

Chase the Northern Lights – Norway and Lapland

Tuesday 3 December – Saturday 21 December 2024
18 nights

TOUR OVERVIEW

Do you dream of seeing one of the most spectacular natural phenomena in the world – Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights? Against the backdrop of the Arctic night sky, we will hope to see the vibrant hues of green, purple, and blue streaks dance across the sky. Scientists and astronomers are predicting this will be the best year to see the Aurora Borealis in over a decade. Travelling by ship and train on our carefully planned itinerary in Norway and Lapland will give you the best possible chance. On this journey up the Norwegian coast to Lapland you will also capture the spirit of Christmas. As the ship glides through the icy waters, you will be enveloped in a magical world, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and pristine fjords. You will be treated to a Northern Hemisphere winter experience, where nature's grandeur takes centre stage.

Explore the highlights of Norway's two main cities, Oslo and Bergen. Begin in Norway's capital Oslo. Then ride the world's most famous train, the Flåm Railway before boarding your northbound coastal voyage for a trip through Norway's picturesque fjords and historic coastal towns. Cross the 71st parallel toward North Cape, the northernmost point of Europe before arriving in Kirkenes in Norway's far north. After disembarking, head south into Finnish Lapland where you will spend a night in a unique cabin, lying in bed and gazing at the night sky. Learn about the Sami culture and discover the arctic wildlife. An overnight train will take you to Finland's capital, Helsinki. Finish your journey with two days in the town of Tallinn in Estonia, which has one of the 10 best Christmas markets in Europe. You will have time at the end of the tour to travel to other European destinations (perfect for visiting overseas friends and family) or be back to NZ in time for Christmas. This promises to be an unforgettable adventure.



TOUR INCLUSIONS

- The services of an experienced New Zealand-based Calder & Lawson tour manager
- 12 nights hotel accommodation in Norway, Finland and Estonia
- 6 nights Norway coastal cruise on a Hurtigruten ship including all meals, soft drinks, beer, and house wine
- Other meals as specified in the itinerary
- Transfers, guided tours, and entrance fees as detailed in the itinerary
- All tips and gratuities for crew and local guides
- Pre-tour material

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- International airfare and airline taxes
- Travel Insurance
- Personal expenses
- Meals not specified in the Itinerary
- Hotel portorage
- Credit card fees

TOUR PRICE

	Polar Outside Cabin	Upgrade to Arctic Superior Cabin
Twin-share price	\$12,890	+\$500
Single Supplement	\$2,990	+\$300

Note that on the Hurtigruten ship, the Polar Outside and Arctic Superior cabins are twin-bed configurations. Double beds are only available in suites (available for an upgrade) and may be limited in availability. If you wish to have a double bed please call us to discuss options to upgrade to suites.

The above prices are in NZ dollars and do not include international airfares from Auckland to Europe. Once the tour is confirmed the team at Calder & Lawson Tours can assist you in booking your flights, stopovers, extensions, or upgrades

GROUP SIZE Minimum 10, maximum 18

VARIATIONS IN TRAVEL We can make arrangements for any travel you would like to do before or after this tour, or book business class flights. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

[**CLICK HERE TO BOOK ONLINE**](#)

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit charming hamlets, sail through picturesque fjords, and chase the magic of the Northern Lights
- Capture the spirit of a Northern Hemisphere Christmas. There will be Christmas markets to visit throughout the three countries you will be visiting: Norway, Finland, and Estonia
- Ride the world's most famous train, the Flåm Railway
- Gaze up at the night sky (and hopefully the Northern Lights) from inside your glass-roofed cabin in Lapland
- Gain insight into the Sámi culture in Finland
- Experience a husky safari, drive a snowmobile, visit a reindeer farm, and have a go at ice fishing during your stay at a wilderness village in Finland
- Explore the museums, galleries, and city life of Oslo, Norway, and Helsinki, Finland
- Spend two nights in Tallinn, Estonia to visit one of the top 10 Christmas markets in Europe and soak in the history and atmosphere of the UNESCO World Heritage old town

IS THIS TOUR FOR ME?

