

# Central Norway



Most people come to Norway for the fjords, and go you should, but the high country of central Norway is an equally extraordinary place. It's home to what is easily the finest mountain scenery in northern Europe, unrivalled hiking, high-thrills white-water rafting and two of Norway's most appealing towns.

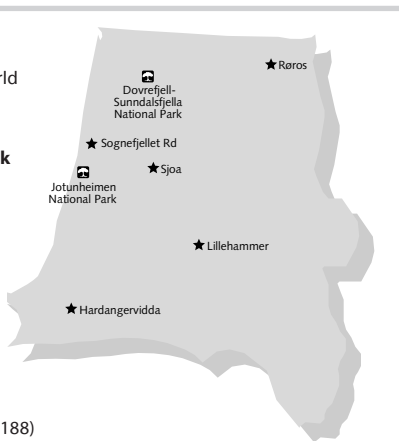
Røros could just be Norway's most charming village, a fact acknowledged by Unesco, which inscribed this centuries-old mining town of timber houses and turf-roofed cottages on its World Heritage list. Further south, Lillehammer may belong to a more modern era but after hosting the 1994 Winter Olympics it has drawn a steady stream of visitors hoping for some Olympic magic of their own in the Olympic museum, ski jump and the Olympic bobsled run; its pretty lakeside setting and Maihaugen, Norway's best folk museum, also have strong appeal.

If stave churches capture the fairy-tale magic of Norway for you, there are two fine examples at tranquil Ringebu and Lom; the latter is also a crossroads town for some of Norway's most scenic drives and rides, including the breathtaking Sognefjellet Road, which runs over the mountains and deep down into fjord country.

Connecting these sites are quiet back roads and challenging hiking trails that lead through some of Norway's most rewarding national parks – Rondane, Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella, Jotunheimen and the desolately beautiful Hardangervidda, which drops suddenly within sight of the fjords. Within the parks' boundaries you may find wild reindeer, musk ox and elk. Oppdal and, particularly, Sjoa are two important centres for white-water rafting.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Return to the past in the charming Unesco World Heritage-listed **Røros** (p171)
- Trek along the highest trails in Norway in the endlessly beautiful **Jotunheimen National Park** (p184) or drive or maybe cycle over **Sognefjellet Road** (p184)
- Wet your pants while white-water rafting in **Sjoa** (see the boxed text, p182)
- Climb the Olympic ski jump at **Lillehammer** (opposite)
- Search for the prehistoric musk ox in **Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella National Park** (see the boxed text, p176)
- Spot your first reindeer on **Hardangervidda** (p188)



POPULATION: 620,000

HIGHEST ELEVATION: GALDHØPIGGEN 2469M

# EASTERN CENTRAL NORWAY

## LILLEHAMMER

pop 25,537

Long a popular Norwegian ski resort, Lillehammer became known to the world after hosting the 1994 Winter Olympics. These Olympics, overwhelmingly considered a great success, still provide the town with some of its most interesting sights. Lying at the northern end of the lake Mjøsa and surrounded by farms, forests and small settlements, it's a laid-back place with year-round attractions, although in winter it becomes a ski town *par excellence*.

The four-day **Lillehammer Jazz Festival** (📞 81 53 31 33; www.dolajazz.no in Norwegian) is held in mid-September; tickets go on sale from 1 July each year. In March there's a popular women-only ski race; contact the tourist office for details of these and other events.

## Orientation & Information

Central Lillehammer is small and easily negotiated. Most of the Olympic sites and the folk museum Maihaugen are a 30-minute walk uphill from the centre. The main (pedestrianised) street is Storgata, two blocks east of the Skystasjon (the bus and train stations).

**Bibliotek** (Library; 📞 61 24 71 40; Wiesegate 2; 🕒 11am-6pm Mon-Thu, 11am-3pm Fri & Sat) Free, but time-limited internet access.

**Lillehammer og Omland DNT** (📞 61 25 13 06; www.turistforeningen.no/lillehammer; Storgata 34; 🕒 10am-3.30pm Tue-Thu) Hiking and skiing maps, mountain hut information and mountain hiking trips.  
**Lillehammer tourist office** (📞 61 28 98 00; www.lillehammerturist.com; Lillehammer Skystasjon; 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Jun-early Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) Offers 15-minutes of free internet.

## Sights & Activities

### OLYMPIC SITES

After Lillehammer won its bid for the 1994 Winter Olympics, the Norwegian government ploughed over two billion kroner into the town's infrastructure. Most amenities remain in use and visitors can tour the main Olympic sites over a large area called the **Olympiaparken** (📞 61 25 11 40; www.olympiaparken.no; 🕒 9am-8pm Jun-Sep, shorter hrs Oct-May).

For the Olympic Bobsled Run, see p168, while the Olympic ski slopes are covered on p168.

## Lygårdsbakkene Ski Jump

The main **ski jump** (K120) drops 136m with a landing-slope angle of 37.5°. The speed at takeoff is a brisk 91km/h with a record leap of 136.5m. During the Olympics, the site was surrounded by seating for 50,000 spectators and it was here that the opening ceremony was held; the tower for the **Olympic flame** stands near the foot of the jump. There's also a smaller jump (K90) alongside where you'll often see athletes honing their preparations.

The **ski jump chairlift** (adult/child return Nkr40/35; 🕒 9am-8pm 9 Jun-19 Aug, 9am-5pm 26 May-8 Jun & 20 Aug-9 Sep, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun 15-30 Sep) ascends to a stunning panoramic view over the town. Alternatively you can walk for free as long as the 952 steps don't prove too daunting. The chairlift price includes entry to the **Lygårdsbakkene ski jump tower** (🕒 9am-8pm 9 Jun-19 Aug, 11am-4pm 11-25 May & 10-30 Sep, 9am-5pm 16 May-8 Jun & 20 Aug-9 Sep), which costs Nkr15/12 on its own for an adult/child. Here you can stand atop the ramp and imagine the experience with all the pre-jump nerves.

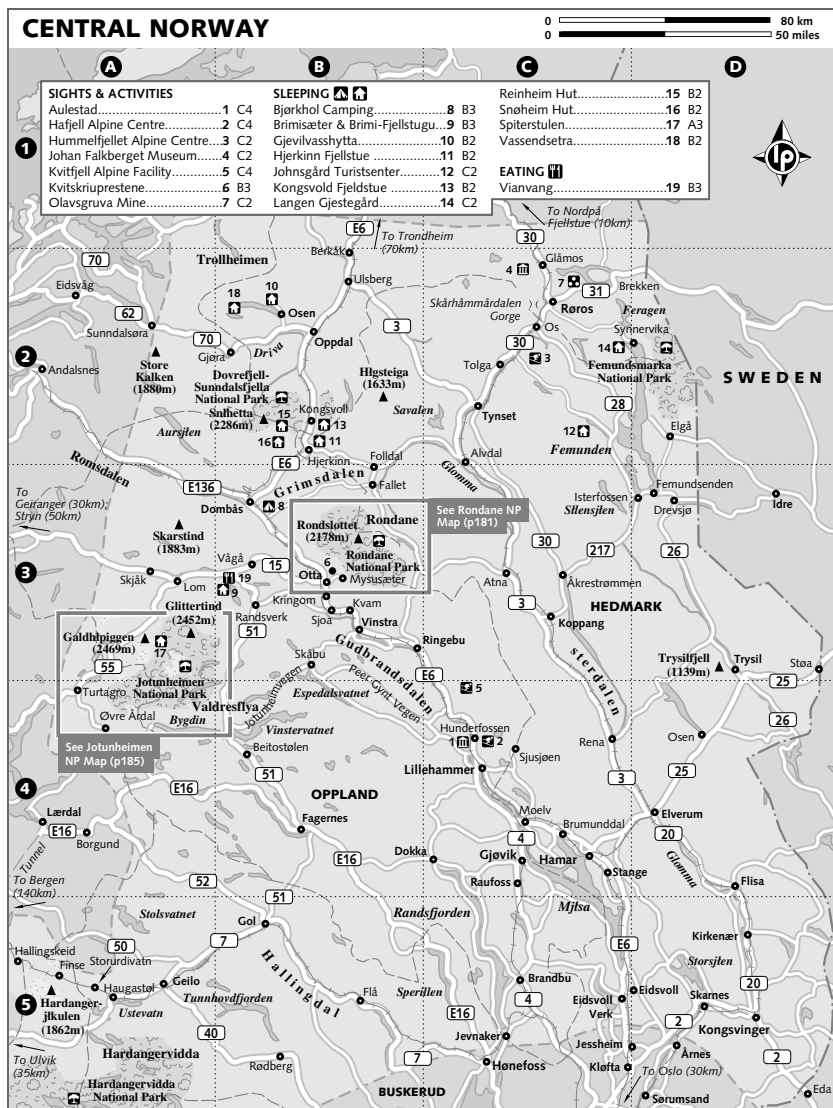
To experience the men's downhill race (and the Olympic bobsledding course) without putting your life at risk, try the nerve-jangling **simulator** (adult/child per 5 min Nkr45/35; 🕒 same hrs as chairlift) at the bottom of the jump.

A combined ticket (adult/child Nkr65/50) is also available for the chairlift, tower and simulator.

To reach the summit by car, take the road that leads past the Olympic Museum north out of town. The turn-off (signed as 'Lygårdsbakkene') comes after 2.8km.

## LILLEHAMMER'S COMBINED TICKETS

If you plan to visit a number of sites while in Lillehammer, consider the **combined ticket** (adult/child/student & pensioner Nkr260/130/210), which includes entry to the Maihaugen Folk Museum, the Norwegian Olympic Museum, Bjerkebæk and Aulestad (p168). A ticket covering Maihaugen and Bjerkebæk costs Nkr150/75/120, while a combination of any other two generally costs Nkr130/55/105, slightly less from September to May.



### Norwegian Olympic Museum

The excellent **Olympic museum** (☎ 61 25 21 00; www.ol.museum.no; Olympiaparken; adult/child/student/senior Nkr75/35/60/60; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-May) is at the Håkons Hall ice-hockey venue. On the ground floor there is a well-presented display covering the ancient Olympic Games as well as all of the Olympic

Games of the modern era, with a focus on the exploits of Norwegian athletes as well as the Lillehammer games. The exhibition is updated every two years.

Upstairs, you can look down upon the ice-hockey arena, which is circled by corridors with displays and video presentations from the Lillehammer games.

### MAIHAUGEN FOLK MUSEUM

Norway's finest folk museum is the expansive, open-air **Maihaugen Folk Museum** (☎ 61 28 89 00; www.maihaugen.no; Maihaugveien 1; adult/child/student/senior/family Nkr80/40/70/70/200; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 10am-4pm Sep & mid-end May, 11am-4pm Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Oct-mid-May). Rebuilt like a small village, the collection of around 180 buildings includes the transplanted Garmo stave church, the collection of around 180 buildings includes the transplanted Garmo stave church, and 27 buildings from the farm Bjørnstad. The three main sections encompass rural and town architecture, with a further section on 20th-century architecture. The life's work of local dentist Anders Sandvig, it also houses temporary exhibitions in the modern exhibition hall and a permanent exhibition 'We made the road', a fascinating journey through Norwegian history.

### BJERKEBÆK

**Bjerkebak** (☎ 61 28 89 00; www.maihaugen.no/bjerkebak; Sigrid Undsetsveg 1; adult/child/student/pensioner Nkr100/50/80/80; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm May & Sep) celebrates the life of Sigrid Undset, one of Norway's most celebrated authors; she won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928. Her home has been restored with memorabilia from her life.

### LILLEHAMMER ART MUSEUM

This **art museum** (Lillehammer Kunstmuseum; ☎ 61 05 44 60; www.lillehammerartmuseum.com; Stortorget; 2; adult/student/pensioner/child Nkr60/50/50/free; ☎ 11am-5pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun rest-of-year) is not only architecturally striking, it also covers Norwegian visual arts from the early 19th century to the present. Highlights of the permanent collection include some of Norway's finest artists (including Edvard Munch) and some local painters.

### NORWEGIAN VEHICLE MUSEUM

Tucked away behind the stream in central Lillehammer, the **Norwegian Vehicle Museum** (Norsk Kjøretøystorhistorisk Museum; ☎ 61 25 61 65; Lilletorget 1; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☎ 10am-6pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun rest-of-year) is for car buffs, featuring everything from sleighs to vintage cars and motorcycles.

### Sleeping

Thanks to the Olympics, Lillehammer has a more varied range of accommodation than most other Norwegian towns.

### BUDGET

**Lillehammer Camping** (☎ 61 25 33 33; www.lillehammer-camping.no; Dampsagveien 47; tent/caravan sites from Nkr125/220, 2-bed cabin from Nkr550; ☎ year-round) Camping is available here on the lakeshore, a typical urban site with cooking and laundry facilities, water-sports equipment, children's play areas, a Viking camp and cable TV.

**Lysegaard** (☎ 61 26 26 63; lysgaard@c2i.net; Lysegaard; s/d Nkr200/400; ☎ Jun-mid-Aug) A converted farmhouse up the hill, this place also represents great value, although for most of the year it serves as a base for budding Olympic skiers.

**Gjeste Bu** (☎/fax 61 25 43 21; gjestebu@lillehammer.online.no; Gamleveien 110; s/d from Nkr275/450) This friendly guesthouse has a range of accommodation, shared kitchen facilities and apartments that are ideal if you'll be in town a while. Breakfast costs extra as does bed linen (Nkr50). If you understand its pricing system, let us know.

