



Sons of Norway Information Banks

#210: INFORMATION ON NORWAY FOR CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

A part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, Norway is a narrow country in northern Europe known for its famous fjords and natural wonders. While its climate is relatively mild, the most northern part of Norway is within the Arctic Circle. For the people living in northern Norway, at certain times of the year they have full days of sunshine due to the tilt of the earth. This is why Norway is sometimes called "the Land of the Midnight Sun."

THE PEOPLE

The people of Norway are proud of their traditions of equality and humanitarianism, and work to ensure human rights through their government. While Norwegians work to be considerate towards others and to appreciate nature, Norway has one of the highest standards of living in the world. Though many Norwegians are thought to be tall and blonde, there is increasing diversity. Norway is also home to the Sami. The Sami are the indigenous people of Scandinavia known for their colorful traditional clothing and culture of reindeer herding.



GEOGRAPHY

Much of Norway's mainland is covered by mountains, glaciers and lakes. Between the mountains, rivers have carved out valleys. Down in the valleys there is fertile soil for farming along the rivers. The valleys also have large forests, mainly of spruce and pine. While along Norway's coastline, deep fjords (narrow inlets of the sea between cliffs or steep slopes) and islands protect the mainland from the Atlantic in the west and the Arctic Sea in the north. Norway's extensive coast has also made it a seafaring nation. In the old days, the coastline gave the Vikings the opportunity to travel far and wide. Today, the sea provides great opportunities for shipping, fishing and oil.



THE VIKINGS

The Viking Age lasted from 800-1050. While Vikings often have bad reputations as raiders, during these centuries the Vikings also acted as traders, explorers and settlers. With their superior longships, the Vikings were able to settle a variety of countries including Iceland and Greenland. Today, there are cities such as Dublin and Normandy that were once Viking settlements. Perhaps one of the more exciting Viking settlements was when Leif Eirikson led a group of Vikings from Greenland to North America. The Vikings called this area of North America Vinland.





Official Name: Kingdom of Norway
(Kongeriket Norge)

Form of Government:
Constitutional monarchy

Capital: Oslo

Official Languages: Bokmal
Norwegian and Nynorsk Norwegian

Money: Norwegian kroner

Climate: Milder along the coast;
colder inland and in arctic regions
with more rain and snow

Agriculture Products: Barley,
wheat, potatoes, pork, beef, veal,
milk, fish

Literacy: 100%

GOVERNMENT

Norway is a constitutional monarchy. This means that Norway has a king as well as elected officials. The king is the official head of state and is responsible for appointing a governor to each of the 19 counties that make up Norway. Each county also has elected officials that act as a community council. Along with these individuals, the people of Norway also elect the members of Norway's parliament, called the Storting, as well as members of the cabinet like the prime minister. You have to be 18 years old to vote in Norway.

SYTTENDE MAI

Norway's Constitution Day is called Syttende Mai (May 17). On this date, parades march, bands play, flags wave and hurrahs (hurrahs) resound. Around 10 a.m., certain streets in all towns and cities throughout Norway are lined with people waiting for the Children's Parade. With flags flying and drums beating, all Norwegian kids march in a parade. They dress in their best clothes, carry Norwegian flags and sing patriotic songs. After the parade, family and friends gather together to grill hot dogs, have potato sack races and eat lots of ice cream. For Norwegians, Syttende Mai is the day when they publicly show their appreciation for living in a free, safe and prosperous country.

KARI, TOR AND FRIENDS – A DAY IN NORWAY

Kari is 12 years old. She lives in a suburb of Sandefjord on the coast of Southern Norway. An ordinary day for Kari starts around seven in the morning. She has breakfast with her parents and her 10-year-old brother. Then all have to get ready for work or school. Kari's brother is a third-grader. Her mother is a lawyer and her father works for a shipping company.

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HISTORICAL DATES

The Viking Age.



800-900

The Black Death (Bubonic plague) wipes out more than half of the population.



Circa 900

1350

Norway becomes a Danish province.



1536

Norway gains its independence from Sweden. King Håkon VII is first elected king of Norway.



1905

Germany occupies Norway during World War II.



1913

1940-1945



Viking King Harold Fairhair unifies Norway into one kingdom.



Norway, Sweden and Denmark form the Kalmar Union and agree to share a monarch.



Norway becomes ruled by a Swedish king, but adopts its own constitution on May 17th after a 14-day war.



Women are given the vote.



FUN FACTS

- Norway is considered the birth place of modern skiing.
- Part of the movie *Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back* was filmed in Finse, Norway.
- Hornindalsvatnet is the deepest lake in Norway and Europe.
- The *russefeiring*, or russ celebration, is when high school seniors in Norway celebrate their final semester in school.
- You can see the northern lights, or aurora borealis, all over Norway.

When her parents leave for work, Kari makes a couple of open-face sandwiches for a matpakke to bring to school for lunch. She clears the breakfast table and puts things into the dishwasher. She checks her rucksack to make sure that the schoolbooks needed for the day are there. Her brother does the same. Then they leave for Tor's house. Tor is Kari's classmate and they usually walk to school together.

School is about a 20-minute walk away and starts at 8:30 a.m. Kari and Tor started school when they were seven, so they are in fifth grade now. Their school is an average-sized Norwegian city school with about 250 students. They have six lessons a day with a 10-minute break between them, except for the lunch break, which is 20 minutes. On their way to school, Kari and Tor talk about a science project they have worked on together. They are going to present it to the class today. They also practice some English verbs. They have been taking English classes since 1st grade. Afterwards, the talk about what they are going to do in the afternoon.

When school is finished at 2 p.m., Tor goes home to do his homework. He needs to get it done before dinner at 4 p.m. because he has a band rehearsal at five. Kari goes to practice with her soccer team. They practice three days a week. She works hard and likes to compete with herself to be better and better.

At 6:30 p.m., Kari meets with Tor and some other classmates down at the street corner. They have decided to bike down to the sea to go swimming. Since it is summer, it will not be dark for hours. They often go swimming or fishing. Sometimes they play ball or go to the woods to build tree houses. In the winter they ski a lot. It does not matter that in the winter it gets dark early in the afternoon because the ski tracks are light. Sometimes they go to the skating rink near the school, or they go to the movies.

All of Kari's friends are involved in some afternoon activity. Some play soccer like Kari, or play in a band like Tor. Many do gymnastics, ballet or go to dance school. Others play handball, basketball or hockey. Some sing in a choir and some are scouts. They usually walk or bike to the place they are going. Only if they have a long way to go, or they have to carry something heavy, will their parents take them there by car. Most of them are busy, but they always try to find time to play together. Especially in the winter, they like to visit at a friend's house and perhaps stay for the weekend.

Norway joins the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).



1949

Oil and gas are discovered under the North Sea.



1960s

Gro Harlem Brundtland is Norway's first female prime minister.



1981

Norway hosts the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer.



1994

The Crown Prince and Princess welcome their first child, Ingrid Alexandra, the future Queen of Norway.



2001

2005



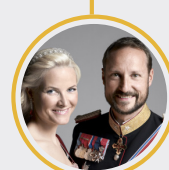
King Håkon VII dies and his son Olav V becomes King of Norway.



Norwegians vote to not join the European Union, and again in 1994.



King Olav V dies. King Harald V and Queen Sonja take over the monarchy.



Crown Prince Haakon Magnus marries Mette-Marit Tjessem Høiby.