

SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND

Practical Travel Information - Summer

THIS DOCUMENT

Our pre-departure information document has been created to help you prepare for your trip and contains general advice only.

As with any travel, it is essential that you consult your doctor for health advice relating to your specific circumstances. Travel insurance is compulsory for all trips and visas are your responsibility.



VISAS & ENTERING/DEPARTING

Entering & Departing the Nordic Region

Citizens from Australia, New Zealand, America, Japan and Canada can travel in **Scandinavia (Norway, Denmark and Sweden) and Finland** without a visa for up to three months within any six-month period, with the time limit beginning on the first entry to any Schengen Agreement nation.

Make sure you get a stamp in your passport as you enter the first Schengen country, as that is then valid for entering any other Schengen country.

GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

CLIMATE

The Gulf Stream plays an influential part in the weather patterns in the North. Areas on the Norwegian coast, as with other areas of Northern Europe experience the powerful warmer air moving into these areas, keeping it warmer than it should be. That said, you will be far north, and you may still encounter cool days, so it is important to be well prepared for the weather conditions you might encounter. The following Norwegian saying is a good mantra; “there is no such thing as bad weather, there is only bad clothing”.

Spring in the region is awash with wildflowers and blossoms. The summers are generally warm and mild with temperatures ranging from 15-19°C to 23-28°C depending on how far north you are. Autumn brings spectacular displays of colours and fresher weather. In Helsinki, Copenhagen & Stockholm at midsummer, the sun is still shining at 10 pm. And in Lapland, in Utsjoki or Kirkenes, for example, a single summer day lasts for over two months. Even in the south, it's never really night, just a period of twilight for a few hours.

LANGUAGE

Children in Scandinavia & Finland are taught English from about 9 years of age, and a third language from about 13 years of age, so you will find that most people speak above average English and often German or French as well.

Whilst not everyone will be able to discuss the latest advancements in astrophysics with you, asking for directions, catching taxis, talking to staff in shops, restaurants and bars is extremely easy and people are in general more than happy to practice their English with you.

TIME ZONE

Scandinavia is in the Central European Time Zone. Central European Standard Time (CET) is 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT+1). Finland and Estonia is 2 hours ahead of GMT. Like most countries in Europe, daylight saving is observed in Scandinavia, Finland & Estonia where the time is shifted forward by 1 hour.

24-hour clock is widely used throughout the region, AM/PM is not. We highly recommend brushing up on your 24-hour clock skills before heading off, but of course there is always the simple trick of subtracting 12 from any numbers exceeding 12 on the 24-hour clock. So, for instance 17:00 on the 24-hour clock minus 12 equals 5pm and so on.

DRIVING IN SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND

You will drive on the right side of the road throughout the region. Cars are well maintained (by law), manual gearboxes is the norm, and the pace is generally civilised and respectful. Driving in snow for a large portion of the year teaches drivers patience.

CURRENCY

The monetary unit in Sweden is (SEK), Denmark (DKK), and Norway (NOK) is the Krone/Krona, although each of these holds a different value. They are all different currencies, and surplus Krone/Krona of each currency can be frequently used in border towns as you pass through - Not always at the most favourable exchange rate though.

Finland use the Euro.

A good website to check exchange rates before you travel is www.xe.com. Perhaps writing a small summary of the different exchange rates will help when you arrive. It is also an idea to download one of the various apps for smartphones/tablets before you travel.

A combination of cash, an ATM card and a credit card as a backup is good.

Remember to check with your bank about using your cards overseas and find out what new international banking cards they have available.

INTERNET & MOBILE PHONES

Scandinavia & Finland has a very good telecommunications infrastructure, ground breaking in some areas, and unless you are in very remote locations, Internet access is no problem, and usually free in hotels.

If you are dialling, or need to be contacted by phone, the country codes are; Norway (47), Denmark (45), Sweden (46), Finland (358)

Mobile coverage is generally very good. Pre-paid GSM phone cards can be purchased at petrol stations throughout the countries. If you're dialling ahead to hotels etc in another province, remember to also dial the area code for the province.

