

# Christmas Season in Norway



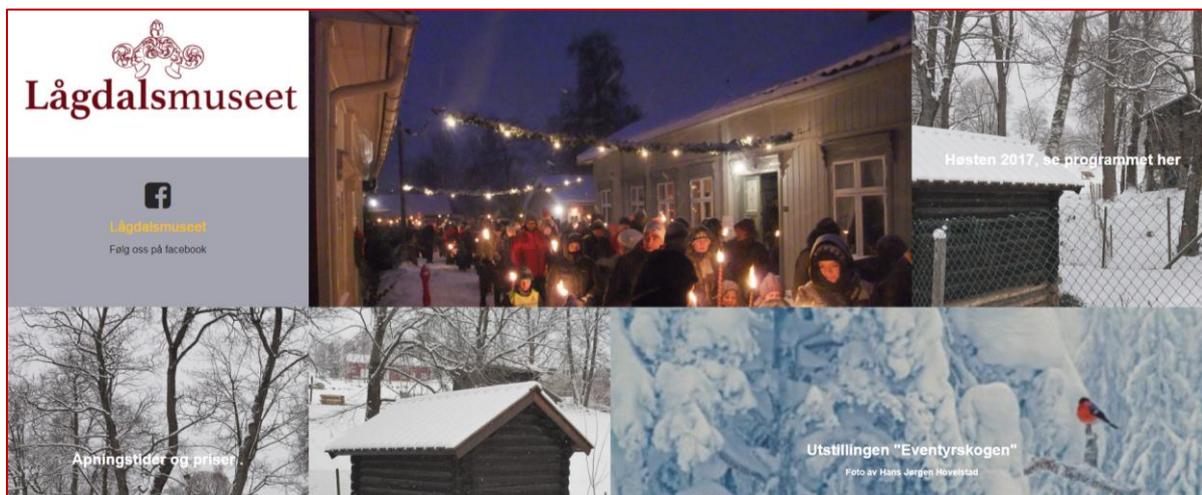
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## NORWEGIAN CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

The Christmas festive period is a very important and integral part of Norwegian culture. This time of year, brings people together to enjoy good food, good music and good times with family, friends and colleagues. The coming weeks are very rich in tradition. We hope you will take the opportunity to experience and learn more about this important cultural event in the Norwegian calendar through all the different events coming up in December.

There are many activities, both locally in Kongsberg but also in cities all over Norway. One example is The Christmas market at Lågendalsmuseet and the lighting of the Christmas tree at Kirketorget this Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December. If you haven't already participated, why not visit the Christmas market this Sunday is followed by a parade from Lågendalsmuseet to Kirketorget where the Christmas tree will be lit. The Christmas market opens 12:30pm and ends at 4:30pm. For more information about activities, see [Kongsberg.no](http://Kongsberg.no) or [Laagendalsposten](http://Laagendalsposten).

There will be Christmas markets and concerts all through December. Oslo offers a variety of markets that is worth visiting as well. For instance, the folk museum in Bygdøys Christmas market has long traditions with a beautiful surrounding and cosy atmosphere. The market is open both the two first weekends of December. Check out "visit Oslo" for more information.



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## ADVENT



Advent is the Latin word for 'arrival' and is the time for Christmas preparations.

Norwegians bake cakes and biscuits, buy gifts and clean the entire house. This is also the time for decorating and the closer we get to Christmas - the more Norwegians decorate. Windows are decorated with red ribbons, stars and candles, angels and anything else you can imagine. A more recent tradition is to decorate with lots of electric lights outside: trees, balconies, terraces, doors and many other places. The tradition of lighting one candle on the first Sunday of Advent and continuing each Sunday, until all four are lit on the last Sunday before Christmas, is approximately 100 years old. Almost everyone in Norway has a four-armed candelabra and lighting the candles on Advent Sunday is what really gets Norwegians into an early Christmas spirit.

Other Christmas traditions are the Advent calendar, the wreath and the Christmas tree, originally from Germany.

Photo: <http://opalveien.blogspot.no>

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## LUCIA CELEBRATION



Lucia is the patron saint of light and is celebrated on 13th December. The modern way of celebrating Lucia is originally a Swedish tradition adopted by Norwegians. Small girls and boys dressed in white and holding candles celebrate Saint Lucia and sing the darkness away.

Parents are often invited to the kindergartens in the morning, to watch their loved ones sing and to eat "lussekatter".



