

The Best of Fjord Norway

12-18 days / 1619 km / 7 ferries

What are the ten most exciting travel destinations in Fjord Norway? The Norwegian people have voted for their favourites – and we have composed a tour of the top ten attractions they would like to share with the world. Welcome to an unforgettable scenic travel adventure!

On this comprehensive tour you will experience: Stavanger – Lysefjord – the Pulpit Rock (Preikestolen) – Sauda – Røldal – Tyssedal – Eidfjord – Ulvik – Hardangerfjord – Bergen – Nærøyfjord – Aurlandsfjellet – Lærdal – Sogndal – Stryn – Geiranger – Geirangerfjord – Stranda – Ålesund – Molde – Kristiansund – Trondheim



Stavanger – The Lysefjord

To the top of Pulpit Rock!

An even more dramatic way to experience Pulpit Rock is to take the four-hour return hike to the plateau on top. The trail starts at Preikestolen Mountain Lodge. For your convenience, buses to the lodge correspond with the ferry from Stavanger to Tau. Welcome to a great adventure and stunning view!

Stavanger – Tau – Sauda – Røldal – Tyssedal, 232 km, 5,5 hours, 3 ferries

The first ferry from Stavanger to Tau takes an hour. From there, your journey along the National Tourist Route Ryfylke lets you experience the region's varied natural magnificence. Ryfylke has a verdant countryside and well-kept farms, fjords dotted with a myriad of islands, waterfalls, rolling heathlands, mountains – and of course, Pulpit Rock.

After you pass Bjørheimsvatnet lake, consider a stop at Glasskjellaren in Bjørheimsbygd, where beautiful glass objects are made by hand. A bit further along is the distinctive wooden Årdal Old Church, built in 1620. When you reach Hjelmeland, take the ferry to Nesvik, then drive to the village of Sand, stopping at its fascinating salmon studio. After the crossing to Ropeid, you drive up the western shore of the Saudafjord. An unusual attraction is the museum, old industrial buildings and abandoned zinc mines at Allmannajuvet gorge. Another stop not to be missed is Svandalsfossen; several hundred steps have been constructed to lead you safely to the viewing platform at the top of the falls, as well as down to the fjord.

More info about Ryfylke on www.ryfylke.com.

Hydropower and a weeping crucifix

From Sauda, the [National Tourist Route Ryfylke](#) continues through mountain scenery to Røldal, with great viewpoints along the way. The stave church in Røldal merits a visit; for centuries it was a place of pilgrimage, thanks to a weeping crucifix said to have healing powers.

On the next leg of your journey, take highway E134/Fv13 towards Odda and the Hardangerfjord. After half an hour you pass the impressive Låtefoss falls, which is where the National Tourist Route Hardanger starts. The town of Odda has a proud industrial history and is situated at the head of the Sørfjord, the southernmost arm of the Hardangerfjord. Then drive 6 km up the eastern shore of the fjord to Tyssedal. Start with a visit to the Norwegian Museum of Hydropower and Industry, before exploring the old hydropower facilities up the valley. Perhaps you're tempted to a 400-metre climb to the dam watcher's hut on Mount Lilletopp? From the heights, you can see Tyssedal through the eyes of the daring navvies who built the pioneering facilities here a century ago.

More info about Hardanger on www.hardangerfjord.com.

The Troll's Tongue

One of Norway's most stunning viewpoints is perched in the mountains of Hardanger. A 20-km mountain walk and 800-metre ascent will take you there – you need a full day for this. Do be careful if you walk out onto Trolltunga (the troll tongue) itself; it's a long drop into oblivion. The guided all-day excursion starts in Skjeggedal, passes old Ringedal Dam and giant's cauldrons along the river before ascending the "Ladder to the Heavens" up the mountains. For details on the adventures offered, visit www.opplevodka.com.

