

# Bergen & the Southwestern Fjords



Two beautiful, vibrant cities and some of Norway's most scenic fjord country make for a wonderful combination. If you're short on time (and even if you're not) and looking for the best that Norway has to offer, this could just be the region to visit.

Bergen is one of the world's most beautiful cities, laid out across harbours and hillsides. It's also rich in history and architecture, especially in the quayside Bryggen district. But this is a city that is anything but stuck in the past with a dynamic cultural life, great restaurants and nightlife. To the south, Stavanger may not match Bergen for architecture, but its old quarter, terrific museums and feel-good vibe make it a must-see.

Even better, both Bergen and Stavanger serve as gateways to the fjords you always dreamed of. Hardangerfjord and its tributaries are quite simply magnificent. Villages beneath precipitous cliffs find their most stunning manifestation in little Eidfjord where farms clinging to high ledges, dizzying waterfalls and Norway's best nature centre provide interest to add to the undeniable beauty. Ulvik, Utne and Kinsarvik also provide perfect vantage points onto this perfect world, while Stalheim allows you to look deep into the valley from its eyrie-like perch. If the plunging landscapes inspire you to do likewise, Voss should be high on your list, where a range of high-energy, high-altitude thrills await.

To the south, Lysefjord might just be Norway's most recognisable image, whether high on Pulpit Rock (Preikestolen) or balancing atop Kjeragbolten. These are places where a frisson of fear draws you to the edge, where you'll stand, amazed, at Norway's extraordinary beauty.

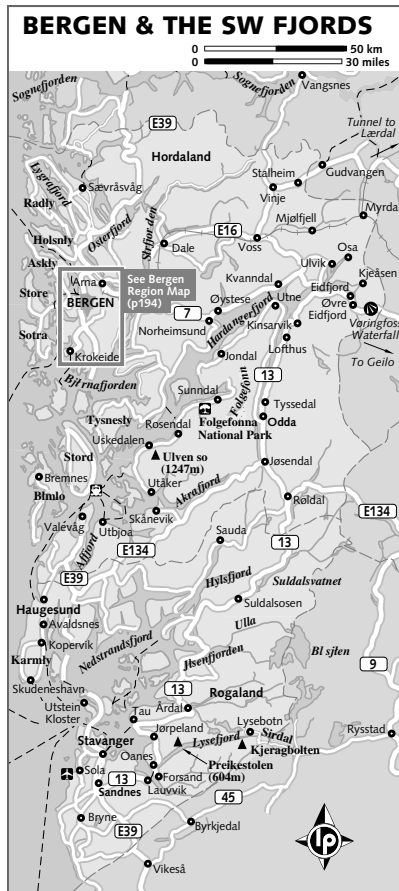
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Stroll through the historic **Bryggen** (p195) in Bergen, a Unesco World Heritage site
- Climb to **Preikestolen** (p229) or **Kjeragbolten** (p231) overlooking Lysefjord
- Relax on a slow boat up **Hardangerfjord** (p215) from tranquil Ulvik
- Amble through cosmopolitan Stavanger, particularly the historic timber houses of **Old Stavanger** (p222)
- Wake up to the best hotel view in Norway at the **Stalheim Hotel** (p213)
- Climb up (or through) the mountain to **Kjeåsen Farm** (p216), high above Eidfjord



■ POPULATION: 840,000

■ HIGHEST ELEVATION: FOLGEFONN (1654M)



## BERGEN

pop 244,620

Surrounded by seven hills and seven fjords, Bergen is a beautiful, charming city. With the Unesco World Heritage-listed Bryggen and the bustling Vågen harbour as its centre-piece, Bergen climbs the hillsides with hundreds of timber-clad houses, while cable cars offer stunning views from above. Throw in great museums, friendly locals and a dynamic cultural life and Bergen amply rewards as much time as you can give it. A word of warning, however: In summer Bergen gets a little overwhelmed by visitors (with a 25% increase in visitors in the last

five years) and finding accommodation can be a problem so always book ahead.

### HISTORY

During the 12th and 13th centuries, Bergen was Norway's capital and easily the country's most important city. By the 13th century, the city states of Germany allied themselves into trading leagues, most significantly the Hanseatic League with its centre in Lübeck. At its zenith, the league had over 150 member cities and was northern Europe's most powerful economic entity; the sheltered harbour of Bryggen drew the Hanseatic League's traders in droves. They established their first office here around 1360, transforming Bryggen into one of the league's four major headquarters abroad, with up to 2000 mostly German resident traders who imported grain and exported dried fish, among other products.

For over 400 years, Bryggen was dominated by a tight-knit community of German merchants who weren't permitted to mix with, marry or have families with local Norwegians. By the 15th century, competition from Dutch and English shipping companies, internal disputes and, especially, the Black Death (which wiped out 70% of Bergen's population) ensured the Hanseatic League's decline, (although Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck are still called Hanseatic cities and Hamburg and Bremen retain city-state status).

By the early 17th century Bergen was nonetheless the trading hub of Scandinavia and Norway's most populous city with 15,000 people. During the 17th and 18th centuries, many Hanseatic traders opted to take Norwegian nationality and join the local community. Bryggen continued as an important maritime trading centre until 1899, when the Hanseatic League's Bergen offices finally closed.

### ORIENTATION

Hilly greater Bergen has suburbs radiating out onto outlying peninsulas and islands, but the central area is compact and easily manageable on foot. Bergen's main attractions lie around the harbour at Vågen; Torgalmenningen, which runs southwest from the harbour to Øvre Ole Bulls plass, is a major commercial and shopping artery. The area south of Øvre Ole Bulls plass is a vibrant student quarter with great bars and

restaurants. The bus and train stations lie a block apart on Strømgaten, a 10-minute walk southeast from the ferry terminals.

### INFORMATION

#### Bookshops

**Norli** (Map p196; ☎ 55 21 42 91; www.norli.no; Torgalmenningen 8; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat May-Sep, shorter hrs rest-of-year) Great selection of travel and English-language books. There's another branch across the road at No 7.

#### Emergencies

**Ambulance** (☎ 113)

**Police** (☎ 112)

#### Internet Access

Bergen has plans to have universal wireless access throughout the city by the end of 2008 although most locals expect it to take longer. In the meantime, most hotels and some cafés have wireless access.

**Accezzo** (Map p196; Galleriet, Torgalmenningen 6; per hr Nkr70; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat Jun-Sep, shorter hrs rest-of-year)

**Bergen Library** (Map p196; ☎ 55 56 85 00; Strømgaten 6; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Thu, 10am-4:30pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Free, time-limited access.

**Cyberhouse** (Map p196; Hollendergaten 9; per hr Nkr60; ☎ 9am-11pm)

**Zoex** (Map p196; Kong Oscars gate 13; per 15/30/60 mins Nkr20/40/70; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

#### Laundry

**Jarlens Vaskoteque** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 55 04; Lille Øvregaten 17; wash/detergent/dry Nkr55/5/10; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon, Tue & Fri, 10am-8pm Wed & Thu, 10am-3pm Sat) Full service (Nkr110) takes two hours.

#### Left Luggage

Lockers at the train and bus stations start at Nkr40.

#### Medical Services

**Legevakt Medical Clinic** (Map p196; ☎ 55 56 87 00; Vestre Strømkaien 19; ☎ 24hr) Handles emergencies.

**Pharmacy** (Map p196; ☎ 55 21 83 84; bus station; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-11pm Sun)

#### Money

You can change money at the post office, tourist office (for much less than bank rates but no commission) or at any of the many banks (most have ATMs) dotted around the centre. One central bank that's good for

changing money is **Sparebanken Vest** (Map p196; Nedre Korskirkeallmenning).

#### Post

**Main post office** (Map p196; Exhibition Shopping Centre, Småstrandgaten; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year)

#### Tourist Information

**Bergen Turlag DNT office** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 22 30; www.bergen-turlag.no; Tverrgaten 4; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-6pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat) Maps and information on hiking and hut accommodation throughout western Norway.

**Tourist office** (Map p196; ☎ 55 55 20 00; www.visitbergen.com; Vågsallmenningen 1; ☎ 8.30am-10pm Jun-Aug, 9am-8pm May & Sep, 9am-4pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) One of the best and busiest in the country, Bergen's tourist office distributes the free and excellent *Bergen Guide* booklet.

#### Travel Agencies

**Kilroy Travel** (Map p196; ☎ 02633; www.kilroytravels.com; Vaskerelven 16; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-3pm Sat) Specialises in student tickets.

#### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

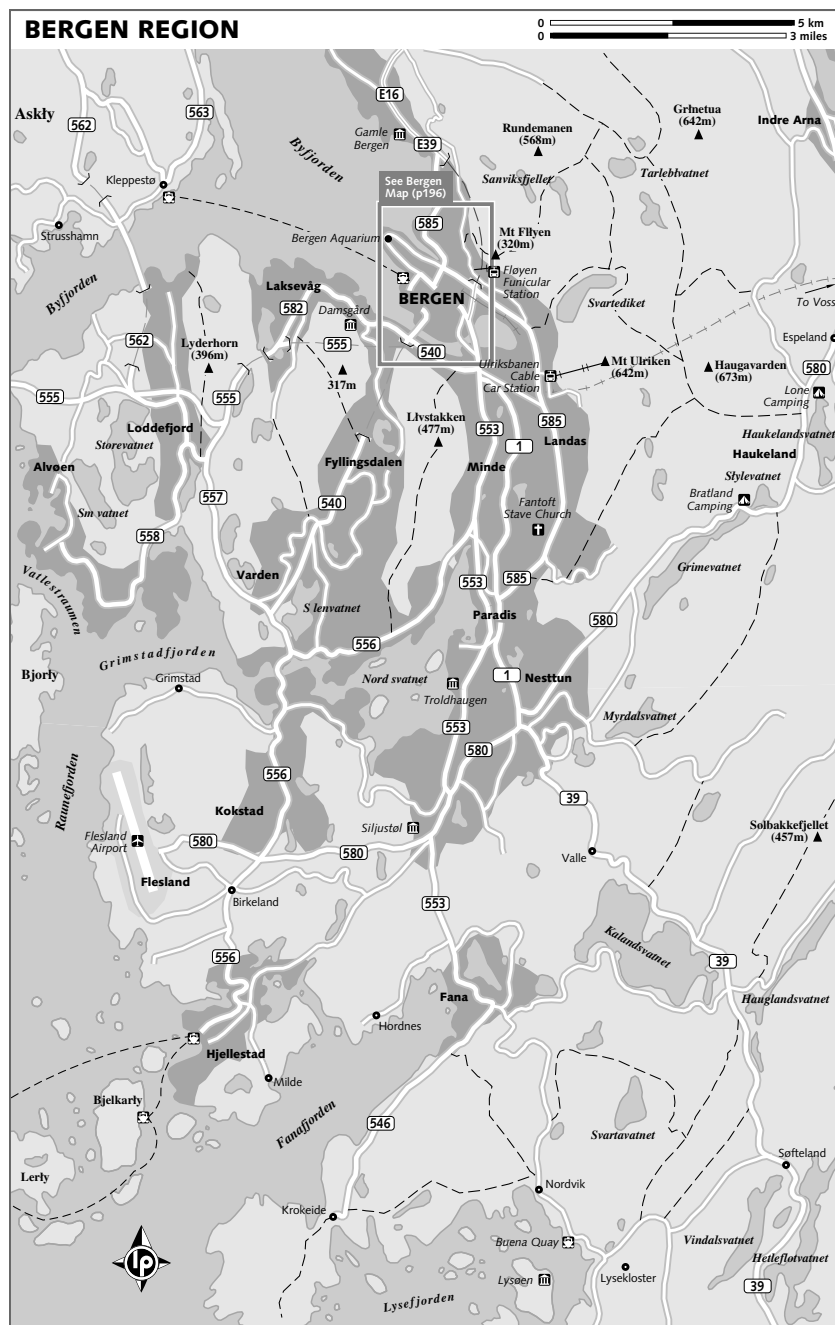
Although Bergen is generally a safe city, pick-pockets are known to operate around the fish market and Bryggen areas so, as in any tourist city, keep a close watch on your belongings.

Bergen's weather is something of a national joke (including for many people from Bergen) as it's one of the wettest cities in Norway – you can reliably expect rain on at least 275 days of the year. In 2006 the city almost broke the national record (held by the Oslo region) with 85 consecutive days of rain. A broly is an essential accessory.

The sheer numbers of visitors in summer can be a little overwhelming. The sudden influx of cruise passengers (210,000 in 2006 alone) in particular can, without warning, change the atmosphere of this otherwise intimate city; as one local told us, 'cruise passengers from all over the world come to take pictures, buy a plastic troll and then leave on their massive cruise liners'. Many locals hope that a new local government tax on cruise ships will reduce the traffic a little.

#### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Bergen has lots of quaint cobblestone streets lined with timber-clad houses; apart from Bryggen, some of the most picturesque are the quiet lanes climbing the hill behind



the Fløibanen funicular station, as well as in Nordnes (close to Kafe Kippers) and Sandviken (behind Bergenhus).

## Bryggen

Bergen's oldest and most enchanting quarter runs along the eastern shore of Vågen Harbour. Once a major commercial centre for northern Europe (see p192), the long parallel rows of buildings with stacked-stone or wooden foundations and reconstructed rough-plank construction run back from gabled fronts facing the wharf.

Bryggen (see Map p196) has always been a work-in-progress and archaeological excavations suggest that the quay was once 140m further inland than where it now lies. The current 58 buildings (25% of the original, although some claim there are now 61) cover 13,000 sq metres and date from after the 1702 fire, although the building pattern dates back to the 12th century.

In the early 14th century, there were about 30 wooden buildings on Bryggen (whose name means 'The Wharf'), each of which was usually shared by several *stuer* (trading firms). They rose two or three storeys above the wharf and combined business premises with living quarters and warehouses. Each building had a crane for loading and unloading ships, as well as a large assembly room, or *schøtstue*, where employees met and ate. That atmosphere of an intimate waterfront community remains intact and losing yourself in Bryggen is one of Bergen's great pleasures.

For an excellent summary of Bryggen's history and threats to its existence, look out for the *Bryggen Guide*, available from the Bryggens Museum and elsewhere.

## Hanseatic Museum

This terrific **museum** (Map p196; ☎ 55 54 46 90; www.museumvest.no; Finnegårdsgaten 1a; adult/child Nkr45/free mid-May–mid-Sep, Nkr25/free rest-of-year, also valid for Schøtstuene; 🕒 9am–5pm mid-May–mid-Sep, 11am–2pm Tue–Sat, 11am–4pm Sun rest-of-year) provides a window onto the world of Hanseatic traders. Housed in a rough-timber building from 1704, it starkly reveals the contrast between the austere living and working conditions of Hanseatic merchant sailors and apprentices, and the lifestyles of the management. Highlights include the manager's office, quarters, private liquor cabinet and summer bedroom; the apprentices' quarters where

## BERGEN CARD

The **Bergen Card** ([www.visitbergen.com/bergen-card](http://www.visitbergen.com/bergen-card); adult per 24/48 hrs Nkr170/250, child Nkr70/10) is worth considering given the rising admission fees, although it takes careful planning, an early start and a steady pace to make sure its economical. The card covers free travel on local buses and the Fløibanen funicular (Map p196); free entrance to some museums with discounted admission to the rest; free guided tours of Bergen; and discounts on city and boat sightseeing tours, concerts and cultural performances. The Bergen Card is available from the tourist office, some hotels, the bus terminal and online.

beds were shared by two men; the fish storage room, which pressed and processed over a million pounds (450,000kg) of fish a month; and the *fiskeskruer*, or fish press, which pressed the fish into barrels.

## Schøtstuene

An essential complement to the Hanseatic Museum, **Schøtstuene** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 60 20; Øvregaten 50; adult/child combined ticket with Hanseatic Museum Nkr45/free; 🕒 10am–5pm mid-May–mid-Sep, 11am–2pm Sun rest-of-year) is a reconstruction of one of the original assembly halls where the fraternity of Hanseatic merchants once met for their business meetings and beer guzzling.

## Bryggens Museum

The archaeological **museum** (Map p196; ☎ 55 58 80 10; Dreggsallmenning 3; adult/child Nkr40/20, free with Bergen Card; 🕒 10am–5pm May–Aug, 11am–3pm Mon–Fri, noon–3pm Sat, noon–4pm Sun Sep–Apr) was built on the site of Bergen's first settlement, and the 800-year-old foundations unearthed during construction have been incorporated into the exhibits, which include medieval tools, pottery, skulls and runes. The permanent exhibition documenting Bergen in around 1300 is particularly interesting.

## Theta Museum

This excellent one-room reconstruction of a clandestine Resistance headquarters, uncovered by the Nazis in 1942, is now Norway's tiniest **museum** (Map p196; Enhjørningsgården; adult/child Nkr20/5; 🕒 2–4pm Tue, Sat & Sun mid-May–mid-



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Sep). Appropriately enough, finding it is still a challenge. It's behind the Enhjoringen restaurant; pass through the alley and up the stairs to the 3rd floor.

## Torget

The waterfront fish market at Torget has a happy, bustling vibe that's hard to tear yourself away from. Here, fishy odours assault the olfactory senses, spilt effluent turns the quay into a slippery mess, and you'll find a range of tasty seafood snacks (see p204).

## Mariakirken

This stone church (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 59 60; Dreggen; adult/child Nkr20/free mid-Jun-late-Aug, free rest-of-year & with Bergen Card; ☎ 9.30-11.30am & 1-4pm mid-Jun-late-Aug, 11am-12.30pm Tue-Fri rest-of-year), with its Romanesque entrance and twin towers, dates from the early 12th century and is Bergen's oldest building. The interior features 15th-century frescoes and a splendid baroque pulpit donated by Hanseatic merchants in 1676.

## Rosenkrantz Tower

Built in the 1560s by Bergen governor Erik Rosenkrantz, this tower (Rosenkrantzårnet; Map p196; ☎ 55 31 43 80; Bergenhus; adult/child Nkr40/20, free with Bergen Card; ☎ 10am-4pm mid-May-Aug, noon-3pm Sun Sep-mid-May) was a residence and defence post. It also incorporates parts of the keep (1273) of King Magnus the Lawmender and the 1520s fortress of Jørgen Hansson. Spiral staircases lead past halls and sentry posts to a reasonable harbour view from the summit.

## Håkonshallen

This large ceremonial hall (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 60 67; Bergenhus; adult/child Nkr40/20, free with Bergen Card; ☎ 10am-4pm daily mid-May-Aug, noon-3pm Fri-Wed, 3-6pm Thu Sep-mid-May), adjacent to the Rosenkrantz Tower, was constructed by King Håkon Håkonsson from 1247-61 and completed for his son's wedding and coronation. The roof was blown off in 1944 thanks to the explosion of a Dutch munitions boat, but extensive restoration has been carried out. There are hourly guided tours in summer.

## SAVING BRYGGEN

So beautiful is Bryggen that it seems inconceivable that conservationists spent much of the 20th century fighting plans to tear it down.

Fire has destroyed Bryggen at least seven times (especially in 1702 and again in 1955 when one-third of Bryggen was destroyed). The notable tilt of the structures was caused in 1944, when a Dutch munitions ship exploded in the harbour, blowing off the roofs and shifting the pilings. The explosion and 1955 fire increased the already considerable clamour to tear down Bryggen once and for all; not only was it considered a dangerous fire hazard, but its run-down state was widely seen as an embarrassment. Plans for the redevelopment of the site included modern, eight-storey buildings, a bus station, shopping centre and car park.

What saved Bryggen were the archaeological excavations that took 13 years to complete after the 1955 fire and which unearthed over one million artefacts. In 1962 the **Bryggen Foundation** ([www.stiftelsenbryggen.no](http://www.stiftelsenbryggen.no)) and Friends of Bryggen were formed. A lot of people and local politicians wanted to 'tear down the rat's nest after the fire in 1955', says Inger Marie Egenberg, manager of the Bryggen Project, which was founded in 2000 to oversee the restoration of Bryggen. After the Foundation of Bryggen was established, attitudes slowly changed. In 1979 Unesco inscribed Bryggen on its World Heritage list.

The buildings are privately owned. Ms Egenberg adds, 'The owners are permitted state funds for the safeguarding and preservation of the buildings, provided they follow the plans and the management guidelines'. Wherever possible, restorers use traditional craftsmanship and materials, although the restorations should also be 'readable', in that people should be able to distinguish between the original features and more recent works. Restorers have also learned that salt absorbed into the timbers in centuries past may have aided their preservation; restorers now soak timbers in sea water before using them in reconstruction.

## Bergen Cathedral (Domkirken)

Bergen's **cathedral** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 58 75; Domkirkeplass 1; admission free; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-12.30pm Tue-Fri rest-of-year), also known as St Olav's Church, is well worth a visit. The stonemasonry in the entrance hall is superb; it was carved by the same stonemasons as those who adorned Westminster Abbey's chapter house in London.

