

Norway

Country name in English (PCGN recommended name)	Norway
State title in English	Kingdom of Norway
Country name in Norwegian	Norge (<i>nob</i>), Noreg (<i>nno</i>) ¹
State title in Norwegian	Kongeriket Norge
Name of citizen	Norwegian
Official languages	Norwegian (<i>nor</i>), Saami (<i>smi</i>)
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	NO/NOR
Capital	Oslo
Population/Area	5.5million (UN data) / 385,207 km ²

Introduction

Norway is a Nordic country along with Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. It shares a border with Sweden, Finland and Russia. It has a long coastline on the North Sea and the Norwegian Sea. The Kingdom of Norway also includes the remote Arctic island of Jan Mayen, about 600 km northeast of Iceland, as well as the Svalbard² archipelago, also situated in the Arctic ocean, midway between the north coast of Norway and the North Pole.³ The volcanic Bouvet island (*Bouvetøya*) in the South Atlantic Ocean is a dependency of Norway.⁴

Geographical names policy

PCGN policy for Norway is to use official sources from the country. The Norwegian national official mapping is produced by the Norwegian Mapping Authority: [Kartverket](#). Geospatial data, including place names from the Norwegian Placename Register, is available free of charge from the national geoportal [Geonorge](#). The [Norwegian Placename Register](#) contains a digital map with a search function for place names.

Languages

Norwegian is the primary national language in Norway and the [Constitution of Norway](#) states that both Norwegian and Saami⁵ have equal value, with Kven (a Finnish language), Romani and Romanes

¹ ISO 639 codes are given for the languages mentioned in this Factfile.

² Also known by the name of the largest island, Spitsbergen or Spitzbergen.

³ Although they are not administratively related, the ISO 3166 standard collectively designates Svalbard and Jan Mayen with their own country code: SJ/SJM.

⁴ ISO 3166 standard country code for Bouvet Island is BV.

⁵ Other spellings include Sámi and Sami.

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

as national minority languages. Norwegian is a North Germanic language, alongside Swedish, Danish, Faroese and Icelandic. Norwegian, has two official written forms: *Bokmål* 'Book Language' (*nob*) and *Nynorsk* 'New Norwegian' (*nno*). They are so similar linguistically that they may be regarded as written dialects, and are mutually completely intelligible. *Nynorsk* is mostly written in western Norway by around 10% of people, *Bokmål* is used elsewhere.

The three variants of Saami (*smi*) spoken in Norway are North Saami (*sme*), Lule Saami (*smj*) and South Saami (*sma*). Kven (*fkv*), Romanes and Romani (*rom*) are acknowledged as official minority languages in Norway, but the latter two are scarcely reflected in geographical names. North Saami is the most widely spoken Saami language in Norway and is spoken from the northern part of Nordland to eastern Finnmark. In this area, many place names are of Saami origin and are written in the North Saami alphabet.⁶ Saami languages have official status in the counties of Finnmark (in five municipalities) and Troms (in two municipalities) and the municipalities of Tysfjord in Nordland county and Røyrvik and Snåsa in Trøndelag county.

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings⁷):

The Norwegian alphabet uses 21 letters of the Roman alphabet: C, Q, W, X and Z are used only in foreign loan words. In addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman alphabet, the **Norwegian** alphabet contains the following letter-diacritic combinations:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Æ	00C6	æ	00E6
Å	00C5	å	00E5
Ø	00D8	ø	00F8

On some older sources these letters may be written as follows: æ = ae, ø = oe, å = aa.

The **North Saami** alphabet uses 22 letters of the Roman alphabet (not Q, W, X or Y) and contains the following additional characters:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Ð	0110	ð	0111
ƒ	0166	ƒ	0167
Č	010C	č	010D
Š	0160	š	0161
Ž	017D	ž	017E
Ŋ	014A	ŋ	014B

The **Lule Saami** alphabet uses 21 letters of the Roman alphabet (not C, Q, W, X or Y) and contains the following additional characters:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Á	00C1	á	00E1

⁶<https://www.kartverket.no/globalassets/til-lands/stadnamn/toponymic-guidelines-for-map-and-other-editors-norway.pdf>

⁷ See www.unicode.org

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Æ	00C6	æ	00E6
Å	00C5	å	00E5
Ŋ	014A	ŋ	014B

The **South Saami** alphabet uses 21 letters of the Roman alphabet (not C, Q, W or X) and contains the following additional characters:

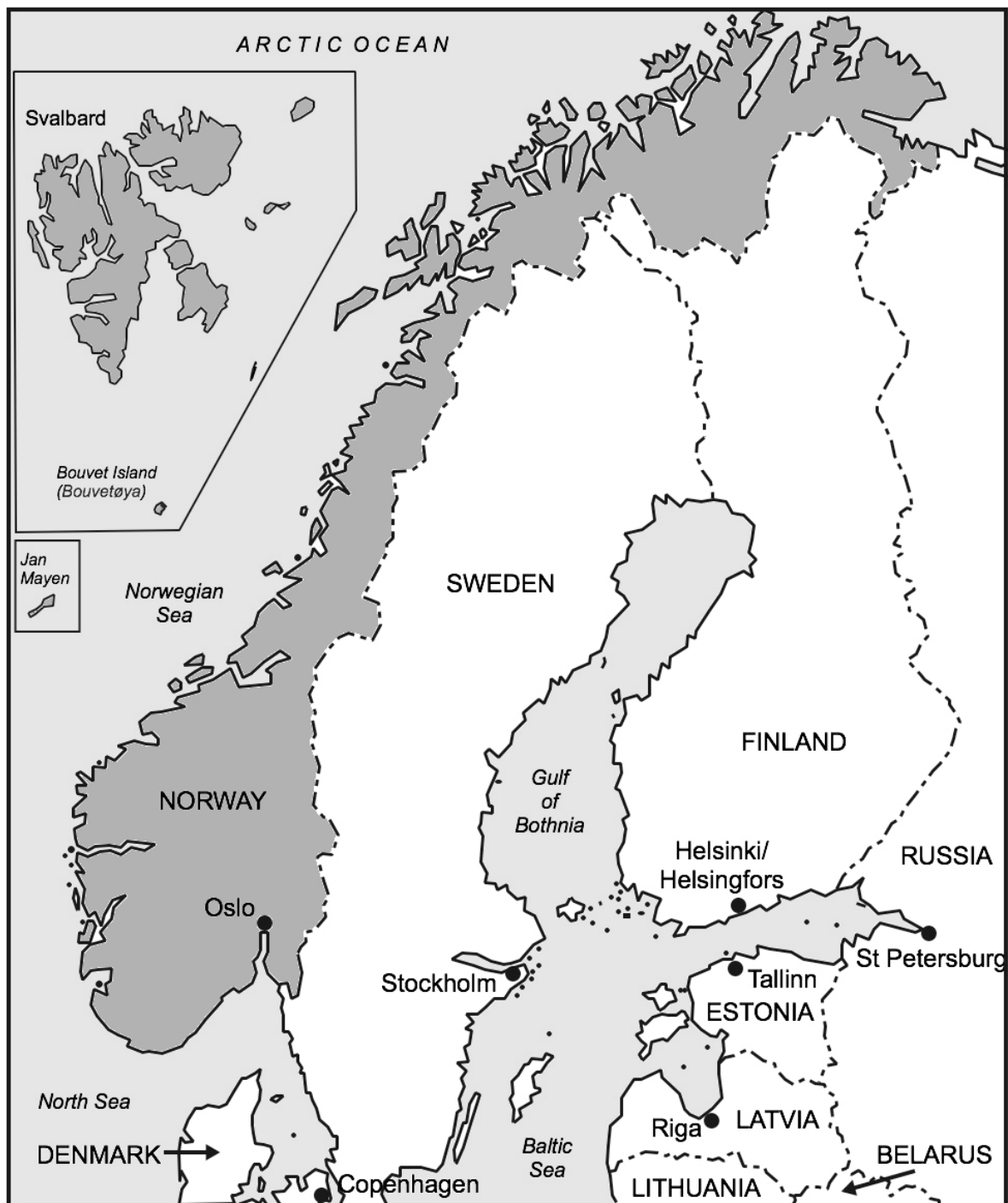
Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Æ	00C6	æ	00E6
Å	00C5	å	00E5
İ	00CF	ı	00EF
Ö	00D6	ö	00F6

In addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman alphabet, the **Kven** alphabet contains the following letter-diacritic combinations:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ä	00C4	ä	00E4
Ö	00D6	ö	00F6
Đ	0110	đ	0111
Š	0160	š	0161

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

Map of Norway



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

Administrative structure

Norway is divided into 15 counties (*nor: fylke; sme: fylka; fkv: lääni*) at the first-order administrative level. Additionally, there are 2 arctic regions (*arktisk område*) that are not part of the first-order administrative structure but have special status within Norway: Jan Mayen and Svalbard. The counties are further divided into municipalities (*nor: commune; sme: gielda, suohkan; smj: suohkan; sma: tjjelte; fkv: kunta*).