ELECTRICITY

The electric current across Scandinavia is 220V AC. Thick round ended two-pronged continental points are used. Most hotels have a limited supply of adaptors so we would recommend you take your own adaptor with you.

Many gadget chargers these days come with the standard 'figure 8' connection to which a power cable is attached. You can buy the 'figure 8' power cables in local shops if your charger breaks or if you need more options. These will also fit the ipad/iphone chargers (just remove the 'duckhead')

SAFETY

As with any destinations, take good care of your personal belongings. Don't carry too much cash and remember that expensive watches, jewellery and cameras may be tempting targets for thieves. Scandinavia & Finland have traditionally had low levels of petty crime so basic awareness is all you need.

TIPPING

Generally, tipping is not mandatory in Scandinavia. There are some exceptions such as the driver on our mini-coach tours and some of the voyages.

Our small group tour escorts: You may also consider tipping your tour escort for outstanding service throughout your trip. The amount is entirely a personal preference, however as a guideline EUR5 per person, per day can be used. Of course you are free to tip more or less as you see fit, depending on your perception of service quality and the length of your trip. Remember, a tip is not compulsory and should only be given when you receive excellent service.

Often in restaurants and cafes, if you are paying by card, you will be asked to manually add

the amount which might make you feel pressured to add a tip. Don't feel like this is an obligation - locals sometimes do add a tip (5% - 10%) if the service was exceptional.

LAUNDRY

Most hotels will offer a dry cleaning and/or laundry service. You might like to hand wash personal items when staying at hotels for several days if you wish to minimize costs. It is also a good idea to bring some 'travel wash', and a travel clothesline.

SHOPPING

In general, shops are open from 9-18, with short hours on Saturdays and closed on Sundays. Corner shops are open later and major cities do have some Sunday trade.

In Scandinavia & Finland, major shops (as well as restaurants & bars) will accept credit cards. It is the norm to have to show ID when you use a credit card so be prepared to show a passport or a driver's licence. Markets & corner shops prefer cash.

ALCOHOL

Beer & Wine are your best value options in restaurants/bars. Liquor tends to be quite expensive when purchased in bars/ restaurants. Light beer is for sale in most food stores.

Sweden, Norway & Finland has a government run monopoly for the purchase of alcohol with normal trade hours of 9-18. Look out for 'Systembolaget' in Sweden, 'Vinmonopolet' in Norway and (to an English speaker) the amusingly named 'Alko' in Finland. In Denmark, alcohol is available in most food shops.

MEDICAL CARE

Scandinavia & Finland has a reliable and high quality health system, although rural cities might be less dependable. Australia has a reciprocal agreement with Norway, Sweden & Finland for basic care, but travel health insurance is essential. No vaccines are required for travel in Scandinavia.

HEALTH

Scandinavia & Finland have high living standards. Tap water is safe to drink, laws and regulations ensure that restaurants and cafes serve fresh and well prepared food.

PHARMACIES

Many pharmacies in the larger cities are open until early evening; some supermarkets will have a small pharmacy section as well.

The word for pharmacy in Swedish, Norwegian & Danish is Apotek. Finnish is Apteekki.

EMERGENCY NUMBER

The emergency number for Scandinavia & Finland is 112.

PUBLIC TOILETS

Scandinavian public conveniences are generally not free - we suggest carrying a small amount of change at all times.

