



# SCANDINAVIA & FINLAND

Practical Travel Information - Winter

## 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.



### SUNLIGHT HOURS / AVERAGE MAX & MIN TEMPERATURES (APPROXIMATE)

	OSLO	HELSINKI	STOCKHOLM	COPENHAGEN
NOV	7h / +3°C / -1°C	7h / +3°C / 0°C	7h / +5°C / -1°C	8h / +3°C / -1°C
DEC	6h / 0°C / -4°C	6h / 0°C / -5°C	6h / +1°C / -3°C	7h / 0°C / -4°C
JAN	7h / -2°C / -7°C	7h / -1°C / -6°C	7h / -1°C / -5°C	8h / -2°C / -7°C
FEB	9h / -1°C / -7°C	9h / -2°C / -7°C	9h / -1°C / -5°C	10h / -1°C / -7°C
MAR	11h / +4°C / -4°C	11h / +1°C / -4°C	11h / +3°C / -3°C	12h / +4°C / -4°C
APR	15h / +10°C / +1°C	15h / +6°C / 0°C	15h / +9°C / +1°C	14h / +10°C / +1°C

	REYKJAVIK	TROMSØ	KIRKENES	ROVANIEMI
NOV	8-5h / +3°C / -1°C	6-0h / +2°C / -2°C	6-0h / -3°C / -8°C	7-4h / -3°C / -8°C
DEC	5-4h / +2°C / -3°C	0h / -1°C / -4°C	0h / -4°C / -11°C	3-2h / -5°C / -11°C
JAN	4-7h / +2°C / -3°C	0-4h / -2°C / -6°C	0-4h / -6°C / -14°C	3-6h / -6°C / -14°C
FEB	7-10h / +3°C / -2°C	5-9h / -3°C / -6°C	5-9h / -6°C / -13°C	7-9h / -7°C / -13°C
MAR	10-13h / +3°C / -2°C	10-13h / 0°C / -5°C	10-13h / -3°C / -10°C	10-13h / -2°C / -9°C
APR	13-17h / +6°C / 0°C	14-18h / +3°C / -2°C	14-18h / +2°C / 0°C	14-17h / +4°C / -4°C

	KITTILÄ	IVALO	KIRUNA	LULEÅ
NOV	7-3h / -3°C / -11°C	7-2h / -3°C / -11°C	7-3h / -4°C / -11°C	7-5h / -1°C / -6°C
DEC	2-0h / -6°C / -15°C	0h / -5°C / -14°C	2-0h / -6°C / -14°C	4-3h / -4°C / -11°C
JAN	0-5h / -8°C / -17°C	0-5h / -7°C / -17°C	0-5h / -7°C / -15°C	4-6h / -5°C / -13°C
FEB	6-9h / -7°C / -18°C	6-9h / -7°C / -17°C	6-9h / -7°C / -16°C	7-9h / -6°C / -14°C
MAR	10-13h / -2°C / -13°C	10-14h / -2°C / -13°C	10-13h / -3°C / -13°C	10-13h / -1°C / -10°C
APR	14-18h / +4°C / -7°C	14-18h / +3°C / -7°C	14-17h / +2°C / -7°C	14-17h / +5°C / -4°C

## GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

### CLIMATE

In Scandinavia & Finland, the winters are long and cold with large amounts of snow in the north. Temperatures vary quite significantly from south to north, and from coastal to inland. The coldest temperatures, and also the clearest skies are found inland and far to the north.

The Gulf Stream plays an influential part in the weather patterns of Scandinavia. 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 other areas of the world on the same latitude.

That said, you will be far north, and in winter you will encounter blistery cold days, sometimes with temperatures as low as minus -20°C to -30°C. So it is important to be well prepared for the weather conditions.

Regardless of the weather, locals head out and get active in the snow and you can join in the fun! The following saying in the area is a good mantra; "there is no such thing as bad weather, there is only bad clothing". Also, houses and major structures are built to withstand cold temperatures and you will never be cold inside.

### 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.

### 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 (EUR), Iceland has its own Krona (ISK). A good website to check

exchange rates before you travel is [www.xe.com](http://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.

