



Jotunheimen Tour (Self-Guided)

Please email us at info@alpineexploratory.com to chat about this holiday.

You'll find all the latest information at www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/jotunheimen-tour.html.



View from the Besseggen ridge, looking back

About these Holiday Notes

These Holiday Notes help you decide whether this holiday is right for you. Before your trip we send you final detailed information.

Details

Start Gjendesheim
Finish Gjendesheim for hotel in Otta
Region Jotunheimen
Country Norway
Length 6 walking days, 7 nights
Total distance 90.5km or 56.5 miles
Typical day 15km (9.5 miles), 820m ascent
Highest altitude 2,258m, optionally 2,469m
Grade Black3

Introduction

The Jotunheimen is arguably the finest of Norway's national parks, certainly the most popular for walkers: dense with high plateaus, imposing peaks, and deep valleys running with streams, rivers and waterfalls. Glaciers, barren sweeping valleys, flourishing meadows, and Nordic forests can all be traversed in a single day.

Founded in the 1960s, the national parks were Norway's means of protecting its natural beauty and unique flora and fauna from encroaching industrialisation. You'll find little sign of human life other than the huts and the paths. This paired with a lack of mobile phone reception means you'll likely find the walking in Norway free from the noise and stress of modern life!

The Norwegian approach is orderly with a time-honoured reverence to preserving their natural spaces and maintaining the parks for the next generation. As the snow melts, Norwegian families return year after year to the walk in the parks. As you'll experience, trekking and the outdoors form an absolute part of the Norwegian cultural soul. Trekkers in Norway will meet Norwegian walkers of all ages; meeting three generations together is common. With so few foreign walkers it's easy to feel warmly adopted into this lifestyle.

The hut system is possibly our favourite of any nation's and typifies the Norwegian experience. A stay in one is a glimpse into the small things which form the culture. For example, in hot or cold it is expected that you will be trekking with a thermos flask, as is the Norwegian way. Thus in the evening guests line up their flasks, labeled with name and hot beverage of choice and miraculously come breakfast they are full and ready to provide sustenance for a day on the hills. Food in the huts is chiefly Norwegian, with all that can be grown in Norway if not the local region. Hearty mountain food is found for dinner as you might expect!

Meals are taken at communal tables and give an excellent opportunity to dine and chat with local trekkers. English is widely spoken. You'll have to tear yourself away to bed early or risk a spirited night of beer and cards.

We hope you'll enjoy the cultural experience and sense of fellowship between all walkers, Norwegian and otherwise, that is formed through the shared common experience in the hills.

The start and end points of our trek are easily reached from the cities of Bergen and Oslo. Our notes contain all the details to make the journey with confidence by bus or train. To give a hint, it's about 5 hours by coach from Oslo, and between 5 and 7 hours by coach from Bergen. The buses and trains will often be busy with residents escaping the city on their way to adventure in the mountains.

Our approach

Your route

Our routecards describe the route from hut-to-hut. Some days have alternatives for example giving a lower option for use in poor weather. We take an anticlockwise circuit as normal.

Routecards and maps

Each day's route is explained in detail on your routecards, to bring you to your night's accommodation. We supply the Norwegian maps for you to follow.

Getting there and back

Your holiday starts in Gjendesheim and ends in Otta, a short bus ride from Gjendesheim. Travel to Gjendesheim is not included in the holiday price - we leave it to you to make the arrangements that suit you best using our extensive notes and advice. Oslo is the most convenient airport with Bergen a close second. Several transfer options are available. Expect about 5 hours from Oslo and 9 from Bergen. Full information on flight and transfer options will be sent to you on booking.

Itinerary

Arrival day: Arrival in Gjendesheim

Evening arrival in Gjendesheim. Dinner is served in the hut.