SCANDINAVIAN HOTELS

- Hotel rooms in the Nordic Region are normally furnished with twin beds, which can be moved together to form a double bed or placed separately. Please note that single rooms are generally smaller than doubles, and are often equipped with a shower instead of a bath. Purpose-built triple or family rooms are likewise unusual in Scandinavian hotels. Whilst it is possible for 3 persons to share a room, this will normally be a double room with an extra bed, with correspondingly less space to move about in.
- It is also unusual to have a porter at hotels to carry your luggage.
- There is free wi-fi in many hotels in Scandinavia and Iceland. In the larger cities, this should be reliable and fast so don't hesitate to ask the reception if there is a problem.
- Unexpectedly, all forms of Scandinavian accommodation rarely provide tea and coffee facilities in their rooms. If you are lucky, a kettle will be supplied but nothing else. Please ask at reception for some provisions when you arrive or just carry a small selection from home.
- On the same note, often you will not find amenities such as soap, shampoo and conditioner in cabins or if they are there, they will be in containers stuck to the wall. Even hair dryers sometimes aren't there! Just ask at reception and they will happily provide you what you need.
- During summer, the daylight hours stretch well into the evening and hotels often do not have black out curtains. Bring an eye mask with you if you are a light sleeper.
- Please also note that in Scandinavia - in particular, during winter - the included lunch will often be a hearty warm soup with bread.
- More remote hotels in Lapland will offer dinner at an additional cost. In some spots, there will be limited choices else where. Generally, you get a very nice home-cooked Scandinavian dinner. However, you may sometimes find only one or two choices only for your main course.
- In Scandinavia, it is normal for washing and laundry facilities to be in the basement. If you are staying in apartment type accommodation, check downstairs or ask for assistance.

BUDGET SURPRISES

Scandinavia has a few items that typically surprise travellers when visiting Norway for the first time. Alcohol and luxury items are heavily taxed and therefore prices are higher than you would expect. On the other hand, necessities such as bread and milk, are taxed low and therefore are great value. If you are planning to self-cater in Norway or Finland, please ask us for our grocery shopping guide.

SUMMER CLOTHING & PACKING

PACKING FOR SUMMER TRIPS IN THE REGION

Regardless of the time of year, pack a light fleece as evenings can be chilly, particularly if you are by the sea. We suggest layers of clothing rather than heavy coats since the weather can vary quite a bit throughout the season.

If visiting above the far northern regions above the Arctic Circle bring that extra jumper, snow jacket and raincoat for warmth, just in case. Bring good comfortable walking shoes for touring and sightseeing, especially for all those cobbled streets! On mountain trips, we recommend that you also bring a warm hat, gloves and a scarf (see next page for listing).





PACKING LIST FOR SUMMER TRIPS:

- Rain Jacket or an Anorak with hood –preferably waterproof and breathable material (Gore-Tex or equivalents)
- Rain trousers – waterproof and breathable material
- Jumper (wool or fleece)
- Blouse with long sleeves
- T-shirts
- Underclothes
- Socks
- Warm cap/hat (beanie)
- Gloves/mittens
- Scarf
- Sturdy footwear with good grip
- Light footwear/trainers
- Back pack for day trips (approx 30 litres)
- Toiletries
- Sun screen
- Lip salve
- Personal medication
- Sunglasses
- Water bottle (thermo)
- Travel documents (including insurance)
- Photo ID
- Note book and pencil
- Camera, memory cards and charger
- Chargers for other gadgets
- Binoculars
- Adaptors

This list is a guide only and not a list of essentials. Clothing, toiletries etc can of course also be purchased locally with most western brands widely available.

SCANDINAVIAN FOOD

Staying well nourished is important during your trip. Breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day in Scandinavia and you will find that breakfast buffets at hotels are generally abundant. Lunch is sometimes already included in your tour or you can purchase lunch at a local restaurant.

If you are staying in a remote location dinner is usually served at the hotel's/resort's restaurant. If you are staying in a bigger town, you will usually have a few options to choose from. Some of your activities and excursions include a meal or a snack.

Your room/cabin/etc. might not have a kettle but you can always ask the reception if they happen to have one that you can borrow or one that you can use in the common areas. Pack some tea bags or hot chocolate if you feel like you might enjoy a hot drink after being in the fresh air outside (we know you will).

If you know that you will be staying in a remote location it might be a good idea to also prepare with some snacks (biscuits, muesli bars, chocolate, fruit, packet soup etc.), just in case you find yourself extra hungry after enjoying the outdoors.

The food in Scandinavia and Finland could be bit different then what you are used to. Normally traditional meals are quite simple but tasty. Potatoes and other root vegetables have an important role with the cuisine. Before modern days, root vegetables were the only vegetables to be able to storage over a long winter.

