

Friluftsliv Fact Sheet

The Meaning of Friluftsliv

Friluftsliv is a Norwegian word loosely translated as “open air life,” which characterizes Norwegian culture. Norwegians embrace nature and enjoy the outdoors as a way of life. Ultimately, *friluftsliv* offers the possibility of recreation, rejuvenation and restoring balance among living things.

The Origins of Friluftsliv

The term *friluftsliv* was first used in print by famous Norwegian writer, dramatist and poet, Henrik Ibsen in 1859. Another important voice for *friluftsliv* includes 20th century Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, founder of the deep ecology movement.

Norwegians also relate to several Norwegian adventurers who have an enthusiasm for nature and a desire to explore the world and test their own limits. Examples of such adventurers include:

- Børge Ousland, a polar explorer and one of National Geographic's best speakers
- Thor Heyerdahl who is most famous for his balsa raft expeditions, Kon Tiki and Ra
- Cato Zahl Peterson, a one-armed adventurer who among several other expeditions has climbed Himalaya

Norwegians and Friluftsliv

The dominant form of Norwegian *friluftsliv* involves people going out for a walk in nature, either alone or with family and friends, and typically starts at their own home and ends back at their home later in the day. The purpose behind the walks varies from person to person. For some individuals it is to experience nature and for others it may be to socialize or to participate in physical activity. The walks are often longest on Saturdays and/or Sundays, and are frequently taken during the week.

Examples of typical *friluftsliv* experiences include:

- Exploring nature on foot or with skis during the winter
- Experiencing nature by biking, boating, canoeing, skating, etc.
- Experiencing additional activities during walks such as fishing, hunting, berry picking, mushroom gathering, photography or observing plants and birds

Norway's law of *allemannsrett* encourages *friluftsliv*. Literally translated, *allemannsrett* means “all man's right.” Norway is one of the few countries in the world that honors the right of access to, and passage through, uncultivated land in the countryside, regardless of who owns it. It is also applied to cultivated land when it is frozen and snow-covered.

Allemannsrett can be traced back to the Viking period and is institutionalized in Norway through the Outdoor Recreation Act. Norwegians, therefore, are free to travel where they like on foot or on skis (motor vehicles are an exception from the law) and to picnic and camp where they like, as long as they are considerate of landowners and other users.

Unique Characteristics of Friluftsliv

What characterizes the Norwegian cultural phenomenon *friluftsliv* vs. other international recreational activities?

- Practicing *friluftsliv* is not dependant on large expenses for travelling and equipment – you just go and get outside
- In Norway, nature and cultural landscape experiences are easily accessible and available to all – within walking distance from major population centers
- Passing on the tradition through natural social groups – family and friends
- *Friluftsliv* is not dependant on organizations; it is possible for individuals to choose their own time and place for practicing it

Benefits of Friluftsliv

There are many physical and psychological benefits that are intrinsic to the *friluftsliv* lifestyle, including the following:

- increased physical activity
- reduced stress levels through a connection with nature
- spending quality time alone or with loved ones

For more information on *friluftsliv* and Norway, visit www.visitnorway.com/friluftsliv