

Welcome to Norway

A survival guide to your AFS-experience



Make sure you go through this booklet with your family, and bring it to Norway!

Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures



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Welcome to Norway!

We hope you are eager and ready to start your AFS-experience this August.

Upon arrival you will be met by AFS volunteers and staff. All AFS students will travel to the welcome camp. During the camp you will learn about Norwegian culture, language and family life. After the camp, you will travel either by train, bus or plane together with other AFS-students, to reach your final destination where you'll meet your host families.

We are hereby sending you some orientation material. It is important that both you and your parents read this material thoroughly before you come to Norway. Parts of the arrival orientation will be based on this material. Please bring this booklet to the camp.

The key to a rewarding exchange year is learning Norwegian as quickly as possible. There is no better tool for understanding another culture than through the native language. Remember that Norwegian will be the language that you will use during your year as an AFSer. It is also necessary for you to learn Norwegian as soon as possible in order to be able to participate in daily activities and at school. We're encouraging you to start your learning before arrival. In the end of this booklet, you'll find an internet based Norwegian course that will be useful for your learning.

We hope you will use the remaining time until your departure to prepare yourself for your year as an AFSer in Norway. We wish you a nice trip and welcome to Norway!

Best regards,

AFS Norway International Exchange

Facts about Norway

Population

Norway's population is 5 050 000 (2013), with a density of 13 people per km². The capital city of Oslo has 608 000 inhabitants. Most Norwegians are of Norwegian descent, but due to an increased level of immigration for the last 50 years, there's now a more complex composition of people in Norway. There's also an indigenous group of people called the Sami. Otherwise, people live from the far south to the far north. You may experience some regional cultural differences, but the population is mainly seen as quite egalitarian.

Geography

Norway is a northern European country which stretches 2 500 km from our south across the polar circle to the far North. It covers an area of 385 199 km². Of this, 304 280 square kilometers comprise the mainland. It is a rugged country with a disperse population and most students will live in small communities of less than 20 000 inhabitants.

The terrain is glaciated; mostly high plateaus and rugged mountains broken by fertile valleys; small, scattered plains; coastline deeply indented by fjords; arctic tundra in north.



Climate

Norway's climate shows great variations. The rugged topography of Norway is one of the main reasons for large local differences over short distances. We have four seasons: winter (December - February), spring (March - May), summer (June - August), and autumn (September - November). The climate is temperate along coast, modified by North Atlantic Current; colder interior with increased precipitation and colder summers; rainy year-round on west coast.

Furthermore we have great variations in received solar energy during the year. The largest differences we find in Northern Norway, having midnight sun in the summer months and no sunshine at all during winter.

Government

Norway is a constitutional monarchy whose constitution calls for the country to be ruled by a monarch. The king and his family have no real political power but are an

important symbol, and they mean a great deal to the Norwegian people. King Harald V took over the throne in 1991. King Harald is married to Queen Sonja, and they have two children; Crown Prince Haakon who is married to Crown Princess Mette Marit and Princess Märtha Louise who is married to Ari Behn. The Crown Prince and Crown Princess have two children together.

The government is headed by a Prime Minister who runs the country with the assistance of 19 cabinet members. Norway's legislative body is called the Storting and is made up of 169 representatives who are elected every four years from 19 counties. Storting passes laws and decides how to spend national revenues.

Religion

Most Norwegians are Christian-Lutheran. However, they do not go to church very often and they seldom participate in religious activities. Some people will go to church during Christmas and Easter and of course during weddings and funerals. There is no state religion in Norway, but since Norway historically is a Christian-Lutheran country the constitution states that the Norwegian laws should reflect Christian-Lutheran values and humanitarian principles. The Christian traditions are also reflected in the national holidays like Christmas and Easter. Most Norwegians are registered at baptism as members of the Christian-Lutheran church. They remain in the church to be able to use services such as baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial, rites which have strong cultural standing in Norway. About 77.0% of Norwegians are members of the Christian-Lutheran church, but only 20% claims that religion plays an important role in their life. Among the largest non-Lutheran religious groups, there is Islam (2.3%), Catholicism (2.1%) and Humanism (1.7%).

Language

Norwegian is the language of Norway. It is a Germanic language related to Danish, Swedish and Icelandic and has two official forms of writing: "Bokmål" (Standard Norwegian) and "Nynorsk" (New Norwegian). Norway also has a great diversity of dialects. People from the different regions of the country will speak differently. As an exchange student you will get the unique opportunity to learn to speak Norwegian as a native.

A dictionary will be essential. They tend to be cheaper in Norway than abroad. So if you have not already bought one to prepare yourself in your home country, buy one when you get here. They will cost around NOK 200. When you finish the arrival camp and go to your host family, ask that your host family and friends speak Norwegian to you right from the beginning. If you make an effort to speak, think and hear only in Norwegian, your progress will be rapid and you will gain confidence and the respect of both others and yourself.

Culture

It is difficult to define Norwegian culture. Depending on where you are in the country, you will find regional, economical, ethnic, and religious differences. Age and gender differences also occur. However, there are some common principles and values that Norwegians consider solid, deep and unifying.

One of them is the principle of being egalitarian (that we are all the same). This is reflected in gender relations, age relations and how you address others.

Norwegians always address people by their first names, even teachers and elders. Norwegians dress and act informal, and treat each other with the sense of equality, no matter differences in economic class, gender or status. Male and female are considered equal. That means it is expected that they do the same kind of jobs, work just as much, earn the same amount of money, have a shared responsibility in the house and have a shared responsibility for the upbringing of their child. Don't be surprised if they expect the same of you.

At first Norwegians may seem shy. They are reserved people, and it will take some time for them to get comfortable around new people and new settings. After some time, they will open up and show a big warm heart. Although it might take some time to make friends, you'll often see that once you get a friend in Norway, it is for life. Just give it some time and show initiative!

Norwegians like to see themselves as equal people with equal rights. Bragging about yourself and your skills is usually seen as something negative, since you're not supposed to see yourself as superior to others. This mindset is called "janteloven", and even though it is joked about, it is not entirely false. Norwegians are modest people, and in general reserved. Honesty and politeness are core values, and people will expect you to ask nicely if you want something. They also expect a "thank you" for favors.

On the other side, Norwegians tend to talk to each other in a very direct way and appreciate honest and straight forward communication. Not many subjects are taboo, and it's usually okay to speak about anything.

Most likely it will take some time getting to know Norwegian culture. The best way is interaction, and learning by doing. Given some time you'll discover and experience the Norwegian culture.

Attitudes/values

All cultures have some qualities/values they see as very important. In Norway the following is very much appreciated and encouraged:

Appreciation (say “thank you!”)

Your host family receives no compensation for hosting you. Show them that you are grateful – not by expensive gifts, but by saying “thank you” often. You should also show your appreciation by smiling, helping them, and by showing your enthusiasm and interest in their lives and culture. Appreciation is necessary to build lasting bonds. Remember that they also have expectations – they also want something from this year. So let them learn about your culture by for example cooking them a meal that is typical from your country, or showing them a dance. Many exchange students say that “Takk (Thank you)” is the most important word in the Norwegian culture, and cannot be used too often.

Being open

You are in Norway to learn. When you learn you have to be patient, and listen carefully. Take in all impressions and information you can. Do not hesitate to ask for advice from friends, your family or from AFS, and do not be afraid to be corrected. There is so much to learn and there is no such thing as a stupid question. Ask your family to correct you when you make a mistake, show them that you do not mind. Encourage them to correct you. If you feel uneasy about something, talk to your family about it. They will not realize it unless you bring it into the open.