Most Scandinavian cuisine relies on fresh, natural ingredients that can be found in the wild or that come fresh from the sea. You will be sure to find nice and fresh seafood around Scandinavia. During summer months, you'll find a lot of local and fresh produce from outdoor markets in city centres. Locals eat lots of berries, mushrooms and seasonal vegetables and create simple but tasty dishes using these ingredients. Scandinavians love rye bread and it can be served with everything, as well as fresh whole grain bread.

You wont find many dishes that have got a lot of strong spices. Cooking is simple while still using the best ingredients to make it tasty.

At the Breakfast buffet in your hotels you will have a really good variety of items. You will find a good cold selection with ham, cheeses, salamis, vegetables, pate, herring and sometimes smoked salmon as well.

A typical Scandinavian lunch could consist of a pea and ham soup or meatballs with mashed potatoes.

SOMETHING TO TRY IN SCANDINAVIA

Korvapuusti - Finnish cinnamon bun.

Karjalan piirakka - A savoury rice paste that Finns usually eat as a light snack with either just butter or an egg-butter on top.

Fika - A Swedish word for having a coffee or another beverage of your choice together with baked sweets, pastries or sandwiches.

Hot Dog - Hot dogs are known as the first fast food in Denmark. Try a traditional Danish hot dog with either fresh or fried onion on top.

Seafood - Norway is well known for its seafood. If you're in Bergen, enjoy a visit to the Fish Market, one of Norway's most visited outdoor markets.



TEA & COFFEE

In Scandinavia you will find that a regular coffee is a filtered coffee that has been standing in its pot for a while and is very bitter, but the Scandinavians drink it in masses.

Also note that Scandinavia doesn't really have a tea culture so if you ask for an English breakfast tea you will probably end up with lukewarm water in a coffee cup and a tea bag on the side. Most hotels do not have a kettle in the room since it's just not the norm but you can always ask for one from the reception. We also recommend bringing some tea bags with you to be on the safe side if you are a tea drinker.



TRANSFERS IN SCANDINAVIA

NORWAY

OSLO - The main airport Oslo Airport Gardermoen is located 45 km north of Oslo. The best way to get to Oslo from the main airport is by the airport express train, Flytoget. The express train departs every 10 minutes and takes 20 minutes. The cost is approx. NOK180 + NOK20 service fee per person one-way. All trains arrive at Oslo Central Station located right in the centre. ("Oslo S").

A taxi takes up to 45 minutes, and is more expensive. Taxis cost approx. NOK700 per car.

Oslo is also easy to reach from Sandefjord Airport Torp and Moss Airport Rygge, although a transfer to the city centre takes longer.

TROMSØ - Most travellers will be arriving into the small and modern airport and the distance into town is short. The cheapest transport option to the city centre is public bus 40 and 42, from across the airport parking lot (wait at the bus stop closest to the sea for transport into town). The bus ride is about 15 minutes, and costs approx. NOK50. There is also a dedicated Airport Express Bus (Flybussen) that will take you straight into the town centre, only stopping at a few hotels along the way (about 100NOK). Taxis are also available, for approx. NOK200. (Please note that taxi can cost around NOK260 on Sundays).

BERGEN - Arriving by train into Bergen is a hassle free way to begin your stay in Bergen, as the central station is located east of the city centre, close to the bus station. Take note, however, that many of the streets are cobblestoned. Bergen is the southern terminus for Hurtigruten, a passenger ship with stops along Norway's coast. The terminal is located at Nøstet. The Hurtigruten ships are accessible with a wheelchair.

If arriving by airplane, the Bergen Airport Flesland, is located 19 km south of the city. There is a frequent airport bus service (Norwegian: Flybussen), which takes about 30-40 minutes to downtown (costing NOK90). Taxis are also available but they cost much more (NOK300-350 on weekdays to downtown, more at night and at the weekend). There are some local buses occasionally going to and from the airport, they have limited space for luggage and take longer, but cost less.