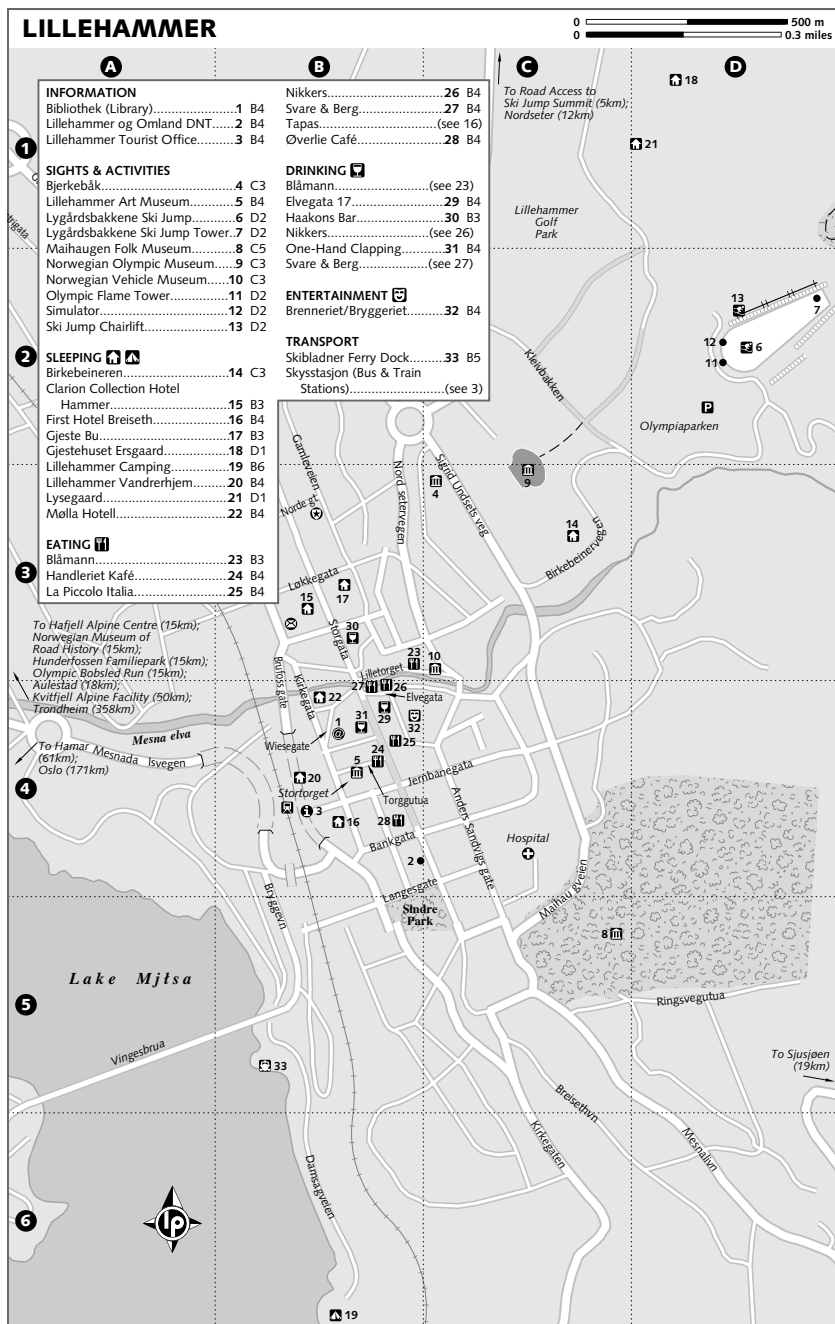
**ourpick Lillehammer Vandrerhjem** (☎ 61 26 00 24; www.stasjonen.no; Jernbanegata 2; dm/s/d/tr Nkr315/590/790/900, 5-7-bed apt Nkr1500, all incl breakfast; ☎) If you've never stayed in a youth hostel, this one above the train station is the place to break the habits of a lifetime. The rooms are simple but come with a bathroom, bed linen, and free wireless internet and free internet access. The service is arguably Lillehammer's friendliest and there's a spick-and-span communal kitchen.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Birkebeineren** (☎ 61 26 47 00; www.birkebeineren.no; Birkebeinervegen 24; s/d Nkr690/980, 2-/4-bed apt Nkr1080/1515; ☎) This very good place, on the road up to the bottom of the ski jump, offers a range of accommodation to suit different budgets; prices fall the longer you stay.

**Gjestehuset Ersgaard** (☎ 61 25 06 84; www.ersgaard.no; Nordseterveien 201; s/d with shared bathroom Nkr420/590, s with bathroom Nkr590, d with bathroom & view of farm/lake Nkr720/850; ☎) High on the hill overlooking Lillehammer, this fine old place has a rural patrician air and pretty rooms in refurbished farm buildings. It's quiet, loaded with character and the views are superb.

**Clarion Collection Hotel Hammer** (☎ 61 26 73 73; cc.hammer@choice.no; Storgata 108; s/d with half board from Nkr950/1050; ☎) This upmarket hotel has extremely comfortable rooms right in the heart of town. There's free wireless connection and the light evening buffet is another selling point.



**First Hotel Breiseth** (☎ 61 24 77 77; www.breiseth.com; Jernbanegata 1-5; s Nkr798-1190, d Nkr998-1398; P) This upmarket hotel opposite the train station has a range of attractive rooms, some of which reflect the hotel's august 110-year history while others are modern. Our only complaint? If the youth hostel can afford free wireless connection, we resent having to pay for it here.

**Mølla Hotell** (☎ 61 05 70 80; www.mollahotell.no; Elvegata 12; s/d Nkr895/1095; P) Built from the shell of an old mill, this fully refurbished hotel is one of Lillehammer's more original hotels, with mill machinery existing alongside flat-screen TVs. The rooftop bar has fine views and the architecture is distinguished.

## Eating

**Handleriet Kafé** (☎ 61 25 63 40; Torgguttua; menu Nkr115; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-4pm Sat) With the air of an English tea room, a wide-ranging menu of light meals and pastries and a pleasant outdoor terrace, this lovely old café just down the hill from Storgata is terrific.

**Øverlie Kafé** (☎ 61 25 03 61; Storgata 50; meals from Nkr50; ☎ 11am-11pm) Filling, inexpensive meals (eg meatballs and mashed potatoes) are the order of the day at this unpretentious pavement-side café.

**La Piccolo Italia** (☎ 61 05 45 10; Storgata 73; pasta from Nkr75, pizzas from Nkr75) This good Italian place spills over onto the pavement when the weather's warm. The food is authentically Italian and prices are reasonable.

**our pick Svare & Berg** (☎ 61 24 74 30; Elvegata; baguettes & sandwiches Nkr64-129, salads Nkr89-139, soups Nkr84-119; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Wed, 11am-midnight Thu, 11am-2am Fri & Sat) Right by Lillehammer's bubbling brook, this very cool café-bar-restaurant serves tasty light meals and great coffee. It's a popular spot for locals.

**Blåmann** (☎ 61 26 22 03; Lilletorget 1; snacks from Nkr75, lunch soup/full buffet Nkr65/135, mains Nkr195-330, children's meals Nkr35; ☎ 11am-11pm) This recommended spot has a clean-lined interior and a trendy menu that encompasses Mexican dishes, crocodile in Sichuan sauce, kangaroo and reindeer!

**Nikkers** (☎ 61 27 05 56; Elvegata 18; lunch Nkr75-125, baguettes from Nkr65, mains from Nkr139) Known as the place where a moose has apparently walked through the wall (look outside for the full effect), it serves international cuisine and has a pleasant outdoor terrace. The ambience is somewhere between English pub and Oslo café.

**Tapas** (☎ 61 24 77 88; Jernbanegata 1-5; tapas Nkr45-75; ☎ 6-11pm Mon-Thu, 6pm-midnight Fri & Sat) For a change of scene, try this Spanish-flavoured bar, which plays Latin music, does good tapas and has a pleasant, buzzy ambience when it's full.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Bars are an integral part of the Lillehammer experience, especially during the ski season.

**One-Hand Clapping** (☎ 61 25 12 22; Storgata 80; ☎ 9.10am-5pm Mon-Wed, 9.10am-6pm Thu & Fri, 9.10am-3pm Sat) This very cool little coffee shop does superb coffee (from Nkr25), as well as croissants and chocolate cake (Nkr20) to die for. The two easy chairs on the pavement are prime people-viewing spots if you're fortunate enough to snaffle one.

**Elvegata 17** (Elvegata 17; ☎ 2-11pm Mon-Thu, 2pm-2am Fri & Sat, 8pm-2am Sun) Lillehammer's trendiest little bar, Elvegata 17 draws a 20-something crowd. Mellow by day, it gets livelier as the night wears on.

**Blåmann** (☎ 61 26 22 03; Lilletorget 1) The downstairs Lille Blå of this stylish restaurant is informal, supercool and a great place to spend a summer's afternoon writing postcards. There's great coffee and drinks and it stays open until 2am on weekends.

Other restaurants which double as attractive bars include Nikkers, Svare & Berg and Tapas.

**Haakons Bar** (Storgata 93; ☎ 11am-3am) During the day Haakon's Bar is the preserve of elbow-on-the-bar locals and very slow. After the sun sets, it kicks into action, becoming a crowded and agreeable place to drink. It can get a little raucous during the ski season.

**Brenneriet/Bryggeriet** (Elvegata 19; ☎ 6pm-3am) This pub, nightclub and disco appeals to a varied clientele from the just-legal to time-worn veterans. It's not the classiest place in Norway, but it can be fun if your musical tastes aren't too discerning.

## Getting There & Away

**Lillehammer Skystasjon** (☎ 177) is the main transport terminal for buses, trains and taxis. There are Nor-Way Bussekspress services to/from Oslo (Nkr290, three hours, three to four daily) via Oslo's Gardermoen Airport (Nkr245, 2½ hours). To/from the western fjords, buses pass through Lillehammer several times daily. There's also one daily run to/from Bergen (Nkr515, 9¼ hours).



### PEER GYNT VEGEN

Of all the beautiful mountain roads of Central Norway, one stands out for its combination of scenery and storytelling: **Peer Gynt Vegen** ([www.peergyntvegen.no](http://www.peergyntvegen.no); toll Nkr60; ☎ Jun-Sep). Running for 60km from Skei to Espedalen, it takes you along the trail followed by that ill-fated, fictional character created by Henrik Ibsen and offers unrivalled views of the Jotunheimen and Rondane massifs en route. Climbing up to 1053m above sea level, it passes the Solbrå Seter farm where Gudbrandsdal cheese was first made in 1863 and an early August concert of Edvard Grieg's Peer Gynt finds its spiritual home at Gålåvatn lake. To reach Skei, head north of Lillehammer along the E6 and at Tretten take the turn-off for the Rv254. At Svingvoll, Peer Gynt Vegen branches off to the northwest.

Lavprisekspresen buses run less often but are cheaper (from Nkr149), and include Oslo, Trondheim and many towns in between.

Rail services run between Oslo (Nkr310, 2¼ hours, 11 to 17 daily) and Trondheim (from Nkr299, 4¼ to seven hours, four to six daily).

For details of the *Skibladner* paddle steamer, see the boxed text, opposite.

### AROUND LILLEHAMMER Hunderfossen

Some 15km north of Lillehammer, just off the E6, is Hunderfossen, home to the **Norwegian Museum of Road History** (Norsk Vegmuseum; ☎ 61 28 52 50; [www.vegmuseum.no](http://www.vegmuseum.no) in Norwegian; Hunderfossen; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-May-Aug, 10am-3pm Sep-mid-May), which tells the story of Norway's battle to forge roads through its challenging geography. Up the hill and part of the same complex, the **Fjellsprengnings-museet** (Rock-blasting Museum) is a 240m-long tunnel that gives you a real insight into the difficulties of building a tunnel through the Norwegian mountains. The walk, guided with lighting, models and video commentary, takes around 30 minutes.

Nearby is the **Hunderfossen Familiepark** (☎ 61 27 55 60; [www.hunderfossen.no](http://www.hunderfossen.no); Hunderfossen; adult/child Nkr280/235; ☎ 10am-8pm 23 Jun-5 Aug, closed 3 Sep-25 May, shorter hrs rest-of-year), one of Norway's best parks for children with water rides, 3-D presentations, fairy-tale palaces and wandering trolls.

Also in Hunderfossen, you can career down the **Olympic Bobsled Run** (☎ 61 27 75 50; Hunderfossen; admission to grounds Nkr15; ☎ 11am-6pm daily 30 Jun-19 Aug, 11am-6pm Sat 28 April-26 Jun & 25 Aug-16 Sep, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun 2-24 Jun, shorter hrs rest-of-year) aboard a **wheelbob** (adult/10-11-year-old-child Nkr190/95) under the guidance of a professional bobsled pilot. Wheel bobs take five passengers and hit a top speed of 100km/h. The real thing, **taxibobs** (adult around Nkr950; ☎ Nov-Easter), take four passengers,

reach an exhilarating 130km/h and you won't have much time to get nervous – you're down the mountain in 70 seconds. Bookings are advisable during winter.

In summer there are up to five buses a day from the Lillehammer Skysstasjon (adult/child Nkr35/20, 30 minutes) to Hunderfossen, with less frequent departures the rest of the year. A considerable uphill walk is involved to reach the bobsled run.

### Olympic Ski Slopes

Lillehammer has two Olympic ski slopes. **Hafjell Alpine Centre** (☎ 61 27 47 00; [www.hafjell.no](http://www.hafjell.no)), 15km north of town, hosted the downhill events, while the **Kvitfjell Alpine Facility** (☎ 61 28 36 30; [www.kvitfjell.no](http://www.kvitfjell.no)), 50km north of town, was dedicated to cross-country. Both offer public skiing between late November and late April and are connected by bus from the Lillehammer Skysstasjon.

### Aulestad

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1903 and lived on a farm at **Aulestad** (☎ 61 22 41 10; [www.maihaugen.no/aulesstad](http://www.maihaugen.no/aulesstad); Follebu; adult/child/student/pensioner Nkr 35/75/60/60; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm mid-end May & Sep), 18km northwest of Lillehammer. It has been lovingly restored, although you'll need your own vehicle to get here. For details on an entry ticket combined with sights in Lillehammer, see the boxed text, p163.

### HAMAR pop 27,909

For a town that would never win a beauty contest, Hamar has a surprising number of attractions. Most date from the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer when Hamar hosted a number of events, but there are also some good museums.