Accepting Differences

Not right, not wrong, just different! Heard that before? If we judge and compare different customs, habits and traditions, we might miss out on important learning. Many things are done differently, without necessarily being better or worse. Keeping an open mind will help you getting closer to the cultural understanding. If you want to understand the other, you have to see the perspective from his/her point of view. You’re in Norway to learn about intercultural learning, and by doing so you have to put yourself in his/her shoes and try to understand how and why things work the way they do. Some important questions to have in mind may be “what is he really meaning by his?”, “What is she really saying”, or “what does she really want?” Sometimes it might be clever not to compare differences, but instead try to accept differences. If you keep an open mind to how things are done differently, you might realize that the similarities are greater than they appeared.

Consideration

Showing consideration is important in everyday life. You should not be late, and ask your family if they need help doing housework. **Do not wait until you are asked to help.** If someone has something he wants to say, take the time and listen. Be curious about the habits, behavior, lifestyles, beliefs, thoughts and actions. Showing an interest will be highly appreciated. Norwegians are very proud of their country, and they like to hear nice things about the nature, people and culture. If you don’t have anything nice to say – why say it?

Humor

A positive attitude, a smile and a laugh will get you through a lot. This includes laughing at funny situations you might get into due to misunderstandings. Being able to laugh at your own shortcomings and mistakes is vital when you are an exchange student. Don't get upset when you make mistakes, but know that it is common and laugh about it. A good laugh will give you the strength to correct a mistake, and it is a lot more enjoyable than getting upset with yourself.

It is also important that you are aware of sarcasm and irony. A lot of Norwegians use both sarcasm and irony to either prove a point, or as a way of joking. If something sounds strange, it is better to ask than to get upset or misunderstand. We don't use it to insult you; it's just our sense of humor!

Explanations:

Irony – the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning

Sarcasm – a sharply ironical taunt; sneering or cutting remark

Punctuality

Punctuality is crucial in Norway, and Norwegians will expect you to be on time. By being on time we mean the exact time. Norwegians have a strict relationship to time, and following the clock will be expected. If you have an appointment at 5, you should be there at 5. Of course it might happen that you lose a bus or get lost, but as a general rule being late is perceived as rude.

Independence

For most Norwegian parents it's important that their children grow independent, and are able to take responsibility for their own activities and actions. Because of this, your host parents will expect mostly the same from you! Also – most Norwegian youth have very busy days, with a lot of spare time activities in addition to school and homework. A lot engage in sports, music (marching band, choirs, bands, etc.), theatre, scouting, and so on. Your Host Family will expect that you do the same! If you spend all afternoons and weekends at home, in front of the TV or your computer, they will feel that you do not want to engage or get integrated into the Norwegian culture and society. Even though you may be used to being told by your parents at home what to do, or expected to spend most of your time at home, your Norwegian Host Family most likely will not have the same expectations!

Please note: This does not mean that you can do whatever you want, or will not have house rules to follow. It only means that you are expected to keep yourself active!

Your Norwegian Host Family

AFS host families

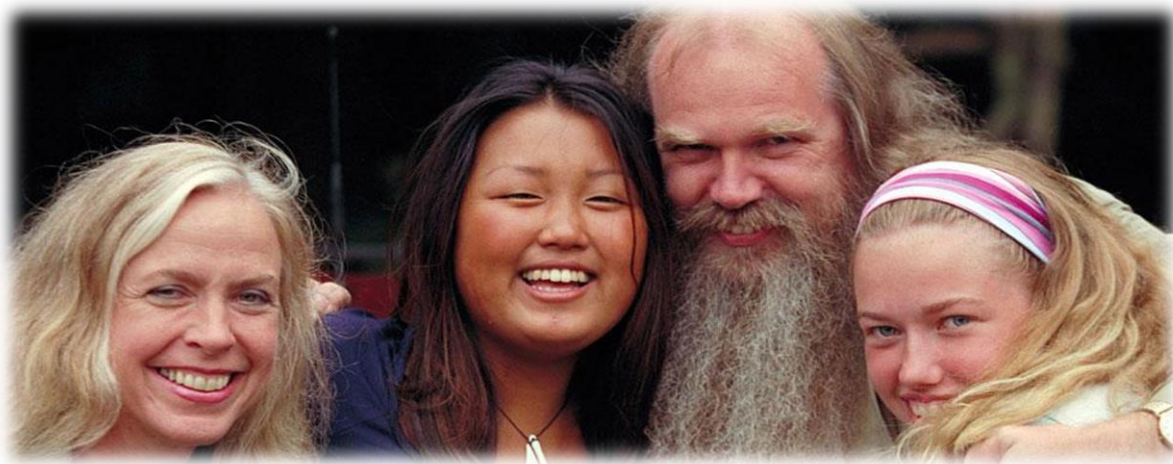
AFS host families are like families everywhere. Everyone one is different from another. Please always remember that:

- Your host family wants you to live with them, and does not get paid. They want you to teach them about your home country, and to teach you about their way of life.
- Your host family wants to help you while you are in Norway. They want you to be a true family member, by sharing and engaging in the family life.

What can you expect?

Family and friends are very important to Norwegians. Tolerance, kindness and independence are qualities that are highly valued. Norwegians like to see themselves as a nation close to nature. But, in reality, Norway's lifestyle is very much like any other industrialized western nation. Norway is sometimes considered Europe's biggest folk museum, but simultaneously it is a laboratory for the future. This contrast is one reason why Norway is such an interesting destination.

Families and friends get together on weekends. During the week, Norwegians are often quite busy. Families don't necessarily do common activities, and they tend to have individual doings during the day. Keep in mind that the families will expect the same for you. Husbands and wives consider each other equal in authority. Families tend to be small, and everyone shares the housework. Parents expect to know when their children are going out and where they are going. Some AFSers live in single parent families.



What is expected of you?

As a member of the family, you will share the pleasures of the home, and also the work and responsibility. Norwegian teenagers (boys too) are usually expected to do their share of housework, cooking and cleaning. They tend to have their own activities, interests and friends, and they will expect you to do the same. You will have to keep your room tidy and clean. When you make decisions, you will have to take the family into consideration. It will be up to you to respect the family rules. Find out what they are, and try to discuss any family or house rules that are unclear. Find out who does what in the home. The parents are "heads" of the

family. They make the rules. They are respected, but Norwegian teenagers may disagree and discuss with their parents.

Equality

Please be aware that the mother in the family has the same, and often more, authority than the father in the house. Please treat both parents with the same amount of respect! Usually both parents have a full time job outside the home. Teenage children often make their own decisions when their parents are not available. They are brought up to be independent. It is considered positive that you have an activity during the week, and also during the weekend. Talk to your family about how much time they expect you to spend with them!

Physical contact

Many AFS students have noticed that physical contact as a sign of affection may not be so common in many Norwegian families. This can seem to be a “cold” home atmosphere if you are used to hugging your parents often. This “distance” is not the same as lack of contact or love - since love and affection can be communicated in many other ways. We’re just not accustomed to show a lot of physical affection.

Family adjustment

Even if you try to approach everything in a positive and open fashion, there are bound to be some adjustments between you and your host family. Just by being there you bring a new element into the home that causes changes in relationships. Most of the time changes happen smoothly, but sometimes you will find that you are uneasy. You may not understand what has gone wrong, and your family may not either. The only way to try to resolve the uneasiness is to talk about it. Try to find out the cause of misunderstanding and express to them how you feel and why you feel that way. The direct approach to the problem is usually the most effective, even if this is difficult at first. It may be a new approach for you and for your host family, but try it!