On 1st January 2024, three of the counties split: Troms og Finnmark became Finnmark and Troms counties; Viken became Akershus, Østfold and Buskerud counties; Vestfold og Telemark became Vestfold and Telemark counties.⁸

PCGN recommended name	Location	ISO 3166-2 code	Centre (PCGN recommended name)	Location
Agder	58° 45' N, 007° 50' E	NO-42	Kristiansand	58° 28' N, 008° 46' E
Akershus	60° 00' N, 011° 00' E	NO-32	Oslo ⁹	59° 55' N, 010° 45' E
Buskerud	60° 30' N, 009° 30' E	NO-33	Drammen	59° 44' N, 010° 12' E
Finnmark/ Finnmárku/Finmarkku (<i>nor/sme/fkv</i>)	70° 00' N, 025° 00' E	NO-56	Vadsø	70° 05' N, 029° 44' E
Innlandet	61° 00' N, 010° 45' E	NO-34	Hamar	60° 48' N, 011° 06' E
Jan Mayen ¹⁰	70° 59' N, 008° 32' W	NO-22	Olonkinbyen ¹¹	70° 55' N, 008° 43' E
Møre og Romsdal	62° 40' N, 007° 50' E	NO-15	Molde	62° 44' N, 007° 11' E
Nordland	67° 00' N, 014° 40' E	NO-18	Bodø/Bådåddjo (<i>nor/smj</i>)	67° 17' N, 014° 23' E
Oslo ¹²	59° 54' N, 010° 43' E	NO-03	Oslo	59° 55' N, 010° 45' E
Østfold	59° 20' N, 011° 20' E	NO-31	Sarpsborg	59° 17' N, 011° 07' E
Rogaland	59° 00' N, 006° 15' E	NO-11	Stavanger	58° 58' N, 005° 45' E

⁸ <https://kartverket.no/til-lands/kommunereform/regionsendringer-2024>

⁹ The administrative seat, Oslo, is not located within the county of Akershus.

¹⁰ Jan Mayen is administered by the governor of the nearest county, Nordland. There is no indigenous population; the only inhabitants are Norwegian Armed Forces and Meteorological Institute personnel.

¹¹ There is no administrative centre of Jan Mayen; Olonkinbyen is the only settlement.

¹² Oslo is both a county and municipality.

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

PCGN recommended name	Location	ISO 3166-2 code	Centre (PCGN recommended name)	Location
Svalbard ¹³	74° to 81° N, 010° to 35° E	NO-21	Longyearbyen ¹⁴	78° 13' N, 015° 38' E
Telemark	59° 30' N, 008° 42' E	NO-40	Skein	59° 13' N, 009° 37' E
Troms/ Romssa/Tromssan (<i>nor/sme/fkv</i>)	69° 49' N, 018° 47' E	NO-55	Tromsø/Romsa/Tromssa (<i>nor/sme/fkv</i>)	69° 40' N, 018° 58' E
Tröndelag/ Trøndelag (<i>sma/nor</i>)	64° 00' N, 011° 00' E	NO-50	Steinkjer	54° 01' N, 011° 30' E
Vestfold	59° 21' N, 010° 07' E	NO-39	Tønsberg	59° 16' N, 010° 24' E
Vestland	60° 55' N, 006° 27' E	NO-46	Bergen	60° 23' N, 005° 19' E

Other significant locations

PCGN recommended name ¹⁵	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Sápmi ¹⁶	Lapland, Sábmme (<i>smj</i>), Saepmie (<i>sma</i>)	Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia	Region
Bouvet island	Bouvetøya (<i>nor</i>)	54° 25' N, 003° 22' E	Island
Skagerrak		59° N, 009° E	Strait
Scandinavian Mountains		65° N, 014° E	Mountains
Bjørnøya (Bear Island)		74° 26' N, 019° 03' E	Island
Sognefjorden		61° 06' N, 005° 10' E	Fjord

¹³ Svalbard is administered directly by the Norwegian government, outside of the county system of Norway through an appointed Governor of Svalbard.

¹⁴ The *de facto* capital of Svalbard, Longyearbyen is the world's northernmost permanent settlement.

¹⁵ PCGN usually recommends conventional English names for international features, unless national variants are specifically required, or the relevant countries share an official language.

¹⁶ The Saami people's own name for their traditional territory is Sápmi. It stretches over northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Although the name Lapland and the term 'Lap' for its inhabitants was long in use, this is now considered derogatory.

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

Useful references

- BBC Country Profile (no longer updated): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17743896>
- FCDO Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/norway>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui>
- Norwegian Geoportal: <https://www.geonorge.no/en>
- Norwegian Mapping Authority: <https://www.kartverket.no/en/about-kartverket>
- Norwegian Placename Register:
<https://www.norgeskart.no/#!?project=norgeskart&layers=1002&zoom=3&lat=7197864.00&lon=396722.00>
- Saami Council: <http://www.saamicouncil.net/en/>
- Saami Parliament of Norway: <https://www.sametinget.no>
- Toponymic Guidelines of Norway: <https://www.kartverket.no/globalassets/til-lands/stadnamn/toponymic-guidelines-for-map-and-other-editors-norway.pdf>
- US Board on Geographic Names Server: [Geographic Names Server](#)

Compiled by PCGN
www.gov.uk/pcgn
updated December 2025