Tyssedal – Eidfjord – Ulvik – Bergen, 245 km, 4 hours

In Eidfjord, an hour's drive farther along the fjord, Hardangervidda Nature Centre offers three floors of exhibitions, and a surround-movie on the region's magnificent landscape. The eastbound National Tourist Route Hardangervidda starts in Eidfjord, and we will follow it for a short while. Perhaps no music more powerfully conjures the splendour of the Norwegian landscape than Edvard Grieg's. The sight of Vøringsfossen falls, the most stunning in all of Norway, has enchanted countless tourists. In fact the view from Fossli Hotel inspired Grieg to compose Norwegian Folk Songs, Opus 66, during his summer stay here in 1896.

Simadalen Hydropower Station, one of the largest in Europe, might well make you feel like you're visiting Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King" – it's tucked 700 metres inside the mountain. Also worth a visit is Kjeåsen, a farm perched like an eagle's nest on a mountain ledge six hundred metres above the Simadalsfjord.

More adventures await the daring: white-water river rafting, kayaking on the fjord, glacier walks and ice-climbing, and in the winter snow-kiting on the Hardangervidda mountain plateau.

Cider, poetry and Viking boatbuilding

From Eidfjord retrace your route, then drive across the Hardangerfjord Bridge and take a detour to the idyllic fjordside village of Ulvik. We heartily recommend sampling some genuine Hardanger cider at one of the nearby apple farms, and visiting the Olav H. Hauge Centre in Ulvik, which celebrates one of Norway's most cherished modern poets.

Continue westward along the Hardangerfjord on the National Tourist Route Hardanger, Fv7, to Øystese and Norheimsund. Along the fjord there are many fruit farms, farm shops and restaurants, such as Steinstø Fruit Farm and Gamlastovo, where you can try some local specialities from Hardanger. Should you wish to extend your stay in scenic Hardanger, the area has a range of accommodation choices, including Hardangerfjord Hotel in Øystese and Thon Hotel Sandven in Norheimsund.

The city of Bergen is only an hour and half's drive away – but there is no reason to hurry. In Norheimsund you can enjoy a fascinating visit to the Hardanger Vessel Preservation Centre. Its skilled craftsmen practice boatbuilding techniques handed down from the Vikings! And just outside Norheimsund is Steinsdalsfossen, where the trail leads you behind the falls!

Bergen

Whereas Rome is the city of seven hills, Bergen is known as “The City of The Seven Mountains”. You will be hard pressed to find any other city this size with a greater number of attractions. Take a stroll through the heart of town, wander its cobblestone streets and narrow alleys, and explore charming neighbourhoods of old wooden houses in Sandviken or Nordnes. The pride of Bergen is Bryggen – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – that seems to draw you into its wooden walkways and its mediaeval past, when Hanseatic merchants controlled the wharf and much of Norway's trade.

Bergen – Nærøyfjorden – Lærdal – Sogndal, 282 km, 5 hours

The road from Bergen winds its way northeast along the fjord, before gradually climbing toward Voss, an inland town steeped in cultural traditions. A visit to Voss Folk Museum Mølstertunet or a Hardanger fiddle concert is sure to be rewarding.

You will also find excellent opportunities for adventure, ranging from rafting and kayaking to rock-climbing and paragliding. At the end of June each year, there's even a popular international [Extreme Sport Festival](#) at Voss. More info about Voss on www.visitvoss.com.

Railway drama and the narrowest fjord

Highway E16 takes you past Tvindefossen falls. Just ahead of Stalheim, make sure you turn onto the old road, so you can stop and enjoy the stunning view from Stalheim Hotel, before slowly driving the 13 hairpin bends of Stalheimskleiva down into the tranquil river valley below. (A wrong turn speeds you into the valley via a tunnel, missing the sights.)

From the village of Gudvangen you should treat yourself to sightseeing on the Nærøyfjord, the narrowest fjord in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage attraction. The boat trip to Flåm takes a couple of hours. There is also a road tunnel to Flåm. More info about fjord cruises: www.thefjords.no and www.fjord2.com.

This fjordside village is the end stop of the world-famous Flåmsbana, one of Europe's most dramatic railway adventures. The nearby mountains and valleys offer many rewarding hikes. For relaxation, head for Ægir, an excellent brewery pub housed in a building inspired by the mediaeval stave churches.

