

Fredrikstad

Norway

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Fredrikstad sits where the Glomma, Norway's longest river, meets the sea. It is two towns in one. On the east bank, Gamlebyen is a star-shaped fortress town with cobbled streets, ramparts and 17th- and 18th-century buildings. On the west bank, the modern centre has a riverside promenade, shops and the station.

It suits a relaxed two- or three-night stay, or an easy trip from Oslo. Days here combine history, short free ferry rides across the river, and swimming and island trips on the nearby Hvaler coast in summer. The polar explorer *Roald Amundsen* was born in the area, in Borge, in 1872.

When to visit

Summer is the best time to visit. July and August are the warmest months, with long, light evenings and sea warm enough for swimming. May, June and September are quieter and still pleasant. Winter is dark and cold, with frequent frost and some snow.

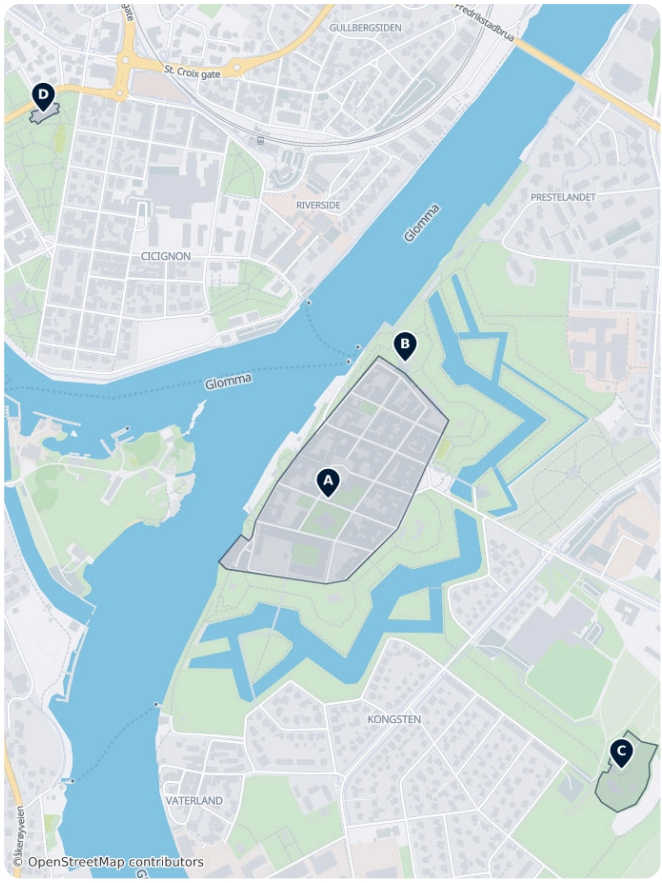
The biggest event is the **Christmas market in Gamlebyen**. It runs on weekends from late November to mid-December, with stalls, lights and food in the old fortress streets.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	1° / 7° Feels like -4°	-3° / -13°	12 rainy days · Dry air
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	2° / 7° Feels like -3°	-3° / -12°	Dry air
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	5° / 11° Feels like 0°	-1° / -7°	Dry air
April	Poor Poor for sightseeing	10° / 16° Feels like 6°	3° / -2°	Dry air
May	Good Good for sightseeing	15° / 22° Feels like 12°	8° / 3°	Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 25°	12° / 9°	Dry air
July	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	15° / 12°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
August	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 25°	14° / 11°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
September	Good Good for sightseeing	16° / 20°	11° / 7°	12 rainy days · Dry air
October	Poor Poor for sightseeing	10° / 15° Feels like 7°	6° / 1°	13 rainy days · Dry air
November	Poor Poor for sightseeing	6° / 11° Feels like 1°	2° / -4°	14 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	2° / 8° Feels like -3°	-1° / -11°	13 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: July, August

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Gamlebyen is the reason most people come. The town was founded here in 1567 and fortified in the 1660s, and it is one of the best-preserved fortress towns in Northern Europe. Walk the earthen ramparts and moats of B Fredrikstad Fortress, then explore the galleries, small shops and cafés inside the walls. Fredrikstad Museum has exhibitions on the town's history here.
- C Kongsten Fort sits on a rocky hill just east of the old town. Built in the 1680s, it is a complete small fortress with walls, cannons and underground rooms. You can walk around the walls and grounds, which give good views over the area.
- D Fredrikstad domkirke is the city's brick cathedral from 1880, with a tall tower above the centre. Inside, look for the stained-glass windows by *Emanuel Vigeland*.
- **Isegran** is a small island between the centre and the old town. It has the remains of a castle from the late 1200s, old fortifications and a museum harbour with historic boats. It is a quiet place for a walk by the water.
- **The riverside in the centre** has a long promenade along the Glomma, with the high arched Fredrikstad Bridge (Fredrikstadbrua) crossing the river above it.