Seeing the Northern Lights is a bucket list item for many people and should be one of the highlights of this tour (see below for more information). Aside from the lights, you will have the chance to experience life above the Arctic Circle and take in lots of snowy activities such as husky rides, reindeer sled rides, ice fishing and even meeting Santa Claus!

Life on board the Hurtigruten cruise will be relaxed, with several opportunities for port stops and time at sea to enjoy the spectacular scenery (and hopefully see the Northern Lights).

You will need to be in good health and fit enough to enjoy comfortably-paced walks on sometimes uneven and slippery terrain, as it is winter the footpaths and walking trails may be snowy and icy.

The weather will be cold as it is the middle of winter but this lends to a magical Christmas environment. Indoor environments are well-heated and comfortable during the European winter.

On the excursions at the Finnish wilderness camp, you get the chance to drive a snowmobile which is relatively straightforward but does require some strength and dexterity (if you can ride a bike you can handle a snowmobile). You do the husky dog sledding in teams of two, one person sitting on the sled the other steering and sometimes pushing the sled to assist the dogs if the sled gets stuck or you have an uphill section. Of course, all activities are optional and you can sit anything out that does not suit you. You will be provided with suitable snow suits and gear during the outdoor activities but good shoes/boots and warm layers are recommended as you will be above the Arctic Circle in the winter.

CHASING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

The Northern Lights are a magical experience and a journey along Norway's coast and up into Finland is a great way to see them. The winter of 2024/25 looks like it will be a particularly good opportunity. Scientists predict the Solar Maximum in 2024-25 will result in the most frequent and impressive Northern Lights in more than a decade. The next Solar Maximum after 2024-25 won't be for another 11 years. The main ingredients for the best chances to see the Northern Lights are being above the Arctic Circle, clear skies, and low light pollution. During this tour, you will be above the Arctic Circle for a total of seven nights, and being at sea on the Hurtigruten ship and at the wilderness camp in Finland you will have less light pollution than if you were near towns and cities. Of course, the Northern Lights are a natural phenomenon and cannot be guaranteed however the crews on board the ship and at the wilderness camp will be doing all they can to ensure you see the wonder of nature's greatest lightshow.

TOUR MANAGER: John Matheson

John Matheson will be your tour manager and will be accompanied by his wife Rosanne. They led their first C&L tour in 2006 and this will be their 20th tour to Europe. John's career in the travel industry gives him in-depth knowledge and the ability to solve any travel-related problems quickly. Rosanne managed C&L Tours for 7 years and gained many insights into our tour participants and their needs and preferences during tours. They loved their tour to Antarctica in 2017 on a Hurtigruten ship, enjoying the small, comfortable cabins, the warm welcoming public spaces, and the knowledge and hospitality of the crew. A work-related trip to Scandinavia has given them the desire to spend more time there, especially during a northern hemisphere Christmas season, such a different experience for those of us who live in the Southern Hemisphere!.



DAILY ITINERARY

Your tour managers will depart on 2nd December from Auckland to Oslo via Doha on Qatar Airways. The flight is 17.25 hours to Doha where they will overnight in a hotel and then continue onto Oslo the next morning, this flight is 7 hours and arrives at 1.30 pm. We can arrange for your flights to match the tour managers or you can also choose to make your own way to Oslo and meet the group in the afternoon of Tuesday 3 December to begin the tour.

Tuesday 3 December **Oslo**

Meals: D

Overnight: Oslo

Welcome to Norway! First stop: Norway's thriving capital, Oslo. The city has a sheltered position deep inside Oslofjord and is surrounded by glistening lakes. Arrive in Oslo from your international flight. Check-in at the hotel is open from 3 pm, after settling in, enjoy a welcome dinner with your tour manager and the group.