More info about Flåm on www.visitflam.com.

The road across the mountain plateau

From Flåm your journey continues along the fjord to Aurland. Those who are in a hurry may drive the world's longest car tunnel (24.5 km) to Lærdal. The scenic alternative is the National Tourist Route Aurlandsfjellet (closed in the winter), which climbs up onto the mountain plateau that forms the “roof” of this tunnel. Here the stark landscape of rock and snow has its own beauty. Do stop at the truly impressive Stegastein viewpoint, which juts out 30 metres to look back down to the tranquil fjord, 600 m below. Up on the mountain plateau, stop at Vedahaugane viewpoint, and explore an art installation designed as a bear den.

After descending on the other side, a short drive leads to Lærdalsøyri, a wonderfully preserved old village that merits exploration on foot. One of the best-known salmon rivers runs right through the village and the Norwegian Wild Salmon Centre is situated right on the banks of the river.

From Lærdal drive Rv5 through the tunnel, then take the Fodnes–Mannheller ferry. A stop at Sogn Folk Museum in Kaupanger is a must, as is a visit to Kaupanger stave church. More info about Sognefjord on www.sognefjord.no.

Detour to Urnes stave church

You also have a chance to visit Urnes, the oldest stave church in the world. It's well worth the round-trip ferry ride from Solvorn. The church stands on a small headland with a beautiful view of the Lustrafjord. Urnes was built around 1150; today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Particularly striking are the dragon-style carvings of intertwined animal figures on the portals facing north and west. It is estimated that during a 200-year period, two thousand stave churches were erected in Norway, by specialized builders who handled their materials with the same care that Viking boat builders did.

[More info about Urnes stave church.](#)

Sogndal – Stryn – Geiranger – Stranda, 300 km, 6 hours, 1 ferry

Sogndal is a premier fruit-growing region, as well as a meeting place of fjord, mountains and glaciers. Our route follows Fv5 along the Sogndalselvi river and Dalavatnet lake. After a series of tunnels you reach the Fjærlandsfjord. A visit to the Norwegian Glacier Museum in Fjærland will give you many insights into the life of glaciers, including how they carved out the fjords of Western Norway during a succession of ice ages. Another 10 km along your route is the turnoff to Bøyabreen, one of 28 arms of Jostedalbreen, the largest glacier on the European continent.

Then continue on Fv5, and along the northern shore of Jølstravatnet lake, before cutting north at Skei toward Byrkjelo. You will discover fine photo opportunities as you cross the mountains down to the idyllic fjordside village of Utvik. The road now hugs the fjord, passing through the villages of Olden, Loen and Stryn – all surrounded by dramatic scenery that beckons you to explore.

More info about Stryn & Nordfjord on www.nordfjord.no.

Outdoor adventures

How about a walk on the glacier with an experienced guide, a rafting adventure, or a hike up [Mount Skåla](#) (1848 m)? Why not take the challenge and hike the via ferrata in Loen, up to the summit of Mount Hoven (1010 m)? Both peaks reward you with great fjord panoramas. Or perhaps you prefer a bicycle trip at your own chosen tempo? For instance from Olden, you can head 20 km up the valley to the Briksdalsbreen glacier arm.

From Stryn, follow Fv15 eastward up the river valley and along the lake, through the charming village of Hjelle, and then to Ospeli Bridge. There you turn onto the scenic [Old Strynefjell Road](#), which first opened in 1884.

Impressive scenic roads

Although a mere 27 km long, this National Tourist Route captures the tension of different landscapes – the rounded mountains of the east, and rough-hewn and the more alpine mountains of the west. The scenery is especially colourful in the autumn. Near Videseter there are unforgettable viewpoints at Videfossen and Øvstefossen waterfalls. One hundred and thirty years ago, hard-working navvies built the beautiful arched Old Jøl Bridge, cut the carefully-fitted stones of the road's many retaining walls, and placed the long rows of guard stones. This old gravel road, which is open from June until the winter snowfall, rejoins Fv15 at Grotli.

