

Frequently Asked Questions – FAQ

Norwegian Guide Service (NGS)

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General

Do I need to be Norwegian or from Bergen to become a guide?

Some of our guides are Norwegian while others are from different parts of the world. You do not need to be Norwegian or from Bergen to become a guide with Norwegian Guide Service (NGS) but you do need to be genuinely in love with Bergen and Norway. Working as a guide means working in an international environment, and we see the cultural diversity of our guides as an asset.

Do I need to know Norwegian to become a guide?

You don't need to know Norwegian to become a guide, as the core literature and information is in English. Nevertheless, knowing Norwegian is very useful to connect with your colleagues as well as to go more in depth about the content that you present. That is why we warmly encourage you to learn Norwegian and use it if you don't already.

What is the guiding season in Bergen?

The guiding season is defined by the tourist activity in Bergen. Even though there are travellers and there is a demand for guided tours year-round in Bergen, the high season starts from the end of April to mid-October, with June usually being the busiest month of the season. Cruises are a significant part of tourist activity in Bergen. Our guided tours are also on sale to the public all year round via our online platforms and the Tourist Information Centre in Bergen.

How can I apply?

Firstly, take your time to carefully read the job description on our website to familiarize yourself with our offer and the job requirements. After you have decided that becoming a guide with NGS is something for you, you need to apply via our online form. Then we take it from there together.

What are the most required languages for guiding?

English and German are the two main languages that most cruise passengers/tourists coming to Bergen speak. Spanish, Italian, French and Dutch are also in high demand. Norwegian is often in demand for our tours for locals. A guide's language skills are a large factor in the number of possible assignments they will be offered during the season.

How well do I have to speak the languages?

Your language skills should fall between B2 and C2 according to EU standards (see "Europass language self-assessment grid"). All applicants will undergo language proficiency tests adapted for guiding. Knowing Norwegian is not mandatory, but it can be an advantage.

What do I get in return for working with NGS?

We are passionate about guiding and we view it as a profoundly human experience. Working with guides gives us a chance to help them become better and do the best work they can. The skills you acquire as a guide will help you for the rest of your life: how to speak to large groups of people so that they will listen; how to lead a group of people, how to manage emergencies and difficult situations; how to react professionally to complaints and emotional outbreaks, and many other skills in addition to that. We deliver over 90% of the cruise calls, which means our guides have a significant percentage of the guiding assignments in Bergen. On top of cruise, we have online and physical sales of our guided tours all year round. You will also benefit from an international environment of professionals to work with and a chance to develop and certify skills to build a career.

Can I develop a career with NGS?

Once you become an NGS guide you can work as a guide for many years going forward. Some of our best guides have been guiding for more than 20 years. NGS is also a part of a larger network of companies all over Norway and Northern Europe. Working as a guide with NGS might just be the steppingstone towards a future career in the tourism and service industry. Our network is continuously growing, and should you apply for other positions, starting as a guide is a great way to get noticed.

What are the steps towards becoming a guide?

You will find details of the application process on our website.

Guide Certification and Training

Do I need to hold a certification to become a guide?

Yes, everyone who wants to become a Guide with NGS must possess certification from a recognised Norwegian course to meet the high standards required by our guests. We also want our guides to feel equipped and confident in performing their assignments.

There are several Guide certification courses available on the market and all guides must prove to have undergone a recognised Guide Certification in Norway, proving extensive local knowledge, have comprehensive knowledge of the specific routines and procedures for cruise assignments and first aid training certificate.

We recommend the Certification Programme organised by Guide Academy (<https://guideacademy.no/>). The training program consists of an engaging online course that you can complete from anywhere in the world, complemented by an intensive onsite training session scheduled for the first weeks of April. No prior guiding experience is required to apply—just bring your passion and enthusiasm!

Do I have to pay for the certification?

Most guide certification courses charge a fee, up to 27000 NOK (Oslo Certification). You can find the costs of these guide courses online.

The Certification Programme organised by Guide Academy provides great value and a comprehensive education for a successful guiding season. We sponsor most of the certification fee of the Certification with Guide Academy for those who commit to working a full season exclusively with us.

Is there further guide education during the season?

Additional optional educational activities will be open to anyone with the yearly membership, which is included in the certification fee. These activities will take place during the season and will consist of visits and seminars. Additionally, you can join your fellow guides on tours as observers. For certain tours, such as the full-day Hardanger and Flåm tours, you must first observe before being assigned to lead them on your own.

Is there a training from NGS?

Within your first days at work, you are required to participate in a mandatory training session where the practicalities, logistics, and booking system will be explained in detail.

Tours

What kind of tours will I be doing?

Throughout a season, guides will experience and lead a variety of tours, such as: two-hour city panoramic tours by coach, tours around Bergen's coast via coach and ferry, hiking tours up Mount Fløyen, scenic bus tours with 50 guests along the fjords with lunch included, and many other tour varieties.

You may also experience other parts of Norway while guiding from other ports.

Will I guide in Bergen only?

You will primarily guide in Bergen, our base port. Occasionally, you may be asked to guide in the Voss area for our sister agency, Voss og Fjordane Guideservice, or from other ports in Norway. Transportation will be arranged and covered by us, and you will receive additional hourly compensation, including paid travel time to the port.

How can I practice and improve my guiding skills?

As well as online and printed sources, some of the best sources of information are your NGS colleagues, driver colleagues, and your guests. Additionally, evaluations from the Guide Coordinator or a member of the office team provide a valuable opportunity to receive constructive feedback, which can help you improve your performance and gain confidence through recognition. This feedback is invaluable in refining your skills and ensuring the highest level of service for our guests.

Employment Conditions

Am I guaranteed paid assignments after the guide certification?

Once you have fulfilled the contractual requirement of becoming a certified guide by successfully passing the exam, your employment contract will become valid, and you will be able to work as a guide with NGS. We will then strive to offer you as many assignments and hours as possible, based on your availability, qualifications, and the needs of our clients.

Is this a full-time job? How much can I expect to work?

Guiding is not a full-time job, and hours vary based on demand, which depends on cruise calls, private tours, and visitor numbers. During peak months like June, July, and August, you may work full-time, while in slower months, there may be fewer hours. Many guides use this time to explore other opportunities in Norway.

To provide more stability for our guides, we offer a minimum average guaranteed of 100 hours per month based on their skills and availability. Most of our guides typically work more than this guaranteed minimum per month.

If you have other commitments and need more flexibility, you can opt for a flexible on-call contract.

How much can I expect to earn?

Many guides earn well beyond the minimum guaranteed salary and have guiding in Norway as a lucrative part of their yearly income. The income is heavily affected by your availability and your skills.

A first-year guide, guiding regularly in English and German, can potentially earn upwards of 150000 NOK (May-October).

A first-year guide, guiding regularly in English, Italian and French, can potentially earn upwards of 120000 NOK (May- September).

An experienced guide, guiding regularly in English and German, can potentially earn up to 240000 NOK (May-October). Experienced guides can usually expect to earn more - since their increased experience and skills work well with longer and more specialised assignments.

We put a lot of effort into giving you a realistic expectation of your earning potential before signing the contract. Working with Norwegian Guide Service should be an enriching experience, also from a financial perspective.

When do guides get paid?

Guides are paid on the 15th of every month.

Guides with a minimum guaranteed hours contract will receive their salary for the current month. For example, on May 15th, they will receive their salary for May. Twice during the season, any excess hours worked beyond 100 hours per month will be compensated.

Guides on an on-call contract will be paid on the 15th of each month for the hours worked the previous month. For example, hours worked in May will be paid on June 15th.

After the contract ends, you will receive your Holiday Pay. ()

What happens if I get sick?

All guides are entitled to self-certification (egenmelding) in case of illness, which can be used for up to three calendar days at a time. You can learn more on the NAV website:

<https://www.nav.no/en/home/benefits-and-services/Self-certification-egenmelding#chapter-1>

Can I take holidays?

