

# A Tourist's-Eye View of Norway's Green Lifestyle | Earth911.com

## A Tourist's-Eye View of Norway's Green Lifestyle



Share this idea!

Norway has a strong environmental reputation. Oslo's aggressive climate change goals, public transportation infrastructure, and circular economy innovations made it the [2019 European Green Capital](#). What does a greener, happier lifestyle look like?

Norway is [ranked 14th](#) out of 180 on the Environmental Performance Index, even after considering Norway's [fossil fuel exports](#). For comparison, the U.S. ranks 27th. Here in the U.S., there is a prevailing idea that living green means sacrificing comfort, convenience, and choice. But Norway ranks third in the [World Happiness Report](#) — well above the U.S.' 19th place.

### Not So Different

On a recent trip to Norway, I was surprised that life in Oslo didn't seem very different. Norwegian prices might shock many Americans. But they aren't much higher than we're used to in coastal U.S. cities like Seattle.

Recycling and garbage containers stood side by side, and cashiers still offered shoppers [plastic bags](#) if they didn't bring their own. Their menus were still full of [meat](#) and their shopping malls offered [fast fashion](#). But on closer inspection, a few important differences are apparent.

### Public Transportation



Public transportation, like this Oslo tram, is convenient and plentiful in larger cities. Image: Adobe Stock

In larger cities like Oslo and Bergen, public transportation is more convenient than driving. Buses, trains, and trams are frequent and ubiquitous.

Even the best American public [transportation](#) systems are designed for downtown commuters. Norwegian transport connects all areas of the city and beyond. You never have to walk far to a bus stop or train station, and rarely have to wait more than 10 minutes, even in the middle of the day. Most residents have monthly passes or pay using a cell phone app. With such frequent service, there is less need to maximize the number seats.

Trains have space for large luggage and buses have room for bicycles, groceries, and pets. On one intercity trip, we even saw people step off the train, strap on their skis, and ski away.

### **Fuel-Efficient Cars**



This tiny electric car can park outside a house in Bergen's old town on an alley where a larger car couldn't fit. Image: Gemma Alexander

I met one rural Norwegian who wryly reported that his favorite thing to do in America was "looking up at the cars."

That small, efficient cars fill the narrow streets of Oslo is no surprise. But even in remote fjords and small mountain towns like Lillehammer, site of the 1994 Winter Olympics, the pickup trucks and SUVs favored by Americans are rare. Thanks to numerous [government sponsored perks](#), Tesla is the Norwegian car of choice.

And this is the biggest difference of all: nationally, [half of new automobile purchases](#) are electric vehicles — a number so high that petroleum sales dropped 2 percent in just the last year.

### Friluftsliv



Norwegians tend to agree that spending time outdoors is beneficial for health and happiness. Image by [Henning Sørby](#) from Pixabay  
"Friluftsliv" translates to "open-air life." It captures the Norwegian idea that spending time outdoors is required for health and



happiness.

The direct environmental impact of this attitude is in decreased vehicle miles. Instead of driving solo, thousands of people walk or bike around town and take public transportation to trailheads and ski hills. But the fact that public transportation serves wilderness areas indicates the deeper significance of friluftsliv. Their respect for the natural world leads Norwegians to vote for representatives who will pass eco-friendly policies and build sustainable infrastructure.

If you want to take a trip to a sustainable nation where you can learn a few good habits, Norway is a must-visit destination.

#### **You Might Also Like...**



#### **Shopping Your Environmental and Social Values**

This article is the first in a six-part series focused ...Gemma AlexanderJune 21, 2019



### Doctors Prescribe the Great Outdoors

As the wellness movement grows, more and more of us ...Lauren MurphyMay 2, 2019



### How to Make Less Trash the Simple Way

What the heck does it mean to live a zero ...Andrea SandersJune 29, 2016