

Lillehammer

Innlandet · Norway

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Lillehammer is a small town at the northern end of Mjøsa, Norway's largest lake, where the lake meets the Gudbrandsdalen valley. It became world-famous as the host of the 1994 Winter Olympics, and the ski jumps still stand on the hillside above the centre. The town itself is compact, with a pedestrian main street lined with old wooden houses.

It suits a relaxed stay of two or three nights. In summer you can combine the large open-air museum, literary homes and family parks with lake trips and mountain walks. In winter it is a base for cross-country skiing and the Olympic slopes at Hafjell. The Nobel Prize-winning novelist *Sigrid Undset* made her home here from 1919, and literature is still a big part of the town's identity.

When to visit

Summer, from June to August, is the main season: days are long and mild, and the museums, parks and lake boat are all open. Winter is cold and snowy from December to March, which is what skiers come for. Spring and late autumn are quiet, and some attractions close or shorten their hours.

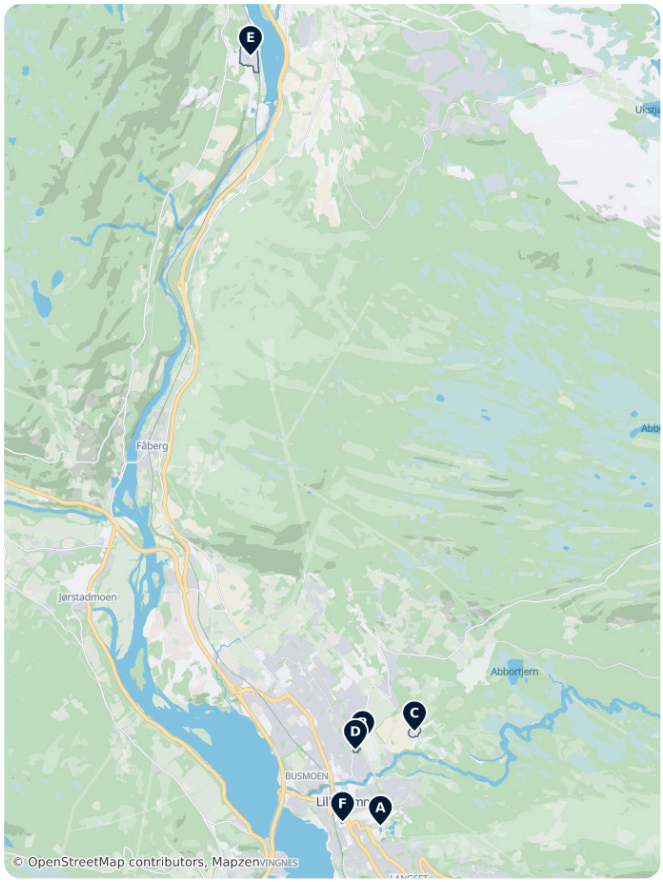
The biggest event is the **Birkebeinerrennet**, a famous 54 km cross-country ski race from Rena to Lillehammer in March. Thousands of skiers take part, each carrying a backpack of at least 3.5 kg. Book accommodation early for that weekend.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for skiing	-4° / 2° Feels like -8°	-10° / -19°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Great Great for skiing	-3° / 2° Feels like -7°	-9° / -19°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
March	Great Great for skiing	1° / 6° Feels like -3°	-7° / -16°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for skiing	6° / 15° Feels like 3°	-1° / -7°	Dry air · Calm winds
May	Fair Fair for hiking	14° / 22°	4° / -1°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	18° / 25°	9° / 4°	16 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
July	Good Good for sightseeing	20° / 26°	12° / 8°	19 rainy days · Calm winds
August	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 24°	11° / 6°	18 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
September	Good Good for hiking	15° / 20°	7° / 2°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
October	Fair Fair for skiing	7° / 13°	2° / -4°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for skiing	1° / 7° Feels like -3°	-4° / -13°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Great Great for skiing	-3° / 3° Feels like -8°	-9° / -19°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

Maihaugen is Norway's largest open-air museum outside Oslo, a short uphill walk from the centre. More than 200 historic buildings, mostly from Lillehammer and Gudbrandsdalen, show how people lived from medieval farms to a 1950s house. Plan at least half a day.



