



EIDFJORD NORWAY

Nestled among the mountains of Hardangerfjord in western Norway, Eidfjord is an oasis town of 900 residents amid some of the greatest mountainous beauty in Northern Europe. The fjords of this area date to the last Ice Age over 10,000 years ago, when glaciers melted away to create staggering plateaus and waterfalls that feed into narrow inlets and rivers. In 2004, National Geographic Traveler Magazine recognized the Norwegian fjords as the most alluring destination in the world from 115 entries.

A kommune or “parish” since 1977, Eidfjord is made up of two towns, Eidfjord and Øvre. The towns are filled with both antique and modern wooden architecture. Meaning “land between waters,” Eidfjord has only 900 residents and is famous for its idyllic beauty. The staggering height of the mountains, nearly one mile above sea level, literally put Eidfjord on a pedestal above the rest. A five hour’s drive from Oslo and two and a half hours from Bergen, Eidfjord is the gateway to the mountain regions of Hardangervidda and Finse/Hardangerjøkulen.

It is no wonder that sports enthusiasts and nature lovers alike flock to Eidfjord to explore the Hardangervidda Mountain Plateau, the largest in Europe, for its spectacular waterfalls, peaceful valleys, and the Hardangerjøkulen Glacier, which stands 1.15 miles above sea level. The Hardangervidda National Park is the largest of Norway’s national parks, and is home to 120 species of birds, diverse Arctic vegetation, and abundant animals, including arctic foxes, snowy owls, and reindeer. The nearby Vøringfossen and Valurfossen waterfalls stand majestically at 597 and 892 feet, respectively, over the plateaus. Whether fishing for salmon or kayaking down the Eio Bjoreio Rivers, hiking in the Hardangervidda National Park, or skiing at Sysendalen Mountain, the opportunities for outdoor activities in Eidfjord are endless.



HISTORY

After the last Ice Age the glaciers retreated and created fjords between the great mountain plateaus along the Norwegian coast. Norway’s earliest residents arrived in the region shortly after the fjords became inhabitable 10,000 years ago. These early groups of hunters transitioned to agricultural communities in southern Norway sometime during the Bronze Age (1500-500 BC). During the Viking Age, Scandinavian civilization rose to power and infamy as the Vikings sailed the North Atlantic seas. Norwegian Viking explorers traveled in Western Europe, trading, raiding, and establishing colonies in Ireland, Iceland, Greenland, and North America, among other places. Though the Viking era ended in 1056 AD, the legacy of these early sailors lives on today.

