

Bø, Norway

PLU Gateway Program

Telemark University College



Student Handbook

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Wang Center for Global Education
Pacific Lutheran University

P: 253-535-7577 :: F: 253-535-8752 :: wang.center@plu.edu

www.plu.edu/wangcenter

****Supplemental Handbook to the Wang Center Travel Guide & TUC Pre-Arrival Guide****

Practical Information

Finding out the practical details of living in Norway will take energy at first, but after a few weeks or a month, your knowledge of such information will make you feel you are indeed living in, rather than visiting Norway. It is wise not to underestimate the degree to which you will need to be patient and positive in the transition to being a student in Norway. Remember, you are not alone! Help each other out with gathering information and getting started. The tips and information below provide you with a start for your semester. Much more will be provided during your orientation at Telemark University College.

Note on Your Residence Permit

Your passport will have a Residence Permit for your time as a student in Norway. After you get to Bø, you need to go to the local police station to register that you have arrived in the country. This must be done within **the first week of the program**. Ask TUC program staff for the location of the police station and for the hours the station is open.

Alcohol

The legal drinking age in Norway for wine and beer is 18. With this in mind, a cultural difference you will find is that the campus is not “dry”. For some students, socializing includes alcohol. As with other aspects of Norwegian student independence, you are expected to take responsibility for yourself, respect others, and make wise and mature decisions where alcohol is concerned. Penalties for drinking and driving are severe in Norway.

Norwegian Weather and You

You will notice that the hours of daylight become fewer during the late fall and early winter. The good news is that this is a unique part of your experience in the northern country of Norway, and that it is not 24-hour darkness as in the north of Norway! (You would need to travel to the far north to experience total darkness or *mørketiden*. See the following website for some towns and the dates of 24-hours minus the sun! http://met.no/met/met_lex/l_p/morketid.html). At the same time, you should not underestimate the effect the shorter daylight may have on you. There are creative ways to cope with it. Norwegians are known to enjoy the late fall and winter with more candles and lights indoors, informal dinners with friends, exercise and social activities. Winters in Norway are great opportunities to learn to knit, experiment with making bread and other foods, go cross-country skiing, invite friends for dinner, or take an exercise class. Consult your Norwegian contacts to find out ways to cope with the darker days.



Keeping in Touch while in Norway

It is highly recommended that you keep in touch with each other during your semester. Get each other's cell phone numbers and know which buildings your classmates live in. If you have not seen a fellow classmate for a couple of days, give him or her a call. If you are going to the movies on a weekend, invite others along. Let someone know if you are going on a weekend trip, and invite others along if you want the company. This is meant merely as a way to share information if needed in emergencies or other situations.

Telephone

It is cheapest to call overseas using an overseas calling card. You will see posters in some stores (usually smaller grocery stores or kiosks) that advertise such cards. Most students use Skype.

For local calls, you may want to invest in an inexpensive Norwegian phone (US phones do not typically work abroad). You can get a phone that operates with a card for a certain number of minutes. When the minutes run out, just buy a new *påfyllingskort*, or phone-credit card, at a grocery store or kiosk and you are back in business. Most communication in Norway is done by cell phone, and it is a good way for you to keep in touch for both course-related matters and for social events.

You could also consider taking your mobile phone with you, and purchasing a new SIM card for it in Norway. Mobile phones are the defacto standard for communication in Norway and few people there go without. Many SIM cards can only be purchased by Norwegian residents, but Lebara can be bought by international visitors.

In an emergency when in Norway, dial 110 (FIRE); 112 (POLICE); 113 (AMBULANCE).

Internet

E-mail access is available either at your residence hall, the local public library, or at the college. Students have also recommended "Skype" as a very good way to speak with friends and family in the States via computer. The service is free, and downloadable at www.skype.com. Please read the information on the website for more details of this service. Be sure to set up accounts for the friends and family who may want to communicate with you via Skype, if they don't already use this software and understand how it works.

Mail

Sending packages can be quite expensive, but check with the post office for special rates for shipping overseas. You will receive your mailing address from TUC when you are assigned a room.

Money

There are 100 *øre* in a *kroner*. Coins come in 1, 5, 10 and 20 *kroner*. Bills start at 50 *kroner*, and continue in 100, 500, and 1000 bills. On March 24, 2014 there were approximately 6 *kroner* per US dollar.

There are ATMs (*minibank*) readily available in Bø. This is the most convenient way to get cash in Norway. Credit cards such as Visa and Mastercard are accepted throughout Norway and Scandinavia. Notify your bank of your travel dates and inquire about transaction fees in Norway. You may, however, find some difficulty using credit cards at small grocery stores. It is best **not** to bring a lot of American traveler's checks, as the fees for exchange are high. We recommend that you take only some cash in case of emergency or loss of ATM card. When traveling in Norway or other places in Scandinavia or Europe, you should use a money belt or pouch. Pickpockets do exist at travel crossroads such as the train station in Oslo.

