

NORDIC EXPLORER

Nordic Splendour by Land, Sea & Rail

14 days

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Day 1 Arrive in Helsinki

Arrival in Helsinki, a vibrant city where modern design meets historic charm. This coastal capital is renowned for its stunning waterfront, world-class museums, and laid-back Nordic lifestyle.

Overnight in Helsinki.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Helsinki: City Tour

This morning we explore Helsinki's central districts on foot. The walking tour takes us through the historic centre and diplomatic quarter, past the Presidential Palace, City Hall, and Parliament building. At Senate Square we see the Lutheran Cathedral, designed by Carl Ludvig Engel in the 1830s. The square's neoclassical buildings—all by Engel—represent Russia's effort to create an impressive capital for Finland after 1812.

We visit Temppeliaukio Church, a striking modern structure built directly into solid rock in 1969. The church's dome consists of copper and glass, allowing natural light to illuminate the rough-hewn stone walls. The space doubles as a concert hall, its acoustics enhanced by the natural rock surfaces.

The afternoon is free for independent exploration. Helsinki's compact size makes it easy to navigate on foot. The harbour market operates daily, selling fresh produce, fish, and handicrafts. Those interested in modern architecture might visit the Oodi Helsinki Library, completed in 2018. The building occupies a prominent site facing Parliament, with a large public terrace on its roof offering views across the city.

Overnight in Helsinki.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Free time in Helsinki / Ferry to Sweden

The morning is free to explore Helsinki independently. A popular option is the ferry to Suomenlinna, a sea fortress built across six islands starting in 1748 when Finland was part of Sweden. The fortress represents an outstanding example of 18th-century military architecture and is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The ferry departs from the Market Square every 15-20 minutes and takes about 15 minutes. Suomenlinna is best explored on foot at your own pace—your Tour Leader will provide directions during yesterday's tour.

This afternoon we board our overnight ferry to Stockholm. The vessels on this route feature restaurants, duty-free shops, and entertainment facilities. Our cabins have low beds (not bunks) and ensuite washrooms. Dinner is served on board as we cruise through the Stockholm archipelago.

Overnight ferry.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Stockholm: Old Town & Vasa Museum

After our morning arrival in Stockholm, we check into our hotel (or put our luggage in storage) and have a break before beginning our afternoon walking tour.

Stockholm occupies 14 islands where Lake Mälaren meets the Baltic Sea. Three islands—Riddarholmen, Staden, and Helgeandsholmen—form the Old Town, a concentration of 17th and 18th-century buildings fronting narrow medieval lanes.

We begin at Stockholm City Hall, completed in 1923. The building has hosted the Nobel Prize banquet since 1930. Our guided tour includes the Blue Hall, where the banquet takes place, and the Golden Hall with its 18 million gold-mosaic tiles depicting Swedish history.

Crossing to Gamla Stan (Old Town), we walk the cobblestone streets between buildings painted in ochre, rust, and gold tones. The Royal Palace, one of Europe's largest with over 600 rooms, dominates the waterfront. We pass St. Nicholas Church (Storkyrkan), Stockholm's oldest church from the 13th century, and Riddarholm Church, where Swedish monarchs have been buried since the 16th century. At Stortorget, the Old Town's main square, the Nobel Museum occupies the former stock exchange building.

From Gamla Stan we take a short ferry to Djurgården island for the Vasa Museum. The museum houses a 17th-century warship that sank on its maiden voyage in Stockholm harbour in 1628. Salvaged in 1961 after 333 years underwater, the Vasa is the world's only preserved 17th-century ship. The vessel stands 69 metres tall in the museum's purpose-built hall, its carved decorations and original paint remarkably preserved. Exhibits explain the ship's construction, its catastrophic sinking, and the salvage operation.

After our visit, we return to the hotel by public transport.

Overnight in Stockholm.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Stockholm: Boat Tour & Leisure Time

This morning we board a boat for a 50-minute tour through Stockholm's waterways. Departing near City Hall, the cruise winds through the channels between islands, offering views of the city from the water. We pass Kungsholmen island with its waterfront promenades, and the smaller islands of Långholmen and Reimersholme. The guide explains Stockholm's development from a 13th-century settlement controlling trade routes between Lake Mälaren and the Baltic, to its current status as Sweden's capital and largest city.

The afternoon is free to explore Stockholm independently. The Old Town rewards further wandering, with shops, cafes, and galleries tucked along its lanes. Djurgården island contains several museums and extensive parkland. The Kungsträdgården, a popular city park, often hosts outdoor events and concerts during summer.

