

Fjord Cruise: Norway, Finland & the Arctic

PRELIMINARY TRIP INFORMATION

Editor's Note: A full trip information kit, including photos, larger maps and additional details will be available in the next week or so. Thank you for your patience as we compile the final color version for your enjoyment.

Tour: Fjord Cruise & Lapland: Norway, Finland & the Arctic

Dates: May 2020

Main Trip, Category I: **\$6,495** per person

Main Trip, Category O: **\$7,295** per person

Main Trip, Category B: **\$7,895** per person

Airfare from Detroit (DTW): **\$1,400** per person

Travel Protection: **\$899-\$999** per person depending on cabin category

TRIP OVERVIEW:

Set a course for the Arctic Circle as you traverse a pristine land of steep, rugged mountains, narrow ocean inlets, and vivid blue fjords. Following in the wake of the Vikings who settled this northern wilderness, you and your small group of no more than 25 will board an authentic 400- to 1000-passenger Hurtigruten steamer ship. An active part of Norway's maritime heritage, Hurtigruten's fleet regularly sails into local harbors to deliver supplies and travelers to hard-to-reach towns.

Cruise along Norway's coast near the top of the world—crossing the Arctic Circle—and step ashore to discover small, colorful cities and quiet fishing villages. Sail through majestic fjords, carved by glaciers throughout the Ice Age. Then disembark your ship to explore the Lapland region—a subarctic realm of astonishing beauty—where you will hike the North Cape and encounter the enduring culture of the indigenous Sami people.

Space is on a first-come, first-serve basis and is truly limited. To reserve your spot, call Southern Exposure at (269) 962-1255.



TEXT-ONLY ITINERARY:

Oslo Helsinki Collapse All

DAY 1

Depart U.S.

Travel to Scandinavia today as you depart on your flight to Oslo, Norway. Please refer to your individual air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times.

DAY 2

Oslo, Norway

Arrive in Oslo today, where a representative will meet you at the airport and assist you with the transfer to your hotel. Once there, we'll meet for a Welcome Drink with our Trip Leader, then settle in for dinner at a local restaurant.

DAY 3

Oslo

After breakfast this morning, we'll explore Oslo with a local guide. During our tour, we'll stop at the Viking Ship Museum to see some of the best-preserved Viking ships in the world—including the Gokstad, which was built around 890 AD, at the height of the Viking period, and designed for long sea voyages.

After getting our first taste of Scandinavia's strong Viking culture, we'll next visit Vigeland Sculpture Park, the world's largest sculpture park devoted to just one artist—Gustave Vigeland. This unique open-air museum was Vigeland's life-work, filled with over 200 sculptures in bronze, granite, and wrought iron.

After lunch on your own, we'll reconvene for a discovery walk, during which we will discuss the 2011 Norway attacks—including a car bomb explosion that tore through Oslo's Regjeringskvartalet quarter, the center of Norway's executive government.

Dinner is on your own tonight; your Trip Leader can suggest different authentic dining options.

DAY 4

Oslo • Borgund • Flam

Today we'll depart for Flam by motorcoach, making discoveries along the way. We'll stop in the village of Borgund where we will visit the famous Stave Church. Constructed around 1180 in honor of Saint Andrew the apostle, the Stave Church is one of Norway's best-preserved wooden churches from that period. Its multi-tiered, sloping rooftops are crowned with dragons' heads—a distinctive Viking style—and the structure is adorned with intricate carvings inside and out. During our journey, we'll also stop for an included lunch. Our last stop of the day will be Flam, where we will check into our hotel and gather for dinner.

DAY 5

Flam • Norway in a Nutshell tour • Bergen

This morning, we'll embark on an included Norway in a Nutshell tour as we hop aboard the vintage Flam Railway for a spectacular ride across the steep and narrow Flam Valley. You'll admire waterfalls and glacier-carved ravines as you ride, arriving in the town of Myrdal by mid-morning. We'll then board another train bound for Bergen. Upon arrival, we'll take a short driving tour of the town, stopping for lunch at Dr. Wiesener's—a community-run restaurant specializing in traditional Scandinavian fare. Once a local bathhouse, the quirky restaurant is owned and operated exclusively by the town's locals.

