

Norway: Travel from UK

Several air and all direct sea routes from the UK to Norway were discontinued in 2008; more air and some Denmark-Norway sea routes closed in 2009; other routes may close owing to increased fuel costs and air passenger duty and falling passenger numbers. Most air and sea fares are cheaper if you book early and cheaper via the Internet. Special bargain price offers are for fixed times and specific destinations and available for only a few days, but to access them you have to click past other apparently attractive offers which are full price. Visit <<http://www.flightmapping.com/Europe/Norway/>> for up-to-date information on current air routes. Use comparison websites to find real bargain offers: <<http://www.flightchecker.co.uk>>, <<http://www.kayak.co.uk>>, <<http://www.skyscanner.net>>, <<http://www.travelsupermarket.com>>, <<http://www.moneysavingsexpert.com>>.

Booking: Nearly all the travel industry makes hefty surcharges for using credit cards; some charge also for using debit cards; a few make no surcharge for using Electron or prepaid cards. The surcharge is usually per ticket rather than per transaction and far in excess of the actual cost of the transaction. Weigh this up against using credit or Visa debit cards to pay for tickets which makes the card company jointly liable if your carrier or travel company goes out of business. This is especially important when booking direct with an airline or ferry company as the ATOL and ABTA compensation schemes apply only to companies offering all-inclusive holiday packages. The EU has proposed a new scheme to cover independent operators but it will be some years before it's available. Ensure that names on tickets are exactly as spelled in passports; many carriers, especially airlines, won't let you travel if ticket and passport have slightly different names and charge megabucks for amending tickets or even force you to pay again (full price) for a new ticket.

Air: BA and SAS are the main scheduled airlines; budget airlines are Norwegian Air Shuttle and Ryanair but cheap fares have many compulsory extras, adding significantly to costs. Weekend fares can be up to five times the price of midweek ones. Always check baggage size/weight limits and the restricted articles list. Most airlines have fly-drive packages. There are flights from the UK to the following destinations:

Ålesund: from London Gatwick (Norwegian)

Bardufoss: from London Heathrow (SAS, from 31 May)

Bergen Flesland [BGO]: from London Gatwick (SAS, Norwegian), from London Heathrow (BMI), from Aberdeen Dyce, Birmingham, Cardiff, Durham Tees Valley, East Midlands, Humberside, Newcastle and Norwich (Eastern), from Aberdeen Dyce (Widerøe) and Edinburgh Turnhouse (Widerøe?), from Birmingham International (SAS via Copenhagen)

Haugesund [HAU]: from London Stansted and Edinburgh Turnhouse (Ryanair)

Oslo Gardermoen [OSL] (30 miles N of city centre; high speed rail link): from London Heathrow (BA, BMI, SAS), from London City (SAS), from London Gatwick and Edinburgh Turnhouse (Norwegian), from Manchester International (SAS), from Durham Tees Valley, East Midlands, Humberside, Leeds, Newcastle, Norwich (Eastern), from Birmingham International (SAS via Copenhagen)

Oslo Rygge [RYG] (at Moss, 40 miles SE of city; rail and busy road links): from London Gatwick and London Stansted (Ryanair)

Oslo Torp [TRF] (at Sandefjord, 80 miles SW of city; rail and very busy slow road links): from Birmingham International, Glasgow Prestwick, Liverpool John Lennon, London Stansted (Ryanair)

Stavanger Sola [SVG]: from London Heathrow (BMI, SAS), from London Gatwick (Norwegian), from Aberdeen Dyce (SAS, Eastern, Widerøe), from Birmingham International (SAS via Copenhagen), from Newcastle (Widerøe), from Aberdeen, Durham Tees Valley, East Midlands, Humberside, Liverpool, Newcastle, Norwich, Southampton (Eastern)

Tromsø/Langnes [TOS]: from London Gatwick (Norwegian), from Aberdeen Dyce (Widerøe, summer only)

Trondheim Værnes [TRD]: from London Gatwick (Norwegian) and Edinburgh Turnhouse (Norwegian?)

British Airways (T: 0844 493 0787, daily 06.00 - 20.00)
 <<http://www.britishairways.com>> <<http://www.ba.com>>

Eastern Airways, Schiphol House, Humberside Airport, Kirmington, DN39 6YH (T: 01652 680 600 or 0870 366 9100, fax: 0870 366 9909, Mon - Fri 0530-2000, Sat: 0900-1700, Sun 1000-1800) <<http://www.easternairways.com>> <reservations@easternairways.com>. There are connecting flights to Aberdeen Dyce and Newcastle from other UK airports.

BMI (T:0870 6070 555) <<http://www.flybmi.com>> £4.50 credit card surcharge.