You will be given a monthly meal stipend. With the exchange rate as it is, and the higher cost of living in Norway, you will find your "kroner" doesn't always stretch as far as you might wish. Try to work from a monthly budget to get you to the end of the month with money for food and some entertainment and/or travel. Also, keep in mind that shopping for the same brands you buy in the US can get expensive in Norway. Asking your Norwegian friends for recipe ideas and learning to cook things from scratch can make your dining experiences cheaper and more fun.

Medications

One thing you will not find at a local grocery store is "over-the-counter" medications like aspirin, cough medications, etc. These you can buy at an *apotek* or another store specializing in such common medications. **Bring enough Prescribed Medication for the entire semester.** Shampoos, toothpaste, etc. are found in grocery stores.

Food

In general, students make their own meals at home since eating out can be expensive. Some students bring a *matpakke* (lunch bag of a few sandwiches) to school. There are cafeterias on campus that serve sandwiches, some warm foods, desserts, water, soft drinks, coffee and more. You will save money by bringing your own lunch, which you can eat in the cafeteria area.

Like in the US, quality and prices of foods vary from store to store. Prices for food are higher than in the US. You may find that items like cheese, meats, vegetables and fruits cost up to twice as much as we are used to here in the US. A favorite place to shop, according to students on the program, is at the *Maxi* supermarket. **Note on store hours:** Large grocery stores and almost all other stores are closed on Sundays. They commonly close between 9 and 11 pm on weekdays, and earlier (commonly 6-8 pm) on Saturdays! You will find convenience stores (7-Eleven for example) are open later and on Sundays, but prices here are higher and selection much reduced (mostly snacks). If you are having a chocolate attack, however, the selection at such after-hours shops is usually superb.

What to Bring

For everyday, you will need the same type of informal clothing you use at PLU – jeans, sweaters, sweatshirts, shirts/blouses, etc. Take along one or two nicer things to wear both for more formal parties, dinners, evenings out, etc. This might be a nicer pair of pants and jacket, sweater or shirt for guys, a skirt and blouse/sweater or dress for women. It will get colder than it does in Washington. Bring along things you can layer. Boots made for walking, rain and snow, are a must. A smaller backpack for everyday and overnight/weekend excursions will be handy.

You will need a **converter** and adaptor for electrical equipment since the current and the kind of plug for electrical outlets are different in Norway. A converter and an adaptor (one with two round prongs) can be found at Fred Meyer, Target or other such stores. With the exception of the converter and adaptor, all other items listed below are easily found in Norway, though medications and some personal hygiene items can be more expensive. You may want to wait until you get to Norway to buy your school supplies to save room in your suitcase. Here are some packing suggestions from PLU students from previous Norway programs:

Necessities of the miscellaneous sort

Passport
Flight Confirmation Info
Insurance Card/Information
International Student ID Card (ISIC)
Some US bills
Money belt or pouch
Credit card (Notify bank of travel plans)
ATM card (Notify bank of travel plans)
Alarm clock
Camera & Charger
Towels
Curiosity, Flexibility, Sense of Humor, Sense of Adventure, Focus

Clothing

Jeans, pants, etc.
Sweaters/sweatshirts
Shirts/blouses
One or two nicer things for more formal occasions
Good walking shoes
Boots – preferably rainproof
Warm socks
Hat, gloves/mittens, scarf
Warm jacket
Rainproof jacket
Workout clothes/jogging clothes/hiking or skiing clothes
Swimsuit
Pajamas
***Pack versatile clothing that can layer**

Toiletries and medicines

Prescriptions and copy of prescriptions (*enough for semester*)
Travel size soap, toothpaste, shampoo, personal hygiene items (*travel size for 1st few days*)

Electrical equipment

Hair dryer
Small radio (lots of music is in English) or iPod
Converter and adaptor
Laptop

Other Miscellaneous

Umbrella
Batteries
Small flashlight
Pictures from home and/or a small item from home to decorate your room
Norwegian phrase book or dictionary
Journal
Address book

Kitchen Miscellaneous (*optional, suggested by former participants*)

Ziplock bags
Water bottle
Swiss army knife
A few recipes if you have favorites

Safety

Please refer to your Wang Center materials on safety, and follow their recommendations. In regard to Norway in particular, most students find a slower, saner, healthier and safer pace of life in Norway. **NOTE: Students are cautioned NOT to hitchhike in Norway.** While you may find your new surroundings seem safer than home, this should not be interpreted as a time be less cautious. Be aware of your surroundings, do not risk hitchhiking or walking alone at night. Crime happens in Norway just as it does in the US.