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## CHRISTMAS FOOD

Ribbe, Lutefisk and Pinnekjøtt are the three most traditional dishes on Christmas Eve and during Christmas in Norway. The traditional Christmas food, "Julemat," is also served at "Julebord" when friends and colleagues from work gather around late November/early December to celebrate and have a good time together. Below you will find recipes for all three. Enjoy!



The **Ribbe** (roast pork rib) is a classic on the Norwegian Christmas table, eaten mostly in the Eastern part of Norway.

You either love it or hate it, praise it or ridicule it. Norwegians consume close to 3000 tons of **lutefisk** each year!



**Pinnekjøtt** is one of the must-have traditional Norwegian Christmas dishes. It is made from ribs of lamb or mutton that has been salted and dried, and so it has a very strong flavor.

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## CHRISTMAS DRINKS

Nearly all Norwegian breweries produce a traditional Christmas beer - "juleøl" - which is darker, stronger and has more flavor than common Norwegian lagers.

There is also a special soda - "julebrus" - which may be a red raspberry or orange flavored soft drink. Usually, both drinks are present at the "juleaften" feast table.

The Norwegian Liquor "Akevitt" is a must for many Norwegians. This is extremely strong, but Christmas would not be the same without it! A couple of shots of Aquavit are necessary in every meal during Christmas (it is actually not shot straight down, only sipped during the meals, unless you feel inclined to do so...).

"Gløgg" (mulled wine) is a drink with spices and served hot or warm. This is a traditional drink during winter, especially around Christmas, when you have it together with "pepperkake" (ginger snaps). Non-alcoholic gløgg can be bought ready-made or prepared with fruit juices instead of wine. The main classic ingredients of alcoholic gløgg are red wine, sugar, spices such as cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, cloves, and bitter orange, and optionally stronger spirits such as vodka, aquavit, or brandy. Gløgg spice extract and ready-mixed spices can be purchased in grocery stores throughout Scandinavia.



Photo: <http://katrinevanwyk.com/glogg/>

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## CHRISTMAS CAKES & COOKIES

Norway has a great variety of Christmas cakes and biscuits ("julekaker").

Traditionally, the woman of the house was expected to bake at least 7 different types of "julekaker"! These are different in each county, but the most common are "pepperkaker" (ginger snaps), decorated with icing sugar frosting. They can also be used for decorating both windows and Christmas trees.



Another tradition is to bake a miniature gingerbread house, decorate it with candy and use it indoors (quite similar to a Jack-O-Lantern). You can buy gingerbread houses in the grocery stores that is ready to be glued together and decorated with candy. This is both a fun and nice tradition and if you like candy, this is a great opportunity to eat candy...

Other common biscuits and cakes are "smultringer" (doughnuts), "sirupssnipper" (syrup snaps), "sandkaker" (sand cakes), "lefsekling" (griddlecake, filled with an icing of butter, sugar and cinnamon), "krumkaker" ("curl cakes"), "brune pinner" ("brown sticks"), "kokosmakroner" ("Coconut macaroon") "mor mosen" and "berlinerkranser" ("Berlin wreaths").

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## TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS DESSERT

### **Rice Pudding (Riskrem med rød saus)**

There is no Christmas in Norway without riskrem! This sweet course is on the dessert table of almost half the Norwegian population on Christmas Eve. Rice pudding is a rich and delicious dessert with a long tradition. Top it with a good red sauce and it will be excellent!

Choose between the traditional red sauce and the red berry sauce.



Photo: aperitif.no

Why not try the traditional Rice pudding!

**Ingredients (serves 4):**

3 dl heavy cream  
1 tablespoon of sugar  
1 teaspoon of vanilla extract  
4 dl rice pudding  
50 g blanched almonds, chopped

**Traditional red sauce:**

2 dl red lemonade or equivalent  
3 dl water  
1 tbsp. corn flour  
2 tablespoons water

**Red berry sauce:**

1 cup of water  
1 cup of sugar  
300 g raspberries and other red berries

**Method:**

Whip the cream, sugar and vanilla sugar until fluffy. Mix in cold rice pudding and the almonds.

Enjoy!

Source: melk.no

**Traditional red sauce**

Give the red lemonade and water a quick boil in a saucepan.

Stir the corn flour into the cold water and add it to the boiling mixture in a thin stream while stirring. Once the sauce boils, put it aside and let it cool.

**Berry sauce**

Boil water, add the sugar and stir until the sugar has dissolved completely (syrup).