A Garmo stave church stands inside Maihaugen. It dates from about 1150 and was moved here from Lom and rebuilt in 1920–1921.

B Norges Olympiske Museum is inside the Maihaugen complex. It tells the story of the Olympic Games, with a focus on the 1952 Oslo and 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics. Its exhibits are interactive and good for families.

C Lysgårdsbakkene hoppanlegg, the Olympic ski jumping hills, rise above the town. Climb the long staircase of over 900 steps beside the hill, or take the chairlift in summer, for a wide view over Lillehammer and Mjøsa.

D Bjerkebæk was the home of *Sigrid Undset* from 1919, apart from wartime exile in the USA, until her death in 1949. Her log houses and garden are kept as they were in the 1930s, and a modern visitor building has exhibitions and a café.

E Hunderfossen Familiepark, about 15 km north of town, is a large family park with rides and attractions based on Norwegian folktales and trolls. It is open mainly in summer, with a short winter season.

F Lillehammer kirke is the red brick parish church from 1882, a short walk from the pedestrian street.

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What to experience

A visit here is about Olympic history, books and the outdoors.

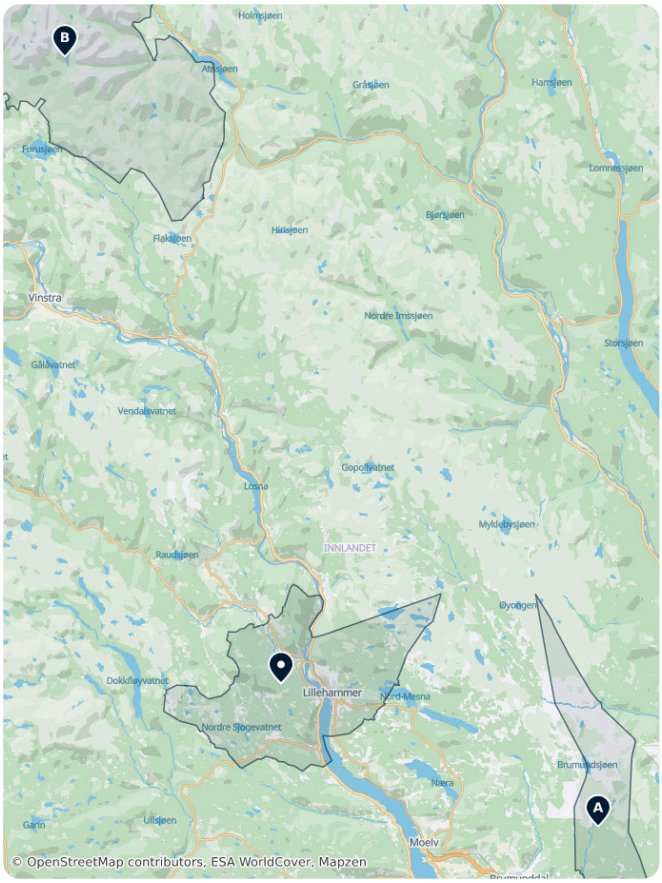
- **Sail on Skibladner:** In summer, take the world's oldest paddle steamer still in scheduled service, launched in 1856. It leaves from Vingnes, across the river from the centre. The trip to Hamar takes just under 4 hours.
- **Join the literature festival:** The Norwegian Festival of Literature fills the town in late May. It is the largest literature festival in the Nordic countries, with talks, readings and concerts.
- **Ski the cross-country trails:** In winter, prepared cross-country tracks start in the hills above town, at Nordseter and Sjusjøen. This is the terrain of the Birkebeinerrennet race.
- **Ride to the top of the ski jump:** In summer, take the chairlift up Lysgårdsbakken and stand at the top of the jump where the Olympic athletes started.

