

Norway

Facts and Statistics

Location: Northern Europe, bordering Finland 729 km, Sweden 1,619 km, Russia 196 km

Capital: Oslo

Population: 4,574,560 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Norwegian, Sami 20,000

Religions: Evangelical Lutheran 86% (state church), other Protestant and Roman Catholic 3%, other 1%, none and unknown 10%

The Norwegian Language

Over 99% of the 4.3m population of Norway speak the official language, Norwegian. Norwegian has 2 written forms, "Bokmal" (Book Norwegian) and "Nynorsk" (New Norwegian) and they enjoy the same legal recognition, although "Bokmal" is increasingly more common. Minority languages include Finnish, spoken by 0.2% of the population, mainly in the northern region of Finnmark, as well as "Sami", a language closely related to Finnish, spoken by 0.9% of the Norwegian population.

Norwegian Society & Culture

The Family

- . Many families consist mainly of the nuclear family.
- . Marriage is not a prerequisite to starting a family.
- . Many couples live together without legalizing the arrangement with marriage. Therefore, it is best not to make presumptions about people's marital status.

Women

- . Women are highly respected in business and generally receive equal pay and have access to senior positions.
- . Norwegian women expect to be treated with respect in the office.
- . Businesswomen are direct and can be skilled negotiators.
- . Women may take up to one year's maternity leave at 80% pay or 10 months at 100% pay.
- . If a woman decides to stay home with pre-school children she receives a monthly stipend from the government.

Jante Law

The poet Aksel Sandemose put Jante Law into words and they convey an important element of Norwegian culture: humility. Jante's Law teaches people to be modest and not 'think big'. It is demonstrated in most people's refusal to criticize others. Norwegians try to see all people as being on equal footing. They do not flaunt their wealth or financial achievements and look askance at those who do.

The tenets of Jante Law are:

- . You shall not think you are special.
- . You shall not believe you are smarter than others.
- . You shall not believe you are wiser than others.
- . You shall not behave as if you are better than others.
- . You shall not believe that you know more than others.
- . You shall not believe that you can fix things better than others.
- . You shall not laugh at others.

- . You shall not believe that others care about you.
- . You shall not believe that you can teach others anything.

Egalitarianism

- . Norwegians view themselves as egalitarian people whose culture is based on democratic principles of respect and interdependence.
- . They like people for themselves and not for what they do for a living their professional accomplishments or how much money they earn.
- . They have simple tastes and are not prone to ostentation or excessive showiness.
- . They pride themselves on being honest and sincere in their personal relationships.