Norwegian Air Shuttle (T: +47 21 49 00 15) <post@norwegian.no>
 <<http://www.norwegian.no>> <<http://www.norwegian.com/en>>

Ryanair (T: 0871 2460 000, expensive rate) <<http://www.ryanair.com>>

SAS Scandinavian Airlines System (T: 0208 990 7159, 0871 521 2772, daily 08.00 - 22.00, fax: 0208 990 7127) <<http://www.flysas.co.uk>> Note that 0871 numbers are charged at a more expensive rate.

Widerøe (T: +47 81 00 12 00, fax: +47 67 11 61 95) <marketing@wideroe.no>
 <<http://www.wideroe.no/?language=en>> <<http://www.wideroe.co.uk>>

Air Transport Users Council <<http://www.auc.org.uk>> for information on delayed flights and other problems.

Check available routes at <<http://www.skyscanner.net>>.

Check airline destinations, fares at <<http://www.traveljungle.co.uk>>

Check airports, weather at <<http://www.flightstats.co.uk>>.

Check baggage limits at <<http://www.flylite.uk.com>>; the airline limits section links directly to the baggage section of airline websites. Flylite (01932 219 194) has 34-litre 1.4kg wheeled hand luggage with dimensions compatible with Ryanair's limits.

Check meal quality at <<http://www.airlinemeals.net>>.

Carparks: On-site airport long stay ones are very expensive, off-site ones are expensive but both are discounted if you book in advance; going by train or coach is even cheaper. Cheaper flights often have very early departures or very late return arrivals; an overnight stay at a nearby hotel may cost more than the flight saving.

Budget airline extra charges: EU law requires airlines to quote the final price including air fare, taxes, charges, surcharges and other fees that are unavoidable, but they get round this by clever wording. There is an extra charge to pay by credit or debit card (Ryanair £5 credit and debit card surcharge per person per flight); cash and cheque are not accepted; Ryanair gets round the law by making no charge (thus avoidable) when paying by Visa Electron card (which few banks issue) or prepaid MasterCard. You can get the prepaid Travelex Cash Passport Electron card from Thomas Cook or Co-op travel shops; you pay 2% to load money onto the card, a fraction of the airline booking fee. Details from: <<http://www.moneysavingsexpert.com/flightextras>>. Ryanair intends to install £1 coin operated toilets.

Meals: Scheduled airlines usually include one in the ticket price, but budget airlines charge (markup over 400%, Ryanair over 500%) and meals must be booked in advance. If you require a special diet, book in advance, check the day before you go and check again on arrival at the airport. Take your own food to eat on the journey instead of buying expensive airline food; Ryanair charges 30 - 50% more than other budget airlines.

Insurance: EU rules state that you must actively opt in to the airline's own (expensive), but the online booking form usually has the insurance box already ticked, so make sure you opt out. Annual insurance policies are cheaper elsewhere and sports/adventurous activities require special policy cover.

Airport checkin: an extra charge (Ryanair £40 per person each way), so make sure you check in online (Ryanair £5 per person each way) and print your boarding passes for all legs of the journey in both directions at least 4 hours before departure. If you set up an email address accessible by web mail, you can forward copies of your e-tickets and boarding passes to this address so they are accessible at an internet café in case of loss.

Hold luggage: must be booked in advance (Ryanair £15 - but £20 in July/August - for one

15kg bag via the Internet); booking it in on arrival at the airport is at a higher price (Ryanair £35, but £70 for a second 15kg bag). Baggage above your weight allowance (Ryanair 15kg per bag; most other airlines more) is charged at £10 (Ryanair £20) per kg. Sports equipment, musical instruments, child car seats and other bulky items may be charged at special higher rates (Ryanair £10 - 40 per item per flight), usually even more for the return journey. Weigh your bag beforehand and don't get too close to the limit. On the return journey, souvenirs may take you over the limit, so dump anything that costs less than £10 (or £15) per kilo if you can buy it again when you get home.

Hand luggage: free if carried on board and stowed in the compartment above the seat unaided; allowance is one bag up to your weight allowance (no limit for British Airways, BMI; 10kg for most other airlines) and you can buy special cases that are designed to fit. The maximum legal size (including protruding wheels, handles and external pockets) is 56 x 45 x 25 cm (British Airways) but most airlines have lower limits (Ryanair 55 x 30 x 30 cm, BMI 55 x 40 x 20 cm); check for changes before flying, oversize bags are charged (expensively) as non-prebooked hold luggage. To reduce the size of bulky clothing and sleeping bags, use a compression sac from an outdoor equipment shop or <<http://www.eagle-creek.co.uk>>. Use cunning to reduce the baggage weight by wearing your heaviest shoes, coat, jumpers etc and filling your pockets, then take them off and put them under your seat for the journey. Take a spare clear polythene bag with sealing strip (maximum capacity 1 litre) for makeup and liquids (less than 100ml each) which have to be shown at airport security (only one bag per person); if you have no suitable bags, you may be charged £1 each.

