

# Norway

Tolerance, human kindness and independence are important Norwegian ideals. The struggle with the harsh, hostile and sometimes untameable environment has endangered a strong, imaginative and independent people.

At the same time it has been important for the government to take responsibility for the welfare of the individual. In some aspects of government and welfare services, Norway has led other Western European Countries.

Economic security from the state controlled oil industry and political stability have made it possible to continue to develop to a high level the people's well-being and quality of life. The variety in nature and seasons, combined with family life, are important qualities in Norway.

With one of the lowest density rates and with little urbanisation, the Norwegian population is scattered. People live where they can build a house. Some might call Norway the quiet corner of the world. Experiencing Norway means opening up to nature, outdoor life and family life.



## Experiencing Norway



## Stable Country

**Area:** 386,200 km<sup>2</sup> (149,000 sq. mi). Norway is about the same size as the U.S. states of Minnesota and Wisconsin combined. It occupies the western and smaller portion of the Scandinavian Peninsula. Its 15,000 km (9,000 mi) of indented coastline reach from the North Sea to the Arctic Ocean. Fjords, mountains, forests, valleys, plains and wasteland make up the land. Only about 4% of the land is suitable for farming.

**Climate:** The Gulf stream tempers the climate and keeps fjords and harbours ice-free during the winters. Winters are cold; summers can be quite warm. The annual range of temperatures increases generally from east to west and from north to south along the coastline.

**Population:** 4.1 million, the second lowest density rate in Europe.

**Religion:** Approximately 95% of the people belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Another 4% belong to other Christian churches. Most Norwegians go to church only on special occasions such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, Easter, and Christmas. Many believe in God and in some form of afterlife. Most are not intensely religious and tend to feel that all religions are the same.

**Government:** Norway is a constitutional monarchy under King Harald V, son of Olav V. Legislative power is vested in the Storting, the Parliament, whose 165 members are elected for a four year term.

**History:** Harald the Fairhaired became the first supreme ruler of unified Norway in 872 A.D. Between 800 and 1000 A.D. the vikings of Norway raided and occupied parts of Europe. Christianity was introduced in the year 1030. The country was united with Denmark from 1381 to 1814 and with Sweden from 1814 to 1905. When the Swedish Union was dissolved in 1905, a Danish prince, Hakon VII, was named King of Norway. Nazi Germany attacked Norway on April 9, 1940, and held it until its liberation on May 8, 1945. Norway is, and always has been a politically stable country. As a small nation, Norway has maintained its individuality while trading with the rest of the world.

**Economy:** Norway is one of the richest countries in the world. Agriculture remains an important resource of the country, even though it supports only 8% of the people. Farmers derive an important part of their income from forest holdings. Forests cover about a quarter of the land area, with 80% of the forest area being privately owned. Fisheries and related industries are an important feature of the Norwegian economy. The Norwegian merchant fleet is primarily engaged in overseas traffic. Industrially, lumber, paper production, ship-building, oil and natural gas production and the mining of iron ore and pyrites are the backbone of Norway's economy.

**Education:** The education system requires students to attend school for a nine-year period. This is divided into six years of lower school and 3 years of basic upper school. Upper secondary school generally lasts three years. There are nine areas of study from which students may select. All secondary schools do not offer all of these areas:

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| General subjects       | Agriculture              |
| Technical / Industrial | Domestic Science         |
| Physical Education     | Fishing / Maritime       |
| Aesthetic subjects     | Social Services / Health |
| Commercial / Clerical  |                          |



**Good Quality**  
of Life

**Language:** Norwegian and Sami are the official languages of Norway. There are two written dialects: Bokmal (a dialect heavily influenced by Danish) and Nynorsk (an invented language which tries to recapture pre-Danish grammar and pronunciation). There are also small Lapp and Finnish-speaking minorities. English is also widely spoken and even more widely understood.

## Norwegian

God Dag.....	Good Day
Hallo.....	Hello (on phone)
Hvordan stor det til?.....	How are you?
Jeg heter.....	My name is
Hva heter De?.....	What is your name?
Vaer sa snill.....	Please
Takk.....	Thank you
Om forlatelse.....	Excuse me
Adj.....	Yes
Nei.....	No





**Recreation:** Norwegians appreciate nature. The beauty of the mountains, fjords, and shores is outstanding. The majority of the urban population has leisure cottages and cabins in the countryside.

Norway is a major ski country and most Norwegians ski.

Most teenage activities take place with friends and/or different organisations. There are few after-class school activities. Larger towns have one or two theatres.

## Norway

Major ski country

**Family Life:** The family unit is very important in Norway. Husbands and wives usually consider each other equal in authority. The divorce rate remains low. Families tend to be small. The standard of living in Norway is high for Europe. A majority of Norwegians are of the middle class. Norwegian parents emphasise shared family responsibility in the upbringing of their children.

**Meals:** Breakfast usually consists of open-faced sandwiches and coffee or milk. Lunch is often the same. For dinner, meat of fish, potatoes, vegetables and a soup or dessert are common. Punctuality is very important.

**YFU in Norway:** The first exchange in YFU-Norway took place in 1967. Jacob Omholt-Jenses, a retired school principal and Rotarian ran the program with help from friends that first year from his home. As the program grew, it required organisation and administration.

The volunteer system with area representatives was developed together with a national committee and an office. In 1977 YFU-Norway became a member of the Norwegian Youth Council. From then on, YFU-Norway has developed a democratic structure that tends to place youth at the centre of responsibility.

Today, more than 2500 members, some 200 active volunteers and four full-time staff in the National Office, support and guide students, natural parents and host families through a cultural experience that will last for a lifetime.

**YFU Activities:** At the beginning of August, incoming academic-year students attend an arrival orientation/language course program ("summer school"), held in a mountain camp school in the centre of southern Norway. The week-long orientation provides information on Norwegian culture, and an introductory language course taught by professional teachers with years of experience teaching exchange students

A language tape and instruction book are provided to students coming to Norway. The students must do some language training with the tapes before arrival.

YFU activities during the year take place in the area where the students are placed. A program evaluation concludes the exchange year. This may be combined with a four-day excursion (paid for by participants). Get-togethers and formal meetings (Halloween, Thanksgiving, St. Lucia, and Christmas) are organised by the regions.



## Family unit

Very important

