NORWAY TRAVEL TIPS

The following is a list of useful information about travel to Norway. If you have any specific questions concerning your airline reservations or our itinerary, please contact BenchMark Travel Services at (978) 792-5150 or toll-free at (866) 535-8600 from the USA and Canada, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. You may also contact us via e-mail at tut@benchmarkin.com or by fax at (978) 834-6082.

TRAVEL DATES
If you’re flying with the group from New York’s JFK, you will depart on Norwegian Air for Bergen, Norway (BGO) at 9:55 p.m. on Monday, August 24th, 2015 and arrive on Tuesday, August 25th at 4:35 p.m. Your flight back to JFK departs Kirkenes, Norway at 12 noon on Tuesday, September 1st and arrives back in New York at 8:05 p.m. the same day.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK?
The atmosphere onboard ship is extremely relaxed and the dress code is casual. This is more of an adventure/explorer holiday where you get to see the parts of Norway to which the larger cruise ships cannot navigate. Keep in mind that the weather in Norway can vary during the course of each voyage or even during the day. You should bring a variety of sensible layers to add or remove according to the temperature. Some essentials we suggest:

• Walking shoes, sneakers or water-resistant hiking boots
• Wind and waterproof jacket, gloves, hat or cap, scarf, rain poncho
• Jeans or casual trousers, light and warmer sweaters or sweatshirts, shirts or t-shirts
• Swimsuit if you plan to take advantage of the ship’s Jacuzzi
• Personal medications and prescription eyeglasses
• Small backpack
• Binoculars
• Sunglasses and sunscreen
• Calculator or currency converter - if you have a smart phone, there’s an app for that
• Camera with charger or extra batteries
• Travel Insurance certificate, if you’ve purchased insurance (highly recommended)
• Passport and money
• A copy of the picture page of your passport – keep separate from your passport
• Electric converter

PASSPORTS
ALL travelers (regardless of nationality) must carry a passport, valid for at least six (6) months after your intended return date to your home country. Two pages must be available for the entry stamp. If you hold a passport with an expiration date less than six (6) months after your return date, you must renew your passport prior to departure.

If you are not a U.S. Citizen, your National Consulate or Embassy can answer any questions you may have regarding the individual travel documents required. You can find a worldwide index of Embassies via the web at:
www.embassyworld.org.
PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU WILL BE EXTENDING YOUR TRIP TO ANOTHER COUNTRY, YOU SHOULD CHECK WITH THE CONSULATE OF THAT COUNTRY TO ESTABLISH IF A VISA OR ANY ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION WILL BE REQUIRED.

AIRPORT CHECK IN
Strict security measures at the airport may impact your travel plans and cause delays, which is why it is important that you allow plenty of time to get to the airport and check in at least three (3) hours prior to your flight’s departure time. Due to constant changes of flight schedules, it is highly recommended that you confirm your flight’s status before you leave for the airport.

Please take note of the check-in policies, carry-on restrictions and airport security rules that may impact your travel plans. Due to the fact that these security measures change regularly, we suggest that you visit the following website for the most up-to-date information: www.tsa.gov

PLEASE NOTE: THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION REQUIRES AIRLINES TO SOLICIT EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION FOR U.S. PASSENGERS TRAVELING INTERNATIONALLY. PLEASE BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER UPON CHECK IN.

CARRY-ON LUGGAGE
You are permitted to carry one item of hand baggage (max 22 lbs. - 21x15x9 in.) in addition to one small personal item onboard the aircraft. Your personal item (e.g. small handbag or laptop case) must fit comfortably under the seat in front of you.

Passengers with more than one carry-on, plus a personal item will be required to check the additional luggage. Be sure to pack the essentials in your carry-on bag, such as your airline tickets, passport, a light change of clothing, any valuables, medications, toiletries, and perhaps a book or a snack.

Although regulations have recently changed, the TSA still recommends that sharp objects be placed in your checked luggage. It’s not just the obvious items, but includes such innocuous items as razors for shaving, nail files, Swiss army knives, and corkscrews. Lighters and matches, or any type of scissors (e.g., from a sewing kit or first aid kit) should also be packed in your checked luggage.

Additionally liquids and gels are forbidden as carry-on items unless they are under three (3) ounces and declared by showing them in a plastic, 1 quart bag. A few exceptions to this rule apply and include diabetic glucose medications such as insulin, baby formula, and prescription liquid medications labeled with a name that matches the passenger’s ticket. These items must be declared to the transportation security officers at the security checkpoint. Beverages and other items purchased in the secure boarding area may be brought onto the aircraft.

Laptop computers must still be screened separately at the security checkpoint, but will be allowed on board the aircraft.