## Bergen Art Museum

Beside the Lille Lungegårdsvann lake, this **art museum** (Bergen Kunstmuseum; Map p196; ☎ 55 56 80 00; [www.bergenartmuseum.no](http://www.bergenartmuseum.no); Rasmus Meyers Allé 3 & 7; adult/child/student Nkr50/free/35, free with Bergen Card; ☎ 11am-5pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 11am-5pm Tue-Sun rest-of-year) exhibits a superb collection of 18th- and 19th-century pieces by international and Norwegian artists, including Munch, Miró, Picasso, Kandinsky and Paul Klee.

## University Museums

The two main university museums ([www.museum.uib.no](http://www.museum.uib.no); adult/student or child combined ticket Nkr40/free, free with Bergen Card; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) include: the **Cultural History Collection** (Kultur-historik Samlinger; Map p196; ☎ 55 58 31 40; Haakon Sheteligsglass 10) with

Viking weaponry, medieval altars, folk art, period furnishings, Inuit and Aleut cultures and displays covering everything from Henrik Ibsen to Egyptian mummies; and the **Natural History Collection** (Naturhistorisk Samlinger; Map p196; ☎ 55 58 29 20; Museéplass 3).

## Maritime Museum

Bergen's **Maritime Museum** (Sjøfartsmuseet; Map p196; ☎ 55 54 96 00; Haakon Sheteligsglass 15; adult/student or child Nkr30/free; ☎ 11am-3pm Jun-Aug, 11am-2pm Sun-Fri Sep-May) is essential to understanding the history of this seafaring city. It features models of ships from Viking times to the present and exhibits tracing Norway's maritime history.

## Bergen Aquarium

At the end of the Nordnes Peninsula, this **aquarium** (Bergen Akvariet; Map p196; ☎ 55 55 71 71; [www.akvariet.com](http://www.akvariet.com); Nordnesbakken 4; adult/child Nkr150/100, with Bergen Card Nkr115/75; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Aug, 10am-6pm Sep-Apr, feeding times noon, 3pm & 6pm May-Aug, noon & 3pm Sep-Apr) has a big outdoor tank with seals and penguins, as well as 70 indoor tanks. You'll never forget the loveable steinbit, the hideous anglerfish or the school of herring, which seems to function as a single entity.

Even with a greater awareness of conservation issues, mistakes have been made. As Ms Egenberg explains, when the Radisson SAS Royal Hotel and its underground car park were built at the northern end of Bryggen in 1982, 'it was necessary to drain out the groundwater under the building. Thus the cultural layers under the Bryggen site are supplied with too much oxygen, causing rot, compression and eventually damage to the foundation of the buildings and the buildings themselves. We just didn't know better, back then.' Talks between the Radisson hotel and the cultural-heritage authorities are ongoing in an effort to sort out what can be done to solve the problem.

There are numerous threats to the survival of Bryggen, says Ms Egenberg. 'Global warming, causing the ocean to reach higher levels, is a big threat, but I think if the resource plan (read money) fails, we will not be able to work according to the guidelines mentioned, and then the cultural significance of the site will eventually be lost.' Tourists, she says, do cause a 'certain wear and tear, but they also keep it alive'.

It is not only Bryggen that conservationists are seeking to preserve, but other old, timber-clad areas of Bergen. According to Sonja Krantz, who has been one of many locals lobbying the local government to protect such formerly working-class districts, 'the greatest threat comes from developers buying up houses and sometimes whole street quarters in order to deliberately run them down and destroy them'. In response, she says, 'people living in the old areas have organised in so-called *velforreninger*, informal, voluntary associations set up to protect their neighbourhoods'.

'Politicians are under great pressure to protect these fragile areas, both from the local associations and also the local newspaper,' says Ms Krantz. 'The attitude has changed.'

*As told to Anthony Ham*

On foot, you can get there from Torget in 20 minutes; alternatively, take the Vågen ferry (p209) or bus 11.

## Gamle Bergen

The open-air **Old Bergen Museum** (Map p194; ☎ 55 39 43 00; [www.bymuseet.no](http://www.bymuseet.no); Nyhavnsveien 4, Sandviken; adult/child Nkr50/25, free with Bergen Card; ☎ hourly tours 10am-5pm mid-May-early Sep), 4km north of the city centre, boasts a fine collection of 35 structures from the 18th and 19th centuries. A 30-minute walk from Torget will get you there or take a bus (No 20-23). Admission to the grounds is free and they are open all year.

## Troldhaugen

This two-storey **home** (Map p194; ☎ 55 92 29 92; [www.troldhaugen.com](http://www.troldhaugen.com); Hop; adult/child Nkr60/free, Nkr20 with Bergen Card; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, shorter hrs Oct-Apr) dates from 1885 and occupies an undeniably lovely setting on a lush and scenic peninsula by the coastal Nordåsvatnet lake, to the south of Bergen. Composer Edvard Grieg (see p50) and his wife Nina Hagerup spent every summer here from 1885 until Grieg's death in 1907. Today the house and grounds are open to the public, there's a multimedia Grieg exhibition and a 200-seat concert hall. Of particu-

lar interest are the Composer's Hut, where Edvard mustered his musical inspiration; the Steinway piano, which was a gift to celebrate Edvard and Nina's 50th wedding anniversary in 1892; and the couple's tombs, which are embedded in a rock face that overlooks Nordåsvatnet. It's an impressive place.

In summer, **concerts** (adult with/without Bergen Card Nkr160/220, children free) are held on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday and during the Bergen International Festival; tickets and schedules are available at the tourist office.

Take any bus from platforms 19 to 21 to the Hopsbroen stop. From there, follow the signs to Troldhaugen; it's a 20-minute walk. There are free buses from outside the tourist office during the Bergen International Festival.

## Siljustøl Museum

Another well-known Norwegian composer's home lies 3km south of Troldhaugen. Harald and Marie Sæverud lived in **Siljustøl** (Map p194; ☎ 55 92 29 92; [www.siljustol.no](http://www.siljustol.no); Siljustøl; adult/child/student Nkr60/free/20; ☎ noon-4pm Sun late-Jun-late-Sep), a simple timber home. It was constructed in the 1930s of natural stone and untreated wood in an attempt to create unity with the environment. Harald Sæverud's first symphony was

completed in 1920 and he endeared himself to Norwegians everywhere when, during WWII, he wrote protest music against the Nazi occupation. In 1986 he was made official composer of the Bergen International Music Festival. When he died in March 1992, he was given a state funeral and buried at Siljustøl, as requested. To get there, take bus 30 from platform 20.

### Damsgård

The 1770 **Damsgård manor** (Map p194; ☎ 55 58 80 10; www.vk.museum.no; Laksevåg; adult/child Nkr50/25, free with Bergen Card; 🕒 11am-5pm late May-Aug, hourly tours 11am-4pm), 3km west of town, may well be Norway's (if not Europe's) finest example of 18th-century rococo timber architecture. The building's superb (even over-the-top) highlight is the baroque garden, which includes sculptures, ponds and plant specimens that were common 200 years ago. To get there, take bus 19 from the centre.

### Lysøen

This beautiful **estate** (Map p194; ☎ 56 30 90 77; www.lysoen.no; Lysøen; adult/child incl guided tour Nkr30/10, free with Bergen Card; 🕒 noon-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun mid-May-Aug, noon-4pm Sun Sep), on the island of the same name, was built in 1873 as the summer residence of renowned Norwegian violinist Ole Bull (see p49). After the death of Ole Bull's French-born wife, Felicité Villemint, Bull purchased the 70-hectare Lysøen island, about 20km south of Bergen. Between 1872 and 1873, he and architect Conrad Fredrik von der Lippe constructed the fantasy villa 'Lysøen'. This 'Little Alhambra' took much of its extravagant inspiration from the architecture of Moorish Granada and integrated not only intricate frets and trellises, but also onion domes, romantic garden paths, Italian marble columns and a high-ceilinged music hall of Norwegian pine.

When Ole Bull died at the Lysøen property in August 1880, about 10,000 mourners accompanied the funeral procession to the Assistentkirkegården near Bergen's old city gate.

The grounds are crisscrossed with 13km of leisurely walks and there's a small café. From Bergen's bus station, take the Lysefjorden bus (566 and 567, return Nkr110) from platform 19 or 20 to Buena Quay, where there's a passenger ferry (adult/child Nkr50/20; hourly noon to 3pm, to 4pm Sun) to Lysøen.

### Funiculars FLØIBANEN

For an unbeatable view of the city, ride the 26-degree Fløibanen **funicular** (Map p196; ☎ 55 33 68 00; www.floibanen.no; Vetrilidsalmenning 21; adult/child return Nkr70/35, free with Bergen Card; 🕒 8am-midnight May-Aug, 8am-11pm Mon-Sat & 9am-11pm Sun Sep-Apr) to the top of Mt Fløyen (320m), with departures every 15 minutes.

From the top, well-marked hiking tracks lead into the forest; the possibilities are mapped out on the free *Gledeskartet* or *Turloyper På Byfjellene Nord/Øst* (Nkr10) maps available from the Bergen tourist office. Track No 2 makes a 1.6km loop near Skomakerdiket Lake and track No 1 offers a 5km loop over hills, through forests and past several lakes. For a delightful 40-minute walk back to the city from Fløyen, follow track 4 clockwise and connect with track 6, which switchbacks down to the harbour.

### ULRIKSBANEN

The Ulriksbanen **cable car** (Map p194; ☎ 55 20 20 20; www.ulriken.no; adult/child return Nkr80/40; 🕒 9am-9pm Jun-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) ascends to the radio tower and café atop Mt Ulriken (642m), offering a panoramic view of the city and surrounding fjords and mountains. The 'Bergen in a Nutshell' ticket (opposite) includes the cable car and a return bus from the tourist office. Otherwise, it's a 45-minute walk from the centre or a few minutes' ride on bus 2 or 31 from the post office or bus 50 from Bryggen.

A popular excursion is to ride up on the cable car and walk four to six hours north along a well-beaten track to the top of the Fløibanen funicular railway.

### Fantoft Stavkirke

The Fantoft **stave church** (Map p194; ☎ 55 28 07 10; Paradis; adult/child/student Nkr30/12/20, free with Bergen Card; 🕒 10.30am-2pm & 2.30-6pm mid-May-mid-Sep), in a lovely leafy setting (which goes by the name 'Paradise') south of Bergen, was built in Sognefjord around 1150 and moved to the southern outskirts of Bergen in 1883. It was burned down by a Satanist (and soon-to-be-released heavy metal musician) in 1992, but it has since been painstakingly reconstructed. The adjacent **cross**, originally from Sola in Rogaland, dates from 1050. From Bergen take any bus leaving from platform 20, get off at the Fantoft stop on Birkelundsbakken

and walk uphill through the park for about five minutes.

### Swimming Pools

If you fancy a swim but can't face wading into cold fjord waters, the outdoor heated pool (27°C) at the **Nordnes Sjøbad** (Nordnes Swimming Pool; Map p196; off Haugeveien; adult/child Nkr46/21; 🕒 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun mid-May-Aug) at the water's edge is good. For something a little cooler, there's a diving board to the open water.

### TOURS

**Bergen Fjord Sightseeing** (☎ 55 25 90 00) operates a one-hour **harbour tour** (adult/child Nkr100/50; 🕒 3.30pm Jun-late-Aug), which offers good views of Bryggen and the surrounding hills. It also runs a four-hour **fjord tour** (adult/child Nkr400/200; 🕒 10am & 2.30pm Jul-late-Aug, 10am May & Jun, 10am Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun Sep). Boats depart from the waterfront next to the fish market.

A good way to reach the more outlying sights is to join one of the three-hour **Bergen Guided Tours** (☎ 05505; www.tide.no; adult/child Nkr280/180, discount with Bergen Card; 🕒 11am May-Sep), which take you to Fantoft Stave Church and Trolldhaugen, among other sights.

Bergen wouldn't be a tourist town if it didn't have its **Bergens-Expressen toy train** (☎ 55 53 11 50; www.bergensexpressen.no; adult/child Nkr100/40; 🕒 half-hourly 10am-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug & hourly 6pm & 7pm, shorter hrs May-mid-Jun & mid-Aug-Sep), which trundles along the Bryggen waterfront from opposite the Hanseatic Museum and up into

some of the more interesting back streets. The trip takes one hour.

The **On&Off City Tour** (☎ 97 05 22 50; www.turistbuss.no; adult/child Nkr150/100, with Bergen Card Nkr100/70; 🕒 hourly 9.30am-4.30pm Jun-Sep) does the usual hop-on, hop-off city circuit from Gamle Bergen to the aquarium.

The '**Bergen in a Nutshell**' bus (☎ 55 20 20 20; www.ulriken.no; adult/child Nkr150/75; 🕒 hourly 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm May & Sep) runs from next to the fish market, along the Bryggen waterfront, to the Ulriksbanen cable car and back again. Commentary is available in six languages.

Narrowing your focus a little, you could also take one of the excellent **Guided Tours of Bryggen** (☎ 55 58 80 10; adult/child Nkr80/free; 🕒 11am (German), 11am & 1pm (English), noon (Norwegian) Jun-Aug). They last 90 minutes, leave from Bryggens Museum and the commentary includes descriptions of life during Bergen's trading heyday. The ticket includes admission to Bryggens Museum, Schøsttuene and the Hanseatic Museum (you can revisit these museums later on the same day).

If you prefer to explore at your own pace, Bryggens Museum also has a (free) brochure entitled *Meeting Point Bryggen*, which allows **self-guided tours** covering 12 stops in the old town.

**Bergen Guide Service** (☎ 55 30 10 60; guide@visitbergen.com; adult/child/teenager Nkr95/free/45, with Bergen Card Nkr75/free/35; 🕒 3pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug) also does 90-minute walking tours of central Bergen.

From early June to early September, another popular excursion is the Sunday tour

### FJORD TOURS FROM BERGEN

You can join any one of dozens of tours of Bergen and longer fjord tours; the tourist office has a full list and you can buy tickets there or purchase online in some cases. Most offer discounts if you have a Bergen Card.

**Fjord Tours** (☎ 81 56 82 22; www.fjordtours.com) has mastered the art of making the most of limited time with a series of tours into the fjords. Its popular and year-round **Norway in a Nutshell** tour is a great way to see far more than you thought possible in a single day. The day ticket (adult/child Nkr820/410) from Bergen combines a morning train to Voss, a bus to the Stalheim Hotel and then on to Gudvangen, from where a ferry takes you up the spectacular Nærøyfjord to Flåm, joining the stunning mountain railway to Myrdal, and a train back to Bergen in time for a late dinner (or you can continue on to Oslo to arrive around 10pm).

From May to September, it also runs train-bus-boat round-trips from Bergen such as the 10-hour **Explore Hardangerfjord** (Nkr645), which goes via Voss, Ulvik, Eidfjord and Norheimsund, as well as the nine-hour **World Heritage Tour** (Nkr830), which takes in Sognefjord, Nærøyfjord, Gudvangen and Voss.

**Tide** (☎ 55 23 87 00; www.tide.no) runs round trips by bus and boat to Eidfjord (p216; adult/child Nkr195/110).

by **veteran steam train** between Garnes and Midtun. It begins at 9am on the historic ferry *M/S Bruvik* from Bryggen to the **railway museum** (☎ 55 24 91 00) at Garnes and from there the teak-panelled train inches 18km to Midtun. The whole trip takes four hours (adult/child Nkr200/100). The train trip alone costs Nkr120/60 return.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The **Bergen International Festival** (☎ 55 36 55 66; www.fib.no), held for 14 days from late May until early June, is the big cultural festival of the year, with dance, music and folklore presentations throughout the city.

In late May, there's the **Seven Peaks Hike**, where all the local peaks must be visited on foot. It's an arduous 30km, with 2200m of ascent, but the record time is only 4½ hours!

Other highlights include:

**Bergenfest** (www.bergenfest.no) International music festival, late April to early May.

**Bergen International Guitar Festival** (www.bergen.guitarfestival.com) Late June.

**Bergen Food Festival** (www.matfest.no) Early to mid-September. It showcases locally grown or caught food, which, sadly, includes whale meat.

**Bergen International Film Festival** (www.biff.no) Mid- to late October.

**Night Jazz Festival** (www.nattjazz.no) A happy festival as the city's large student population gets into the swing at the end of May.

For a full list of events, see the website www.visitbergen.com.

## SLEEPING

Bergen has outstanding accommodation, but if we could leave you with only piece of advice, it would be to book your accommodation before arriving in town, at least in the summer months. While we were there, the tourist office was sending tourists to Voss, one hour away, as Bergen was full.

The tourist office has an accommodation booking service (Nkr30 for walk-ins, Nkr50 for advance booking).

## Budget

**Lone Camping** (Map p194; ☎ 55 39 29 60; www.lone.camping.no; Hardangerveien 697, Haukeland; tent sites Nkr130 plus per person Nkr20, cabins Nkr400-900) This lakeside camp site, 20km from town between Espeland and Haukeland, is a long way from Bergen's charms, although it's accessible by public

transport; bus 900 runs to/from town (Nkr42, 30 minutes) every half-hour.

**Bratland Camping** (Map p194; ☎ 55 10 13 38; www.bratlandcamping.no; Bratlandsveien 6, Haukeland; tent sites Nkr110 plus per person Nkr15, cabins Nkr390-1200) Also accessible on bus 900, this well-equipped site is 4km south of Lone Camping.

**Bergen Vandrerhjem YMCA** (Map p196; ☎ 55 60 60 55; www.bergenhostel.no; Nedre Korskirkeallmenning 4; dm Nkr155-230, bed linen Nkr50, breakfast Nkr55, d with bathroom, breakfast & bed linen Nkr750; ☒) Gone are the days when staying in a hostel meant a long hike into town; this friendly hostel could be Norway's most central. It has that unmistakable hostel feel, same-sex or mixed dorms, kitchen facilities and a terrific rooftop terrace. Children under 14 pay half price and bookings are essential year-round.

**Marken Gjestehus** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 44 04; www.marken-gjestehus.com; Kong Oscars gate 45; dm from Nkr160, s/d with shared bathroom Nkr395/500, with bathroom Nkr500/630) Midway between the harbour and the train station, this guesthouse has simple, but extremely well-kept rooms. The white walls and wooden floors give an attractive sense of light and space and the communal areas are clean and pleasant. It also has washing machine and bed linen/towels cost Nkr65/10 for those in dorms.

**City Box** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 25 00; www.citybox.no; Nygårdsgaten 31; s/d with shared bathroom Nkr400/500, with bathroom Nkr500/600, breakfast Nkr59; ☒) The best hostel in Bergen. City Box is a place where the owners do simple things well, such as bright modern rooms with splashes of colour, free wireless access, a minimalist designer feel without the price tag and friendly young staff. For the rooms without a bathroom, there are two showers for every five rooms, most of the rooms have kitchen facilities and there's a laundry room. Let's hope the City Box idea catches on elsewhere in Norway.

## Midrange

**Villa Nordnes** (Map p196; ☎ 92 44 03 80, 55 23 29 44; Haugeveien 34; s Nkr350-500, d Nkr650-750) This lovely, rambling house out on the Nordnes Peninsula close to the aquarium is illuminated by a fine collection of antiques and by the friendly owner, Grethe Marthinussen. It's a good choice in a quiet location.

**Ourpick Skansen Pensjonat** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 90 80; www.skansen-pensjonat.no; Vetrilidsalmenning 29; s Nkr375-500, d Nkr600-700, apt Nkr750) There are family-run guesthouses springing up all over Bergen, but this charming seven-room place

is still our favourite. A wonderful location up behind the funicular station, a real attention to detail and many personal touches from the owners, Jannicke and Svein (who add much warmth to the place), make this a terrific choice. The rooms are light and airy, none more so than 'the balcony room', one of the nicest in Bergen. Prices for all but the largest apartments include breakfast.

**Skuteviken Gjestehus** (Map p196; ☎ 93 46 71 63; www.skuteviken.guesthouse.com; Skutevikens Smalgang 11; s/d Nkr600/800, attic Nkr900) This recently opened, authentic timber guesthouse, set on a small cobble street, has traditional decoration (such as white wicker furniture and lace cushions) and a few modern touches. Painstakingly restored by two artists whose work adorns the rooms, the guesthouse is quite simply charming.

**Kjellersmauet Gjestehus** (Map p196; ☎ 55 96 26 08; www.gjestehuset.com; Kjellersmauet 22; 1-2/-3/-4-bed apt from Nkr600/800/1350/1400) This oasis of hospitality and tradition in a delightful timber-clad street southwest of the centre is also outstanding. Run by the friendly Sonja, who goes the extra mile in taking care of her guests, the Kjellersmauet has a range of small, medium and large apartments in a building dating back to the 16th century. Wooden floors, traditional decoration and modern bathrooms make for a great stay.

**Steens Hotell** (Map p196; ☎ 55 30 88 88; www.steens.hotel.no; Parkveien 22; s/tw/d with Fjord Pass Nkr700/850/970, otherwise s Nkr650-950, d Nkr880-1160; ☒ Nkr40 ☒) This lovely 19th-century building oozes period charm, from the late-19th-century antiques to the gentle curve of the stairway; the bathroom facilities have recently been renovated. It's also a welcoming place. Most rooms are spacious and there's a wonderful dining room with stained-glass windows. It also boasts some of Bergen's cheapest parking.

