

City of explorers, art and industry

From Neolithic hunters and Viking sailors to Arctic explorers and pioneering painters, Oslo's inhabitants have left a diverse legacy.

Eleanor Barraclough explores the sights of the Norwegian capital



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The medieval Akershus Fortress, later renovated to become a Renaissance palace, guards Oslo's fjord

Oslo was settled in the 11th century, in the late Viking Age, but evidence of far older human presence can be seen dotted around the city: prehistoric rock carvings. Look out for a cluster of petroglyphs ❶, dating from around 4,500 BC, by the Ekebergparken tram stop at the foot of the Ekeberg hills: deer and elk run across the rock, dwarfing a tiny human figure that appears to be hunting them. The city has inspired more modern art, too: the view over the fjord on the road leading to Ekeberg Park is immortalised in the background of *The Scream*. In the centre of Oslo, the National Museum ❷ holds two versions of this most famous work by Edvard Munch (1863 – 1944), while the nearby Munch Museum owns a third. Not far from Ekeberg is Gamlebyen (Old Town), where you can explore the ruins of medieval St Hallvard's Cathedral ❸, built around 1070, and St Olav's Monastery, dating from the 13th century. If it's sunny, take a picnic to relax in the nearby park.

In 1624 the medieval city was ravaged by fire, and King Christian IV ordered the new city, renamed Christiania, to be built to the west beneath

Akershus Fortress ❹. Perched above the fjord, it's one of the most pleasant spots in the city. The fortress, built from the 1290s, was often besieged by Norway's enemies – mostly Sweden. It was also used as a prison, notoriously for rebel Sami leaders from northern Norway who led the 1852 Kautokeino rebellion. This was one of the few violent uprisings by the Sami, Norway's indigenous inhabitants, against the state, and it ended badly: most of the rebels were killed or imprisoned for many years.

During the Second World War, Akershus was taken over by occupying Nazi forces, and several members of the resistance were executed here. The Resistance Museum ❺ in the fortress grounds is well worth a visit, exhibiting artefacts including a pair of false teeth converted into a radio transmitter by Norwegian prisoners of war.

No historical tour of Oslo (as the city's name reverted in 1925) would be complete without a visit to Bygdøy, the city's museum hub. Highlights include the Fram Museum ❻, literally built around the ship that polar explorer, scientist, champion of refugees, Nobel peace prize winner and all-round badass Fridtjof Nansen used for his attempt

to reach the north pole (1893–96). Bygdøy is also the site of the Viking Ship Museum ❼, home to one of the finest Viking Age discoveries yet made. The Oseberg ship was the centrepiece of a lavish burial of AD 834, in which two high-status women and a wealth of exotic grave goods were interred.

Flowing through Oslo is Akerselva, the river traditionally viewed as the dividing line between the city's posh western and working-class eastern districts. It's not quite that cut and dried, of course, but certainly the capital's two sides have very different vibes. This is due partly to the growth of industry during the 19th century, when the river became a major power source for new mills and factories. Workers lived in cramped conditions on its east bank, while their wealthy employers occupied houses on the west side. You can follow the river all the way from its source in the hills down to the city centre, a remarkable walk through Oslo's industrial history. Look out for the 'Factory Girls' statue ❽ by Ellen Jacobsen, installed on the Beyer Bridge to commemorate the

The Fram Museum is literally built around the ship that Fridtjof Nansen used to reach the north pole

thousands of young people who moved from the country to the city to work long hours in often dangerous conditions. Right by the statue, stop for coffee and cake in Høuse-Lovisas Hus, a little red house built as a sawmill's cottage by the waterfall that powered the mill.

Complete your tour in the western hills with a particularly Norwegian type of history. The Holmenkollen ski jump ❾ is an iconic feature of Oslo's skyline, and particularly beautiful when lit up at night. Inside is the Ski Museum, which explores more than 4,000 years of skiing history. From the observation deck, look out across Oslo to the hills, forests and islands beyond. 🌐

OSLO IN NINE SITES

- ❶ **Petroglyphs at Ekeberg**
Neolithic rock carvings depicting animals and hunters
- ❷ **National Museum**
Norway's finest collection of art, including many works by Edvard Munch
- ❸ **St Hallvard's Cathedral**
Ruins of Oslo's original cathedral alongside medieval St Olav's Monastery
- ❹ **Akershus Fortress**
Often-besieged medieval castle turned Renaissance palace and 19th-century jail
- ❺ **Resistance Museum**
Reminders of fight against Nazi occupiers
- ❻ **Fram Museum**
Celebrating the achievements of polar explorer and scientist Fridtjof Nansen
- ❼ **Viking Ship Museum**
Exhibits centred on the magnificent Oseberg ship buried in AD 834
- ❽ **'Factory Girls' statue**
Memorial to Oslo's industrial heritage
- ❾ **Holmenkollen ski jump & museum**
Iconic landmark and museum exploring 4,000 years of skiing history



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