CHECKED LUGGAGE
Included in the group airfare are 2 pieces of checked baggage (max 44 lbs. per piece) per person at no additional charge. Size of individual items must not exceed: length 98 in., height 31 in., and width 44 in. In addition, the total circumference (L+H+W) must not exceed 118 in. Charges will apply for additional bags. If you are not flying with the group, please check with your carrier regarding their rules for checked baggage.

LOST LUGGAGE
In the event that one of your bags goes astray, you’ll want to file a Baggage Claim Report before passing through customs at the airport. Also, be sure to inform a member of the TUT Travel Staff so that they can work with the airlines to recover your lost luggage as quickly as possible.
EMERGENCY TRAVEL SERVICE
If Benchmark Travel Services has arranged your flights, and you are in need of assistance on your travel days, you may contact us at the numbers listed above. If you are traveling before or after normal business hours, you may contact Emergency Travel Services at the number listed on the back of your airline ticket jacket – a representative will be available on a 24-hour basis to receive your call. If you have an emergency while in Norway, our TUT Travel Staff will be on-site with you throughout the trip to offer assistance.

IMPORTANT TRAVEL DOCUMENTS
If you book your flights with BenchMark Travel Services, your airline ticket and/or e-ticket receipt will arrive, along with your final documents, approximately three (3) weeks prior to your departure date.

HEALTH PRECAUTIONS
The following general information has been provided only as a guideline. Please consult your personal physician for his or her advice based on your health history and current situation.

ALL TRAVELERS should make sure that your standard adult immunizations and ‘boosters’ are up to date. Additional vaccines are not necessary.

TIME ZONE
In August, Norway will be 6 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time. If it’s 1:00 p.m. on August 24th in New York City, it is 7:00 p.m. on August 24th in Norway.

COMMUNICATIONS

Phone
Private mobile phones may be used on board although reception may vary. If you plan to use a cell phone be sure to confirm with your wireless provider that you have an international calling plan and advise them that you will be cruising with Hurtigruten Cruise Line. In addition, all cabins have a telephone. You can buy a phone card at reception to call from the ship.

If family and friends need to contact you during the program the ship can be contacted by phone or e-mail:
MS Midnatsol – midnatsol@hurtigruten.com
Telephone: (47) 994 87 277

The international prefix and country code for Norway is 47. To call a Norwegian number from abroad, dial the country code before the 8-digit phone number. If you are calling from the USA or Canada you will also need to dial 011, prior to dialing the number.

Internet
There is an internet café on board the MS Midnatsol. There are also wireless networks in most public areas to connect laptops, mobile phones, etc. Be aware that as the bandwidth is narrow, reception may be intermittent and internet and WiFi cannot be guaranteed.

Please note that the connection is a 512MB line and that both internet and telephones from time to time will be out of range due to the vessel’s location.

WEATHER
In August, most of Norway has warm, pleasant weather. Average daily temperatures easily reach 55-65 degrees Fahrenheit. Even farther north, summer temperatures are rather pleasant – sometimes reaching as high as 75 degrees Fahrenheit. However, the summer weather can be wet and changeable, especially in the Fjords of Norway and Northern Norway. Brisk breezes and brief rainstorms are possible anytime. Nights can be chilly, even in summer.
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONVENTIONS
Norway doesn’t really have any distinct social conventions and visitors from other countries will find the normal rules are applicable with regards to polite behavior and good manners. Simplicity and nature are the core of the Norwegian lifestyle. Tolerance, kindness to each other and independence are highly valued. Norwegians are very proud of their country and talk a lot about it - they especially like it when visitors show an interest in their country, the land, its culture and its heritage. In fact, asking a Norwegian about his or her country is itself a great “icebreaker,” maybe even better than talking about the weather.

ELECTRONICS – AT THE HOTEL AND ON BOARD THE SHIP
Norway has 220 volts, AC of 50 Hertz (North America operates at 110-120 volt and the electricity is generated at 60 Hertz). Electric appliances use continental-style two-pin plugs for which an adapter is required. If you need an adapter/converter, please bring your own with you.

Important: If your home supply is 110 volts and your electrical equipment does not have a 110/220 or 110/240 switch on it, you will need to get a voltage converter to step the Norwegian 220 volts down to 110 volts. These are best purchased in your home country as electrical supply stores in Norway do not usually sell adapters. Electronics you should check are your phone charger, camera chargers, electric toothbrush, travelling clothes irons, hair curlers, shavers, hair dryers, laptop chargers etc. many of these devices are “dual” voltage meaning they operate either at 110v or 220/240v. There should be a label on the appliance advising that it is capable of dual voltage, (if not or in doubt don't use it).

