

Squiz The World goes to... Norway

Each fortnight, we give the world globe a spin, and see where we land. Then we take the kids of Australia on an audio excursion to visit that country and its people.

I'm Christie Kijurina, and today on Squiz the World we're heading to a land of towering fjords, mighty Vikings, and a sky that sometimes stays bright all night—and sometimes goes completely dark for weeks.

Can you guess? Strap yourselves in to the Squiz Kids Super Fast Supersonic Jetliner as we take off and take a squiz at Norway.

JUST THE FACTS

Norway is a land of breathtaking landscapes, where towering mountains plunge into, glacial fjords... deep, narrow waterways that were carved into the land by Ice Age glaciers thousands of years ago.

Officially called The Kingdom of Norway, this country has a king and a prime minister. King Harald V is the head of state, but the government is run by elected leaders, making Norway a constitutional monarchy—like Australia and the UK.

In summer, the sun never sets in parts of the country—imagine playing outside at midnight with the sun still shining! This is called the Midnight Sun, and it happens because Norway is so far north that the Earth tilts in a way that keeps the sun above the horizon for weeks. But in winter, the opposite happens—Polar Night—where the sun disappears, leaving the sky dark for up to two months!

Stretching 1,700 kilometres from top to bottom (about the distance from Melbourne to Brisbane), Norway is long and skinny, wedged between Sweden and the wild North Atlantic Ocean. It's part of Scandinavia, a group of countries including Sweden, Denmark and Finland, with shared language roots and history. It even shares an almost 200km boarder with Russia.

The capital of Norway is a lively city called Oslo, but most of Norway is open space—perfect for skiing, hiking, and exploring nature. Only 5.4 million people live in Norway (about the population of Sydney), but the country is one of the richest in the world, thanks to huge oil and gas reserves. Instead of spending it all, Norway saved up—creating one of the world's biggest wealth funds to benefit future generations. And even though they sell oil, Norway itself runs mostly on hydroelectric power, using its rivers and waterfalls to generate energy!

Now that we know a bit about the facts and figures of Norway, let's find out more about the people...

LET'S GET CULTURAL

Norway is a land where history and myths collide—where real-life warriors set sail across the seas, and mysterious creatures were said to lurk in the mountains. It's a place of Vikings, trolls and magical stories.

A thousand years ago, Vikings ruled the seas—and many of them came from Norway! These weren't just warriors; they were brilliant shipbuilders and fearless adventurers who sailed as far as North America.

If you love Marvel, you already know some of their gods—Thor, with his mighty hammer, and Loki, the trickster. These weren't just comic book characters—they were real Norse myths that Vikings believed in!

And, Viking legends weren't just about gods and warriors—they also told tales of trolls! Giant, lumpy creatures with big noses and wild hair, trolls were said to live in the mountains and forests, turning to stone if sunlight hit them. To this day, Norway's landscapes are so dramatic, you wouldn't be surprised if a troll really did stomp through the fjords! There's even a windy mountain road called Trollstigen (Troll's Path)—watch out!

Norwegian stories have inspired writers and filmmakers all over the world. Roald Dahl, one of the most famous children's authors ever, had Norwegian parents. The witches in his book *The Witches* were based on creepy Norwegian folktales that his grandmother would tell him on his holidays in Norway.

From Viking warriors to mythical trolls—Norway is a land where history, legend, and make-believe are all part of the adventure! And Norwegian kids, get to learn all about it. That reminds me, it's....

TIME FOR SCHOOL

If you love spending time outdoors, Norwegian school might be for you. Learning isn't just about sitting in a classroom—it's about exploring the world outside.... even when it's cold!

Norwegian kids start school the year they turn six, but before that, most go to kindergarten, where they play, explore, and get ready for learning. Primary school lasts for seven years, and here's something surprising—kids don't get grades! Instead, teachers give feedback to help them improve.

Norway's love of nature is built into learning. There's even a word for it: *friluftsliv*, meaning "open-air living." Many schools have outdoor classrooms, and some, called Forest Schools, teach kids outside every day—rain, shine, or snow!

Lunchtime? Most Norwegian kids bring a packed lunch to school called *matpakke* meaning food packet. It's a simple packed lunch of wholemeal bread with cheese, fish,

or meat wrapped in paper. Schools also offer milk and fruit and veggie subscription programs to keep students fueled for all that fresh air! Speaking of outdoor activities, Norway is famous for them. I think it must be...

SPORT TIME

If one country could be called the home of skiing, it's Norway. The evidence? A 4,000-year-old rock carving of a person gliding over the snow—one of the earliest depictions of skiing in the world! Ancient Norwegians didn't just ski for fun, they used it to hunt, travel, and survive in the snowy wilderness.

Fast forward a few thousand years, and Norway was still leading the way. Norway was the first country to introduce ski competitions in the 1700s for soldiers, and by the 1800s, the world's first ski festival was held, a tradition that still attracts thousands of fans today.

Skiing isn't just a sport here—it's part of Norway's identity. Cross-country skiing is the national sport, and Norway dominates the Winter Olympics, having won more medals than any other country. They've even hosted the Winter Games twice—in Oslo (1952) and Lillehammer (1994).

But it's not all about the slopes. The most-played sport in Norway is actually, soccer! And for those long, dark Polar Nights, it makes sense that Norway is also home to one of the world's best chess players—Magnus Carlsen, a five-time world champion! Whether it's the rush of a downhill race or the quiet intensity of a chess match, Norway definitely knows how to win.

Phew... all that cold weather and skiing has made me really hungry. Surely it must be nearly...

DINNER TIME

In Norway, be prepared to get your politeness on because everything is eaten with a knife and fork! Yep, that includes burgers, pizza, tacos, even those packed lunches we were talking about earlier. No messy hands here!

Norwegian food is shaped by its wild landscapes, with plenty of hearty, traditional dishes. The national dish, fårikål is a simple but delicious lamb and cabbage stew, but local meat like reindeer, moose, elk, and other wildlife might also be on the menu. For those with a more adventurous palate, on a special occasion there's smalahove - a boiled sheep's head, eyes and all!

And for those of you who are not quite as adventurous, you'll be pleased to learn that Norwegians also eat more frozen pizza per person than anyone else on the planet! Makes sense, really you don't always feel like a sheep's head do you?

So whether it's a steaming bowl of stew, a slice of reindeer, or a fork-and-knife pizza night, eating with family and friends is what it's all about.

THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1 What is the name for the group formed by Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland? (Scandinavia)

Question 2 Which ugly, hairy mythical creature inhabits the forests of Norway? (Trolls)

Question 3 What is the national sport of Norway? (Cross-country skiing)

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for staying curious about the world, and joining me on this incredible trip to Norway.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day. Over and out.