From Grotli take Fv63, passing numerous mountain lakes on your way to Geiranger. National Tourist Route Geiranger Trollstigen starts at the far end of Langvatnet lake. (Parts of this route are closed in the winter.) Soon the road hugs the southern face of Dalsnibba (1476 m). When it's open, you can drive a private toll road that climbs up to the summit and one of Norway's most

magnificent panoramas!

More info about National Tourist Routes on www.nasjonal turistveg.no.

A UNESCO World Heritage fjord

The descent to the village at the head of the Geirangerfjord is quite an experience. A unique photo opportunity can be enjoyed at Flydalsjuvet, a rock outcrop above this fjordside village.

More info about the Geirangerfjord on www.visitalesund-geiranger.com.

Now we suggest a cruise on the fjord, albeit without the expenses usually associated with such an indulgence. Take the ferry from Geiranger to Hellesylt. You will have an hour to enjoy the tall mountains, perhaps still topped with snow. Here are majestic waterfalls such as De Syv Søstre, Brudesløret and Friaren (the seven sisters, the bridal veil, and the suitor). And here are farms perched on mountain ledges, and lush forests that seem to defy gravity on the steep mountain faces – all mirrored in the tranquil blue-green fjord. It's easy to understand why travellers come from all over the world to experience the Geirangerfjord, a UNESCO World Heritage attraction.

More info about the fjord cruise on www.fjord1.no.

View from the summit

On arrival in Hellesylt head towards Stranda, just 30 km away – but don't be in a rush. There is an incredible panorama to be enjoyed from the top of Roaldshornet, 1230 m, and a cable car takes you almost to the top. You might see paragliders riding the updrafts. At the upper station there is a café with a stunning view on the menu, and if you want more the summit is just a ten-minute walk away. We fully understand if you choose to linger in the mountains of Strandafjellet, because there is great hiking to be had – for instance to the top of Mount Slogen (1564 m), with an overnight stay at Patchell Cabin.

In the winter, the local mountains offer perhaps the best powder snow and freestyle conditions in Scandinavia. Strandafjellet Ski Resort has seven lifts and 17 pistes, as well as many prepared tracks for cross-country enthusiasts.

Mer info om Strandafjellet finner du på www.strandafjellet.no.

Stranda – Trollstigen – Åndalsnes – Ålesund, 196 km, 3.5 hours, 1 ferry

A ferry from Stranda takes you across the Norddalsfjord. From Liabygda on the other side you drive eastward via Linge to Valldal, a place renowned for its tasty strawberries. You are now back on the National Tourist Route Geiranger-Trollstigen.

The giant's cauldrons and the Troll Ladder

After heading up the river valley, there is popular viewpoint above Gudbrandsjuvet, a high and narrow gorge through which the raging Valldøla river flows. The river has carved deep giant's cauldrons and intricate rock formations.

Continue on up into the mountains – you're soon in for a breathtaking adventure. Norwegians consider [Trollstigen Road](#) (the Troll Ladder) a national treasure – your descent down the 11 hairpin bends can best be described as "mountaineering by car". (Please check your brakes before the descent!) If you take less than an hour, you didn't stop long enough to enjoy the amazing views. A stone bridge takes you across the 320-metre-high Stigfossen falls, and the valley leads you safely down to Åndalsnes on the fjord. This town is a great base for wilderness adventures.

The route westward is highway E136 along the shore of the Romsdalsfjord, before E39 cuts across a peninsula to Sjøholt, finally reaching Ålesund.

More info about Åndalsnes on www.visitandalsnes.com.

Ålesund – the Art Nouveau town

This town's unique location on the edge of the ocean, surrounded by fjords and mountains, creates an almost unbeatable combination of culture and nature! Ironically, it is thanks to the great

fire of 1904 that Ålesund has one of the world's finest concentrations of Art Nouveau architecture. During one winter night, 800 buildings were reduced to ashes and ten thousand people were left homeless – incredibly enough there was only a single casualty.