<<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Foreigntravel/AirTravel/index.htm>> for the list of items banned in hand luggage, click on Travel and Transport, then Air Travel; also check with your airline which may ban additional items. For very lightweight backpacks and bags, see <<http://www.onyabags.co.uk>>.

Extra weight saving tips at <<http://www.gotiny.co.uk>>, <<http://www.onebag.com>>, or <<http://www.moneysavingsexpert.com>> then search for budget airlines.

Sea: If you are taking a car, the only options are the DFDS car ferries from Harwich to Esbjerg, Denmark, or Newcastle to Ijmuidin, Netherlands, P&O from Hull to Rotterdam, Netherlands, and Stena Line (cheapest and quickest North Sea crossing) from Harwich to Hook of Holland, Netherlands.

The Newcastle and Hull routes are more convenient for those living in Scotland or North England. For the Netherlands routes, UK driving distance is less, the sailing is shorter and cheaper, but the driving distance to North Denmark is greater. The overall journey takes about the same time as the DFDS Esbjerg route but the total cost for ferry fares and petrol is cheaper.

Harwich - Esbjerg: 17.45 W, F; 17.15 Su (alternate days June to mid-Sep), crossing 18h 15m

Esbjerg - Harwich: 18.45 Tu, Th, Sa (alternate days June to mid-Sep)

Newcastle - Ijmuidin: 17.00 daily, crossing 15h 30m

Ijmuidin - Newcastle: 17.30 daily

Harwich - Hook of Holland: 09.00 (but 10.30 on Sun), 23.15 daily, crossing 6h 45m, overnight 7h 30m; free Wi-Fi access

Hook of Holland - Harwich : 14.30, 22.15 (but 22.00 on Sun) daily

Hull - Rotterdam: 21.00 daily, crossing 10h 15m (11h on Sat, Sun)

Rotterdam - Hull: 21.00 daily

Sailings are often fully booked in high season (mid June - late August), so early booking is advised and always cheaper. DFDS and P&O offer cheaper package prices for car with passengers and DFDS also has also car/accommodation packages with pre-booked hotels or self-catering cabins. There are supplementary charges for long, high or wide vehicles and also surcharges for booking by phone or using a credit card.

Embarkation starts 2h 30m and closes 40m before departure (DFDS) or 2h 30m and 90m (P&O) or 2h 45m and 45m (Stena). Cars arriving late will not be loaded and no refund of ticket price is given; plan to arrive early, allowing for traffic delays. Before leaving home,

check <<http://www.highways.gov.uk>> for UK roadworks and traffic delays. Early arrivals embark first and usually disembark first. The car deck will be locked during the voyage so take what you need for the voyage to your cabin. DFDS ship time is Central European time, one hour ahead of UK.

There are several standards of en suite cabin, restaurants, cafeterias, bars and a children's play area. Currencies accepted are Danish krone/sterling for the Esbjerg route and euro/sterling for the Netherlands routes, but the DFDS sterling exchange rate is poor. Restaurants/cafeterias are expensive and eating your own food on board is prohibited; eat before you embark or use dinner and breakfast all-you-can-eat buffets (with vegetarian options) which are good value – a breakfast brunch may suffice for the day with a snack on the way to your destination. There is a discount on meal price (up to 20% DFDS, 10% P&O) if paid in advance with your ticket.

On arrival, drive to one of the North Denmark ferry terminals or to SE Norway via the Øresund toll bridge (between Denmark and Sweden, Dkr245 per car, 2007) or the quicker and cheaper Helsingør car ferry. You can reach Hirtshals (346km, 3h 10m from Esbjerg; 997 km, 9h from Ijmuidin; 1021 km, 9h from Hook; 1079 km, 9h 40m from Rotterdam) for an evening sailing, or stay overnight in Denmark for a morning/lunchtime sailing next day. Order a free Denmark road map with camping, youth hostel and car ferry information from <<http://www.visitdenmark.com>>. If you use an online route planner, try more than one — they are not all up-to-date; <<http://www.viamichelin.com>> and <<http://www.theaa.com>> are usually reliable.. Most ferries offer a package price for car with passengers; in high season, book in advance. Check-in closes 60 or 90 min before sailing. The Skagerrak, between Denmark and Norway, can be very rough; if you suffer from sea/travel/motion sickness, take an appropriate remedy with you but remember it can affect your driving reaction time.

Frederikshavn - Oslo, 8h 30m (Stena Line) 20 Jun - 24 Aug, daily at 10.00, return 19.30

Hirtshals - Kristiansand, 3h 15m (Color Line) daily: 12.15 and 20.45, return 08.00 and 16.30, except 3x Sat, Sun 24 Jun - 18 Aug.

