

World Heritage City

BERGEN

The Gateway to the Fjords of Norway

*A city with its feet in the sea, its head in the skies and its heart in the right place
– full of infectious enthusiasm, and happy to share it with visitors.
Welcome to Bergen, the old city with a young outlook.*

BERGEN – WORLD HERITAGE CITY

Bergen has given a warm welcome to its visitors for more than 900 years

Ever since the intrepid King Olav Kyrre sailed into the harbour and founded the city in 1070, Bergen has attracted people from all quarters of the world. Some came and went, others decided to make Bergen their home. Bergensers travelled abroad and learned and so Bergen became a melting-pot of cultures and Norway's most international city.

Bergen grew up around its colourful harbour – it was the hub of commerce, seafaring and craftsmanship. We became the north's largest city, Norway's first capital city and the seat of royalty. So important was Bergen by the 13th century that the Hansas – the German medieval guild of merchants – opened one of their four European offices on the wharf called Bryggen. Some of the Hansas chose to become Bergensers. And so have many others throughout the centuries. But Bryggen stays the same, its contour just as it was in the 11th century, untouched by shifting times. It has become a symbol of our cultural heritage and has gained a place on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Bergen has become a World Heritage City.

Bergensers are proud of their city and of their city's traditions. They look after their past because it is a part of their living present. A city with its feet in the sea, its head in the skies and its heart in the right place – full of infectious enthusiasm, and happy to share it with visitors.

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BERGEN – A EUROPEAN CULTURAL CITY

From Commerce to Culture

Aside from their commercial interests, Bergen merchants had a nose for culture. It was they who laid the foundations for Bergen to be the cultural city it is today. Bergen has one of the world's oldest symphony orchestras, the country's first national theatre, a host of international festivals, and a whole range of museums and institutions, which owe their existence to the generosity of merchants.

Also, Bergen was the birthplace of the north's first comic writer, Ludvig Holberg; Norway's first major landscape painter, Johan Christian Dahl, and the hugely popular composer, though

small in stature, Edvard Grieg. The dramatist Henrik Ibsen was not born in Bergen, but it was here that he entered the world of theatre. The painter, Edvard Munch, was not Bergen-born either, but it was a Bergen industrialist who ensured that the city now has a unique collection of Munch's works.

Bergen resounds with music and has some of the country's best choirs, jazz musicians who improvise through the night, and operatic singers whose arias soar above the fortress walls of Bergenhus. Art can be created on pavement slabs, and even drain covers are turned into works of art – in a city which considers that culture is a part of the every day, and an important expression of Bergen's variety of life.

It is therefore not surprising that Bergen became a European City of Culture in the year 2000.

BERGEN – A PARTY IN ITSELF

It's like the people here are always on their way to, or from, a party

It can be a party just to wander out and about in Bergen on a balmy summer evening. The streets throng with people milling in and out of cafés sampling food ranging from familiar fish dishes to fashionable tapas; people sipping a glass of beer on the wharveside, or wine in a wine cellar. During the day you can eat smoked salmon and fresh shrimps on the busy Fish Market, while a true Bergenser will be tucking into fish cakes and spicy 'shilling buns'!

From fish cakes to festivals, and spring bursts into action for Norway's largest cultural event – the annual Bergen International Festival. Out of all of Norway, it *had* to be here because Bergen has such a festive atmosphere. Edvard Grieg's birthplace has all the right ingredients of intimacy, charm and enthusiasm. Even so, weather experts were consulted for the best time of the year. Bergensers have a thing about the weather. But they don't let things stop just because of a drop of rain! The show must go on. And there are many shows, many annual festivals - from Blues to Ballet, from Raves to Rachmaninov. We Bergensers grasp any excuse for a festival. Nothing is too trivial. We make a celebration out of anything - street entertainment, theatre, all around the city, in shops, in parks – even over statues. And if there is no particular anniversary, something else will be found to celebrate!

BERGEN – A CITY TO REJOICE IN

Let yourself be drawn to a city that pulsates year round

Extra value for money: Experience Bergen the practical and inexpensive way with the Bergen Card

Come to Bergen in the spring, when the rhododendron and laburnum are in full flower. When red roofs gleam in the sunlight or old cobblestones glisten in the rain. Saunter up the tiny steep streets where the Bergensers will plant a bush wherever can they find a bit of soil.

Come to Bergen in the summer when the land is lush in every shade of green; when the fjords are abuzz with small boats, and the city is alive with visitors.

Come to Bergen in the autumn, or even winter. Experience the changing seasons - and the warmth of Bergen hospitality. Come to Bergen at any time – there is always something to excite you, always something happening.