Wednesday 4 December **Oslo**

Meals: B

Overnight: Oslo

After breakfast, you will go on an Oslo grand city tour. The Oslo Opera House is perhaps the capital's most iconic building, resembling a gleaming glacier floating in the water. Wander along its clean lines, admire the dramatic angles, and marvel at the white marble that covers its exterior. Vigeland Sculpture Park is located at the centre of splendid Frogner Park. There, you'll find more than 200 visually striking sculptures in bronze, granite, and cast iron by prolific Norwegian artist Gustav Vigeland. The highlight of the sculptures is the monolith that rises several metres high. Further north of Vigeland, just outside of Oslo, is the Holmenkollen Ski Jump. You won't be doing any jumping yourself, but the impressive building enjoys panoramic views over the city, lakes, and fjord. Beneath the ski jump is also the world's oldest ski museum featuring 2,500 pairs of skis and 4,000 years of skiing history. After the tour, you'll return to your hotel in Oslo.

An optional extra tonight is a sauna sitting right on the fjord. This is a wonderful Norwegian experience as you soak up the heat gazing out the window to magical views. If you are brave you can even take a bracing dip into the chilly waters of the fjord!

Thursday 5 December **Oslo - Myrdal - Flam**

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Flam

After breakfast, you take the train from Oslo to Myrdal station over 2,000 feet high in the mountains. This is the boarding point for the Flåm Mountain Railway. The vintage train will weave its way down from the mountains and into the valley towards the village of Flåm. The scenic journey takes about an hour and includes a brief stop at Kjosfossen Waterfall for you to take photos. The small power station on the waterfall is actually what powers the Flåm Mountain Railway. You will then arrive in the village of Flåm where you'll spend the night at a hotel. You can visit Flåm Railway Museum to learn more about the history and the engineering that brought about the railway. Enjoy your included dinner at the hotel tonight.

DAILY ITINERARY

Friday 6 December

Flam - Bergen

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Bergen

Following breakfast and checking out of your hotel, it's time to enjoy a two-hour boat cruise of Aurlandsfjord and narrow UNESCO-listed Nærøyfjord, ending at Gudvangen. A short bus ride through Nærøydalen valley, usually fringed by waterfalls, leads to the village of Voss where you will catch the train to Bergen, a beautiful city on the west coast of Norway. Check in to your hotel in Bergen before heading out to explore Norway's third largest city at your leisure. One recommendation is to take the Fløibanen funicular to the top of nearby Mount Fløyen to enjoy views of Bergen and the surrounding mountains.

Dinner is back at the hotel tonight with the group.

Saturday 7 December

Bergen

Meals: B/D

Overnight: on board MS Maud

After a relaxing morning, take a walking tour of Bergen, including St Mary's Church, Håkon's Hall, and the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Bryggen district. Bryggen is made up of colourful age-old wooden wharves which now house boutique shops selling handicrafts, art, and souvenirs. Across the cobblestone street from Bryggen is the Fish Market, a place of sights, sounds, and smells. Freshly caught seafood is cooked on the spot here and served to salivating visitors.

You'll then head to Troidhaugen, the home of Norway's most famous composer, Edvard Grieg. Arrive at Bergen pier, where you can relax before boarding your Hurtigruten Coastal Express ship for your voyage along Norway's beautiful coast. Once aboard, enjoy the first of many delicious meals made from fresh coastal produce as we depart Bergen and sail the old Viking route along Hjeltefjord.

Sunday 8 December

Alesund

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: on board MS Maud

Enjoy the early morning in the breathtaking Nordfjord near Torvik. You then sail past West Cape for the approach to Ålesund. You'll have most of the day to explore this picturesque town. Ålesund is renowned for its beautiful Art Nouveau architecture. Enjoy wandering around pastel-coloured buildings, picking up details such as semi-circular windows and charming rounded fairy-tale-like towers. For a lovely panorama over the town, head up to Mount Askla. There's also Atlanterhavsparken, one of Northern Europe's largest saltwater aquariums. The last port of the day is Molde.