Overnight in Stockholm.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Stockholm, Sweden - Fly to Copenhagen, Denmark

This morning we fly to Copenhagen, Denmark's capital. After arriving and checking into our hotel, we begin exploring the city.

We start with a one-hour canal cruise that provides an overview of Copenhagen's layout and landmarks. The boat glides through the historic harbour, past Amalienborg Palace where the Danish royal family resides, and Christiansborg Palace, which houses Denmark's parliament. The canals also reveal Copenhagen's maritime heritage—the city has been an important Baltic trading port since medieval times. We pass the Little Mermaid statue, created in 1913 and inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, sitting on a rock at the harbour entrance.

Overnight in Copenhagen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Copenhagen: City Touring

This morning we walk through Copenhagen's historic centre, beginning at Nyhavn. This canal-side district, lined with 17th-century townhouses painted in bright colours, once served as the city's main commercial harbour. Hans Christian Andersen lived in several of these

houses during his years in Copenhagen—you can visit the museum dedicated to his life during free time.

From Nyhavn we walk to Amalienborg Palace, the royal family's winter residence. Four identical Rococo palaces face an octagonal courtyard, completed in the 1750s as mansions for noble families before becoming the royal residence after Christiansborg Palace burned in 1794.

We continue to Rosenborg Castle, built by King Christian IV in the early 17th century as a summer residence. The castle now houses the Danish crown jewels and royal regalia, including the crown used at coronations since 1671. The surrounding King's Garden provides a green space in the city centre, popular with locals during warm weather.

The afternoon is free. Copenhagen's National Museum, located in a former palace, contains extensive collections on Danish history and ethnography. The museum is free to enter and makes an excellent rainy-day option.

NOTE: The sequence of Copenhagen sightseeing may vary depending on weather, hotel location, and logistical considerations.

Overnight in Copenhagen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Copenhagen: City Tour - Overnight Ferry to Oslo

This morning we visit Christiansborg Palace, which houses Denmark's parliament, prime minister's office, and Supreme Court. The current palace, completed in 1928, stands on a site that has held a fortress or palace since 1167. The two previous buildings on this site both burned—in 1794 and 1884. We tour the Royal Reception Rooms, used for state functions and royal audiences, which showcase Danish craftsmanship in their tapestries, chandeliers, and furnishings.

If time permits before our ferry departure, you might visit the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, founded by beer magnate Carl Jacobsen. The museum contains significant collections of ancient Mediterranean art and 19th-century European painting and sculpture, housed in a building with a large winter garden at its centre.

This afternoon we board the evening ferry for the overnight journey to Oslo. The route crosses the Kattegat and Skagerrak straits between Denmark and Norway. Our cabins provide ensuite facilities and comfortable sleeping arrangements. The vessel includes restaurants, shops, and deck spaces for watching the coastline. Dinner is served on board.

Overnight ferry.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Arrival in Oslo: City Touring

The final 90 minutes of the ferry journey offers excellent views as we enter Oslofjord. The ship passes Drøbak fortress and numerous islands with summer cottages before docking near Oslo's city centre. Our coach and guide will meet us at the terminal to begin sightseeing directly from the port.

We visit Vigeland Sculpture Park, the life work of Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland (1869-1943). The park contains over 200 sculptures in bronze, granite, and wrought iron, all by Vigeland, arranged along a central axis. The Monolith, carved from a single piece of granite, rises 14 metres and depicts 121 human figures climbing toward the summit.

We continue to the Norwegian Folk Museum, an open-air collection of over 150 historic buildings relocated from across Norway. The museum includes urban houses, farm buildings, and the Gol Stave Church, a wooden church from around 1200 demonstrating medieval construction techniques. Buildings are arranged to show regional variations in Norwegian architecture and living conditions from the 16th through 19th centuries.

Our tour includes a stop at the Opera House, completed in 2008. The building's angled white roof slopes directly into the harbour, designed to be walked on as a public space. From the roof we have views across the harbour toward the city centre.

After checking into our hotel, the remainder of the day is free. The Karl Johans gate, Oslo's main street, connects the Royal Palace to the central station and contains shops, cafes, and the National Theatre.

NOTE: Hotel rooms will not be available when we dock in the morning. Large luggage remains secured on the coach while we tour; prepare a day-pack with items you'll need.

Overnight in Oslo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Oslo: Area Sightseeing

This morning we walk to Oslo City Hall, completed in 1950. The building's main hall contains murals by Norwegian artists depicting the country's history, industry, and culture. The Nobel Peace Prize ceremony takes place in this hall each December.

From City Hall we take a short ferry across the harbour to Bygdøy peninsula, where several of Oslo's museums are located. We visit the Viking Ship Museum, which houses three vessels excavated from burial mounds along Oslofjorden. The ships date to around 850 AD and provide the world's best-preserved examples of Viking Age shipbuilding. The Oseberg ship, the largest and most ornate, contained a queen's burial with numerous grave goods.

