

WORKING IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NORWAY

(Updated April 2013)



About the industry

Norway is a well-known tourist destination for visitors from all over the world. The Land of the Midnight Sun has much to offer both on land and at sea, with its high mountains, deep fjords, long summer days and crisp snowy winters.

Currently the hospitality sector in Norway is experiencing challenges in several areas. The economical situation in Europe and the uncertainty it is causing makes tourists hesitate. The industry is expecting fewer bookings in advance and more impulsivity, which will make it more difficult to predict and plan ahead.

The demand for workers in the tourist industry varies a great deal depending on the seasons and on the geography of Norway. There is a lot of staff turnover as a direct consequence of seasonal variations. In general, the summer season can be said to start in May and run through August/ September; the winter season usually starts in November and ends in March/ April.

There are periods where businesses in this sector do not have quite as much activity, depending on the season and the region where they are located. If you apply for a job in the tourist sector, be aware of the fact that you may be out of work between seasons.

In Norway there are two main types of businesses catering to the tourism sector:

- Companies with summer season only: located mainly on the west coast, where tourism is mostly concentrated around the fjords, called 'Fjord Norway'. These regions include the counties of Sogn og Fjordane, Rogaland and Hordaland. Also included in this category is the southern coast of Norway (Sørlandet).
- Companies with both summer and winter seasons: these include the mountain regions of Norway, especially the counties of Buskerud (Hallingdal region) and Oppland (Lillehammer region, site of the 1994 Olympics), and Hedmark as well as Telemark. For some locations summer is not nearly as busy as winter.

The businesses in the larger cities of Norway (Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger and Trondheim) have great need for staff both summer and winter.

In the last years the tourist industry has emphasised on developing so-called "adventure tourism", which is suitable for the Norwegian climate and landscape and a way for Norway to

stand out as an interesting destination. Examples are whale safari, hiking, snow scooter safari, ice hotels, kiting on the beaches of the west coast, rock climbing, sky diving, hunting and fishing, rafting, dog sledging and riding. Tourism in “arctic and exotic” places like Svalbard, Lofoten and Finnmark is very popular and attract tourists looking for something extraordinary.

“Farm tourism” - the use of old beautiful farms for recreation, conferences and events is also increasingly common.

A renewed interest in old cultures like the Sami culture has also enhanced tourism in the areas where it can be found.

Geography and climate also play important roles in the demand for labour in the hospitality sector. For example, mountain resorts may have a quiet period in early autumn and late spring, depending on weather conditions suitable for hiking and skiing. More urban areas may have slightly less tourist activity in January after the Christmas season and before winter and Easter holidays begin, and again in May before the summer season starts up again. But for many of these types of businesses, these quieter periods can often be filled with company conferences, seminars and courses, weddings and family receptions etc.

Visitors to Norway come from all parts of the globe, with a great many from Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, USA and France especially. The majority of tourists, however, are Norwegian or from other Scandinavian countries, usually travelling on business. These “business tourists” constitute an important part of the total number of overnight stays; many of the larger hotels therefore base their activities on conference rooms and restaurant facilities.

What is the demand for workers in the tourism industry?

Despite challenges within the industry there is still a considerable demand for skilled personnel, preferably with vocational training or a fair amount of experience in the following categories:

- Chefs and cooks.
- Head waiters, waiters and bartenders
- Front desk staff, such as shift managers, receptionists and front desk staff
- Spa therapists
- Guides

There is also a demand for unskilled workers:

- Cleaners.
- Assistant serving staff
- Kitchen assistants

Many of the niche products previously mentioned employ locals and is therefore important for the communities to offer local work and maintain and attract settlement, but often additional service personnel and special competence is needed also here.

How to find work in the tourism industry?

The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service (NAV) has a database containing all published vacancies. Go to www.nav.no and choose “*ledige jobber*” to find the job vacancies.

- Select the category "*Handel, kundeservice, restaurant og reiseliv*".
- In the field for "stillingstype" it is possible to select the categories "*Handel, kundeservice, restaurant og reiseliv*" (trade, service, restaurant and tourism)
- In the field for type of work ("*stillingskategori*"), choose "*Restaurant og forpleining*" or "*Reiseliv, hotel and accomodation*".