We recommend to keep small change for public toilets.

## 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').

## FLIGHTS AND TRANSPORTATION

Scandinavia and Finland are used to winter conditions, and airports have appropriate equipment to keep the runways open. Snow and ice rarely affect on flights in Scandinavia and Finland in winter. Taxi and bus drivers are used to driving in snowy and icy conditions with special winter tires.

## 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 (although opening hours may vary slightly by location and season). 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.

# HOW TO NOT BREAK YOUR LEG WHEN IT'S ICY



Please take care and practice your 'penguin walk' as slipping on ice can be very dangerous. It is possible to get 'non slip crampons/spikes' on your shoes.

## SAFE WINTER ACTIVITIES

All our snow mobile and dog sled safaris are operated locally by independent and accredited safari operators. 50 Degrees North does not operate any snow mobile and dog sled safaris themselves.

Before commencing a snow mobile or dog sled safari the local operator may ask you to sign an indemnity form, which in such case, will be a mandatory requirement in order to participate in the activity. You are also required to present a valid drivers license in order to ride a snow mobile. No driver license is necessary for driving a dog sled.

### SNOWMOBILE SAFARIS

The driver of a snowmobile must be at least 18 years old and in possession of a valid driving license. Children under 15 year of age will travel in a sledge pulled by guide's snowmobile. For your own safety, and safety of others, driving a snowmobile under the influence of alcohol or any other narcotics is prohibited by Finnish law.

Generally, you will be riding with 2 persons per snowmobile. However, it is possible to ride the snowmobile solo by paying a solo riders surcharge. Please ask us for details.

Before a snow mobile ride your qualified safari guide will always go through general driving instructions and safety. If this for some reason is not done, please be sure to point this out for the guide, as it is a mandatory requirement in order to conduct snow mobile safaris for possibly inexperienced riders.

While riding it is near impossible to hear anything other than the sound of the engine, therefore, the guide will go through a set of hand signals used during the ride. These signals are initiated by the guide and repeated by each rider in the line so as to visibly pass the signal backwards to the last rider.

On snow mobile safaris you will always ride in one line. The guide rides at the front, and you will follow behind keeping a safety distance of at least 20 metres between each snowmobile. The safety distance is designed to allow enough time in the event of a sudden stop. It is prohibited to ride side by side, overtake other machines, or curve or speed up unnecessarily.

The guide carries a first aid kit, as well as an emergency communication device in case of emergencies. The guide also has the authority prohibit participants from riding if they act irresponsibly, or are otherwise seen unfit to handle a snow mobile.

When we are driving you won't be able to hear anything else than the sound of the engine and this is why we need to communicate by hand signals. When your guide shows you a hand signal, please repeat it so that everybody in the line knows what is going on. Make sure you check with your travel insurance company that you are covered for snow mobile rides.

### REINDEER SAFARI

Reindeer safaris usually have a shorter duration. You will sit in the sled while the reindeers are either hooked up to each other in a line or they just go around in a fenced area.

### DOGSLED SAFARIS

On most of our dog sled safaris you will be the actual musher (driver) of the team of sled dogs. Generally, there will be 2 persons per dog sled; one person mushing (driving); and other travelling as a passenger inside the sled. Switching positions can be done during any of the breaks, but never while the sled is moving. The guide will travel as the first sled, so as to set the pace and not let any teams pass. It is also common, although not mandatory, for the safari to be accompanied by a snow mobile.

It is important to remember that dogs are not machines. They respond differently to trail conditions, weather, people and each other on a moment-to-moment basis. For the professional mushers, this is part of the addiction of dogsledding, as no two runs are ever the same!

Dogsledding is most definitely a team sport, and the musher is part of the team, encouraging the dogs, working with the sled (pushing with one foot or walking behind) when going up hills and steering and braking when coming down hills. By doing this the dogs will gain trust in your abilities, although some may still give you a backward glance with questioning eyes from time to time! While riding as the passenger your job is to enjoy the scenery, the dogs and have fun with a camera!