FINLAND

HELSINKI - The main airport Helsinki is located 20 km north of Helsinki. The best way to get to Helsinki centre from the main airport is by the Finnair bus. You can buy tickets on board. This bus trip costs approx. EUR7. The taxis into town generally cost around EUR50-60.

The train connection between Helsinki city centre and Helsinki Airport takes about 30 minutes. There are two services: train I and train P. The entrance to the train station at the airport is in the corridor between the terminals. At the airport you can buy a train ticket from the following spots: HSL ticket automates (by the entrance of the terminals and train station), Alepa Grocery Store (T2 Arrivals Hall 2B), WH Smith stores, R-Kioski, Tourist information (T2 Arrivals Hall 2A) and HSL Mobile Ticket app. Please note that it is not possible to buy a ticket in the train. Tickets cost around 5EUR.

SWEDEN

STOCKHOLM - Arlanda Airport is the main international airport and is situated 40 km north of the city. There are several methods for travelling between Stockholm and Arlanda.

The train service, Arlanda Express Train is the fastest way into town, 20 minutes and costs SEK250 per person. There are local regional trains which are considerably cheaper, take just a little longer and can be boarded at Arlanda Central, located under Sky City.

A taxi ride to central Stockholm takes approximately 40 minutes. The maximum price for trips within the marked zone boundaries is SEK 675. Free price setting applies to taxi rides in Sweden since the taxi market is deregulated. Choose the company and car that best suits you, you do not need to take the car that is first in line. Always ask the driver before you start your trip about what price is in effect. You can check the price on the yellow label in the rear door window, before entering the taxi. The price on the yellow label is based on a 10km, 15-minute journey and it is in Swedish Krona. If you are staying at a hotel with a long walking distance from the Central Station, a taxi might be a better idea.

Buses also run to and from the City Terminal, 1-4 times/hour Mon-Fri, 1-2 times/hour on Sat-Sun (the journey takes approx. 35-45 minutes). A single ticket costs approx. SEK120.

DENMARK

COPENHAGEN - Copenhagen's Kastrup Airport is the hub for the Scandinavian Airlines so it is frequently used as an arrival spot for those flying into Scandinavia. The airport is located less than 10 km from the city.

The easiest and most cost effective way to get into town is to take the local train. It takes twelve minutes by train to get from Kastrup to the central square (Kongens Nytorv) in downtown Copenhagen. You need a ticket for three zones, which can be purchased from one of the automated vending machines or the ticket counter located inside the atrium on arrival and costs DKK38 for a single journey. You can also get taxis that cost approx. DKK250-300 one-way from the airport to the city.

MIDNIGHT SUN

During the summer season above the Arctic Circle, the sun does not set for several months. This phenomenon is caused by the tilt in the Earth's axis. This axis is the imaginary line through the planet between the south and the north poles around which it rotates.

As the Earth orbits the Sun, the tilt makes the North Pole face towards the Sun in summer (keeping it in sunlight even as the Earth spins) and away from it in winter (keeping it dark). Hence the continuous sunlight during the summer. Of course, after a dark winter, the flora, the fauna and the people of this region all go a little crazy in the sunshine with a huge 24 hour a day energy burst.

Fortunately, the Midnight Sun isn't as difficult to find as the Aurora Borealis lights. From early June to mid July, Northern Norway and Northern Finland bask in 24 hour sunlight. The higher you travel, the longer the opportunity to see the Midnight sun is. Svalbard for instance has the Midnight Sun for approximately 4 months.

The Scandinavian capitals all enjoy long summer days - Oslo never really gets dark in summer, just a soft sunset glow during the mid summer season. Stockholm likewise has 18.5 hrs of sun in June and as with all cities who enjoy the Midnight sun, celebrates mid summer with festivals galore.