**Jacobs Apartments** (Map p196; ☎ 98 23 86 00; www.apartments.no; Kong Oscars gate 44; dm Nkr165, s/d apt Nkr860/960, breakfast Nkr60; ☒) The owners are trying hard to present a designer apartment hotel and they almost succeed. The rooms have flat-screen TVs and some are spread over two levels, although these duplex rooms could do with a little more light.

**Hotel Park Pensjon** (Map p196; ☎ 55 54 44 00; www.parkhotel.no; Harald Härfagresgate 35; s Nkr700-940, d Nkr970-1140; ☒) Filled with character and antiques, this family-run place spreads over two beautiful 19th-century buildings. Every room is different, although those in the building across the road from reception are more sub-

tle; in the main building, expect antique writing desks and the corner rooms are gorgeous and filled with light. The location is quiet and just a 15-minute walk from the city centre.

**First Hotel Marin** (Map p196; ☎ 53 05 15 00; booking.marin@firsthotels.no; Rosenkrantz gate 8; s/d with Fjord Pass Nkr990/1150; ☒) A block back from the waterfront and with elegant hardwood floors, First Hotel Marin has a maritime theme and a great location. Some rooms have harbour views and there's a touch of class here that's sometimes lacking in chain hotels.

**Clarion Hotel Admiral** (Map p196; ☎ 55 23 64 00; www.admiral.no; C Sundts gate 9; s Nkr990-1150, d Nkr1160-1555) With sweeping views across the water to Bryggen from the balconies of its harbour-facing rooms, this well-appointed hotel promises the best view to wake up to in Bergen if you can get a waterside room. The hotel also has a cigar and cognac salon and ice machines in the corridors.

**In City Hotel & Apartments** (Map p196; ☎ 53 23 16 13; www.incity.no; Øvre Ole Bulls plass 3; d/deluxe/penthouse/ste Nkr1190/1490/1690/1990; ☒) Modern, well-equipped apartments in the heart of town are the order of the day here. The rooms don't have a lot of personality but they're large and comfortable.

## Top End

**Ourpick Det Hanseatiske Hotel** (Map p196; ☎ 55 30 48 00; www.dethanseatiskehote.no; Finnegårdsgaten 2; s/d Nkr1195/1395, deluxe d Nkr1695-1895, ste up to Nkr4500; ☒) Now here's something special. The only hotel to be housed inside the old timber buildings of Bryggen itself, Det Hanseatiske Hotel is luxurious and like stepping back into a bygone Bergen age. Flat-screen TVs cohabit with antique bathtubs and some extraordinary architectural features from Bryggen's days as a Hanseatic port. Spread over two buildings and connected by a wonderful walkway, this is easily Bergen's most atmospheric hotel. If you're going to splash out, do it here.

**Rica Strand Hotel** (Map p196; ☎ 55 59 33 00; www.strandhotel.no; Strandkaiaen 2-4; s/d Nkr1200/1500; ☒) With rooms that range from a tight squeeze to those with views over Torget and towards Bryggen, the 1920s-era Rica Strand has an excellent central location.

**Augustin Hotel** (Map p196; ☎ 55 30 40 00; www.augustin.no; C Sundts gate 22; s/d Nkr1450/1650; ☒ Nkr85 ☒) Two things make this place stand out: first, as Bergen's oldest family-run hotel, it's renowned for the friendliness of its welcome. It's also one

of very few hotels in Bergen that has met the exacting standards of environmental sustainability set by the Norwegian government (see p21). Modern artworks, blue-dominated, spacious rooms and Altona (opposite), a funky wine bar, round out a great package.

**Grand Hotel Terminus** (Map p196; ☎ 55 21 25 00; www.grand-hotel-terminus.no; Zander Kaesgate 6; s/d from Nkr1450/1650, cheaper with Fjord Pass; (P) Nkr100 (€)) Opposite the train station, the Grand Hotel Terminus has historically been the hotel of choice for the city's well-heeled visitors. Some rooms are cramped and a little soulless, others are ornate and spacious, but the old-world charm (the building dates from 1928) and elaborate décor make this place stand out.

## EATING

Bergen is the sort of place where international trends make their mark (sushi and tapas are all the rage) but you'll also find bastions of Norwegian tradition. There are plenty of restaurants in the Bryggen and Torget area, but many are targeted at a fairly undiscerning tourist market. There are exceptions as well as creative choices around and southwest of Øvre Ole Bulls plass.

## Markets & Bakeries

**Our pick Torget Fish Market** (Map p196; www.torgetiber.gen.no; Torget; ☎ 7am-7pm Jun-Aug, 7am-4pm Mon-Sat Sep-May) For price and atmosphere, it's hard to beat the fish market. Right alongside the harbour and a stone's throw from Bryggen, here you'll find everything from smoked whale meat (Nkr349 a kilo if you can live with your conscience) and salmon to calamari and chips (Nkr130), fish cakes (from Nkr89), prawn baguettes (Nkr45), local caviar and, sometimes, nonfishy reindeer and elk. Stallholders are usually happy to make up a take-away platter or prepare a sealed bag to take home.

**Kjøttbasarell** (Map p196; cnr Torget & Kong Oscars gate; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-6pm Thu, 9am-4pm Sat) This lovely old food market is excellent if you're planning a picnic with cheeses, meats and all sorts of gourmet items.

Bakeries are in plentiful supply in Bergen. One delicacy to watch out for is Bergen's own *shillingsboller* (local pastry speciality shaped in a ball, which translates as shilling, ie the old currency unit) buns. Some of our favourite bakeries:

**Baker Brun** (Map p196; Zachariasbryggen Quay; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun)

**Godt Brød** (Map p196; Nedre Korskirkealmenningen 12; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4.30pm Sat)

**Sol Brød** (Map p196; cnr Vetrlidsalmenning & Kong Oscars gate; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5.30pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun)

## Norwegian

**Pygmalion Økocafé** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 33 60; Nedre Korskirkealmenning 4; ciabatta Nkr69-87, organic pancakes from Nkr86, salad from Nkr112; ☎ lunch & dinner; (V)) This very cool place has contemporary art adorning its walls, a downtempo vibe and tasty organic food. It's a great place at any time of the day and there are good choices for vegetarians.

**Our pick Pingvinen** (Map p196; ☎ 55 60 46; Vaskerelven 14; mains Nkr63-135; ☎ 2pm-3.30am) Devoted to small-town Norwegian cooking and with a delightfully informal ambience, Pingvinen is terrific. Expect large servings of reindeer, elk, lamb and local fish but without the usual price tag and it's always obligatory to pay homage to Alma, the 'goddess chef'. As the night wears on and Alma heads home, the snacks menu comes out.

**Lido** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 59 12; Torgalmenningen 1a; soup & mains Nkr69-169, children's menu Nkr35-89; ☎ lunch & dinner) Lido is an inexpensive cafeteria with good traditional grub. Its budget credentials get battered by the Nkr5 charge to go to the toilet, but it's nonetheless a good place for simple but hearty local food.

**Bryggeloftet & Stuene** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 06 30; Bryggen 11; specials from Nkr89, mains Nkr89-275; ☎ lunch & dinner) Another Bryggen favourite for traditional Norwegian fare, this restaurant dates to the early 19th century, which is plenty of time to master the art of cooking reindeer, wolf-fish and lutefisk (dried whitefish).

**Boha** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 31 60; Vaskerelven 6; starters Nkr95-135, mains Nkr210-255, 4-/6-course menu Nkr485/580; ☎ 4-10pm Mon-Thu, 4-11pm Fri, 5-11pm Sat) Famous for its seafood, this is the place to come for Kamchatka crab or monkfish. There's a thoughtfully chosen wine list and the retro décor works wonderfully well. The service is also attentive.

**Wesselstuen** (Map p196; ☎ 55 55 49 49; Øvre Ole Bulls plass 6; starters Nkr79-109, mains Nkr219-259; ☎ lunch & dinner) The richly decorated Wesselstuen evokes the wood-panelled dining halls of Bergen's past and is well known as the restaurant of choice for Bergen's intellectuals. The sirloin of reindeer (Nkr259) is excellent.

**Bryggen Tracteured** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 59 55; Bryggen; light meals Nkr95-145, starters Nkr82-145, mains

Nkr225-275; ☎ lunch & dinner May-Sep) This is one of the great Bryggen eating experiences. Housed in a 1708 building that ranges across the former stables, kitchen (note the stone floor, which meant that it was the only Bryggen building allowed to have a fire) and Bergen's only extant *schotstuene* (dining hall), this fine restaurant does fish soup (Nkr98), steamed mussels (Nkr125) and a selection of Norwegian tapas. The food's good, but the atmosphere is the major drawcard.

**Our pick Enhjørningen** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 79 19; Bryggen; starters Nkr95-135, mains Nkr275-310, 3-/4-course dinner Nkr490/550; ☎ noon-11pm Jun-Aug, 4-11pm Sep-May) The popular, upmarket Enhjørningen offers delicious fish and seafood in a rustic Bryggen setting. Known by locals for its unimpeachable excellence, this place is all about quality food and old-style elegance. We particularly like the scallops and scampi symphony (Nkr295) but everything's good.

**Finnegaards Stuene** (Map p196; ☎ 55 55 03 20; Finnegaardsgaten 2; 3-/5-/7-course dinner Nkr595/695/795; ☎ 6-11pm Mon-Sat) Part of the magnificent Det Hanseatiske Hotel, this high-class restaurant combines flavoursome traditional local dishes with the evocative architecture of 18th-century Bryggen.

## Sushi & International

**Red Sun** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 31 00; Kong Oscars gate 4; sashimi from Nkr47, makis from Nkr56, sushi combo Nkr270; ☎ lunch & dinner) The freshest seafood and stylish surrounds make for a great combination at Bergen's newest and most celebrated sushi bar. Upstairs is a more formal restaurant serving Vietnamese and Thai dishes.

**Our pick Kafé Kippers** (USF; Map p196; ☎ 55 31 00 60; Georgenes Verft 12; lunch mains Nkr58-81, dinner mains Nkr89-141; ☎ lunch & dinner) Away from the hubbub of downtown Bergen, this agreeable outdoor terrace is one of the best places for a meal or just a drink when the weather's warm. Attached to a cultural centre in an old sardine canning factory, it has an artsy vibe and serves plentiful lunch dishes such as linguini or sesame tuna salad.

**Sumo** (Map p196; ☎ 55 90 19 60; Neumanns gate 25; sushi from Nkr59, mains Nkr149-225; ☎ lunch & dinner) Sumo is another good sushi bar with a creative range of noodle dishes to complement all that sashimi and lovely outdoor tables.

**Naboen** (Map p196; ☎ 55 90 02 90; Neumanns gate 20; Swedish mains Nkr88-194; ☎ 4-11pm Mon-Sat, 4-10pm Sun) Although the cook does a

range of Norwegian dishes here, Naboen is best known for its Swedish specialties, such as Swedish meatballs or the fillet of hare (Nkr194).

**Bocca** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 64 50; Øvre Ole Bulls plass 3; 2-course lunch menu Nkr113-179, mains Nkr210-295; ☎ 7am-5pm Sun-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat Jun-Aug, 7am-4pm Mon-Sat Sep-May) Bocca has trendy décor and an upmarket brasserie feel and it's the sort of place where Bergen's young professionals come for Mediterranean food with a nod to Norwegian traditions.

**Stragiotti** (Map p196; ☎ 55 90 31 00; Vestre Torvgate 3; lunch specials Nkr59-139, mains Nkr129-279; ☎ lunch & dinner) This revamped Italian restaurant is stylish indoors, nice and breezy outside on the terrace and serves up authentic Italian food at very reasonable prices.

## Tapas

**Our pick Escalon** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 90 99; Vetrlidsalmenning 21; tapas Nkr56-98; ☎ 3pm-midnight Sun-Fri, 1pm-midnight Sat) Tapas has taken Bergen by storm and no-one does it better than Escalon. The friendly young waiters are happy to make suggestions on wine selection and the tapas are tasty and the closest you'll find in Bergen to what you'll get in Spain. Highly recommended.

**Bar Celona** (Map p196; ☎ 55 23 42 33; Vaskerelven 16-18; tapas Nkr39-79, mains Nkr174-228; ☎ 2pm-1am Mon-Thu, 2pm-2am Fri, noon-2am Sat) Another chic choice, this Spanish-inspired restaurant-bar has oodles of style with a friendly atmosphere. The outdoor tables are lovely on a fine afternoon and the food is excellent.

## DRINKING

Bergen is a great place to go out. Although there's no hard-and-fast rule, the Bryggen area is where you'll find tourist-oriented bars (with tourist-oriented prices) while students and a discerning Bergen crowd hang out in places southwest of Øvre Ole Bulls plass; in the mainly student places, summer nights can be quieter than you might think as the main clientele is away on holiday. Bergen also has a thriving café culture.

## Bars & Wine Bars

**Our pick Altona Vinbar** (Map p196; ☎ 55 30 40 30; C Sundtsgate 22; ☎ 6pm-12.30am Mon-Thu, 6pm-1.30am Fri & Sat) Possibly our favourite wine bar in town, Altona Vinbar is in an intimate warren of underground rooms that date from the 16th



**LOCAL VOICE: ESPEN OLSEN**

**How long have you lived in Bergen?** All my life, apart from one year overseas as an exchange student.

**What's the best thing about living in Bergen?** It feels like a small town but here you have everything you need. It's also a very cultural city and with the Bergen Wave a few years ago, many things that were new in Norwegian music and short or documentary film came from here; for a city of its size, Bergen has a variety of interesting cultural expressions.

**What are people from Bergen like?** We are a very proud people and we always say that we're not from Norway, we're from Bergen. We're also very talkative.

**Does it annoy you that your city gets overrun with so many tourists?** We like it, because we've always been a very international city. Tourism helped to save Bryggen and people now are very proud of it, but they almost tore it down in the 1970s...You should have seen Bergen back in the 1980s. It was quite ugly, but people have moved back into the city centre.

**What makes you laugh about tourists in Bergen?** In summer, when the weather is warm and everyone is outdoors, we get visitors who ask us what we're celebrating when we're just outdoors because it normally rains so much.

**Best local tip?** Take the Fløibanen up to the summit but walk back down.

**Favourite places to go out at night?** Altona (p205), Legal (below), Capello (opposite), Naboen (below), Pingvinen (below), Kafe Kippers (below) and Escalon (p205) where I work.

**Best place for a coffee?** Det Lille Kaffe Kompaniet (opposite) and Dromedar Kaffebar (opposite).

**Favourite Bergen festivals** Bergenfest, Night Jazz Festival and Bergen International Film Festival (see p202 for details on each).

**Best things to do from Bergen?** Hiking in the Stølsheimen mountains (p211), glacier walking from Finse (p190) and riding down to Flåm from Finse (see the boxed text p189).

*As told to Anthony Ham*

century. With a huge selection of international wines, soft lighting and music that ranges from jazz to rock but never drowns out conversation, it's hard to find fault with this place. If you've had a few glasses, take care with the impossibly low connecting doors!

**Legal** (Map p196; cnr Nygårdsgaten & Christies gate; ☎ 2pm-1.30am Sun-Thu, 2pm-2.30am Fri & Sat) One of the best student bars in Bergen, this laid-back place does retro décor and music that could be rock, but is more likely to be electronica or soft funk. Upstairs is a fine place to keep the night moving.

**Fincken** (Map p196; Nygårdsgaten 2A; ☎ 7pm-1.30am Wed & Thu, 7pm-2.30am Fri, 8pm-2.30am Sat) Just across the road from Legal, Fincken is one of few gay bars in Bergen.

**To Glass Vinbar** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 90 99; Vetrilidsalmenning 19; ☎ 6pm-1am Mon-Thu, 6pm-2am Fri & Sat) If you're keen not to move too far from the centre, this trendy wine bar, next to the funicular station, gets a classier crowd than most bars on this street.

**Bocca** (Map p196; 1st fl, Øvre Ole Bulls plass 3; ☎ 11am-3.30am) Upstairs from the restaurant of the same name, Bocca draws a chic 30-something crowd who flock to the open balcony, or snug-

gle in the dimly lit retro salon. Music is usually lounge, with a DJ from Thursday to Saturday. A San Miguel will set you back Nkr54, martinis cost Nkr59, while most cocktails are Nkr93.

Other restaurants that double as cool bars southwest of the centre:

**Kafe Kippers** (USF; Map p196; Geogenes Verft 12;

☎ 11am-12.30am Mon-Fri, noon-12.30am Sat & Sun)

Great for an outdoor drink in summer.

**Naboen** (Map p196; Neumanns gate 20; ☎ 5pm-1.30am Sun-Thu, 5pm-2.30am Fri & Sat) Downstairs from the restaurant, this place is for those who love indie rock and jazz.

**Onkel Lauritz** (Map p196; Vaskerelven 6; ☎ 6pm-1am Sun-Thu, 6pm-2am Fri & Sat) Upstairs in Boha, this is good for a quiet conversation.

**Pingvinen** (Map p196; Vaskerelven 14; ☎ 2pm-3.30am) A funky, casual vibe and a friendly young crowd. Late-night snacks are good if you get the munchies.

**Coffee Houses & Cafés**

**Café Opera** (Map p196; ☎ 55 23 03 15; Engen 18;

☎ 11am-12.30am Mon-Thu, 11am-3.30am Fri & Sat, noon-12.30am Sun) By day, Café Opera has a literary- café feel with artworks and good coffee that attracts artists and students. On

weekends, the crowd gets dancing until late with jazz seguing into electronica or classic club hits.

**Det Lille Kaffe Kompaniet** (Map p196; Nedre Fjellsnug 2; coffee or hot chocolate Nkr18-55; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Fri, noon-6pm Sat) In the past few years, this place has twice won a nationwide competition for the country's best coffee and two of its waiters are on Norway's national coffee team (kind of like a football team but with espresso machines). It's a lovely little place and it overflows onto the neighbouring stairs when the sun's out.

**Dromedar Kaffebar** (Map p196; ☎ 55 55 85 86; Strandgaten 79; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) Bergen's coffee aficionados put this place not far behind Det Lille Kaffe Kompaniet for the city's best coffee.

**Capello** (Map p196; ☎ 55 96 12 11; Skostredet 14; ☎ noon-6pm Mon-Wed, noon-1am Thu-Sat, 1-6pm Sun) An engaging little café-bar that does smoothies, milkshakes, beer and pancakes, Capello is all about '50s and '60s décor and music downstairs (the juke box is filled with Elvis, the Monkeys, the Beatles and Bob Dylan). Upstairs the '70s take over.

**Vågen** (Map p196; Kong Oskars gate 10; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-7pm Sat, 11am-9pm Sun) This quiet café is where old Norwegian meets Bob Marley, with traditional Norwegian decoration, rustic wooden tables and a chilled vibe helped by occasional Reggae tunes. It's a cool combination and provides a great backdrop to a lazy afternoon.

**Jacobs Café** (Map p196; Kong Oscars gate 44; ☎ 7.30am-1am Sun-Thu, 7.30am-2am Fri & Sat) Jacobs is a nice café with a beer garden and it draws a predominantly local crowd. There's occasionally live music in the evenings on weekends.

**ENTERTAINMENT**

Bergen has something for everyone, from high culture to late-night live-music venues. For some concerts and folklore performances, the Bergen Card (see p195) offers significant discounts.

**Cinema**

**Bergen Kino** (Map p196; ☎ 82 05 00 05; Neumanns gate 3; admission Nkr60-80) First-run movies are shown in their original languages at this multiscreen complex. It's also the base for the **Bergen International Film Festival** (www.biff.no) in October.

**Concerts**

Bergen has a busy programme of concerts throughout summer, many of them classical performances focusing on Bergen's favourite son, composer Edvard Grieg (see p50). Most of the concerts take place at evocative open-air venues such as **Troldhaugen** (Map p194; adult with/without Bergen Card Nkr160/220; ☎ Wed & Sat mid-Jun-Aug & Sun Sep & Oct) and **Siljustøl** (Map p194; Nkr200; ☎ 3pm Sun mid-April-mid-May), atop Mt Fløyen and in the park adjacent to Håkonshallen. For details and schedules, contact the tourist office. Tickets are sold by the tourist office or at the venue. There are free buses to the concerts from outside the tourist office, leaving one hour before starting time. From mid-June until late August, **Grieg concerts** (adult with/without Bergen Card Nkr140/180) also take place in the Grand Hotel Terminus (p204) at 9pm.

The renowned **Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra** (☎ 55 21 61 50; www.filharmonien.no) stages classical concerts at **Grieghallen** (Map p196; ☎ 55 21 61 00; www.grieghallen.no; Edvard Griegs plass) from September to May.

Grieghallen also hosts major rock and other modern music concerts. For upcoming concerts, check out www.bergenlive.no (in Norwegian).

Another place to watch out for concerts and exhibitions is **USF Verftet** (☎ 55 31 55 70; www.usf.no; Geogenes Verft 12) on the Nordnes Peninsula.

