



# Focus on NORWAY

## School Program

*“Although many years have gone by, I still talk about my experiences in Norway like it was yesterday. I still dream in Norwegian and catch myself speaking it now and then! Words cannot describe the lasting feeling my experiences and friends left in my heart—always there when I need them and never too far from my thoughts.”*

*Janis Farquar, participant from Canada, 1995-96*

The Gulf Stream’s warmth lets Norwegians bask comfortably in Scandinavian summers on their southern beaches. On Norway’s northern shores, above the Arctic Circle, however, the baskers are exclusively walruses and polar bears. An abundance of off-shore oil has enriched Norway’s prosperity and given its cities a cosmopolitan pace and focus. Tranquility, though, still reigns in small towns, where venerable churches are among the world’s oldest wooden buildings. Norwegians themselves are reserved but kind and, perhaps inevitably, aficionados of winter sports. The country’s voters also have a fierce national pride that led them to reject joining the European Union.

### ***AFS & Your Experience***

AFS Norway has been in existence since 1947. About 200 AFS volunteers in more than 30 chapters across the country work hard year-round to provide you with the most satisfying intercultural experience possible. AFS Norway works in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education at the national level and has a well-established relationship with the umbrella organization of Norwegian youth groups. During the school year, AFS Norway hosts approximately 160 AFSers from as many as 35 countries.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

### ***Landing in Norway***

When you land in Oslo, the capital of Norway, you and your fellow AFSers will pass through customs and be met by AFS Norway staff and volunteers who will take you to your first Norwegian orientation.

### ***Arrival Orientation***

The arrival orientation camp, organized by staff and run by volunteers from five different regions, is a five-to-seven-day-long language and orientation stay that will help you to prepare for life in Norway. This camp will give you a chance to learn more Norwegian and be better prepared to meet your host family and school, meet other AFSers from around the world, ask questions and learn about AFS in Norway as well as about

Norwegian culture. After this week of meeting new friends, you will travel to your host family by bus, train or plane or be picked up by your host family at the site.

## ***Living in Norway***

### **Lifestyle and Family Living**

Family and friends are very important to Norwegians. Tolerance, kindness and independence are highly valued. Norwegians like to see themselves as a nation of fishermen and farmers who live with traditional customs, close to nature. In reality, Norway's lifestyle is very much like any other industrialized western nation. Norway is sometimes considered Europe's biggest folk museum, but simultaneously it is a laboratory for the future. This contrast is one reason why Norway is such an interesting destination.

Norway's forefathers grew up living a simple life filled with hard work, close to a healthy and challenging natural world. Today's Norwegians are rich in humanity and demand fairness and equality. Neighbors get along well and usually consider each other to be close friends, even in large cities. Children are fairly independent, and some teenagers have part-time jobs.

Families get together on weekends; during the week, Norwegians are often quite busy. Husbands and wives typically consider each other equal in authority. Families tend to be small, and everyone shares in the housework. Parents expect to know when their children are going out and where they are going. Some AFSers live in single-parent families.

Norwegian host families, like all AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their family lives. Most AFSers are placed in small towns and rural areas.

### **Dress and Appearance**

Norwegian youth dress casually. Both boys and girls wear pants (jeans or corduroys) and a sweater and shirt or blouse to school. You should bring sports clothes, a swimsuit, tennis or jogging shoes, good leather shoes, comfortable walking shoes, warm boots, slippers, mittens, warm sweaters, warm underwear, warm socks, a warm, waterproof coat or jacket and a warm winter coat. On a few special occasions, more formal dress is expected: for girls a dress or blouse and skirt; for boys a jacket, slacks and tie. Clothes labeled as "used clothing" on the box can be sent ahead. School uniforms are not worn.

### **Diet and Meals**

Food in Norway is rich in meat, fish, potatoes, vegetables, milk, cheese and sweets in wide varieties. A common meal is meatballs with potatoes, brown gravy and vegetables. Open-faced sandwiches are also popular. Fish is part of the everyday diet. Vegetarianism is extremely rare.

It is common to bring your own sandwich to school where lunch breaks are usually short so that students can go home sooner in the afternoon. In this culture, most families eat the same food at meals together, and it is considered inappropriate for individuals to request special foods or to prepare separate dishes for themselves. Raiding the refrigerator is not done.