Norwegians also tend to have a strict separation between what’s mine and what’s yours. Sharing personal belongings is not so common, so please show respect for personal items. If you want to borrow or use something that isn’t yours, please ask.

Host siblings

Many students expect their host brother or host sister to be a close companion. Yet sometimes this does not happen. Be prepared to make your own friends and pursue your own interests, without depending on your host sister or host brother. After all, many natural sisters and brothers live together without necessarily sharing all their personal thoughts or activities. Of course you will both have to make efforts and compromises to live together comfortably, but neither of you should feel forced to be someone you are not.

When something is wrong...

If difficulties do arise, which you feel unable to handle within your family or, if you cannot approach your host family about something personal that troubles you, it is important to talk to your local AFS contact person or your local AFS chapter. Do not wait too long with a problem before you ask for support or help. If there are real misunderstandings, time alone cannot solve them. Keeping them to yourself will only prolong the concern, and doing this is really unfair to you and your host

family. Most importantly, the family is your primary source of help. They know what is “right” in your community and school and can explain many things. Be sure to give them a chance to help!

When you need support

If you become sick consult your host family, see a doctor and inform AFS immediately if it is serious. In case of a serious illness or accident this should be done by telephone. AFS Norway in turn will inform AFS in your home country and your natural parents.

If you get homesick, - get up and do something! Homesickness comes from missing people or things that are familiar. Make yourself familiar with your new surroundings!

If you feel unhappy, talk to your host family. They are there to help you and want you to be happy. Many minor difficulties can be solved with openness and tact. If you do not think your family can help you, please let us know immediately. There is no use in wasting valuable time by pondering your fate and being unhappy. We are here to advise and help you.



Your Spare Time

Your social life will probably differ from what you are used to. Do not expect to be "on the go" all the time – and be prepared to be bored at times. Of course social life will vary greatly according to your family and your community, but be sure to ask if you want to go out and to tell them when, where, with whom and how long. Also, please do not forget to adapt to your sisters and brothers in this matter.

Internet

You might have a lot of spare time at your disposal which will not be filled with organized activities. It is up to you to make good use of this free time and to spend it in a constructive way. You will also notice that Norwegians love the internet, and pages like Facebook. This can be a real challenge for you. Try to balance your usage of internet, so that you don't spend your time in Norway chatting and looking of pictures of your friends in your home country.

However, you should use the internet to communicate with your new Norwegian friends! If you spend a lot of time on the internet, paying attention to your "old" life – most of the time you will get very homesick, and your Norwegian family will feel like you would rather be somewhere else. Remember to keep your focus at your new community, family and friends.

Get to know your family

Find out what your family does. Join each member in his/her activities or his/her work, in order to really get to know them. One AFSer once said that he had the most interesting and valuable talks with his mother while doing the dishes, and with his brother while cleaning their bikes.

Get busy!

However, for your Norwegian family, it will be important that you also have some activities that do not involve them. If you stay at home every night and weekend, they might think something is wrong. Try to have an activity every week, and also try to get some Norwegian friends. Go for a walk and get to know the community you are living in and its people. Read a Norwegian children's book or a newspaper. Take up some new activity such as playing an instrument, doing sports or crafts. You don't have to be good at it!

Norwegians love nature. You can expect to go to the mountains and for walks in the woods. Many people also go hiking in the summer. During the winter many Norwegians go skiing during weekends, especially cross country but also downhill. You can ask your host family if they can help you borrow some ski equipment.

Norwegian teenagers

Norwegian youngsters are expected to employ themselves during their spare time. Many young people take part in organized activities like sports, political organizations, volunteer work etc. Your school will usually not provide this kind of organized activity. Ask your family or classmates to tell you about what's happening in your local community. Taking part in an organized activity is a good way to meet people and make friends. Norwegians might seem reserved, and you cannot expect people to take the initiative to get to know you. You will gain much by taking the initiative yourself.

Once you get in touch with people and get to know them, you will find that Norwegians are open and keen on developing deep friendships. It is common that boys and girls are good friends without being a couple. Boys and girls are regarded as equals when it comes to rights and duties in Norway. There are very few things considered to be boy things or girl things.

Part-Time work

Some teenagers have a part time job. They work afternoons or Saturdays to cover their personal expenses. You could also try to get a small job if you need extra money or just would like the experience. You have to apply for a working permit. As an exchange student the maximum amount of workhours permitted is 8 hour per week. Ask your family how you go about getting a part time job.

Weekends

When not taking part in organized activities or working, teenagers visit or attend parties at each other's houses. It is common to go to a friend's house, both on weeknights and weekends. Norwegians often goes to the movies and sometimes they spend the evening in a café. Discotheques are usually expensive, so most teenagers seldom go to discos. In Norway you have to be over 18 years old to drink alcohol. Respect your family's view on drinking.

Involvement in your local community

Like your host family and school, your new community will be unique and different from your community at home. Whether it has a population of 1000 or 500,000, there will be much for you to learn, and the way to do this is to be interested and involved.

As a broad generalization, contact with neighbors might not be as close as you could imagine, even in the smaller villages. As for your status in the community, it is possible that apart from your family and their friends, few people will know about you or be acquainted with AFS. People will still be glad to get to know you, but the first steps towards establishing contacts must often be made by you.

Food

What do we eat?

Food in Norway is often based on meat, fish, potatoes, vegetables, milk, cheese and sweets in wide varieties. Norwegian food is usually a mix of traditional and international cuisine.” Taco”, for example, is a very typical dish some families will eat during the weekend. Still, you will see that it's the Norwegian version of a taco and not completely the same as a Mexican taco. The same works for pizzas and pasta. Norwegians eat it a lot! Among the most common dishes is bread and potatoes. Norwegians eat bread at least two times a day, and sometimes even three times. Breakfast and lunch is usually made up of bread. It is common to bring your own sandwiches to school. The lunch break is rather short, usually around 30 min. Most Norwegians will not have any hot meals before dinner; around 4 – 8 pm. Mealtimes are important in most families. That is the time your families get together and talk. Remember to be on time for dinner.

Do's and Don'ts with food

Don't – Say “I don't like this” or “this doesn't look good”. This will in most families be considered rude, and an offense to the cook. If you really don't like the food – and you get the food every week – it's ok to say in a nice way that it is not your favorite. And - don't say you really like something if you don't.

Don't - Take more on your plate than you can eat. Norwegians do not like to throw away food. It is much better not to take enough the first time and then ask for seconds – something that delights mothers – and fathers!

Don't - make burping sounds, smack your lips a lot, or make other loud sounds during meals. It is usually considered impolite.

Don't – Leave the table before everybody is finished.

Do – Try everything! If you don't try, you will not know if you like it!

Do – Eat the same food as everyone else! In Norway, most families eat the same food at meals together, and it is considered inappropriate for individuals to request special foods or to prepare separate dishes for themselves.

Do- Ask the parents before helping yourself to food in the refrigerator. It is considered rude to take food from the cupboards or fridge if you haven't asked first.

Do – Adapt! Look at your family member's behavior and try to copy their ways of eating.

