21 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE VISITING NORWAY

by Celia Woolley

Fantastic fjords, magical mountainscapes and eye-watering prices may be leap to mind when you think of Norway. But there's way more to this fascinating country than simply stunning scenery.

We've consulted locals and long-time residents about what they think you should know before visiting one of the world's most beautiful countries. So, here's our guide to 21 surprising and fun facts about Norway.

1) Norway introduced salmon sushi to the Japanese. Traditionally salmon wasn't used for sushi, but the quality of the seafood from Norway's cold waters is so good, that the Japanese were persuaded to try it – and now it's one of the most popular forms of sushi.

2) Everyone underestimates the time it takes to drive anywhere in Norway – even Google maps. What may look like a short journey in miles often involves switchback roads and challenging weather, plus better speed limits than you may expect.

So, take your time, enjoy the views, and don't try and see too much on one trip.

3) It gets light very early in summer, even if you're nowhere near the midnight sun – pack an eyemask unless you want to wake up at silly o'clock.

4) Slow TV is massive. Staying in to watch 24 hours of drinking needlework? It was on 1 November, plus National Knitting Day. Or maybe you fancy twelve hours of watching a log fire burning? Or how about 20 hours of salmon spawning?

Public service broadcaster NRK's first slow show involved stopping a camera to the Bergensbanen express train and screening the seven-hour journey in real time.

It was such a hit that NRK followed up with Hurtigruten Minute by Minute (across 135 hours). Over half the population of Norway tuned in at some point to watch.

5) Cheese can be brown. If you see a fudge-like block on the breakfast table, with a mysterious slicer next to it, it's Brunost.

It's made from whey, boiled down to caramelise the natural sugars before being left to cool into 'cheese'. For added pungency, try an aged gammeldal ('old cheese') if you dare.

6) Queuing is for wimps. Be prepared to use your elbows to get onto public transport in big cities like Oslo. For all the new eleven-or-negotiating Oslo public transport system, see our guide to getting around Oslo.

7) Convenience in Norway is early – typically around 7pm. Restaurants will serve food later, but still tend to close by about 10pm.

Ok, so the locals do, and go for a fourth meal called kveldsmat (evening food). It's more of a late snack, really – 9/10 it's, have an early lunch around 11am and dinner at 7pm.

8) You can catch your next pretty much anywhere in the country for free, as long as it's 100m from the nearest house, thanks to allemannsretten (loosely translated as 'right to roam').

For full details on the dos and don'ts of where you can set up camp, see our comprehensive guide to camping in Norway.

You can camp pretty much anywhere in Norway.

9) Polar bears, walrus and Arctic foxes – Svalbard in the Arctic Circle is famous for all three. But warmer climes matter, too! Hey, Chefs grande here, attracted by the challenge of cooking at 70 degrees north, just 130kms from the North Pole.

Svalbard's capital, Longyearbyen may have a population of just 2,000, but it's home to three of Norway's most amazing restaurants, Mount, Fuglehjørnet and Gruvelaget.

For more on visiting the remote wintery wilderness of Svalbard, check out our ultimate guide.

10) When socialising with Norwegians, don't feel you have to fill the gaps in any conversation. Children shatter isn't really a thing here, and long silences are normal.

11) It's not just the scenery and breathtaking views that make Norway's 18 Scenic Routes so amazing to drive along. The award-winning architecture of the rest stops and public toilets en-route are pretty impressive too.

Read our guide to Norway's top ten scenic routes for more info on these spectacular drives.

12) Staying in a mountain hut is an integral part of Norwegian life – and the Norwegian Trekking Association has a network of them. As far as Norwegians are concerned, the fewer the mod-cons, the better.

The whole point is to get back to basics, so it's great if there's no electricity or running water. And bonus points if you can only get there on skis or by snowmobile.

13) A former staple subsistence food, Lutefisk is having a moment. Made from dried cod soaked in lye, this jelly dish originated from the days when people only survived on preserved food throughout the winter, but it's now served in Norway's trendiest restaurants.

If you want to find out more about where to sample local and traditional dishes, see our guide to finding the best authentic Norwegian food in Oslo.