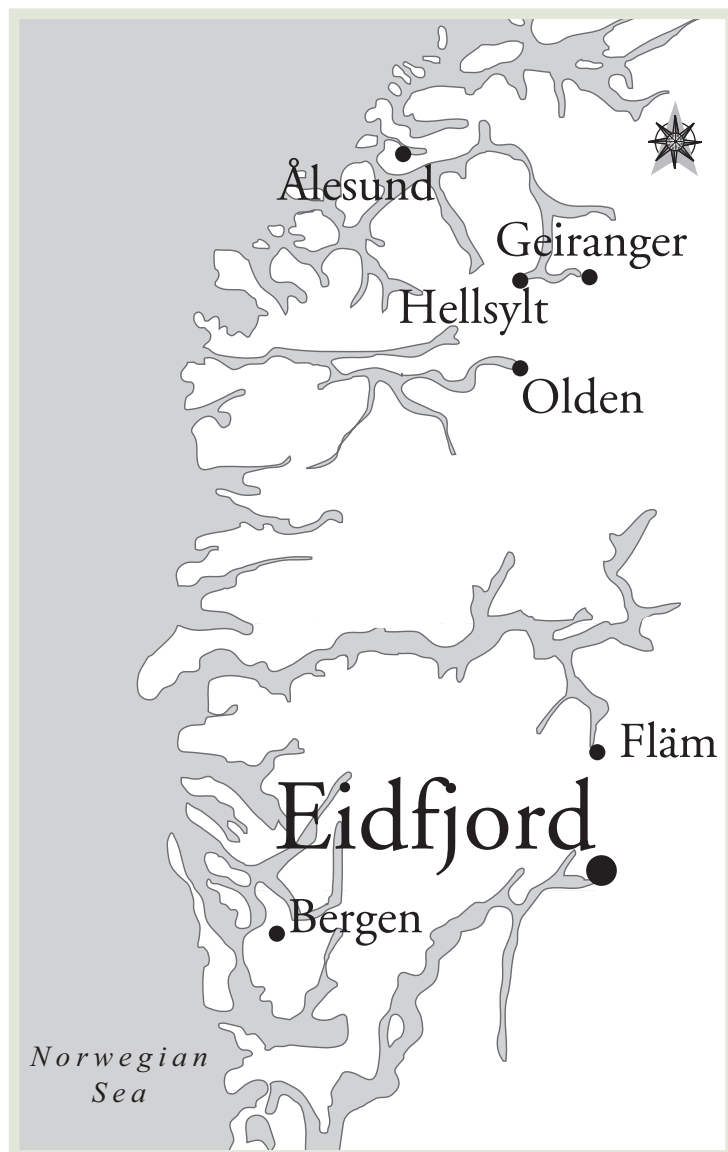
By the 1100s, Norway’s many kingdoms were consolidated under a common crown and religion by King Harald Fairhair. During the 1300s, political power shifted across Scandinavia, creating conflicts. Beginning in 1380 the Danish Crown ruled Norway, at first jointly with Sweden in the Kalmar Union until 1520 and then alone until 1814.

Calls for national unity grew during the 1700s and early 1800s, especially after the Napoleonic Wars. After the Battle of Leipzig that ended the Napoleon era, Sweden won Norway from the Danish. Norwegians revolted against the prospect of Swedish control when the Norwegian governor and an assembly met to write a new constitution. They declared the Danish king, Christian Frederik, to be the Norwegian king on May 17, 1814. After five months of fighting with Sweden, a peace treaty in November 1814 declared an alliance under Swedish rule.

Economic development and connections with European politics dominated the nineteenth century in Norway. Eidfjord, as a small village in western Norway, became a tourist spot in the 1820s for Europeans escaping industrial fervor and political conflicts in the cities. Fishing and scenic views attracted visitors. In 1889, the Vøringfoss Hotel was constructed in Eidfjord, followed by several other buildings to accommodate travelers.

By the end of the nineteenth century Norway's alliance with Sweden reached a point that allowed for a peaceful separation in 1905. The Danish Prince Carl became the king of Norway, taking the name Haakon VII. He ruled the economically successful nation until after World War I. German occupation during World War II brought tumultuous times to Norway. The country did not regain independence until 1945 with Germany's surrender. Postwar Norway concentrated on recovery and prosperity both politically and economically. The United Nations Human Development Index has consistently ranked Norway as having one of the top standards of living in the world.

Eidfjord has followed the national example of integrating welfare state policy into local governance. In the 1970s, Eidfjord investment built the Sima hydroelectric power plant, which now literally and financially supports the regional economy. Ecological preservation and tourism continue to support Eidfjord as an attractive destination for anyone seeking solace among some of the most stunning scenery in Northern Europe.



AREA PLACES OF INTEREST

Eidfjord Old Church – Not to be confused with the New Church built in 1981, the St. James Old Church was built in 1309. A legend says that a wealthy woman Rike-Ragna built the church to atone for her sins.



Hardangervidda Nature Centre, boasts three floors of interactive ecological exhibits and several aquariums, the Nature Centre offers many opportunities for visitors to

learn about the natural history of Eidfjord. One of the many highlights is a film about the Hardangervidda plateau area, “Mountain, Fjord, and Waterfall,” presented on a 225 degree panoramic screen.