On days when the temperatures are low and/or trails are very hard and fast, your guides will slow the lead team down. Even though you may wish to go at the top speeds that the dogs would run, it is too dangerous for all. Hard/fast trails can tip sleds easier and dogs are also more likely to get shoulder and elbow/knee injuries running too fast on such conditions.



There are no “reins” on a dog sled; you control your team by voice commands and slow/ stop them with a brake on your sled. The most important part of the mushers job is to make sure the gang line (rope that attaches the sled to the dogs) is tight at all times, meaning the sled is where it should be and the dogs are all strung out in a tight line and working in unison. You must keep both of your feet on the runners and both hands on the handlebar. The driver cannot take any pictures!

It is very important to always keep a safety distance of at least 10 metres between your first dog (running as a leader) and the sled in front of you. You may not pass another sled. Before a dog sled ride your qualified safari guide will always go through general driving instructions and safety. If this for some reason is not done, please be sure to point this out for the guide.

Changing the drivers: The driver must stand on the brake with BOTH feet. Then the passenger will stand up and come to stand on the brake also. When the new driver is standing on the brake, the other one will go to sit as a passenger on the sledge. The driver will stand on the brake with both feet until seeing the sign “lets go”.

Accidents do happen, and fortunately seldom of any serious nature. The most common is for the musher to fall off, with the dogs and sled, with passenger, heading off into the distance. The dogs will then soon catch up with the sleds in front and stop. The worst thing may be that you have to trudge through the deep snow for a few hundred meters. That is unless the guide or accompanying snow mobile comes and picks you up.

The guide carries a first aid kit, as well as an emergency communication devise in case of emergencies. The guide also has the authority prohibit participants from riding if they act irresponsibly, or are otherwise seen unfit to handle a dog sled team. Make sure you check with your travel insurance company that you are covered for snow mobile rides.

Dog sled touring allows you to feel like you are viewing nature in its purest form, and it is what visiting the northern wilderness is all about. You will have a great time!

Kindly note that you need to be somewhat fit for the dog sled safaris as you might have to help the dogs by running a little bit.

**Kindly note that the operations and regulations may vary amongst different suppliers and these are just general guidelines and information.**



## SCANDINAVIAN FOOD

Staying well nourished is important during your trip, especially in winter time when it can be cold outside. 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/igloo/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 - or if you wake up in the middle of the night to watch the Northern Lights!

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.

During the winter months the dishes could be quite heavy, such as meat stews, game meats, hearty soups and creamy dishes. But you will also find nice and fresh seafood around Scandinavia. You can be sure to find rye bread 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 pasty 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 it's 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.



## 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.



# WINTER CLOTHING & PACKING

## PACKING FOR WINTER TRIPS

As a mantra it is important to always keep your head, hands and feet nice and warm. These are the parts of your body that most easily lose heat.

The largest investment if you normally live in the southern hemisphere is a pair of warm boots. However, we strongly recommend that you do invest in, or borrow, some nice warm winter or snow boots, as that will ensure you have an enjoyable holiday rather than always being cold. Your boots need to be sizable enough to fit two pairs of thick, warm socks.

We also recommend that you think about buying 'Crampon Slips' or 'non-slip Ice Spikes' that go on over your shoes and help prevent slipping on ice.

## RENTING WINTER CLOTHES

It is recommended that you purchase or borrow clothing. Renting clothes when you arrive at your destination could mean that you don't get your preferred choice. There are generally few options, if any, for renting winter clothing unless you are taking part in an activity.

## GUIDED ACTIVITIES AND APPROPRIATE GEAR

If you are taking part in a guided activity such as snowmobiling or dogsledding, appropriate winter gear will be provided for the duration of the activity. This usually includes a thermal overall and boots, and depending on the activity you might also get a balaclava, warm mittens, woollen socks, helmet, etc. Note that city sightseeing tours and other lighter tours do not include winter clothing.



