

## Norway: Bergen & the Fjords

### Tour-Only Itinerary

Welcome to Norway—and an enlightening and idyllic fjords walking tour. Your journey takes you from the breathtaking fjords of the country’s spectacular west coast to the mountaintops and valleys of its equally scenic interior. When not walking, you’ll travel by coach, RIB boat, ferry, and train—including the celebrated Flam Railway. Along the way, you’ll visit a stately manor and its gardens, perambulate a pristine lake, view the untamed beauty of the Flåmsdalen Valley, see historic wooden villages and a well-preserved stave church, and explore Bergen’s historic Bryggen district. You’ll also touch modern culture with tastings of goat cheese and cider, as well as the opportunities to mingle with locals that a walking tour allows. Let us show you the essence of Norway, then and now.



### Highlights

- Walk the historic and breathtaking Vindhella section of the King’s Road hiking trail, a curvaceous path that winds toward the beautifully preserved Borgund Stave Church.
- Travel by coach, ferry, RIB boat, and train on scenic rides that include the renowned Flam railway, the Aurlandsfjellet National Tourist Route, and the Nærøysund.
- Learn about cider production on the Hardanger Fruit Trail and enjoy a tasting, followed by a delicious lunch overlooking a fjord.
- Ferry to the historic Rosendal Barony to admire its famous rose garden and view a landscape of fjords, glaciers, mountains, and waterfalls.
- Spend two nights at a cozy boutique hotel in Lærdal, named a national “heritage village” for its cluster of 18th-century wooden houses.

## On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Air Packages include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

## Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate with an average of 4-6 miles daily. The terrain varies from paved and cobblestone streets (during organized city tours and other easy village explorations) to country roads, wide grassy trails, and uneven, single-track hiking trails with loose stones or gravel, rocks, and roots. The footpaths and trails can be wet and muddy due to rain and melting snow, increasing their difficulty. There are daily ascents and descents, which are mostly gradual but some portions are steep. The hikes to the Hovden viewpoint, on the Rallarvegen, on the King's Road and on Mt. Prest include an elevation gain and/or loss of 850-ft. or more. A few walks can be shortened or lengthened for the entire group, but in general, there are limited options available for alternative walks to the planned

itinerary. This tour includes transport by ferry, railway, and RIB boat, as well as drives over scenic but winding mountain roads and through tunnels. Those with extreme motion sickness should take precautions. Throughout the itinerary, Norwegian history and traditions are framed by the stunning scenery of mountains and fjords.

## DAY 1

### Join your *Norway: Bergen & the Fjords* tour

*Rosendal Baroniet; 2–3 miles, easy with moderate sections. Bondhusvatnet, 3 miles, easy*

Your Country Walkers leaders meet your group at the meeting hotel in Bergen at 8:15 a.m. in the lobby. Your Norwegian discoveries begin with a two-hour ferry ride to the village of Rosendal, where you visit the historic Baroniet Rosendal (Rosendal Barony). Originally a farm given as a wedding present to a wealthy Norwegian heir and her Danish husband, it was developed into an elegant manor house completed in 1665. Set amid a landscape of fjords, glaciers, mountains, and waterfalls, this magnificent structure reflects 250 years of history, with influences from every epoch. You stroll here from the ferry port and take a walk around the property, perhaps admiring its famous rose garden. Afterward, savor an included lunch in the farmhouse.

From here, you drive to Lake Bondhus, set in a valley formed by retreating glaciers. The massive Bondhusbreen Glacier, which can still be seen from the outlet to the lake, has been popular with travelers since the 19th century. As you hike, view the turquoise waters of the lake ringed by craggy mountains and hear the rush of cascades tumbling down their steep slopes.

Shuttle to the hotel, where you can get better acquainted with your travel mates over a three-course dinner.

**Included Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 2

### Sørfjord

*Elvadalen Valley; 4 miles, easy to moderate, 600-ft. gain/loss OR Hovden; 4 miles, moderate with*

*difficult sections, 1,500-ft. elevation gain/loss*

This morning's hike begins on a section of the Hardanger Fruit Trail, which leads through the largest fruit garden in Norway. More than half a million trees crowd the orchards here. As you amble past local farms and an abundance of fruit trees, signposts will offer insights into local fruit production and history.

Formed millennia ago by retreating glaciers, Norway's fjords are revered for their scenic vistas of pristine waters surrounded by rugged mountains that rise steeply from their banks. Embark on an easy walk through a valley ringed with craggy mountains and laced with waterfalls and streams. For those looking for a more challenging route, continue your hike along one of these famed landscapes and up to a scenic viewpoint will give you an up-close view of their splendor. For today's included lunch overlooking the Sør fjord, gain a taste of the local fruit as you enjoy a cider tasting, followed by a picnic lunch.