The **Hamar Regional Tourist Office** (☎ 62 51 75 03; [www.hamarregionen.no](http://www.hamarregionen.no) in Norwegian; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) is at the Viking Ship Sports Arena.

### Sights

#### VIKING SHIP SPORTS ARENA

Hamar's stand-out landmark is this **sports arena** (Vikingskipet; ☎ 62 51 75 00; [www.hoa.no](http://www.hoa.no) in Norwegian; Åkersvikaveien 1; entry Nkr30; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun late Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year), a graceful structure with the lines of an upturned Viking ship. The building, which hosted the speed skating during the Winter Olympics, holds 20,000 spectators, encompasses 9600 sq metres of ice and is 94.6m long. Both in scale and aesthetics, it's an impressive place. From late July to mid-August, the ice is open to the public for ice-skating (Nkr80).

#### NORWEGIAN RAILWAY MUSEUM

Established in 1896 to honour Norway's railway history, this open-air **railway museum** (Norsk Jernbanemuseum; ☎ 62 51 31 60; [www.norsk-jernbanemuseum.no](http://www.norsk-jernbanemuseum.no) in Norwegian; Strandveien 163; adult/child Nkr70/40; ☎ 10.30am-5pm daily Jul-19 Aug; 11am-3pm Tue-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun 20 Aug-Jun), lies on the Mjøsa shore. In addition to lovely historic stations, engine sheds, rail coaches and steam locomotives, you'll learn about the extraordinary engineering feats required to carve the railways through Norway's rugged terrain.

#### HEDMARK MUSEUM & GLASS CATHEDRAL

West of town (1.5km), the extensive open-air county **museum** (Hedmarkmuseet; ☎ 62 54 27 00; [www.domkirkeodden.no](http://www.domkirkeodden.no); Strandveien 100; adult/child/pensioner Nkr70/30/55; ☎ 10am-5pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun mid-May-mid-Jun & mid-Aug-mid-Sep) includes 18th- and 19th-century buildings, a local folk-history exhibit featuring the creepy Devil's Finger, the ruins of the castle, and the extraordinary showcase 'glass cathedral' (Domkirkeodden). The cathedral, whose ruins stand poignantly beneath the glass-and-steel roof, and castle dominated Hamar until 1567, when they were sacked by the Swedes. Take bus 6 from the town library (Nkr32, hourly).

#### NORWEGIAN EMIGRANT MUSEUM

Around 10km east of town, the fine open-air **Norwegian Emigrant Museum** (Norsk Utvandreremuseum; ☎ 62 57 48 50; [www.museumsnett.no/emigrantmuseum](http://www.museumsnett.no/emigrantmuseum);

Åkershagan; admission free; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-3.30pm Tue-Fri Sep-May) focuses on exhibits and archives from Norwegian emigrants to America from the 1880s. There's also a research library open to members (Nkr150).

### Festivals & Events

On the second weekend in June, Hamar hosts the **Middle Ages Festival** ([www.middelalderfestival.no](http://www.middelalderfestival.no)) with locals in period costume and Gregorian chants in the glass cathedral. In the first week of September, the **Hamar Music Festival** ([www.musicfest.no](http://www.musicfest.no) in Norwegian) attracts a growing band of international acts.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Vikingskipet Motell og Vandrerhjem** (☎ 62 52 60 60; [www.vikingskipet-motell.no](http://www.vikingskipet-motell.no); Åkersvikaveien 24; s/d Nkr690/790, 2-bed apt Nkr1190) Opposite the Viking Ship Sports Arena, this is an excellent choice with simple but very well-kept rooms and terrific self-contained apartments.

**Seiersted Pensjonat** (☎ 62 52 12 44; [www.seiersted.no](http://www.seiersted.no); Holsetgata 64; s/d Nkr450/695; ☎) Central Seiersted Pensjonat offers a family atmosphere, nicely decorated rooms and wireless access. Dinner is available from Nkr75.

**Scandic Hamar** (☎ 21 61 40 00; [www.scandic-hotels.com/hamar](http://www.scandic-hotels.com/hamar); Vangsvæien 121; s/d from Nkr720/920; ☎) With sleek-lined Scandinavian design, a gymnasium and convenient location, Scandic Hamar could just be Hamar's best address.

### WORLD'S OLDEST PADDLE STEAMER

**Skibladner** (☎ 61 14 40 80; [www.skibladner.no](http://www.skibladner.no)), the world's oldest paddle steamer, is a wonderfully relaxing way to explore lake Mjøsa. First built in Sweden in 1856, the boat was refitted and lengthened to 165ft (50m) in 1888. From late June until mid-August, the *Skibladner* plies the lake between Hamar, Gjøvik and Lillehammer. Most travellers opt for the route between Hamar and Lillehammer (one way/return Nkr220/320, 3½ hours) on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, which can be done as a return day trip (from Hamar only, Nkr320). Jazz evenings aboard the steamer cost Nkr450, including food (but not drinks).

Rack rates are expensive but there are always good deals happening on its website.

**Stallgården** (☎ 62 54 31 00; cnr Bekkegata & Torggata; lunch Nkr75-89, snacks & light meals Nkr70-160, mains Nkr179-260; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat) The downstairs café here is particularly popular for its outdoor tables in summer, while the upstairs restaurant is more formal.

### Getting There & Away

Frequent trains run between Oslo (Nkr205, 1¼ hours, once or twice hourly) and Trondheim (Nkr585, five hours, four or five daily) via Lillehammer. Trains also head to Røros (Nkr425, 3¼ hours, one to three daily). Lavprisexpressen buses go to Oslo (from Nkr149) and Trondheim (from Nkr199) one or two times a day.

## ELVERUM

pop 19,620

With a name like Elverum, you might expect a whiff of magic, but in reality this is a pretty nondescript town set amid the vast and lush green timberlands of southern Hedmark county. Its excellent forestry museum is the main reason to stop here en route elsewhere.

Elverum's **tourist office** (☎ 62 41 31 16; www.elverum-turistinfo.com; Storgata 24; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) is centrally located and brimful of information.

### Sights

The expansive **Norwegian Forestry Museum** (Norsk Skogmuseum; ☎ 62 40 90 00; www.skogmus.no in Norwegian; Rv20; adult/child/student & senior incl Glomdal Museum Nkr80/40/60; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 10am-4pm rest-of-year), 1km south of central Elverum, covers the multifarious uses and enjoyments of Norwegian forests. It includes a nature information centre, children's workshop, geological

and meteorological exhibits, wood carvings, an aquarium, nature dioramas with all manner of stuffed native wildlife (including a mammoth) and a 20,000-volume reference library.

The open-air **Glomdal Museum** (☎ 62 41 91 00; adult/child/student & senior incl Forestry Museum Nkr80/40/60; ☎ 10am-4pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug), across the bridge from the Forestry Museum, is a collection of 90 historic buildings from the Glomma valley.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Elverum Camping** (☎ 62 41 67 16; www.elverumcamping.no; Halvdans Gransvei 6; tent sites Nkr150, 2-bed cabin with/without bathroom Nkr900/450) This decent place is in a green setting south of the Norwegian Forestry Museum.

**Glommen Pensjonat** (☎ 62 41 12 67; Vestheimsgata 2; s/d from Nkr400/450) A simple but friendly guesthouse, Glommen Pensjonat lies 500m west of the town centre. It's a good choice for a more personal touch than most hotels.

**Elgstua** (☎ 62 41 01 22; Trondheimsveien 9; s/d from Nkr700/950) Although a little overpriced for its simple rooms, Elgstua is a traditional place that gets good reports from travellers.

**Forstmann** (☎ 62 41 69 10; mains from Nkr125; ☎ lunch & dinner mid-Jun-mid-Aug) The fish-and-game restaurant at the Forestry Museum serves good traditional Norwegian cooking.

### Getting There & Away

The Nor-Way Bussekspress 'Trysil Ekspresen' runs between Oslo (Nkr205, 2½ hours) and Trysil (Nkr107, 1¼ hours) via Elverum seven times daily.

## TRYSIL

pop 6782

Surrounded by forested hillsides close to the Swedish border, and overlooked by Norway's

largest collection of ski slopes, little Trysil is well worth a detour with year-round activities taking you off into the wilderness.

Although Trysil lives and breathes winter **skiing**, for the rest of the year you can do just about anything to keep active, from canoeing to canyoning or the more sedate pastime of fishing. Perhaps the most rewarding activity in summer is **cycling** with at least six cycle routes from 6km to 38km; route maps are available from the tourist office, while bike hire is available from **Trysil Hyttegrend** (see below; 1-/3-/6-days Nkr200/375/575). For horse-riding, contact **Trysil-stallen** (☎ 62 45 10 55; www.trysil-stallen.no; half-/full-day Nkr450/700).

**Trysil Tourist Office** (☎ 62 45 10 00; www.trysil.com; Storvegen 3; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun 25 Jun-12 Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year), just off the northern end of the main street, has loads of useful information.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Trysil Hyttegrend** (☎ 90 13 27 61; www.trysilhytte.com; Ørånset; 4-bed huts per day/week from Nkr450/1500; ☎ ☎) By the water's edge 2.5km south of town, this excellent site has many drawcards, with wireless internet, a wood-fired sauna and plenty of activities on offer.

**Trysil Hotell** (☎ 62 45 08 33; www.norlandia.no/trysil; Storvegen; d from Nkr830; ☎ ☎) One of the few Trysil hotels to open year-round, this good hotel is right in the centre of town. It also has a good restaurant.

### Getting There & Away

The Nor-Way Bussekspress 'Trysil Ekspresen' connects Trysil with Oslo (Nkr225, four hours) via Elverum (Nkr107, 1¼ hours) seven times daily.

## NORTHERN CENTRAL NORWAY

### RØROS

pop 5671

Norway's outstanding folk museums that recreate the past are no substitute for Røros, a charming Unesco World Heritage-listed village set in a small hollow of stunted forests and bleak fells. This historic copper-mining town (once called Bergstad, or mountain city) is home to colourful wooden houses that climb the hillside and a strong

community spirit. The Norwegian writer Johann Falkberget described Røros as 'a place of whispering history'. It makes for a good tourist brochure cliché, although in this case it happens to be true as Røros remains one of the most enchanting places in Norway.

### History

In 1644 a local, Olsen Åsen, shot a reindeer at Storvola (Storwartz). The enraged creature pawed at the ground, revealing a glint of copper ore. In the same year Røros Kobberverk was established, followed two years later by a royal charter that granted it exclusive rights to all minerals, forest products and waterways within 40km of the original discovery.

The mining company located its headquarters at Røros due to the abundant wood (fuel) and the rapids along the river Hyttelva, which provided hydroelectric power. The use of fire in breaking up the rock in the mines was a perilous business and cost Røros dearly. Røros first burnt to the ground during the Gyldenløve conflict with the Swedes between 1678 and 1679, and the smelter was damaged by fire again in 1953. In 1977, after 333 years of operation, the company went bankrupt.

### Information

**Biblioteket** (☎ 72 41 94 24; Fargarveien 4; ☎ 2-7pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 11am-4pm Tue & Thu, 11am-2pm Sat) Free, but time-limited internet access.

**Tourist office** (☎ 72 41 11 65; www.rorosinfo.com; Peder Hiorstgata 2; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-12.30pm Sat rest-of-year)

### Sights

For details of the Olavsgruva Mine and Johan Falkberget Museum, see p175.

### HISTORIC DISTRICT

Røros' historic district, characterised by the striking log architecture of its 80 protected buildings, takes in the entire central area. The two main streets, **Bergmannsgata** (it tapers from southwest to northeast to create an optical illusion and make the town appear larger than it is!) and **Kjerkgata**, are lined with historical homes and buildings, all under preservation orders. If you follow the river Hyttelva upstream, you'll reach the historic smelting district and its tiny turf-roofed **miners' cottages**.

### THE DARK DAYS OF WWI

Elverum played a proud but tragic role in the Norwegian resistance to the Nazis. When German forces invaded Norway in April 1940, King Håkon and the Norwegian government fled northwards from Oslo. They halted in Elverum and on 9 April the parliament met at the folk high school and issued the Elverum Mandate, giving the exiled government the authority to protect Norway's interests until the parliament could reconvene. When a German messenger arrived to impose the Nazis' version of 'protection' in the form of a new puppet government in Oslo, the king rejected the 'offer' before heading into exile. Two days later, Elverum became the first Norwegian town to suffer massive bombing by the Nazis and most of the town's old wooden buildings were levelled. By then the king had fled to Nybergsund (close to Trysil), which was also bombed, but he escaped into exile.

**RØROS**

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If Røros looks familiar, that's because several films have been made here, including Røros author Johan Falkberget's classic *An-Magrit*, starring Jane Fonda. Flanderborg gate starred in some of Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* classics and Røros even stood in for Siberia in *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

### RØROS KIRKE

Røros' Lutheran church (Kjergata; adult/child Nkr25/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-3pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) is one of Norway's largest with a seating capacity of 1640. Constructed in 1650, it had fallen into disrepair by the mid-18th century and from 1780 a new baroque-style church was built just behind the original at a cost of 23,000 riksdaler (one riksdaler is the equivalent of Nkr4, and at the time miners earned about 50 riksdaler per year).

The posh King's Gallery at the back, identified by both royal and mining company logos, has never hosted a king; visiting royals have always opted to sit among the people. Unusually, the pulpit sits over the

altarpiece, while the organ (1742) is the oldest Norwegian-built organ still functioning.

Until 1865 the building was owned by the mining company and this is reflected in the church art. By the altar you'll see the grizzled Hans Olsen Åsen, credited with the discovery of Røros copper, among other company dignitaries. There are also paintings of the author Johan Falkberget and the original 1650 church.

For five weeks from early July to early August, the church hosts organ recitals (adult/child Nkr50/free; ☎ 6pm Mon-Sat), sometimes accompanied by orchestral musicians from across Europe.