DAILY ITINERARY

Monday 9 December

Trondheim

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: on board MS Maud

You will arrive mid-morning at Trondheim, with three hours to explore Norway's first capital. Founded by Viking king Olav Tryggvason in 997, Trondheim today is one of Norway's largest cities and a mix of historic buildings and a vibrant student population.

A must-see site of the city is Nidaros Cathedral, nicknamed "Norway's Notre Dame" for its Gothic style and considered the most sacred building in all of Norway. Nearby, the old city bridge Gamle Bybro sits over Nid River, marking the entrance to the old Hanseatic district of Bakklandet. The neighborhood's colourful wooden wharves propped up on stilts by the river's edge now house a variety of eateries. Up from Bakklandet is Kristiansten Fort which offers beautiful views. In the afternoon, the ship sails northwest, passing the ochre-coloured Kjeungskjær Lighthouse towards charming Rørvik for a very short stop in port.

Tuesday 10 December

Bodø

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: on board MS Maud

You cross the Arctic Circle early in the morning. The moment is marked with a traditional ceremony that's sure to wake you up! Above the Arctic Circle, your chances of seeing the Northern Lights greatly improve. At 10 am, you call into Ørnes, near Norway's second-largest glacier, Svartisen. Then sail to Bodø, the second largest city in Northern Norway, overlooked by the Børvass peaks. You can choose to explore Bodø or take an optional (extra cost applies) boat excursion to Saltstraumen, the world's most powerful whirlpool. That afternoon, the ship enters the Lofoten archipelago. The 3,000-foot-high Lofoten Wall is a stunning sight stretching for miles on the horizon. Stamsund is home to one of the largest fishing fleets in the islands, busy catching Arctic cod called skrei which swim from the Barents Sea in the north down to nearby Vestfjord to spawn. Come evening, when you see rows of traditional fishermen's huts on stilts, known as rorbuer, you've arrived in the pretty harbour of Svolvær, the main town of the Lofoten Islands.

Wednesday 11 December

Tromsø

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: on board MS Maud

The ship docks into Harstad early in the morning and you can go for a peaceful early morning stroll around town. The ship will then continue to Finnsnes which connects the beautiful island of Senja via the impressive Gisund Bridge. You then sail to the historic Arctic exploration capital of Tromsø where you'll have four hours to explore the city or join an optional excursion. Along the waterfront, you'll find Polaria, a center exhibiting environmental research in the Arctic with a small aquarium. Take your pick from the many shops and restaurants in the city center, including Mack Brewery and favourite local watering hole Ølhallen Pub. There are also cafés offering delicious cinnamon buns where baristas create innovative coffee art. Across the fjord from where the ship docks, you should be able to see the iconic Arctic Cathedral with its beautiful stained-glass mosaic. Leaving Tromsø in the early evening, you head north for the trading post of Skjervøy, founded in 1622. On your way, you'll pass the Lyngen Alps which rise majestically from the sea.

DAILY ITINERARY

Thursday 12 December **Gateway to the North Cape**

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: on board MS Maud

The ship makes early morning stops in the town of Hammerfest and at Havøysund before arriving at Honningsvåg mid-morning. This is the portal to the North Cape where a globe monument marks the top of continental Europe. An optional excursion will take you to North Cape from Honningsvåg by bus. The ship then continues north. Near the entrance of Kjøllefjord village, look out for the striking, building-like rock formation Finnkirka, an ancient sacrificial site once used by the indigenous Sámi. You reach Mehamn in the evening, our northernmost port of call. The ship then sets off for Berlevåg. On the way, you pass the tall Slettnes Lighthouse, the northernmost mainland lighthouse on Earth.

Friday 13 December **Kirkenes, Norway to Inari, Finland**

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Inari

Coach: 3hrs

You will make two very early morning port calls at Båtsfjord and Vardø before docking at Vadsø around 07:00 AM. Here, you leave your ship behind and continue your journey south toward Finland on land. You will board a coach and enjoy a scenic drive through the town of Kirkenes, and after crossing the border into Finland, you'll begin heading south through Lapland. We'll stop at Inari, a village in Finland's largest municipality. The area is famous for its large Sámi population and is seen as the centre of Finnish Sámi culture. At the newly renovated Siida Sámi museum, you can see exhibits and artefacts that document the rich culture of the Finnish Sámi. After a day of travelling, learning, and exploring, you'll spend your first night in Finland at the Wilderness Hotel Inari.