Hirtshals - Kristiansand, 2h 15m (Fjordline) runs 2x daily 14 Apr - 18 Sep only, except 3x daily 24 Jun - 14 Aug.

Hirtshals - Larvik, 3h 45m (Color Line) daily 12.45 and 22.15, return 08.00 and 17.30

Hirtshals - Stavanger, 11h 30m, - Bergen, +8h (Fjordline) Sa (to Stavanger only), Su, Tu, Th; return Sa, M, W, F.

København - Oslo, 16h 30m (DFDS) 17.00 daily, return 17.00

Color Line T: 0800 931 0801 <<http://www.colorline.com>>. Fares are cheaper midweek.

DFDS Seaways Ltd, Royal Quays, North Shields NE29 6EE. T: 0871 522 9978 for bookings (£20 fee), brochures and enquiries, M-F: 09.00 - 17.30, Sa: 09.00 - 17.00; 0871 882 1777 for departure/arrival confirmation 24 hours before scheduled time; <<http://www.dfds.co.uk>> for online bookings (no booking fee) and information. YHA members receive a 10% discount off passenger and vehicle fares booked on 0871 522 9955 quoting code X0102 (£10 booking fee) or online at <<http://www.dfds.co.uk/YHA>>. Note that 0871 numbers are charged at a more expensive rate.

Fjordline T: +47 815 33 500 <<http://www.fjordline.eu/index.php>> <booking@fjordline.no>

P&O Ferries T: 0871 664 5645 (information), 0871 664 2642 (bookings), 0845 832 8888 (departure/arrival information), 020 201 3919 in Netherlands. Note that 0871 numbers are charged at a more expensive rate. <<http://www.poferries.com>>

Stena Line Ltd, Stena House, Station Approach, Holyhead LL65 1DQ. T: 08447 70 70 70 for bookings (£10 fee), brochures and enquiries; 0870 575 5755 for departure/arrival confirmation 24 hours before scheduled time; <<http://www.stenaline.co.uk>> for online bookings (no booking fee) and information. £5 charge for credit card booking.

Bus & Rail: Travel from London to Oslo is possible via National Express coaches (30 hours) with several changes or via rail (29 hours) with a Scanrail pass. Both are long tiring journeys and are more expensive than travel by air.

Detailed info on rail travel <<http://www.seat61.com/Norway.htm>>

Customs (*toll*): Duty free allowances entering Norway are 1l spirits (over 22% alcohol, maximum 60%) and 1.5l wine (2.5% to 22% alcohol) and 2l beer (2.5% to 4.7% alcohol), or 3l wine and 2l beer, or 5l beer; 200 cigarettes or 250g tobacco, 5kg sugar, 1kg sweets/chocolate; total value of imports kr 6000 maximum. Alcohol is expensive in Norway, so you may wish to take in your allowance, but buy it in a UK shop or airport; on board planes and ships it is more expensive. Age limits are 20 for spirits, 18 for wine, beer and tobacco. You can also take in for your immediate needs up to 10kg of fruit, berries and vegetables (but not potatoes) and up to 10kg of meat, meat products, fish, eggs, cheese and other dairy products (provided that they are stamped with an EEA country of origin); honey is prohibited because of bee disease; arms, ammunition, narcotics, plants and plant parts are prohibited. You can take in up to 600l of motor fuel in your vehicle tank (for those who drive trucks!) plus 10l in an approved spare can. Weight limits and liquid restrictions determine what you can take for air travel.

Customs Directorate <<http://www.toll.no>>

Duty Free Shops: The discount prices in Norway and onboard ships are similar to normal UK shop prices; the real bargains are Norwegian foods and speciality products.

Passport (*pass*) & Visa: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, UK and USA citizens need a valid passport but no visa for stays of less than three months. Check well beforehand that your passport is up-to-date and renew it if necessary. Be aware that photo requirements are now much stricter and many automatic photo booths do not provide acceptable photos. The Post Office 'check and send' service (at an additional fee) does not guarantee acceptability of photos; Jessops has staff trained in the new requirements. In case of loss or theft, make photocopies of the personal information page – leave one at home, keep one in your car and one in your luggage. No immunisation certificates are required. Changes in entry, visa, immunisation requirements for all countries can be checked at <<http://www.fco.gov.uk>>.

Travelling with children: Single parents and non-parent adults travelling with children must carry documentary evidence of parental responsibility to be allowed to enter Norway or to allow the children to leave the country.

Pets and other animals are admitted only with licences which must be applied for well in advance. Vaccination certificates may be required. <<http://www.mattilsynet.no>>

<<http://www.iatatravelcentre.com>> for advice on passport, visa, health, customs and currency regulations.