### RØROS MUSEUM

Housed in old smelting works, which were central to Røros' *raison d'être* from 1646 until 1953, this museum (☎ 72 40 61 70; Malmplassen; adult/child/senior/student/family Nkr60/30/50/50/140; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) is a town highlight. The building was reconstructed in 1988 according to the original 17th-century plan. Upstairs you'll find geological and conservation displays, while downstairs

are a large balance used for weighing ore, some well-illustrated early mining statistics, and brilliant working models of the mines and the water- and horse-powered smelting processes. Displays of copper smelting are held at 3pm from Tuesday to Friday from early July to early August.

Outside the museum entrance spreads the large open area known as the **Malmplassen** (Ore Place), where loads of ore were dumped and weighed on the large wooden scale. Just across the stream from the museum are the protected **slegghaugen** (slag heaps) from where there are lovely views over town.

In summer your entry ticket entitles you to a free guided tour at 11am, 12.30pm, 2pm or 3.30pm; the last is in English.

### Activities

**Hiking** (and, in winter, **nordic skiing**) possibilities abound across the semiforested Røros plateau; ask the tourist office for advice. Note, however, that many areas remain covered in snow well into the summer. **Hummelfjellet Alpine Centre** (☎ 62 49 71 00; www.hummelfjell.no in Norwegian), 16km south of Røros, has two lifts and six slopes, while **Ålen Ski Centre** (☎ 72 41 55 55), 34km northwest of town, boasts two lifts and four slopes.

A 1km walk northwest from central Røros will take you to the sand dunes of **Kvitsanden**, the largest in Scandinavia. Scoured, transported and deposited there by water flowing under an ancient glacier, they're more novel than beautiful.

Another kilometre to the west is **Skårhåmmårdalen**, a gorge with sand-lined pools, which offers **swimming** on hot days and appears as if it might harbour trolls.

The tourist office has details of **cycling, canoeing, horse riding** and **ice-fishing** for trout. For summer cycling, you can rent a mountain bike from **Røros Sport** (☎ 72 41 12 18; Bergmannsgata 13).

### Tours

In winter, **Alaskan Husky Tours** (☎ 62 49 87 66; www.huskytour.no in Norwegian; Os) organises two-hour excursions by dog-sled (adult/child/12-18-year-old Nkr590/190/290) or horse-drawn sleigh (Nkr600 per hour for four people); in summer dog-cart trips offer an all-you'll-get-at-this-time-of-year substitute. Its office is in Os, 22km southwest of Røros, but reservations can be made at the tourist office in Røros. You can also join a winter day trip to the

Southern Sami tent camp at Pinstitjønna, 3km from Røros, where you'll dine on reindeer and learn such unique skills as ice-fishing and axe-throwing. The three-hour tour costs around Nkr500 per person (minimum 10 people).

The tourist office runs excellent **guided walking tours** (adult/child Nkr60/free; ☎ tours 11am Mon-Sat May-mid-Jun & mid-Aug-mid-Sep, 10am, 11.30am, 1pm, 2.30pm Mon-Sat, noon & 2pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am Mon-Sat 1-19 Jun & 16 Aug-10 Sep, 11am Sat rest-of-year) of the historic town centre; the summer tours at 1pm Monday to Saturday and 2pm Sunday are in English or German.

### Festivals & Events

The biggest winter event is **Rørosmartan** (Røros Market), which began in 1644 as a rendezvous for hunters who ventured into town to sell their products to miners and buy supplies. Thanks to a royal decree issued in 1853 stipulating that a grand market be held annually from the penultimate Tuesday of February to the following Saturday, it continues today. Nowadays it's celebrated with cultural programmes, street markets and live entertainment.

In August every second year (2009, 2011 etc), Røros stages a nightly three-hour **rock opera** in Swedish entitled *Det Brinner en Eld*, or 'Fiery Call for Peace'. It recounts the invasion of Trøndelag by Sweden in 1718, covering the occupation of Røros and the subsequent death of thousands of soldiers on their frozen trek homewards to Sweden. It's enacted on the slag heaps in the upper part of town.

Other annual events: **Femund Race** (www.femundlopet.no/eng/) One of Europe's longest dog-sled races starts and ends in Røros in the first week of February. **Winter Chamber Music Festival** (www.vinterfestspill.no) Concerts held in Røros Kirke in the first week of March.

### Sleeping

The tourist office keeps a list of summer cabins and guesthouses, some within walking distance of town, from around Nkr2500 to Nkr4000 per week in the high season.

**Håneset Camping** (☎ 72 41 06 00; fax 72 41 06 01; Osloveien; tent or caravan sites Nkr130 plus per person Nkr25, 2-/4-bed cabins Nkr320/420) Simple but well-kept cabins are available at this excellent site, with cooking and laundry facilities, a common room and TV; it's about 2km south of town.

**Idrettsparken Hotell** (☎ 72 41 10 89; www.idrettsparken.no in Norwegian; Øra 25; tent/caravan sites from



Nkr100/155, cabins from Nkr420, hotel s/d from Nkr665/990, dogs Nkr100; (P) The family-run Idrettsparken Hotell, 500m south of the train station, has a range of options for most budgets.

**Erzscheidergården** (☎ 72 41 11 94; www.erzscheidergaarden.no; Spell Olaveien 6; s/d from Nkr790/990; (P) (Q)) This appealing 16-room guesthouse is up the hill from the centre and behind the church. The wood-panelled rooms are loaded with personality, the atmosphere is Norwegian-family-warmth and the breakfasts were described by one reader as 'the best homemade breakfast buffet in Norway'. We're inclined to agree.

**our pick Vertshuset Røros** (☎ 72 41 93 50; www.vertshusetroros.no; Kjerkgata 34; s/d from Nkr760/990, 2-/3-/4-bed apt Nkr1060/1305/1640; (P) (Q)) Located in a historic building on the main pedestrian thoroughfare, the Vertshuset Røros is another wonderful choice. The all-wood rooms are generously sized, have numerous period touches such as wooden beds with columns and arguably the most comfortable beds in town. If only all hotels in Norway had this much charm.

**Bergstadens Hotel** (☎ 72 40 60 80; www.bergstaden.no in Norwegian; Osloveien 2; s Nkr850-1395, d Nkr990-1495) This long-standing Røros hotel has pleasant, mostly modern rooms that won't win too many originality awards. Service can be a little impersonal.

**Quality Røros Hotel** (☎ 72 40 80 00; www.choice.no; An Magrit veien 10; s/d from Nkr845/1090) The Quality Røros is at the top end of town and has well-appointed rooms with a touch more character than most chains but far less than the smaller Røros hotels.

## Eating

Røros has some good restaurants, and most places have good-value lunchtime buffets or specials on offer.

**our pick Vertshuset Røros** (☎ 72 41 24 11; Kjerkgata 34; snacks Nkr71-119, starters Nkr81-145, mains Nkr195-270) Our favourite restaurant in town, Vertshuset Røros is both classy and casual with a small but select menu. For dinner, we couldn't bring ourselves to order the 'heart of reindeer', but the fillet of the same beast was sublime. Fresh mountain trout is another highlight. It's pricey, but easily worth it at least once.

**Papa's Pizza/Bodegaen** (☎ 72 40 60 20; Bergmannsgata 1; child's/small/large pizza Nkr49/90/170, pasta from Nkr129) Papa's, at the bottom end of Bergmannsgata, serves decent pizza, fish and

meat dishes. Its outdoor tables have views up this historic street.

**Krambuavis** (☎ 72 41 05 67; Kjerkgata 28; starters Nkr69-122, mains Nkr134-215) This is an excellent choice with large servings, friendly waiters and good food, which ranges from Mexican to spare ribs and fish dishes.

**Kaffetugu Cafeteria** (☎ 72 41 10 33; Bergmannsgata 18; lunch specials Nkr82-135, mains Nkr75-165; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) This informal cafeteria in a historic central building offers a good range of coffee, pastries, snacks and light meals. Its lunchtime specials are a little heavy on the potatoes, but the elk burger is good.

There are also many small coffee shops (some of which are attached to crafts and souvenir shops):

**Dahlsgården** (☎ 72 41 19 89; Mørkstugata 5;

☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun summer, shorter hrs rest-of-year)

**Galleri Thomasgården** (☎ 72 41 24 70; Kjerkgata 48;

☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun summer, shorter hrs rest-of-year)

**Tryggstads Bakeri** (☎ 72 41 10 29; Kjerkgata 12;

☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun) Great coffee and baked goodies.

## Entertainment

**Ramm Kjelleren** (☎ 72 41 24 11; Kjerkgata 34; ☎ 7pm-1am Wed, Fri & Sat) This wonderfully atmospheric place occupies the bank vaults of a building dating from the mid-1700s. Cool bar staff, great decoration and a buzzy ambience when full make for a great evening out. It offers (free) live music on Friday night at around 9pm.

## Shopping

Given its unaffected ambience, it isn't surprising that Røros has attracted dozens of artists and artisans.

**Galleri Thomasgården** (☎ 72 41 24 70; Kjerkgata 48; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun summer, shorter hrs rest-of-year) At the worthwhile Galleri Thomasgården, potter Torgeir Henriksen creates rustic stoneware and porcelain. You'll also find the wonderful nature-inspired wood carvings of Henry Solli. The player piano is one of only two in Norway and dates back to 1929.

**Potteriet Røros** (☎ 72 41 17 10; www.potteriet-ros.no in Norwegian; Fargarveien 4; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat) Here you'll find pottery based on traditional designs from all over Trøndelag, although there are also some creative mod-

ern interpretations. The pottery workshop next door is open to the public and staff are always happy to explain the history behind each design.

**Hartzgården Sølvsmie** (☎ 72 41 05 50; Kjerkgata; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun summer, shorter hrs rest-of-year) Of special interest is this silversmith's shop, where you'll find locally handcrafted silver jewellery with an emphasis on Viking themes, as well as a small historical jewellery exhibit.

## Getting There & Away

Røros has one **Coast Air** (www.coastair.no) flight to/from Oslo (from Nkr471) daily except Saturday. For tickets and information, contact **Røros Flyservice** (☎ 72 41 39 00; www.roros-flyservice.no).

Røros lies on the eastern railway line between Oslo (Nkr199, five hours, six daily) and Trondheim (Nkr159, 2½ hours); for Oslo, you may need to change in Hamar. The daily bus to Oslo (Nkr395, six hours) leaves at 12.40am.

## AROUND RØROS

### Olavsgruva Mine

The **Olavsgruva mine** (☎ 72 41 11 65; Kojedalen; adult/child/senior/student/family Nkr60/30/50/50/140; ☎ guided tours 11am, 12.30pm 2pm, 3.30pm & 5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) is 13km north of Røros. The moderately interesting exhibition is made worthwhile by **mine tours**, which pass through the historic Nyberget mine, dating from the 1650s. The modern Olavsgruva mine beyond it was begun in 1936. The ground can get muddy and the temperature in the mine is 5°C; bring a jacket and good footwear. To get to the mine, use your own wheels or take a taxi (Nkr450 return).

### Johan Falkberget Museum

Røros' favourite son, author Johan Falkberget (1879-1967), grew up at Trondalen farm in the Rugel valley. His works (translated into 19 languages) cover 300 years of the region's mining history. His most famous work, *An-Magrit*, tells the story of a peasant girl who transported copper ore in the Røros mining district. The **museum** (☎ 72 41 46 31; Ratvolden; adult/child Nkr60/30; ☎ 11.30am-3pm Tue-Sun Jul-early Aug, 11.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun early Aug-mid-Sep) is beside the lake Rugelsjø, 20km north of Røros. Guided tours run at noon Tuesday to Sunday, with an extra one at 1.30pm in July. To get there, take a local train to Rugeldalen sta-

tion, where a small walking track leads to the museum.

## FEMUNDSMARKA NATIONAL PARK

The national park that surrounds Femunden, Norway's second-largest lake, was formed in 1971 to protect the lake and the forests stretching eastwards to Sweden. Indeed, the landscapes here are more Swedish in appearance than recognisably Norwegian. The park has long been a source of falcons for use in the European and Asian sport of falconry and several places in the park are known as Falkangerhøgda, or 'falcon hunters' height'. If you're very lucky, you may also see wild reindeer grazing in the heights and, in summer, a herd of around 30 musk oxen roams the area along the Røa and Mugga Rivers (in winter they migrate to the Funäsdalen area). It's thought that this group split off from an older herd in the Dovrefjell area and wandered all the way here (see the boxed text, p179).

## Sleeping

The two main sleeping options are **Johnsgård Turistcenter** (☎ 62 45 99 25; www.johnsgard.no; Sømådalen; tent sites Nkr130, 4-bed cabin from Nkr170), 9km west of Buvika; and **Langen Gjestegård** (☎ 72 41 37 18; fax 72 41 37 11; Synnervika; s/d from Nkr250/450), a cosy turf-roofed farmhouse near the lake.

## Getting There & Away

The historic ferry *M/S Fæmund II* is more than a century old and sails daily between mid-June and late August from Synnervika (also spelt Søndervika), on the northern shore of lake Femunden, to Elgå (six hours return). At the height of summer, the boat sometimes continues on to Buvika and even Femundsenden, at the lake's southern tip. A timetable is available from Røros tourist office (p171).

From mid-June to late August, buses leave Røros train station for Synnervika 45 minutes before the boat's departure. Buses for Røros later meet the boat at Synnervika. You can reach the southern end of Femunden on the Trysil Ekspressen buses (change in Trysil for Engerdal/Drevsjø).

## OPPDAL

### pop 6531

Oppdal isn't the most architecturally distinguished town in central Norway, but the beauty of its surrounds more than compensates. Oppdal is also an activity centre

## OPPDAL ACTIVITIES

### White-water Rafting

The nearby, wild and white Driva promises excellent rafting runs from May to October. The outdoor adventure company **Opplev Oppdal** (☎ 72 40 41 80; www.opplev-oppdal.no in Norwegian; Olav Skasliens vei 12) organises trips, from the relatively tame Class I-II family trips to full-day Class III-IV trips that provide substantial thrills. Prices range from Nkr590 to Nkr830 per person per day.

The same company also offers canoe rental (from Nkr320 per day), river surfing (Nkr830) and rock climbing (Nkr830).