Architects and craftsmen from all over Norway contributed to the huge rebuilding project. The result is a greater and more harmonious concentration of Art Nouveau architecture than is found anywhere else in Europe.

A visit to the [Art Nouveau Centre](#) and its “Time Machine” will give you insight into the amazing story. Lift your eyes as you stroll through Ålesund, and you will discover elegant facades and imaginative ornamentation, much of it inspired by our Viking roots. A walk up the 418 steps to the top of Mount Aksla is rewarded by an unforgettable panorama!

More info about Ålesund on www.visitaalesund-geiranger.com.

Ålesund – Molde – Kristiansund, 167 km, 3h15min, 1 ferry

Getting to your next destination is simple. Drive the E39 to Vestnes, and take the ferry across to Molde. That's one hour driving, and one hour's relaxation as you cross the fjord.

Molde, jazz and roses

Molde is the town of jazz and roses, as well as fjords and mountains. During the 19th century, more parks and rose gardens were established here than perhaps anywhere else in Norway. The Molde International Jazz Festival is legendary – you could write a credible history of modern jazz based just on the great musicians who have played Molde since the first festival in 1961.

The “Molde panorama” is almost equally renowned, counting 222 peaks. Lest you think the locals are exaggerating, a brochure lists them by name.

More info about Molde on www.visitmolde.com.

Molde – Bud – Kristiansund, 104 km

The coastal road between Molde and Kristiansund is proof that the joy lies in the journey. Three-quarters of an hour drive from Molde lies the idyllic fishing village of Bud. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Bud was the largest trading post between Bergen and Trondheim – today it is known for its seafood restaurants and cultural history.

The Atlantic Road

Bud is also the start of the [National Tourist Route Atlanterhavsvegen](#), or more simply: the Atlantic Road. The real fun starts once you reach Vevang. At moments you may feel you're skipping over the surface of the sea like a skimmed stone, as the Atlantic Road leaps from island to island, and from islet to skerry, across elegant bridges and causeways.

Road workers endured twelve hurricanes to build it. If the winds are strong, make sure your windows are up, unless you want a shower! Many people take a trip out here when the autumn storms start to rage – it is quite a sight when the big waves break beside (and sometimes across) the road.

Do take time to stop at one of the many lay-bys to enjoy the view, or walk a few metres along the smooth coastal rocks and cast your fishing line. A stone's throw or two to the west the shipping lane crosses the notorious waters of Hustadvika bay, which conceals innumerable wrecks.

Cosmopolitan Kristiansund

The town of Kristiansund, built on three islands, is renowned for its first-rate klipfish. For centuries, fresh cod was salted and dried on the local cliffs (hence the name), and exported to Mediterranean countries and beyond, where it is rightly considered a delicacy. In return, Kristiansund received spices and cultural impulses – and many good recipes for bacalao, which can be enjoyed in local

restaurants. Today the cod is dried indoors, but we guarantee that the klipfish and bacalao is at least as good.

Kristiansund prides itself on having built an opera house long before the Norwegian capital got around to it. Needless to say, the town's annual opera festival is very well attended.

More info about Kristiansund on www.visitkristiansund.com.

Kristiansund – Trondheim, 197 km, 3h20min, 1 ferry

The quickest route from Kristiansund to Trondheim is highway E39, which goes via Orkdal and Valsøyfjord with a ferry crossing from Kanestraum to Halså.

However, if you're not in a great hurry, we recommend a longer but far more scenic route through a truly magnificent part of FjordNorway! The hour extra is well worth it. Head east on Fv680 and take the Seivik–Tømmervåg ferry. Continue the windy coastal route past Kyrksæterøra to Vinjeøra, then drive highway E39 the final stretch to Trondheim.

Trondheim

Granted, Trondheim is well outside FjordNorway, but nonetheless deserves mention. The central attraction is the impressive, built in 1140, which was long a pilgrim destination. If you're interested in music and musical instruments (and surely that means all of us), then pay a visit to Ringve Music Museum. The collection counts 2000 instruments gathered from throughout the world.

More info about Trondheim on www.trondelag.com.