

Norway: Basic Information

Around 2.7 million tourists visit Norway every year, 250 000 of them British. It is a country of vast distances. Although public transport is good, to explore even a small part of this beautiful country, a car is essential. It may be fairly expensive to take your own car, but once there, it will be much cheaper than using public transport. You will leave frustrated after a one-week visit; go for two weeks or more.

It is impossible to find all the information you want from a single source. These information documents are the accumulated wisdom (?) from over 30 years of visits to Norway, gleaned from books, travel brochures, government publications, web sites and personal experiences – some disastrous! They do not detail all the tourist sights – for that, consult one of the many tourist guides (Lonely Planet, Rough Guide and other publishers) for both Norway itself and Scandinavia in general. These are revised every few years; older editions in libraries may have out-of-date information.

The Norwegian Tourist Board and local tourist information offices in Norway publish annual guides. Most towns have a tourist office, usually near the station, ferry terminal or town centre; those displaying a green "i" sign are open all year, ones with a red "i" only for the summer; staff are very knowledgeable – make a point of visiting when you arrive in an area. Some holiday companies publish useful guides, but oriented to their own holidays.

Norwegian Tourist Board, Akersgata 13, N-0158 Oslo (T: 22 00 25 00, Fax: 22 00 25 01)

Innovation Norway (NTB), 5 Regent Street, London SW1Y 4LR (T: 0207 389 8800, fax: 0207 839 6014; the phone number 0906 302 2003 in some brochures is a premium rate); <london@innovationnorway.no>. Order printed brochures or download copies from <<http://www.visitnorway.co.uk>> (summer brochures are usually available from mid-February); the main brochure lists all regional tourist offices with phone numbers

The Norwegian Embassy can supply information on living and working in Norway.

Royal Norwegian Embassy, 25 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QD (T: 0207 591 5500)

<<http://www.norway.org.uk>> The web site also has news of Norwegian events in the UK.

Royal Norwegian Consulate General, 12 Rutland Square, Edinburgh EH1 2BB (T: 0131-228 2444) <<http://www.norway.org.uk/edinburgh>>

<<http://www.arbeidsformidling.no/eng>> also has information on working in Norway.

Anglo-Norse Society, c/o British Embassy (in Norway) or c/o Norwegian Embassy (in UK)

<<http://www.anglo-norse.org.uk/>> <Secretariat@anglo-norse.org.uk>.

Scottish Norwegian Society, 36 Randolph Road, Glasgow G11 7LG (T: 0141-334 2260)

<grakar@bt.internet.com>

Useful Websites: Many Norwegian websites have pages in English.

Business and residential phone directories <<http://www.180.no/>>, <<http://www.1881.no>>,

<<http://www.gulesider.no>>, <<http://www.nettkatalogen.no/telefonkatalog/>>,

<<http://www.kvasir.no/>> (business only).

Comprehensive tourist information from USA <<http://www.norway.com>>

The Norway Post for news in English <<http://www.norwaypost.no>>

Packing guide <<http://www.oratory.com/onebag/home.html>>

Planning your visit <<http://www.dontforgetyourtoothbrush.com>>

Public Sector information portal in English <<http://www.norway.no>>

Scandinavia Connection <<http://www.scandinavia-connection.co.uk>> supplies books on Norway in English.

Travel Guide <<http://www.norwayguide.no>>

Information & Services for Travellers:

Asthma & Allergy Sufferers: *Norges Astma- og Allergiforbund*, Postboks 2603 St Hanshaugen, 0131 Oslo (T: 23 35 35 35, fax: 23 35 35 30) <<http://www.naaf.no>> <naaf@naaf.no> can

supply information about suitable hotels.