**Folklore**

**Fana Folklore** (Map p194; ☎ 55 91 52 40; Fana church; tickets incl bus ride Nkr350; ☎ 7pm Fri Jun-Aug) If you're finding traditional Norwegian culture elusive, this folklore show in the Fana stave church may cut through the obscurity. Yes, it's tourist-oriented, but it's well done and a healthy proportion of the spectators is likely to be Norwegian. Fana Folklore buses pick up ticket holders at Festplassen at 7pm, returning at 10.30pm; tickets can be bought at the tourist office.

**Bergen Folklore** (Map p196; ☎ 55 55 20 06; adult/child Nkr100/free; ☎ 9pm Tue mid-Jun-mid-Aug) Another group performs traditional one-hour music and dance routines in the atmospheric Schøtstuene (see p195). Tickets are available from the tourist office or at the door.

**Nightclubs & Live Music**

**Calibar** (Map p196; www.calibar.no in Norwegian; Vaskerelven 1; ☎ 3pm-1am Mon-Thu, 3pm-3am Fri, noon-3am Sat) Funky! Calibar is hip in all the right places

with stunning lighting and décor that fuses chic modern style with retro flair (it claims to have the oldest floor in Bergen). Upstairs is a café and conversation, but downstairs is a sweaty nightclub for a 30-something crowd drawn by '80s music it can sing along to. You have to be 24 to get in and ready to pay Nkr96 for a cocktail.

**Garage** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 19 80; Christies gate 14; ☎ 3pm-3.30am) Garage has taken on an almost mythical quality for music lovers across Europe. It does play live jazz and acoustic, but this is a rock venue at heart with well-known Norwegian and international acts drawn to the cavernous basement. If he's around, ask for Dennis, who's something of a local legend (he once played in the group Electric Rain) and he'll set you straight on the local music scene.

**Hulen** (Map p196; ☎ 55 55 31 31; www.hulen.no in Norwegian; Olaf Ryes vei 48; ☎ 9pm-3am Thu-Sat Sep-mid-Jun) Like Garage, Hulen enjoys a legendary status. Going strong since 1968, it's the oldest rock club in northern Europe and it's one of the classic stages for indie rock. Hulen means 'cave' and the venue is actually a converted bomb shelter. Sadly, it closes during summer when many of Bergen's students head off on holidays. It also hosts a heavy-metal festival in early November.

**Rick's** (Map p196; ☎ 55 55 31 31; Veiten 3; cover charge Nkr90; ☎ 1pm-3am Sun-Thu, 1pm-3.30am Fri & Sat) There's something for everyone at Rick's. At street level, 'Silver' is a superstylish wine bar and café with occasionally outrageous décor, while Rick's, downstairs and open from 10pm, is for live music, with an extra venue that serves as a popular disco. You have to be at least 24 to get in.

## SHOPPING

Many of the shops along Bryggen are devoted to hideous fridge magnets, cheese slicers and trolls, but there's some higher quality stuff if you know where to look.

**Juhls' Silver Gallery** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 47 40; juhls.bg@online.no; Bryggen 39; ☎ 9am-10pm mid-May-mid-Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri & 1-7pm Sat & Sun rest-of-year) This wonderful jewellery shop sells exquisite silver jewellery crafted by Regine Juhls at her workshop high above the Arctic Circle (p365). Her 'Tundra' collection strongly evokes the icy wastes of the north.

**Kvams Flisespikkeri** (Map p196; ☎ 55 32 78 20; www.kvams-flisespikkeri.com; Bredsgården, Bryggen; ☎ 9am-

6pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 11am-3pm Mon-Fri & noon-4pm Sat rest-of-year) Paintings, block prints and other artworks by Ketil Kvam adorn this lovely Bryggen gallery, with a range of cheaper prints available up to original artworks. Most have a Bergen theme.

**Læverkstedet** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 45 73; Jacobsfjorden, Bryggen; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-May-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) One of the most popular shops in the lanes tucked away in Bryggen, this place sells the softest moose leather along with everything from jackets to bags and other knick-knacks.

**Gitarmaker** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 07 01; www.hanno.kiehl.com in Norwegian; Kong Oscars gate 45; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat) The engaging Hanno Kiehl hand-crafts top-notch acoustic guitars that seem very much at home in this most musical city. They don't come cheap (prices start at Nkr25,000) and they can take two months to make, but the quality is unquestionable.

**Oleana** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 05 20; www.oleana.no; Strandkaiaen 2A; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun) With textiles inspired by traditional folk costumes and a whole philosophy of storytelling through weaving, Oleana is all about vivid colours and beautiful clothes.

**Husfliden** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 78 70; Vågsalmenningen 3; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-7pm Thu, 9am-3pm Sat) If you're looking for the less creative but typically Norwegian souvenirs, Husfliden sells a broad selection of handicrafts, wooden toys and traditional clothing.

**Foto Video** (Map p196; ☎ 55 31 62 15; www.fotovideo.no in Norwegian; Nygaten 9; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-7pm Thu, 9am-3pm Sat) This professional camera store is the place to come for all your photo and video needs.

Bergen has two stylish shopping centres in the centre of town. **Galleriet** (Torgalmenningen 8; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat) spreads over five floors with everything from Benetton to the Body Shop, while **Xhibition** (Småstrandgaten 3; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat) is home to an enormous H&M, as well as a supermarket and the post office.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Bergen airport** (Map p194; ☎ 55 99 80 00) is at Flesland, about 19km southwest of the centre. **SAS Braathens** (☎ 81 52 00 00; www.sasbraathens.no) connects Oslo and Bergen (from Nkr265) six times daily. There are also direct flights to Trondheim (from Nkr560), Kristiansand

(from Nkr560) as well as Stavanger (from Nkr520). **Coast Air** (☎ 81 54 44 42; www.coastair.no) also has a daily flight to Haugesund (from Nkr490).

For information on international flights to/from Bergen, see p403.

## Boat

There are daily **Fylkesbåtane** (☎ 55 90 70 70; www.fylkesbaatane.no) express boats to Balestrand (Nkr410, four hours), Flåm (Nkr552, 5½ hours), Måløy (Nkr595, 4½ hours), Selje (Nkr640, five hours) and Stavanger (one way/return Nkr620/710, four hours) from the Strandkaierterminal (Map p196).

The Hurtigruten coastal ferry leaves from the Frieleneskaiaen (Map p196), to the south of the university, at 8pm daily. See p412 for details.

International ferries to/from Bergen dock at Skoltegrunnskaiaen (Map p196), northwest of the Rosenkrantz tower. See p408 for details on international sailings.

**Rødne Fjord Cruise** (☎ 51 89 52 70; www.rodne.no; Nkr285; ☎ May-Aug) has summer express boats from Bergen to Rosendal (p220) twice daily from Monday to Friday and once on Saturday and Sunday. It leaves just northwest of Strandkaierterminal.

## Bus

The cheapest buses are with **Lavprisekspressen** (www.lavprisekspressen.no in Norwegian), which runs services to Oslo (Nkr349, two on Saturday, Monday, Thursday and Friday). Otherwise, see below for details on Nor-Way Bussekspress destinations:

Destination	Departures	Cost	Duration
Ålesund	1 to 2 daily	Nkr610	10½hr
Kristiansand	1 daily	Nkr625	12hr
Oslo	3 daily	Nkr700	11½hr
Stavanger	8 daily	Nkr420	5¾hr
Stryn	3 daily	Nkr451	6½hr
Trondheim	2 daily	Nkr751	14¾hr

## Train

The spectacular train journey between Bergen and Oslo (Nkr299 to Nkr728, 6½ to eight hours, five daily) runs through the heart of Norway. Local trains between Bergen and Voss (Nkr153, one hour) leave every hour or two; four of these run to/from Myrdal (Nkr232, 2¼ hours) for connections for the Flåmsbana railway.

## GETTING AROUND To/From The Airport

Flesland airport is serviced by **Flybussen** (www.flybussen.no), which runs four times hourly between the airport, the Radisson SAS Royal Hotel, the main bus terminal and opposite the tourist office (adult/child Nkr75/free, 45 mins).

## Bicycle

You can hire cycles from the downstairs workshop of **Sykkelbutikken** (Map p196; ☎ 55 36 18 80; Kong Oscars gate 81; per weekend from Nkr300, mountain bike per day/week Nkr200/700, bag/helmet Nkr40/50).

## Bus

**City buses** (☎ 177) cost Nkr20, while fares beyond the centre are based on the distance travelled. Free bus 100 runs between Bryggen and the bus terminal.

## Car & Motorcycle

In busy areas, metered parking is limited to 30 minutes or two hours; the parking areas at Sydnes allow up to nine hours (free at night). The largest and cheapest (Nkr75 per 24 hours) indoor car park is the 24-hour Bygarasjen at the bus terminal.

## Boat

From late May to late August, the **Vågen Harbour Ferry** (Map p196; ☎ 55 56 04 00; one way/return adult Nkr40/50, child Nkr25/35; ☎ every 30 mins from 10am to 6pm) runs between the Torget fish market and Tollbodhopen at Nordnes (near the Bergen Aquarium).

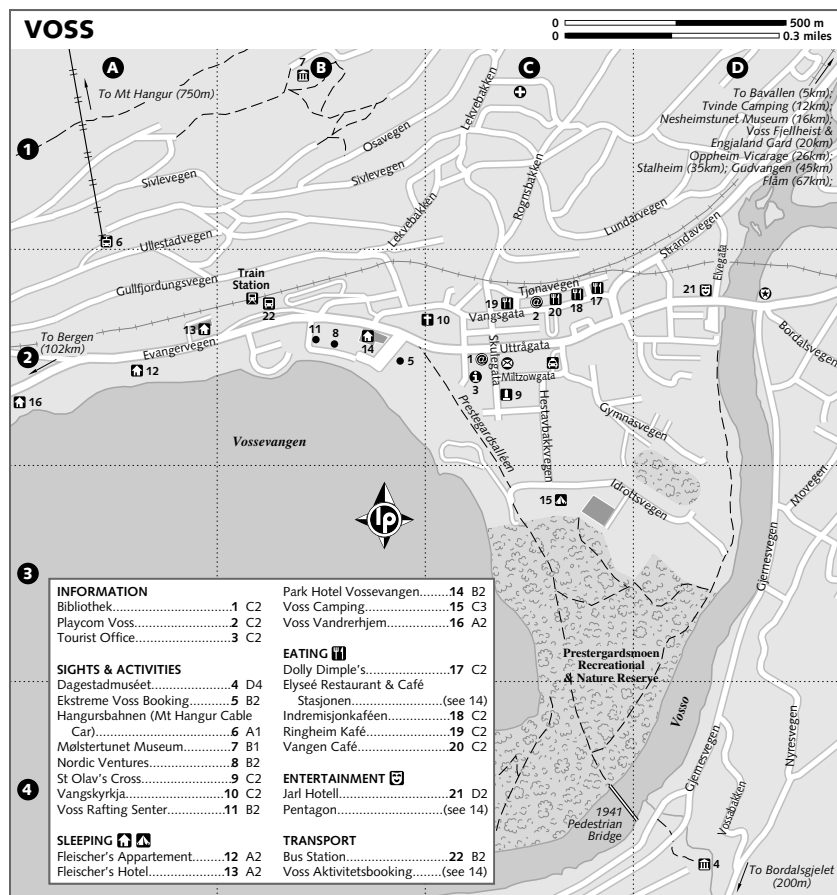
## VOSS

pop 13,786

Voss has built a world-renowned reputation as Norway's adventure capital and you'll be drawn here if you love the thrill of white-water rafting, bungee jumping and just about anything you can do from a parasail. For everyone else, Voss is little more than a staging post between Bergen and the fjords. It does have a pretty lakeside setting, but German bombing during WWII means that the architecture is largely modern and undistinguished.

## INFORMATION

**Bibliothek** (☎ 56 51 94 70; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-7pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat) Free, time-limited internet access.



**Playcom Voss** (☎ 56 51 63 03; Vangsgata 36; per hr Nkr40; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) Internet access.

**Tourist office** (☎ 56 52 08 00; www.visitvoss.no; Uttrågatga 9; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & noon-7pm Sun Jun-Aug, 8.30am-3.30pm Sep-May)

## SIGHTS

### Vangskyrkja & St Olav's Cross

Voss' stone church (☎ 56 51 38 80; www.voss.kyrkjer.net; Uttrågatga; adult/child Nkr15/free; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat, 2-4pm Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) occupies the site of an ancient pagan temple. A Gothic-style stone church was built here in the mid-13th century. Although the original stone altar and unique wooden spire remain, the Lutheran Reformation of 1536

saw the removal of many original features. The 1923 stained-glass work commemorates the 900th anniversary of Christianity in Voss. Miraculously, the building escaped destruction during the intense German bombing of Voss in 1940.

In a field around 150m southeast of the tourist office stands a weathered stone cross erected by King Olav Haraldsson den Heilige (St Olav) in 1023 to commemorate the local conversion to Christianity. Just because it's close at hand, doesn't mean the tourist office knows where to find it.

### Prestegardsmoen

The **Prestegardsmoen Recreational and Nature Reserve**, which extends south from Voss

Camping, is a series of hiking tracks through elm, birch and pine forests with 140 species of plants and 124 bird species.

### Hangursbåhnen

This cable car (☎ 56 53 02 20; adult/child Nkr90/55; ☎ 11am-5pm Jun-early Sep) whisks you to Mt Hangur, high above Voss, for stunning panoramic views over the town and the surrounding mountains.

### Voss Folk Museum

The main portion of the Voss Folk Museum (Voss Folkemuseum) is the **Mølsterstunet Museum** (☎ 56 51 15 11; Mølstervegen 143; adult/child Nkr45/free; ☎ 10am-5pm daily mid-May-mid-Sep, 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, noon-3pm Sun rest-of-year), on a hilltop at the farm Mølster high above Voss. The collection of 16 historic farm buildings once typical of the region dates from 1600 to 1870. There are guided tours on the hour, every hour.

The other two portions of the museum, the **Nesheimstunet Museum** (12 farm buildings, the oldest dating back to 1688) in Tvinne and the old wooden **Opheim vicarage**, lie 16km and 26km from Voss respectively, along E16 to Gudvangen. Although the grounds are

open, to see inside the buildings you'll need to ring ahead.

### Dagestadmuseet

This museum (☎ 56 51 65 33; www.dagestadmuseet.no in Norwegian; Helgavangen 52; adult/child/student or senior Nkr40/free/30; ☎ 11am-2pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug), 1.5km south of the town centre, was opened in 1950 by renowned local woodcarver Magnus Dagestad (1865-1957) and features his lifetime of carvings, drawings and traditional wooden furniture, as well as works by his wife, Helena. It's an unusual and worthwhile exhibit.

## ACTIVITIES

From late June to mid-September, the tourist office arranges guided **half- or full-day hikes** (www.vossafjell.no) into the mountains surrounding Voss on Saturdays. It can also provide details of cycling routes and sells **fishing permits** (1-day/3-day/season Nkr50/75/250).

**Voss Fjellhest & Engjaland Gard** (☎ 56 51 91 66; www.vossfjellhest.no; Engjaland; 3hr/full day Nkr500/900) organises hiking and horse riding in the beautiful Stølsheimen mountains 20km north of Voss from July to late August. It also has full-board weekend accommodation for Nkr2500.

## EXTREME SPORTS IN VOSS

If slow boats up the fjords seem like a pretty tame response to extraordinary Norwegian landscapes, Voss may be your antidote. This town lives and breathes extreme sports, never more so than in late June when adrenaline junkies converge on Voss for **Extremesport Week** (www.ekstremsportveko.com), a week-long festival that combines all manner of extreme sports (skydiving, paragliding and base jumping) with local and international music acts.

For bookings, contact **Ekstreme Voss Booking** (☎ 56 51 36 30; www.ekstremevoss.com; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sun, 10am-8pm Fri & Sat May-Sep). You'll find it in the car park of the Park Hotel Vossevangen.

### Paragliding, Parasailing & Bungee Jumping

**Nordic Ventures** (☎ 56 51 00 17; www.nordicventures.com; ☎ Apr-mid-Oct) is one of the best activity centres of its kind in Norway, offering tandem paragliding flights (Nkr1200), parasailing (Nkr450) and even 180m-high, 115km/h bungee jumps from a parasail (Nkr1600)! As its motto says: 'Be brave. Even if you're not, pretend to be. No-one can tell the difference.'

### Watersports

If you're unable to take to the air, you don't need to be left behind. **Voss Rafting Center** (☎ 56 51 05 25; www.vossrafting.no) has everything from white-water rafting (Nkr450 to Nkr750, or Nkr1600 per family), or canyoning (Nkr700) to waterfall abseiling (from Nkr800) and riverboarding (Nkr800). Rafters and riverboarders can choose between three very different rivers: the Stranda (Class III to IV), Raundalen (Class III to V) and Vosso (Class II). Not to be outdone in the motto stakes, its motto is: 'We guarantee to wet your pants'.

Nordic Ventures also runs sea-kayaking expeditions, ranging from lake tours (four to five hours, Nkr575) to one-/two-/three-day tours (Nkr895/1895/2595) on the stunning Nærøfjord (p237).

The **ski season** in Voss usually lasts from early December until April. The winter action focuses on the cable-car route up Mt Hangur (p211) where there's a winter ski school. Those with vehicles can opt for Bavallen, 5km north of the centre, which is used for international downhill competitions. On the plateau and up the Raundalen Valley at Mjølfjell, you'll also find excellent cross-country skiing. For weather and snow conditions, call ☎ 56 51 94 88.

## TOURS

The famous 'Norway in a Nutshell' tour (see boxed text p201), normally done from Oslo or Bergen, also works as a day tour from Voss. It involves rail trips from Voss to Myrdal and from there to Flåm, the boat to Gudvangen and the bus back to Voss (adult/child Nkr530/265, 6½ to 8½ hours). Book through the tourist office, any travel agency, or directly through **NSB** (☎ 56 52 80 07) at the train station.

The tourist office also organises 6½-hour day excursions to Ulvik (p215) and Eidfjord (p216) through a bus-ferry combination; tickets cost from Nkr300/250 per adult/child.

## FESTIVALS

For Voss' **Extreme Sports Festival**, see the boxed text, p211.

On the last weekend of August, the **Voss Blues & Roots Festival** (☎ 56 51 63 03; www.vossblues.no in Norwegian; Fri/Sat day pass from Nkr400/500, festival pass Nkr850) is one of Norway's better music festivals. **Vossajazz** (www.vossajazz.no in Norwegian) is held in March.

The late-September **Sheep's Head Food Festival** (www.smalahovesleppet.no in Norwegian) involves exploring the culinary delights of sheep heads.

## SLEEPING

**Voss Camping** (☎ 56 51 15 97; www.vosscamping.no; Prestegardsalléen 40; tent/caravan sites from Nkr140/190, cabins from Nkr500; ☹ Easter-Sep) The lakeside and centrally located Voss Camping has basic facilities. It can get a bit rowdy in summer but the location's a winner.

**Tvinde Camping** (☎ 56 51 69 19; www.tvinde.no; Tvinde; tent/sites per person from Nkr110, cabins from Nkr375) If you don't mind being a bit out of town, this scenic alternative lies beside a waterfall about 12km north of town. Without a car, access is on the Voss-Gudvangen bus (Nkr35, 20 minutes).

**Voss Vandrerhjem** (☎ 56 51 20 17; www.vossstestel.com; Evangervegen 68; dm/s/d from Nkr150/455/590) The modern Voss hostel offers rooms with en suite and fine lake views; ask for a top-floor, lake-side room. Bicycles, canoes and kayaks can be hired here and there's a free sauna.

**Fleischer's Appartement** (☎ 56 52 05 00; www.fleischers.no; Evangervegen 13; 2-4-bed apt Nkr990/1580; ☎ ☑ ☑) This lakeside annexe of Fleischer's Hotel offers small but adequate self-catering units.

**Park Hotel Vossevangen** (☎ 56 53 10 00; www.parkvoss.no; Uttrågata 1; s/d from Nkr825/1100; ☎ ☑) While this place lacks the elegance of Fleischer's Hotel, the modern rooms are nonetheless very comfortable and many overlook the lake Vossevangen.

**our pick Fleischer's Hotel** (☎ 56 52 05 00; www.fleischers.no; Evangervegen; s/d Nkr1195/1550, with Fjord Pass Nkr830/1230; ☎ ☑ ☑) For historic character, the beautiful Fleischer's Hotel, opened in 1888, oozes antique charm and is the best place in town. Some rooms have lake views. Edvard Grieg stayed here in 1901 if you're into celebrity hotel stays.

## EATING

**Café Stasjonen** (☎ 56 53 10 17; Uttrågata 1; dishes Nkr35-175; ☹ 9.30am-midnight Sun-Thu, 9.30am-1am Fri & Sat) In the Park Hotel Vossevangen is this train-themed café, which offers snacks, light meals and a salad bar.

**Fleischer's Hotel restaurant** (Evangervegen; meals Nkr85-259; ☹ lunch & dinner) This restaurant is excellent, with a salad buffet (Nkr110), light meals (from Nkr85) and main dishes (from Nkr179).

**Dolly Dimple's** (☎ 56 51 00 40; Vangsgata 52; pizzas from Nkr130; ☹ 2-10pm Mon-Thu, 2-11pm Fri, noon-11pm Sat, 1-10pm Sun) Dolly Dimple's serves more than 30 different pizzas.