You can taste Norway in *fårikål*, the fattiest parts of mutton fresh from the autumn slaughter, simmered with cabbage and whole peppercorns, considered a national dish.

At Christmas, families usually serve salted lamb ribs—*pinnekjøtt*. A traditional Christmas dinner generally features roast pork ribs in Eastern Norway, and cod, halibut or *lutefisk* in coastal districts. Milk is known as “a mother of all dishes,” and it is prominent in Norwegian cooking. Cheese, especially the Norwegian brown goat cheese *geitost*, one of the most distinctively Norwegian sandwich toppings, and sweet milk dishes such as *gomme* are all popular. Butter was once used as a currency in a barter economy.

### **School**

In Norway, municipalities are responsible for compulsory elementary and secondary education (nine years), the counties for upper secondary school (10th to 12th years), and the state for all higher education. Some schools are privately owned but they too rely on subsidies from the state.

In upper secondary school, students choose among many fields of study: general, commercial/clerical, arts/aesthetics, physical education, domestic science, social services and health, technical/industrial, fishing trade, maritime, and agricultural trade. In the field of general studies, second- and third-year students may choose an area of specialization: natural sciences, social studies, language or music. All courses of study require three types of subjects: compulsory core subjects (Norwegian, natural and social science, gym), subjects in the area of specialization, and electives. Admittance to an area of specialization is usually determined by grades obtained in compulsory school. To graduate, a student must pass a state examination that also serves as a university entrance exam. The general field of study lasts three years, and academic standards are fairly high.

Most AFSers are placed in the general field of study or in the first or second year of business studies, music, drama and dance studies or sports and physical education studies. Students meet and discuss their courses with their academic advisor and principal before the start of school if possible. All AFS students are treated as Norwegian students. Transcripts and/or certificates of attendance can be obtained if all requirements are met.

School runs from late August to late June. Classes begin at 8 a.m. and go to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. There are seven 45-minute periods per day with 10- to 15-minute breaks between classes. Each class averages 25-30 students. There are up to one-week vacations in the fall, in February and at Easter, as well as time off at Christmas. Most students walk or cycle to school, but special transport arrangements are made for those who live far from the nearest school.

### **Teen Life**

Most Norwegians are physically active and love nature. In winter, many people ski. In summer, they hike and spend time in forests and mountains. Young people are involved in many activities outside of school such as sports, music, arts and crafts. They also take part in organized activities in the community such as scouting, political organizations and the Red Cross. Like teenagers everywhere, they like to go to movies, get together and have parties and hang out in cafes. Boys and girls treat each other as equals.

### **AFS Activities**

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Norway will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) and talk about expectations for the future program and experiences from their pasts. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also

allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experiences.

Some local chapters may organize special events, activities and trips for your enjoyment. You can look forward to a five- to seven-day language camp and a weekend-long mid-stay session where you will meet other AFSers from the same region. In most regions, immediately prior to the mid-stay orientation, AFSers will participate in a week-long community service project, giving them the opportunity to become better integrated into the community and broaden their perspective of Norwegian culture. The camps are required of all AFSers, and travel expenses will be reimbursed by AFS.

Finally, there is the so-called End-of-Stay orientation. This is a camp or bus trip with the students you met at your language camp and mid-stay evaluation. The End-of-Stay is about looking back at your sojourn and sharing memories with other AFSers. It is also about thinking of the future. The End-of-Stay will end up at the airport in Oslo where you will leave for your home.

### **Language**

Norwegian is the language of Norway. It is a Germanic language related to Danish, Swedish and Icelandic and has two official forms of writing—*bokmål* (Standard Norwegian) and *nynorsk* (New Norwegian).

### **Travel**

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Norway, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS Norway. We strongly discourage traveling on your own or with friends.

### **Spending Money**

The cost of living in Norway is high, so plan on bringing sufficient spending money. AFS suggests that students bring US\$175 per month.

Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to join, but they may pay for some of your personal activities. When you do things with your friends or alone, such as going to a movie or taking special lessons, the expense is your responsibility.

### **Safety and Support**

Like your country, Norway can be safe if you are aware of potential dangers and act accordingly. Host families, as well as AFS Norway, educate students to enable them to have a safe and rewarding experience.

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Norwegian. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Norway have additional rules on especially travel.

