





*Norway's  
Northern  
Exposure*

*Written by Hope S. Philbrick*

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*Photo courtesy of Eric Jorgensen/Innovation Norway*



Photo courtesy of Terje Rakke/Nordic Life/Innovation Norway

Sail aboard Hurtigruten’s MS Nordlys and one conclusion is inevitable: A cruise is a particularly effective way to explore Norway. It combines the convenience of unpacking once with the thrill of exploring new territory every day. It’s restful. It passes vistas so gorgeous that words like breathtaking and spectacular seem inadequate—after all, this cruise is billed as “the world’s most beautiful voyage.” Plus, it’s a whole lot of fun.

Among the highlights sailing south from Kirkenes to Bergen: Vardøhus Fortress is the world’s northernmost and Norway’s easternmost fortress. Constructed from 1734 to 1738, it is surrounded by low, stone-clad earthen walls that are arranged to form an eight-pointed star. Though today the fortress is primarily a flag hold and salute station, an onsite museum and nine picturesque buildings make it

worth a visit. The fortress is located in Vardø, the only city in Europe located in the arctic climate zone.

North Cape, the northernmost tip of the European continent, is a cliff rising 920 feet out of the Arctic Ocean. The site houses a restaurant, coffee shop, monuments and a wide-screen movie theater that plays a film profiling the region. From the gift shop I sent home a postcard that was then postmarked to prove I stood at 71° 10’ 22” N—and while that’s still about 1,000 miles from the North Pole, it’s likely to be as close as I’ll ever get.

The small peninsula of Trondeneshalvøya is home to Trondenes Kirke, a white medieval church that’s filled with art and is considered to be a premier cultural heritage site from the late Middle Ages. Next-door is the Tron-

denes Historical Center with exhibits from the Viking Age to present day.

Aboard a ferry crossing the Gullesfjord at mid-morning, we were treated to coffee and trays of Norwegian pastries. The light and fluffy lefse tasted like an elegant, grown-up interpretation of a brown sugar cinnamon Pop-Tart and were addictive. Throughout the journey from Harstad to Sortland, the photogenic view included quaint farms, dramatic mountains, crystal clear lakes and stunning fjords.

Located north of the Arctic Circle at the 67th and 68th parallel, the island group of Lofoten boasts beautiful scenery with steep mountains, colorful fishing villages, calm bays and white sandy beaches. Home primarily to generations of fish industry workers, Lofoten also attracts artists from around the world and their work is showcased at the Henningsvaer Art Gallery.

Trondheim, Norway's third largest city (after Oslo and Bergen), is known as Norway's technological capital and home to many university students. It houses the world's northernmost cathedral, Nidaros, Norway's National Sanctuary built over the grave of sainted King Olav Haraldsson. Constructed entirely of soapstone, the cathedral's Roman and Gothic architecture is unique in Norway.

Built into a steep mountainside, Bergen is reminiscent of San Francisco with streets and walkways climbing sharp inclines. It's also a world heritage city with great restaurants and bars (like Bryggen Tracteursted, Beyer'en Bar & Restaurant and the Femte i ANDRE Bar), extensive retail outlets, impressive museums (including Troidhaugen, honoring composer Edvard Grieg), comfortable accommodations and active entertainment options (such as fjord rafting, glacier walks and more). Colorful architecture alone would make Bergen picturesque, but it also happens to overlook a gorgeous fjord.

Visit Norway and you'll likely fall head-over-heels in love with the country. I did, despite some initial misgivings about the possibility of freezing to death. But Norway isn't as cold as you might think: Thanks to the Gulf Stream, Norwegian coastline waters never freeze over! And its global position offers certain advantages each summer: Longer daylight hours for picture taking.

Photo courtesy of Anders Gjengedal/Innovation Norway





Photo courtesy of Rune Werner Molnes/Innovation Norway

If You Go...

### **Gay Norway**

The sixth country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage (effective January 1, 2009), Norway is among the world's most gay-friendly destinations. For details visit: <http://www.visitnorway.com/us/Articles/Theme/Gay-Lesbian-travel-in-Norway>

### **Getting There**

SAS Scandinavian Airlines offers nonstop flights to Copenhagen from the Dulles Washington DC and JFK New York airports.

### **When To Go**

Hurtigruten sails 365 days a year. North- or south-bound and round-trip itineraries are available. If a partic-



Photo courtesy of Terje Rakke/Nordic Life/Innovation Norway



ular port most interests you, it's possible to plan an itinerary that allows you to disembark and stay on land for a few days and then board another ship sailing through to continue the cruise route.

### **More Information**

Hurtigruten

800-323-7436

[www.hurtigruten.us/Norway.asp](http://www.hurtigruten.us/Norway.asp)

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