**our pick Elysée** (☎ 56 53 10 09; Park Hotel Vossevangen; Uttrågata 1; mains Nkr130-275; ☹ lunch & dinner) The finest restaurant in Voss specialises in French and international cuisine and has a particularly extensive wine list. The Elysée also does set menus.

Traditional Norwegian food is served at **Indremisjonskaféen** (☎ 51 56 14 08; Vangsgata 46; snacks & light meals Nkr35-99; ☹ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun). For cakes, snacks and reindeer roast, try **Vangen Café** (☎ 56 51 12 05; Vangsgata 42; dishes Nkr49-115; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-4pm Sat, 12.30-6pm Sun). You'll find a more varied menu at the **Ringheim Kafé** (☎ 56 51 13 65; Vangsgata 32; mains Nkr89-199; ☹ lunch & dinner), not to mention pleasant outdoor tables.

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Park Hotel Vossevangen** (☎ 56 53 10 00; Uttrågata 1) has a piano bar, for those who like their music light, and the somewhat more energetic and popular Pentagon weekend disco. The pub in the **Jarl Hotell** (☎ 56 51 19 33; Elvegata 9) has a cellar disco that attracts the 18-to-25 crowd with house and techno.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses stop at the train station, west of the centre. Frequent bus services connect Voss with Bergen (Nkr150, two hours) and Aurland (Nkr130, 1½ hours), via Gudvangen and Flåm.

The **NSB** (☎ 56 52 80 00) rail services on the renowned *Bergensbanen* to/from Bergen (Nkr153, one hour, hourly) and Oslo (Nkr199 to Nkr633, 5½ to six hours, five daily) connect at Myrdal (Nkr94, 50 minutes) with the scenic line down to Flåm (see p234).

## GETTING AROUND

Bicycle hire is available for around Nkr250 per day from **Voss Aktivitetsbooking** (☹ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sun, 10am-8pm Fri & Sat), beside the Park Hotel Vossevangen, or for Nkr150/250 per half/full day from the Voss Vandrerhjem (p212).

## AROUND VOSS

### Stalheim

This gorgeous little spot high above the valley is an extraordinary place.

Between 1647 and 1909, Stalheim was a stopping-off point for travellers on the Royal Mail route between Copenhagen, Christiania (Oslo) and Bergen. A road was built for horses and carriages in 1780. The mailmen and their weary steeds rested in Stalheim and changed to fresh horses after climbing up the valley and through the Stalheimskleiva gorge, flanked by the thundering Stalheim and Sivle waterfalls. Although a modern road winds up through two tunnels from the valley floor,

the **old mail road** (marked as 'Stalheimskleiva' along the E16 from Gudvangen) climbs up at an astonishing 18% gradient.

At the top is the **Stalheim Hotel** (☎ 56 52 01 22; www.stalheim.com; s/d Nkr900/1380, half-board Nkr1195/1860, full-board Nkr1335/2140; ☹ mid-May-early Oct), arguably Norway's most spectacularly sited hotel. Not surprisingly, the hotel (room 324 in particular) once featured in *Conde Nast's* 'best rooms-with-a-view'. The rooms are spacious and comfortable, but you'll scarcely be able to tear yourself away from the window to notice. Unfortunately, rooms without a view cost the same. Lunch/dinner buffets cost Nkr250/335, but lighter meals are available and meals work out cheaper if you pay half- and full-board rates.

If you're not staying at the hotel, the **terrace** (admission free; ☹ 9.30am-6pm mid-May-Sep) has breathtaking views down Nærøydalen.

The **Stalheim Folkemuseum** (☎ 56 52 01 22; Stalheim; adult/child Nkr50/free; ☹ on request), near the hotel, includes folk exhibits and 30 log buildings laid out as a traditional farm. It only opens if there are 10 or more visitors; ask at the hotel for details.

There are two other options for sleeping in the Stalheim area. In summer, there are log cabins at **Stalheim Fjord og Fjellhytter** (☎ 56 51 28 47; www.stalheim.no; cabins from Nkr550) in the village just beyond the hotel, while **Stalheimsøy Gard** (☎ 56 52 00 22; www.stalheimsoy.no; d from Nkr700) is down in the valley far below.

To reach Stalheim from Voss (Nkr56, one hour, four to 11 daily), take any bus towards the towns of Gudvangen/Aurland, but you may have to hike 1.3km up from the main road unless you can persuade the bus driver to make the short detour.

### Myrdal

Between towns of Voss and Finse, Myrdal is the junction of the Oslo-Bergen railway

### A WALK ALONG THE PRECIPICE

Norwegians may seem to delight in building their homes in the most inaccessible places, but **Husmannsplassen Næli** (the Cotter's Farm of Næli), along the ledge from Stalheim high above Nærøydalen, may just win the prize. Built in 1870 when the first cotter moved there with two cows, four sheep and 11 goats, it was occupied until 1930. Now overgrown, it's an evocative spot, although the route there (two hours return) is not for the faint-hearted with the path beneath the cliff wall extremely narrow in parts and with nothing between you and the valley floor far below; don't even think of walking here after rain. As long as you don't suffer from vertigo, it's one of Norway's most beautiful walks. Ask directions from the reception of the Stalheim Hotel.

and the spectacularly steep Flåmsbana railway; it's also a famous stop on the 'Norway in a Nutshell' tour. From here, the dramatic Flåmsbana line twists 20km down to Flåm on Aurlandsfjorden, an arm of Sognefjorden. For more information, see p234.

## HARDANGERFJORD

Running from the Atlantic to the steep wall of central Norway's Hardangervidda Plateau, Hardangerfjord is classic Norwegian fjord country. There are many beautiful corners, although our pick would probably be Eidfjord, Ulvik, Utne and Kinsarvik. Many people visit from Bergen, while the high-energy town of Voss makes a fine alternative and, if time permits, don't neglect to stay overnight in one of the small villages that cling to the water's edge. For details of exploring Hardangerfjord from Bergen, see the boxed text, p201, while www.hardangerfjord.com has plenty of useful information as well.

### NORHEIMSUND

pop 3500

Quiet little Norheimsund serves as the gateway to Hardangerfjord. There are more beautiful places further into the fjord network, but it's a picturesque town nonetheless and makes for a pleasant introduction to what lies ahead.

**Norheimsund tourist office** (☎ 56 55 15 85; www.visitkvam.no; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 3-8pm Sun mid-May-Aug) has information in summer. **Fjord Tours** (☎ 81 56 82 22; www.fjordtours.com) runs 'Explore Hardangerfjord' train-bus-and-boat tours from Bergen (p201) that you can just as easily catch in Norheimsund as Bergen.

Just 1km west of Norheimsund along Rv7 is the picturesque **Steinsdalsfossen waterfall**. It's a far cry from Norway's highest, but it does offer the chance to walk behind the water. Another attraction in Norheimsund is the unusual **Hardanger Boat-building Museum** (Hardanger Fartøyvernser; ☎ 56 55 33 50; www.fartoyvern.no; adult/child Nkr60/30; ☎ 10am-5pm daily end May-end Aug), where you'll find old wooden boats, restoration procedures, rope-making and exhibitions; children can also try their hand at building a boat. It sometimes also offers two-hour cruises on the fjord in a restored cutter.

**Oddland Camping** (☎ 56 55 16 86; oddland.camping@kvamnet.no; tent sites Nkr130, cabins from Nkr450) This

well-equipped, family-run camp by the lake has good fjord views, simple cabins and the staff can rent out rowboats.

**Sandven Hotel** (☎ 56 55 20 88; www.sandvenhotel.no; s/d from Nkr790/1140; ☎) Located right on the waterfront in the centre of Norheimsund, the atmospheric Sandven Hotel dates from 1857 and has loads of charm, expansive balconies and excellent views. You may also want to try the Crown Prince suite (Nkr2000) – this is where the future king of Norway once stayed.

Three to seven daily buses run between Voss and Norheimsund (Nkr138, two hours) via Øystese.

### ØYSTESE

pop 2176

Øystese used to be little more than an adjunct to Norheimsund, but the **Kunsthuset Kabuso** (☎ 56 55 39 00; www.kabuso.no; adult/child Nkr50/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug, 11am-3pm Tue-Sun Sep-May) has made it a destination in its own right. A showcase for contemporary and traditional art (it attracts artists of world renown, such as the UK's Damien Hirst in 2007), it's a terrific place that you just don't expect to find in a small village on the shores of a Norwegian fjord.

Also in town is the **Ingebrigt Vik Museum** (☎ 56 55 30 00; adult/child Nkr30/10; ☎ 10am-3pm Jun-Aug), an octagonal gallery dedicated to the renowned Norwegian sculptor of the same name (1867–1927).

**Øystese tourist office** (☎ 56 55 59 10; k-reise@online.no; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat mid-May-Aug) has good information about the area if you're here in summer.

The best place to stay in town is the modern **Hardangerfjord Hotell** (☎ 56 55 63 00; www.hardangerfjord-hotell.no; s/d from Nkr700/1010; ☎), which has pleasant rooms, a fjord-side location and a lovely heated swimming pool. It's opposite the Kunsthuset Kabuso.

Hardangerfjord is renowned as a fruit-growing region, especially its apples, and locals swear that the best apple pie (Nkr65) in all of Hardangerfjord is to be found at **Steinstø Fruit Farm** (Steinstø Fruktgard; ☎ 56 55 79 33; www.steinsto-fruktgard.no; Steinstø; ☎ mid-Apr–mid-Oct), a short distance east of Øystese. It also runs guided farm visits (adult/child Nkr50/free) and serves lunch (by prior appointment; Nkr175) and great apple juice. Nearby, **Gamlastovo** (☎ 56 55 79 63; www.gamlastovo.no; Steinstø; set menu per person

### EXPLORING HARDANGERFJORD FROM ULVIK

Little Ulvik is a terrific base from which to explore Hardangerfjord. The **Ulvik tourist office** (☎ 56 52 63 60; www.visitulvik.com) sells tickets to a range of self-guided day excursions that take in much of Hardangerfjord by boat, ferry and express boat from June to August. These include the following:

- Eidfjord (adult/child return Nkr219/110 Monday to Saturday) – via Bruravik and Brimnes; allows two hours each at Hardangervidda Nature Centre and Eidfjord; departs Ulvik 8.55am and arrives back at 3.10pm
- Eidfjord & Vøringfoss waterfall (adult/child boat only Nkr100/200, with tour of Hardangervidda Nature Centre and waterfall Nkr395/295 Monday to Saturday) – departs 11.10am and arrives back at 3.10pm
- Kinsarvik and Utne (adult/child Nkr217/110 Monday to Friday) – via Bruravik, Brimnes, Kvanndal and Granvin with a visit to the Hardanger Folk museum in Utne. It departs Ulvik at 8.55am and arrives back 4.40pm
- Hardanger Grand Tour (adult/child Nkr320/160 Monday to Friday) – same as previous tour but also stops in Odda
- Norway in a Nutshell (adult/child Nkr668/335 Sunday to Friday) – Ulvik's own branch of the famous round trip leaves Ulvik at 8.55am and goes via Voss, Gudvangen, Flåm and Myrdal and returns to Ulvik at 6.40pm

Nkr80-250; ☎ by appointment) is similar, although it only caters for groups; Arne Fyke sometimes plays the Hardanger fiddle for guests.

There are six to 12 buses that run each day from Øystese to Bergen (Nkr145, 1½ hours) via Norheimsund.

### ULVIK

pop 1137

There's something special about Ulvik, in the heart of Norway's apple-growing territory. Framed by hills and mountains and with wonderful views up the fjord, Ulvik is bathed in tranquil silence once the tourist boats disappear. There's not a lot to see in Ulvik itself, but you're in the heart of stunning fjord country with plenty of cycling and hiking opportunities in the surrounding hills and farmstead visits possible. The wonderful Stream Nest complex (right) is 10km away in Osa and the whole area in May is delightful when the blossoms are out.

The **Ulvik tourist office** (☎ 56 52 63 60; www.visitulvik.com; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun mid-May–mid-Sep, 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) has a full list of local activities and hires **bicycles** (per hr/half-day/day Nkr40/90/160). It also organises **fruit-farm visits** (Nkr150; ☎ Mon-Fri mid-Jun–mid-Aug).

### Sleeping & Eating

**Ulvik Fjordcamping** (☎ 56 52 61 70; camping@ulvik.org; tent or caravan sites Nkr120, huts from s/d Nkr250/350) This convenient place, which lies 500m from

the centre of town, is small and right by the water's edge.

**Uppheim Gård** (☎ 56 52 62 93; www.uppheim-farm.com; s/d Nkr650/800) This charming old timber farmhouse, 2km uphill and north of the village, has lovely accommodation and great views. Helen and Sjur will make you feel like one of the family.

**Ulvik Fjord Hotel** (☎ 56 52 61 70; www.ulvikfjord.no; s/d from Nkr650/860) Another excellent choice, this well-run guesthouse offers very comfortable rooms. It's across the road from the water, but some rooms have balconies terraces overlooking a bubbling stream.

**Rica Brakanes Hotel** (☎ 56 52 61 05; www.brakanes-hotel.no; s/d from Nkr990/1190; ☎) This huge modern hotel has a front-row seat to some of the best views in Hardangerfjord, although you pay an extra Nkr100 per person for a fjord view. The hotel serves meals (buffet dinner Nkr395, mains from Nkr135).

### Getting There & Away

Buses run two to six times daily between Voss and Ulvik (Nkr85, 1½ hours).

### AROUND ULVIK

At the **Stream Nest complex** (☎ 56 52 69 90; Osa; adult/child Nkr40/free; ☎ 10.30am-4pm May-Aug), 10km east of Ulvik, highlights include the ecological herb garden, several artworks, including Allan Christensen's *Rambukk* (pile driver), and the odd eponymous log sculpture, *Stream*

*Nest*, originally conceived by Japanese artist Takamasa Kuniyasu for the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer. The sculpture, which consists of 3000 logs and 23,000 bricks, resounds with the tuba music of Geir Løvold, just as it did during the Games. It's a lovely spot.

## EIDFJORD

pop 915

In the innermost reaches of Hardangerfjorden, Eidfjord wins our prize as the most beautiful town among many in this part of Norway. Dwarfed by sheer mountains and cascading waterfalls, accessible by spiral tunnels and close to charming farms perched on mountain ledges with great views, Eidfjord is simply magnificent. Eidfjord's beauty does, however, come at a price: in summer, cruise ships arrive on an almost daily basis and the town can get overwhelmed.

Over the next few years, Eidfjord will become even more accessible with a planned 1380m suspension bridge to replace the ferry between Bruravik and Brimnes along the Rv7/13. The project probably won't be finished during the life span of this book, but check out the website for **Vegdirektoratet** ([www.vegvesen.no](http://www.vegvesen.no)); follow the links to 'Roads' and then 'Road Projects'.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 53 67 34 00; [www.visiteidfjord.no](http://www.visiteidfjord.no);  
🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) In addition to dispensing tourist information, it also has internet (per 10 mins Nkr10)

## Sights

Apart from the view from the water's edge, there are some wonderful sights in the Eidfjord vicinity. In addition to those listed below, the tourist office can point you in the direction of a number of nearby **Viking burial mounds**.

## KJEÅSEN FARM

Above all other sights in the region, **Kjeåsen Farm**, 6km northeast of Eidfjord and close to the treeline 530m above the valley floor, should not be missed. According to some accounts, there has been a farm here for 400 years, although vehicle access was only possible with the construction of the road in 1975. Now one of Norway's top scenic locations, the wonderfully remote farm buildings are still

inhabited by a woman who has lived alone there for 40 years – alone, that is, apart from the busloads of tourists who visit the farm every day in summer. She sometimes shows visitors around from 9am to 5pm. It's possible to climb up to the farm on foot (four hours return), but it's steep and quite perilous involving at least one rope-bridge; ask the tourist office for directions. The vehicle road goes through a one-way tunnel, driving up on the hour, down on the half-hour; ignore the signs that list the last time as 5.30pm as the road is open 24 hours. If Kjeåsen Farm has piqued your curiosity, the booklet *Kjeåsen in Eidfjord*, by Per A Holst, tells the history of the farm and its inhabitants; it's available for Nkr20 from the Eidfjord tourist office.

## SIMA POWER PLANT

At the foot of the road leading up to the farm, the **Sima Power Plant** (☎ 53 67 34 00; adult/child Nkr55/45; 🕒 guided tours at 10am, noon, 2pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Aug, extra tour 3.30pm Jul), one of the largest hydroelectric power plants in Europe, runs guided tours (one hour). The main hall runs 700m inside the mountain.

## HARDANGERVIDDA NATURSENTER

The exceptional **Hardangervidda Natursenter** (☎ 53 66 59 00; [www.hardangervidda.org](http://www.hardangervidda.org); Øvre Eidfjord; adult/child/family Nkr90/40/195; 🕒 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Apr, May, Sep & Oct) is a superlative introduction to one of Norway's most beautiful national parks. The centre shows a must-see 19-minute movie with dramatic panoramic footage of the park; if you can't visit the inner depths of the park on foot, this is the next best thing. Otherwise, there are interactive displays, informative explanations of the region's natural history, fish tanks of mountain species and interesting geology exhibits. The centre, which is located 6.5km southeast of Eidfjord in Øvre Eidfjord, has detailed trekking maps and staff can offer advice as to trekking and skiing in the park.

## TROLL TRAIN

In summer, the cutesy **Troll Train** (☎ 53 67 34 00; adult one way/return Nkr55/70, child Nkr30/40; 🕒 hourly 10am-5.30pm Jun-Aug) runs from outside Eidfjord's tourist office to the waterfalls at Vøringsfossen 20km up through the steep Måbødalen, stopping en route at Måbø Farm. Instead of taking Rv7 through the tunnels, it takes the older, more beautiful road up the valley. The jour-

ney takes about one hour and tickets must be purchased at the tourist office.

## Activities

In addition to hiking up to Kjeåsen Farm (opposite) and trekking in the Hardangervidda National Park (see p188), climbing (half-day Nkr250), abseiling (per day Nkr1700), river- and sea-kayaking (half-day Nkr360 to Nkr400), power-kiting (half-day Nkr400) and guided, two-day glacier expeditions (Nkr1800) can be arranged through **Flat Earth** (☎ 47 60 68 47; [www.flatearth.no](http://www.flatearth.no); Øvre Eidfjord; 🕒 around May-Sep). You'll find it close to the Hardangervidda Natursenter in Øvre Eidfjord, 6.5km south-east of Eidfjord.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Sæbø Camping** (☎ 53 66 59 27; [www.nafcamp.com/sabo](http://www.nafcamp.com/sabo) camping; Øvre Eidfjord; tent sites Nkr120, cabins Nkr460-900; 🕒 mid-May-mid-Sep) This good camp site has a pretty lakeside location in Måbødalen just 500m from the Hardangervidda Natursenter. The owners promise freshly baked bread in the mornings.

**Eidfjord Gjestegiveri** (☎ 53 66 53 46; [www.ovre-eidfjord.com](http://www.ovre-eidfjord.com); Øvre Eidfjord; hut Nkr325, s/d with shared bathroom & breakfast Nkr440/550; 🕒) This delightful guest house run by Erik and Inge has a homely feel 6.5km from central Eidfjord; it's also close to the Hardangervidda Natursenter. Breakfasts are good and there's internet access. There are just four double rooms and one single; the six camping huts are only open from April to October.

**Vik Pensjonat** (☎ 53 66 51 62; [www.vikpensjonat.com](http://www.vikpensjonat.com); Eidfjord; d/f Nkr990/1340, cabins Nkr600-700) This appealing place in the centre of Eidfjord not far from the water's edge is set in a lovely, renovated old home. It offers a friendly welcome and an excellent range of cosy accommodation and there's a small café. The rooms with balconies (rooms 1 and 6) are our favourites.

**Ingrid's Appartement** (☎ 53 66 54 85; [www.iapp.no](http://www.iapp.no); Eidfjord; d/f Nkr650/800, loft apt Nkr1050) This recommended, family-run place has well-kept apartments with bathroom and kitchen and some have good views.

**Eidfjord Hotel** (☎ 53 66 52 64; [www.eidfjordhotel.no](http://www.eidfjordhotel.no); Eidfjord; s/d with Fjord Pass from Nkr700/970) This modern hotel offers comfortable, if uninspiring rooms, some of which have partial views of the fjord. The garden terrace is a good place to chill and the restaurant (mains Nkr75 to Nkr179) is reasonable.

**Quality Hotel Vøringfoss** (☎ 53 67 41 00; [www.choice.no](http://www.choice.no); s/d May-Sep Nkr1290/1500, half-board Nkr1550/1900, s/d Oct-Apr from Nkr880/1000) This swish hotel opened in 2001 and offers extraordinary views from its fjord-facing rooms. This is a great place for a splurge and to wake up to an exceptional vista, unless, of course, a cruise ship has arrived blocking your view. Rooms are extremely comfortable. It also has a café that serves light meals and snacks; the wild boar burger with curry mayonnaise (Nkr139) makes a change from standard Norwegian kiosk food.