It is also possible to make an efficient search for seasonal work in this sector by writing the words "*ferie*" (holiday), "*sesong*" (seasonal) or "*sommer*" (summer) in the search field called "*Stillingstype, område eller arbeidsgiver*". Then you will get all the vacancies containing one of these words. The ads will most often be in Norwegian.

For access to the above mentioned vacancies via telephone, call NAV Service Centre EURES +47 800 33 166. Opening hours: 08.00 - 18.00.

At the European Job Mobility Portal (choose "Norway") a small EU flag is attached to vacancies where the employer is particularly interested in attracting job seekers from abroad, for instance due to language skills, or national labour shortages.

Another idea is to access the web sites of the large hotel chains. There you can easily register your CV online, and choose from a menu as to where you are interested in working, and what type of work.

In general most employers require a written CV (personal details and a description of your education, practical experience and a little about your general interests and hobbies) along with an application. Almost all Norwegian employers will ask for references; preferably from a previous employer.

General information about working and living in Norway is available on the NAV EURES www.nav.no/englisheures web sites.

Language, education and training requirements

The companies in the tourist sector usually require good knowledge of Norwegian or another Scandinavian language (Danish or Swedish), especially for staff having close contact with customers, such as receptionists, waiters etc. The reason for these language requirements is that most guests in Norway are Norwegian or Scandinavian.

In spite of this, the tourist sector has a much higher percentage of non-native staff than other sectors. It is an international work place with employees of international background and experience. Some employers use English as a common working language, so it would be useful if you have a basic understanding of this language. The easiest positions to get for non-

Norwegian speaking staff are within cooking and cleaning. Some of the larger hotels have translated their working instructions for cleaning personnel into other languages.

Wages and taxes

There is no minimum salary in Norway. But there is a system of pre-agreed wages signed by employers' organisations and trade unions every year, called the "tariff" agreement. The standard wages in this sector vary a great deal according to qualifications, experience and type of positions. The rates are renegotiated every other year, usually in early spring.

The agreements are updated in April every year.

As of April 2012 the basic hourly wages for unskilled staff from 18 years is approximately 114 NOK for beginners in this sector. Unskilled workers who do have experience can expect up to 155 NOK, depending on the type of work and years of experience.

The hourly wages are higher for qualified cooks and start at approximately 149 NOK per hour (beginners) and go up to about 164 NOK depending on type of job and your experience. As working in the hotel and restaurant sector often means irregular hours, you may also be entitled to extra pay for working late night shifts, weekends and holidays, etc.

Although many companies use this "tariff" wage system, not all do. The wages above give an indication of what you may expect to earn. For more specific information about the wage agreement in the hospitality sector, you should check with a trade union such as the Union of Hotel and Restaurant workers (see links below). Remember to ask for a written work contract before you start to work.

When you work for a Norwegian employer, you are required to pay tax in Norway. If you reside in Norway for less than six months, special tax rules apply. Bring your employment contract and passport to the nearest tax office ("skattekontor") and apply for a tax card ("skattekort"). If you start working without a tax card, the employer will deduct 50% tax. Otherwise the tax usually amounts to around 1/3 of your pay. See the Norwegian Tax Authority (www.taxnorway.no) for more information

Important things to consider

Some employers provide accommodation, but you may have to share living space, kitchen and bathroom with other tenants. Some employers also have rooms available to let, or camping facilities. The rent may vary considerably, depending on the standard of accommodation and where in Norway you are located. Basic furniture and kitchen/cooking utensils may also be available. Those who do not offer housing will in many cases help find accommodation. A very common way to find accommodation is through the Internet.

Some of these jobs are to be found in the countryside, and public transportation may be very limited. You may need your own transportation to get around.

Trade Unions

You will often get useful information from branch and employers' organisations such as the Norwegian Hospitality Association, or from a trade union such as the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union ('Fellesforbundet').

- www.fellesforbundet.no (Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union)
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Related information

- <http://eures.europa.eu> (European Job Mobility Portal)
- www.reiselivsbasen.no (Norwegian Hospitality Association, only in Norwegian)
- www.turistforeningen.no (Norwegian Trekking Association)
- www.visitnorway.no ([Tourist information](#))
- www.finn.no (Housing)
- www.camping.no (Camping sites)
- www.arbeidstilsynet.no (Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority)
- www.udi.no (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration)