

# 62 degrees north

A report of our experience at the Norwegian  
University of Science and Technology (NTNU)  
in  
Trondheim



In this short report we will try to give you a glimpse of the Norwegian culture, lifestyle and stunning landscapes; of the city that became our very own for several months; of these odd and shy creatures (no not the moos - the Norwegians!) and last but not least of the academic and student life at NTNU.

## The Departure:

On the sunny morning of August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the vague idea thrown on the table during a casual chat more than a year before: “I was thinking of going abroad for a semester... or two maybe” was suddenly becoming very real. Staring at the airplanes waiting for our check in to begin, we both knew that we were drinking the cheapest beer in a while.

Although Scandinavia is *technically* Europe reaching it is not the easiest of things: finding a direct and cheap flight seems almost impossible and the distance will make you think twice about a road-trip. We ended up, as no car was available for us for the whole duration of our stay, to fly Vienna-Riga Riga-Oslo. After spending few days there we took the train to Trondheim. If you book train tickets early enough (3 weeks) you can get a *minipris* (a nice discount) and enjoying the Norwegian landscapes on our way to Trondheim was great. The trains are very comfortable, spacious and equipped with Wi-Fi.

However, if you do have the option we suggest to seriously consider going by car as not only it will save you quite some troubles with luggage transport but comes also very handy when travelling in Norway. If you are sure that you'll be going by car you'd probably also want to apply for a room at Steinan *studentby* which offers a unique feature in Trondheim: free parking lots!

## First Week in Trondheim

Be prepared for the best possible week of your life: the orientation week. Make sure to join and book the activities of the orientation week early enough. It's totally worth the ridiculously small amount of money they ask for and it's the fastest way of making new friends from day one while getting to know Trondheim a bit. We really had great fun during these events and cannot praise enough NTNU that took such great care of us. This week was also be a bit stressful, as getting around in a foreign city is not always easy, and on top of all daily social activities we also took care of our student ID card, Norwegian phone number and other administrative

requirements. The sooner these things are done the better: the student ID will get you a discount on the public transportation means and a Norwegian phone number will make communication much easier. Pick a provider that offers phone calls for a good fare, as for messaging using mobile data is very cheap and Wi-Fi is available also in the city center as well as in all university buildings. Make sure before leaving that your smartphone is unlocked for other sim cards.

### **Where to live?**

**Nicola:** I applied for a room in the Steinan *studentby* which I really liked. The room was huge compared to the 10 m<sup>2</sup> of friends living elsewhere (e.g. *Moholt studentby*) and the common area, shared with 3 other persons, featured 2 big refrigerators, a huge freezer, 2 showers, and one toilet. It was plenty of space. Steinan lies outside the city center (20-30 mins by bus) and is very quiet and enjoyable. I especially liked going for a run on the hill from which you can gaze towards the city and the fjord, which offer a great view at twilight. There is internet although there is no Wi-Fi. You need to bring your own cable (you'll need a long one!). Sit (the student organization that manages housing and much more) says that you need to bring your own cutlery, bed sheets etc. With a good chance plates, cutlery will already be there as people are living there. As for bed sheets, duvet and pillows I recommend you to get in touch with ERASMUS students already in Trondheim that will be leaving upon your arrival and purchase their stuff ;). There is (of course) a Facebook group for that purpose. Otherwise Fretex (Salvation Army) is a good option for any secondhand stuff you might need.

Most of international students live in Moholt studentby, which makes it great to hang out and there is an activity house always opened in the evenings. In Moholt there are much more parties (at least one per week) and more events. It's still far away from the city center and more expensive than Steinan. I really advise picking a room in a *studentby* as it's another great way of meeting new people. My flatmates were from Norway, Australia and Singapore: couldn't have been any better...

**Christian:** After a long and tedious search I managed to rent a private room. Having a Norwegian flatmate made connecting with the locals easier. Also residing in the center, just a short walk away from numerous cafes and bars, provided an urbanly flair. Bus connections were perfect for any direction. However, that came with elevated costs compared to living in a *studentby*. If you consider this option you might check out [hybel.no](http://hybel.no), [finn.no](http://finn.no) or try Facebook. As mentioned looking for a private room from afar is not too easy.

### **Traveling**

Norway is known to be very expensive, though the best things are free for everybody. Enjoy Norway's beautiful landscapes and stunning fjords for a limited amount of money. The *Allemannsretten* allows everyone to camp for free and put on a tent on public land, as long as

it's unfarmed and not in the sight of houses. Student networks (like ESN) are very active when it comes to short convenient trips. But if you can't make one of the highly coveted spots on the shortlist there is always someone up for joining you and your own plans. Even better, NTNU has a deal with Sixt (a car rental company) so you can get a car for a fair deal in whole Norway. That's how we've travelled the Atlantic Road, the Lofoten, to Geiranger Fjord, Åre (Sweden), Røros and much more without having to compromise on schedule. Also consider becoming member of NTNUi (the sport association of NTNU) which will allow you to book a stay in a typical *hytte* and experiencing the feeling of isolation, close contact with nature, coldness and deprivation of modern luxuries such as running water and electricity for derisory 30 NOK per night.

### **Free time and Leisure in Trondheim:**

Mormors Stue is a special and cozy place to have a chat and a coffee with friends. It also offers a great cake buffet on Sundays: 84 NOK p.p. for as much cake and coffee as you like. Circus is the place with the cheapest beer in town. On Tuesdays Lyche offers 50% discount on beer as well. Superhero burgers provides the best burgers in town. Studentersamfundet: you'll hear enough about in the first 4 days. Three Lions english pub: definitely our favorite place in town to watch football or simply hang out with friends. A good way of getting to know Norwegians, staying healthy while having fun and avoid spending too much is to join NTNUi and practice any kind of sport. There are 4 facilities scattered across town which you can use as much as you like and the course offer is really wide. There is also a sauna which can be used without any extra costs. As we learned during our stay and from a great book (see readings) Norwegians tend to better associate in frame activities (or while drunk). Since alcohol can be very expensive this might be a great opportunity. If you are not much into sports and still want to meet Norwegians then join one of the numerous societies or the ESN buddy program - attend the events and get your own Norwegian!



### **Courses NTNU – somehow different, but not really**

Basically, every student at NTNU takes four courses per semester, each of them counting for 7.5 ECTS. The ones we took consisted of lectures and exercises meaning one stayed constantly in

touch with the subject and was encouraged to make use of the brain and study a couple of extra hours weekly :). There is no obligatory lecture attendance and the assignments are to be submitted online: this gave us some extra flexibility when planning our trips. Lecture contents pursued a more practical approach than we were used to. Many real-life examples and guest lectures for specific topics supported that. As far as we can judge, there are some outstanding lecturers around at NTNU!

What felt unfamiliar was that lectures ended mid-November and instead of Advent season it was time to become engrossed into our books. Also having exams in a big sports hall in parallel with thousands of other students was a novel experience. As experienced students from Leoben we adapted to the situation and still managed to make it to a party or two in between. However, the best thing was that these were probably the first Christmas holidays where we did not have to think about exams. :)

A good hint when picking your courses is to check the examinations' date: if two or more overlap you'll have to change your courses as you can take max one exam per day.

### **Life hacks & good things to know:**

Join facebook groups (Erasmus NTNU 20XX, Trondheim student market, ESN Trondheim, etc..)

The „meat“ bus by Thorleifs Bussreiser: free daily bus ride to a cheap supermarket in Sweden

MazeMap: navigate on campus

Norgeskart: Maps of No for hiking

UT.no: suggestions for hikes, bicycle and ski tours

Rutebok.no: travel options

Amazon may not ship to Norway

<http://www.aurora-service.eu/aurora-forecast/>: don't miss the stunning northern lights

### **Readings:**

The Social Guidebook to Norway: An Illustrated Introduction

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