### Musk Ox & Elk Safaris

To see the decidedly prehistoric musk ox (see the boxed text, p179), take one of the five- to six-hour safaris (adult/child Nkr285/175; ☞ 9am mid-Jun–mid-Aug) organised by Oppdal Booking (see below).

The humble elk can also be tracked down by taking an elk safari, which leaves on Wednesday evenings (Nkr250, two to three hours) in summer and can be booked through the tourist office.

### Hang-gliding

To get an aerial view of scenic Central Norway, a tandem hang-glide could be just what you need. To find out more, contact **Walter Brandsegg** (☎ 72 42 21 30; walter@brandsegg.no); costs start from around Nkr550 per person.

### Skiing & Snowboarding

The three-part Oppdal Skisenter climbs the slopes from Hovden, Stølen and Vangslia, all within easy reach of town. The smaller Ådalen ski area nearby has two lifts. Vangslia is generally the easiest, with a couple of beginners' runs, while Stølen offers intermediate skiing and Hovden has three challenging advanced runs. Lift passes for one/two/three days cost Nkr295/540/760. The season runs from late November to late April.

*par excellence* and that's why most people come here.

The **tourist office** (☎ 72 40 04 70; www.oppdal.com; ☞ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) has information on local activities and the wider attractions of central Norway.

**Oppdal Booking** (☎ 72 40 08 00; www.oppdal-book-ing.no; ☞ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 8am–6pm daily mid-Jan–Easter, shorter hrs rest-of-year) is a central reservations service for accommodation and activities including trips to see musk ox; booking fees apply.

### Sleeping & Eating

If you're unable to find a bed, contact Oppdal Booking or the tourist office for assistance.

**Oppdalstunet Vandrerhjem** (☎ 72 42 23 11; oppdal.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Gamle Kongsvei; dm/s/d Nkr150/370/450; ☞ May–Nov) This place, 1.5km northeast of central Oppdal, offers good hostel accommodation on a gentle rise overlooking the valley.

**Quality Oppdal Hotel** (☎ 72 40 07 00; www.choice.no; Olav Skasliens vei 8; s/d Nkr1250/1450) Part of the Choice Hotels network, this comfortable hotel

offers pleasant rooms that are overpriced, but easily the best in central Oppdal; prices sometimes drop in summer.

**Sletvold Apartment Hotel** (☎ 72 40 40 90; booking@sletvold-stolen.no; Gamle Kongsvei; s/d from Nkr805/1015) If you don't mind being on the town's northern fringe, this fine place (part of the Norlandia hotel network) represents excellent value with tidy, appealing rooms, some of which have views down the valley.

**Møllen Restaurant & Pizzeria** (☎ 72 42 18 00; Dovreveien 2; pasta & kebabs Nkr79–139, small/large pizza from Nkr85/159, mains Nkr135–215) In the town centre alongside the E6, this is a good choice if you feel like a sit-down meal that's a cut above hamburgers, but with a reasonable price tag.

**Café Ludvik** (☎ 72 42 01 40; Inge Krokanns vei 21; mains Nkr69–159) The popular Café Ludvik is also good, though with a touch less class. It serves a range of inexpensive light meals, including beef dishes, omelettes and pasta. It's 300m south of the centre.

**Perrongen Steak House** (☎ 72 40 07 00; starters Nkr89–115, mains Nkr115–245) This place, in the Quality Oppdal Hotel, has the best food and

the most sophistication of any place in town. Reindeer steak goes for Nkr255.

### Getting There & Away

The best access to Oppdal is via the four or five daily train services between Oslo (Nkr199 to Nkr674, five hours) and Trondheim (Nkr199 to Nkr213, 1½ hours). Oppdal lies on the twice-daily Nor-Way Bussekspress route between Bergen (Nkr686, 12½ hours) and Trondheim (Nkr210, two hours). Cheaper Lavprisexpressen buses (from Nkr149) also pass through once or twice daily en route between Oslo and Trondheim.

### TROLLHEIMEN

The small Trollheimen range, with a variety of trails through gentle mountains and lake-studded upland regions, is most readily accessed from Oppdal. You can either hitch or hike the 15km from Oppdal up the toll road (Nkr30) to **Osen**, which is the main entrance to the wilderness region. The best map to use is Statens Kartverk's *Turkart Trollheimen* (1:75,000), which costs Nkr120 at the tourist office in Oppdal.

A straightforward hiking destination in Trollheimen is the hut and historic farm at **Vassendsetra**. From Osen (the outlet of the river Gjevilvatnet), 3km north of the main road to Sunndalsøra, you can take the boat *Trollheimen II* all the way to Vassendsetra (Nkr150 return). From July to mid-August it leaves from Osen daily at noon and from Vassendsetra at 3.30pm. Alternatively, it is possible to drive or hike 6km along the road from Osen to the DNT hut, **Gjevilvasshytta**, and follow the lakeshore trail for another 12km until you come to **Vassendsetra** (☎ 72 42 32 20; fax 72 42 34 30; dm for DNT members/nonmembers Nkr150/230, breakfast Nkr75/125, dinner Nkr160/200; ☞ Jul & Aug). About midway you'll pass several outstanding sandy beaches, with excellent summer swimming.

The popular three-day 'Trekanten' hut tour follows the impressive Gjevilvasshytta–Trollheimshytta–Jøldalshytta–Gjevilvasshytta route; contact Oppdal Booking (opposite) for details.

### DOMBÅS

pop 2812

Dombås, a popular adventure and winter-sports centre, makes a convenient break for travellers between the highland national parks

and the western fjords. That said, there's more choice of activities to the north in Oppdal (p175), while for rafting you should head to Sjøa (p182).

**Dovre fjell National Park Centre** (Dovre fjell Nasjonalparksent; ☎ 61 24 14 44; domaas@nasjonalparker.org; Sentralplassen; admission free; ☞ 9am–8pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) is an adjunct to the **tourist office** (☎ 61 24 14 44; www.dovrenett.no; ☞ 9am–8pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9am–4pm Mon–Fri rest-of-year).

### Sights

The **Dovregubbens Rike Trollpark** (☎ 61 24 12 90; www.trollpark.com; Sentralplassen; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☞ 10am–7.45pm Mon–Fri, 10am–6.45pm Sat, 11am–6.45pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 10am–4pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat rest-of-year) brings to life the legendary Norwegian trolls and the 'Realm of the Mountain King' (the Dovre massif), inhabited by the friendliest and most powerful troll. There's also a film explaining local natural history and various displays, from stuffed animals and prehistoric hunting techniques to the creation of national parks in the region.

### Tours

**Moskus-Safari Dovrefjell** (☎ 99 70 37 66; www.moskus-safari.no) offers a range of well-run, guided tours including:

**Elk Safari** This tour (Nkr250) departs from the tourist office from mid-June to mid-August Tuesday to Thursday; advance booking required.

**Hiking to Snøhetta** This five- to seven-hour (Nkr450) guided hike to the summit of Snøhetta (2286m) runs on Saturday from mid-June to mid-August, requires a minimum of five people and reservations are essential.

**Musk Ox Safari** This five-hour tour (Nkr300) departs at 9am from the tourist office from 10 June to at least the end of August and weekends in September. No advance booking is necessary.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Bjørkhol Camping** (☎ 61 24 13 31; www.bjorkhol.no; Bjørkhol; tent/caravan sites Nkr90/110, 2-/4-bed cabin with shared bathroom from Nkr240/350, 2-bed cabins with bathroom from Nkr550) One of Norway's best-value and probably friendliest camp sites is 7km east of Dombås. The facilities are in excellent nick and a bus runs several times daily from Dombås.

**Trolltun Gjestegård & Dombås Vandrerhjem** (☎ 61 24 09 60; www.trolltun.no; hostel dm/d/f Nkr200/550/600, hotel s/d Nkr670/960) This excellent place is 1.5km northeast of town, up the hill from the E6. The



setting's lovely, the rooms tidy and the meals reasonably priced. A good choice.

**Norlandia Dovrefjell Hotell** (☎ 61 24 10 05; www.norlandia.no; s/d Nkr1020/1200) This is another good place with attractive rooms and it's just far enough removed from the centre to remind you that you're on the fringe of a wilderness area. You'll find it off the E136, about 2km northwest of the centre.

The main commercial complex in the centre includes the popular **Frich's Cafeteria** (☎ 61 24 10 23; Sentralplassen; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner), which serves cheap if unimaginative meals. In the same complex is **Senter-Grillen** (☎ 61 24 18 33; Sentralplassen; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner), which serves pizza.

### Getting There & Away

Dombås lies on the railway line between Oslo (Nkr565, 3¼ hours) and Trondheim (Nkr352, 2½ hours). It is also the cut-off point for the spectacular Raumabanen line down Romsdalen to Åndalsnes (Nkr198, 1¼ hours, two or three daily). Nor-Way Bussekspress buses between Bergen (Nkr631, 11¼ hours) and Trondheim (Nkr315, 3¼ hours) call in twice daily in either direction. Cheaper Lavprisekspresen buses (from Nkr149) also pass through en route between Oslo and Trondheim.

The drive from Dombås to Åndalsnes, which also goes down the Romsdalen (107km), is spectacular.

### DOVREFJELL-SUNNDALSFJELLA NATIONAL PARK

This 4367-sq-km national park, Norway's largest continuous protected area, protects the dramatic highlands around the 2286m-high Snøhetta and provides a suitably bleak habitat for Arctic foxes, reindeer, wolverines and musk oxen. Snøhetta can be ascended by hikers from Snøheim (allow six hours). The Knutshøene massif (1690m) section of the park, east of the E6, protects Europe's most diverse intact alpine ecosystem.

The **Fokstumyra marshes** are home to an astonishing array of bird life. Approximately 75 species nest in the area and up to 40 others are occasionally observed. Among the more unusual species breeding near the water are the ruff, great snipe, Temminck's stint, whimbrel, great northern diver (loon), lapwing, lesser white-fronted goose and hen harrier. Species that breed in the surrounding

hills and forests include the snow bunting, ring ouzel, fieldfare, purple sandpiper, great grey shrike, dipper, brambling, peregrine falcon, dotterel, short-eared owl, raven and shore lark.

Many of these species can be viewed from the 7km-long marked trail near the Dombås end of the reserve; note that from May to July, visitors are restricted to this trail to prevent disturbance of nesting birds.

For more information, visit the Dovrefjell National Park Centre (p177), while a variety of tours into the park are covered on p177.

To get there, you could also rent a bike from the Dombås tourist office (per hour/day Nkr35/100) or otherwise take a taxi (around Nkr170 one way).

Hikers will fare best with the Statens Kartverk map *Dovrefjell* (1:100,000). However, it doesn't include the Knutshø section; for that, you need Statens Kartverk's *Einunna 1519-I* and *Folldal 1519-II* topographic sheets.

### Sleeping & Eating

The original DNT **Snøheim** hut was, thankfully, judged to be too near the army's Hjerkin firing range and was replaced by the new self-service **Reinheim** hut, 5km north and at 1341m, in Stropsjødalen. DNT also maintains several other self-service huts in the adjacent Skrymtheimen region; keys are available from Dombås tourist office.

**Kongsvold Fjeldstue** (☎ 72 40 43 40; www.kongsvold.no; Kongsvold; d from Nkr650) Park information, maps, meals and accommodation are available at this charming and historic place, 13km north of Hjerkin on the E6. The intriguing early-18th-century timber buildings huddle deep in Drivdalen, 500m from tiny Kongsvold station (trains stop only on request). Every room is different.

**Hjerkin Fjellstue** (☎ 61 24 29 27; www.hjerkin.no in Norwegian; Hjerkin; s/d from Nkr625/950) This cosy inn is about 1.5km east of Hjerkin on Rv29. The rooms in the annexe are simple but fine and a lot cheaper than the main hotel building. There's also a restaurant and camping is available.

### Getting There & Away

There's no public transport into the park, although tours from Dombås offer musk ox safaris (see p177). The only public transport between Dombås and Hjerkin is by train (Nkr77, 25 minutes).

### MUSK OX

Although a member of the family Bovidae, the musk ox (*Ovibos moschatus*) bears little resemblance to its nearest relations (sheep, goats and cattle) or indeed to any other animal. During the last ice age, it was distributed throughout the northern hemisphere's glaciated areas. Wild herds can now be found in parts of Greenland, Canada, Alaska and the Dovrefjell-Sunddalsfjella and Femundsmarka National Parks in Norway.

The musk ox, weighing between 225kg and 445kg, has incredibly high shoulders and an enormous low-slung head with two broad, flat horns that cross the forehead, curving outwards and downwards before twisting upwards and forwards. Its incredibly thick and shaggy coat, with a matted fleece of soft hair underneath, covers the whole body and hangs down like a skirt to almost reach the ground. Below this hair only the bottom part of the legs protrudes, giving the animal a solid, stocky appearance reminiscent of a medieval horse dressed for a joust. During the rutting season, when the males gather their harems, they repeatedly charge each other, butting their heads together with a crash that's often heard for miles around. This heated battle continues until one animal admits defeat and lumbers off.

Traditionally, the musk ox's main predator has been the wolf; its primary defence is to form a circle with the males on the outside and females and calves inside, trusting in the force of its collective horns to rip open attackers. This defence has proven useless against human hunters, especially the Greenlandic Inuit, and numbers have been seriously depleted. Only with restocking have they been able to thrive again.

In 1931 10 animals were reintroduced to Dovrefjell from Greenland. Musk oxen all but vanished during WWII, but 23 were transplanted from Greenland between 1947 and 1953. The herd has now grown to around 80 animals and some have shifted eastwards into Femundsmarka National Park to form a new herd.

Your best chance of seeing the musk ox is to take a musk ox safari, either from Oppdal (see the boxed text, p176) or Dombås (p177). You may also see them while hiking through the Røa and Mugga Rivers section of Femundsmarka National Park (p175) in summer.

Musk oxen aren't inherently aggressive toward humans, but an animal that feels threatened can charge at speeds of up to 60km/h and woe betide anything that gets in its way. Hikers should stay at least 200m away; if an animal seems agitated or paws at the ground don't run, but back off slowly until it relaxes.