The Wang Center will register you for STEP, The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program provided by the US Government to US citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. This allows the Department of State to better assist you in an emergency. STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest US embassy or consulate.

During your stay at TUC, the faculty and staff will also serve as a resource. You can also contact the Wang Center when necessary.

Independent Travel

Students often maximize their time away with personal travel before, during and after the study away program. Such travel is permitted provided students adhere to and recognize the following policies:

PLU does not allow students to partake in personal travel to or within countries that are designated by the US State Department as existing under a travel warning or trade block. Travel to approved destinations *before* the program start date, including early arrival, is considered personal travel.

For personal travel to approved destinations *during* the program dates, students should communicate their travel plans to on-site support staff, following any program procedures. For personal travel to approved destinations *after* the program date, students are required to sign out of the program using the Travel Waiver form: <http://www.plu.edu/studyaway/widgets/documents-forms/items/other/Travel-waiver.pdf>. Submit this form to the Wang Center.

The University is not responsible for any incidents that occur during personal travel before, during or after a study away program, nor is it responsible for any costs incurred by the student for such personal travel, including any requested travel deviations from group travel arranged by the Wang Center.

Norwegian Academic Life

You will find there are some major differences between your studies at PLU and at TUC. Here are three major differences:

First, classes may not meet as often. This might sound fine at first, but it means that it requires more self-discipline to study on your own and to use your time to explore your course topic on your own. It may also mean that there is less of a sense of community formed in the class. This is left to you to develop through contacts with others in your residence hall, through campus activities and among friends.

Second, you will not have the amount of homework and small assignments you normally have in classes at home. Again, this might sound like a fine difference, but it means that you are expected to study on your own and complete the reading list provided for each course. You might feel you are receiving less feedback than you do at home. You can always talk to your professor if you have questions on a course topic. Your progress is important to them; it is just that the Norwegian system is built more on independent work. A very Norwegian thing to do is form your own student study group for a course! This is an excellent way for you to meet other students and work through course materials together. Most importantly, your grade is often based on one final exam or paper. It is expected that you independently or in study groups to prepare for this final exam or paper by studying regularly during the semester.

Third, exam times are not negotiable. In Norway, the schedules are set by administration and professors have no option to negotiate the time of an exam. Your TUC orientation handbook will provide the approximate days of exams. **Plane tickets home must be reserved for after the date of exams.**



Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens: Oslo (Norway), Security Reminder Crime
Europe, Norway, Oslo
1/17/2012

Norwegian media have reported a number of violent assaults in the Oslo area over the past several months. These include a daytime knife attack on a tram near Solli plass on January 5th and two stabbings near Oslo Central Station on January 10th. Parks can be especially dangerous, even Slottsparken (The Palace Park) across from the U.S. Embassy, which has been the site of multiple assaults.

The U.S. Embassy wants to remind all U.S. citizens to exercise basic safety precautions, even in a generally safe country like Norway, as you would in other locations:

- If possible, do not walk alone at night. If you are out late, arrange to walk with others or consider another form of transportation.
- Remain in well-lighted areas with heavy traffic.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times; see potential threats before they become actual threats.
- Trust your instincts. If something seems wrong, get yourself out of that area.
- Keep your cell phone with you and charged to call for help if necessary. The police emergency number is 112, which you can dial from any land line or cell phone.

Individuals needing consular assistance from the U.S. Embassy should contact the Embassy by [email](#) or by telephone (+47 2130-8550, or +47 2244- 8550, after hours). The [U.S. Embassy in Oslo](#) is located at Henrik Ibsens Gate 48.

Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the U.S. Embassy's website, <http://norway.usembassy.gov>, and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website, www.travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Country Specific Information can be found. The U.S. Embassy also encourages U.S. citizens to review "[A Safe Trip Abroad](#)," which includes valuable security information. Travelers may obtain up-to-date information by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or outside the U.S. and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