## Getting There & Away

Buses run between Geilo and Odda via Vøringfoss, Øvre Eidfjord and Eidfjord once or twice daily, plus several extra runs daily except Sunday between Øvre Eidfjord, Eidfjord and Odda.

## AROUND EIDFJORD

Eidfjord is a gateway to the **Hardangervidda Plateau** (p188), the largest mountain plateau in northern Europe and one of Norway's largest national parks. From Eidfjord, the Rv7 twists up through Måbødalen, including through a number of corkscrewing tunnels. At the summit after a steep 20km drive and where Hardangervidda begins, is the stunning, 182m-high **Vøringfoss waterfall**. There are actually numerous waterfalls here, which together are called Vøringsfossen, plunging over the plateau's rim and down into the canyon; the main section has a vertiginous drop of 145m. By some accounts, this is Norway's most-visited natural attraction, and it's hard to disagree given the endless stream of tour buses in summer (the record is 43 buses at any one time). The best views are from the lookout next to the Fossli Hotel (parking Nkr30) or from a number of lookouts (only one of which has a railing!) reached from the Vøringsfossen Cafeteria back down the valley on the Rv7. Buses between Geilo and Odda pass right by the falls.

If you'd like to fall asleep to the roar of cascading water, the **Fossli Hotel** (☎ 53 66 57 77; [www.fossli-hotel.com](http://www.fossli-hotel.com); s/d Nkr690/1050, cheaper with Fjord Pass; 🕒 May-Sep) is set just back from the precipice. The views from the atmospheric and historic hotel are stunning and the rooms have character and modern parquet floors, but neither TV nor phones. Best of all, staying here allows you to enjoy the falls after the crowds

disappear down the mountain. The hotel is run by Erik, whose great-grandfather built the hotel in the 1890s and who is a quiet but engaging host with a treasure-trove of stories from the Hardangervidda region; Erik cooks up delicious meals (Nkr180). Edvard Grieg composed his *Opus 66* in the hotel. The hotel is well signposted 1.3km off the Rv7.

## KINSARVIK & LOFTHUS

pop 3416

The picturesque town of Kinsarvik and nearby Lofthus rest peacefully on the shore of Sørforjorden, an offshoot of Hardangerfjord in the heart of a region known as Ullensvang. Kinsarvik wasn't always so peaceful – it was the site of a settlement of up to 300 Vikings from the 8th to 11th centuries.

**Kinsarvik tourist office** (☎ 53 66 31 12; www.visitullensvang.no; per half-hr internet access Nkr25;

☎ 9am–7pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year, closed December)

**Lofthus tourist office** (☎ 53 66 11 90; ☎ 11am–7pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug)

## Sights & Activities

### KINSARVIK

The small U-shaped patch of greenery opposite the Kinsarvik tourist office is all that remains of the former **Viking port**. Kinsarvik also boasts one of Norway's oldest **stone churches** (admission free; ☎ 10am–7pm late-May–mid-Aug). First built in around 1180, it was restored in the 1960s and the walls still bear traces of lime-and-chalk paintings that depict the weighing of souls by Michael the Archangel with the devil trying to weigh down the scales. According to local legend, the church was built by Scottish invaders on the site of an earlier stave church.

Kinsarvik also offers an appealing access trail past the cooling **Husedalen waterfalls**, along what's known as the **Monk's Stairway**, and onto the network of tracks through the wild forest of **Hardangervidda National Park** (see the boxed text, p188).

For children, the **Familieparken Hardangertun** (☎ 53 67 13 13; www.hardangertun.no; day pass Nkr125; ☎ 10.30am–6.30pm daily late Jun–mid-Aug, 10.30am–6.30pm Sat & Sun mid-May–late Jun & mid-Aug–Sep) has water slides, minigolf and farm animals.

From May to September, the tourist office sells tickets for a **boat** (adult/child Nkr260/130) that leaves Kinsarvik at 10.25am and returns at 3.55pm, with three hours in Eidfjord.

Given that you pay an extra Nkr195/110 if you want to take the sightseeing bus to the Hardangervidda Natursenter (p216) and Vøringsfossen (p217), it's only worth doing if you don't have your own wheels.

### LOFTHUS

The main attraction in Lofthus is **Grieg's Hut** (☎ 24hr year-round), the one-time retreat of Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg. It's in the garden of Hotel Ullensvang. Lofthus also has a **stone church** (admission free; ☎ 10am–7pm late-May–mid-Aug) dating back to 1250 (the tower was added in the 1880s) with fine stained-glass windows and it's surrounded by a cemetery with some graves from the Middle Ages.

## Sleeping & Eating

### KINSARVIK

**Kinsarvik Camping** (☎ 53 66 32 90; www.kinsarvikcamping.no; tent & caravan sites Nkr120 plus Nkr20 electricity, 4-bed cabins Nkr290–550) This simple, friendly place is right by the water's edge and has a waterslide for kids and the young at heart.

**Kinsarvik Fjord Hotel** (☎ 53 66 31 00; www.kinsarvikfjordhotel.no; s/d from Nkr890/1080; ☎ ) This comfortable Best Western hotel just back from the shore in the centre of Kinsarvik is comfortable and it has a reasonable restaurant.

### LOFTHUS

**Lofthus Camping** (☎ 53 66 13 64; www.lofthuscamping.com; tent & caravan sites Nkr130 plus Nkr35 electricity, 2-bed cabin Nkr360–480, 4-bed cabin Nkr450–590; ☎ ) Another well-equipped fjord-side camp site with front-row views, Lofthus Camping has a heated indoor pool and can arrange boat rental.

**Ullensvang Gjesteheim** (☎ 53 66 12 36; www.ullensvang-gjesteheim.no; s/d/f from Nkr490/710/870) Kristin and Tor will make you feel right at home in this renovated 16th-century farmhouse. The rooms are simple but there's a warm feeling about this place.

**Hotel Ullensvang** (☎ 53 67 00 00; www.hotel-ullensvang.no; s/d from Nkr890/1350 with Fjord Pass, fjord view extra Nkr100; ☎ ☎ ☎ ) This enormous, luxurious place has exceptional views, supremely comfortable rooms and a good restaurant (buffet dinner Nkr375).

## Getting There & Away

Buses run between Odda and Voss or Geilo on a semiregular basis and pass through Kinsarvik and Lofthus. A ferry connects Kinsarvik with Utne (per person/vehicle

Nkr28/77, 40 minutes) and on to Kvanndal (Nkr35/102, one hour) at least six times a day.

## UTNE

One of the prettiest little villages you'll find Hardangerfjord, Utne is famous for its fruit-growing and for the excellent open-air **Hardanger Folk Museum** (☎ 53 67 00 40; www.hardanger.museum.no; adult/child Nkr50/free; ☎ 10am–4pm May, 10am–5pm Jun–Aug, 10am–3pm Mon–Fri Sep–Apr), which acts as a repository for the cultural heritage of the Hardanger region. It comprises a collection of historic homes, boats, shops, outhouses and a school, plus exhibitions on Hardanger women, weddings, the famed Hardanger fiddle and fiddle-making, fishing, music, dance, orchard crops and the wood-carvings of local artist Lars Kinsarvik; it also bakes delicious local cakes on Tuesdays (noon to 3pm) in July.

There are also some good **walking trails** leading beyond the village; ask at the Utne Hotel for information.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hardanger Gjestegård** (☎ 53 66 67 10; www.hardanger-gjestegard.no; Alsåker; d from Nkr750) This atmospheric guesthouse, 10km west of Utne on Fv550, is in a pretty 1898 building with character-filled rooms brimming with cutesy folk touches. It offers good weekly rates.

**Utne Hotel** (☎ 53 66 64 00; www.utnehotel.no; Utne; s/d Nkr1135/1470; ☎ ) The historic wooden Utne Hotel was built in 1722 after the Great Nordic War, making it Norway's oldest hotel. Restored in 2003, it overflows with period touches from the 18th and 19th centuries. The hotel's fabulous décor makes it worth a look even if you're not staying and it also has the best restaurant (three-course evening buffet Nkr439) in town.

## Getting There & Away

Ferries run between Utne, Kinsarvik (per person/vehicle Nkr28/77, 40 minutes) and Kvanndal (Nkr14/35, 20 minutes) at least six times a day.

## ODDA

pop 7154

Frequently cited as Norway's ugliest town (it does battle with some pretty dire places in Finnmark), Odda is the Hardanger region's industrial, iron-smelting capital. What it does

offer is a front-row view of one of Norway's finest landscapes: the innermost reaches of Hardangerfjord with a riotous waterfall and the icy heights of the fabulous Folgefonn glacier. Just try not to breathe in while you're admiring the view.

The Odda **tourist office** (☎ 53 65 40 05; www.visitodda.com; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat, 11am–6pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9.30am–4pm Mon–Fri rest-of-year; internet access per half-hr Nkr25) is near the Sørforjorden shore.

## Sights

### FOLGEFONN

Folgefonn is mainland Norway's third-largest icefield and offers summer skiing, snowboarding and sledding from mid-June to October. For more information, contact the **Folgefonn Sommar Skisenter** (☎ 53 66 80 28; www.folgefonn.no). Short tours to the ski centre leave from Jondal Quay at 10.30am from mid-June to mid-August and return at 3.30pm. From Odda, weekend glacier trips run to Odda Turlag's Holmaskjær mountain hut; contact the tourist office for details.

Anyone in good physical condition with warm clothing and sturdy footwear can take a guided hike up the lovely Buer valley followed by a glacier walk on the Buer arm of Folgefonn (minimum three persons, Nkr400 per person, including crampons and ice axes). For details contact **Hardanger Breiføring** (☎ 90 64 49 75) or the tourist office. Transport to the starting point, at Buer, 8km west of Odda, isn't included in the price. For glacier hikes, you may also want to contact **Folgefonna Breiføring** (☎ 95 11 77 92; www.folgefonna-breiføring.no; Jondal).

### TYSSESTRENGENE WATERFALL

About 5km east of town, in Skjeggedal, the 960m, 42-degree **Mågelibanen Funicular** (adult/child return Nkr120/60) runs on Wednesday and Friday; timings are variable so check with the Odda tourist office. Hikers can head for the top of the **Tyssestrengene waterfall** (646m) and the outrageous **Trolltunga rock feature** from either Skjeggedal (eight to 10 hours return) or the upper funicular station (six to eight hours return).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Odda Camping** (☎ 41 32 16 10; www.oppleve.no/odda\_camping; Odda; tent & caravan sites Nkr130; ☎ mid-May–Aug) The most convenient camping is on the shores of the lake Sandvinvatnet, a 20-minute uphill walk south of the town centre.

**Hardanger Hotel** (☎ 53 64 64 64; www.hardangerhoteltel.no; Eittheimsveien 17; s/d from Nkr790/950; 📍 📺) The upmarket Hardanger Hotel offers comfortable rooms with modern facilities and a reasonable restaurant-cafeteria.

**Tyssedal Hotel** (☎ 53 64 00 00; www.tyssedal-hotel.no; Tyssedal; s/d from Nkr950/1050) The highly recommended Tyssedal Hotel has great rooms with ensuite, parquet floors and a real sense of style, but this is above all a place for lovers of ghost stories – the hotel is reputedly haunted by the ghost of Eidfjord artist Nils Bergslien whose fantastic fairy-tale and Hardangerfjord landscape paintings adorn the hotel. The food is also terrific (mains around Nkr230) with fusion dishes based on local produce, such as reindeer in a blueberry sauce or mountain trout. The locally born owners are a mine of information on the area.

### Getting There & Away

Between Odda and Jondal (Nkr149, 2½ hours), local buses operate one to three times daily. One to three daily Nor-Way Bussekspress buses run to/from Voss (Nkr215, 2½ hours) and Oslo (Nkr490, 7¼ hours).

### ROSENDAL & AROUND

pop 1056

Just west of Folgefonn, scenic Rosendal can now be reached by an 11km-long road tunnel (car Nkr60; 🕒 6am–10pm) under the icefield from Odda. The **tourist office** (☎ 53 48 00 40; www.folgefonna.net; 🕒 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat, 11am–5pm Sun May–Sep) is by Rosendal Quay.

At Sunndal, 4km west of the tunnel, take the road up the Sunndal valley (drivable for 1km), then walk 2km on a good track to lake Bondhusvatnet, where there's a wonderful view of the glacier **Bondhusbreen**. In Uskedalen, 14km west of Rosendal, there's an extraordinary rock-slab mountain, Ulvenåso (1247m), offering some of the best **rock climbing** in Norway; contact the tourist office in Rosendal for details.

The 1665 **Baroniet Rosendal** (☎ 53 48 29 99; www.baroniet.no; Rosendal; adult/child Nkr75/10; 🕒 variable hrs May–Aug), Norway's only baronial mansion, features period interiors, a Renaissance rose garden, concerts and art exhibitions. You can even sleep here (single rooms Nkr350 to Nkr600, dorms Nkr600 to Nkr800) in one of the farm buildings, which makes for one of western Norway's most atmospheric stays.

In Sunndal, there's the reasonable **Sundal Camping** (☎ 53 48 41 86; www.sundalcamping.no;

Sunndal; tent sites Nkr70, cabins Nkr400–600). It also rents canoes/bicycles for Nkr100/90 per day.

The ornate **Rosendal Gjestgiveri** (☎ /fax 53 47 36 66; www.gjestgiveri.no in Norwegian; Skålagata 17; Rosendal; s/d with shared bathroom Nkr650/850) dates from 1887 and is an atmospheric B&B. The restaurant (mains Nkr89 to Nkr179) is probably the best in the area.

Buses run three to seven times daily between Rosendal and Odda via Sunndal. There are also two daily connections to Bergen via nearby Løfallstrand.

## HAUGELANDET & RYFYLKE

North and east of Stavanger lies a region of low-lying hills and relatively flat coastal inlets and islands that are reminiscent of the northern Scottish Isles. Haugesund is the regional capital and its main calling cards are its festivals and waterfront café culture in summer.

### HAUGESUND

pop 32,303

The North Sea port of Haugesund lies well off the beaten routes and is rarely visited by travellers. It's a base for the historically rich Haugelandet region with some interesting sights, while the Haugesund waterfront is lined with wooden buildings and has a real buzz about it in summer. The town also has a busy summer festival calendar.

The area around Haugesund carries huge historical significance for Norwegians. It was in the nearby Hafstrsfjord that the decisive battle took place in 872 and Norway was first unified.

### Information

**Haugesund tourist office** (☎ 52 01 08 30; www.visithaugelandet.no; Strandgata 171; 🕒 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–end Aug, 10am–4.30pm Mon–Fri Sep–mid-Jun)

**Quick Storkiosk** (Haraldsgata 82; per hr Nkr40; 🕒 10am–11pm) Internet access.

### Sights

Haugesund has retained many of its historical buildings, with the highlights including the **Rådhus** (town hall). About 75m south is the **Krosshaugen** mound and stone cross, erected in celebration of Christian gatherings around 1000.

**Haraldshaugen**, the burial site of Viking King Harald Hårfagre, who died of plague at Avaldsnes on nearby Karmøy, is 1.5km north of Haugesund. The obelisk, erected in 1872, commemorates the decisive 872 battle.

Bizarrely, Haugesund claims to be the ancestral home of Marilyn Monroe, whose father, a local baker, emigrated to the USA. A **monument** on the quay, next to the Rica Maritim Hotel, commemorates the 30th anniversary of her death.

### Festivals

Haugesund has two excellent festivals in August: **Silda Jazz** (Haugesund International Jazz Festival; early–mid-Aug) and the **Norwegian Film Festival** (mid-late Aug). For details, contact the tourist office.

### Sleeping

**Strandgaten Gjestgiveri** (☎ 52 71 52 55; www.gjestgiveri.net; Strandgata 81; s/d Nkr545/750; 📍 📺) On offer at Strandgaten Gjestgiveri are tidy rooms that are a cosy choice in the centre of Haugesund. There's also free wireless internet.

**Comfort Hotel Amanda** (☎ 52 80 82 00; www.choice.no; Smedasundet 93; s/d from Nkr945/1095; 📍 📺) This hotel in the centre of town has the best waterfront location, an attractive early-20th-century building and large and luxurious rooms. Included in the price is a light evening buffet.

**Rica Maritim Hotel** (☎ 52 86 30 00; www.rica.no; Åsbygaten 3; s/d summer & weekend from Nkr860/1110, d summer & weekend with water view Nkr1250, s/d weekday mid-Sep–mid-Jun Nkr1200/1735; 📍 📺) From its aquarium in the lobby to the luxurious appointed rooms (one suite goes for Nkr10,000!), this recently renovated hotel is high class.

### Eating

Haugesund's waterfront promenade, Smedasundet, is almost entirely given over to restaurants, giving the area an agreeable hum whenever the weather's warm. Any Haugesund restaurant worth its salt morphs into a bar as the night wears on.

**NB Sørensen's Damskipsexpedisjon** (☎ 52 70 00 50; Smedasundet 90; English breakfast Nkr99, lunch mains Nkr99–125, dinner mains Nkr229–295; 🕒 11am–midnight Mon–Thu, 11am–2am Fri & Sat, 1–11pm Sun) One of the more architecturally distinguished buildings along Smedasundet, Sørensen's has Norwegian staples with creative twists such as fillet of

monkfish with vegetarian lasagne or soy-and-honey-marinated pork neck.

**Lothes Mat & Vinhus** (☎ 52 71 22 01; Skippergata 4; mains Nkr145–279; 🕒 11am–1.30am) With its lovely outdoor terrace overlooking the waterfront and period wood architecture, this long-standing Haugesund landmark is always full and deservedly so.

**To Glass** (☎ 52 70 74 00; Strandgata 169; light meals Nkr139–164, mains Nkr219–279; 🕒 3–11pm Mon–Thu, 3pm–midnight Fri & Sat) There aren't many reasons to drag yourself away from the waterfront, but this achingly cool restaurant and wine bar is one of them. Try the entrecote sandwich (Nkr159) for a filling, but affordable meal.

### Getting There & Away

**SAS Braathens** (☎ 81 52 00 00; www.sasbraathens.no) has up to five daily flights between **Haugesund airport** (☎ 52 85 79 00) and Oslo (from Nkr560). **Coast Air** (☎ 81 54 44 42; www.coastair.no) also has a daily flight to Haugesund (from Nkr490).

Nor-Way Bussekspress buses connect Haugesund with Stavanger (Nkr210, 2¼ hours) and Bergen (Nkr290, 3½ hours) almost hourly on weekdays and every second hour on weekends.

For details of international boat and air services to Haugesund, see p403.

### AROUND HAUGESUND Karmøy Island

Not content with playing a role in the family history of one American icon (Marilyn Monroe; see left), Haugesund was also essential to the founding of another. Copper from the mine at Visnes – now the **Visnes Mining Museum** (☎ 52 83 84 00; www.karmoy.com mune.no; Visnes; adult/child Nkr50/10; 🕒 11am–5pm Mon–Fri, noon–5pm Sun mid-May–mid-Aug) – 4km west of Avaldsnes, was used to build the Statue of Liberty in New York.

About 5km south of central Haugesund, King Håkon Håkonsson's huge **stone church** (☎ 52 83 84 00; Avaldsnes; admission free; 🕒 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, noon–5pm Sun Jun–Aug) was dedicated to St Olav in 1250. The adjacent 6.5m spire, known as the **Virgin Mary's Needle**, leans perilously towards the church wall and legend suggests that when it actually touches the wall, the Day of Judgment is at hand; it was close but still free-standing when we were there. Local legend has it that priests of little faith have, through the centuries, climbed the needle to chip bits away.



Down a short path from the church's car park is the new and outstanding **Nordvegen History Centre** (☎ 52 81 24 00; www.nordvegen.info; adult/child/student or senior Nkr80/40/60; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun Apr-Sep; 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sun Oct-Mar), which recreates the history of Harald Fair-Hair and other monarchs of the newly unified Nordvegen from the 10th century onwards.

The reconstructed **Viking farm** (☎ 52 83 84 00; www.nordvegen.info; Avaldsnes; adult/child Nkr30/10; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug) is beyond the church; you'll be guided by staff in period dress.

In early June, Karmøy Island hosts a **Viking Festival** (www.vikingfestivalen.no in Norwegian) with Viking feasts, processions and saga evenings.

In Vedavågen, on the island's west coast, the **Karmøy Fishery Museum** (☎ 52 81 74 55; www.museumsnnett.no/karmoyfiskerimuseum in Norwegian; adult/child Nkr30/10; 🕒 11am-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sun mid-May-mid-Aug) will have fishing buffs enthralled with a state-of-the-art new building, fishing exhibits and a saltwater aquarium.

To reach Avaldnes from central Haugesund, catch bus 8, 9 or 10 (Nkr37) from next to the post office.

The wonderful settlement of **Skudeneshavn**, 37km south of Haugesund (on Karmøy), has many traditional wooden buildings and an extensive museum, **Mælandsgården** (☎ 52 84 54 60; adult/child Nkr50/10; 🕒 11am-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sun mid-May-mid-Aug), with excellent collections of household articles, rooms with period furnishings and agricultural and nautical exhibits.