Upon return to the hotel, you have time at leisure to enjoy its many amenities. Perhaps you'll swim the channel that links the heated indoor and outdoor pools. Indulge in the Jacuzzi or sauna. Explore the hotel's private beach. Or relax in a lounge chair admiring views of the fjord and Folgefonna glacier. Dinner is on your own tonight. Perhaps you'll sample traditional Norwegian cuisine in the hotel's restaurant or bar. Or ask your leaders for suggestions for a village café. Please take into consideration that available dining options and times this evening may be limited.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 3

### Flåmsdalen Valley. Travel to Lærdalsøyri

*Rallarvegen; 5 miles, easy with moderate sections, 1,560-ft. elevation loss. Laerdal town walk; 1 mile, easy*

Known as Norway's extreme sports capital, the town of Voss awaits you this morning. After breakfast, board a motorcoach for an hour's ride to this region of untamed beauty. On arrival to Voss Folk Museum, enjoy a guided tour of this well preserved collection of two farmsteads, protected since 1928. You'll have time to visit both the outdoor farm museum as well as the indoor exhibits which detail life in this Norwegian town from the last 500 years.

Board a train for a one-hour ride to Myrdal, the gateway to the Flåmsdalen Valley. Here you start your walk on the Rallarvegen or Naavies Road, so named after the construction workers of the Bergen Railway. This route is popular with cyclists and starts with a moderately steep descent of 21 hairpin turns (your guides will set a leisurely pace for this section). The adventurous may choose to skip walking this section and cruise down a zipline instead (at your own cost, subject to availability). As you walk (or zip), the Flam Valley opens up before you, offering superb views of mountains, waterfalls and the Moldåni River. Pause with your group to enjoy your packed lunch. Along the road you may encounter a curious goat or two who has stayed from one of the many farms in this valley. Continue by motorcoach (approximately 1 hour) to Lærdalsøyri, your home for the next two nights. Today, the main highway connecting Oslo and Bergen includes the Laerdal Tunnel between the cities of Laerdal and Aurlandsvagen, completed in 2000. At 15.2 miles, it is the world's longest road tunnel. You experience it for yourself as you pass through the tunnel en route to Lærdalsøyri, named a national "heritage village" for its cluster of 18th-century wooden houses. Here, you check into your hotel and set off on a short optional walking tour of the town before enjoying dinner with your travel mates.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 4

### King's Road

*Galdane to Husum; 5 OR 3 miles, easy to moderate. Vindhellavegen; 1 mile, moderate, 600-ft elevation gain*

Built in 1790, the King's Road was the first road linking Oslo (then Christiania) and Bergen. Stretching 62 miles over Filefjell, a mountainous region between Lærdal and Valdres in southern Norway, it has since been restored as a hiking trail rife with magnificent scenic overlooks and cultural heritage sites. In 2014, it was named "Norway's most beautiful road" by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration.

This morning, a 20-minute shuttle takes you to this historic route. There, you meet a local guide for a hike on the Galdane path along the rushing River Lærdalselvi. With its east/west climate divide, this stretch is renowned for its scenic diversity. View unspoiled vistas of massive boulders, steep cliffs, and rare vegetation that line the riverbanks as you walk. Next, you stroll along the Øygardsvegen path, passing ancient bridges, farms, inns, and Iron Age burial sites along the way. You break to enjoy lunch at a family-run hotel that has been welcoming King's Road travelers since 1835. For those looking for a slightly

shorter walk today, two miles of this route can be skipped by using our bus support.

Your last stretch of the King's Road is the Vindhellavegen, a stunningly beautiful, curvaceous path that winds toward the Borgund Stave Church. Built in 1190, this beautifully preserved, historic edifice is considered the most distinctive stave church in Norway. Spend time exploring the church on a guided tour and the Visitors' Center across the street.

Your discoveries conclude with a ride back to your hotel, where the rest of the day and evening are free. Perhaps you'll venture into town to visit the Sogn Art Center and the Norwegian Wild Salmon Center. The town has options for dinner on your own or you may dine at the hotel.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 5

### Aurland

*Mt. Prest; 1-3 miles, easy-moderate, 850-ft. elevation gain/loss. Otternes farmyard; 2 miles, easy. Farm hike; 1 mile, easy*

Start your morning with a Norwegian hiking tradition of making a *matpakke* or packed lunch, from the breakfast buffet. Your hotel will have enticing options of cheese, meat, fish, and bread available so you can prepare a hearty sandwich for later in the day.

A barren yet beautiful landscape flanks the Aurlandsfjellet, one of the most scenic routes in this highly photogenic country. A series of 20 hairpin turns reveals diverse landscapes at every bend, from desolate plateaus to steep mountains where snow may be glimpsed for most of the year—giving this route its nickname: the “snow road.” You ride along this famous thoroughfare this morning, enjoying views of a spectacular fjord landscape leading to rocky hills and sparsely vegetated plains. Disembark your motorcoach at Mt. Prest for a chance to stretch your legs. Your leaders will choose a route based on the weather, trail conditions, and group fitness level. As you hike, marvel at breathtaking panoramic views of the Aurlandsfjord in its nest of lofty mountains. Continue hiking through a quiet pine forest and then descend to the Stegastein viewpoint, a 2,000-foot viewing platform perched overlooking the fjord.