History is all around in the old parts of Bergen, a blessed place nestling in the shelter of its seven mountains. There is so much to see and experience, whether you like architecture and museums, shopping and rubbing shoulders with the locals, or watching an exciting football match. Art exhibitions and concerts are prolific; shops and commerce even more so. The Fish Market's delicacies lure everybody – and if you get tired of streets and houses, you are just a short distance away from unspoiled scenery. Eight minutes from the city centre and you can be on top of one of Bergen's mountains. Admire the view and enjoy the peace and quiet, high above the city. Few places have such a combination: a city with nature right on its doorstep.

BERGEN – THE BIG CITY WITH SMALLTOWN CHARM

Let Bergen enter your Mind's Eye

Bergensers have an in-born love for their city and even newcomers quickly fall under its spell.

Where does this sense of magic come from? Is it the atmosphere, the environment? Though there are high-rise buildings, the impression of Bergen is of a charming city full of small wooden houses. They scramble up the mountainsides and compete for space with wealthy mansions, flaunting themselves all the way into the city. Clusters of old houses cling together in among the new quarters. Bergensers take a keen interest in protecting their grass-root traditions and building styles, and Bergen architecture is distinctive yet diverse. Though Bergen has suffered many fires over the centuries, it still has one of Europe's largest conglomerates of wooden houses. Not to say *the* largest.

Everything is not how Bergensers would like it. But a lot is like it was. It is this blend of past and present which creates a special ambience. We Bergensers polish and paint as best we can, just as much to please ourselves as to please you. We enjoy Bergen as inhabitants, we hope you enjoy Bergen as visitors.

BERGEN – THE GATEWAY TO THE FJORD EXPERIENCE

One of Europe's biggest cruise ship harbours

The fjords are Scandinavia's tourist attraction Number One – and Bergen opens the door to a virtual *kingdom* of fjords. It is one of the reasons why Bergen is one of Europe's most visited cruise ship harbours. The sea has carved itself through and across Norway's long coastline and has given us nature in many facets. Here waterfalls tumble down the mountainsides, here eternal snows glitter on the mountain tops, here bright grass softens the fjord edges. In spring, blossoming fruit trees throw a lacy carpet over the landscape.

This is a land of contrasts. From the soft and gentle, to the harsh and untamed. Tiny fertile villages strung like glowing green pearls along the fjordline, and indomitable fishing communities clinging to rocky outcrops with the wild ocean crashing all around. Between the world's longest fjord and one of the world's most beautiful – that is the Sognefjord and the Hardangerfjord – lies Bergen – which is the gateway to exploring this beautiful natural area.

But the scenery isn't just to soothe the eye. Here you can ski throughout the year – yes, also in summer. There's also white water rafting, mountain and glacier hiking, cycling along the byways, and fishing in the sea and rivers. The round trip «Norway in a nutshell» gives you a flavour of the fjords and mountains in just one day, all year round. But if you have the time, why not cruise the fjords, either by boat or car. Fjord Norway is worth it!

BERGEN – A MEETING PLACE FOR PEOPLE FOR 900 YEARS

Everything you could wish for – and a little bit more

Bergen is an ideal place to organise big as well as small meetings. The city has developed itself into a meetings venue of international stature and accordingly has all the facilities for congresses, conferences and exhibitions. Our conference organisers have all the necessary professionalism, competence and experience to make you feel confident and relaxed.

But it is all the extra qualities that make Bergen such an attractive place to hold meetings. There is a sense of high-spirits which delegates find especially invigorating. Social arrangements can be held in unique locations - from aquariums to museums to a medieval king's banqueting hall. Or, your event can have that special touch, such as a private concert at Grieg's house or at a fairytale-island's villa. You can pick and chose from any number of team-building activities – from golfing in superb natural surroundings to fishing on the open sea, or even safe-sailing around the skerries on Bergen's Tall Ship, *Statsraad Lehmkuhl*.

The possibilities for Bergen as a meetings venue are boundless, and an extra *plus* is our renowned hospitality. We want you to have a really good time in our city – so good that you will insist on returning!

BERGEN – EASY TO GET TO

Bergen is easy to get to, from the rest of Norway and from abroad. Thanks to direct flights from Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki, Amsterdam and London, you only need to change planes once to reach Bergen from far-away destinations. Low-fare airlines also operate direct flights to Bergen from international airports (Paris, Prague, London and more). You can also take direct sea routes from Denmark and Newcastle-upon-Tyne in England, as well as from the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Shetland. Domestic air connections are very good. Modern express boats go along the coast and into the fjord areas; there are express bus routes in nearly every direction, and Bergen is the turn-around port for the world-famous Norwegian Coastal Voyage to «The Land of the Midnight Sun». The spectacular train journey between Oslo and Bergen should not be missed!

BERGEN REISELIVSLAG * BERGEN TOURIST BOARD * www.visitBergen.com

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