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## Norway's western fjords & coastal passage

9 Days | Oslo – Åndalsnes – Ålesund – Geiranger – Coast – Bergen

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“The classic fjords – Without the crowds”

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### Executive summary

This journey is designed for travelers who want to experience Norway as a *continuous unfolding landscape*—not just a sequence of destinations.

Starting in Oslo, the route quickly leaves the urban behind and moves into Norway's most striking natural regions. You will travel through vast inland valleys by rail, descend one of Europe's most dramatic mountain corridors on the Rauma Railway, and reach the Atlantic coast at Ålesund.

From there, the journey continues into the heart of fjord Norway, with a cruise through the UNESCO-listed Geirangerfjord—a landscape that defines the country's natural identity. The route then expands outward again, transitioning from enclosed fjords to the exposed coastline, before concluding in the historic maritime city of Bergen.

This itinerary is ideal for those who want to experience not only Norway's highlights, but also the *transitions between them*—the subtle changes in light, scale, and atmosphere that make the journey feel complete.

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## **Day 1 – Arrival in Oslo: Settling into the Nordic rhythm**

Arrive in Oslo, a city that rarely overwhelms first impressions, but instead reveals itself gradually through movement, light, and atmosphere.

After your arrival and hotel check-in, the remainder of the day is intentionally left open. This is not simply “free time,” but an opportunity to ease into the rhythm of Norway without structure or expectation. Oslo is particularly well-suited to this kind of arrival—compact, walkable, and quietly elegant.

You might begin along the waterfront at Aker Brygge and Tjuvholmen, where contemporary architecture meets the fjord. Here, the city feels open and connected to the water, with boats moving slowly through the harbor and locals enjoying cafés and outdoor spaces. Continue toward the Oslo Opera House, where the building itself becomes part of the landscape. Walking up its sloping roof, you gain your first wide view of the fjord—a perspective that will resonate more deeply as the journey progresses.

Alternatively, explore inland neighborhoods where Oslo feels more intimate. Grünerløkka offers a creative, lived-in atmosphere with independent shops and relaxed cafés, while Frogner provides a more classical setting with tree-lined streets and historic buildings.

The key to this first day is not how much you see, but how you arrive—calmly, without pressure, and open to the pace that will define the days ahead.

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## **Day 2 – Oslo: Layers of history, exploration & evening on the fjord**

Today allows you to move beyond first impressions and begin to understand Oslo’s deeper character.

You may explore independently or choose to include a guided experience that brings together the city’s key cultural and historical elements. A natural starting point is the Bygdøy peninsula, reached by a short ferry ride that immediately shifts your perspective from city streets to open water.

On Bygdøy, the Fram Museum and the Kon-Tiki Museum provide insight into Norway’s long-standing relationship with exploration and the sea. These are not just museums, but stories of ambition, resilience, and curiosity—qualities that echo throughout the country’s history.

Back in the city, a walk along Karl Johans gate connects several of Oslo’s most recognizable landmarks, including the Royal Palace Oslo. Yet what often stands out most is not the landmarks themselves, but the sense of space and calm that defines the city.

For those who prefer a slower pace, Oslo offers ample alternatives: sculpture parks, waterfront walks, and quiet corners where the city feels almost residential rather than capital.

In the evening, step aboard a fjord cruise. As the boat moves away from the harbor, the city softens into the background, replaced by islands, open water, and the changing light of the evening sky. A traditional shrimp buffet is served on board, creating a relaxed and distinctly Norwegian dining experience.

This contrast—urban exploration followed by quiet time on the fjord—captures Oslo at its best.

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### **Day 3 – Into the wild: The Rauma railway & arrival in Åndalsnes**

Today marks a clear turning point in the journey.

Depart Oslo by train, traveling north and west through landscapes that gradually shift from cultivated lowlands to more rugged terrain. The transition is subtle at first, but becomes increasingly pronounced as mountains begin to define the horizon.

The highlight of the day is the journey on the Rauma Railway, a route widely regarded as one of Europe's most dramatic rail experiences.

As the train descends into the Rauma Valley, the scenery intensifies. Towering peaks rise abruptly on either side, rivers cut through the valley floor, and waterfalls cascade down steep rock faces. The train moves slowly, allowing time to absorb each view—crossing bridges, curving along cliff edges, and passing beneath Trollveggen, Europe's tallest vertical rock wall.

Arriving in Åndalsnes, you find yourself in a landscape that feels both powerful and contained. Surrounded by mountains, the town serves as a gateway to some of Norway's most dramatic natural environments.

The afternoon is yours to explore. You might take a short walk to a viewpoint, visit the Norwegian Mountaineering Centre, or simply sit and take in the scale of the surroundings.

This is where Norway begins to feel truly wild.

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#### **Day 4 – Ålesund: Architecture shaped by sea & light**

Travel by road toward the coast, where the landscape gradually opens and the air begins to carry a distinct maritime clarity.