## PACKING LIST FOR WINTER TRIPS

- Warm wind and water proof jacket and trousers (snow clothing) large enough to fit thick woollen jumper/clothing underneath
- Warm windproof cap/hat
- An extra Woollen hat and thin woollen neck warmer/balaclava
- Warm gloves or mittens. Mittens where all fingers except the thumb are together are often warmer than gloves.
- Windproof gloves or mittens (snow gloves), which you can pull over the warm gloves. We have found through experience, that countries with warmer climates don't offer the same quality gloves that can be found in Scandinavia. You might like to purchase on arrival.
- Warm woollen scarf
- 2 pairs of long woollen underwear (Merino wool in a few different thicknesses is perfect)
- 1-2 warm woollen jumper(s), or one jumper and a warm fleece
- Woollen or fleece trousers
- 2-3 pairs of warm woollen socks - different thicknesses
- Warm & sturdy footwear with good grip
- Ski goggles for snow mobile touring (newer versions offer better anti-fog)
- Clothes for indoors, i.e. a shirt, T-shirts and jeans or cotton trousers
- Back pack for day trips (approx. 30 litre)
- Light footwear/trainers (mainly for indoors - even something you can slip into when you take your outdoor boots off)
- Sun screen & Lip salve (the sun reflects off the snow and the air is dry)
- Sunglasses
- For children, a small light to attach to their outfit for when they are playing and walking around a night
- Hand warmers
- Nordic Grip anti-slip soles/crampons for walking on ice. These can be found in supermarkets and hardware shops in Scandinavia and you can purchase some easily on arrival if the ground is icy. Icy footpaths and roads vary depending on the rain and temperature. These shoes are hard to purchase accurately online with sizes over boots.
- Personal medication
- Water bottle - thermo, or include a cover to keep warm (or you can stick it into a warm sock)
- Travel documents (including insurance)
- Photo ID - you need to bring this for snowmobile driving
- Note book and pencil
- Camera, memory cards and charger
- Chargers for other gadgets
- Extra batteries for your cameras as they are used fast in cold conditions.
- Adapters
- For autumn and spring travel, rain trousers - waterproof and breathable material
- It is possible to bring food into Norway such as tea bags, biscuits, coffee, milo, museli bars, cereal and so forth for consuming on arrival or in self-catering accommodation.



## IMPORTANT: SAFEGUARDING THE ARCTIC'S UNIQUE ECOSYSTEMS

The Arctic Environment is home to many unique and vulnerable species and habitats. Help us protect the Arctic from the impact of alien species by, where possible, brushing, hoovering and cleaning clothes and any equipment prior to departure, paying particular attention to outerwear and footwear. This is in accordance with the request of the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research.

Learn more at [www.stoparcticaliens.com](http://www.stoparcticaliens.com).

## TRAVELLING WITH KIDS

For travelling with kids in our winter wonderland, here are a few of our recommendations:

- Make sure they have tried on their woollen undergarments before they arrive. Children find some materials very itchy and uncomfortable. It is critical that they have at least one full thermal outfit that they are happy to wear. You can wash these out each night as accommodation is generally very toasty and good for drying. There is often a drying cupboard.
- The same goes with a good woollen hat - go with the finest wool you can find.
- Keep an eye out for children getting extremely cold, then numb hands and feet (potential frostbite) during the adventure safaris. Encourage them to wear lots of socks and to tuck themselves in. Remind them to wiggle their fingers and toes when cold.
- Snow goggles are good for winter activities to slip under the helmets
- Woollen Balaclavas

Just remember that extra (non-cotton) layers that can be added or taken away when needed. Mittens where all fingers except the thumb are together are often warmer than gloves, and extra pair of mittens will come in handy after building a snowman or two. A balaclava type of hat that covers both the neck and ears is also great under a warm and windproof beanie.

When on tour with 50 Degrees North, many of the hotels and activity providers also do offer warm outer clothing for hire, but if traveling with small kids, please do check beforehand that correct sizes are available. You will still need to bring one set of snow gear as you will need to transfer to your starting point (NOTE TO SELF: have your gear ready for when you get off the PLANE!).





# NORTHERN LIGHTS

## WHAT ARE THE NORTHERN LIGHTS?

The ultimate energy source of the aurora is the solar wind flowing past the Earth and touching its magnetic field. Aurora starts when explosions in the sun send off particles into space. These particles are charged and form the solar wind. When solar wind hits Earth's magnetic field in the Polar areas where the magnetic shield is less powerful, it collides with particles in our atmosphere creating electricity and light. It is this light that we see as the Northern Lights (also known as the Aurora Borealis).