FOOD ON BOARD
The food is Norwegian and breakfast is buffet style with a selection of cold meats, cheese, eggs, cereals and fruit. Lunch is the famous cold table with a choice of fish dishes, cold meats, salads, a selection of hot dishes, desserts and fruit. Dinner is a three-course set meal, please note there is not usually a choice of menu. Occasionally a cold table may be served in the evening and the set meal at lunch time. Special diets, (e.g. vegetarian) may be accommodated if requested in good time. Passengers on strict diets, e.g. vegans, may find that there is a limited choice.

WATER SAFETY
Tap water is perfectly safe to drink however visitors not accustomed to its taste may prefer to buy bottled water. Your cruise package includes unlimited bottled water on board the ship.

FOR YOUR PROTECTION
Remember, neither the airlines nor the ship will take responsibility for lost or stolen valuables. We suggest that you pack them in your carry-on bag and when on board they can be stored by reception in the ship’s safe. While touring or shopping leave your passport and the bulk of your money in the ship’s safe. Take with you only the money you intend to spend. Carry a copy of the picture page of your passport with you as you may need it to exchange traveler’s checks or in case your passport is lost.

THE LANGUAGE
In Norway most people understand and speak English well, and it is not uncommon for Norwegians to have some knowledge of German, French or Spanish. Norwegian and English are the official on board languages and German is also spoken by the personnel at reception.

In addition, you will be accompanied throughout the trip by two American Travel Staff who will be ready to assist you at all times.
SHOPPING IN NORWAY

Popular souvenirs include knitwear, wood and ceramic trolls, cheese slicers, boxes with rosemaling, gold and silver jewelry, items made from pewter, smoked salmon, caviar, akvavit, chocolate, and geitost, the sweet brown goat cheese that can be found in just about every Norwegian kitchen.

Prices in Norway, as in all of Scandinavia, are generally much higher than in other European countries. Prices of handmade articles, such as knitwear, are controlled, making comparison shopping pointless. Otherwise, shops have both sales and specials - look for the words salg and tilbud. Most stores are open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm or 6:00 pm, and on Saturday 9:00 am to 1:00 pm or 3:00 pm.

Norway imposes a 19.4 percent value added tax (VAT) on all goods sold within the country. However, foreign visitors can export goods without paying a tax as many stores mail purchases directly to customers’ homes, thus making paying and recovering tax unnecessary. Tax-free receipts can be obtained from any shops bearing the sign 'Tax-free for tourists'. VAT refunds can be obtained in cash at airports.

CUSTOMS

Upon Departing for Norway
If you have just bought a new and expensive digital camera, camcorder, watch, laptop computer or similar item, it will be worth your while to stop at the Customs Office at your international departure airport and register these items. It usually does not take much time and will save you from the possibility of delays and/or having to pay duty on these items on the return home.

Returning from Norway
Per the norm, you will need to declare everything that you may have bought in Norway or did not take with you when you left your home country. Of course, how much you will be permitted to bring home under “duty free” status varies by country and is often determined by the length of your trip. For those traveling from outside of the United States, it is wise to confirm details with the Customs personnel at your departure airport or contact your local Consulate prior to your departure.

Each U.S. citizen may bring back $800.00 USD worth of “duty free” items (a maximum of $1,600.00 USD per household) as long as they are in your possession or brought back as accompanied baggage. Duty will be waived on items that you mail home to yourself, if the value is $200.00 USD or less. Antiques that are at least 100 years old and fine art are considered “duty free.”

Citizens who individually declare between $800.00 USD and $1,000.00 USD will be charged a duty on the amount over $800 USD (up to $1,000.00 USD) by Customs officials at the first point of entry, so remember to keep your receipts handy. The $800.00 USD “duty free” exemption may include 200 cigarettes (1 carton) or 100 cigars and, if you are over the age of 21, one (1) liter (33.8 ounces) of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, liquor, etc.).

CURRENCY

Norway’s monetary unit is the Kroner (NOK). 1 NOK is divided into 100 øre (cents).

As of this printing $1.00 USD = 7.5 NOK.

Norwegian coins come in the following denominations: 50 øre, 1 krone, 5 kroner, 10 kroner, and 20 kroner. Norwegian bills: 50 kroner, 100 kroner, 200, kroner, 500 kroner, and 1000 kroner.

MONEY MATTERS

Norwegian currency is used on board and most major currencies can be exchanged on board. Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club and American Express are all accepted. A cruise card can be obtained and used for payment for extras and settled at the end of your voyage.

Currency Exchange
Currency can be exchanged at banks, bureaux de change and tourist information centers. Bank opening hours in Norway are usually 9:00 am to 3:30 or 4:00 pm Monday to Friday, with longer opening hours on Thursday (usually until 5:00 or 5:30 pm). Banks are closed Saturday and Sunday, and on bank holidays. In some places, however, the only way to exchange money is at post offices, where the exchange fee might be high.
Traveler’s Checks
We recommend that you use credit cards or cash while in Norway as Travelers’ Checks are not widely accepted in stores. However, they are accepted at banks and major hotels or tourist centers. The exchange fees vary by location. If you do plan to carry some of your funds using Traveler’s Checks, those offered through American Express are the most preferred. PLEASE NOTE: Before you depart for Norway, be sure to call your bank and/or credit card issuer(s) to alert them that you will be traveling to Norway and plan to use your card(s) while traveling.

