

## NORWAY CUSTOMS

### Greetings:

Shaking hands is appropriate in both formal and informal contexts. In formal contexts, businesslike handshakes are firm and short. In personal contexts, handshakes are longer and warmer. Close friends may hug each other while touching opposite cheeks during or after a handshake.

Everyday acquaintances greet each other with a casual *Morn* (literally, “Morning”), regardless of the time of day. The term is roughly equivalent to “Hi.” The word *Hei* also means “Hi” and is as common as *Morn*. A slightly more formal greeting is *God dag* (Good day). People greeting others for the first time since a shared social event often say *Takk for sist* (Thanks for the last time), a phrase that recognizes the social bond between them.

Traditionally, only close friends addressed each other by first name, but the younger generation tends to use first names once they have been introduced. Even schoolchildren may call teachers by their first name. Older individuals continue to follow the custom of using titles with a family name.

### Gestures:

Norwegians keep hand gestures to a minimum during conversation. However, people may wave the index finger in the air when warning others or expressing anger.

It is impolite to place one's hands in the pockets when standing in front of a large group. Chewing gum is also inappropriate in public and business settings.

### Holidays:

Official holidays include New Year's Day, Easter (Thursday–Monday), Labor Day (1 May), Constitution Day (17 May), and Christmas (24–26 Dec.).

The Norwegian flag is a prominent feature of all holidays; it is even used to decorate Christmas trees. Constitution Day is celebrated much like the Fourth of July in the United States, with parades, flags, family gatherings, etc. Families often take skiing vacations during the Easter holiday.

Christmas is the biggest celebration of the year. As in other countries, preparations begin well in advance. At 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve, bells ring and the holiday officially begins. Stories about *Julenisse* (Father Christmas) are popular among children. Families gather to share a big meal and exchange gifts. Parties are common on Christmas Day and thereafter until the new year begins.