For events and tips, see Visit Lillehammer.

Day trips

Several good day trips start right outside town, and the train makes the Gudbrandsdalen valley easy to explore.

- **Hafjell** (about 15 km north, about 20 min by car): the 1994 Olympic alpine resort, with skiing in winter and mountain biking in summer.
- **Aulestad** (a short drive north-west, in Gausdal): the home of Nobel laureate *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson*, now a museum with guided tours. Open from late May to September.
- (A) Hamar (under 1 hour by train): the lakeside town with the medieval cathedral ruins and the national railway museum.
- **Kvitfjell** (about 50 km north): the Olympic downhill slope, with quieter skiing than Hafjell.
- (B) Rondane (about 1 h 20 min by train to Otta, then a short drive): Norway's first national park, with easy mountain walks and wild reindeer.



Where to explore

Lillehammer lies in Innlandet, the large inland county of lakes, valleys and mountains.

- **Along Mjøsa:** Hamar is the other Olympic town of 1994, at the southern end of the lake route.
- **Into the mountains:** Rondane and Jotunheimen are the big national-park ranges north and west of Gudbrandsdalen. Beitostølen is a mountain village and ski resort on the edge of Jotunheimen.
- **The capital:** Oslo is about two hours south by train.

Getting there

- **By air:** Oslo Airport Gardermoen is the nearest major airport, about 145 km south. Direct trains run from the airport station to Lillehammer in about 1 h 50 min.
- **By train:** Trains on the Dovre Line run from Oslo via the airport, about every hour, and take about 2 hours. Some trains continue north to Trondheim, and at Dombås you can change for the scenic Rauma Line to Åndalsnes. Buy tickets at Vy.
- **By car:** The E6 motorway passes the town. Oslo is about 180 km away, and the drive from the airport takes under 2 hours.
- **By boat:** In summer, the historic paddle steamer Skibladner sails on Mjøsa between Lillehammer, Hamar, Gjøvik and Eidsvoll.

Getting around

- **On foot:** The centre and the pedestrian street are small and easy to walk. Maihaugen, Bjerkebæk and the ski jumps are on the hillside above town, a 10–20 minute uphill walk.
- **Local buses:** Innlandstrafikk runs the town and regional buses, including to Hafjell and Hunderfossen. The easiest way to pay is the Entur app. On board you can pay with a Visa or Mastercard bank card, but only if the card supports offline payment, or with cash in NOK. See Innlandstrafikk.
- **Cycling:** Cycling is pleasant along the lake and river, but the streets up to the sights are steep.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The centre and pedestrian street are flat and compact; Maihaugen, Bjerkebæk and the ski jumps are a steep 10–20 minute walk uphill.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Pleasant along the lake and river, but the streets up to the main sights are steep.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not for the town itself, which is small and has good train and bus links. A car helps for the wider valley, the mountain areas and Aulestad.
- **Parking:** There are paid car parks and on-street parking zones around the centre. Most are paid with a parking app or at the machine. Maihaugen and the Olympic Park have their own car parks.
- **Restrictions:** The main street, Storgata, is a pedestrian street. In winter, use winter tyres and expect snow on the hill roads.

Food & drink

Lillehammer is a good place to try food from Gudbrandsdalen, the valley famous for its sweet brown goat's cheese. Look for local cured meats, trout from the lakes and mountain lamb on restaurant menus.

The best area to eat is the pedestrian street, Storgata, and the small streets around it. Cafés, bakeries and restaurants sit in the old wooden houses there. Maihaugen and Bjerkebæk also have cafés that are good for lunch during a visit.

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

Lillehammer is very safe, and crime against visitors is rare. The main risks are outdoors. In winter, pavements and hill streets can be icy, so wear shoes with good grip. In the mountains, weather changes fast, so take warm clothes and check the forecast before a hike or ski trip.

History

Lillehammer grew as a market place at the point where the Gudbrandsdalen valley meets Mjøsa. It received town rights in 1827. Its name means "little Hamar", to tell it apart from the older town further down the lake. The wooden houses along Storgata date mostly from the late 1800s, when the railway arrived and the town grew.