Do – Eat without worrying too much about becoming an AFSer (Another Fat Student©). The food is a big part of a country's culture, and you have to try it all! You are only in Norway one year, and you should not waste it thinking about how much you weigh. Most students gain some weight on their exchange, and they usually lose it very fast when they get back to their home countries.

And last – but not least (actually it's the most important):

DO - Say “**Takk for maten**”! This means “thank you for the food”, and should always be said when you are done eating and are leaving the table.

Personal hygiene and clothing

Norwegians usually shower and change their underwear every day. Talk to your host family about when it's ok to take a shower, how often and how long. Most teenagers change their outfit everyday – it's not very common to wear the same t-shirt/sweater two days in a row to school. However, pants are often used several days at a time.

In Norway you're also expected to shower after Physical Education class at school, with the rest of the boys/girls from your class.

NB: In Norway we throw the toilet paper in the toilet. Don't put the toilet paper in the trashcan. The toilet is only for the toilet paper, not for sanitary tissues or tampons.

Clothing

Clothing habits vary a bit from place to place and also from family to family. Follow your family's advice. They will know what to wear for different occasions.

Daily wear

Both girls and boys wear pants of various types (jeans being the most common), and a sweater/blouse/shirt/hooded sweater. Girls wear almost exclusively pants to school. Occasionally girls will wear a skirt to school. In Norway we do not wear school uniforms.

Sports clothes

Bring some sports clothes. You will have Physical Education ("Gym") at school every week. In your gym class you will usually wear training pants or shorts, a t-shirt and tennis shoes or trainers.

Outdoors clothing

In Norway there is a famous saying (you will hear this many times): *There is no such thing as bad weather, - only bad clothes!*

Here is what you need to be prepared for the weather in Norway: For outdoors activities you will need clothes that are easy to move in, like a light rain/wind-proof jacket, and also boots of some kind. If you have a warm winter coat, bring it with you, or have it mailed to you. If not, you should plan to buy one in Norway. You might want to buy the rain boots or hiking boots in Norway as they are heavy to carry in your luggage. The winter temperature is not necessarily frightfully cold, but you need a couple of heavy sweaters, a knitted/warm hat, mittens or gloves, a warm scarf, long underwear and other winter clothes. You may experience temperatures of -20 degrees Celsius!

For summer time bring spring type clothes, like a summer dress, shorts, a skirt and a swimsuit (not too much summer clothes!). There are relatively few days when the temperature reaches +25 degrees Celsius.

Shoes

People in Norway walk a lot, so you will need a pair of sturdy walking shoes. Shoes that are worn outside are normally exchanged for slippers in your home. Normal

custom in Norway is to take off your shoes when you enter a house. If you are insecure, ask if you should take off your shoes when you enter a home.

Semi-formal occasion

For teenage parties you can usually wear the same as in school, but this depends on the group of people. The best way to be sure is to ask your family what is the custom. For family gatherings and various other meetings you should consult your family. Most boys wear nice pants, a sweater and a shirt. Girls might wear a skirt and a blouse, a dress or a nice outfit.

Formal occasions

Girls will need a dress and boys will need nice pants and a jacket or a suit. Formal occasions are usually for Christmas, New Year's, confirmation and weddings.

Your Norwegian Host School

You are in Norway on a school program! School is in fact a major part of every student's AFS year. The AFS program could not exist without the support of schools and teachers. You may find that this school year will be a challenge. Not only because of the struggle to learn and understand the language, but also because you may feel isolated and useless during the school period.

How is the school organized?

The school system is mainly public: The municipalities are responsible for the first 10 years of school (grade 1-10). The counties are responsible for secondary schooling and the state for all higher education. The Norwegian school system offers 10 years of compulsory schooling, starting at age 6 in elementary school (barneskolen), 1st -7th grade. Junior high school (ungdomskolen) lasts for 3 years, in 8th -10th grade. In Norway the private schools and public schools have the same quality, and only around 2-3% attend private schools. You will go to a public school in Norway.

Upper secondary school (11th-13th year)

You will go to upper secondary school, called "videregående skole". And this is confusing: After grade 10, you start counting again! So the grades in upper secondary school are; 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Most likely, you will go to the second year. There are several areas of study in Norwegian secondary school, but most AFS students will be placed in the general studies.

What does the school expect from you?

The school expects you to do your best, and to always show up for school. The students usually have 7 periods a day and go to school 5 days a week. Most of the schools start around 8 a.m. and end about 3 p.m. Between every period there is a break of 10 or 15 minutes. Each class averages 25 - 30 students, but it depends on the size of the community you live in. When you get your first homework assignments, do not despair - get to work and do your best. School is where your real language progress is made and a 100% effort in the beginning will be indispensable. It may seem impossible at times, but remember that the students and the faculty of your school are happy to have you there and will want to help you.

What does AFS expect from you?

Every AFS-student must attend school (and have at least 25 hours a week) due to visa requirements. You cannot skip school. AFS also expects you to do your best. We do not expect you to get good grades, or learn the language after only some months, but we do expect you to work hard, and represent your country and AFS in a good way. At school you will also experience that the teachers don't force you to do anything. They will give you freedom, but also a responsibility to do what you're supposed to.



Homework

Usually the students have homework to prepare for every school day, but many times you will not be assigned homework but will be expected to study on your own to prepare yourself for tests. Remember that it is **your own** responsibility to study and learn, even though the teacher hasn't told you exactly what to do.

School books/laptop

In Norwegian High schools, all students have to have their own laptop. If you don't have one you can bring to Norway, AFS Norway will help you to either lend one from your school, or find other options. We will pay for this. You have to buy pen/pencils/notebooks for yourself.

School transport

Most Norwegians walk to school, and to their jobs. However, sometimes the distance is too far. In Norway "too far" means more than 4 km. If the distance between your home and school is more than 4 km, you can get reimbursed from either your school or AFS.

Uniform

There is no uniform at schools in Norway. You can wear your own clothes.

Lunch

There is usually no school cafeteria. The lunch break is usually about 30 minutes, and the students eat sandwiches brought from home.

School excursions

Sometimes the schools arrange excursions. If you participate you are expected to pay a part yourself.

Leisure activities

Leisure activities, sports and other hobbies are usually not arranged by your school. However, there are activities arranged by your local community. Ask the other students, teachers or your host family about what activities you can join.

Adaptation

10 tips on how to adapt to a different culture

Though many hidden factors can make it difficult to get insight into another culture, it is not impossible. The following tips may help you better understand and adapt to a new culture.

1. Be **cautious**: Don't always think you understand everything – remember that you are among new rules and customs that may be unfamiliar to you.
2. **Learn the language** and use it: Even though you can't speak perfectly, the fact that you try to speak Norwegian will be appreciated. Making an effort at learning the language shows people that you really try to adapt.
3. **Don't judge** situations too early: Especially in problematic situations it is important not to arrive at conclusions until all sides of the story have been heard.
4. **Avoid value judgments**: The natural tendency to right away label everything you see as “good” or “bad” may be a serious obstacle to understanding a new culture. Observe and describe, and most importantly accept other people on their own terms.
5. Show **empathy**: To show empathy means to identify you with somebody else's feelings. It is to put yourself emotionally in the place of a different person, and see the situation from their point of view. Remember that there are different ways of seeing the same situation.
6. **Listen and observe** with caution: Intercultural communication is not easy; there may be many factors that complicate mutual understanding. To be observant about verbal and non - verbal signs, and to place them in the right context, is a great challenge that demands time and patience.
7. Learn to **express yourself** correctly: Communication happens on many levels, it is necessary to be aware that every culture has its own pattern for expressing thoughts and feelings. Try to adapt to this pattern – both verbally and non - verbally.
8. **Check meanings**: If you are in doubt, double check that you have understood correctly. Both words and body language can have different meanings in different cultures.
9. Accept that it is **natural to be insecure**: Cross cultural communication is not easy, there are many stress factors involved in communication between people from different cultures. Openness, willingness to take chances and the ability to laugh at your own mistakes may help you to handle your insecurity in a positive manner.
10. **Share** with others as much as you can: Show your ability to participate, to try out new things, and to learn about your hosting community and the culture there.

