



Sons of Norway Mini Presentations

#302: MAIHAUGEN IN LILLEHAMMER

There is a place in Norway where you can step back in time and experience life as it was for Norwegians living in residential neighborhoods, busy towns and rural districts throughout time. This place is called Maihaugen (MY'haug'ehn), a special cultural destination located near the small, bustling, Olympic town of Lillehammer (LIL'ehhah'mehr). Lillehammer is located just north of Oslo on Lake Mjøsa at the southern end of the grandiose valley of Gudbrandsdalen. Travelers who visit this part of southern Norway should be sure to experience the unique and culturally rich open air museum of Maihaugen which is said to be the finest outdoor museum in Europe.

Maihaugen is home to 200 historic and modern buildings, exhibitions, cafes and fun activities for curious individuals of all ages. This Norwegian treasure is one of the largest open air museums in Northern Europe. Maihaugen is a paradise for Norwegian-Americans who would like to explore what life was like for their ancestors in old-time Norway.

This unique open air museum takes visitors through various centuries of rural, urban and

residential Norway with time-period actors playing their parts in history. There are three types of farms displayed at Maihaugen that illustrate living conditions from various walks of life. All aspects from the old farm communities can be studied at Maihaugen, and the collection of buildings are capped off with a beautiful 13th century Stave Church. This is truly a wonderful place to learn more about Norwegian history from the Middle Ages to modern times.

The old buildings, furniture, antiques, art, and more were first collected by Anders Sandvig, a dentist from the area. Born in Romsdalen (Ruhms'dah'lehn), Sandvig studied in Germany in the 1880s when he suddenly became ill. Certain that his life had come to an end, he moved to Lillehammer to die. Much to his own surprise he recovered, settled down in the area, and opened a dental office. He began collecting from old farmyards and houses in the Gudbrandsdalen area in order to display a small sample of Norwegian history.

His collection eventually grew and his small museum was able to expand when the city of Lillehammer provided him with a large piece of land in 1904. By that time, people realized that he was saving a part of their history and they wanted to protect that. The formal

name for Maihaugen is Sandvigkse Samlinger or Sandvig's Collections. Maihaugen is an amazing piece of landscape architecture. The quaint village allows visitors to step back in time and use all their senses to experience Norway throughout the years.

The layouts of the grounds provide an extensive experience into Norwegian living throughout the centuries. This museum is a live museum in that there are people portraying their roles within the homes, farms and businesses. The rural collection is comprised of farms and buildings that date as far back as the 15th century. The urban section shows off Norway's old towns which include everything from a railroad station, a post office and a real working café and bakery. In the residential area visitors will find homes and people inside them representing every decade of the 20th century. There is also an extensive collection of crafts, textiles, folk art and more that exhibit the history of Norway from the Ice Age until today.

Maihaugen is truly a cultural gem within Norway. It is easy to get swept in to museum life and feel more like a resident than a voyeur in the world of Maihaugen.



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