Time permitting, you stop in Aurlandsvagen, a small village known for its cultural heritage and exquisite

setting. During the mid-20th century, it attracted hunters and fishers. Today, it is popular among those seeking a pristine natural environment. As you explore the town, perhaps you'll visit the local glassblowing studio or the Aurland shoe factory, home of the original penny loafer.

You then set off on a short walk to Otternes Farm, where a traditional way of life is preserved. Stretch your legs as you explore this complex of 27 buildings, each with its own function. Enjoy your packed lunch while gazing out to the awe-inspiring Sognejord. Continue with a walk along the fjord in Flam.

In the afternoon, your leaders offer another walk at a local farm before you shuttle a short distance to your hotel, where the rest of the afternoon is at leisure. You might visit the Flam Railway Museum, dedicated to the spectacular rail line you experienced earlier in your journey. Here, you can learn about the history and challenges involved in its construction. You may also decide to indulge in a session at the nearby floating sauna or go for a beer tasting at the local brewery. There also may be time to enjoy an optional guided kayak paddle on the fjord (at your own expense). There are also a number of easy, self-guided walks starting from town (maps are available at the visitor center).

This evening, have dinner at your convenience. Choose to dine at one of the restaurants in town including the Flam Marina, Fretheim Hotel, and Aegir Brewpub or perhaps book the evening bus to the nearby "Viking village" of Gudvagen and eat at one of their multiple restaurants.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 6

### Nærøyfjord and Aurlandsfjord

*Old Postal Road; 3 miles, easy to moderate. Undredal Village; 1 mile, easy*

Your early start this morning will be rewarded with a thrilling ride aboard a RIB (rigid inflatable boat). Your voyage will provide unparalleled views of the Aurlandsfjord. Draw close to small villages along the shore; marvel at the Sagfossen, a dazzling waterfall; and view Nærøyfjord, one of only two Norwegian fjords designated a UNESCO World Heritage site for its "exceptional natural beauty."

After your boat ride, you take a scenic walk along the Old Postal Route from Styvi to Bleiklindi (named for an old linden tree). Until the advent of the steamship, this road was used to deliver mail when the fjord was

unnavigable because of ice. Views of the Nærøyfjord accompany you all along this dramatic protected landscape.

From Bleiklindi, take a short boat ride to the hamlet of Bakka and then travel by motor coach a short distance to Undredal, famous for its brown and white goat cheese. Learn about the history and production of this local delicacy as you savor a tasting, followed by an included lunch. Burn off a few calories with a short, guided walk through the village to Norway's smallest stave church this afternoon before a 25-minute shuttle ride back to the hotel. This evening, share reminiscences of your memorable journey over a festive farewell dinner.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 7

### Travel to Bergen. Your *Norway: Bergen & the Fjords* tour concludes

*Bryggen city tour; 1–2 miles, easy*

This morning yields a ride on the famed Flam railway. Built between 1923 and 1940 to connect Bergen and Oslo, the railway is a marvel of 20th-century engineering. Today, it opens a window for travelers to the majesty of Norway's unspoiled and splendid interior.

Settle into a vintage car for your scenic journey (approximately 50 minutes). As you ride through a narrow valley, an array of wonders unspools before you: rivers snaking through deep gorges, snowcapped peaks with waterfalls plummeting down their slopes, and stubbles of vegetation poking through rocky expanses. Your small group disembarks at Myrdal, where you'll switch lines to continue onto Bergen (approximately two hours).

Once the capital of the Kingdom of Norway, charming Bergen is also one of the oldest port cities in northern Europe. During the Middle Ages, it was an important trading center for the Hanseatic League, and vestiges of that fascinating history remain in the district of Bryggen (the Quay), a UNESCO World Heritage site. Many of the colorful buildings that line the waterfront have been restored or rebuilt over time and today showcase the character and architecture of that distant era. On arrival, enjoy a short guided tour of Bryggen before walking through the city to your hotel. Your *Norway: Bergen & the Fjords* tour ends at the Clarion Hotel Admiral in the early afternoon (approximately 1:30 p.m.) Bid farewell to your travel



companions and depart at your leisure for onward travels.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## What's Included

### Tour Only

### Air Package

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓	✓
14 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 3 dinners	✓	✓
Local leaders with you throughout tour	✓	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓	✓
Roundtrip airfare		✓
Two extra nights in Bergen		✓
Airport car service for arrival and departure		✓
Pre- and post-trip breakfast		✓
Business-class upgrades available		✓