Located just five minutes from the Sámi village, Inari offers a blend of quality accommodation with pristine nature and Arctic activities. You will spend the first night in an Aurora Cabin which is an extraordinary way to experience Inari. Admire the star-filled sky or, with some luck, witness the awesome spectacle of the Northern Lights from the comfort of your bed. The laser-heated glass roof opens up into the northern sky, directly above your bed.



DAILY ITINERARY

Saturday 14 December and Sunday 15 December Inari

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Inari, Finland

Over the next couple of days at the Inari village, you can take part in the following included activities: The activities will be planned and divided over the days based on the weather forecast and conditions.

Snowmobile Safari 2 hours

This tour is perfect for those who have never tried snowmobiling before. Get acquainted with your snowmobile, receive full safety instructions, and a driving lesson then you will head out for a trip into the nearby Arctic surroundings.

Husky Safari including lunch at the hotel 3 hours

A husky safari is a 'must do' experience when visiting Lapland. You will be taught how to handle your own sled before heading out on the husky safari, where the friendly huskies will pull your sled through the beautiful winter scenery. You will drive two persons to a team, with the opportunity to swap places halfway. Enjoy the excitement of the dogs before the start, and the serene silence once they get to do what they love – run in the snowy scenery. You will have lunch before or after the activity, and the musher will also show you around the husky farm.

note all the pictures below are from Kevin's (owner of Calder & Lawson Tours) recent visit to Norway to develop this tour itinerary.



DAILY ITINERARY

**Saturday 14 December and
Sunday 15 December
Inari**

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Inari, Finland

Reindeer Farm Visit 2 hours

On this popular excursion, you will get to meet a local reindeer herder and his many reindeer. At the reindeer farm, you will hear interesting stories about the reindeer and the life of a herder and Sámi culture. There will also be a possibility for a short reindeer sled ride during your visit to the farm.

Aurora Snowmobiling 2.5 hours

One evening you will head out to find a good spot to search for the Northern Lights. When the Northern Lights appear, you stop and admire the spectacle. During the excursion, you will be provided with warm drinks.

Aurora Camp 2.5 hours

You will be seated comfortably in a sled pulled by a guide's snowmobile. At the camp, there is an open fire where you can sit around and enjoy a warm drink whilst waiting for magical colours to appear in the sky.



DAILY ITINERARY

Monday 16 December Rovaniemi

Meals: B/L

Overnight: Rovaniemi

Coach: 4 hours

Today you will depart early by coach to drive to the world-famous 'Santa Claus Village' which will be a hive of activity and festive spirit with Christmas being less than 10 days away. We will have lunch at the village before transferring to our hotel in Rovaniemi.

This Arctic city has an intriguing history, having grown to prominence in the 19th century due to the Lapland gold rush. After extensive destruction during World War II, the city had to be rebuilt, and its footprint was redesigned in the shape of a reindeer's head.

Tuesday 17 December Rovaniemi to Helsinki Night Train

Meals: B/L

Overnight: Night train

12 hours 18 min

Today take a reindeer safari to an ice fishing lake. This safari offers you an insight to how life in Lapland used to be when you travel through the forest in a traditional reindeer sleigh to a frozen lake. Your guide will teach you how to drill a hole in the ice and prepare the ice fishing rod and bait so you can try to catch a fish yourself. Enjoy some warming barbequed sausages on the fire before returning to Rovaniemi. Then depart at 8.57 pm to travel by overnight train to Helsinki, Finland's capital, arriving at 9.15 am the following morning. Widely regarded as one of the world's best cities to live in, Helsinki is vibrant and colourful, and offers a delicate balance of historic architecture and contemporary living. The city is also known for its incredible natural scenery. You will stay overnight in a sleeper car with a private ensuite bathroom. There will be a restaurant car on the train to buy snacks, drinks and light meals this evening.