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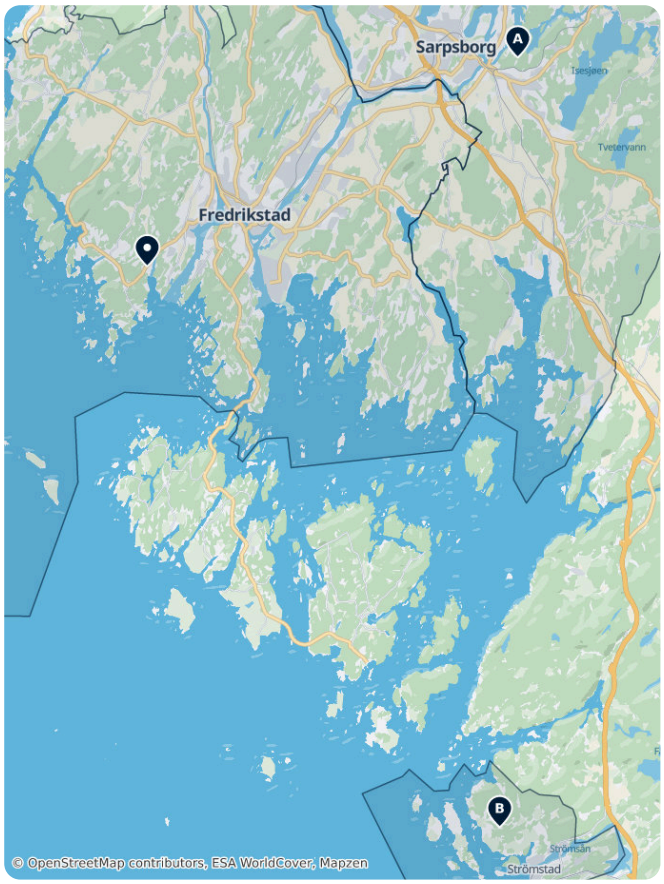
What to experience

A few things that make a visit to Fredrikstad special:

- **Ride the free city ferry** across the Glomma. The short crossing between the centre and the old town is part of daily life here, and it costs nothing.
- **Picnic on the ramparts** of Gamlebyen. On a summer evening, locals sit on the grassy walls and along the moat.
- **Visit the Christmas market** on a weekend from late November to mid-December, when the old fortress streets fill with stalls and lights.
- **Swim from the rocks on Hvaler.** In July and August, the smooth granite rocks and small bays on the islands are the local way to spend a warm day.
- **Shop on a Sunday.** Shops in the old town open on Sundays all year, which is unusual in Norway.

Day trips

Fredrikstad is a good base for the coast and the border area.



- A Sarpsborg — 15 km upriver, about 10–15 minutes by train. It is one of Norway's oldest towns and has the large Sarpsfossen waterfall on the Glomma.
- **Hvaler** — a group of islands south of the city, under an hour by car or bus. Expect smooth granite rocks, small beaches, summer houses and the fishing village of Skjærhalden. The sea around the outer islands is Ytre Hvaler National Park, Norway's first marine national park.
- **Halden** — under an hour by train towards the Swedish border. Fredriksten Fortress stands above the town, where the Swedish king *Charles XII* was killed in 1718.
- B Strömstad — a Swedish seaside town about 1 hour by car over the Svinesund Bridge. A boat also sails there from Skjærhalden on Hvaler, several days a week in summer, and Fridays and Saturdays the rest of the year.

Where to explore

Other destinations nearby:

- Sarpsborg shares the lower Glomma with Fredrikstad, and the two towns form one urban area.
- Oslo, the capital, is about one hour north by train.

Getting there

- **By air**: Oslo Airport Gardermoen is the main gateway. Take the train to Oslo S and change for Fredrikstad, about 1.5–2 hours in total. A direct airport bus also runs to Fredrikstad. Sandefjord Airport Torp, on the west side of the Oslofjord, has fewer flights.
- **By train**: Regional trains on the Østfold Line run from Oslo S about every hour, and every 30 minutes at rush hour. The trip takes about 1 hour. Some trains continue to Sarpsborg and Halden. Vy trains Oslo–Fredrikstad
- **By bus**: Express buses connect Fredrikstad with Oslo in about 1 hour 20 minutes.
- **By car**: From Oslo, follow the E6 south and then road 110, a little over 1 hour.