## MAXIMIZING THE CHANCES OF SEEING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS DURING YOUR TRIP

There is a fair chance that you are taking part in a 'Northern Lights Chase' or an evening snowmobiling or dogsledding tour during your trip. These tours are fantastic for trying to catch this magical phenomenon, and your knowledgeable guide will often be able to tell you interesting facts about the lights.

However, if you want to maximize your chances, you will need to make the effort yourself. If the skies are clear, just go outside and look up. Sometimes you may need to wait for a long time, and sometimes the lights won't appear at all - but when they do, you'll be happy that you waited. Sometimes the light show lasts only for a couple of minutes, and sometimes it might go on for hours and hours.

The level of geomagnetic activity gives you a good idea of the chance of seeing the Aurora. There is a simple index called Kp, a number between 0 and 9, which is used to refer to geomagnetic activity. The higher the Kp number, the better.

There are several smartphone apps available that will tell you what the current conditions are. 'Aurora Forecast' and Visit Norway's 'Norway Lights' are good ones to try.



## PHOTOGRAPHING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

You don't really need much gear to photograph the northern lights, but there are some things you simply cannot do without:

- Camera: A camera with interchangeable lenses will be best, but in principle any camera can be used. The bigger the imaging chip in it, the less grainy the pictures will be.
- Lens: A wide-angle lens is best, preferably with a focal length between 10 and 24 mm and a maximum aperture of f/2.8 (but f/3.5 will do at a pinch). Manual focus adjustment is a must.
- Sturdy tripod: To avoid blurring of the picture from camera movement. A good head which allows independent adjustment of each axis will be best. If your tripod is unstable, try hanging something heavy from the centre column.
- Remote trigger: A cable release fitting your camera will be invaluable in reducing the vibration. It can be used in addition to or instead of the trigger delay timer, built into most cameras today. If you don't have a remote trigger, use the trigger delay instead.
- Memory cards: Always bring extra memory cards, if you can. A faulty card can completely ruin an otherwise excellent trip.
- **Spare batteries: The cold drains batteries very quickly, so remember to bring fully charged spares and keep them in your pocket, close to your body, until you need them.**

Here are some things to keep in mind when shooting the northern lights:

- Deactivate the camera flash and automatic settings.
- Always shoot RAW format - it will give you the most data to work with later. Feel free to shoot JPG at the same time, though, if your camera supports it.
- Focus manually to infinity. Switch off the camera's autofocus to be on the safe side.
- Open up the lens aperture. You need to admit a lot of light, so shoot wide open. This will be when the f-number is as low as possible, i.e. f/2.8 or lower for many pro-lenses, or f/3.5 or f/4 for many consumer zooms.
- Compose your shot. Remember that the northern lights need scale and context, so include the foreground in your shot. This can be a tree, a building, a car or even just the horizon.
- Set the ISO to somewhere between 100 and 400, depending on what you need. The faster your lens and the longer your shutter speed, the lower your ISO can be, and vice versa.
- Start with a shutter speed between 4 and 12 seconds, and experiment from there. Avoid longer shutter speeds, as they will tend to blur the northern lights as they move across the sky. Adjust ISO and/or aperture if necessary.
- Keep the camera as still as possible while you are exposing. Use a tripod and a remote trigger if you have one, and the trigger delay function if you do not. Do not touch the camera until it is done exposing, and shield it from the wind if you can.
- Keep in mind that you do not need complete darkness to see and photograph the northern lights. In fact, a certain glow over the horizon might add that special something to your pictures, so try to be ready to catch the magical light that can occur from an hour before sunset to an hour after. A full or partially full moon may also add a certain ghostly glow to your pictures. The key is to experiment and make the most of what you have available.

Source: Visit Norway

# TRANSFERS IN SCANDINAVIA

Winter weather does not typically disrupt air travel in Scandinavia and Finland. Unlike parts of Central Europe, where snow can cause delays due to limited de-icing equipment, airports in the Nordic region are well-prepared for snowy conditions. The aviation industry is highly regulated, with experienced pilots and robust infrastructure ensuring safe operations throughout the winter season.