In the late 1800s, the dentist *Anders Sandvig* began collecting old buildings from the valley. The town bought his collection in 1904, and it became the Maihaugen museum. Sandvig also brought Garmo stave church here from Lom. Writers came too: *Sigrid Undset* settled at Bjerkebæk, and she won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1928.

The town's best-known legend is told every March. In 1206, loyal fighters called *birkebeiner* carried the infant heir to the throne across the mountains to safety on skis. The Birkebeinerrennet ski race still follows that story.

In 1994 Lillehammer hosted the Winter Olympics, and the ski jumps and Norges Olympiske Museum keep that memory alive. The town hosted the Winter Youth Olympic Games in 2016.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Norway at a glance:

CURRENCY
NOK kr

ELECTRICITY

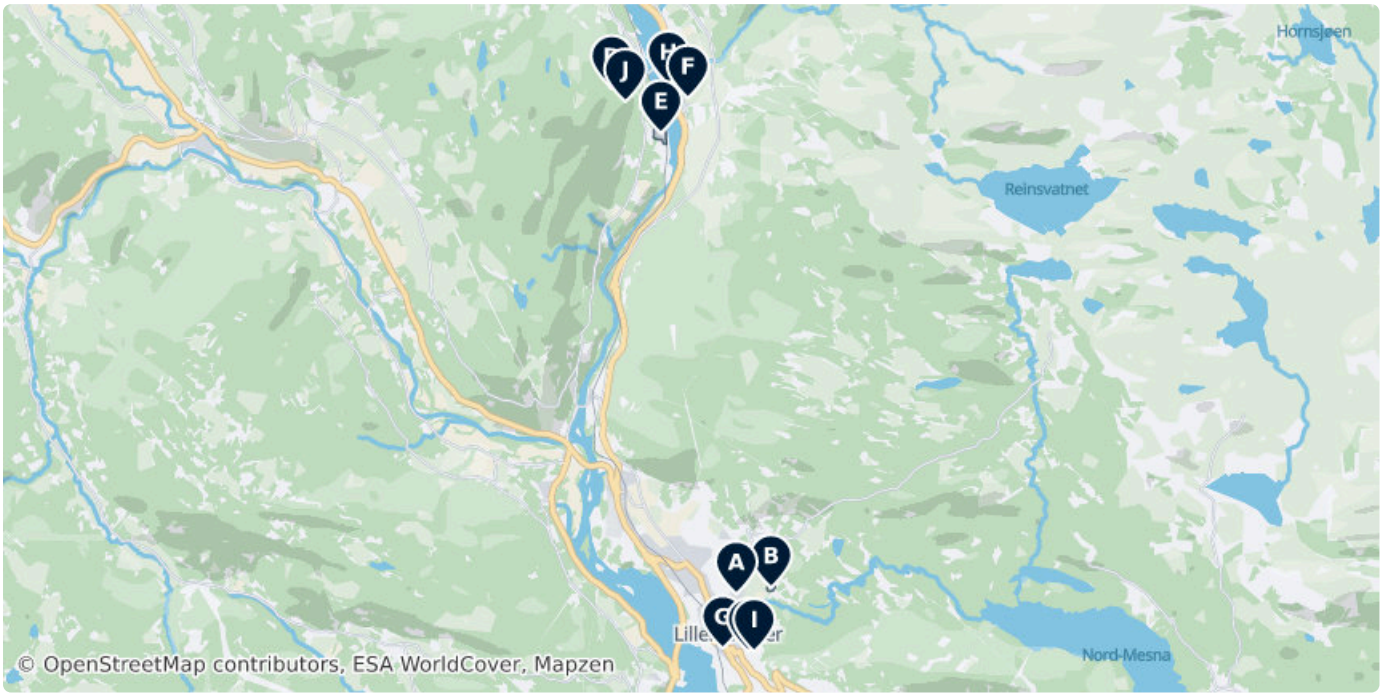
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230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Norwegian Bokmål, Norwegian Nynorsk