When you think about these advice you will realize that they do not only apply to Norway and AFS, but that they are important everywhere!

AFS and You

As you probably already know, AFS is a volunteer organization, but every country has an administrative office. AFS Norway has an office located in Oslo, and the staff is there to make sure the local chapters have everything they need and organize the different programs. Remember, the AFS-volunteers you will meet in Norway don't get paid, so show them your appreciation!

Contact with your AFS local chapter

Most AFSers in Norway belong to a local chapter. The local chapter consists of former AFS students, their parents and families who have hosted students from other countries. They are volunteers, and do not get paid. The volunteers make the AFS program possible. Depending on the activity level of your chapter, they will arrange social gatherings, weekends and orientations.



Your contact person

In your Norwegian community there will be an AFS contact person or contact family. This person/family has the special job of keeping in contact with you and your host family, knowing how you are, helping you if problems should arise, and being a friend. It is important that you are able to discuss freely with them, even alone without your host family present. If you, for one reason or another, experience difficulty in communicating with your contact person (-s), contact your AFS chapter or the AFS office in Oslo. You should talk to your contact person at least once every month, and as often as you'd like. Remember to take the initiative if you ever need to talk.

AFS on the web

Both your host family and you will receive a password to an internal website for host families and students in Norway, where you find a lot of helpful information (www.afs.no). We're also active on Facebook, and you will get invited to a closed group for all the AFSers in Norway that year. Please use it actively to share joys and difficulties.

AFS-activities through the year

Arrival

When you arrive in Norway you will be met by staff and volunteers along with the other AFSers arriving. Before you travel to your host family, you will participate on a short orientation in Oslo by AFS Norway. This will be your first meeting with Norwegian culture, and you will receive useful information about your first weeks in Norway, as well as some practical information. We still ask all of our students to please do some research before you arrive. You can find information at libraries, internet and tourist offices. There will also be volunteers and staff from AFS present during this orientation, who will be happy to answer your questions.

At the orientation you should have regular summer/spring clothes. It may be quite cold in the evenings, and it might rain. You can wear shorts or jeans during classes. Make sure to have a warm jacket nearby.

The travel to your host family is either by train, bus, car or plane, depending on where your host family lives. You might fly to your host community, so be sure you follow the luggage rules: maximum one piece/20 kg!

Arrival camp part 2

The second arrival camp will be in October. On the second arrival camp you will stay with the other students in your region for a weekend. At the camp you will talk about the first “culture shock”, and you will have one-on-one talks with the volunteers. This will give you a chance to reflect on your first weeks in Norway, and get good advice about possible cultural misunderstandings. And, as all the other camps, you will have lots of fun and will be very busy!



Mid-year stay

In January or February you will go to the mid-year stay, together with the same students that you spent the arrival camp part 2 with. The mid-year stay lasts for a weekend. During the camp we address different aspects of the year so far, and talk about how the last 6 months will be. You will get the opportunity to ask questions, and exchange experiences with the other AFSers in your region. During the camp all participants will have a one-on-one meeting with one of the leaders.

End of stay

Before you go to the airport to go home you will spend a few days at a camp site with the AFS-students in your region, before heading for Oslo's airport, Gardermoen. This is to leave you some space between leaving your host family and going home to your friends and family. We will also have the opportunity to discuss how the year has been, and how it will be to return home.

Your involvement in AFS

Remember that during your stay in Norway you are an ambassador for your country, your family and AFS. You have to be prepared to give some speeches about your country, and about being an exchange student during your year in Norway. You will also have to be prepared to help out in promoting AFS in different ways locally and during AFS gatherings. This is usually lots of fun and some of you will be interviewed by local newspapers or a local radio station.

Calendar 2016-2017

- Arrival: From August 19th 2016
- Arrival camp part 2: Ca. October 13th to 16th 2016 (can vary from region to region)
- Mid-year stay camp: Ca. January 27th to January 29st 2017 (can vary from region to region)
- Departure camp: From June 21st/22nd to 24th 2017
- Departure date: June 24th 2017

These are the dates for the mandatory AFS-camps. Your local chapter may have more activities planned for you through the year.



Safety Tips

General safety tips and rules from AFS

A good safety tip is to get to know the host culture through questions, dialogue and discussion with your host family, peers and the AFS local chapters. You should take any concern seriously, and follow the advice of your host family.

As stated in the agreement document you signed in your home country, the national AFS office will make recommendations and give guidelines for physical welfare and security. Take the advice seriously and follow the guidelines.

Participants and their natural parents are fully responsible for damages caused by the participants to third parties and any cost involved in connection with such claims. AFS does not assume any legal liability for the participants, e.g. if a student hits a car when riding a bicycle.

Follow national law

AFS students are subject to the law of their hosting country. Neither AFS nor the national government of the student's home country has the ability to protect the student from punishment with respect to narcotics, thefts or other legal offences.

Internet usage

Here are some tips to help you use the internet in a safe and appropriate way while you are in Norway:

- Never give out personal information like your name, address, or phone number.
- Keep your passwords private.
- Stay away from pornographic pages.
- Remember that nothing you write on the Web is completely private. Be careful and think about what you type and who you tell.
- Don't write about your host family in a negative way on Facebook, even if it is in a different language. It is easy to translate through Google.
- Writing a blog is a good way of letting people at home know what you are doing. Still, keep in mind that people can be offended, even if you didn't mean it that way. Ask someone to help you write in an appropriate way. Remember that it is easy to translate blogs as well!

Safety in your new home

In general, if you are worried about something you should ask your host family. Here is a list of questions you should ask your host family:

1. Is it safe to walk around outside after dark?
2. Do you lock doors and windows in the house? All the time?
3. What should I do if I am alone and a stranger is at the door? What should I tell him/her?
4. Will I receive a house key?
5. Who can I call if I arrive home without a key or there is no one in the house?
6. How should I answer the phone? What information should I not give out to strangers?
7. Do you have first aid equipment? Where do you keep it?

8. What should I do in the event of a fire? Do you have a fire extinguisher? Where is it?
9. What should I do if an emergency occurs? Who should I call?
10. Are there any appliances that could cause a problem and that I should be aware of?



Outside the home

Let your host parents know whenever you are concerned or feel frightened. Ask them what they support and recommend, helping you feel personally more secure. When you are going out, you should let your host family know where you're going and how to reach you. Your host family knows their community and neighborhood. Ask them about advice regarding places you should avoid. You should take their advice seriously and follow their recommendations.

Norway is generally a very safe country. But, like any other country, you should of course be cautious and there might be areas you should avoid. Listen to those who know the area!

