

Discover Bergen – Mountains, Fjords and Delicious Cuisine

Situated between Byfjorden **and seven surrounding mountains, spectacular** Bergen is a starting point for experiencing the wild, breath-taking scenery of Western Norway. As one of Europe's major Hanseatic cities and trading centers, the first German merchants arrived here in 1270; traded from the 14th–16th centuries and the powerful Hanseatic League existed until 1784 to be disbanded.



In the 19th century, Bergen was Europe's largest wooden city. Old and architecturally unique Bryggen included in UNESCO's World Heritage List with 61 protected wooden buildings and alleyways restored from devastating fires is living illustration of Bergen's look in the Middle Ages and over time. The (60.418469,5.3096) Bryggens Museum on a 900 years old foundation highlights Bryggen's architectural history supplemented by the world's largest collection of medieval runic inscriptions on wood.

The Hanseatic Museum introduces Hansa life in an authentic merchant's house (1700s), used until late 19th century. Modern day Bryggen has a lively atmosphere with restaurants, pubs and traditional workshops selling art and crafts – hidden gems like a wooden carved 'fish' or skillingsbolles (cinnamon buns) at Baker Brun.

Bergenshus Fortress, one of the oldest and best preserved fortresses in Norway beside the international ferry terminal, was a royal residence from the 11th century. It has a medieval cathedral – the Church of Christ, used for coronation and royal burial site in the 13th century. The Royal Hall, Håkonshallen, built from 1247 to 1261 is presently used for banquets. The 16th century Rosenkrantz tower has its oldest part dating to the 1270s.

The museum of Norwegian resistance in WWII with guns, uniforms and newspapers highlights the efforts of Norway's bravest souls. In the grounds, locals and tourists hang out in the sunshine over free views of the bay.



One of Norway's oldest stone churches, St. Mary's (1140), in Romanesque architecture has warm and colorful original interiors with an altar installed by German merchants 500 years ago.

The Fantoft Stave Church, reconstruction of a church built in Fortun around 1150 (destroyed by arson) is austere and devoid of paintings.

Bergen has been a historical center for fish trade as well. From the open-air Fisketorget with the smells and tastes of the sea, hand-pick from the local stalls and find a sunny spot to enjoy al fresco dining! Free samples are available of the common whale and salmon, while caviar, canned herring, mackerel in tomato is over-priced to even Norwegian superstores. For many the market is overrated and oversold in tourist literature. In summer, makeshift shops sell high quality, expensive crafts and farm food. Stroll for the sights and sounds being aware of pickpockets!

Norway's second largest city (after Oslo) bustles with creative energy and culture interspersed with film and music festivals, art galleries and museums. The Bergen Art Museum with collections from the renaissance to contemporary has interesting works by Munch, Astrup, Picasso and Dahl.

The Bergen Museum of Cultural History's collection of Norwegian national costumes, knitting, folk and medieval church art with painted altarpieces and crucifixes from demolished stave churches built with tree logs is outstanding.

The Maritime Museum's collection of Viking ship models, marine archaeological findings and naval warfare items highlights Bergen's shipping history.

St. Jørgen's Hospital (Leprosy Museum) is where Armauer Hansen discovered the leprosy causing bacteria (1873). It tells about the disease, its history and of those castigated by society.

Beautifully landscaped Nygårdsparken in 1800s English patterns is ideal for relaxing afternoons of barbeque or picnics.

Troldhaugen (Troll House) as magical as the name, home to Norway's national composer Edvard Greig captures a bygone era that inspired his acclaimed works. The compound has his original house (1885) with furniture and artefacts, composer's hut and grave. Inspired by aesthetic Viking style architecture beside an idyllic hill overlooking Nordas Lake, it holds lunchtime concerts of Greig's famous musical compositions by renowned artists. The museum is an interesting timeline starting with Greig's early life, study and work in Bergen and final years in Troldhaugen juxtaposed against major European events. Music interspersed with history makes a delightful experience. Violinist Ole Bull's self-built house on

Lysøen Island brought in 1872 draws music lovers.



Journeying to Mt. Fløyen with the Fløibanen funicular is an experience with nature savored by many. Alternatively, a 40-minute walk avoids queues at the lower station near Fisketorget. Atop are endless wooden walks past troll figures, children's playground and souvenir shops. The panoramic Fløien Folkerestaurant offers innovative traditional cuisine with a twist as reindeer filet with goat cheese. Walk down the 1 km sign posted route as locals, stopping for a Norwegian waffle! For Bergen's highest mountain, the Ulriken 643 Panoramic Tour by double-decker bus and cable car to the summit unfolds beautiful surroundings – sea, islands, fjords and mountains. The steep, arduous five-hour climb demands fitness.

Bergen is the gateway to the fjords – Hardanger, Sognefjorden or Osterfjord in Mostraumen sound on a boat ride is an experience past strong currents, beautiful waterfalls and steep mountains. Voss is popular for skiing, paragliding, rafting, kayaking, and riding. The annual, week-long Ekstremsportveko attracts many. Picturesque Myrdal offers hiking options: the Flam Valley, Kjosfossen waterfall or Lake Reinunga. It is served by the Flåm Railway, one of the world's steepest with twisting mountain tunnels – testimony to skillful engineering.

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