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Lillehammer Essentials

Lillehammer is defined by its 1994 Winter Olympic legacy and deep cultural history. The Lysgårdsbakkene ski jump and the Norwegian Olympic Museum showcase the city's sporting heritage, while the Maihaugen open-air museum houses the 13th-century Garmo Stave Church. To the north, the Hunderfossen and Lilleputthammer theme parks offer attractions based on Norwegian folklore and local history. The surrounding landscape is marked by the Fakkelmannen hillside figure and the extensive slopes of Hafjell Alpine Resort.





A Norwegian Olympic Museum

Norwegian Olympic Museum is located at Maihaugen in Lillehammer, Norway.

Håkons Hall, 2618 Lillehammer, Norway (61.12376, 10.47083)

maihaugen.no/no/Norges-Olympiske-M... , +47 61 05 76 50



B Lysgårdsbakken

Venue for the 1994 Winter Olympics opening and closing ceremonies, featuring two ski jumping hills and a chairlift providing views of the city and Lake Mjøsa.

2618, Norway (61.12521, 10.48699)



C Garmo stave church

A 13th-century stave church originally from Lom, relocated to the Maihaugen open-air museum in 1921. It features a cross-shaped floor plan added during the 1700s.

(Unnamed Road), Lillehammer 2614, Norway (61.11092, 10.47633)

maihaugen.no/Opplev-Maihaugen/Frilufts... , +4761288900



D Fakkelmannen

A 140-meter-tall figure of a torchbearer created by clearing trees on a hillside in Øyer for the 1994 Winter Olympics.

(Unnamed Road), 2636, Norway (61.23722, 10.41293)



E Hunderfossen Familiepark

A fairytale-themed park featuring over 60 attractions, including a 14-meter-tall troll, inspired by the traditional folk stories of Asbjørnsen and Moe.

Musehullet, 2636 Lillehammer, Norway (61.22720, 10.43572)

hunderfossen.no, +47 61 27 55 30

F Hafjell Alpine Resort

A wonderful ski resort with easily accessible slopes ranging from the easiest ones to the most challenging drops.

Aaslettvegen, 2636 Øyer, Norway (61.23504, 10.44833)

hafjell.no, +47 61 27 47 00



G Lillehammer Church

Lillehammer Church is a parish church of the Church of Norway in Lillehammer Municipality in Innlandet county, Norway.

28 Kirkegata, Lillehammer 2609, Norway
(61.11151, 10.46450)

H Lilleputthammer

An adventure park for young children featuring a 1:4 scale replica of Lillehammer's historic main street, Storgata, as it appeared in the 1930s.

(61.23819, 10.43919)

lilleputthammer.no, +47 61 28 55 00



I Fishermen's chapel

Norway's only preserved medieval log-built church building, dating back to approximately 1459. It is currently located within the Maihaugen open-air museum.

(Unnamed Road), 2609, Norway (61.11087, 10.47922)

J Haugakampen

A viewpoint in Øyer offering panoramas of the Gudbrandsdalen valley and the Fakkelmannen hillside figure.

(61.23422, 10.41915)

DATA SOURCES

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- Garmo stave church — "Garmo stavkirke, Maihaugen" by Bitte Sveen, cc-by-sa-4.0
- Fakkelmannen — "Hafjell is a village and a ski resort in Norway, in the Øyer municipality in..." by Ole C Eid, CC BY-SA 2.0
- Hunderfossen Familiepark — "Eventyrslottet i Hunderfossen Familiepark" by MikkelMagnus, cc-by-sa-4.0
- Lillehammer Church — "Hafjell Resort kirke i lillehammer by Benyamin Farnam" by Benyamin Farnam, CC BY-SA 4.0
- Fishermen's chapel — "Fiskerkapellet på Maihaugen slik det står i dag ved Breisjøen." by Jan-Tore Egge, CC BY-SA 4.0

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