**Norneshuset** (☎ 52 82 72 62; www.norneshuset.no in Norwegian; Nordnes 7, Skudeneshavn; s/d from Nkr550/750) is one of the most atmospheric and friendliest B&Bs in Norway; it's located in a former warehouse that was shipped from Riga, Latvia, in the 1830s.

## STAVANGER & LYSEFJORD

Tucked away in Norway's southwest, the oil-rich city of Stavanger hums to an agreeable buzz. It also serves as the gateway to Lysefjord, the southernmost of Norway's signature fjords and home to one of its most recognisable vantage points – Pulpit Rock (Preikestolen).

### STAVANGER

pop 117,315

Vibrant Stavanger ends up being many travellers' favourite city in Norway. With its centre arrayed around a pretty harbour with the quiet streets of the old town climbing up from the water's edge, it's a picturesque place. It's also home to almost two dozen museums. But Stavanger's appeal is as much about atmosphere as anything else. Most nights, especially in summer, the city's waterfront comes alive and can get quite rowdy in the best tradition of oil and port cities. By Sunday morning, it's quiet and charming, for this is a place that has never lost its small-town feel.

#### Orientation & Information

The bus and train stations are alongside each other on the southern shore of the lake Breiavann, about 10 minutes' walk from the harbour. Most sites of interest are within easy walking distance of the harbour.

Most major banks are represented along Olav V's gate and Håkon VII's gate. **Den Norske Bank** (Håkon VII's gate) and the adjacent **post office** (Håkon VII's gate) offer competitive exchange rates.

**@fe.com** (☎ 51 55 41 20; Sølberggata 15; 🕒 11am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun; per hr Nkr55) Well-run Skype-equipped internet café with good coffee.

**Public library** (Kulturhus; 🕒 10am-4pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-7pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat) Free, time-limited internet access.

**Stavanger Turistforening DNT** (☎ 51 84 02 00; off Muségata; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-6pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat) Information on hiking and mountain huts.

**Tourist office** (☎ 51 85 92 00; www.regionstavanger.com; Domkirkepllassen 3; 🕒 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Sep-May) Local information and advice on Lysefjord and Preikestolen.

#### Sights

At last count, Stavanger had 23 museums; the tourist office has a full list.

#### OLD STAVANGER

**Gamle (Old) Stavanger**, above the western shore of the harbour, is a delight. The old town's cobblestone walkways pass between rows of 173 late-18th-century whitewashed wooden houses, all immaculately kept and adorned with cheerful, well-tended flowerboxes. It well rewards an hour or two's ambling.

#### NORWEGIAN EMIGRATION CENTRE

This **centre** (☎ 51 53 88 60; www.emigrationcenter.com; Strandkaiaen 31; 🕒 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) helps foreigners of Norwegian descent trace their roots. In mid-June it stages a popular Emigration Festival.

#### STAVANGER CATHEDRAL

This beautiful **cathedral** (Stavanger Domkirke; Håkon VII's gate; admission free; 🕒 11am-7pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Thu & Sat Sep-May) is an impressive, but understated, medieval stone cathedral dating from approximately 1125; it was extensively renovated following a fire in 1272 and contains traces of Gothic, baroque, Romanesque and Anglo-Norman influences. Despite restoration in the 1860s and 1940, and the stripping of some features during the Reformation, the cathedral is, by some accounts, Norway's oldest medieval cathedral still in its original form. Its wonderful stone columns, tapestries, elaborate baroque pulpit and stained-glass window depicting the main events of the Christian calendar are a visual feast.

#### NORWEGIAN PETROLEUM MUSEUM

We could (and have) spend hours in this state-of-the-art **museum** (Norsk Oljemuseum; ☎ 51 93 93 00; www.norskolje.museum.no; Kjeringsholmen; adult/child Nkr75/35; 🕒 10am-7pm daily Jun-Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Sep-May), one of Norway's best. Filled with high-tech interactive displays, gigantic models and authentic reconstructions, its many highlights include a terrific 3-D film covering Norway's geological history, a documentary by former Lonely Planet TV presenter Ian Wright, simulators, a petrodome recreating millions of years of natural history and an amazing model of 'Ekofisk city'.

Tracing the history of oil formation and exploration in the North Sea from discovery in 1969 until the present, the museum nicely balances the technical side of oil exploration and extraction with archive footage and newspapers of significant moments in the history of Norwegian oil. Not least among these are: coverage of the *Alexander L Kielland* tragedy in 1980, when 123 oil workers were killed; the 1972 decision by Norway's parliament that Statoil should be based in Stavanger; and the 1950s declaration by a Norwegian government commission that 'the chances of finding oil on the continental shelf off the Norwegian coast can be discounted'. You'll spend longer here than you planned, especially if you have kids.

#### VALBERG TOWER & GUARD MUSEUM

The historic **tower** Valbergtårnet was constructed as a guards' lookout in 1850 and now contains this interesting **museum** (Vektermuseet; Valberget 2; adult/child Nkr20/free; 🕒 10am-4pm Mon-Sat). From behind the west side of the tower at ground level there are some reasonable views over the city towards the old town.

#### STAVANGER MUSEUM

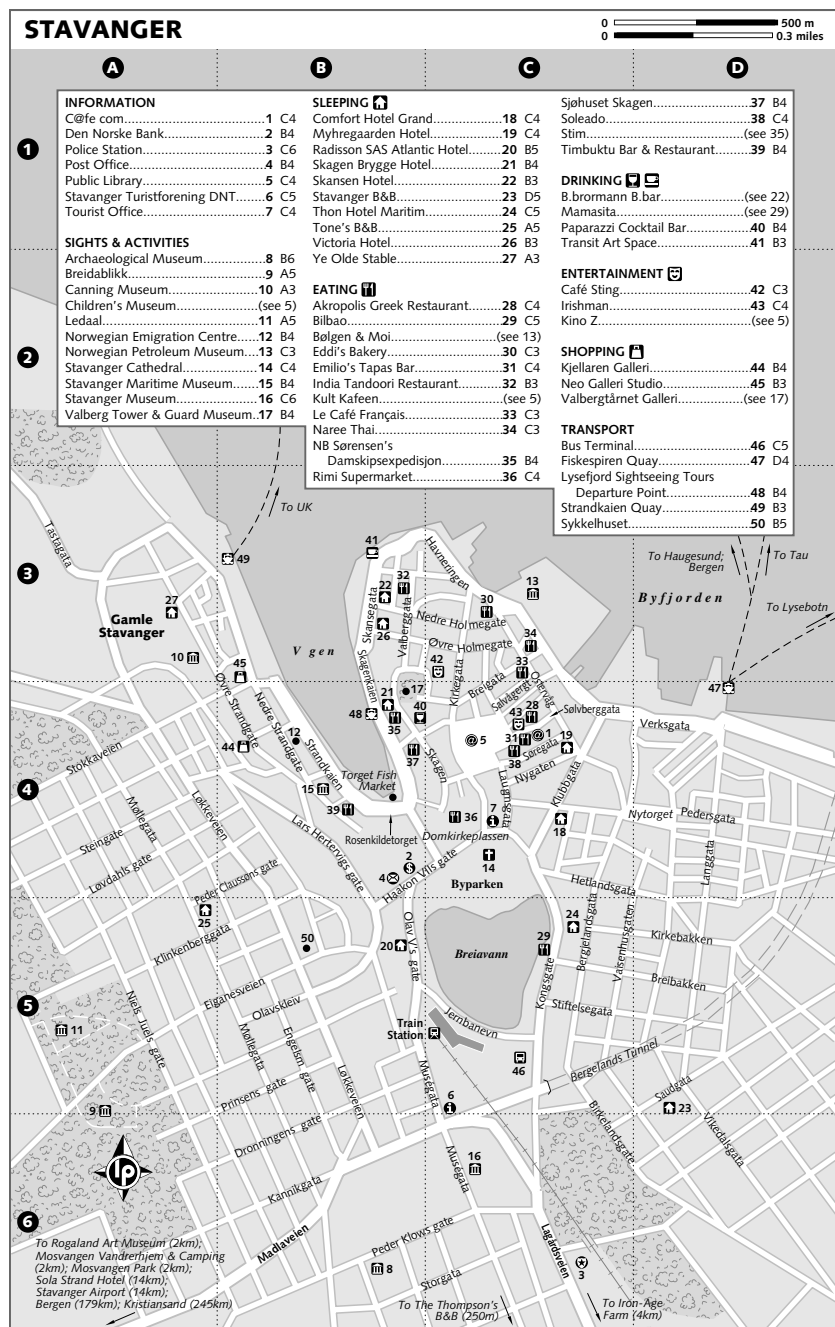
The large **eight-part museum** (☎ 51 84 27 00; www.stavanger.museum.no), with its sites scattered around Stavanger, could easily fill a sightseeing day, but you'd have to keep up a brisk pace to fit them all in. The first museum you visit costs Nkr60/30 per adult/child, with each extra museum visited the same day costing Nkr20; student and senior prices are the same as for children. The children's museum has separate pricing. The other two museums we don't cover here are the **Norwegian Printing Museum** and the **Medical Museum**.

#### Stavanger Museum

The main **museum** (Muségata 16; 🕒 11am-4pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, closed Mon rest-of-year) reveals nearly 900 years of Stavanger's history, 'From Ancient Landscape to Oil Town'. Features include evidence of Stone Age habitation, the medieval bishopric, the herring years and the development of the city into a modern oil capital. The Stavanger of the 1880s is described in a series of tableaux focusing on local author Alexander L Kielland.

#### Canning Museum

Don't miss this **museum** (Hermetikkuseet; ☎ 51 52 65 91; Øvre Strandgate 88-90; 🕒 11am-4pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, closed Mon rest-of-year); housed in an old cannery, it's one of Stavanger's most appealing museums. Before oil there were sardines and Stavanger was once home to more than half of Norway's canning factories; by 1922 the city's canneries provided 50% of the town's employment. Here you'll get the lowdown on canning brisling and fish balls and the exhibits take you through the whole 12-stage process from salting, through to threading, smoking, decapitating and packing. There are no labels but there's a handy brochure available at the entrance and guides are always on hand to answer your questions or crank up some of the old machines. Upstairs, there's a fascinating display of historical sardine-can labels (more than 40,000 designs were used and they became collectors' items). An



adjoining building houses a café and restored workers' cottages furnished in 1920s and 1960s style. On the first Sunday of every month (and Tuesday and Thursday from mid-June to mid-August), the fires are lit and you can sample smoked sardines straight from the ovens.

### Ledaal

The empire-style **Ledaal** (Eigensveien 45; ☎ 11am-4pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-4pm Sun rest-of-year) was constructed between 1799 and 1803 for wealthy merchant shipowner Gabriel Schanche Kielland. Now recently restored it serves as the local royal residence and summer home. You'll see the king's 250-year-old four-poster bed, unusual antique furniture and a pendulum clock from 1680.

### Breidablikk

The excellent **Breidablikk manor** (Eigensveien 40A; ☎ 11am-4pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-4pm Sun rest-of-year) was constructed for another merchant shipowner, Lars Berentsen. These days, it allows you to see the opulent lifestyles of the rich and famous in late-19th-century Norway, displaying old farming implements, books and knick-knacks.

### Stavanger Maritime Museum

This worthwhile **museum** (Sjøfartsmuseet; Nedre Strandgate 17-19; ☎ 11am-4pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, closed Mon rest-of-year) covers 200 years of Stavanger's maritime history spread over two warehouses dating from around 1800. There's also a large collection of model boats, sailing vessels, a noisy wind-up foghorn, a reconstruction of a late-19th-century sailmaker's workshop, a shipowner's office and an excellent general store, as well as the merchant's living quarters. The museum also owns two historic sailing vessels, the 1848 *Anna of Sand* and the 1896 *Wyvern*, both on display.

### Children's Museum

A great place to take the kids is this **museum** (Norsk Barnemuseum; ☎ 51 91 23 93; www.norskbarne.museum.no; Arneageren; adult/child Nkr80/40; ☎ 11am-3.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-4.30pm Sun), which has a range of activity-based exhibits (eg old toys, a labyrinth) centred around the themes of landscape, labyrinth and theatre.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

This well-presented **museum** (☎ 51 84 60 00; www.ark.museum.no; Peder Klows gate 30A; adult/child Nkr20/10;

☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year), traces 11,000 years of human history, including the Viking Age. Exhibits include skeletons, tools, a runestone and a description of the symbiosis between prehistoric humans and their environment. There's also a full programme of activities for kids (eg treasure hunts) in summer and it's making a welcome move to more interactive exhibits.

### IRON-AGE FARM

The reconstruction of a 1500-year-old **Iron-Age Farm** (Jernaldergarden; ☎ 51 80 70 00; Ullandhaugvn 3, Ullandhaug; adult/child Nkr40/10; ☎ 11am-4pm daily Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-4pm Sun only May-Oct), 4km south of the centre, features various activities, staff in period dress and food preparation on Sunday. Take bus 25 or 26 towards Sandnes to Ullandhaug (Nkr27, 15 minutes).

### ROGALAND ART MUSEUM

This **museum** (Rogaland Kunstmuseum; ☎ 51 53 09 00; Henrik Ibsensgate 55; adult/child Nkr50/30; ☎ 11am-4pm Tue-Sun), 2.5km south of the town centre, displays Norwegian art from the 18th century to the present, including the haunting *Gamle Furutrær* and other landscape paintings by Stavanger's own Lars Hertervig (1830-1902). A nine-sided annexe houses the largest assemblage of mid-20th-century Norwegian art, including work by Harald Dal, Kai Fjell, Arne Ekeland and others.

### MOSVANGEN

The large forest **park** at Mosvangen is a popular place for locals to wander and picnic amid the greenery. The lake and its small attached lagoon, which are encircled by footpaths, attract large numbers of breeding ducks, geese, and sea birds, as well as songbirds. It's a pleasant 3km walk from the centre or 10 minutes on bus 130 (Nkr25).

### Tours

From June to August, the tourist office runs **guided walking tours** (☎ 51 85 92 00; adult/senior, student or child Nkr200/125) of the city. They leave from the tourist office at 11am.

For details of tours to Lysefjord, see the boxed text, p231.

### Festivals & Events

In early August, Stavanger plays host to its **International Chamber Music Festival** (www.icmf.no). Most concerts are held in the Stavanger

## EUROPE'S CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Stavanger richly deserves its designation as Europe's Capital of Culture (an honour it shares in 2008 with Liverpool in the UK), so vibrant is its cultural life and so diverse are its cultural attractions. With a motto of 'Open Port', the year-long celebrations seem perfectly matched to this energetic port city, which is Norwegian to its core but open to cultural influences and visitors from all over the world. With more than 200 projects planned, chances are that there will be plenty of things happening to coincide with your visit if you're here during 2008. Themes around which the projects are based include cultural heritage, environment, architecture, youth and migration and 'Sounds from the Cathedral'. In practical terms, what that means is a continuous programme of concerts, exhibitions and street parties with Stavanger's signature landmarks as the backdrop. For more information on upcoming events, visit the website [www.stavanger2008.com](http://www.stavanger2008.com).

Cathedral and tickets range from Nkr100 to Nkr300. Other music festivals with Stavanger as their backdrop include the **May Jazz Festival** ([www.majazz.no](http://www.majazz.no) in Norwegian; early to mid-May), the **Pulpit Rock Festival** ([www.pulpit.no](http://www.pulpit.no) in Norwegian; mid-Aug) and **NuMusic** ([www.numusic.no](http://www.numusic.no); early Sep).

In the middle of March, Stavanger shakes off the winter blues with the **Stavanger Vinfest** ([www.stavangervinfest.no](http://www.stavangervinfest.no) in Norwegian), a celebration of food and drink.

## Sleeping

Accommodation in Stavanger is always snapped up well in advance during summer; book as far ahead as possible.

## BUDGET

For the Mosvangen Vandrerhjem or Mossvangen Camping, take bus 78 or 79 (Nkr25) from opposite the cathedral to Ullandhaugveien, 3km to the south. Bus 4 also passes by.

**Mosvangen Vandrerhjem** (☎ 51 54 36 36; [stavanger.hostel@vandrerhjem.no](mailto:stavanger.hostel@vandrerhjem.no); Henrik Ibsensgate 19; dm/s/d with shared bathroom Nkr240/400/480, ☹ mid-May–mid-Sep) Stavanger's pleasant and simple lakeside hostel, 3km southwest of the city centre, charges Nkr60 for breakfast.

**Mosvangen Camping** (☎ 51 53 29 71; [www.mosvangencamping.no/indexengelsk](http://www.mosvangencamping.no/indexengelsk); Tjensvoll 1b; tent sites without/with car Nkr80/110, with caravan or camper Nkr120, 2-/4-person huts from Nkr350/500, ☹ mid-May–mid-Sep) During nesting season around Mosvangen lake, campers are treated to almost incessant birdsong amid the green and agreeable surroundings.

The tourist office distributes the *Bed & Breakfast Circle* leaflet and the seven places listed are all charming places to stay. Those in or close to the city centre:

**Thompsons B&B** (☎ 51 52 13 29; [www.thompsonsbedandbreakfast.com](http://www.thompsonsbedandbreakfast.com); Muségata 79; s/d with shared

bathroom Nkr250/450) Housed in a 19th-century home and with a warm family feel.

**Tone's B&B** (☎ 51 52 42 07; [ton-bour@online.no](mailto:ton-bour@online.no); Peder Claussens gate 22; s/d with shared bathroom Nkr280/450) An old Stavanger home close to Gamle Stavanger.

## MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Comfort Hotel Grand** (☎ 51 20 14 00; [www.choice.no](http://www.choice.no); Klubbgate 3; d Fri-Sun & all week in summer Nkr590, s/d Mon-Thu rest-of-year Nkr1250/1450) Don't be put off by the grim exterior because this place promises modern, comfortable rooms in the heart of town.

**our pick Stavanger B&B** (☎ 51 56 25 00; [www.stavangerbedandbreakfast.no](http://www.stavangerbedandbreakfast.no); Vikedalsgate 1a; s/d with shared toilet Nkr625/740; ☹) This quiet but popular place comes highly recommended by readers and it's not hard to see why. The simple rooms are tidy and come with satellite TV, shower and a smile from the friendly owners. Packed lunches are available for a bargain Nkr35, and at 9pm nightly, free coffee, tea and waffles are served.

**our pick Skansen Hotel** (☎ 51 93 85 00; [www.skansenhotel.no](http://www.skansenhotel.no); Skansegate 7; guesthouse s Nkr690-1030, d Nkr775-1190, hotel s Nkr790-1130, d Nkr875-1290; ☹) This centrally located place, opposite the old customs house, has a more personal feel to it than Stavanger's larger hotels. The hotel is divided into an older guesthouse section with simple, comfortable rooms, and newer hotel rooms that are larger and more stylish. There's free wireless access throughout both sections.

**Sola Strand Hotel** (☎ 51 94 30 00; [www.solastrandhotel.no](http://www.solastrandhotel.no); s/d from Nkr700/850) The recommended historic Sola Strand overlooks a quiet sandy beach 14km southwest of Stavanger. Many of the rooms are large and have sweeping coastal views. Breakfasts are also a highlight and the

hotel contains an entire lounge from a former cruise ship.

**Skagen Brygge Hotel** (☎ 51 85 00 00; [www.skagenbryggehotei.no](http://www.skagenbryggehotei.no); Skagenkaiaen 30; s/d Fri-Sun & all week in summer Nkr805/975, Mon-Thu rest-of-year Nkr1410/1520, ste Nkr1750-3100; ☹) This large and opulent hotel (part of the Fjord Pass network) offers good weekend and summer value from its superb location right by the water. There are a range of rooms to choose from, but your best bet is to ask for a room with a harbour view. Guests have access to a private gym, and bills from some restaurants around town can be added to your room bill to be paid at check-out. Internet rates (per 24 hours Nkr200) are extortionate.

**Thon Hotel Maritim** (☎ 51 85 05 00; [www.thonhotels.no](http://www.thonhotels.no); Kongsgate 32; s/d Fri-Sun & all week in summer Nkr775/975, Mon-Thu rest-of-year Nkr1195/1395) Part of the consistently comfortable Thon chain of hotels, this modern hotel just back from the lakeshore keeps up the standard with spacious, well-appointed rooms.

**Victoria Hotel** (☎ 51 86 70 00; [www.victoria-hotel.no](http://www.victoria-hotel.no); Skansegate 1; s/d Fri-Sun & all week in summer Nkr795/995, Mon-Thu rest-of-year Nkr1150/1350; ☹) Part of the Rica Hotels network, the Victoria has a somewhat baronial air with traditionally styled rooms.

**Ye Olde Stable** (☎ 51 52 53 46; [www.gamlestallen.com](http://www.gamlestallen.com); Øvre Strandgate 112; 4-/6-bed house Nkr1000/1400) Fifty sq metres all to yourself in one of Stavanger's oldest 18th-century homes.

**Radisson SAS Atlantic Hotel** (☎ 51 76 10 00; [www.radissonsas.com](http://www.radissonsas.com); Olav V's gate 3; s/d from Nkr1295/1395; ☹) Arguably the most luxurious hotel in Stavanger, this outpost of the Radisson is supremely comfortable and staff are attentive to your every need. It's accredited as part of the system of Miljmerking good environmental practices.