1. In general, you should try to avoid being alone in parks, train and bus stations late at night. In some areas these places **might** be dangerous, although this is usually not the case in most areas. If walking alone at night you should try to walk in streets which are well lit and have other people walking in them.
2. When walking in crowded areas you should take care of your valuables.
3. Public transportation in Norway is perfectly safe to use. You should make sure you know the time when buses and trains stop running at the end of the day if you are planning to return late at night.
4. In Norway traffic keeps to the right, remember that when you cross the street or ride a bike. A lot of Norwegians, especially students, ride bikes. When it is dark you will need lights on your bike.
5. When it's dark, you should use a "refleks". That is a shiny piece of plastic that reflects the lights of passing cars, enabling them to see you.
6. It is illegal in Norway for civilians to carry weapons. The police do not carry weapons either.
7. Most families in Norway lock their doors and windows before leaving home and at night (although many leave the bedroom window open during the night, for fresh air).

8. Electricity: In Norway the voltage is 220V. You should be careful when using electrical appliances. Do not leave them on when you are not at home, or when you are at sleep. This goes for your PC and cell phone charger as well.
9. Wintertime is cold. Remember to put on warm clothes, and don't underestimate cold temperatures.
10. Be careful when walking on ice. It's slippery and you might fall and break your legs.
11. When outside in wintertime, be careful about snow falling down from rooftops. This is most common when the snow is melting.
12. If you are out skiing, be careful about avalanches. Ask the people you're with for advice. Avalanches can be fatal.

Uncomfortable social situations

Social gatherings

In general, knowing the culture is usually the best preparation for knowing how to handle uncomfortable social situations. It is also a good idea that your host parents meet your friends and know with whom you spend your spare time. If you're going to a party or other events such as concerts or soccer games, and are uncertain about the safety, you should ask your host siblings, host family, friends or teachers to give you information. Some host parents may also «forbid» students to attend certain kinds of events. Students must respect the parents' advice, even if others are going.

Alcohol and smoking

In Norway the legal age for buying alcohol and cigarettes is 18. It's quite common that you find people under 18 drinking and smoking. You should ask your host family about their attitude towards drinking and smoking. Most host families will not allow under-age drinking. You must also pay attention to the fact that drinking habits vary from one family to another. Follow your host family's rules!

Sexual harassment

Cultures differ in their views of appropriate sexual behavior and practices by young people. Often clarification of attitudes may be necessary and here, again, the advice of people you have come to know and trust is very valuable. Knowledge about the people you socialize with is important, and this is best acquired through increased knowledge of the culture.

Equally important are your own values and beliefs regarding your behavior. You should of course not compromise your own personal values and beliefs regarding sexual behavior.

You may be unsure in some situations if you are being sexually harassed or if a particular person's behavior would be considered normally friendly. An important source is your own instinct. Also often your host siblings/parents and friends will be able to advise you about normal behavior of people you do not know. Other resources to which you can turn to for advice or help are teachers at school, and the AFS contacts within your community or at the national office.

In the event of an actual assault, contact AFS Norway immediately.

Emergencies

If you find yourself questioned by a police officer you should identify yourself as an exchange student, and give them the contact information of your host family. In the case of an emergency, you should call your host family, the contact person (contact person) or the AFS national office. Remember that AFS is available at any time.

Rules

National law

When you are in Norway, you are a natural subject of the Norwegian law. If you violate it, your family, AFS, or your embassy will not be able to help you. Beyond this, AFS requires you to respect a few rules. These rules are based on international AFS rules and the participation agreement.

International AFS rules

If the participant breaks any of these rules, the student will be immediately excluded from the program and sent home:

1. No use of illegal substances

All participants are forbidden to use illegal drugs and substances. Explicit violations of this rule are cause for dismissal from the program and immediate return to the home country. Similarly, abuse of alcoholic beverages can be a cause for dismissal from the program

2. No hitchhiking

You can of course ask host family, friends, neighbors and other people you know to give you a lift. But – it is not allowed to ask strangers for a ride!

3. No driving

As an AFS student you are **not** permitted to drive. In Norway a person must be 18 years old to get a driver's license. An AFS student must not be a passenger in any motor vehicle with a younger driver or someone without a license, or with someone who has consumed alcohol (under Norwegian law this is strictly forbidden). If you find yourself in such situation, you should contact the police, your host family or someone from AFS.

Activity Waiver

As a part of the application process in your home country, you and your parents were asked to sign an "Activity Waiver" indicating which high-risk-activities you can and cannot participate in while you are in Norway. Your host family and local chapter will also be informed.

Host family rules

Respecting the family rules is very important. They have a great responsibility hosting you, and they will of course keep you safe. If you feel the rules are strict in the beginning, remember that more independence might come with trust as they get to know you better.

School

AFS students are accepted by Norwegian schools on the basis on an application from AFS on the condition that the student will follow school rules and decisions. If a student does not follow these school rules and AFS' rules, the participant can be sent home. All students have to attend at least 25 hours a week, and meet to all school lessons according to the timetable.

Alcohol and smoking

In Norway the legal age for buying alcohol and cigarettes is 18. AFS students must follow national law and respect host family rules regarding the use of alcohol and cigarettes.

Travel

AFS would like all exchange students in Norway to have the opportunity to live as similar as possible to Norwegian youth. That includes the freedom of traveling. However, AFS has a great responsibility for the safety of all the exchange students while in Norway. We therefore ask you to respect and follow the travel rules below.

AFS Norway is required to be able to reach all exchange students within 24 hours. This is part of our safety commitments to you, your families and your host families. It is therefore very important that we are informed about your current placements, and how to get hold of you, if you're not available on cellphone or at your host families.

Permission to travel

You always have to ask your host family for permission to travel. Keep in mind that AFS is not a travel agency, but an exchange organization where your host family, school and local community are the main arenas. The host families will not allow any trips that they do not consider safe, and they are strongly encouraged to treat you as they would with their own children.

In some cases you are required to apply for permission to travel from AFS. You will find a link to the application form at the "AFS-rommet". You need to apply at least 2 weeks before departure, and always before you buy any tickets.

It might also be necessary to get permission from your parents at home. They will need to sign a form called "Independent Travel Waiver" or "Parental Permission to travel abroad".

We will not allow any independent travels before December 1st. Independent travel is if you're traveling alone without a responsible adult over the age of 20.

Violation of the travel rules

The rules are set to ensure the safety and protection of the participant, the natural family, the host family and AFS.

Violation of the travel rules (by the participant, the host family or the participant's family or friends from home) can result in total travel restriction for the AFS student for the remainder of the year, or the participant can be sent back to his/her home country immediately.

Rules that apply to ALL travels

1. The trip must be acknowledged as safe by the host family and AFS.
2. Even though AFS approves of the trip, your host family will have the final saying.
3. As a main rule, you may only travel during weekends or holidays.
4. The trip cannot result in absence from any mandatory AFS activities.
5. The trip cannot result in absence from any special days important to your host family.
6. No individual trip can result in more than a total of 4 days absence from school during the school year. You may use the total of four days on either one or several trips.
7. AFS has the right to disapprove of the trip if the AFSer has difficulties adopting, or has an ongoing support case.
8. AFS allows students to go on trips organized and arranged by schools, sports teams or other organizations only if there's a responsible adult over the age of 20, such as teachers or coaches, present during the whole trip.
9. AFS does not allow the AFS students to spend the night alone at hotels, hostels, cabins, camp sites or other similar facilities, by themselves, without supervision from a responsible adult over the age of 20.
10. If you're planning an overnight stay at another AFSer's house, you will have to clarify it with your host family and the host family of the other AFSer.
11. AFS does not allow any individual trips before December 1st.
12. AFS will only approve of one trip outside the country throughout the whole year, and only for special occasions.
13. AFS does not allow any trips with helicopters, charter or private planes.
14. AFS does not allow the students to go on graduation trips ("russetur").
15. AFS does not allow the students to attend any overnight festivals unless in the company of a responsible adult over the age of 20.
16. AFSers coming from outside the EEA cannot leave Norway before he or she gets a Norwegian residence permit.
17. AFS must always be notified and given contact details in case of a trip to an area without mobile reception; that includes daytrips as well as longer trips.