## NORWAY

### OSLO

Located about 50 km north of Oslo, Gardermoen Airport offers several efficient transfer options:

- Train: The Airport Express Train (Flytoget) and regional VY trains run frequently to Oslo Central Station, taking around 20–25 minutes.
- Bus: Airport coaches (Flybussen) provide direct service to various parts of Oslo.
- Taxi: Available outside the terminal; travel time is around 40–45 minutes.
- Other Airports: Oslo is also accessible from Sandefjord Airport Torp and Moss Airport Rygge, though transfers take longer.

### TROMSØ

The airport is small and modern, with a short distance to the city centre. Public buses (routes 40 and 42) and a dedicated Airport Express Bus (Flybussen) provide convenient transport options. Taxis are readily available, with slightly higher fares on Sundays.

- Public Bus: Routes 40 and 42 connect the airport to the city in about 15–25 minutes.
- Airport Express Coach: Flybussen offers direct service to central hotels.
- Taxi: A convenient option, especially for groups or late arrivals.
- Private Transfers: Available for pre-booking and ideal for larger groups or added comfort.

### BERGEN

Arriving by train is a convenient option, with the central station located near the city centre and the wharf. Bergen is also the southern terminus for Hurtigruten, a coastal passenger ship route. The terminal is wheelchair accessible. Bergen Airport Flesland is located south of the city and is served by a frequent airport bus service. Taxis and local buses are also available, though travel times and comfort levels vary.

- Light Rail (Bybanen): Line 1 connects the airport to the city centre in about 45 minutes.
- Airport Bus (Flybussen): Offers a faster route with multiple stops in central Bergen.
- Taxi: Available outside the terminal and suitable for direct hotel transfers.
- Private Transfers: Can be pre-booked for convenience and comfort.

## FINLAND

### HELSINKI

Helsinki Airport is located north of the city. The Finnair Bus and commuter trains (Ring Rail Line I and P) offer reliable connections to the city centre. Tickets can be purchased at the airport from machines or convenience stores. Be sure to select a ticket valid for the ABC zone when travelling between the airport and central Helsinki. Taxis and app-based ride services are also available.

- Train: Lines I and P of the Ring Rail Line connect the airport to Helsinki Central Station in about 30 minutes. Tickets must cover zones ABC.
- Bus: Several public buses and the Finnair City Bus serve the route.
- Taxi and Ride Services: Widely available, with fixed-rate options and app-based services like Bolt.

## SWEDEN

### STOCKHOLM

Arlanda Airport is the main international gateway, located north of the city. The Arlanda Express Train is the fastest option, while regional trains and buses offer more economical alternatives. Taxis operate on a fixed-price basis, but prices can vary significantly between companies. Sweden does not regulate taxi fares, so it's advisable to check the price label on the taxi before entering. You are free to choose any taxi from the queue.

- Arlanda Express: A high-speed train reaching Stockholm Central Station in about 18–20 minutes.
- Airport Coaches (Flygbussarna): A budget-friendly option with a travel time of ~45 minutes.
- Regional Trains: Slower but more economical than the express train.
- Taxi: Fixed-price services are available; choose reputable companies to avoid scams.
- Private Transfers: Recommended for groups or those seeking door-to-door service.

## DENMARK

### COPENHAGEN

Kastrup Airport is a major hub and located close to the city. The local train provides a quick and cost-effective connection to central Copenhagen, including Norreport Station for those staying at nearby hotels. Metro and bus services are also available. Taxis offer door-to-door service but are more expensive than public transport.

- Metro: Fast and frequent service to Kongens Nytorv and other central stops in about 13 minutes.
- Train: Direct access to Copenhagen Central Station in around 15 minutes.
- Bus: Route 5C and others connect the airport to various city locations.
- Taxi: Available outside Terminals 1 and 3; travel time is 20–30 minutes depending on traffic.

## 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! If you have an Instagram account, you can upload your holiday photos and tag them with #50DegreesN

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