

Discovering Norway: Fjords, Peaks, and a Living Landscape

*with Dr. Michael E. Wyssession (May)
or Dr. Rachel Phillips (September)*

May 23–30, 2027 | September 12–19, 2027



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From: \$8,995 per person

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Travel with The Great Courses Journeys to Norway's western fjords and experience one of the world's most dramatic convergences of ice, rock, water, and human ingenuity. Begin in Bergen, when your Great Courses Journeys expert will examine how innovative energy systems like hydropower have become central to Norway's economy and global leadership in sustainability. Continue to Flam and explore the geological forces that carved deep fjords and towering mountains and how communities have adapted to a challenging environment.

With travel by ferry, railway, and cable car through some of Scandinavia's most striking scenery, you'll witness firsthand how successive ice ages transformed the landscape and how technological developments continue to power modern Norway. From UNESCO-listed fjords to Europe's largest mainland glacier, this journey is your opportunity to connect scientific insight with lived experiences and gain a deep understanding of how natural forces shape both the land and the future.

Your Journey Expert



Dr. Michael E. Wysession (*May*) is the Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis. He earned his PhD from Northwestern University. An established leader in seismology and geophysical education, Professor Wysession sees Norway as a geologist's dream, where the natural forces that shape our planet are on display on a grand scale: big fjords, steep cliffs, big glaciers, dramatic landscapes. He is noted for developing a new way to create three-dimensional images of Earth's interior from seismic waves, which have provided scientists with insights into the makeup of Earth and its evolution throughout history. He is the coauthor of *An Introduction to Seismology, Earthquakes, and Earth Structure*; the lead author of *Physical Science: Concepts in Action*; and the primary writer for the texts *Earth Science, Earth's*

Interior, Earth's Changing Surface, and Earth's Waters. Professor Wysession has received the Distinguished Faculty Award of Washington University and in 2014 the inaugural Ambassador Award of the American Geophysical Union. He has created three Great Courses, including *The World's Greatest Geological Wonders: 36 Spectacular Sites*, *How the Earth Works*, and *The Science of Energy: Resources and Power Explained*. He also contributed to *National Geographic Polar Explorations*.



Dr. Rachel Phillips (*September*) Dr. Rachel Phillips is a National Science Foundation STEM Education Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of South Carolina. She received her PhD in geological sciences from the University of Texas at El Paso, where her research aimed to improve reconstructions of Earth's ancient atmospheric and oceanic conditions by strengthening the reliability and precision of palaeoceanographic proxies. A popular science communicator, Professor Phillips also works to promote global geoscience communication through her YouTube channel, GEO GIRL, on which she shares educational geoscience videos. Through her interdisciplinary research and communication endeavors, Rachel has developed expertise in biogeochemistry, geomicrobiology, paleoceanography, paleoclimatology, and geoscience education. She created the Audible Original *Earth's Great Extinctions* with The Great Courses, and is developing a new Great Course, *Tectonic Time Machines: Reading Earth's Deep Past*.



Highlights

- Experience Norway by land, sea, and summit, from low-emissions ferries and fjord cruises to cable cars and coastal Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIB) that showcase the region's diverse landscapes and ecosystems.
- Ride the iconic Flam Railway, an engineering marvel that climbs steep mountain terrain and offers a vivid look at how humans adapt infrastructure to extreme geological conditions.
- Explore the science of the fjords as you travel through UNESCO-listed waterways shaped by glaciers over successive ages, gaining insight into the geological processes that carved Norway's dramatic coastline.
- Encounter Europe's largest mainland glacier in Jostedalsgreen National Park and learn about the dynamic relationship between ice, climate, and time.
- Examine Norway's renewable energy leadership with visits and discussions focused on hydropower and sustainable innovation, illustrating how natural resources are harnessed to power a modern society.

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Itinerary



Day 1: Welcome to Norway

Arrive on individual flights into Bergen and transfer independently to your hotel. Begin your journey with an introductory talk with your Great Courses Journeys expert, followed by a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Included Meal: Dinner

Accommodations: Scandic Ornen

Day 2: Renewable Energy in Motion

Set out for a full day's exploration in Bergen, beginning with the UNESCO World Heritage Bryggen Wharf and Bergenhus Fortress, one of Norway's oldest and best-preserved fortifications. Ascend Mount Floyen by funicular for sweeping views over the city and a discussion with your expert on fjord formation, glacial erosion, and regional geology. After a group lunch, visit a local company such as Norwegian Hydropower AS or Bergen Synergy to explore Norway's role as a global leader in renewable energy (*specific organization pending confirmation*). The evening will be yours to enjoy Bergen at your own pace.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Scandic Ornen

Day 3: Into the Fjords

This morning, board a low-emissions ferry for a scenic journey through the majestic Sognefjord, Norway's longest and deepest fjord. As you glide past steep mountainsides and waterfalls, your expert will discuss how ice and water sculpted this dramatic landscape over millions of years. Arrive in Flam in the afternoon, nestled in the Flamsdalen Valley, and enjoy time at leisure where you may choose to explore the village or take a moderate-level hike to the nearby Brekkfossen Waterfall. Reconvene at your hotel in the evening over dinner as a group.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Fretheim Hotel

“There are few places in the world like Norway where, in a short amount of time, you can see such spectacular and varied geology and biology, revealing fascinating stories of Earth’s history that stretch back far across time and inspire us to think of our place on Earth in a new way.”

