

Oslo, Norway: A Travel Feature

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

Norway is a country that Walt Disney World fans will already be familiar with from visits to Epcot's World Showcase and that's exactly where my fascination with Norway started.

As we walked around the pavilion on our honeymoon, marvelling at the beautiful replica buildings of a fishing village outside and enjoying Maelstrom with its journey into a world of trolls, Vikings, polar bears and oil exploration, I knew this was somewhere we had to visit.

Norway is a huge country, with so much to see. It stretches more than 1,000 miles from the Arctic circle, making it one of the largest countries in Europe. Bordered by the North Sea, the Norwegian Sea and even the Arctic Sea; it's also home to breathtaking fjords, long and narrow ocean inlets that can be just as deep as the mountains surrounding them. They were created in the last Ice Age by glaciers that gouged out steep crevices in the landscape. When the ice finally receded, water burst in and filled the space left behind.

Of the four and a half million Norwegians, around 500,000 live in the capital city of Oslo towards the south end of the country, and that's where we decided to head. Apart from the height of winter, Oslo shares fairly similar temperatures with Britain, hitting highs in the summer that are into the 70's and getting up into the 50's in spring and autumn. Tempting though it was to go in mid-winter and see the Norway at its coldest, we opted for the height of summer and managed to hit a heat wave, which regularly saw temperatures up in the 90's. Wandering around Oslo in shorts was not an experience I ever thought we'd enjoy, but it was a very pleasant surprise!

One of the beauties of visiting Oslo in the summer is the daylight. Because it's so far north, it doesn't start to get dark until around 9pm at night and even in the early hours of the morning, it's never pitch black, which gives you lots of time to be out and about, getting all the photos you could ever want of the city.

There is certainly plenty to see, although much of it is outside the city itself. The two biggest attractions in Oslo are in Bygdoy, which means the inhabited island. It's across the harbour from Oslo and ferries take you there during the summer months, while a bus service runs year round. The place is home to the Vikingskipshuset (Viking Ship Museum), which is where you will be able to see some of the original Viking ships, dating from the ninth century, which have been excavated

from farmland. These ships were used to transport the bodies of high-ranking Vikings on their last journey to the kingdom of the dead and it's amazing how much of these boats have been preserved. Considering that they're over 1,000 years old, about 90% of the Oseberg ship is still original wood!

Nearby is the Norsk Folkemuseum, Europe's largest open-air museum, which celebrates Norwegian life. As you walk around this massive site, you'll see more than 150 buildings that have been reconstructed from all over Norway, showing you how life used to be in towns, farming and fishing communities. The most striking exhibit here is the Gol Stave Church, originally built in 1200 and is immediately familiar to Disney visitors, as this was the model for the Stave Church in Epcot's World Showcase.

To the north of the city is the striking Vigelandsparken, Oslo's largest park, named after the sculptor Gustav Vigeland and packed with 212 of his sculptures. It's a stunning sight and well worth the tram or train ride out there. Public transport in Oslo is not only reliable; it's also very easy to use.

In the city itself, star attractions include another part of Norwegian life from Epcot, Akershus castle. OK, so in Oslo, the Disney Princesses don't dine here, but you will be able to explore a castle that has a history of more than 700 years and is still used today for state functions. It also offers some breathtaking views across the harbour.

The City Hall (Rådhuset) is also well worth a visit. It's where the Nobel Peace Prize is presented every December and although this was only opened in 1950, it's hard to remember that when you walk around, as it's so richly decorated. It's like stepping into a castle or a Royal residence.

Close by is the beautiful harbor-side development of Aker Brygge. But be warned -- this is Oslo and Norway's downfall. It's an exceptionally expensive country to visit. I had been warned by friends about how pricey food and drink would be and I thought they were joking. Unfortunately for us, they weren't. It's very difficult to eat cheaply here and any visitor needs to budget accordingly.

One other thing that should go into your budget is a cruise into the fjords. We took an evening cruise from Oslo, which included a seafood buffet, and within a few minutes of leaving Oslo harbour, it was as if we had entered another world -- peaceful and beautiful. By the end of the evening I could understand why so many cruise ships offer trips along the Norwegian fjords. It really is one of the world's most amazing sights.

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There is so much to see and do in Oslo that it's hard to pack it all in. We had three days here and we came away feeling that wasn't quite enough time. But then again, it's a place that has a history dating back more than 1,000 years to the time of the Vikings, so perhaps it's no surprise that today it's a city packed with opportunities for visitors.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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