Domestic travel

What kind of travel	When	Must apply for permission from AFS	Maximum duration	Absence from school allowed
Travel together with...				
Day trips together with host family, local AFS contact person, school or sports team.	All year	No	1 day	Yes
Day trips together with responsible adult over the age of 20.	All year	No	1 day	No
Travel together with members of the host family over the age of 20, local AFS contact person, school or sports team.	All year	No	No limit	No
Travel together with a member of the host family under the age of 20.	All year	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	Yes
Travel together with responsible adult over the age of 20.	After December 1 st	No	No limit	No (Yes, in case of available absent days left. See number 6 in the list of travel rules).
Travel to mandatory AFS camps/activities/meetings.	All year	No	No limit	Yes
Travel together with members of natural family and/or friends (over the age of 20) visiting Norway	After December 1 st	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	No
Independent travel outside local travel				
Day trips in Norway.	All year	No	1 day	No
Independent travel to visit member of host family over the age of 20.	All year	No	No limit	No
Independent travel (outside local chapter).	After December 1 st	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	No (Yes, in case of available absent days left. See number 6 in the list of travel rules).
Independent travel to visit another AFSer in a host family (outside local chapter)	After December 1 st	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	No (Yes, in case of available absent days left. See number 6 in the list of travel rules).
Independent travel to visit members of natural family and/or friends (over the age of 20) living in or visiting Norway.	After December 1 st	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	No

International travel

NB! AFSers coming from outside the EU/EEA cannot travel outside of Norway before he or she has received a Norwegian residence permit.

What kind of travel	When?	Must apply for permission from AFS	Maximum duration	Absence from school allowed
Travel together with...				
Day trips together with host family, local contact person, school or sports team.	All year	Yes	1 day	Yes
Day trips together with responsible adult over the age of 20.	All year	Yes	1 day	No
Travel together with host family, members of the host family over the age of 20, school or sports team.	All year	Yes	No limit	Yes
Travel together with responsible adult over the age of 20.	After December 1 st	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	No
Independent travel				
Independent day trips outside Norway.	After December 1 st	Yes	1 day	No
Independent travel to visit members of natural family and/or friends from home country (over the age of 20) living in or visiting Europe.	After December 1 st , and only in special circumstances.	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	No (Yes, in case of available absent days left. See number 6 in the list of travel rules).
Independent travel to visit members of host family (over the age of 20) living in Europe.	After December 1 st , and only in special circumstances	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	No (Yes, in case of available absent days left. See number 6 in the list of travel rules).
Independent travel to visit another AFSer staying in a host family in Europe.	After December 1 st	Yes	In agreement with AFS and host family	No

Remember:

- It is *your* responsibility to make sure all the visa and passport requirements are in order for trips not arranged by AFS.
- AFS Norway does not have any financial responsibilities for the travel.
- Any question concerning the rules should be directed to the AFS office in Oslo.

Visits in Norway by natural family or friends

For friends and family, an AFS year might seem like a perfect opportunity to visit Norway. But AFS has seen the damaging effects such visits can have on the participant and the relationship between the participant and the host family.

AFS strongly advice against visits from members or your natural family or friends during the AFS year. If for one reason or another there is talk of such a visit, the AFS office must be contacted in advance.

The AFS student must ask both the host family and AFS for permission, which may be granted or denied in consultation with all three parties. AFS will not allow any visits before Christmas. Only in special circumstances will AFS allow travel together with members of natural family and/or friends visiting Norway. See travel rules above.

Program release

AFS strongly recommends that all AFSers travel home on the scheduled date. If an AFS exchange students still want to remain in Norway/Europe after the end of the program (Program Release) the following rules apply:

1. You must apply for a Program Release **no later than April 15th**.
2. AFS Norway will consider applications based on information about the plans and itinerary.
 - It is not possible to get a program release before program end (June 25th 2016)
 - The End of stay camp is a mandatory AFS activity that everyone must attend
 - You must have a valid residence permit in Norway
 - Permission to remain in Norway after program end is only given in special situations
 - Travel with friends and/or family, or traveling to visit friends/family in Europe can be allowed. The travel must be considered to be safe and detailed information about the trip and itinerary and plans must be submitted before April 15th
 - You are not allowed to travel alone in Europe after program end
 - The program release must also be must also be approved by AFS in your home country as well as your natural parents
3. Your parents must sign an agreement where they assume all responsibility for you. AFS will be released from all responsibilities, and all AFS-services (including insurance) cease.
4. AFS in your home country is responsible for your international plane ticket. Return tickets can often be changed (only the date, not the destination).
5. You and your parents/guardians are responsible to pay any change fees to the airlines or AFS in your home country.
7. You and your parents/guardians must cover expenses for domestic travel both in Norway and in your home country, as well as any accommodation.
8. AFSers from countries outside the Schengen agreement are responsible for leaving the Schengen area before the residence permit in Norway runs out.

Practical information

Money

Norway is an **expensive** country. Use your money wisely. Bring lunch from home, and try not to buy unnecessary items. Remember that you need to manage your pocket money yourself. The host family is only responsible for providing you with a bed, and the food you eat at home. However there will be more expenses. We will try to give you an idea of the prices in Norway and the expenses you can expect to have.

Public transportation is rather expensive. The prices depend on how far you travel, and if you live outside the city limits the buses cost more.

For school purposes, you need to buy pens, pencils, notebooks and in some cases a calculator. If the school arranges excursions, you are expected to pay yourself. If you don't know where to buy equipment, you can always ask your host family.

For sports clubs or other organized activities, there's usually a membership fee that you'll have to pay. Ask your local chapter if they can help, and perhaps the club is willing to give you a membership for a reduced price.

Clothes are also quite expensive. You'll need warm clothes for the winter, and they are quite expensive. You should put some money aside for this, and keep an eye out for clothes at reduced price or at a thrift shop.

Most teenagers have cell phones. When you get one, you're expected to pay the bill yourself.

Some price examples

City bus/tram	NOK. Ca. 20,- to 80,-
Movie Ticket	NOK. Ca. 80,- to 120,-
Jeans	NOK. Ca. 300,- to 800,-
Meal at McDonald's	NOK. Ca. 80,-
0,5 l Coca Cola	NOK. Ca. 20,-
Concerts	NOK. Ca. 200,- to 800,-
Winter coat	NOK. Ca. 1000,-

We advise all AFSers to have **at least NOK 1500** at their disposal per month.

Bank Account

AFS recommend you to bring a bank card. VISA cards works all over Norway. Be sure to ask your local bank if there is a fee for withdrawing money in Norway with your card. If you want to get a bank account in Norway, please talk to your own bank in your country to see if they can help you, or if they have any advice. If you want a bank account, the bank might ask you for a confirmation from your parents. Ask your host family to help you open a bank account.

It might take some time before you can get a Norwegian bank account, so try to have access to money elsewhere. AFS does not recommend you to borrow money from host family during your stay. It could compromise your relationship.