Wednesday 18 December Helsinki

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Helsinki

After a mid-morning arrival, spend the next few hours exploring the city with a local guide discovering the many hidden gems dotted around the centre.



DAILY ITINERARY

Thursday 19 December **Helsinki to Tallinn**

Meals: B
Overnight: Tallinn

Have a free morning to relax or explore more of Helsinki before taking an early afternoon, two-hour ferry ride to the capital and largest city of Estonia, Tallinn. A UNESCO World Heritage site the imposing fortress walls, cobblestone streets, and medieval architecture transport you back in time, To top it off Tallinn has one of the best Christmas markets in Europe, a perfect chance to buy some last-minute presents or souvenirs. Dinner tonight is at leisure and a fun option is to buy from the many food and drink stalls at the Christmas market.

Friday 20 December **Tallinn, Estonia**

Meals: B/D
Overnight: Tallinn

Take a guided tour of Tallinn, soak up the festive spirit of this beautiful town, and enjoy a farewell dinner with the group this evening.

Saturday 21 December **Homebound**

Meals: B

Depart Tallinn in the morning on the ferry back to Helsinki where you can connect with your return flight to New Zealand on Qatar Airways (with your tour managers) or perhaps stay in Europe for the Christmas and New Year holidays.



MAPS



YOUR SHIP — *MS Maud*

YOUR SHIP

MS Maud, previously MS Midnatsol, is named after one of the most famous polar vessels of all time, Roald Amundsen's Maud from 1917. The original Maud received her name from the first Queen of modern-day Norway. The décor on board is inspired by Norway's stunning nature, reflected in many of the pieces of Norwegian modern art on board. Her bright interiors are appointed in a classic Art Deco style. Colours are inspired by the Midnight Sun, allowing you to relax with warm vibes every day of the year.

Aside from the stops at port as detailed in the day-by-day itinerary you can expect onboard lectures and presentations on Norway's history, biology, geology, and culture. A photography workshop will help you to be best prepared to take home your best pictures and videos of the Northern Lights.

On board you can watch the world go by and the activity while in port from the observation deck which has two hot tubs. There is a sauna, fitness room a library and a large lounge and bar to relax and get to know your fellow passengers.



YOUR SHIP - MS Maud

Sauna



Outdoor deck and hot



Restaurants

There are three restaurants on board the MS Maud

'Torget' - Meaning 'marketplace' in Norwegian, the main restaurant offers a variety for all three daily meals, which are a combination of buffets and set menus.

'Brygga' - The name of this bistro is the Norwegian word for 'wharf'. It serves salads, pizzas, and other crowd-pleasers with a Nordic twist.

Kysten - Dine in style at 'The Coast', an à la carte option. You'll savour exquisite dishes crafted by skilled chefs, using the finest ingredients the Norwegian coast has to offer.

CABINS

Polar Outside

Cabins have separate beds, one of which converts to a sofa. All have private bathrooms with a shower and toiletries, a TV, a safe, European two-pin plug sockets, and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

Arctic superior

Most cabins have separate beds, one of which converts to a sofa, and some have double beds. All have private bathrooms with a shower and toiletries, a TV, a safe, European two-pin plug sockets, and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

You can see a short video about the ship facilities at [this link](#)

HOW TO SECURE YOUR PLACE ON THIS TOUR

A deposit of \$1,000 is required to secure your place on the tour. This deposit becomes non-refundable once the tour has reached minimum numbers and becomes a confirmed departure.

Click below to complete the online registration form, pay the \$1,000 deposit, and your place on this tour is secured. Or you can complete a paper registration form. You can download one from our website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz/forms or give us a call and we will email or post one to you.

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ONLINE](#)

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Can be found on our website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz/forms, on the back of the paper registration form, or on the summary page when you complete an online registration. There is a 1.5% surcharge if you pay by Visa or MasterCard or 3% for American Express.