Arriving in Ålesund, you encounter a town unlike any other in Norway. Rebuilt in Art Nouveau style after a devastating fire in 1904, Ålesund presents a cohesive architectural identity—ornate facades, soft colors, and decorative details that reflect both European influence and local character.

The town is spread across several islands, giving it a unique relationship with the sea. Water is never far away, and the constant interplay between land and ocean shapes the atmosphere.

To fully appreciate this setting, take the walk up to Mount Aksla. From the top, the view stretches across rooftops, waterways, and distant mountains—a perspective that reveals both the town's beauty and its geography.

The rest of the day invites exploration without urgency. Visit local galleries, enjoy a meal by the harbor, or simply wander through streets that feel both elegant and lived-in.

Ålesund offers a pause in the journey—a moment where the focus shifts from raw nature to human craftsmanship and design.

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### **Day 5 – Geirangerfjord: Immersion in a defining landscape**

Today brings you into one of Norway’s most iconic natural settings.

Travel by boat into the UNESCO-listed Geirangerfjord, where the scale and intensity of the landscape become immediately apparent. The fjord is narrow and enclosed, with steep cliffs rising directly from the water and waterfalls descending from heights that seem almost unreal.

As you move through the fjord, the experience is immersive rather than observational. The silence, broken only by water and distant echoes, creates a sense of being fully inside the landscape.

Arriving in Geiranger, you are surrounded on all sides by mountains. The village itself is small, but its setting is vast.

The afternoon offers a range of possibilities. Gentle walks provide changing perspectives on the fjord, while hikes such as Westerås or Skageflå offer more elevated views for those seeking a deeper experience. Alternatively, simply remaining at fjord level—watching the light shift across the water—can be equally rewarding.

This is a place where time feels secondary to presence.

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### **Day 6 – From fjord to ocean: A gradual opening of space**

Leaving Geiranger, today’s journey follows a route that gradually shifts from enclosed fjord landscapes toward the openness of the coast.

Traveling toward Måløy, you pass through valleys, along waterways, and eventually reach the outer edge of the Norwegian mainland.

Here, the landscape changes character once again. The mountains recede, the horizon expands, and the influence of the ocean becomes dominant. Wind, light, and weather shape the environment in a way that feels more exposed and elemental.

Spend the afternoon exploring the town or venturing into the surrounding area. A walk or hike to Veten offers a sweeping view across islands and open sea, providing a sense of scale that contrasts sharply with the narrow fjords of previous days.

This is a quieter part of Norway—less visited, less defined by tourism, and therefore often more memorable.

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### **Day 7 – Coastal passage: Norway as It truly is**

Today’s boat journey to Bergen is one of the most authentic travel experiences in the program.

Moving through a network of islands, narrow channels, and open water, you experience the Norwegian coastline as it has been traveled for generations. Small communities appear along the route, boats move between islands, and the landscape shifts constantly.

There is no single “highlight”—and that is precisely the point. The journey itself becomes the experience.

This slower pace allows for reflection. After days of movement through dramatic landscapes, the rhythm of the coast provides a sense of continuity and calm.

Arriving in Bergen, the return to city life feels natural rather than abrupt.

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### **Day 8 – Bergen: A city rooted in history and everyday life**

Spend the day exploring Bergen, a place where history and modern life exist side by side.

Take the Fløibanen to the top of Mount Fløyen for a wide view of the city and surrounding landscape. From here, the relationship between Bergen and the sea becomes clear.

Back at ground level, explore the UNESCO-listed Bryggen, where wooden buildings line the harbor and narrow passageways reveal hidden spaces behind the facades.

The Fish Market Bergen offers a lively contrast, bringing together locals and visitors in a shared space centered around food and daily life.

Bergen is not a city to rush through. It rewards time, curiosity, and a willingness to wander.

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## **Day 9 – Departure**

Departure from Bergen.

By the end of this journey, you will have experienced Norway not just as a collection of places, but as a sequence of landscapes—each one distinct, yet connected to the next.

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### **Why choose this tour**

- Includes the spectacular Rauma Railway—less known, often more impressive
  - Visits Geirangerfjord, Norway’s most iconic fjord
  - Combines fjords with authentic coastal travel few visitors experience
  - A more varied and less predictable route than the standard Flåm itinerary
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### **Best for / Who this suits**

- Travelers who want the highlights—but not the crowds
  - Guests returning to Norway for a second visit
  - Those who appreciate variety: mountains, fjords, coast, and architecture
  - Curious travelers who value routes that feel less “packaged”
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### **Upgrade options**

- Private driver-guide from Åndalsnes to Bergen
- Helicopter sightseeing over Geirangerfjord
- Boutique hotel upgrades in Ålesund and Geiranger
- Add kayaking or guided hikes in Geiranger