—Michael Wyession



Day 4: The Flam Railway

Embark on the historic Flam Railway, often cited as one of the most beautiful train journeys in the world. Ascend more than 800 meters in just one hour, passing waterfalls, tunnels, and rugged terrain that highlight both Norway’s dramatic geology and remarkable engineering achievements. After a brief pause in the mountain station of Myrdal, enjoy the view in reverse as you return to Flam. Gain insight into Viking life, culture, and belief systems during lunch and a visit to Viking Valley, followed by a stop at the beautifully preserved Undredal Stave Church. Return to Flam where dinner and the rest of the evening will be at your leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Fretheim Hotel

Day 5: Jostedalsbreen National Park

Travel north by coach and ferry to the Norsk Bremuseum and Ulltevit-Moe Climate Center, where interactive exhibits and striking architecture illuminate the relationship between glaciers, climate, and geological time. Continue to Jostedalsbreen National Park, home to mainland Europe’s largest glacier, where you may have the opportunity to visit a glacier arm (*weather permitting*) followed by lunch as a group. Later, take an exhilarating ride on the Loen Skylift, one of the world’s steepest cable cars, to the summit of Mount Hoven, where scenic trails and panoramic views reveal the scale of glacial forces at work. Check into your hotel in Loen and enjoy dinner and an evening at leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Hotel Loenfjord





Day 6: Carved by Ice

Depart Loen on a scenic coastal journey through the Geiranger region, a landscape shaped by successive ice ages. Cruise through the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Geirangerfjord, where sheer cliffs and cascading waterfalls provide dramatic evidence of glacial carving and uplift. After lunch and free time in the village of Geiranger, cross the fjord by commuter ferry and continue by coach to the charming coastal town of Alesund, where dinner and the rest of the evening are yours to enjoy.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Quality Hotel Alesund

Day 7: Life Along the Coast

Begin your day with a walk to Aksla Viewpoint for a sweeping view of Alesund and the surrounding islands. Please note that access to Aksla is via 418 stone steps; there are points along the route that allow for a pause in activity. Later, experience the rugged coastline from the water on a high-speed RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat), where unique close encounters with seabirds and marine life are likely. Enjoy time at leisure in Alesund, then raise a toast to your journeys during a festive farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Quality Hotel Alesund

Day 8: Departures

Transfer individually to the airport in Alesund and depart Norway on individual flights for your journey home.

Included Meal: Breakfast



Accommodations



Scandic Ornen | *Bergen*

Overlooking Mount Floyen, the contemporary Scandic Ornen Hotel is centrally located near Bergen's main train station and a short walk to the medieval harbor district. Comfortable rooms offer Wi-Fi, flat-screen televisions, and a writing desk, while an onsite gym is equipped with state-of-the-art exercise options. Relax with a beverage and fantastic view of the city in the 12th floor Roast Restaurant, Bergen's only sky bar. **(2 Nights)**



Fretheim Hotel | *Flam*

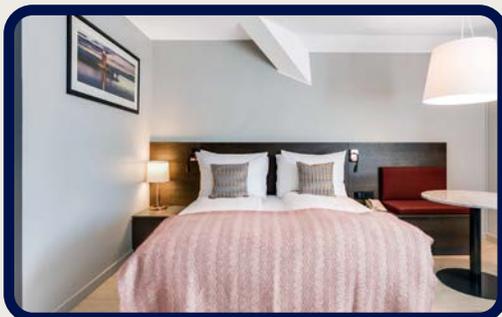
Steeped in history and surrounded by breathtaking scenery, Fretheim Hotel combines old-world charm with modern comfort. Originally a farmhouse welcoming travelers in the 19th century, the hotel now features elegant guest rooms with comfortable bedding, a flat-screen television, tea and coffeemaking equipment, and stunning views of the fjords or mountains. Other onsite amenities include two restaurants showcasing local ingredients, and direct access to the famous Flam Railway. **(2 nights)**

Accommodations



Hotel Loenfjord | *Loen*

Backed by mountains and overlooking the Loelva River and Nordfjord, this quaint hotel is located a few minutes' walk from the Loen Skylift. Comfortable rooms provide mountain or valley views as well as Wi-Fi, a flat-screen television, and sitting area, while guests can dine at either the onsite café or Karjolen Restaurant. Hotel Loenfjord is Eco-Lighthouse certified for their use of renewable local hydropower to heat guest rooms, which results in no greenhouse gas emissions. **(1 Night)**



Quality Hotel | *Alesund*

Set along the picturesque coast, this charming hotel offers stunning fjord views at nearly every turn. Bright and spacious rooms feature a television, writing desk, and tea and coffeemaking equipment, and the onsite fitness center provides cardio machines and free weights. A breezy terrace overlooks the sea and is the perfect place to enjoy a beverage in the sun. **(2 Nights)**



Pricing:

Departure	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy	Deposit	
May 23–30, 2027	\$8,995	\$10,625	\$650	BOOK NOW
September 12–19, 2027	\$8,995	\$10,625	\$650	BOOK NOW

What's Included:

- All accommodations for the duration of the tour
- Meals, as noted in the itinerary
- All sightseeing and visits as noted in each itinerary
- Expertise of The Great Courses expert, travel director, and local guides throughout the tour
- All gratuities for on-tour guides, drivers, hotel and restaurant staff as part of the group program
- All on-tour transportation, unless otherwise noted
- Quietvox listening devices to facilitate audibility and social distancing on tour
- The assistance of an ATA professional travel team to assist with pre-trip questions, travel arrangements, including flights, extra hotel nights, and other services
- Comprehensive pre-departure mailings and materials, with information about the destination and what to expect on tour, including a suggested reading list
- Emergency evacuation insurance

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