### OTTA

pop 3724

Set deep in Gudbrandsdalen, Otta occupies a strategic position at the confluence of the Otta and Lågen Rivers. Despite this promising location, it's not the region's prettiest town, although, to be fair, we were last there on a rainy Sunday and Monday when the town was not at its best. Otta's main attraction is as the gateway to Rondane National Park.

**Rondane National Park Centre** (☎ 61 08 08 70; otta@nasjonalpark.org; Johan Nygårdgata 17a; ☺ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 61 23 66 50; www.visitrondane.com; Otta Skystasjon; ☺ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year)

### Sights

The unusual 6m-high natural pillar formations of **Kvitiskriuprestene** (White-screed Priests)

resemble an assembly of priests and were formed by erosion of an Ice Age-moraine (deposit of material transported by a glacier). They're 4km east along the Nkr10 toll road from Sel towards Mysusæter, and a steep 20-minute hike uphill.

### Sleeping

**Otta Camping** (☎ 61 23 03 09; www.ottacamping.no in Norwegian; Ottadalen; tent or caravan sites for 2 people Nkr130, 4-bed cabins Nkr350-550) The convenient and popular riverside Otta Camping is a 1.5km walk from the train and bus stations; cross the Otta bridge from the centre, turn right and continue about 1km upstream.

**Killis Overnatting** (☎ 61 23 04 92; Ola Dahls gate 35; s/d/tr with shared bathroom Nkr250/280/325) The Killis Overnatting offers simple rooms (a shower cost Nkr5) and it is overseen by a delightful woman who will make you feel right at home.

## GURI SAVES THE DAY

During the Kalmar War between Sweden and Denmark, when Norway was united with Denmark, 550 Scottish mercenaries arrived in Norway in August 1612 to aid the Swedes. Word spread through Gudbrandsdalen and local peasants armed themselves with axes, scythes and other farming implements. They stacked rocks and branches to block the track and, to set up a diversion, placed several older men across the river to fire their muskets at the column, using blanks.

As the Scots reached a narrow section of path between the river and a steep hillside at Høgkringom, 3km south of Otta, the heroic Pillarguri (Guri) dashed up the hill to announce their arrival by sounding her shepherd's birch-bark horn. The old farmers began to fire. The Scots fired back across the river, then responded to Guri's music by waving their hats and playing their bagpipes, unaware of the trap.

As Guri sounded her horn again, more rocks were tumbled over the trail behind the column, blocking any retreat. The farmers attacked with rocks and their crude weapons, savagely defeating the trapped contingent and making the river flow red with blood.

Only six farmers were killed in the battle. The victors intended to take the 134 surviving Scots as prisoners to Akershus Fortress in Oslo. However, during the victory celebrations at Kvam, the farmers, who had to get on with their harvest and couldn't be bothered with a tiresome march, executed the prisoners one by one.

The exploits of the peasant 'army' are still remembered in Otta, where the local *bunad* (national costume) is a distinctly un-Norwegian tartan and there's a statue of Pillarguri near the train station. There's also a war memorial at Kringom commemorating the victory, across the river from which rises the hill Pillarguri.

**Grand Gjestegård** (☎ 61 23 12 00; fax 61 23 04 62; Ola Dahlgate; s/d Nkr610/840) Recently renovated and the busy hub of the little that happens in Otta, the Grand Gjestegård wins plaudits for its friendly welcome and pleasant rooms.

**Norlandia Otta Hotell** (☎ 61 21 08 00; www.norlandia.no/otta; Ola Dahlgate 7; s/d Nkr820/1095) Don't be put off by the run-down 1980s exterior or that this place may be less personal than the other places; the rooms are large, comfortable and well-appointed.

## Eating

In addition to the restaurants at the Grand Gjestegård and Norlandia Otta Hotell, there are two other decent options.

**Milano Restaurant & Pizzeria** (☎ 61 23 19 93; Storgata 17B; pasta Nkr90-109, small/large pizza Nkr90/180, other mains Nkr115-179; ☎ 1-11pm Sun-Thu, 1-11.30pm Sat) One of the most popular places in town, this Otta institution has more than 80 menu items to choose from and the outdoor balcony is the place to eat them in summer.

**Pillarguri Kafé** (☎ 61 23 01 04; Storgata 7; mains Nkr85-179) Another good choice of eatery, the Pillarguri promises a varied menu, with Norwegian fare (reindeer stew costs Nkr145) as well as sushi and a range of cheaper lunch specials.

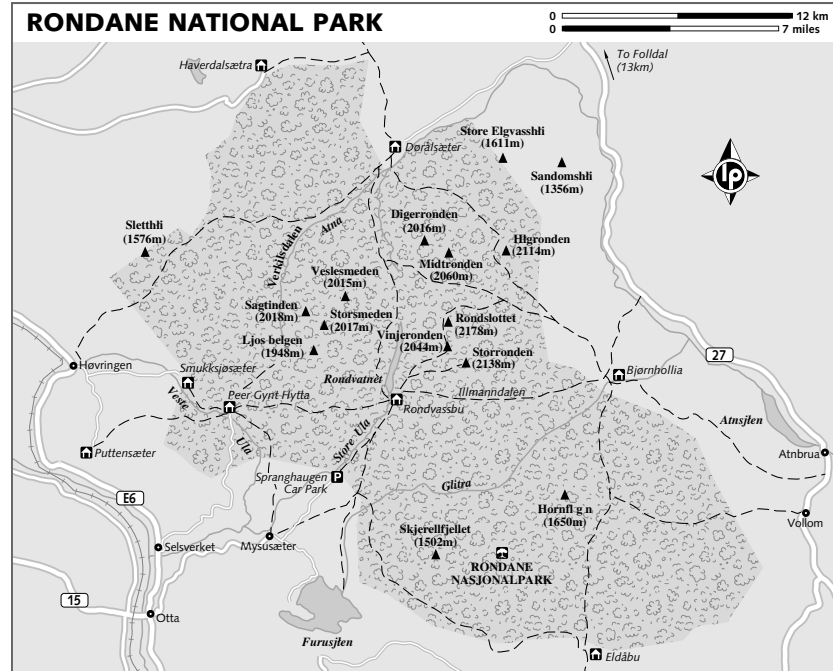
## Getting There & Away

Local buses to/from Lom (normal/express Nkr78/99, two/one hours) leave up to six times daily, less often on weekends. Nor-Way Bussekspress has buses to/from Lillehammer (Nkr180, two hours, up to five daily) and Oslo (Nkr410, five hours). Cheaper Lavprisekspresen buses (from Nkr149) also pass through once or twice daily. The town also lies on the Dovre rail line between Oslo (Nkr491, 3¼ hours) and Trondheim (Nkr426, three hours) and there are services to Bergen (Nkr964, 11 daily).

## RONDANE NATIONAL PARK

Henrik Ibsen described the 963-sq-km Rondane National Park (www.visitrondane.com) as 'palace piled upon palace'. It was created in 1962 as Norway's first national park to protect the fabulous Rondane massif, regarded by many as the finest alpine hiking country in Norway. Ancient reindeer-trapping sites and burial mounds suggest that the area has been inhabited for thousands of years and the park is now one of the last refuges for the wild reindeer. Much of the park's glaciated and lichen-coated landscape lies above 1400m and 10 rough and stony peaks rise to over 2000m, including the highest, Rondsloppet (2178m),

## RONDANE NATIONAL PARK



and Storronden (2138m). Rondane's range of wildlife includes 28 mammal species and 124 bird species.

If you're driving, the 87km-long Rv27 between Folldal and the E6 5km north of Ringebu is a stunningly beautiful route that runs along the Rondane range.

For hikers, Rondane provides ample opportunities for high-country exploration and the relatively dry climate is an added bonus, although the season only runs in July and August. The most accessible route into the park is from the Spranghaugen car park, about 13km uphill along a good road from Otta and via the toll road (Nkr10). From there, it's a straightforward 6km (1½ hour) hike to **Rondvassbu**, where there's a popular, staffed DNT hut; there are other DNT huts in the park.

From Rondvassbu, it's a five-hour return climb to the summit of Storronden. Alternatively, head for the spectacular view from the more difficult summit of **Vinjeronden** (2044m), then tackle the narrow ridge leading to the neighbouring peak, Rondsloppet (about six hours return from Rondvassbu).

The best maps to use are Statens Kartverk's *Rondane* (1:100,000; Nkr99) and *Rondane Sør* (1:50,000).

Just down the hill from the 'Bom' (toll post) gate is a small shop selling staple provisions and supplies. Camping is permitted anywhere in the national park except at Rondvassbu, where you're restricted to the designated area. **Mysusæter Fjellstue** (☎ 61 23 39 25; www.mysuseterrondane.no; Mysusæter; dm Nkr250, d with/without bathroom Nkr650/585) promises a basic roof over your head; while the **Rondane Spa Høyfjellshotell** (☎ 61 20 90 90; www.rondane.no; Mysusæter; per person with full board from Nkr850) is a comfortable upmarket option with good spa facilities, including pedicures for worn-out hikers' feet.

## Getting There & Around

In summer, buses run twice daily between Otta and Mysusæter (Nkr29, 45 minutes), from where it's a further 4km to the car park.

From Rondvassbu, the ferry *Rondegubben* crosses the lake Rondvatnet to Nordvika (Nkr50, 30 minutes) three times daily from early July to late August.

**WET & WILD IN SJOA**

Sjoa is arguably the white-water rafting capital of Norway. The season runs from the middle of May until early October. Excursions range from sedate Class I runs (ideal for families) up to thrilling Class Vs. Prices start from Nkr500 for a 3½-hour family trip; there are also half-day trips (from Nkr565) through to seven-hour day trips (from Nkr790), or even two-day expeditions (from Nkr2150) that pass through the roiling waters of the Åsengjuvet canyon.

The main players for this activity include:

**Go Rafting** (☎ 61 23 50 00; www.gorrafting.no in Norwegian) About 3.5km north of Sjoa along the E6.

**Heidal Rafting** (☎ 61 23 60 37; www.heidalrafting.no; Sjoa) Just 1km west of E6 along Rv257.

**Sjoa Adventure** (☎ 93 40 65 00; www.sjoaadventure.com; Sjoa)

**Sjoa Rafting** (☎ 90 07 10 00; www.sjoarafting.com; Nedre Heidal) Some 7.5km upstream from Sjoa along Rv257.

**Sjoa Rafting Senter NWR** (☎ 61 23 07 00; www.sjoaraftingsenter.no; Varphaugen Gård) About 3km upstream from Sjoa along Rv257.

**Villmarken Kaller** (☎ 90 52 57 03; www.villmarken-kaller.no) About 20km upstream from Sjoa along Rv257.

Most of these companies also organise other activities, including riverboarding, low-level rock climbing, canyoning, caving and hiking.

**SJOA**

The small settlement of Sjoa, 10km south of Otta, would have little to detain you were it not for the fact that this is one of the major white-water rafting centres in Norway (see the boxed text, above).

Most rafting participants stay at atmospheric **Sjoa Vandrerhjem** (☎ 61 23 62 00; www.heidalrafting.no; dm Nkr155-230, 2-bed r incl breakfast Nkr320-420; ☎ mid-May-Sep), a hillside hostel. Dinner costs Nkr100 and is served in the wonderful 1747 log-farmhouse building.

The camp site at **Sæta Camping** (☎ 61 23 51 47; tent/caravan sites Nkr130/170, 1-5-bed hut per person from Nkr375) is down by the river bank. It's a pleasant grassy site with a front-row seat for some of the minor rapids.

Nor-Way Bussekspress bus routes between Oslo (Nkr400) and the western fjords pass through Sjoa three times daily.

**RINGEBU**

pop 4457

The southernmost small community of Gudbrandsdalen, the narrow river valley that stretches for 200km between lake Mjøsa and Dombås, Ringebu is worth a detour for its lovely **stave church** (☎ 61 28 43 50; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☎ 8am-6pm Jul, 9am-5pm late May-Jun & Aug), 2km south of town and just off the E6. A church has existed on this site since the arrival of Christianity in the 11th century. The current version, which remains the local parish church, dates from around 1220, but

was restored in the 17th century when the distinctive red tower was attached. Inside, there's a statue of St Laurence dating from around 1250 as well as some crude runic inscriptions. Entrance to the grounds is free and the gate is open year-round. Some 300m uphill to the east, the buildings from 1743 house **Ringebu Samlingene** (☎ 61 28 27 00; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug), which served as the vicarage until 1991.

For further information, contact the Ringebu **tourist office** (☎ 61 28 47 00; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Thu, 8am-8pm Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, 5-8pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year).

Nor-Way Bussekspress bus routes between Oslo (Nkr355, five hours) and the western fjords stop in Ringebu three times daily. Cheaper Lavprisexpressen buses (from Nkr149) to Oslo or Trondheim also pass through one or two times a day. Trains to Oslo (Nkr403, 2¾ hours) or Trondheim (Nkr514, 3½ hours) stop in Ringebu four or five times daily.

**WESTERN CENTRAL NORWAY****LOM**

pop 2436

If you were to set up a town as a travellers' gateway, you'd put it somewhere like Lom, in the heart of some of Norway's most spectacular mountain scenery. Roads lead from

Lom to Geiranger (74km; p259) and the staggering Sognefjellet Road leads from here across the top of the Jotunheimen National Park (p184). Lom itself is picturesque with a lovely stave church.

**Information**

The helpful **Lom tourist office** (☎ 61 21 29 90; www.visitlom.com or www.visitjotunheimen.com; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri & 10am-7pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year), in the Norwegian Mountain Museum, dispenses advice and brochures. It also provides free internet access.

**Sights****LOM STAVKYRKJE**

This delightful 12th-century Norman-style **stave church** (☎ 97 07 53 97; adult/child Nkr45/free; ☎ 9am-8pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 10am-4pm mid-May-mid-Jun & mid-Aug-mid-Sep), in the centre of town on a rise by the water, is one of Norway's finest. Still the functioning local church, it was constructed in 1170, extended in 1634 and given its current cruciform shape with the addition of two naves in 1663. Guided tours explain the interior paintings and Jakob Sæterdalen's chancel arch and pulpit (from 1793). At night, the church is lit to fairy-tale effect. Entry to the grounds is free.