### **Health Precautions**

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Norway (which you can get from your government or easily

find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for your health needs.

If you require any medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant, your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

### **Documents**

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you might also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices of your host country, and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. AFS Norway will help you obtain the visa and provide you with instructions regarding the required documents.

### **Program Prices**

Please [contact the AFS office in your home country](#) for information about program price and scholarship possibilities and what the program price covers for the various program offerings. In most cases the program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

## ***Country Information***

### **Geography and Climate**

Much of Norway is covered by mountains and forests. The country is generally divided into four regions. Southeastern Norway features large, flat areas of forests, rich farmland and gentle valleys. Southwestern Norway is more dramatic, with glaciers and deep fjords cutting far inland. Central Norway also has fjords and a similar coastline, but the mountains are less jagged and there are large areas of fertile flatland. Northern Norway is filled with valleys, fjords, mountains and islands. Norway is approximately the size of Great Britain or Japan.

The climate varies considerably from one region to another, but four seasons are distinct throughout the country. In the northernmost county of Finnmark, temperatures can drop to -52°C /-62°F in winter and top 30°C/86°F in summer. The coastal areas have a maritime climate, with mild winters and cool summers, while interior regions have cold winters and warm summers. Although Norway lies in the same latitudes as Alaska and

Siberia, it owes its milder climate to the Gulf Stream, which warms the North Atlantic and keeps the coast and harbors ice-free year-round.

### **Population**

Norway's population is 4,640,200 (2006), with a population density of 11.7 per km<sup>2</sup>. The capital city of Oslo has 532,000 inhabitants. The natives of Norway are the Sami (formerly known as Lapps), who today are an ethnic minority and a separate people, but Norwegian citizens too. About 30,000 Sami live in Norway.

### **Government**

Norway is a constitutional monarchy whose constitution calls for the country to be ruled by a monarch rather than a president. The king and his family have no real political power but are an important symbol, and they mean a great deal to the Norwegian people. King Harald V took over the throne after the death of his father, King Olav V, in 1991. King Harald is married to Queen Sonja, and they have two children, Crown Prince Haakon and Princess Märtha Louise.

The government is headed by a Prime Minister who runs the country with the assistance of 18 cabinet members. Norway's legislative body is called the Storting and is made up of 165 representatives who are elected every four years from 19 counties. Storting passes laws and decides how to spend national revenues.

### **Religion**

The Church of Norway (Evangelical Lutheran) is the state church.

## ***Launching Your AFS Experience***

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving home have the best experience. In order to get ready, first make every effort to learn some key Norwegian words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Norway, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Norwegians and their culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Norway. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living life as a Norwegian. If you do not know alumni, please contact your local volunteer or national AFS office. In addition, AFS Norway will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information, language tape, insurance and school information before you leave home.

Norwegian people will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

If you have not already received a full AFS application packet, please contact your local AFS volunteer or national office to request one. We wish you a wonderful experience!

### **Norwegian pride**

Nature, the midnight sun, the northern lights, fjords, Vikings, fish, elk, bear, sports, Olympics, cheese, wool.

MARILYN MONROE - actress (1926 - 1962) birth name: Norma Jean Mortenson;  
ROALD AMUNDSEN - explorer (1872 - 1928); BJØRNSTJERNE BJØRNSON - Nobel

Prize for Literature (1832 - 1910); FRIDTJOF NANSEN – scientist, explorer – Nobel Peace Prize (1861 - 1930).

**Norwegian Curiosity:** The paper clip (1899) and cheese-slicer (1927) were invented in Norway.

### ***How to Apply***

To become a participant in this country's School Program, contact your nearest AFS office. To locate an AFS office, go to <http://www.afs.org/contact>

Student age (upon arrival)	15y 8m to 18y 6m	
Country data	Size	307,860.00 sq km
	Population	4, 640,200
	Official language	Norwegian
	Government	Constitutional monarchy
Currency	Norwegian krone, divided into 100 ore	
Useful website	<a href="http://www.norway.org">www.norway.org</a>	
AFS Norway website	<a href="http://www.afs.no">www.afs.no</a>	

AFS program destinations are not always available to residents of all countries. If a program interests you, please contact your nearest AFS office to find out if it is an option for you. You can locate your nearest AFS office at <http://www.afs.org/contact>