After checking into our hotel, we'll set off on a discovery walk of the area, including an optional journey in search of a bird's-eye view of Bergen as we ride the scenic Floibanen funicular to the top of Mount Floyen. Once we reach the top, we will be greeted by spectacular views of the town, as well as the fjords stretching out in the distance. Take some time to stroll the mountaintop park.

Enjoy dinner this evening at our hotel.

Please note: Funicular rides are subject to availability and weather conditions.

DAY 6

Bergen • Whaling & seal hunting discussion

We'll join our Trip Leader this morning on a walk to Bergen's Fisheries Museum. Although one of Bergen's newest exhibitions, the museum is housed in authentic wharf-side warehouses that date back to the founding of the town. Learn about Norway's rich maritime history as we explore interactive exhibits and glimpse into the past of these hardy fishing folk.

Along the way, our Trip Leader will lead a discussion on the controversial topic of whaling and seal hunting during an exclusive Discovery Series event. The harsh conditions of the Arctic once demanded these hunts as a source of sustenance, and over the centuries, both industries became an integral part of Norway's economy as well as culture. As time marched on, however, these practices fell under much scrutiny—so much so that seal hunting culture has all but disappeared with the rare exception of indigenous tribes. And while Norway presently remains one of three countries left on Earth than still hunt whales, a decrease in local demand may put an end to that soon as well.

After lunch at a local restaurant we will have time to make independent discoveries on our last night in Bergen. Dinner will be on your own.

DAY 7

Bergen • Optional Music of the Fjords tour • Embark ship

Enjoy this morning at leisure. Or, join your Trip Leader on an optional visit to a local fish market. This colorful open-air market is open year-round and is a bustling meeting place for fishermen, merchants, and of course, local customers.

The rest of the day is yours to experience more of Bergen at leisure. You could explore the 13th-century Bergen Cathedral, the charming Old Town, and the Aquarium, known for its rare penguins.

Or, join us for an optional tour to discover the Music of the Fjords. We'll begin our exploration of Norway's musical legacy at the home of Edvard Grieg, one of the most important composers of the Romantic era of the 19th century. Grieg's works helped to launch Norway into prominence on the international scene, and to define the Romantic genre as a whole. Learn more about his legacy during a tour of his home (now a museum) and then be treated to a piano concert performed by a professional pianist. Our introduction to Norwegian music continues at our next stop, where we'll enjoy a demonstration of traditional Norwegian folk music during lunch.

This evening, we'll board a Hurtigruten Coastal Voyage ship. As an active part of Norway's maritime heritage, the ships in Hurtigruten's Discovery-class fleet can carry 400-1000 Norwegian and foreign travelers, and your Nautical-class ship can carry around 550 travelers. Shortly after we embark, our chartered ship will set sail north and begin one of the world's most scenic coastal cruises—with the islands and mountains of Norway as your constant companions. The ship calls at many ports, and at some of them we'll have time to go ashore. However, this is a working vessel that also delivers cargo on a strict schedule, and some port calls may not allow us any time on shore.

Dinner tonight is onboard the ship.

Music of the Fjords - \$165/person

Delve into the musical history of Norway on this half-day optional tour. Begin at the former home of Edvard Grieg, a legendary Norwegian composer of the Romantic era. Grieg's works helped to put Norway on the musical map, and to define this era of classical music. Tour his home (which is now a museum) and then attend a concert performance by an expertly-trained pianist.

Then, during lunch (included in the cost of this optional tour), learn about the Hardanger fiddle—a uniquely Norwegian string instrument with an important place in Norwegian folk and classical music—during a discussion and demonstration with a fiddle player.

DAY 8

Alesund • Coastal cruising • Molde

Wake up this morning to Norway's mountainous coastline gliding past. After breakfast and a Port Talk with our Trip Leader, we'll arrive at our first stop—the town of Alesund—which is comprised of several islands stretching out into the sparkling Atlantic Ocean. After a devastating fire in 1904, the town was completely rebuilt, resulting in the elegant Art Nouveau architecture we'll see today.