Måbø Museum – This small museum is located among the mountains and tells the local history of Eidfjord and the surrounding areas. The main exhibit tells the 600 year tradition of road-building in Eidfjord.

Lofthus – About an hour from Eidfjord, this small town is the gateway to the Hardangervidda Mountain Plateau and the Folgefonn Glacier. Visit the local church built in 1250, and marvel at the half million fruit trees against the snow-peaked mountains in the background.

Skytjefossen – This is Norway's highest waterfalls with a total drop of 984 feet.

Sima Plant – This hydroelectric power plant is one of Europe's largest and located in Simadalen.

Kjeåsen Mountain Farm, is located just past the Sima hydroelectric power plant, Kjeåsen offers beautiful vistas overlooking Eidfjord from a mountain perch. It is considered by some to be one of the most isolated Norwegian farms, allowing it to remain an oasis of Norwegian agricultural traditions.

Vøringsfossen is one of Norway's iconic natural attractions, this waterfall has a total drop of 158 yards. View the waterfall at its most spectacular from the Fossli Hotel, located on the Hardangervidda Mountain Plateau.



Sysen Dam is one of Norway's biggest stone-filled dams, consisting of over 3.6 million stones.

Hæreid – Located only 20 minutes walking distance from Eidfjord, this plateau is home to 400 graves of the Viking period and the Iron Age (400-1000 AD).

SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Eidfjord and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of the organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Order Form or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Bargaining: There is little or no opportunity to bargain in Norway.

Tipping: Service charges are included in restaurant pricing. It is appropriate to tip 10% for good service. Taxi fares are usually rounded up to the nearest 5 or 10 NOK.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

Norway is noted for its fresh and flavorful seafood, especially salmon, trout, codfish, herring, and shellfish. Game meats, such as moose, reindeer, mutton, and duck, also star in some of the region's most delicious dishes. Brunost, Norway's signature whey-based "cheese" has a distinctive sweet caramel taste and is used in open-faced sandwiches and lutefisk dishes. Fårikål, this classic Norwegian stew includes mutton, cabbage, and black peppercorns. Lutefisk, dried codfish or haddock is soaked in potash lye and fermented for up to two years. This local favorite is then served with mustard, bacon, or Brunost.

Aquavit, is a popular throughout Scandinavia. It is distilled from potatoes, aged in wood barrels, and flavored with dill and caraway. Like fine wines, aquavit can be paired to complement dishes.

SHOPPING

Some of Eidfjord's best products include handmade candles, wooden crafts, hand-woven tapestries, and regional pullover sweaters. The Norwegian invented cheese slicer (essential for slicing Brunost) is also a nice gift. Shops may be found in the city center, as well as in Øvre Eidfjord, next to the Hardangervidda Nature Center.

Value Added Tax (VAT), is added to most purchases. Visitors who spend over a certain amount may be entitled to re-claim some or all of the tax paid. In Scandinavia many stores participate in "Tax Free Shopping." ask for a "Tax Free" receipt, this is usually reimbursed before departing the country although RCCL cannot guarantee the cooperation of local authorities.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The unit of currency in Norway is the Krone (NOK). There are 100 øre to the Krone. Krone bills are available in the following denominations; 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1,000.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES

The local post office is located in the Joker Supermarket in Nedre Eidfjord.

Local coins are required to use public telephones.

TRANSPORTATION

Eidfjord has a strong public transportation system. Daily bus service can take you to the nearby towns of Odda and Voss. In the summer, bus service to Geilo connects with a train to Bergen. Ferries are the primary means of travel uniting Eidfjord with the neighboring fjords.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Destinasjon Eidfjord / Eidfjord Turistkontor is the local tourist office. It is located at Simadalsvegen 3, 5783 Eidfjord.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Yes • Ja

No • Nei

Good Day • God Dag

Good-bye • Ha Det

Thank-you • Tak

You're Welcome • Versegod