Stay in mountain hut

Stage 1: Memurubu to Glitterheim (18km (11.5m), 950m ascent, 600m descent)

On the first day you begin by taking the morning ferry from Gjendesheim to the Memurubu hut on the North shore of the Gjende lake. From Memurubu it's a stiff ascent north, away from the lake, before passing into the Lower Russglopet valley, walking along the sandy shore of Lake Russvatnet. The path climbs away from the lake on grassy ground, crossing the river Blåtjønnåne. As you reach the high plateau of the day the ground becomes increasingly rocky with some snow patches. The Glitterheim hut can be seen many kilometres away but the descent over boulderfield should be taken with care.

Stay in mountain hut.

Stage 2: Glitterheim to Spiterstulen (15.5km (9.5m), 1400m ascent, 1100m descent)

Today's stage is an exciting ascent of Glittertind's snowy peak. Ascend from the Glitterheim hut to meet the snowline and climb gradually in soft snow to the flat summit. Enjoy superb views before the long, rocky descent to Spiterstulen. For poor weather or low cloud a lower route is also described.

Stay in mountain hut.

Stage 3: Spiterstulen to Leirvassbu (15.5km (9.5m), 500m ascent, 100m descent)

A relaxing day after yesterday's endeavour! Enjoy the wide valley as you ascend gradually, surrounded on both sides by walls of glacier-formed peaks. Eventually pass by the shores a string of small lakes and the sharp 'Kyrkja' (Steeple) peak before arriving at the gastronomic Leirvassbu hut.

Stay in mountain hut

Stage 4: Leirvassbu to Gjendebu (18km (11.5m), 250m ascent, 650m descent)

A short, stiff climb leads to a pass and the revelation of the long valley ahead. Pass the turning to Olavsbu and an isolated hut on a promontory in the lake. Before the final valley descent to Gjendebu, at the head of its lake, we drop beside a huge waterfall.

Stay in mountain hut

Stage 5: Gjendebu to Memurubu (10km (6m), 700m ascent, 650m descent)

Steep rocky paths guard a plateau at either end, especially steep on the way up from the shore of lake Gjende and helped by chains. The middle section of the day gives high and wild views to the North. Arrive at Memurubu in a grassy setting by the shore. An alternative path in the morning misses the steep trail from the lake.

Stay in mountain hut

Stage 6: Memurubu to Gjendesheim (13.5km (8m), 1100m ascent, 1000m descent)

On the last day we take in the famous Besseggen ridge. After a fair ascent away from the lake, the path continues over rocky ground with dramatic views out to the south over the Gjende lake. The

path has a rocky descent to the narrow ridge which is flanked on both sides by water. Some slight scrambling will be required to ascend the other side of the ridge's saddle which is very steep in parts. The long, occasionally steep, descent to the Gjendesheim hut is a great finish to the trek. **Stay in local hotel, Otta**

Departure day: Departure from Otta

Otta is on the train line so Oslo can be reached in about 3h30m, Bergen in about 9 hours.



Optional extra days if you'd like a longer trip:

Leirvassbu to Skogadalsbøen

(18.5km (11.5m), 300m ascent, 700m descent)
A gorgeous day though the Gravidalen valley following a lush network of waterways. Turning south, the path traverses the side of the Ulla valley through birch trees, gaining height as the valley drops below and views open up.

Stay in mountain hut

Skogadalsbøen to Eidsbugarden

(22.6km (14m), 650m ascent, 800m descent)
A day through the wilder western half of the park, the path ascends from the valley onto a barren height plateau where a rocky valley leads to the beautiful pair of mountain lakes, Urdalsvatnet and Kvitevatnet before descending down the course of the valley to Fondsbu

Stay in mountain hut

Eidsbugarden to Gjendebru

(16km (10m), 400m ascent, 450m descent)
A fine medium-length day on the Jotunheimen. The path follows the lake Bygdin before cutting inland and following the wide, rocky valley to Gjendebru. The day is well-marked by cairns.