SUNLIGHT HOURS / AVERAGE MAX & MIN TEMPERATURES (APPROXIMATE)

	OSLO	HELSINKI	STOCKHOLM	COPENHAGEN
APR	13-15h / +10°C / +2°C	13-15h / +10°C / 0°C	13-15h / +10°C / +1°C	13-15h / +11°C / +3°C
MAY	16-18h / +16°C / +7°C	16-18h / +15°C / +4°C	16-18h / +16°C / +5°C	15-17h / +16°C / +7°C
JUN	18h / +20°C / +11°C	18h / +19°C / +9°C	18h / +20°C / +10°C	17h / +19°C / +11°C
JUL	17-18h / +22°C / +13°C	17-18h / +22°C / +12°C	17-18h / +22°C / +12°C	16-17h / +22°C / +13°C
AUG	14-16h / +22°C / +13°C	14-16h / +21°C / +11°C	14-16h / +21°C / +11°C	14-16h / +22°C / +13°C
SEP	11-14h / +16°C / +9°C	11-14h / +16°C / +7°C	11-14h / +16°C / +7°C	11-13h / +17°C / +10°C
OCT	8-11h / +10°C / +4°C	8-11h / +9°C / +3°C	8-11h / +10°C / +3°C	9-11h / +12°C / +6°C

	BERGEN	TROMSØ	KIRKENES	ROVANIEMI
APR	13-15h / +9°C / +3°C	14-18h / +1°C / -9°C	13-18h / +2°C / -5°C	13-17h / +4°C / -4°C
MAY	16-18h / +13°C / +6°C	18-24h / +6°C / -2°C	18-24h / +6°C / 0°C	17-22h / +10°C / +2°C
JUN	18h / +16°C / +9°C	24h / +12°C / +4°C	24h / +12°C / +5°C	22-24h / +17°C / +8°C
JUL	17-18h / +18°C / +11°C	21-24h / +16°C / +8°C	21-24h / +16°C / +9°C	19-24h / +20°C / +11°C
AUG	14-16h / +18°C / +11°C	15-21h / +14°C / +7°C	15-21h / +15°C / +8°C	15-18h / +17°C / +9°C
SEP	11-14h / +15°C / +9°C	11-15h / +9°C / +2°C	11-15h / +9°C / +4°C	11-14h / +11°C / +4°C
OCT	8-11h / +11°C / +5°C	6-11h / +2°C / -3°C	6-11h / +3°C / -2°C	7-11h / +3°C / -2°C

	REYKJAVIK	LONGYEARBYEN	ILULISSAT	TALLINN
APR	13-16h / +6°C / +1°C	15-24h / -6°C / -13°C	14-18h / -6°C / -9°C	13-15h / 11°C / -1°C
MAY	16-20h / +10°C / +4°C	24h / -1°C / -5°C	18-24h / 0°C / -2°C	15-18h / +17°C / +4°C
JUN	20-21h / +13°C / +7°C	24h / +5°C / +2°C	24h / +4°C / +2°C	18h / +20°C / +8°C
JUL	18-20h / +14°C / +9°C	24h / +9°C / +5°C	20-24h / +8°C / +6°C	16-18h / +24°C / +12°C
AUG	14-17h / +14°C / +8°C	19-24h / +8°C / +4°C	15-20h / +8°C / +6°C	14-16h / +22°C / +11°C
SEP	11-14h / +11°C / +6°C	14-18h / +4°C / 0°C	11-15h / +3°C / +2°C	11-14h / +17°C / +6°C
OCT	8-11h / +8°C / +3°C	0-10h / -3°C / -7°C	6-11h / -1°C / -3°C	8-11h / +10°C / +2°C

	ST PETERSBURG	MOSCOW
APR	13-15h / +10°C / 0°C	13-15h / +11°C / +1°C
MAY	15-18h / +16°C / +5°C	15-17h / +17°C / +6°C
JUN	18h / +20°C / +10°C	17h / +22°C / +11°C
JUL	16-18h / +23°C / +13°C	16-17h / +24°C / +13°C
AUG	14-16h / +21°C / +11°C	13-16h / +22°C / +11°C
SEP	11-14h / +15°C / +7°C	11-13h / +15°C / +6°C
OCT	8-11h / +9°C / +2°C	9-11h / +8°C / +2°C



THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

We would love to hear back from you after your trip. Your feedback is very much appreciated. We would also love it if you shared your best holiday photo on our Facebook page!

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