Getting around

- **City ferries**: Small passenger ferries cross the Glomma and are **free for everyone**, including bikes. The Cicignon–Gamlebyen crossing takes about one minute and links the station side with the old town. In summer, ferries can fill up, so expect a short wait. City ferry information
- **Buses**: Local buses are run by Østfold kollektivtrafikk. Buy tickets before boarding in the Østfold Billett app, or in the Vy or Entur apps. On board, you can only pay with cash, not with a bank card. Østfold kollektivtrafikk
- **On foot**: The centre and the old town are compact and flat. Most sights are within a 20-minute walk plus a ferry ride.
- **Cycling**: The city is flat and has bike paths, and bikes ride free on the ferries.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The centre and the old town are compact and flat, linked by a free one-minute ferry.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

Flat terrain with bike paths, and bikes ride free on the city ferries.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for the city itself, which is easy on foot and by ferry. A car is useful for the Hvaler islands and the coast.
- **Parking**: Parking in the old town is limited. Use the large car park outside the walls near Kongsten. In the centre, the Apenesfjellet, St. Hansfjellet and Cityterminalen garages give 2 hours free each day, then charge by the hour. They are free on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from 09:00 to 24:00. Pay with the EasyPark or Fredrikstad P app, or at machines.
- **Hvaler in summer**: Parking at Skjærhalden fills up in high season, so arrive early.

Food & drink

Fredrikstad's food is simple and coastal. In summer, look for fresh shrimp eaten with bread, mayonnaise and lemon, and for fish soup and seafood in the harbour restaurants on Hvaler.

For where to eat, go to two areas. The riverside promenade in the centre has many restaurants and bars facing the water. In Gamlebyen, small cafés in the old wooden and brick buildings serve coffee, waffles and light lunches.

What to eat & drink

DINNER

Fårikål
Lamb and cabbage stew simmered with whole peppercorns; widely regarded as Norway's national dish, especially in autumn.

Cured salmon · Gravlaks
Salmon cured in salt, sugar, and dill, served thinly sliced with a mustard-dill sauce.

Fermented fish · Rakfisk
Trout fermented for months, eaten cold with flatbread, sour cream, and onion. A strong-smelling acquired taste.

Dried salted cod · Klippfisk
Cod salted and air-dried, then rehydrated and cooked into stews such as bacalao.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Brown cheese · Brunost
A caramel-colored whey cheese with a sweet, slightly tangy flavor, typically sliced thin onto bread or waffles.

Potato flatbread · Lefse
A soft flatbread made from potato, rolled up with butter and sugar or cinnamon.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Waffles · Vafler
Heart-shaped, thin waffles served with sour cream and jam, a common café treat.

DRINKS

Caraway spirit · Akevitt
A potato-based spirit flavored with caraway and other spices, traditionally aged in oak sherry casks and served at holidays.

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Safety & health

Fredrikstad is a very safe town, and crime against visitors is rare. Use normal care with bags in busy places in summer.

The main risks are outdoors. Ticks are common on the islands and in long grass along the coast, so check your skin after a day on Hvaler. The sea can be cold even in summer, and rocks are slippery when wet. Wear a life jacket on small boats.

History

King *Frederick II* founded Fredrikstad in 1567, after Swedish troops burned Sarpsborg upriver. The new town was built closer to the sea, where it was easier to defend and trade.

In the 1660s, after more wars with Sweden, the town was turned into a fortress. The ramparts and moat of Gamlebyen date from this time. In the 1680s, Kongsten Fort was added on the hill to the east to protect the fortress from that side. The fortress closed as a fort in 1903, but the army stayed in the old town until 2002.

In the 1800s, Fredrikstad grew on the west bank as a busy timber and sawmill port. Fredrikstad domkirke, built in 1880, dates from this time of growth, and it became a cathedral in 1969.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Norway at a glance:

CURRENCY
NOK kr

ELECTRICITY

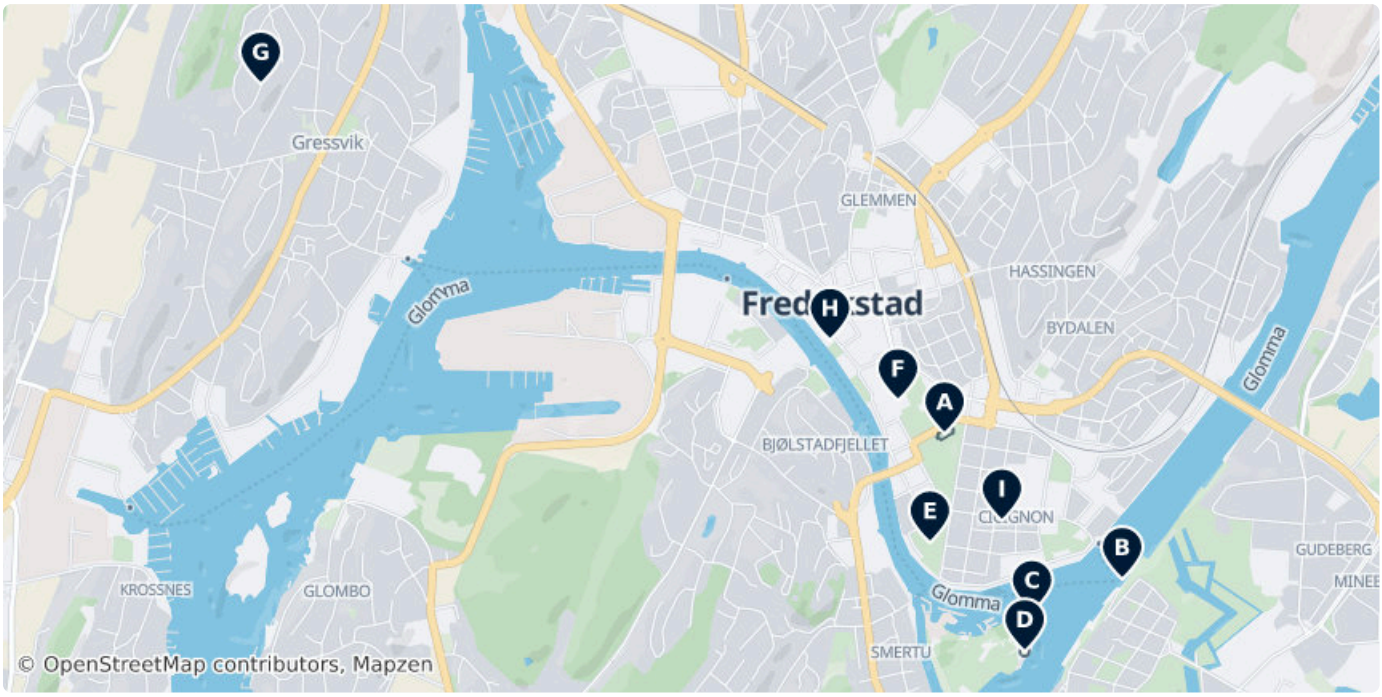
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Norwegian Bokmål, Norwegian Nynorsk

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Fredrikstad Essentials

Fredrikstad is defined by its 17th-century fortified Old Town, Gamlebyen, featuring intact star-shaped ramparts and moats. The city's history extends to the island of Isegran, a former strategic fortification now housing a historic water mill and tower ruins. In the modern center, the 19th-century brick cathedral and the Literature House anchor the cultural scene. This selection highlights the architectural transition from medieval defensive layouts to contemporary art centers and scenic viewpoints like Fjellhesten overlooking the Glomma River.





A Fredrikstad Cathedral

Fredrikstad Cathedral is a cathedral located in the west of the city of Fredrikstad in Østfold county, Norway.

6 Nygaardsgata, Fredrikstad 1606, Norway
(59.20948, 10.94284)

Mo–Fr 10:00–14:00

fredrikstad.kirken.no

B Gamlebyen

Scandinavia's best-preserved fortress town, established in 1567. It features cobblestone streets, 17th-century buildings, and a star-shaped moat system.

(59.20508, 10.95332)

C Vannmølla på Isegran

A historic water mill located on the island of Isegran, reflecting the area's industrial and maritime heritage.

1672, Norway (59.20409, 10.94800)

D Tårnet på Isegran

Stone ruins of the fortification tower on Isegran island, which served as a strategic defensive point at the mouth of the Glomma river.

1 Mindre-Alvs vei, Fredrikstad 1672, Norway (59.20290, 10.94756)

E Fredrikstad bibliotek

A heritage-listed public library housed in a historic building, known for its distinctive architecture and vaulted ceilings.

1 J.N.Jacobsens gate, Fredrikstad 1606, Norway (59.20619, 10.94197)

fredrikstad.kommune.no/biblioteket, +47 69 38 34 00

F Fredrikstad rådhus

The municipality's administrative center, located in the modern city district near the riverfront.

18 Nygaardsgata, Fredrikstad 1606, Norway (59.21048, 10.94009)

fredrikstad.kommune.no

G Fjellhesten

A scenic viewpoint offering elevated perspectives of the Fredrikstad landscape.

(59.22004, 10.90246)

H Litteraturhuset Fredrikstad

A cultural hub and art center dedicated to literature, debates, and public events, situated along the city's vibrant riverfront.

(59.21230, 10.93607)

I Østfold Kunstsenter / Galleri ØKS

A regional art gallery showcasing contemporary visual arts and crafts from local and national artists.

(59.20685, 10.94622)

DATA SOURCES

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