Due to the seasonal nature of the job taking time off during the season affects your overall income. If you plan to take extended holidays during the peak season, it's important to communicate this before signing the contract so we can plan accordingly. All holidays must be requested and approved by the office to ensure proper scheduling and coverage.

Do I have to pay tax?

Yes, you will have to pay tax. Unless you are registered as self-employed in Norway, NGS is legally required to automatically pay tax for you in accordance with your registered Norwegian tax card. You must make sure you apply for and have the correct tax card registered with the Norwegian tax office (Skatteetaten). Tax is paid by our accounting department from your gross amount before you are paid your net salary for each working month.

Do I get employee insurance?

You will be covered by an obligatory Norwegian occupational injury insurance for medical emergencies when at work. If you are a resident of Norway, then you have the standard health insurance provided by the social security system. EU/EEA citizens are covered for most health expenses by their European Health Insurance. Very often our guides from other countries obtain travel insurance for convenience.

Do I have to stay and work the entire season?

Some of our guides only work for part of the season, some work throughout the year. To plan the season, it is important for us to agree on the period during which you are available to take on assignments before signing the contract. The contract is a legally binding commitment towards the duration of the work relationship.

NGS will prioritise guides who can and show the desire to work for the entire season. A guide's availability is a large factor in the number of possible assignments they will be offered during the season.

Do I need a mobile phone and Norwegian phone number? Do I get refunded for the costs of using my phone?

You must have a contactable mobile phone to work as a guide; mobiles are required for receiving and confirming assignments, as well as for during the tours (e.g. emergencies, contacting the office). Guides are strongly encouraged to have a mobile telephone with a Norwegian sim card activated and working. Guides will be compensated, for using their Norwegian phone number only

Norwegian SIM cards can be obtained using a national ID card, passport or a Norwegian D number. There are both pay-as-you-go (*kontant*) and subscription plans available in Norway.

Is there a uniform? Do I have to pay for it?

Our guides must wear:

- A white shirt/polo shirt/collared shirt
- Black trousers/skirt
- Black shoes
- An NGS-branded green vest

You will receive a green vest, a yellow visibility vest (mandatory on certain piers in Bergen) to use for the entire season. These must be returned at the end of the contract.

Some clients may also require that we wear accessories with their own logos or symbols.

Are there any other clothing requirements?

Since Bergen can be such a rainy city, we recommend that you are prepared for the weather with rain boots, rain trousers, wool underwear, etc.

International applicants considering moving to Bergen

Is there anything I need to do to be able to work in Norway?

It is your responsibility to check whether you can work in Norway. Please consult the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) website at www.udi.no/en and the Service Centre for Foreign Workers (SUA) at www.sua.no/en for more information.

Also find more information at <http://www.robinhoodhuset.no/about-us/activities/advice-and-guidance/>.

Do I need a work permit?

Citizens of an EU/EEA country are allowed to visit and work for 3 months. After 3 months you must register with the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). It is your responsibility to check whether you need a work permit. Consult the UDI website at www.udi.no/en and the Service Centre for Foreign Workers (SUA) at www.sua.no/en

How can I apply for a tax card?

You can book an appointment online at the Service Centre for Foreign Workers (SUA) in Bergen, where you will have to go in person to obtain your tax card. You will need to fill in the relevant forms and provide documentation to prove your requirement to pay tax. Refer to:

<https://www.skatteetaten.no/en/person/foreign/are-you-intending-to-work-in-norway/tax-deduction-cards>

Do I need a visa to come to Norway?

Citizens of Nordic and EU/EEA countries do not need a visa to come to Norway. It is, however, your responsibility to check if you do need a visa to come to Norway. You can do that here: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/>

Does Norwegian Guide Service organise accommodation?

Guides are responsible for finding accommodation in Bergen. We strongly advise you to try to find accommodation in or as close as possible to the city centre as this makes life and work much easier. You will get more information and support during the recruitment process.