Visa TravelMoney is a good way to carry money abroad. It is simply a card, which you “pre-pay” with your spending money before you travel. Then you can use your Visa TravelMoney card to withdraw cash from ATMs or to spend money in shops and restaurants while you’re away, exactly as you would use a bankcard at home.

You can buy Visa TravelMoney at branches of Travelex and also at AAA, CAA, CUNA, ICBA and ABA. Visa TravelMoney is just as secure as a Traveler’s Check. It has PIN and signature protection, and you can choose to take a second card with you, which will still be active if the first card is lost or stolen. Plus you are covered by 24-hour emergency assistance to help with replacement cash in a hurry.

Credit Cards
Visa, MasterCard, Eurocard, Diners Club and American Express credit cards are widely accepted throughout Norway. Please note that not all places accept debit cards. Some of the smaller establishments do not accept American Express or any credit cards, so it is always good to ask if you do not see a sign in the window or at a register.

When you receive your monthly credit card statement it will show the converted costs and will reflect the rate of exchange at the time of your purchase. Please be aware that in most cases, an extra fee for converting from foreign currency will be added to your credit card.

PLEASE NOTE: IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TO TAKE CASH ADVANCES OUT ON YOUR CREDIT CARD PRIOR TO YOUR DEPARTURE.

ATM Transactions
Minibanks (the Norwegian name for ATMs) can be found adjacent to many banks and near busy public places, such as airports, train stations and in shopping centers. You can withdraw cash using major credit cards or Cirrus, Visa Electron or Plus debit cards with a 4-digit PIN. Banking fees for ATM withdrawals and foreign transactions vary widely, so please check the rates with your bank(s).

TIPPING
Not much tipping is required in Norway, as the service charge will always be included in your bill. It is common courtesy, however, to round up your bill to the next even 5 or 10 NOK amount, e.g. a 37.58 bill to 40 NOK. A 10% gratuity is considered generous.

It is not common practice to tip on Hurtigruten ships, but if you feel that crew members should be rewarded for providing exceptional service, tip boxes are placed in the restaurant together with envelopes.

Your American TUT Travel Staff will not expect or accept any tips.

TRAVEL INSURANCE
BenchMark Travel Services strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance* before any TUT trip! Travel insurance offers travelers coverage for unforeseen problems, from a cancelled flight to a serious illness—or in rare cases, even an act of terrorism or the financial default of a travel supplier. If you miss a travel connection, even for reasons beyond your control, you are NOT necessarily protected from financial loss unless you have travel insurance. For example, if you encounter mechanical problems, flight delays, or inclement weather that causes you to miss connections, the airline carrier might re-book you, although in many cases (such as bad weather) it is NOT guaranteed (in which case you may either have to purchase an entirely new round-trip ticket or forego the entire prepaid trip without any reimbursement). Travel insurance can cover new flights or provide trip cancellation coverage (for a covered loss), as well as emergency medical expenses and medical transportation. Travel insurance also provides 24 hour “911” emergency travel service, in case a traveler has to change a flight or a hotel room, in addition to assistance with emergency cash transfers, lost baggage, and pre-trip consultation services (travel advisories, passport requirements, inoculation information, etc.).
HOW TO PURCHASE TRAVEL INSURANCE: You can obtain travel insurance from Travel Guard International.* To view the various policies offered, log onto www.travelguard.com. You will have two options to purchase travel insurance: 1. US and Canadian residents may call Travel Guard directly at 1-800-826-1300. 2. Visit Travel Guard’s website at www.TravelGuard.com to process the insurance yourself. In this case you will be asked for a travel agent code, please give Travel Guard the code 22735731 as this code will identify your booking with BenchMark Travel Services. Please be sure to read all policy information thoroughly and note that if you have a pre-existing condition you must apply for the insurance within 14 days of the trip deposit date.

*Please note that Travel Guard insurance is only available to US and Canadian residents at this time. If you live elsewhere, please check for such coverage within your home country from independent providers.

MORE QUESTIONS?
If you have any questions prior to traveling, please contact BenchMark Travel Services at the numbers below. We expect that questions will arise during your stay in Norway; therefore the TUT Travel Staff will be readily available at the Hospitality Desk, located in a convenient area on the ship. If you need assistance, feel free to stop by the Hospitality Desk any day during the trip.

BenchMark Travel Services
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