<https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=11876>

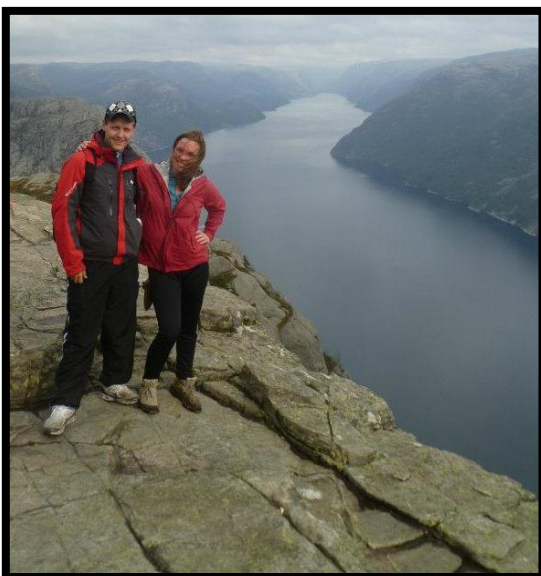
Getting to Know Norwegian Students

It is often the case that American students find students in Norway harder to get to know. Though you will find exceptions, generally students may seem shy and little interested in small talk. On the other hand, they will respect your privacy, and be helpful if asked for information. So how do you meet Norwegian students? The suggestion of former program participants is to take the initiative! Norwegians are just not as outgoing as Americans, so – at the same time as you respect their privacy and initial reserve – dive in and say hello and introduce yourself. Join in at the orientation activities and make friends with your apartment-mates. Other suggestions for the semester – go to the parties or concerts, and join a campus club. There may be special events organized for international students. By all means go! Arranging a potluck meal is sometimes a good way to get to know your own neighbors in the residence hall and other students (PLU and non-PLU) in the program. Sharing of traditional meals has worked well for students in the past as a way to get together.

Cultural Contrasts

Getting to know the foods, sites, and sounds of Norway is only the tip of the iceberg in your cross-cultural experience. Out of sight, but definitely noticeable as you live in Norwegian culture, are the different behaviors, attitudes, perspectives and values of the culture that make study away an eye-opening, energy-demanding and often life-changing experience. With a dose of humor and adventure, and patience with yourself and others, these aspects of Norwegian life and culture will also become very familiar to you, sometimes to the extent that you miss them once you are home! You will learn more about these cultural “codes” during orientation, your courses at TUC, and your own interactions with Norwegians. A summary of some cultural differences – with allowance for all the exceptions you may find – relevant to your life in Norway are:

- What appears to us as “shyness” or quietness; some call it reserve - it is not entirely permanent. It just takes longer to get to know most Norwegians. One common view of the difference in getting to know people is that Americans are easy to get to know, but harder to *really* know (Why, international students ask, do we ask “How are you?” and then walk by without waiting for an answer?), while Norwegians may be harder to get to know at first, but the friends they have are often long-lasting.



- Privacy and independence. A related topic to the one above. Unlike the shyness that disappears with time, Norwegians do enjoy a degree of privacy and independence that is different than in the US. As mentioned earlier, you may find the trait of independence most noticeable in residence hall living and course work expectations.

- Tendency toward modesty. Norwegians seldom brag a lot about themselves, though this code, contained in “The Law of Jante”, is changing some now. In general, you will learn of the accomplishments and talents of Norwegians either indirectly or gradually within the context of given moments.

- Less individualism than among Americans. Though studies show both Norway and the US are much more “I”-centered than many other countries around the world, there are still differences between the US and Norway. The US holds the (unfortunate?) #1 spot in this individualism category according to researcher Geert Hofstede.
- Acceptance of social “leveling”. Also a topic related to the two above. As one student on the program put it, from her experience this is not the “law” in Norway, but an integral part of Norwegian mentality.
- Love of nature. It is of course a great exaggeration (not to mention an impossibility!) that Norwegians are born “with skis on their feet”, but you will most likely find Norwegians walk a lot, find walks in nature a pleasure, and seek time to exercise. Traditionally Sundays were a day to be outside walking, hiking or skiing with family or friends. Closed stores on Sunday are a continuing effort to put such a lifestyle ahead of consumerism.
- Priority on family life and children.
- An Americanized culture??? You will most likely find a “mixed bag” of attitudes toward the US. To some extent, Norway is quite “Americanized” – they are fully familiar with our music, fast foods, movies, dress, slang, etc., and some have adopted some of these aspects of popular culture as their own. You will also find Norwegians who will judge Americans according to the images about the US they see from movies and media. But this perception of Americans will change as they get to know you. You might hear someone say that you aren’t a “typical American”. Take it as a compliment, even though the concept of the typical may not be entirely correct to begin with!

A final note on cultural differences: It should be noted that there is no need to apologize for the unique cultural qualities you possess as an American, though your awareness and sensitivity to contrasts with the Norwegian way of being are key to your positive learning of cultural differences and adjustment to Norwegian culture. The cultural differences are just that, differences, not necessarily better or worse. A good maxim in encountering such difference is “I will not judge before I understand.” Wait to find out the reasons for the curious, interesting or frustrating ways of being that you encounter. It takes more patience, but brings more insight. Openness and willingness to engage in the process of cross-cultural learning will get you a long way. You will no doubt have time to discuss this with fellow students, faculty and administrators along the way!