How do I find a place to stay in Bergen?

Most people looking for a place to rent use websites such as www.hybel.no or www.finn.no. Look at local transport connections on www.skyss.no/en/

How much does it cost to rent in Bergen?

Prices vary depending on location, size and standard, but in Bergen city centre you can find a room in a shared flat for as little as 4000 NOK and as much as 9000 NOK per month. The average is around 6000 NOK per person. On top of that you should usually calculate electricity costs. Be advised that many places will require a deposit which will usually be returned at the end of your stay.

What should my budget be to live in Bergen?

You should consider a minimum of 7500 NOK per month to cover living costs (accommodation, electricity, internet, phone etc.) and food (home cooked). Food costs could be around 2500 NOK per person, per month.

Approximate costs per person, in Norwegian Krone NOK (calculated in 2022):

Accommodation per month - 5000-7000 (city centre area, room in a shared flat, including internet)

Food per month - 2000

Social per month - 800

Electricity per month (summertime usage) - 350 (unless the electricity is included in your rent)

Internet at home per month: 450 (but is usually included in rent)

Phone per month - 150

Transport options:

Bus/tram travel pass (monthly) - 795 per month (475 student), 47 for a 1.5-hour ticket (28 student)

https://www.skyss.no/billett-og-pris/prisar/buss-bybanen-og-nokre-batruter/#vaksen__fr%C3%A5_18_%C3%A5r

City bikes - 169 per month <https://bergenbysykkel.no>

City e-scooters: Ryde, Voi ca. 300 /14 days

What other financial practicalities are there to consider?

Please be aware that many landlords require two or three months of rent as a refundable deposit.

Your salary will be paid out monthly on the 15th of the following month.

Students with valid student ID can often get discounts on travel passes and other services.

My application

I have worked with a different guide agency in the past. Can I still apply?

We welcome guides that have worked with other companies within our network.

The deadline has passed. Can I still apply?

If the deadline for applications has passed you can submit your interest to work as a guide with us. We will get back to you with information on what you should do next.

I am not available throughout the whole season. Can I still apply?

You can still apply but guides who are available for the whole season have an advantage in the recruitment process.

I want to move to Bergen, but I do not have enough funds to support myself until my first salary. Can I still apply?

It is your responsibility to provide for yourself until your first salary payment.

I do not have any previous work experience. Can I still apply?

Not having work experience does not stop you from becoming a fantastic guide. You must however prove in the application process that you have experience of being committed to work, such as an employee or volunteer in a charitable or non-governmental organization, and that you have people that can endorse you as a worker.

I do not live in Bergen yet. Can I still apply?

Yes. But you do eventually have to be in Bergen and ready to start working as a guide by the beginning of the contract.

I do not live in the city centre. Can I still apply?

Yes, although we have experienced that guides living outside the city centre have a higher chance of being late because of issues with their means of transportation (bus, tram etc.).

I do not have a passport/ID card and I live outside of Norway. Can I still apply?

You must make sure to obtain a passport/ID card by the time you travel to Norway. Our guides who have come to Norway and did not have a passport/ID, have had difficulties with the paperwork (opening a bank account, getting a tax card etc.)

I am not an EU/EEA citizen. Can I still apply?

Unfortunately not, unless you already reside in Europe and have the appropriate documentation to live and work in Norway. It is your responsibility to check that you are entitled to live and work in Norway. Check via <https://www.udi.no/en/>

I don't currently live in Bergen. If I get invited for an interview how will that work?

All interviews will include an online video call. We will then communicate about the next step

I don't have a visa for Norway. Can I still apply?

You must be entitled to work and live in Norway by the time you apply. This includes the visa if required. It is your responsibility to check that you are entitled to live and work in Norway. Check via <https://www.udi.no/en/>

I don't have a work permit for Norway. Can I still apply?

You must be entitled to work and live in Norway by the time you apply. This includes the application for a work permit if required. It is your responsibility to check that you are entitled to live and work in Norway. Check via <https://www.udi.no/en/>