

## Norway: Shops & Restaurants

**Opening Hours (*åpning tider*):** Usually 10.00 to 17.00 Mondays to Fridays, except 09.00 to 18.00 or 20.00 on Thursdays, although some may open earlier and close later; Saturdays 10.00 to 13.00 or 15.00. Supermarkets are usually open 09.00 to 20.00 weekdays, 09.00 to 16.00 or 18.00 Saturdays. Most shops are closed on Sundays. Petrol stations often sell bread, milk and basic groceries, usually at a higher price than supermarkets and may be open until 23.00. Bargaining over prices is not common practice in Norway.

**Units of Measurement:** Metric (metres, litres, kilograms, °C). Tins and jars are often 500g, larger than the UK's 454g (1 lb) ones. Milk is in *1l* (1.75 pints) or *2l* cartons.

**VAT (*merverdiavgift, mva, moms*)** is payable on all purchases including food, stationery and books. The rate is 12% on food, up to 24% on other goods and services; there is no zero rate. Prices in shops, restaurants and hotels are usually quoted inclusive of *mva*.

**Tax-free Shopping:** If you buy goods for more than kr 315 (foods kr 285) less than one month before departure from one of the 3000 shops displaying a 'Tax Free Shopping' sign, you can obtain a cash refund (12 - 19%, foods 6 - 7.5%) when you leave the country. Ask for a Tax Free cheque which you complete with your personal details and present with your passport and the unused sealed goods at your departure point (airport, onboard ship, international train station, major frontier post) to receive the refund. The refund desk is sometimes situated in a local shop — see the website for details of all locations.

Global Refund (T: 67 15 60 10) <<http://www.globalrefund.no>>

**Consumer Rights:** If you have a problem, complain to the shop or service provider. If it is not redressed, contact the Norwegian Consumer Council or the ECC Office in the UK.

Norwegian Consumer Council <<http://www.forbrukerportalen.no/english>>

United Kingdom European Consumer Centre, 1 Sylvan Court, Sylvan Way, Southfields Business Park, Basildon SS15 6TH (T: 9845 604 0503, fax: 0845 608 9600) <[ecc@tsi.org.uk](mailto:ecc@tsi.org.uk)> <<http://www.ukecc.net>>

Norwegian specialities include traditional woollen sweaters and other hand-knitted clothing, woven wall coverings, pewter ware, porcelain, crystal and glass, gold, silver and enamel jewellery, china and cutlery, Sami sheath knives, reindeer leather products, troll figures, wooden toys, woodwork with rose-maling painted or carved decoration and other handicrafts, traditional foods such as fish, cheese and cranberry (*tranebær*), bilberry (*blåbær*), cloudberry (*multe*) preserves (*syltetøy*) and aquavit (*akevitt*) made from potatoes and caraway.

**Toilets (*toaletter*)** are found in shopping malls, restaurants, airports, train and bus stations and many roadside lay-bys. They may be free or fee-charging.

**Post Office (*postkontor*):** Open 08.00 to 16.00 or 09.00 to 17.00 Mondays to Fridays, 09.00 to 15.00 Saturdays. There are offices in cities and large towns, but in small towns and villages, they may be situated in the local supermarket. There are separate rates for posting to Norway, rest of Europe, elsewhere. The lowest rate is for postcards and letters under 20g (kr 9 for Europe). Postage stamps (*frimerker*) are also available in many shops and kiosks.

**Supermarket (*supermarked*):** The main chains are Domus department stores (slightly dearer), Co-op, ICA, Kiwi (usually cheapest), Rema 1000, Rimi, Spar. You can expect a similar range of foods, including baby foods, and household items to UK supermarkets, but there will be less choice per item, generally one or two major brands plus an own brand. International brands, eg Kellogg's, Knorr, Nestlé, are available, but sometimes with slightly different ingredients due to differences in permitted colouring and other additives. Larger supermarkets may have an in-store bakery and a deli counter with prepared salads (*salater*). Discounts are displayed as *Lavpris* and special offers as *Tilbud*. Most aluminium

cans, glass and plastic bottles can be returned when empty for a kr 1 refund. Washing-up liquid kr25.75/0,75 litre, washing powder kr39.82/0.75 litre (average price Oct 2007).

**Wine Monopoly (*vinmonopolet*):** Only beer (*øl*) is available in shops, and wine in some rural supermarkets. Other alcohol must be bought in the state-owned shop usually open 10.00 to 16.30 or 17.00 Mondays to Fridays, until 15.00 on Saturdays ... and it's expensive! The legal drinking age is 18 for beer and wine, 20 for spirits. You will be asked for your passport if you look under 20.

**Other Shops:** Expect a similar range to the UK, but there are rarely greengrocers or butchers except in cities and large towns. Coastal towns usually have a fishmonger. Most towns have a specialist bakery (*bakeri*) with many varieties of real bread.

**Laundry:** Coin-operated laundries (*myntvaskeri*) are expensive and rare, but washing machines and dryers are often found at campsites and hostels; take your own washing powder. If you are staying elsewhere, take soap powder suitable for washing by hand.