14) Mountain biking is big in Norway – buses will sometimes slow bikes in the back to take some of the leg work out of a ride, and there are plenty of shared-use/walking routes, single track and off-road paths – check out the trail code here.

15) Never offer to buy a round in a bar. Given the price of alcohol, Norwegians usually just buy a drink just for themselves – and they certainly won't be offended if you do the same.

16) And don't expect to stock up on cheap booze at the supermarket either. Although you can buy lager-type beer at supermarkets, wine and spirits are only sold in the state-run (pricey) vinmonopolet.

Note, Norway also has an active black market in homemade hooch.

17) Good news if you're not a fan of mud and walking well gear: staying on a campsite doesn't mean roughing it in the bush. Most sites have cabins for rent with everything you need including a kitchenette.

18) On 17 May, aka, National Day, the whole country takes to the streets for a huge party to celebrate the country's declaration of independence on 17 May 1814.

Wear Bunad (traditional dress) or go smart (the kind of outfit you'd wear to a wedding) to this.

19) We've got to say it, prices here are jaw-dropping. Even when you've been in the country for a while you can't help but come out with the occasional 'How much...?'

20) The days are so short in winter they can feel over before you've done anything. Even if you're not a morning person, brace yourself and get up early.

21) Norway's coffee obsessed. With a per capita consumption of nearly 10kg a year, it's amongst the world's top coffee-drinking nations, beating Japan and the USA.

See also:

Norway's best glaciers (and how to reach them)

The 10 best fjords in Norway

Whale watching in Norway: when, where and how

The epic train ride from Oslo to Bergen

Written by
Celia Woolley

PREVIOUS ARTICLE
POLAR BEAR SPOTTING IN SVALBARD, NORWAY: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE
Polar bear spotting in the Longyearbyen area of the Arctic Circle in Svalbard, Norway.
Read More

You may also like

NORWAY IN A NUTSHELL: THE DIY OPTION

THE 15 BEST PLACES TO VISIT IN NORWAY

8 GREAT HIKING TOURS IN NORWAY

Subscribe

Join the discussion

2 COMMENTS

Newest

JOHN WALKER 4 years ago

If there was not a Yorkshire (Britains God's Country) then Norway would take that title. Lets get rid of this bloody Covid-19 so I can visit you again.
John Walker

0 Reply

Jorun Jones 5 years ago

Just wanted to say, Brunost is also called Geitost Goat cheese). There is also a milder version called Fløtemysost. That's my favorite. Gammelost is Limburger cheese. The Norwegian national costume is called Bunad. F.Y.I
Thanks

1 Reply

OUR SCANDINAVIA TRAVEL GUIDE

Routes North helps you discover all of the amazing stuff that Scandinavia has to offer, regardless of your travel budget. The site covers the whole Nordic region, from cool cities like STOCKHOLM, OSLO, GOTHENBURG and COPENHAGEN, all the way north to the frozen reaches of ICELAND and SWEDISH LAPLAND.

AFFILIATE LINKS

Some of our articles contain affiliate links. We may be compensated if you make purchases through these thinks, but there is no extra cost to you. Please note that we do not endorse these companies, although we are selective in our choices. Please exercise caution when making online purchases.

ROUTES NORTH

- ABOUT US
- ROUTES NORTH NEWSLETTER
- YOUTUBE
- ADVERTISE WITH US
- WORK WITH US
- TERMS AND CONDITIONS
- DISCLOSURE
- PRIVACY POLICY
- COOKIE POLICY

USEFUL LINKS

- CAR HIRE
- TOURS AND TICKETS
- TRAVEL INSURANCE
- DISCOUNT PASSES

GUIDES

- STOCKHOLM
- COPENHAGEN
- OSLO
- GOTHENBURG
- HELSINKI
- MALMÖ
- SWEDISH LAPLAND
- LUND
- KIRUNA
- LULEÅ
- GÄLLIVARE

ALL CONTENT © ROUTES NORTH LTD.

Update Privacy Preferences

Terms of Content Use

A RAPTIVE PARTNER SITE

Download Our Brochure
Reserve your ocean Journey & discover freedom, perspective & effortless elegance at sea. Explora Journeys
Book Now