Pour the syrup in a blender or food processor, add red berries and mix it all together

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## CHRISTMAS TREE

The tradition to have a Christmas tree is fairly new in Norway. The first tree was said to have been decorated in 1822 at Bogstad Gård (Manor), Oslo, an estate belonging to the aristocracy. In the beginning, it was a tradition for the upper classes. Gradually, more and more people celebrated Christmas by having a decorated tree in their living room and now it is impossible to imagine Christmas without it. Many Norwegians decorate their Christmas tree with small Norwegian flags, a custom probably originating from the time when Norway became an independent country in 1905. Also, it's more common to use white Christmas lights and not colored ones.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Christmas tree is brought into the house and finally gets decorated. Once the kids are off to bed, parents put the presents under the tree for opening the following day, in the evening.

Norwegians love the Christmas tree. Here are some tips on how to Buy and Treat Your Tree:

Make sure the tree is fresh and fully green when you buy it. The needles along the stem should not be brown or dry.



The tree should not be taken into a warm room right away, but kept in a chilly place to acclimatize for a day or two.

Make a cut in the bottom of the tree trunk, in order for it to soak up water and keep the stand filled. That way the needles will not fall off right away (or so they say!).

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## WALK AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE



Walking around the Christmas tree after dinner is an old tradition in Norway, but still alive, particularly among families with children.

Everyone joins hands to form a ring around the tree, walking around the tree singing carols after the Christmas dinner, usually before opening the presents.

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## ROMJUL

The time between Boxing Day and New Year's Eve is called "romjul".

This is the time for a tradition called "Julebuk" (literally, "Christmas goat"). Children dress up in wonderful disguises and visit neighbors' houses singing Christmas Carols. For this, they normally receive nice treats.

December 25 is a very quiet and relaxed day and church services are often well attended. The old tradition of a very early service before breakfast has been replaced in most areas by a service later in the morning.

Afterwards, many families get together for a large typical Christmas meal. Others start the day with a very festive breakfast ("julefrokost"), that can last quite a while...

December 26 is yet another day of festivities. Cinemas, night clubs and bars are full, and there are lots of private gatherings and parties, where all kinds of traditional Christmas food, cakes and sweets are enjoyed. Fattening, tasty dinners are also part of it!

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## JULENISSEN (SANTA CLAUS)

### Julenissen

The Norwegian "Nisse" probably derives from St. Nicholas, but "nisser" - elves (or gnomes) - are old figures existing long before the birth of Christ.

There are several types of "nisser" in Norway. The most famous is probably the "Fjøsnisse", which takes care of farm animals. He is very short, often bearded, lives in a barn or stable and wears wool clothes and a red knitted hat. He often plays tricks and scares people by blowing out the lights in the barn or scaring the farm dog at night. He can be very friendly with the people living on the farm, as long as they do not forget to give him a large portion of porridge on Christmas Eve. If they do, he will play all sorts of tricks, like moving the animals around or braiding the horses' mane and tail.



There is of course also a Christmas nisse ("Julenissen") which is more or less identical to Santa Claus. The "Julenisse" brings presents to all the nice children on Christmas Eve. He is not as shy as the traditional Santa Claus, though, since he delivers the gifts himself and does not come down the chimney in the middle of the night.

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## GOOD TO KNOW THIS TIME OF YEAR

### Opening hours before Christmas

Most shops have extended opening hours in December and some shopping malls are open until late on weekdays. Many shops are also open the first three Sundays in December, between 14–18, but this can vary from shop to shop.

### During Christmas:

The shops are closed on 25th and 26th December, and close early 24th and 31st. The days between have normal opening hours.

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## THE NORWEGIAN «JULEBORD»

Julebord events or "Christmas Table" as it translates into in English, take place pre-Christmas all over Norway. They are usually arranged from the last week of November, going well into December. The term refers to a party either a private or corporate gathering, where people get together and enjoy Christmas food, often served on a buffet table. The dishes are usually both hot and cold, and a variety of traditional and more modern plates. Many times the Julebord will be arranged at public restaurants, and is the preferred serving method in this instance.



The idea behind the Julebord is that the pre-Christmas period should not only be about stressing around buying gifts, cleaning and decorating the house, baking the 7 different required cookies, etc. but also to sit down, relax and enjoy a nice evening with friends.

Don't be taken by surprise if you meet very happy (and not so sober) Norwegians singing on their way home late at night. The explanation is simply that they have been to a 'julebord'!



***We wish you a lovely Christmas & A Happy New Year!***