**Markets:** Cities have open air markets for vegetables, fruit, flowers and other goods, open Monday - Saturday from 07.00 or 08.00 to 14.00 or 15.00. These are cheaper, especially towards the end of the day when fresh food prices are reduced – everything must go!

**Farms:** Roadside signs in the summer advertise fruit and other farm produce, especially strawberries (*jordbær*). *Ekte geitost* is 100% goat milk cheese (strong), *egg* is eggs (!), *honning* is honey, which you cannot take back to the UK as it's prohibited by Customs because of bee disease. Some farms have visitor centres with cafés and children's activities.

**Restaurant opening times vary;** most are closed on Sunday. Lunch is served from 12.00, sometimes as late as 17.00; dinner is served from 18.00. Eating out regularly is expensive. Most visitors (including Norwegians on holiday) buy food at bakeries, supermarkets and markets and prepare their own meals.

Norwegian foods include fish soup (*fiskesuppe*), grilled (*grillet*) or smoked (*røke-*) salmon (*laks*), cured trout (*rakørret*), boiled shrimp (*reker*) often sold ready-cooked at the quayside, lobster (*hummer*), cod (*torsk*), whalemeat (*hvalkjøtt*) and other seafood, reindeer (*reinsdyr*) steaks, dried smoked salted meat (*spekemat*), dried smoked leg of lamb (*fenalår*), meatballs (*kjøttboller*), fishballs (*fiskeboller*), potato dumplings (*raspeboller*) in lamb and cabbage stew (*fårikål*), lobscouse stew (*lapskaus*), pastry layered with cheese or brawn (*lefse*), substantial open sandwiches (*smørbrød*) with a large variety of meat, fish, cheese, salad *pålegg* (on-lay) on top, apple crumble with chocolate and cream (*tilslørte bondepiker*). Dried cod soaked in lye until it becomes like jelly (*lutefisk*) which is popular at Christmas, sheep's head (*smalahovud*) singed, smoked and then boiled (you eat the cheeks, tongue and eyes) and ultra mature cheese (*gammelost*) are acquired tastes.

**Breakfast (*frokost*)** can be quite substantial; the buffet has Scandinavian, English, American and Continental options including cereals, scrambled egg, bacon, tomatoes, sliced ham (*skinke*), salmon, sweet brown goats milk cheese (*geitost*) and other cheeses, pickled herring (*sursild*), pickled beetroot (*rødbete*) and pickled cucumber (*agurk*) and a variety of breads and crispbreads (*knekkebrød*). In many hotels, grease proof paper is provided for you to make your own packed lunch and a vacuum flask can be filled with coffee for an additional charge. Lunch (*lunsj*) is a light meal often from a buffet (*koldtbord*), usually good value; dinner (*middag*) in the early evening is the main hot meal of the day.

There are food festivals at Stavanger (*Gladmat*, Scandinavia's largest), Trondheim and Ålesund; Norway's Bocuse d'Or is ranked as the world's second most prestigious chef's competition.

**Restaurant:** Expensive; there are no exploitation wages, staff are paid well, so you are paying for the service. A main course will cost kr 195 or more. Most have a cheaper daily special (*dagens rett*). Many towns have Chinese, Indian and Italian restaurants with menus influenced by Norwegian tastes; cities have other ethnic restaurants. Some restaurants

indicate vegetarian dishes (*vegetariske retter*) on menus, but their interpretation may not be reliable. EatYrEgo, Fragrance of the Heart Cafe, Krishna's Cuisine, Vegeta Vertshus in Oslo and Markens Grøde in Trondheim are entirely vegetarian.

**Kafeteria:** In department stores, railway stations or hidden above shops and offices, usually closing at 18.00. Moderate prices, self-service, simpler menu, often with a cheap daily special (*dagens rett*). A main course will cost from kr 75 to kr 150.

**Konditori:** Moderate prices. Usually part of a bakery, providing *smørbrød* (often good value), pastries, cakes, tea and coffee. Large ones may serve hot meals.

**Veikro:** Roadside diner/inn. Usually cheaper than restaurants; may be waiter service or self-service.

**Chains:** Burger King, McDonald's, Pizzaland, Subway and coffee shops have branches in cities and large towns. Norwegian chains include Peppe's Pizza and some bakeries.

**Street Stalls and Kiosks (*gatekjøkken*):** These sell hot dogs (*varme pølser*), burgers, pizza and other snacks.

**Bars & Pubs:** Hotel bars are open to the public. Pubs are found in cities and larger towns. All alcohol is expensive; served by a barman, it's mega-expensive. In groups, everyone buys their own drink; buying a round for others is not normal practice. The legal age for drinking alcohol is 18 for beer and wine, 20 for spirits. You will be asked for proof of age if you don't look old enough.

A bottle of something is usually welcome as a gift, but do not expect it to be opened at the time – Norwegians are aware of when they will next be driving.

**Drinking & Driving:** Don't! The permitted blood alcohol level is much lower than the UK and penalties are severe. Norwegians use taxis on a night out or drink after returning home.

**Tipping:** A service charge is usually included in the bill; otherwise a tip is expected.