Mobile Phone

You should get a mobile phone as soon as you get settled with your host family. Ask them to help you get a SIM-card, and ask if they have an old phone you can borrow for the year. You will probably be expected to pay for the service yourself. It is important for you to have a mobile phone in Norway, as Norwegian youth are highly reliant on their mobile phones, and will use it actively to make appointments.

House phone

Remember to always ask before making a call to a cell phone or an international call. If you need to get in contact with your natural family, give them a quick call and ask them to call you back.

The internet based program Skype is a very good option, and much more affordable than phones. Through Skype you can have online conversations and keep in touch. Remember to limit your usage.

Mail

Norwegian post functions well, and is reliable. Go to your local post office to ask about prices. You can also find information at www.posten.no.

Social media: Facebook, chatting and blogging

Limit your time on the Internet and Facebook. First, the more time you spend chatting or keeping in time with old friends and family, the harder it's going to be to learn Norwegian. Remember that you're here to learn, and you will not learn by keeping too much in touch with your old life. Second, your host family might get offended if you spend too much time on the Internet, and don't socialize with them. We recommend that you send a general e-mail to family and friends once a week, making it more similar to a letter.

Blogging is a form of communication that has proven very popular the last few years. Please remember that what is written in a blog is public and viewable not only to those you write too, but also for your host family and host community in Norway. Therefore, you should be very cautious about what you write as things that you may find innocent might be regarded as offending for your Norwegian family. AFS Norway will not tolerate that AFS students use their blog to publish material that may offend someone.

Please read more about internet usage in the Safety tips-section.

Residence permit

You have to register online with the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration within one week after your arrival in Norway; this means Friday August 26th at the latest. At the same time you will register an appointment at your local police station, so that you can bring the necessary documents to them in order to register/apply for a residence permit. If you are from an EU/EEA country you actually just register, but the procedure is more or less the same. Your host family will receive information about what to do when you arrive in Norway.

When you have registered/your residence permit is approved, you will receive a small plastic card the same size as a credit card proving you have the permit. It is important that you keep this card in your wallet at all times. Please note you cannot use it instead of a passport, it only works as identification.

AFS in your home country will contact you with more detailed information on what you need to do before the program starts, but here is a summary of what you will have to bring/present when you apply for the residence permit.

Resident permit for all students from the EU/EEA:

This is what you need to bring with you to the police station:

- Your passport
- A copy of your passport (only the pages with information about you).
- A copy of your parents/guardians passport / ID with signature
- A copy of your birth certificate
- A signed certificate from your parents (you will receive this document from AFS in your host country to sign and bring with you to Norway)

Resident permit for all students outside the EU/EEA

This is what you need to bring with you:

- Your passport
- A copy of your passport (ALL the pages).
- A copy of your parents/guardians passport / ID with signature
- A copy of your birth certificate
- A signed certificate from your parents (you will receive this document from AFS in your host country to sign and bring with you to Norway)

Social Security Number

After you have received your residence permit, you can apply for a social security number through your closest tax office (Folkeregisteret). This number will be useful if you want a part time job, a bank account, or for school purposes. To apply for the number you need:

- Your passport
- A copy of the signed certificate from your parents
- A copy of your parents passport / ID with signatures
- A copy of your residence permit

European Health Card

If you are an EU/EEA national, **it's important that you bring your European Health Card!** If you are from a country outside of the EU/EEA, you are insured through AFS' Medical Plan.

Medical Care

If you need to go to the doctor, you'll Host Family or AFS will help you. If you're an EU or EEA citizen, you must bring your European Health Card. Please note that dental care and routine visits is not covered by AFS' insurance.

Health care is public, and has a high quality. If you go to the doctor here, you might have to pay a small fee. AFS Norway will reimburse the fee unless it's a routine visit, or dental care.

For reimbursement you will need the receipt. You will find the form for reimbursement on the internal AFS pages at www.afs.no. Remember to give us a bank account number to deposit the reimbursement.



Important preparations

Get in touch with other AFS-students to Norway

Join the Facebook-group for all AFS-students to Norway: [AFS Norway 2016 - 2017 *Official group*](#). Ask to join the group, and we'll accept you.

Follow us on Facebook [AFS Norge Internasjonal Utveksling](#)

Our username on **Instagram** is: afsnorge

Learn more about Norway

If you want to know more about Norway, we suggest that you visit the following web pages:

Visit Norway – official travel guide to Norway: www.visitnorway.com

Norway.org – official page of Norwegian embassies: www.norway.org

Lonely Planet – destination guide: Norway: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/norway>

The World Fact book: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/no.html>

Learn Norwegian

We strongly advise you to start using the free, internet based language course **LearnNow** as soon as possible. You should use it as often as possible before coming to Norway. The course is available on: <http://www.ntnu.edu/learnnow/>

In addition different resource pages for learning Norwegian can be found on this web site: <http://www.vox.no/Norsk-og-samfunnskunnskap/Nettbasert-opplaring/gratis-norskopplaring-pa-nett/>

Please note that you will need an updated version of Java to be able to use all the parts of this course.

At first Norwegian might seem difficult to learn, and very different from your own language. But no one expects you to know a lot of Norwegian before coming. It takes time learning a new language. What's most important is that you try to get accustomed to the language and some of the grammar. A good start is learning a few words, and how to introduce yourself.

Here are some other useful links to help you learn Norwegian:

- Different activities: http://www.quia.com/shared/search?category=10762&adv_search=true
- Duolingo: [https://www.duolingo.com/course/no-BO/en/Learn-Norwegian-\(Bokm%C3%A5l\)-Online](https://www.duolingo.com/course/no-BO/en/Learn-Norwegian-(Bokm%C3%A5l)-Online)
- BBC's essential Norwegian phrases: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/other/quickfix/norwegian.shtml>
- More activities: <http://www.internetpolyglot.com/lessons-no-en>
- Another language course. Note that you might have to pay: <http://www.livemocha.com/>

What you should bring to Norway

Fill out this form with all the other things you will bring to Norway, and use it as a list to help you remember everything.

√	Item
	This booklet. It will be helpful for you when you are in Norway
	Norwegian dictionary- if you have one.
	A separate bag/backpack for the arrival orientation
	(Warm) Clothes, winter coat, shoes, toiletries, wool underwear if you have any, etc.
	Pictures of you, your family and country
	Brochures/booklets about your country
	Some souvenirs from your country as gifts to your host family and people you meet during your stay. Remember that the souvenirs can be simple and inexpensive.
	National costume (if you have one).
	Pocket money. Remember to check if you'll be able to withdraw money in Norway.
	The invitation letter from AFS Norway in your travel bag together with your passport and other important documents
	Your passport along with 2 copies of your passport
	2 copies of one of your parents' passport/ID.
	3 copies of the signed certificate from your guardians/parents saying you can apply for the residence permit and a social security number.
	If you are over 18 years and from a country outside the EU/EEA, you must have 3500 NOK available on a credit card for the residence permit fee.
	If you are from the EU/EEA - your European Health Card
	Laptop, if you have one. It is necessary for school.

Contact information AFS Norway

To visit us:

Trondheimsveien 135
0570 OSLO

To send us a letter:

AFS Norge Internasjonal Utveksling
Trondheimsveien 135
0570 OSLO

E-mail us: info@afs.no

Call us: (00 47) 22 31 79 00

Webpage: www.afs.no

In case of emergencies:

Fire: 110

Police: 112

Ambulance: 113

AFS Norway Duty Officer (when office is closed): (00 47) 950 28 307