Stay in mountain hut

Galdhopiggen ascent from Spiterstulen

(11km (7m), 1400m ascent, 1400m descent)
This optional day's walk is an out-and-back ascent from Spiterstulen. It is within the walker's realm but crosses extensive snow patches near the summit, even in high summer. These are marked by twigs and sometimes waymarks. Depending on conditions, there could be snow-covered ridges and boulders too. It is a popular path and an achievable summit for strong walkers. The summit view is exceptional, of snow-filled corries with turquoise tarns. A small manned hut at the summit serves coffee, snacks and souvenirs. Galdhopiggen (2,469m) is something of a pilgrimage for Norwegians and you will see many more walkers coming from the Juvashytta glacier route to the North, the two routes meeting at the summit.

Accommodation

Our standard schedule of accommodation consists of 1 night in a 3-star hotel, and 6 nights in mountain huts. The huts are comfortable and

welcoming. Hut accommodation is in dormitories in bunks or if you are travelling as a pair we can arrange private rooms where available.

Your info pack contains full details of your accommodation including contact details and directions.

The walking

Terrain

The terrain encountered will vary greatly. Days are generally a combination of good paths, and rockfields where progress is slower and care must be taken. On these sections the path is less well defined but cairns mark the way, generally visible on the horizon for navigation in poor visibility. Small streams are quite common and mostly easily crossed. Throughout summer there is a good chance of snow patches lying on the higher paths, but the lower paths are likely to be snow-free. There are short sections of scrambling where hands will be needed for stability. These sections are within the realm of normal mountain walking and are not via ferrata.

Your own routes

While your routecards make up the walking for the trip, you are of course free to walk wherever you choose, taking side trips or going by a different route of your own choice. Please note that if you follow your own route you will have left the holiday for the duration.

Food

Meals included are all breakfasts, all packed lunches, plus evening meals at the 6 huts.

For lunches there are no options to buy food on the route so it's Norwegian tradition to make two substantial sandwiches on the hearty seeded bread at the breakfast buffet and fill their thermos flask for the day ahead.

Insurance

Clients must have insurance to cover themselves for helicopter search & rescue, medical expenses and repatriation. We recommend, but it is not compulsory, that you also have cover for personal liability, cancellation and your baggage and money. You might find that your annual multi-trip travel insurance covers these items already. We will send you details of suitable insurance policies on booking.

Passports and visas

Passport holders of the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore do not need a visa to Norway.

Weather

The weather in the Norway from mid-July to early September is generally highly suitable for walking. While snowfall is possible on higher ground all year round, it is unlikely in this Summer season. Patches of snow left over from the Winter and Spring might linger into the start of, even throughout, Summer, but should not pose problems. July and August are commonly the warmest months although there is always the risk or rain. Into September there is a greater chance of rain but temperatures should remain pleasant. Thunderstorms are a risk in summer, occurring

most often in the afternoons. This all means that it is sensible to come equipped and expecting all the types of weather that might be experienced in a typical summer in the UK: from heavy rain storms with a chill in the air, to hot sunshine.

Equipment

You will need the usual equipment for mountain walking, plus a sheet liner for use in the huts. Especially important are good walking boots, waterproofs and sun protection. We will send you an equipment list on booking. Please also see the Equipment page of our website for more information.

Local expenses

Local expenses include food and drink other than those meals that are included, any local transport, attractions and extras.

Guided days

Hire a professional mountain leader to join you on this self-guided holiday. A leader helps plan and carry out each day's walking and adds interest to your holiday with their knowledge of local features. Please contact us for prices and more information.

Groups

Walk by yourself or in your own group. We arrange many group trips large and small every year. More details about how we make group bookings as simple as possible can be read here: www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/groups.html

Hazards

Health

Norway does not require tourists to take any vaccinations. However, it is recommended to keep tetanus vaccines up to date.

Safety

This is adventure travel! This holiday takes you to some wild and remote areas, in particular some areas of upland mountains where navigation can be difficult in poor weather. The weather can also be a hazard in itself. During any walking, whether following a routecard or making your own route, you are responsible for your own actions and safety and you should join the trip with suitable skills, experience and equipment.

Further information

Please email us with any questions to help with your planning and logistics at info@alpineexploratory.com.

Disclaimer

This information is given in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of issue. Alpine Exploratory cannot be liable for any loss or injury incurred.