In the adjacent souvenir shop, there's a small **museum** (admission Nkr10; ☎ same hrs as church) about the stave church.

**FOSSHEIM STEINSENTER**

The **Fosheim Steinsenter** (☎ 61 21 14 60; www.fosheimsteinsenter.no; admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) combines Europe's largest selection of rare and beautiful rocks, minerals, fossils, gems and jewellery for sale and it also includes a large museum of Norwegian and foreign geological specimens; we found stones from Gabon, Congo and Brazil.

The knowledgeable owners of the centre, both avid rock collectors, travel the world in search of specimens but they're especially proud of the Norwegian national stone, thulite. It was discovered in 1820 and is now quarried in Lom; the reddish colour is derived from traces of manganese.

**NORWEGIAN MOUNTAIN MUSEUM**

Acting as the visitors centre for Jotunheimen National Park, this worthwhile **mountain museum** (Norsk Fjellmuseum; ☎ 61 21 16 00; www.fjell

.museum.no; adult/child Nkr50/free; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest-of-year) contains mountaineering memorabilia, exhibits on natural history (the woolly mammoth is a highlight) and cultural and industrial activity in the Norwegian mountains. There's also an excellent 10-minute mountain slide show, a discussion of tourism and its impact on wilderness and, upstairs, a scale model of the park.

**PRESTHAUGEN OPEN-AIR MUSEUM**

Behind the mountain museum, this **museum** (Presthaugen Bygde-museum; ☎ 61 21 19 33; www.gbdmuseum.no; adult/child Nkr40/10; ☎ 11am-5pm late Jun-mid-Aug, guided tours 11.30am & 2.30pm Mon-Fri) is a collection of 19th-century farm buildings, several *stabbur* (elevated storehouses), an old hut (it's claimed that St Olav slept here) and a summer mountain dairy.

**Activities**

Although most of the serious trekking takes place in neighbouring Jotunheimen National Park, there are several **hiking trails** closer to town; ask the tourist office for maps, directions and its 'Footpaths in Lom' pamphlet. A popular route is the 3km return loop up Lomseggi (1289m) to the century-old stone cottage called Smithbue, with some excellent views of Ottadalen and Bøverdalen en route.

For something a touch more energetic, contact **Naturopplevingar** (☎ 61 21 11 55; www.naturopplevingar.no in Norwegian), which can organise ski tours and climbing. For an adrenaline rush contact **Skjåk Rafting** (☎ 99 77 50 88; www.skjak-rafting.no, in Norwegian; Skjåk); its base is in Skjåk, 18km upstream from Lom along Rv15.

For a full list (including prices) of hikes, glacier walks and ice-climbing in Jotunheimen National Park, pick up a copy of *Sognefjellet - Activities and Attractions* from the Lom tourist office.

**Sleeping & Eating**

Lom has three places to stay, all of which are recommended.

**Nordal Turistsenter** (☎ 61 21 93 00; www.nordalturistsenter.no; tent sites Nkr170-240, s/d/f Nkr660/950/1400, light meals from Nkr50) A busy, rambling place in the centre of town, the Nordal Turistsenter has something for everyone with comfy rooms, self-catering cabins and a camp



site at the water's edge. It also has a casual cafeteria-style restaurant that serves simple meals, and a cosy pub.

**our pick Fossheim Turisthotell** (☎ 61 21 95 00; www.fossheimhotel.no; hotel s/d Nkr925/1250, hotel annexe s/d Nkr800/950, 4-bed apt Nkr1700) This historic family hotel at the eastern end of town is one of the best hotel-restaurant combinations in Norway. The all-wood rooms in the main hotel building are lovely (we especially like rooms 401 and 402 for the balconies and views), while there are also luxurious log cabins with modern interiors and simpler, cheaper rooms (some with good views) in the adjacent annexe. But this place is more famous for formerly being the home kitchen of the renowned Norwegian chef Arne Brimi (open 1pm to 3.30pm and 7pm to 10pm). Now under the care of Brimi's protégés, the traditional Norwegian food is exquisite. Specialities include wild trout, reindeer, elk and ptarmigan. The lunch buffets are highly recommended (from Nkr250), while the evening meals consist of three-/four-course set menus (Nkr250/495).

**Fossberg Hotell** (☎ 61 21 22 50; www.fossberg.no; s/d Nkr850/1150; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Although not in the same league as the Fossheim Turisthotell, this is nonetheless an appealing place in the centre of town. The pine-clad rooms are tidy and pleasant and there's a gymnasium for guests. It also has a popular cafeteria (light meals from Nkr55, mains Nkr115 to Nkr215) where the food's nothing to write home about, but at least the outdoor tables are a pleasant place to do so.

**Kafe Isbar** (☎ 61 21 92 05; light meals Nkr79-125; ☎ 11am-9pm) Also in the centre of town, this informal café has an upstairs terrace with fine views.

## Shopping

In addition to the shop at the Fossheim Steinsenter (p183), the small **Brimi Bue** (☎ 61 21 95 92; www.brimibue.no in Norwegian; ☎ 10am-8pm Jul, 10am-4pm Aug-Nov & Apr-Jun), next to the Fossheim Turisthotell, has cookbooks, organic foods and kitchenware inspired by Arne Brimi.

## Getting There & Away

The thrice daily Nor-Way Bussekspress service between Oslo (Nkr470, 6½ hours) and Måløy (Nkr340, 4½ hours) passes through Lom. It's also on Ottadalen Billag's summer route between Otta (Nkr100, one hour) and

Sogndal (Nkr230, 3½ hours, two daily), which serves Sognefjellet Rd from late June to early September. The *Sognefjellet – Activities and Attractions* brochure from the Lom tourist office has a timetable.

## AROUND LOM

If eating at the Fossheim Turisthotell has you inspired by the food of Arne Brimi and you want to taste meals cooked by the man himself, **Vianvang** (☎ 90 50 24 69 or 41 93 11 11; www.brimiland.no in Norwegian; ☎ by appointment) is the master-chef's highland restaurant that he opens only by appointment. Here you can watch him work as he cooks up a gourmet meal. If you're coming from Lom along the Rv15, take the Rv51 towards Randsverk just before you reach Vågåmo (Vågå). Prices depend on the banquet and seasonal produce prices, but having arguably Norway's finest chef prepare a meal for you doesn't come cheap. It is, however, always worth it.

To stay nearby, **Brimisæter** (☎ 91 13 75 58; www.brimi-seter.no; per person around Nkr300) is a former summer mountain dairy with a simple but lovely rural family ambience and plenty of animals that kids will love. **Brimi-Fjellstugu** (☎ 61 23 98 12; www.brimi-fjellstugu.no; per person from Nkr475) offers higher levels of comfort in the same stirring mountain setting.

## JOTUNHEIMEN NATIONAL PARK

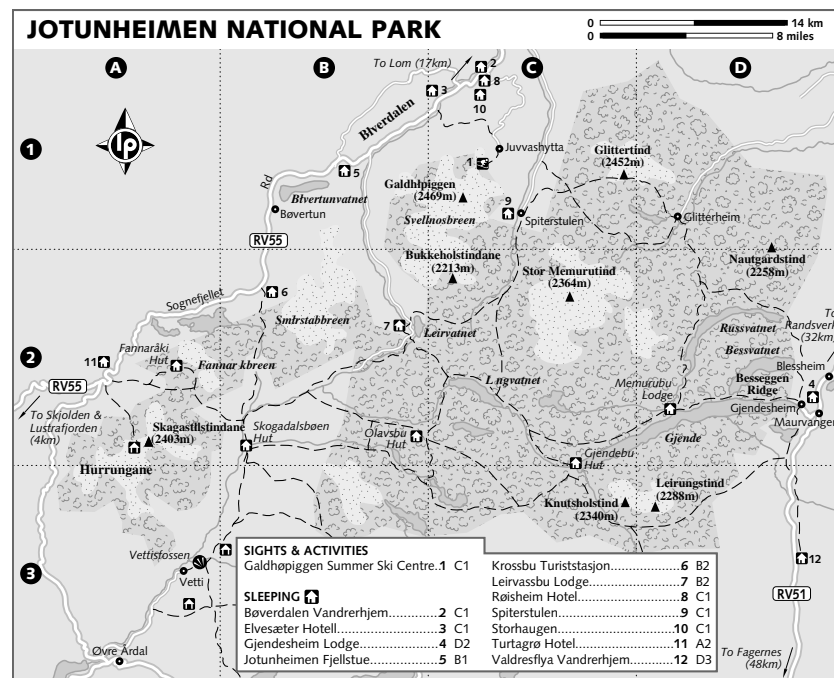
The high peaks and glaciers of the Jotunheimen National Park (1151 sq km) make for Norway's best-loved and busiest wilderness destination. Hiking routes lead from ravine-like valleys and past deep lakes, plunging waterfalls and 60 glaciers to the tops of all the peaks in Norway over 2300m, including Galdhøpiggen (the highest peak in northern Europe at 2469m), Glittertind (2452m) and Store Skagastølstind (2403m). By one count, there are more than 275 summits above 2000m inside the park. DNT maintains staffed huts along most of the routes and there's also a choice of private lodges by the main roads.

For park information, contact Lom tourist office (p183).

## Sights & Activities

### SOGNEFJELLET ROAD

Snaking through the park (and providing access to many of the trailheads) is the stunningly scenic Sognefjellet Road (Rv55), billed as 'the road over the roof of Norway'.



It connects Lustrafjorden with Lom and was constructed in 1939 by unemployed youths to a height of 1434m, making it the highest mountain road in northern Europe and providing those with a vehicle a taste of some of Norway's finest mountain panoramas. So fine is the road that it has been chosen as one of 18 'National Tourist Routes' (see the boxed text, p414); visit www.turistveg.no/index.asp?lang=eng for more information about the road.

Access from the southwest is via the multiple hairpin bends climbing up beyond the tree line to **Turtagro**, with a wonderful vista of the **Skagastølstindane** mountains on your right. If you're coming from Lom, the ascent is more gradual, following beautiful **Bøverdalen**, the valley of the Bøvra River, with its lakes, glacial rivers, grass-roofed huts and patches of pine forest. The road summit on **Sognefjell** offers superb views.

The snow sometimes doesn't melt until at least early July, although the road is usually open from May to September. Even so, at higher elevations visitors should prepare for new snow at any time of year. The road

can get very narrow and snow is often piled metres high on either side of the road. There are plenty of places to pull over and allow cars to pass (not to mention admire the spectacular view) and there are ample camping and other accommodation options lining the road (see p187).

Although this road is mainly traversed by motorised transport, the Sognefjellet Road also has legendary status among cyclists and frequently appears on lists of the world's most spectacular cycle routes. It's a serious undertaking that requires high levels of fitness and perfect brakes, but if you're a cyclist there are few finer roads in Norway.

From mid-June to late August, **Ottadalen Billag** (☎ 61 23 44 55; www.fjord1.no) has buses that run between Otta and Sogndal (Nkr230, 3½ hours, two daily) via Sognefjellet Road.

## GALDHØPIGGEN SUMMER SKI CENTRE

Juvvashytta hut serves as the gateway to this **ski centre** (☎ 61 21 17 50; fax 61 21 21 72), at 1850m on the icy heights of Norway's highest mountain. From Galdesand on the Rv55, follow the Galdhøpiggen road (Nkr70 toll) to its end at

## HIKING IN JOTUNHEIMEN

Jotunheimen's hiking possibilities are practically endless and all are spectacular. The best maps are Statens Kartverk's *Jotunheimen Aust* and *Jotunheimen Vest* (1:50,000; Nkr99 each). The tourist office in Lom can offer advice, route descriptions and guided hikes through the park.

### Krossbu

Krossbu, near the head of Bøverdalen, lies at the outset of a tangle of hiking routes, including a short day trip to the Smørstabbreen glacier.

### Galdhøpiggen

With its dramatic cirques, arêtes and glaciers, this is a fairly tough eight-hour day hike from Spiterstulen, with 1470m of ascent. Although the trail is well marked, you'll need a map and compass.

### Øvre Årdal

From Øvre Årdal, head 12km northeast up the Utladalen valley to the farm Vetti, from where hiking tracks lead to Vettisfossen (275m), usually described as Norway's highest free-falling waterfall, and also to the unstaffed hut at Stølsmaradalen. This is an alternative access route, via upper Utladalen, to longer hikes in Jotunheimen.

### The Hurrungane

The fabulous Hurrungane massif rises darkly above the westernmost end of the park. Most experienced mountaineers will be able to pick their way to some of these prominent peaks, with several even accessible to skilled scramblers.

Most people head eastwards from Turtagrø. From the hotel, a four-hour hike will take you to Norway's highest DNT hut, Fannaråki, on the summit of Fannaråken (2069m), with astonishing views. To get started, walk about 500m up the road and follow the track up Helgedalen. At Ekrehytta hut, a narrow track starts a steep 800m climb to the top.

1841m. The main season runs from June to mid-November. Apart from the skiing opportunities, this road takes you to the highest point reachable by road in Norway.

### OTHER SCENIC DRIVES

Although most travellers will want to explore the following routes by car, serious cyclists will also enjoy the challenge.

### Turtagrø to Øvre Årdal

The toll mountain road between Turtagrø and the industrial town of Øvre Årdal is one of Norway's most scenic short drives. Open from late May to October, it leads above the tree line through wild and lonely country. From late June to late August, the route is served by daily bus (Nkr100, one hour). The vehicle toll (Nkr50) is collected by an isolated gatekeeper at the pass (1315m).

### Randsverk to Fagernes

Between Randsverk and Fagernes, the Rv51 climbs through the hilly and forested Sjødalen

country onto a vast upland with far-ranging views of peaks and glaciers. It's one of Norway's most beautiful mountain routes and is used by lots of hikers heading for Jotunheimen's eastern reaches. En route it passes the DNT hut at **Gjendesheim**, the launching point for the popular day hike along the Besseggen ridge.