Next we'll embark on a coastal cruise, but where we sail will depend on seasonality. Due to weather and ice conditions, different courses must be charted—which is precisely what makes this trip such a unique experience.

If your adventure departs between April 1st-June 1st: Enjoy a scenic cruise along Alesund's wild, emerald coast—the majestic peaks of Fjellstue Mountain rising above the pastoral landscape.

If your adventure departs between June 1st-September 1st: Discover the jewel of Norway's fjords—the Geirangerfjorden. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the Geirangerfjorden is an astonishingly beautiful work of nature, carved by glaciers throughout the Ice Age and known as the world's most picturesque fjord, complete with thundering waterfalls and dancing rainbows.

If your adventure departs between September 2nd-October 31st: We'll sail through the Hjørundfjord—one of the longest fjords in Norway. Slicing through the Sunnmore Alps, the Hjørundfjord is something of a secret, very rarely visited by tourists. We'll get spectacular views of its sheer rock walls, lush meadows, and far-flung mountain farms well off the beaten path.

Upon our return to Alesund, there may be time for an elective discovery walk on Fjellstue Mountain, which will grant us views of the city far below. Please note that this walk includes uneven ground and several sets of stairs (418 stairs total).

The last port today is Molde, Norway's "City of Roses," scenically situated near the mouth of the Romsdalsfjord. Rebuilt in the aftermath of World War II, Molde today is well known among jazz aficionados for the international music festival it hosts each year in mid-July.

Lunch and dinner will be served aboard the ship today.

DAY 9

Trondheim • Rorvik

Today, our first port will be the city of Trondheim. Founded in AD 997, this was once the capital of Norway, as well as an important pilgrimage site for followers of St. Olav, a Norwegian king and Catholic martyr. The city's old veitenes (narrow alleys) wind among its markets, Archbishop's Palace, Old Town Bridge, and historic 17th-century warehouses. We'll tour the city and visit its cathedral before returning to the ship.

As we sail to our next destination, our Trip Leader will lead a Port Talk. This evening we'll arrive in Rorvik, a port town in the Vikna archipelago made up of approximately 6,000 islands. Soak up the charming atmosphere of this colorful fishing town during a short evening walk with our Trip Leader.

Lunch and dinner will be served onboard today.

DAY 10

Coastal cruising • Bodo • Svolvær

Today our Hurtigruten ship sails even further north—this afternoon, you'll cross the Arctic Circle.

After lunch, we'll dock in Bodo, the capital of Nordland County situated just north of the Arctic Circle. Known as the gateway to Norway's true north, Bodo—a bustling urban city—is also home to awe-inspiring natural phenomena, such as maelstrom Saltstraumen, the world's strongest whirlpool. We'll take a discovery walk of Bodo with our Trip Leader before heading back to the ship.

As we sail, we'll listen to a Port Talk on our next destination—Svolvær, the capital of Lofoten. Framed by towering mountains, this colorful port town supports a thriving cod fishing industry; its shores are dotted with traditional fish-drying racks.

Lunch and dinner will be served onboard today.

DAY 11

Coastal cruising • Tromsø

As we continue our northern voyage this morning, gather with your Trip Leader to discuss your discoveries so far, and learn about what is to come.

This afternoon, the ship calls at Tromsø, a city of more than 50,000 that sprawls across three fjord-indented islands. This is the largest city in northern Norway, and it has been the starting point for expeditions by famous Arctic explorers, including Norway's own Roald Amundsen, who in the 1900s became the first person to reach both the North and South poles. Tromsø is also home to the northernmost university in Europe. The city comes alive during the long hours of summer daylight as the locals (including 13,000 university students) enjoy the Arctic's brightest season.

While ashore, we'll also visit The Polar Museum. Here we'll learn of Tromsø's importance in the risky profession of Arctic hunting and trapping, as well as how it earned the title "Gateway to the Arctic" from being the base of many famous polar expeditions.

We'll return to the ship in time for dinner this evening.

