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Norway

Location:

Located in Northern Europe on the western and northern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, bordering the North Sea in southwest and the Skagerrak inlet to the south, the North Atlantic Ocean (Norwegian Sea) in the west and the Barents Sea to the northeast. Norway has a long land border with Sweden to the east, a shorter one with Finland in the northeast and a still shorter border with Russia in the far northeast.

Capital:

Oslo

Language:

Norway has two main languages - Bokmål (Book Norwegian) and Nynorsk (New Norwegian) which are two distinct written languages, they are similar in many respects. In Civil Service situations there is a law that directs how government employees should use each. Urban centers primarily use Bokmål and maybe 10-12% of the Norwegian population uses Nynorsk today.

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
- ~ 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 check 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 and financial achievements and they frown on those who do. They pride themselves on being honest and sincere in their personal relationships. Their culture is based on democratic principles of respect and interdependence.



Your message. Clearly delivered.

Meeting and Greeting:

- ~ Greetings are casual, with a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and a smile
- ~ They are casual; they often introduce themselves with their first name only
- ~ In some circumstances people may use the honorific title “Herr” (Mr.) or “Fru” (Mrs.) and the surname
- ~ You can wait to be invited before moving to first names although most people will start with this
- ~ Shake hands and say good-bye individually when arriving or departing
- ~ Shake hands with people on a first come first served basis

Business Etiquette:

Building Relationships & Communication

- ~ Norwegians prefer to do business with those they trust, so it is important that you provide information about yourself and the company you represent prior to meeting your business colleagues
- ~ Giving a well-researched presentation indicates that you are serious about conducting business. The basic business style is relatively informal.
- ~ Norwegians are direct communicators. They have no problem telling their colleagues that they disagree with something.
- ~ They are excellent time managers who do not require face-to-face contact in order to conduct business
- ~ Appearing overly friendly at the start of a relationship may be viewed as weakness. Maintaining eye contact while speaking is interpreted as sincerity.
- ~ They do not appreciate being rushed. They are scrupulous about honesty in communication.

Business Meetings:

- ~ Appointments are necessary and should be made as far in advance as possible by writing or by telephone. If writing, address the letter to the head of the division, even if you do not know the person.
- ~ Punctuality is important since it indicates trustworthiness. If you are late even 5 minutes, it is polite to phone and explain.
- ~ It is difficult to schedule meetings during July and August, which are popular vacation times; during the two weeks before and after Christmas; and during the week before and after Easter. Also, May 17 is Constitution Day, a national day of celebration.
- ~ Meetings are informal, but send an agenda before so that the Norwegian colleagues can be prepared.
- ~ There is not much small talk. Presentations should be precise and concrete, and backed up with charts, figures, and analysis.
- ~ Leave time for Q&A at the end of a presentation. Norwegians do not interrupt and will save their questions until you have finished speaking.



Negotiating:

- ~ Decisions are consensus driven and they will take time as all the alternatives are weighed
- ~ Present a firm, realistic, and competitive initial price and expect a minimum of bargaining. Price is often the most important deciding factor. Norwegians do not generally give discounts, even to good customers or for large orders.
- ~ Avoid high-pressure sales tactics and adhere to deadlines and commitments
- ~ New concepts should be shown to be high quality, practical, and already market tested

What to Wear?

- ~ The business attire is more casual than the European style. Men should wear dark-colored, conservative suits to meetings.
- ~ For the first meeting, women should wear well tailored dresses or pants suits (not sure about the pants suit, it seems that in the US, we wear slacks, jacket and a shell or blouse underneath). We are not as “matchy-matchy” in our offices. If you are doing business in Norway, it’s something to check.
- ~ Jewelry and accessories should be kept to a minimum and always be understated and please have spotless shoes

Gift Giving Etiquette:

- ~ If invited to a Norwegian’s home bring flowers, chocolates, pastries, wine, or imported spirits to the hostess
- ~ Do not give carnations, lilies or white flowers as they are used at funerals
- ~ Do not give wreaths, even at Christmas, they too are for funerals
- ~ Do not give even numbers of flowers
- ~ A houseplant is a good gift to give in the winter months
- ~ A bouquet of freshly picked wildflowers is always appreciated
- ~ Gifts are opened when received

Dining Etiquette:

- ~ Invitations are generally given verbally
- ~ Norwegians are punctual in both business and social situations
- ~ Confirm the dress code with your hosts
- ~ Offer to help the hostess with the preparation or clearing after a meal is served
- ~ Do not discuss business. Norwegians separate their business and personal lives.
- ~ Reciprocate any invitation
- ~ Table manners are more formal than one might expect of a culture that is informal
- ~ Hold the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating
- ~ Do not begin eating until the hostess starts
- ~ Most food, including sandwiches, is eaten with utensils. When you have finished eating, place your knife and fork across your plate with the prongs facing down and the handles facing to the right
- ~ The male guest of honor, generally seated to the left of the hostess, thanks the hostess on behalf of the other guests with the phrase “takk for matten” (thanks for the meal)
- ~ The host makes a small speech and offers the first toast. Toast the host/hostess during the meal. Women may offer toasts. Toasts are made with alcoholic beverages, but not beer.



- ~ When someone is being toasted, raise your glass, look at the person, take a sip, look at the person again, and then return the glass to the table
- ~ Women must put down their glasses first
- ~ If you do not want more food, leave just a bit on your plate. If you clear your plate you will be offered more. Don't accept or take the last serving on a platter. This action is perceived as rude in Norway.
- ~ In informal restaurants, you may be seated with others; if so, you are not expected to make conversations
- ~ Never chew gum in a restaurant or on the street
- ~ If you go to a pub, you are not expected to buy a round of drinks. If you do it will be regarded as a "treat", and Norwegians will not reciprocate. Norwegians always pay for their own drink.

Export Goods:

Oil and petroleum products, and also supplies its' trading partners with machinery, equipment, metals, chemicals and fish.

Imported goods:

Generators and accessories, civilian aircraft, ammunition, artillery, guns, missiles, rockets and tanks, other iron and steel products.

Climate:

The climate of Norway is more temperate than expected for such high latitudes; this is due to the North Atlantic Current with its extension, the Norwegian Current, raising the air temperature, and the prevailing southwesterly winds bringing the mild air on shore. The January average in Brønnøysund is almost 27.0° F warmer than the January average in Nome, Alaska. The warmest temperature ever recorded in Norway is 96.1° F in Nesbyen. The coldest temperature ever recorded in -61° F.

Government:

Constitutional monarchy
Parliamentary democracy

Religion:

Protestant Christianity (Evangelical-Lutheran) with 78.9% belonging to the state Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway. Prior to the Reformation, Norwegians were part of the Catholic Church with the conversion to Protestantism occurring in 1536. Islam is now the second largest religion due to recent migration trends.

Ethnic Make-up:

Norway has an indigenous Sami population as well as five national minorities, defined as groups with long association with Norway. They include the Sami, Finnish, Gypsies, Germans and Danish. There has been an ethnic immigration movement since the 1960s, with people coming from Pakistan, Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Chile, Iran, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Somalia.