Backpackers: VIP Backpackers, PO Box 3184 Elisenberg, N-0208 for information on cheap accommodation (T: 48 13 47 25) <<http://www.vipbackpackers.no/engelsk/>> <post@backpackers.no>

Disabled: *Norges Handikapforbund*, Schweigaardsgt. 12, Postboks 9217 Grønland, N-0134 Oslo (T: 24 10 24 00) <<http://www.nhf.no>> <nhf@nhf.no> publishes a brochure in English, also available from tourist offices. Norway is disabled-friendly; accommodation brochures indicate wheelchair accessibility; some trains have special coaches, DFDS and *Hurtigruten* have special cabins. There are coach tours for wheelchair users. There is also useful information at <<http://www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople>>.

Gay & Lesbian: *Landsforeningen for Lesbisk og Homofil Frigjøring*, St Olavs plass 2, N-0165 Oslo (T: 22 36 19 48).

Independent travel: There are several gap year web sites with useful advice for anyone 'doing your own thing': <<http://www.dontworrymum.com>>, <<http://www.gapaid.org>>, <<http://www.gogapyear.com>>, <<http://www.ultimategapyear.co.uk>>.

Senior Citizens: Discounts for those over 67 are available at most museums, for air, rail and bus fares and at some hotels – always ask. Have your passport handy as proof of age if you look too youthful! <<http://www.ageconcern.org.uk>> for travel advice.

Students: Discounts are available for travel, museums and other venues. Obtain an International Student Identity Card; the ID card for your own educational institution may not be recognised.

Women: *Kvinnefronten*, Holsts gate 1, N-0473 Oslo (T: 22 37 60 54) and *Krisesenter* (T: 22 37 47 00 in Oslo or 112 elsewhere) in emergencies.

Complaints: If you are not satisfied with any goods or services you have paid for, raise the matter politely but firmly with the local provider at the earliest opportunity - don't wait until you return home. Focus on the main issues without introducing minor moans. Make written notes about the problem and take photographic/video evidence with contact details of witnesses if appropriate. Be reasonable and justify any monetary value you are claiming; this improves your chances in any subsequent mediation or court claim. Don't be fobbed off with a low offer or credit/vouchers that you cannot spend. Advice can be obtained from Citizens Advice, Consumer Direct or Which?. If you aren't satisfied, in the UK you can use the Small Claims Court or the ABTA or AITO arbitration services for claims against members. There are fees, time and compensation limits and documentary requirements; decisions are binding. Getting redress is difficult for privately owned accommodation, unless it is graded by the tourist authority or listed in a guide book; contact the local tourist office or guide publisher for advice.

Association of British Travel Agents <<http://www.abta.com>>

Association of Independent Tour Operators <<http://www.aito.co.uk>> then click on About AITO, Why AITO, Dispute Settlement Service.

Citizens Advice Bureau <<http://www.adviceguide.org.uk>>

Consumer Direct (T: 0845 404 0506) <<http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk>>

Which? <<http://www.which.co.uk/advice>>

Electricity: 220V, 50Hz, compatible with UK appliances. The unearthed 2.5A 2-pin round europlug and similar 16A Schuko plug with two earth contacts at its circumference are used; both plugs fit the same socket. International car ferries use the same. UK 3-pin to Schuko plug adapters are available in UK electrical shops, but are usually rated at 6A maximum and so are not suitable for most kettles and some hairdryers.

Steve Kropla's guide to electrical and phone plugs: <<http://www.kropla.com>>.

Hitch-hiking isn't common and is usually difficult as traffic can be very light. Expect very long waits. Ask truck drivers at ferry terminals, fuel stations and roadside café car parks.

Lost Property (*hittegods*): Enquire at bus or train stations or the police.

Photography: The outstanding scenery means you will take many more photographs than you expect. Take spare camera batteries, extra film or digital memory cards. Ask permission before taking photos of people, especially Sami. A UV filter may be needed to avoid glare from water, snow and ice; digital cameras may not work at temperatures below freezing.

Weather: For daily and 7-day forecasts: <<http://www.worldclimate.com>>

Documents in this series list organisations that provide brochures on travel, accommodation and activities. You can write to them in English.

Some Norwegian prices are given as a guide but they become out-of-date quickly. Consult brochures published annually or websites for current prices.