DAY 12

The North Cape

Today, we will strike out in pursuit of not just the northernmost point of Norway, but of all Europe: the North Cape. Far above the Arctic Circle, where the freezing waters of the Atlantic and Arctic oceans meet, the Cape rises a sheer 1,000 feet above sea level. Between May and July the sun never sets here, making it a popular place to view the "midnight sun." Dominating the landscape, the massive Cape is also home to the bird cliff of Gjesværstappan, which can boast hundreds of thousands of puffins, gannets, and cormorants as residents.

Tonight, we will enjoy our last dinner together onboard our Hurtigruten ship.

DAY 13

Disembark ship • Kirkenes • World War II cave shelter visit • Ivalo, Finland

This morning, we bid our Hurtigruten coastal vessel farewell as we disembark in Kirkenes, a Norwegian port near the Russian border. Strategically significant for its iron ore resources and its location near the Russian port of Murmansk, Kirkenes was occupied by 100,000 Nazi troops during World War II. During the occupation, the Germans created shelters from old iron caves to protect its troops from attacks and raids by the Soviet Union—which were frequent given Kirkenes's close proximity to the border. We'll visit these caves today and view these complex tunnels first hand during an exclusive Discovery Series event.

Then, we'll ride south towards Lapland, stopping for lunch on the Norwegian/Finnish border.

Today's journey ends in Ivalo, Finland. We check into our hotel and reconvene for dinner at a local restaurant.

DAY 14

Ivalo • Sami family visit • Home-Hosted Dinner

Awaken to our first full day in Ivalo—the gateway to Lapland and home of the Sami, the indigenous people who have lived in northern Scandinavia since prehistoric times. Lapland, also called Samiland, spans northern parts of Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Although the Sami are a minority of today's population in northern Finland, their cultural traditions endure. After breakfast, we'll begin our discoveries of Sami and northern Lapland culture at the Siida Museum.

Then, we'll visit with a Sami family for an exclusive Discovery Series event, where you'll learn about the importance of reindeer and their role in the life of the Sami.

After some free time in Ivalo, we'll get a taste of Finnish culture and cuisine during a Home-Hosted Dinner with a local family. Join our hosts for lively conversation over a meal of freshly-prepared, home-cooked dishes for an up-close and personal encounter with everyday Finnish life.

DAY 15

Ivalo • Helsinki

After breakfast this morning, we'll check out of our hotel. Depending on the day, we may have an early afternoon or a early evening flight to Helsinki. Our Trip Leader will provide activities that accommodate each schedule.

Upon arrival in Helsinki, we'll transfer to our hotel. Then we'll enjoy a guided orientation walk with our Trip Leader to give us the lay of the land in our Helsinki neighborhood. Helsinki's historic center dates from the early 19th century, when Russia ruled Finland and designated this city as the country's new capital. As a result, the city has both a Russian look and a more modern layout than other European capitals. Graced with many buildings by noted Finnish architects such as Alvar Aalto, Helsinki today is a masterpiece of urban design.

Dinner will be on your own tonight.

DAY 16 Helsinki

After breakfast, we'll set off on an included Helsinki city tour.

Among the highlights is Senate Square, where we'll discover many ornate Empire Neo-classical buildings, including the 19th-century Lutheran Cathedral, whose central tower dominates the city. Like Times Square in New York City, this is the place where residents gather to celebrate special occasions, such as New Year's Eve and Independence Day (December 6th). Admire the onion domes of Uspenski Cathedral, the most important Russian Orthodox church in Finland. As we wind our way through the city, we'll notice how the sea is an integral part of Helsinki—the city spreads out onto islands, peninsulas, and along coves among which boats of all types navigate.

After an independent lunch, we'll reconvene to explore Helsinki further with our Trip Leader. One option might be a visit to Suomenlinna, a fortress built on a cluster of islands off the coast of Helsinki during the 1700s. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the fortress is still inhabited today by modern-day Finns.

Tonight we'll gather at a local restaurant for a Farewell Dinner, as we reminisce about our Scandinavian discoveries.

DAY 17 Helsinki • Return to U.S.