Expected to open in 2008, the **Myhregaarden Hotel** (☎ 95 88 91 53; [www.myhregaardenhotel.no](http://www.myhregaardenhotel.no); Nygaten 24) promises to be Stavanger's most stylish hotel.

## Eating

Stavanger has an extensive choice of restaurants and, despite the hubbub around the harbour in the evening, many places lie in the streets beyond the waterfront. We're confident about our recommendations, but for a second opinion check out [www.gardkarlsen.com](http://www.gardkarlsen.com), which gives a local view on many of Stavanger's eateries.

## CAFÉS & BAKERIES

**our pick Le Café Français** (☎ 51 86 17 18; Østervåg 30-32; sandwiches from Nkr50; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-7pm Thu, 9am-4pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) With the widest range of pastries and other sweet goodies in town and outdoor tables on the pedestrian street outside, Le Café Français is a good place to wind down. It also serves sandwiches.

**Eddi's Bakeri** (☎ 51 53 90 00; Østervåg 39; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Some of Stavanger's freshest bread is found here; it also sells a small but delicious selection of pastries.

**Kult Kaféen** (☎ 51 89 16 00; Sølvberggata 14; pasta Nkr119-139, mains around Nkr135; ☹ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Located in the Kulturhus in the centre of town, this cool place has won the affections of families and cool young professionals alike. It's relaxed with hints of minimalist style and serves a tasty fish burger (Nkr135) among the highlights.

## NORWEGIAN

**our pick NB Sørensen's Damskipsexpedisjon** (☎ 51 84 38 20; Skagen 26; specials Nkr85-125, mains Nkr229-269; ☹ lunch & dinner) One of the better places along the waterfront, this restaurant serves everything from red mullet to pork ribs, with a seasonal lunch menu that's excellent value. The atmospheric indoor dining area is ideal when the weather turns, and locals swear that the food and service is better upstairs.

**Sjøhuset Skagen** (☎ 51 89 51 80; Skagenkaiaen 16; lunch specials Nkr105-139, mains Nkr185-269; ☹ lunch & dinner) Also along the waterfront, this 18th-century former warehouse is the venue for great seafood dishes, although the cooks also do meat dishes. The oven-baked salmon (Nkr245) would be our pick for mains. The outdoor tables are tempting, but inside has more character.

**Bølgen & Moi** (☎ 51 93 93 51; Norsk Oljemuseum, Kjerringholmen; lunch specials Nkr129-149, 3-/4-/5-course dinner menus Nkr465/525/595; ☹ café 11am-6pm daily, bar & brasserie 5-11pm Tue-Sat) The imaginative menus in this stylish restaurant include monkfish, lamb and veal, while the lunch specials are huge – the shrimp sandwich in cilantro and lime marinade (Nkr139) can only be described as massive. Although there are set menus in the evenings, you can also choose à la carte.

## INTERNATIONAL

**Akropolis Greek Restaurant** (☎ 51 89 14 54; Sølvberggata 14; specials Nkr59-129, mains from Nkr125, lunch buffet Nkr149; ☹ lunch & dinner) This very popular place serves

authentic Greek food at reasonable prices for those in search of great salads, tzatziki, grilled meats and moussaka. It also does a Sunday lunch buffet until 6pm.

**Emilio's Tapas Bar** (☎ 51 89 64 00; Sølberggata 13; tapas Nkr55-125, mains from Nkr77; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Opposite the Akropolis and continuing on the Mediterranean theme, this pleasant Spanish tapas bar serves good Iberian food with friendly service at no extra cost.

**Soleado** (☎ 51 55 43 80; Sølberggata 7; lunch specials Nkr59-162, dinner set menu from Nkr365; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Sat) Better value for lunch than for dinner, Soleado does tasty dishes that include club sandwiches (Nkr92) and chicken curry (Nkr162).

**Bilbao** (☎ 51 53 33 00; Kongsgate 41; starters Nkr95-115, mains Nkr195-255, small/large tapas set menu Nkr195/345; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) This elegant restaurant next to lake Breiavann serves high-quality Basque cuisine and other Spanish dishes such as paella (from Nkr195).

**Timbuktu Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 51 84 37 40; Nedre Strandgate 15; mains from Nkr235; ☎ 6pm-12.30am Mon & Tue, 6pm-1.30am Wed-Sat) This hip place attracts a young-and-trendy crowd for its excellent meat and well-chosen seafood as much as for the chic atmosphere.

**Stim** (☎ 51 85 00 16; Skagenkaien 28; starters Nkr89-129, mains Nkr169-265; ☎ 4pm-1am Mon-Fri, noon-1am Sat) The third place that's worth trying by the water, Stim is set in a refurbished 19th-century canning factory and has window tables on the 1st floor that we really like.

Also recommended:

**India Tandoori Restaurant** (☎ 51 89 39 35; Valberggata 14; mains Nkr115-225; ☎ 4pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Reasonably priced and extensive menu.

**Naree Thai** (☎ 51 89 05 10; Breigata 22; starters Nkr40-70, lunch mains from Nkr60, dinner mains around Nkr120; ☎ lunch & dinner) One of numerous Asian restaurants in town.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Most of the livelier bars are right on the waterfront and cater to a younger crowd with a penchant for loud, energetic music. You'll hear them long before you see them and, as they're all similar, we think you're able to find them on your own.

**Café Sting** (☎ 51 89 32 84; Valbergjet 3; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-3.30am Fri & Sat, 3-11pm Sun) Just up the hill but a world away, Café Sting is at once a mellow café and a funky cultural space with exhibitions, live jazz whenever

the mood takes it and a weekend nightclub where the DJs keep you on your toes, spinning house, hip-hop and soul.

**Our pick: B.brormann B.bar** (☎ 51 93 85 00; Skanse-gata 7; ☎ 5pm-1am) One of Stavanger's coolest bars where you can actually hear the conversation and with contemporary artworks on the brick walls, this oddly named bar draws a discerning over-30s crowd and serves great-value half-litre beers (Nkr58) and spirits (Nkr76 to Nkr91). This is where we drink when we're in town.

**Mamasita** (☎ 51 53 33 00; Kongsgate 41; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) This appealing café-bar by the lake is wonderfully removed from the tourist scrum.

**Transit Art Space** (☎ 51 55 41 00; www.transitart.space.com; Skansekata; ☎ noon-4pm Tue-Sun) This sophisticated little café is an adjunct to a fine, small gallery of changing and often avant-garde exhibitions. It does good coffee and sells great art books. If you can't find it, look for the Mona Lisa baring her bottom on the wall outside.

**Irishman** (☎ 51 89 41 81; Hølebergsgata 9; ☎ 3pm-1am) Stavanger's friendly Irish pub has (free) live Irish folk music at least twice a week in summer.

**Paparazzi Cocktail Bar** (☎ 51 59 71 20; Skagen 27; ☎ 6pm-midnight Mon-Thu, 6pm-1.30am Fri & Sat) For more sophistication than most Stavanger bars can muster, this clean-lined place attracts a chic crowd most nights. It also has a restaurant.

For cinema features (some in English), try the eight-screen **Kino Z** (☎ 82 05 11 00; adult/child Nkr70/40) in the Kulturhus.

## Shopping

Old Stavanger is home to dozens of artistic workshops, artists' studios and quiet little shops. If it's still around, get hold of the leaflet *The Old Town Stavanger - Art & Crafts*, which has advertisements and a map for some of these shops, although it's a little outdated. Of those that remain, **Kjellaren Galleri** (☎ 95 09 67 04; Øvre Strandgate 66; ☎ 10am-3pm) sells oils, watercolours and photos of old Stavanger, while **Neo Galleri Studio** (☎ 51 52 90 05; Nedre Strandgate 54; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) is a small studio that sells ceramics and glasswork.

In the Valberg Tower, you'll also find the excellent **Valbergtårnet Galleri** (☎ 93 65 30 41; www.valbergtaarnet.no; Valbergjet 4; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 10am-6pm Thu, 11am-3pm Sat & Sun), a gallery

and showroom for high-quality artworks and handicrafts from across Norway.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Stavanger airport** (☎ 51 65 80 00) is at Sola, 14km south of the city centre. **SAS Braathens** (☎ 81 52 00 00; www.sasbraathens.no) flies between Stavanger and Oslo (from Nkr560) and Bergen (from Nkr520) at least once daily. See p403 for international flights.

### BOAT

From **Fiskepirterminalen** (☎ 51 86 87 80), **Flaggruten's** (☎ 51 86 87 80) boats leave for Bergen (Nkr620, 4½ hours, two daily Monday to Saturday, one on Sunday) and Haugesund (Nkr280, 80 minutes, four daily Monday to Friday, two daily Saturday and Sunday). For ferries to Lysefjord, see the boxed text, p230.

For ferries between Stavanger's Strandkaaien Quay and England, see p409.

### BUS

Buses run to the following places:

Destination	Departures	Cost	Duration
Bergen	every 2hr daily	Nkr420	5¼hr
Haugesund	every 2hr daily	Nkr210	2¼hr
Kristiansand	2-4 daily	Nkr355	4½hr
Oslo	up to 5 daily *	Nkr735	9½hr

\* some services change at Kristiansand

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving between Bergen and Stavanger along the direct E39 can be expensive, once you factor in two ferries, road tolls and city tolls. In all you'll end up paying around Nkr500. The toll to enter Stavanger for cars/motorcycles/campervans is Nkr13/free/26.

### TRAIN

Trains run from Stavanger to Egersund (Nkr133, one hour, eight daily) and Oslo (Nkr846, eight hours, up to five daily) via Kristiansand (Nkr390, three hours), including an overnight service. For more information on cheaper *minipris* fares (from Nkr199), see p419.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Between early morning and mid- to late evening, **Flybussen airport buses** (☎ 51 52 26 00) run every 20 minutes between the bus terminal and

the airport at Sola (one way/return Nkr70/120). Alternatively, from Monday to Friday take city bus 9 (Nkr41), which runs hourly between early morning and midnight.

### BICYCLE

You can hire mountain bikes at **Sykkelhuset** (☎ 51 53 99 10; Løkkeveien 33; per day/week Nkr75/280; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-7pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat).

## LYSEFJORD

All along the 42km-long Lysefjord (Light Fjord), the granite rock glows with an ethereal, ambient light, even on dull days, all offset by almost-luminous mist. This is many visitors' favourite fjord, and there's no doubt that it has a captivating beauty. Whether you cruise from Stavanger, hike up to Preikestolen (604m), or drive the switchback road down to Lysebotn, it's one of Norway's must-sees. For visiting from Stavanger, see the boxed text, p230.

## Information

**Lysefjordssenteret** (☎ 51 70 31 23; www.lysefjordsen-teret.no; Oanes; adult/child Nkr50/25; ☎ 11am-8pm Jun-Aug, 11am-5pm Sep-May), in a fabulous setting north of the ferry terminal at Oanes, provides tourist information and presents Lysefjord in audio-visual displays. There are also geological and folk-history exhibits.

Also worth contacting is **Lysefjord Utvikling** (☎ 51 70 01 14; www.visitlysefjorden.no, in Norwegian) in Forsand.

Located at the trailhead for the hike up to Preikestolen, both the Preikestolhytta Vandrerhjem (p230) and the **kiosk** (☎ 97 16 55 51; ☎ 9.30am-8.45pm May-mid-Sep) at the entrance to the car park dispense information about Preikestolen and can sell walking guides of the region's various trails.

## Preikestolen (Pulpit Rock)

The sight of people scrambling without fear to the edge of this extraordinary granite rock formation is one of Norway's emblematic images. Preikestolen, with astonishingly uniform cliffs on three sides plunging 604m to the fjord below, is a freak of nature which, despite the alarming crack where it joins the mountains, is likely to be around for a few more centuries. While looking down can be a bit daunting, you won't regret the magical view directly up Lysefjord. It's quite simply a remarkable place, a vantage point unrivalled anywhere in the world.

## VISITING LYSEFJORD

The most spectacular aspect of visiting Lysefjord is the two-hour hike up to Preikestolen (Pulpit Rock; p229), although a ferry along Lysefjord is an alternative for those who can't make the hike. For general information on the region, check out [www.lysefjordeninfo.no](http://www.lysefjordeninfo.no).

### Preikestolen by Bus

Six ferries a day run from Stavanger's Fiskespiren Quay to Tau (adult/child foot passengers Nkr38/20) from late June to mid-August and just three daily the rest of summer; the first departure from Stavanger is at 8am (8.25am on Sunday). In summer, the ferries are met by a bus (Nkr55), which runs between the Tau pier and the Preikestolhytta Vandrerhjem. From there, the two-hour trail leads up to Preikestolen. The last bus from Preikestolhytta to Tau leaves at 8.10pm (7.50pm on Saturday).

### Preikestolen by Car

If you've got your own vehicle, you can take the car ferry from Stavanger's Fiskespiren Quay to Tau (car and driver Nkr125, 40 minutes, up to 24 departures daily). From the pier in Tau, a well-signed road (Rv13) leads 19km to Preikestolhytta Vandrerhjem (take the signed turn-off after 13km). It costs Nkr50/25 per car/motorcycle to park here.

An alternative route from Stavanger involves driving to Lauvik (via Sandnes along Rv13) from where a ferry crosses to Oanes (car and driver/adult foot passenger Nkr67/24, 10 minutes, departures almost every half-hour).

Either way, the trip between Stavanger and the trailhead takes around 1½ hours.

### Lysebotn by Ferry

Ferry services from Stavanger to Lysebotn (opposite) were in a state of flux when we visited. The tourist office has plans to incorporate the Kjeragbolten (opposite) into the ferry service as visiting is difficult without a car. At the time of writing, the following companies were offering four-hour

There are no fences and those with vertigo will find themselves unable to go right to the edge (even watching the death-defying antics of people dangling limbs over the abyss can make the heart skip a beat). However, the local authorities assured us that there have been no reported cases of anyone accidentally falling off (even the French daredevil who balanced on the edge atop three chairs!). That said, please take all due care even if other people seemingly don't. Rocky trails also lead up the mountains behind, offering more wonderful views.

The two-hour, 3.8km trail up to Preikestolen leaves from Preikestolhytta Vandrerhjem. It begins along a steep but well-marked route, then climbs past a series of alternating steep and boggy sections to the final climb across granite slabs and along some windy and exposed cliffs to Preikestolen itself. The steepest sections are at the beginning and in the middle parts of the trail and can be challenging for those of low fitness.

The area also offers several other fabulous walks – the **Vatnerindane ridge circuit** (two

hours), **Ulvaskog** (three hours), the **Refsvatnet circuit** (three hours) and summit of **Moslifjellet** (three hours) – all of which are accessible from the Preikestolhytta car park.

See above for detailed info on how to get to Preikestolen.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Preikestolen Camping** (☎ 51 74 97 25; [www.preikes.tolencamping.no](http://www.preikes.tolencamping.no); Jørpeland; tent sites without/with car Nkr130/150 plus per person Nkr30; ☹ Apr-Oct) The closest camp site to Preikestolen (5km, or 1km off the Rv13) isn't anything to write home about but proximity is everything. Kitchen facilities are available, but you can also eat at the attached shop-restaurant.

**Preikestolhytta Vandrerhjem** (☎ 97 16 55 51; [www.preikestolhytta.no](http://www.preikestolhytta.no); Jørpeland; dm incl breakfast Nkr250, d Nkr670-850) The fine turf-roofed hostel by a lake is adjacent to the start of the Preikestolen walking track. It's a well-run, fantastically situated place with a café (dishes Nkr35 to Nkr145), although it comes into its own when the crowds disappear for the night. It also rents out rowing boats.

**car ferries** (car/motorcycle & driver Nkr360/260, adult/child & senior foot passenger Nkr165/110) to Lysebotn. From Lysebotn, the road twists up the mountain from where you can continue on into the Setesdalen region (p159) and Oslo.

- **Veteran Fjord Cruise** (☎ 51 86 87 88; [www.vfc.no](http://www.vfc.no) or [www.stavangerske.no](http://www.stavangerske.no); ☹ departures 10am daily Jun-Aug) Boat includes tourist commentary and stops for photos. Those travelling with a car should book at least two days in advance.
- **Kolumbus** (☎ 91 65 28 00; [www.kolumbus.no](http://www.kolumbus.no)) Normal car-and-passenger ferries that leave Stavanger at 1.30pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday and make eight stops en route to Lysebotn (arrival 3.25pm) but not at Preikestolen.

### Lysebotn by Bus

**Sirdalekspressen** (☎ 51 59 90 60 or 51 86 87 88) buses from the Stavanger Fiskepirterminalen (departure 9.50am) or bus station (platform 6, departure 10am) to Lysebotn (arrival 2.20pm, one way/return Nkr250/490) depart daily from late June to mid-August.

### Tours

At the time of writing, **Rødne Fjord Cruise** (☎ 51 89 52 70; [www.rodne.no](http://www.rodne.no); adult/child/senior or student Nkr320/175/225; ☹ departures 10am & 2pm Sun-Wed, 10am, noon, 2pm & 6pm Thu-Sat Jul & Aug, noon daily May, Jun & Sep, noon Sat & Sun Oct-Apr) was offering 3½-hour cruises from Stavanger to the waters below Preikestolen and back.

**Veteran Fjord Cruise** (☎ 51 86 87 88; [www.vfc.no](http://www.vfc.no); adult/senior or child Nkr300/200; ☹ departures 11.30am mid-Jun-late Aug) runs similar tours, sometimes under the banner of **Stavangerske** ([www.stavangerske.no](http://www.stavangerske.no)). It also runs eight-hour ferry-bus-hike tours from Stavanger to the top of Preikestolen that cost Nkr100/50 per adult/child. They depart at 8am daily from Stavanger Fiskepirterminalen from late May to early September.

Just down the road in Oanes (16km south of the Preikestolen turn-off along the Rv13) you'll find **Lysefjord Hyttegrend** (☎ 51 70 38 74; [www.lysefjord-hyttegrend.no](http://www.lysefjord-hyttegrend.no); 4-6-person cabins Nkr400-700, apt Nkr350-450), which has excellent chalets with en suite. Also in Oanes, **Lysefjordsenteret** (☎ 51 70 31 23; mains Nkr59-139, Sun buffet Nkr195) is a restaurant serving good, reasonably priced traditional meals.

### Lysebotn

The ferry ride from Stavanger takes you to the fjord head at Lysebotn, where a narrow and much-photographed road corkscrews spectacularly 1000m up towards Sirdal in 27 hairpin bends. For more details on getting to Lysebotn, see opposite.

### ACTIVITIES

After Preikestolen, the most popular Lysefjord walk leads to **Kjeragbolten**, an enormous oval-shaped boulder, or 'chockstone', lodged between two rock faces about 2m apart – you've surely seen it on postcards around Norway. The 10km return hike involves a strenuous

700m ascent from the Øygardsstølen Café car park (parking Nkr30), near the highest hairpin bend above Lysebotn.

The route trudges up and over three ridges and, in places, steep muddy slopes can make the going quite rough. Once you're at Kjeragbolten, actually reaching the boulder requires some tricky manoeuvring, including traversing an exposed ledge on a 1000m-high vertical cliff! From there, you can step (or crawl) directly onto the boulder for one of Norway's most astonishing views. The photo of you perched on the rock is sure to impress your friends.

If this doesn't provide sufficient thrills, then base jumping from Kjeragbolten could just be Norway's craziest sport; contact the **Stavanger Base Club** (☎ 51 88 12 10; [www.basekjerag.com](http://www.basekjerag.com)) for advice.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Lysebotn Tourist Camp** (☎ 90 83 20 35; [www.lysebotn-touristcamp.com](http://www.lysebotn-touristcamp.com); tent/caravan sites Nkr130/150, dm Nkr250, 4-bed cabins Nkr650-950) If you can't face the daunting road up the mountain or, more likely, you

can't bear to leave, Lysebotn Tourist Camp occupies an incredible setting at the head of the fjord. It's a lovely quiet spot to be after the ferry has left for the day.

**Øygardsstølen Café** (☎ 38 37 74 00; snacks & light meals Nkr45-129; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep) For views at this end of Lysefjord, you can't beat the 'eagle's nest', perched atop the cliff overlooking the hairpin twists down to Lysebotn. There's a viewing deck for those who don't wish to eat.

## AROUND LYSEFJORD

The Rv13 road through the wild and lightly populated country north of Lysefjord is one of 18 roads designated as a 'National Tourist

Route' (see the boxed text, p414). It's definitely the slow route between Stavanger and Bergen, but it's worth it if you have time. The finest scenery is around **Årdal, Jøsenfjorden, Suldalsosen** and **Suldalsvatnet**.

For considerable comfort and charm, the grand old **Sauda Fjord Hotel** (☎ 52 78 12 11; www.saudafjordhotel.no; Saudasjøen; s/d from Nkr690/990, half-board from Nkr850/1150), west off the Rv13, offers fine accommodation and good meals at reasonable prices. The hotel is part of the Fjord Pass network.

The best public transport is the ferry between Stavanger and Sauda (Nkr310, 2¼ hours, two or three daily), although Rv13 is best followed by private car.

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