

It's All About Being Green

There is something about Norway. You can't place your finger on whether it is the unique fjords, the limitless forests and the northern lights or rather the innovative way of thinking, the vibrant economy and the strong focus on sustainability. Whatever the reason, holding your event in one of Norway's major cities guarantees an eco-friendly experience which combines the best of both worlds, i.e. advanced technology and respect for your surroundings.

Words Vicky Koffa

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HYDRO POWER STATION ØVRE FOSLAND

In the universal struggle towards a sustainable planet, Norway is not holding back. From providing 'off-grid' clean energy solutions to farmers for the world's most extreme climates and using local resources for innovative constructions (like the world's tallest timber building), Norwegians have imbued 'greenness' in every aspect of everyday life.

This inherent 'need for green' is evidently embedded in businesses and business tourism. VisitNorway, the country's Convention Bureau, is actually part of a larger organization, Innovation Norway, powered by the government. With a mission to support companies and tourism in developing their competitive advantage and to enhance innovation, this innovative instrument has a 50% environmentally focused profile within its financial portfolio.

BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY IN OSLO

Recognition of such efforts starts already in the capital, Oslo. Under the banner "City for everyone, putting people first", Oslo was awarded the title of European Green Capital for 2019. One of the city's environmental initiatives was reducing the cars in the city centre and creating more open urban spaces that can be filled with activities and green areas. Another one was reopening its waterways, which is beneficial both for biodiversity and for a healthier urban environment. No wonder the same year the city ranked among the top 20 sustainable congress destinations in Europe, according to the 2019 GDS-Index list.

A leader in green innovation, Oslo prides itself in companies like Klemetsrud CHP, a waste-to-energy plant where residual waste is incinerated and used in production of environment-friendly district heating and electricity. In addition, the city is collaborating with the national authorities on a carbon capture facility at the Klemetsrud plant, which will be one of the most advanced in its kind worldwide once completed. The construction sector is also being electrified. The vision is to achieve zero-emission construction sites by 2025.

And it almost feels redundant to mention that Ruter - the public transport company for the greater Oslo region - has stated that all its modes of transport will become emission free by 2028. The city plans to reduce the number of cars in the city centre, not just to cut transport emissions, but also to improve public health by reducing local air pollution. Half of all new cars sold in the city are electric, making it the world's capital for electric vehicles.

In this context, it won't come as a surprise green conferences seem to pile up in Oslo. The Nordic EV Summit held there for the last three years, the World Conference on Timber Engineering (WCTE) in 2022 and the Electric Vehicle Symposium and Exhibition (EVS35) in 2022 are proof of the city's attraction as a sustainable destination. Espen Hauge, President of AVERE, the European Association for Electromobility, explains why: "We know that Norway will still be years ahead of most other countries in terms of electric vehicle

market penetration, and Oslo will still be full of green inspiration. Therefore, EVS35 in Oslo is a more relevant destination than ever."

FOSSIL-FREE FUTURE IN BERGEN

In fact, examples of sustainability spread across the entire country. Bergen, Norway's second largest city, is committed to winning the bet against pollution. Claiming the 18th place in the 2018 GDS-Index list, it boldly aims to become fossil-free by 2030. Innovation goes well into an advanced waste management system, efficient housing construction, and, of course, the hospitality sector with big hotel chains pledging to radically reduce food and water waste down to half by 2030. It ranks number 1 on the GDS-Index when it comes to sharing hotel rooms with third party sustainable certification.

Norway's biggest cruise port and the renewable energy company BKK have now established a joint company, Plug AS, with the aim of building Europe's largest onshore power supply, as well as Bergen's first shore power facility for cruise vessels. The facility that will supply three cruise vessels simultaneously and will start operations from May 2020.

With facilities for up to 2,200 delegates, Bergen is gearing up for four days of talks, collaboration and commitments to action, diving into how to cut our carbon footprint in areas like energy, transportation, food, forestation and more. The TED Countdown Summit, set to take place in October 2020, is a worldwide movement to find ways to shift, more rapidly, to a world with net zero greenhouse emissions; a perfect fit for the only city in Europe invited to become a member of the European Climate Forum.

CLEAR ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS IN TRONDHEIM

Sustainability commitment reaches as far north as Trondheim. The city is given a unique place in the work of sustainable development, when, in October last year, it received official status as a UN centre of excellence. This means that the UN recognizes Trondheim as one of the foremost in the world to manage the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Trondheim municipality and NTNU (Norwegian Technical University) have already for several years collaborated on how the sustainability goals should be incorporated in all parts of society.

Trondheim is an active participant in the +CityxChange proposal, which describes a structured approach on how to develop and deploy Positive Energy Blocks and Districts and scale these out as part of the Clean Energy Transition. New forms of integrated innovations will deliver citizen observatories, innovation playgrounds, regulatory sandboxes, and Bold City Visions.

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