From mid-June to early September, two daily buses run between Otta and Gol, via Vågå, Randsverk, Gjendesheim, Valdresflya and Fagernes. You'll have to change at Gjendesheim. From Otta, the trip to Gjendesheim takes two hours and costs Nkr89. Valdresflya is just 15 minutes further.

### Jotunheimvegen

Branching off the Rv51 at Bygdin, the 45km-long Jotunheimvegen (www.jotunheimvegen.no) to Skåbu is much quieter and every bit as picturesque. It's usually open from mid-June until October, depending on the weather, and you pay a Nkr100 toll, which seems expensive, but it is the only way the authorities can make maintenance of the road viable. There's no

You can either return the way you came or descend the eastern slope along the well-marked track to Keisarpasset and thence back to Ekrehytta. To launch into a multiday trip, you can also descend Gjertvassdalen to Skogadalsbøen hut and then choose from one of many routes eastwards through Jotunheimen.

### Besseggen

No discussion of hiking in Jotunheimen would be complete without mention of Besseggen ridge, the most popular hike in Norway. Indeed, some travellers find it *too* popular, with at least 30,000 hikers in the three months a year that it's passable. If you want to avoid the crowds, choose another route, but if you don't mind sacrificing solitude for one of Norway's most spectacular trips, you probably won't regret it. Henrik Ibsen wrote of Besseggen: 'It cuts along with an edge like a scythe for miles and miles...And scars and glaciers sheer down the precipice to the glassy lakes, 1600 feet below on either side.' So daunting did it appear to him, that one of Peer Gynt's mishaps was a plunge down to the lake on the back of a reindeer.

The day hike between Gjendesheim and Memurubu Lodge takes about six hours and climbs to a high point of 1743m. From Gjendesheim hut, follow the DNT-marked track towards Glitterheim for about 30 minutes, where a left fork strikes off up the Veltløyfti gorge, which leads upward onto the level Veslefjellet plateau.

After a short descent from the plateau the track leads you onto the Besseggen ridge, which slices between the deep-blue lake Bessvatnet and the 18km-long glacier-green lake Gjende, coloured by 20,000 tonnes of glacial silt that is dumped into it each year by the Memuru River.

Besseggen is never less than 10m wide and only from a distance does it look precarious. After passing the head of Bessvatnet, the route passes a small plateau lake, Bjørnbøltjønn, and shortly thereafter begins its descent to the modern Memurubu Lodge.

Once there, you can decide whether to take the boat *M/S Gjende* back to Gjendesheim (Nkr67, 30 minutes, five daily in summer), continue west to Gjendebu hut, either on foot or by boat (Nkr67, 30 minutes), or hike north to Glitterheim.

public transport along the route but there are camp sites at Beitostølen and Skåbu. The route also links up with Peer Gynt Veggen (see the boxed text, p168).

### Sleeping & Eating

The following places all lie on, or are accessible from, the Sognefjellet Road, starting from those closest to Lom. Most open only from May to September, later if the weather permits.

**Spiterstulen** (☎ 61 21 14 80; www.spiterstulen.no; Spiterstulen; tent sites per person Nkr50, d with shared bathroom & without/with own bed linen Nkr410/305) The private Spiterstulen lodge, at an old *sæter* (summer dairy), is convenient for access to Galdhøpiggen. The toll road to Spiterstulen costs Nkr60 per vehicle. On foot, you can approach on the five-hour marked route from Leirvassbu hut, further west.

**Bøverdalen Vandrerhjem** (☎ /fax 61 21 20 64; boverdalen.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Bøverdalen; dm Nkr160, s/d with shared bathroom Nkr250/380, breakfast Nkr65; ☞ Jun-Sep) This fine riverside hostel has a small café,

tidy rooms and delightful surrounds to enjoy once the day-trippers have returned home.

**Røisheim Hotel** (☎ 61 21 20 31; www.roisheim.no; Bøverdalen; s/d from Nkr1000/1200) This charming place combines rustic, historical buildings with modern comforts. Quite simply, it's a wonderful place to stay, although prices fluctuate and can soar once you include meals.

**Storhaugen** (☎ /fax 61 21 20 69; www.storhaugengard.no; Bøverdalen; cabin Nkr350-1500) A highly recommended upmarket alternative is this friendly farm run by Marit and Magner Slettede. It's a traditional-style timber farm with views of both the Jotunheimen heights and Bøverdalen. At Galdesand, turn south on the Galdhøpiggen road and continue 1.5km to the signposted turn-off for Storhaugen.

**Elvesæter Hotell** (☎ 61 21 20 00; www.elveseter.no; Bøverdalen; s/d Nkr750/975, 3-course dinner Nkr285) This comfortable hotel is high on novelty value, adjacent as it is to the Sagasøyla, a 32m-high carved wooden pillar tracing Norwegian history from unification in 872 to the 1814 constitution.

**Leirvassbu Lodge** (☎ 61 21 29 32; fax 61 21 29 21; dm DNT members/nonmembers Nkr150/160, s/d with bathroom Nkr650/990) Leirvassbu, a typical mountain lodge at 1400m and beside Leirvatnet lake, is a good hiking base; guided glacier walks on Smørstabbreen cost around Nkr600. Despite its large capacity, it can get crowded. The toll on the access road is Nkr50 per car.

**Jotunheimen Fjellstue** (☎ 61 21 29 18; www.jotunheimen-fjellstue.no; s/d Nkr845/1190, 3-course menu Nkr395) This modern mountain lodge has a lovely location, good rooms and decent food.

**Krossbu Turiststasjon** (☎ 61 21 29 22; www.krossbu.no in Norwegian; d with/without bathroom Nkr360/255) At this roadside lodge, the larger rooms have attached bath and dinner is available. Guided glacier hikes and courses cost Nkr300 (four to six hours) if there are enough people.

**Turtagrø Hotel** (☎ 57 68 08 00; www.turtagrø.no; s/d Nkr1150/1670, tower r Nkr2050, full board from Nkr1340/2130; 🍴) This historic hiking and mountaineering centre is a friendly and laid-back base for exploring Jotunheimen/Hurrungane. The main building was completely destroyed by fire in 2001, but a new building has arisen in its place, with wonderful views and supremely comfortable rooms. It also conducts week-long climbing

courses and guided day trips (hiking, climbing and skiing). There's also a great bar full of historic Norwegian mountaineering photos. The dining room serves hearty meals (daily special Nkr89, available until late afternoon).

Across the mountains on the eastern side of the park, you'll find the popular **Gjendesheim Lodge** (☎ 61 23 89 10; www.gjendesheim.no; beds DNT members Nkr105-200, nonmembers Nkr170-265) and the quiet, well-run hostel **Valdresflya Vandrrehjem** (☎ 22 71 34 97; Valdresflya; dm/s/d Nkr150/250/310), about 15 minutes' drive south from Gjendesheim. The latter place prides itself on being the highest hostel in northern Europe (1389m). There's no guest kitchen but breakfast/dinner costs Nkr65/120 and there's a daytime café serving excellent waffles to passers-by.

## HARDANGERVIDDA

The desolate and beautiful Hardangervidda plateau, part of the 3430-sq-km Hardangervidda National Park, ranges across an otherworldly tundra landscape that's the southernmost refuge of the Arctic fox and Norway's largest herd of wild reindeer (caribou). Long a trade and

### HIKING THE HARDANGERVIDDA

Trekking through the Western Hardangervidda is possible only in July and August – for the rest of the time, snow and the possibility of sudden changes in weather conditions make setting out hazardous. Before exploring the park, visit the Hardangervidda Natursenter (p216), which is the best of its kind in Norway. It sells maps and the staff can offer advice on hiking routes, quite apart from have a wonderful exhibition on the park. Hikers and skiers will find the Turkart map *Hardangervidda* (Nkr125), at a scale of 1:100,000, to be the map of choice for locals. For an overview of trekking routes, get hold of its brochure *Eidfjord Tour Guide – Hardangervidda*. You should also pick up *Hytteringen Hardangervidda Nasjonalpark* (www.hardangerviddanett.no), which gives the run-down on mountain huts. The Bergen Turlag DNT office (p193) is another good source of information.

There are numerous trailheads, among them the waterfalls at Vøringfoss (p217) and Finse (opposite). Some of our favourites include:

- **Finse to Vøringfoss** (two days) The steepest hiking country of Hardangervidda, skirting the Hardangerjøkulen glacier and overnighting in Rembesdalsseter; you could also make the two-hour (one-way) detour to Kjeåsen Farm (p216).
- **Vøringfoss to Kinsarvik via Harteigen** (three to four days) To the picturesque mountain of Harteigen with its panoramic views of Hardangervidda, then down the monk's stairway to Kinsarvik (p218).
- **Halne to Dyranut via Rauhellere** (two days) Trails lead south off the Rv7 with strong chances of encountering reindeer herds.

There are also enticing options if you set out from Geilo (opposite) or Finse (opposite). For details of other adventure possibilities on the plateau, see the boxed text, p157.

### RALLARVEGEN

The Rallarvegen, or Navvies' Road, was constructed as a supply route for Oslo-Bergen railway workers (the railway opened on 27 November 1909). Nowadays, this 80km route of asphalt and gravel extends from Haugastøl through Finse and all the way down to Flåm, and is only open to bicycle and foot traffic. To make the trip from Finse to Flåm means that you get the best of the stunning scenery of the emblematic Flåmsbana railway (p234) with the additional benefit of being able to stop whenever you like to enjoy the view. The popular stretch between Vatnahalsen and Flåm descends 865m in 29km, with an initial series of hairpin bends. Brakes on bikes usually have to be changed after just one descent!

Cyclists and hikers will find optimum conditions between mid-July and mid-September. Most people do the route from east to west due to the significant altitude loss.

To rent bikes (Nkr420 to Nkr820 depending on the date and type of bike) ready for the Rallarvegen challenge, contact **Finse 1222** (☎ 56 52 71 00; www.finse1222.no); bikes must be booked before arriving in Finse due to high demand in summer and prices include the return bike transportation fee on the train.

travel route connecting eastern and western Norway, it's now crossed by the main railway and road routes between Oslo and Bergen.

Reindeer numbers have dropped in recent years, from a high of around 19,000 in 1998 to around 7000. This fall in numbers is, however, part of a programme of resource management by the park's authorities as a ban on hunting until recently meant that herd numbers became too large and reindeer body weights began to fall dangerously due to a lack of sufficient fodder.

Old snow lingers here until early August and new snow is a possibility at any time of year. The perils of this wild country were brought home in March 2007 when two Scottish cross-country skiers died after being caught in snow and freezing fog.

### GEILO

pop 3150

At Geilo (pronounced Yei-lo), midway between Oslo and Bergen, you can practically step off the train onto a ski lift. In summer, there's plenty of fine hiking in the area. A popular nearby destination is the expansive plateau-like mountain called Hallingskarvet, frosted with several small glaciers. For more information, contact the Geilo **tourist office** (☎ 32 09 59 00; www.geilo.no; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun Jul-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-Jun).

**Geilo Aktiv** (☎ 32 08 75 20; www.geiloaktiv.com in Norwegian) offers glacier trekking on Hardangerjøkulen (1862m) three times a week from July to mid-September. The standard 10-hour tour (including train to and from Finse)

costs Nkr650 per person. The company also offers a variety of rafting tours, riverboarding and a two-hour moose safari that occurs once a week.

### Sleeping & Eating

Geilo has dozens of accommodation choices, most of which are geared towards the adventure and outdoor-activity crowds. The tourist office has a full list.

Some of the more reasonable options include: **Øen Turistsenter & Geilo Vandrrehjem** (☎ 32 08 70 60; www.oenturist.no; Lienvegen 137; dm Nkr275, s/d Nkr470/650, breakfast Nkr60); **Haugen Hotell** (☎ 32 09 66 00; www.haugenhotell.no; Gamleveien 16; s/d from Nkr515/750); and **Ro Hotell & Kro** (☎ 32 09 08 99; www.rohotell.no; Geilovegen 55; s/d Nkr575/750, dinner mains from Nkr90).

### Getting There & Away

Most visitors arrive on the train between Oslo (Nkr421, 3½ hours, five daily) and Bergen (Nkr378, three hours).

### FINSE

Heading west from Geilo, the railway line climbs 600m through a tundra-like landscape of lakes and snowy peaks to Finse, lying at 1222m near the Hardangerjøkulen icecap. This region offers nordic skiing in winter and hiking in summer, not to mention what could be Norway's steepest mountain bike ride (see boxed text above).

East of Finse station, the **Finse Navvies Museum** (Rallarmuseet Finse; ☎ 56 52 69 66; adult/child Nkr50/20; ☎ 10am-8pm Jul-Sep) traces the history of the Oslo-Bergen railway and the 15,000



people who built this hard-won line in 2.5 million worker days.

### Hiking

Finse is the starting point for some exceptional treks, including the popular four-hour trek to the Blåisen glacier tip of Hardangerjøkulen; some Norwegians-in-the-know claim this to be the most spectacular glacier walk in the country. Adding interest to your hike, remember that scenes of the planet Hof in the *Empire Strikes Back* were filmed around the glacier. It's also possible to walk around the glacier and down to Vøringfoss (see the boxed text, p188). The wonderful three- or four-day Finse–Aurland trek follows Aurlandsdalen down to Aurlandsfjorden and has a series of

DNT and private mountain huts a day's walk apart. For more on this route, see p238.

### Sleeping & Eating

Most budget travellers stay at the staffed DNT hut, **Finsehytta** (☎ 56 52 67 32; dm Nkr110-250), while the friendly **Finse 1222** (☎ 56 52 71 00; [www.finse1222.no](http://www.finse1222.no); full board Nkr900-1200) offers comfortable rooms in sight of the glacier, and a good three-course dinner; Finse 1222 is also the starting point and best source of information for many of the activities in the region.

### Getting There & Away

Five daily trains run between Oslo (Nkr499, 4½ hours) and Bergen (Nkr299, 2¼ hours) via Finse.

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