We also visit the Fram Museum and Kon-Tiki Museum. The Fram Museum houses the ship used by Norwegian polar explorers Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen for Arctic and Antarctic expeditions between 1893 and 1912. The Kon-Tiki Museum displays the balsa raft Thor Heyerdahl sailed from Peru to Polynesia in 1947, demonstrating the feasibility of pre-Columbian trans-Pacific contact.

We return to central Oslo by public bus in time for lunch and an afternoon visit to the National Museum, which opened in 2022 combining several previous collections. The museum contains Norway's largest art collection, including Edvard Munch's "The Scream" (1893), along with works by other Norwegian and international artists.

Overnight in Oslo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Oslo - Flamsbana Railway - Gudvangen - Stalheim

An early departure takes us to Oslo's central station for the morning train to Myrdal, approximately a five-hour journey through southern Norway's mountain plateau. At Myrdal we transfer to the Flam Railway for the descent to Flam village, one of Europe's most dramatic rail journeys.

The Flam Railway descends 865 metres over 20 kilometres (12.4 miles), an average gradient of 5.5%—one of the world's steepest standard-gauge railways. Construction began in 1923, with workers excavating 18 of the 20 tunnels by hand over 17 years. The line opened in 1940. The railway loops and tunnels through the mountain, crossing the river three times to maintain a navigable gradient. At Kjosfossen waterfall, approximately midway down, the train stops for views and photos.

At Flam, located at the head of Aurlandsfjord, we have time for lunch before boarding a two-hour fjord cruise. The boat travels along Aurlandsfjord and into Naeroyfjord, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Norway's narrowest fjords. Mountain walls rise 1400 metres (4,593 feet) directly from the water, with waterfalls cascading down the cliffs. Traditional farms cling to ledges above the fjord.

At Gudvangen we board a coach for the journey to Stalheim, located in the heart of western Norway's fjord region.

Overnight in Stalheim.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Stalheim - Train to Bergen

This morning we visit Stalheim Folk Museum, an open-air collection of 30 log buildings arranged to recreate a traditional Norwegian farm.

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The museum displays tools, household items, and crafts illustrating rural life in western Norway from the 17th through 19th centuries.

We continue by coach along a winding mountain road to Voss, a market town known as an outdoor activity centre. The route offers views of waterfalls and the steep Stalheimskleiva road descending into the valley below.

From Voss we board the Bergen Railway for the journey to Bergen. This line, completed in 1909, crosses the mountain plateau between eastern and western Norway, reaching 1237 metres (4,058 feet) at its highest point. The route passes through varying landscapes—forests, high mountain plateau, and the descent through narrower valleys toward the coast.

Bergen, Norway's second-largest city, occupies a natural harbour surrounded by seven mountains. The city served as Norway's capital during the 12th and 13th centuries. Later, Hanseatic merchants from northern Germany established a major trading post here, dominating Bergen's commerce from the 14th to 18th centuries. The wooden warehouses from this period still line the harbour at Bryggen. Bergen's maritime traditions continue today in fishing, shipping, and oil industry support.

Overnight in Bergen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Bergen: City Tour

Our walking tour begins at Bryggen, the wharf on Bergen's harbour where rows of wooden warehouses face the water. These gabled buildings mark the site of the Hanseatic merchants' quarter, established in 1360. The current structures date mainly from after an 1702 fire, but they maintain the medieval layout with narrow passages between buildings. Shops and galleries now occupy the ground floors, while upper levels house offices and apartments.

We walk along the harbour past the historic buildings to Bergenhus fortress. The fortress contains Hakon's Hall, a medieval stone hall from the 1260s used for royal ceremonies, and Rosenkrantz Tower, a Renaissance fortification from the 1560s. Behind the fortress stands St. Mary's Church (Mariakirken), Bergen's oldest surviving building from around 1130.

From the church we walk to Fløibanen, the funicular railway that ascends Mount Fløyen. The seven-minute ride climbs 320 metres (1,050 feet), providing panoramic views across Bergen's harbour, the surrounding mountains, and the islands beyond. Walking trails lead from the top station into the forest for those wanting to explore further.

The afternoon is free to enjoy Bergen independently. The fish market near the harbour operates daily, selling fresh seafood including prawns, salmon, and crab. Many visitors buy prawns to eat at the harbour's edge, served simply with bread, lemon, and mayonnaise in the local style.

Overnight in Bergen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Departure

Today we depart from Bergen.

Bon voyage! Ha det bra!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast