

## Faroe Islands Practical Information

Take a deep breath! Fill your lungs! Let them open wide take in from all directions the clean air of the open sea. The loneliness of the ocean, the silence everywhere is interrupted only by the voices of birds in motion, weaving changing patterns that recreate the forms of the landscape – its heights, its depths. Welcome to the Faroe Islands!



### Documentation

Canadian/USA Passports are required for visitors to travel to Faroe Islands and must be valid for at least six months beyond your intended stay. For nationals of all other countries please check your documentation requirements online.

### Airports – Vagar

Vága Floghavn (Vagar Airport) is the international airport of the Faroe Islands. It is located just outside the village of Sørvagur. A subsea tunnel between the island of Vágur and the main island of Streymoy provides an easy link between the airport and the capital of Tórshavn. There are two tax free shops at the airport.

### Location & Geography

Situated in the heart of the Gulf Stream in the North Atlantic at 62°00'N, the Faroe Islands lie northwest of Scotland and halfway between Iceland and Norway. The archipelago is composed of 18 major islands (and a total of 779 islands, islets and skerries) covering 1399 km<sup>2</sup>/545.3 sq. miles and is 113 km/70 miles



long and 75 km/47 miles wide, roughly in the shape of an arrowhead. There are 1100 km/687 miles of coastline and at no time is one more than 5 km/3 miles away from the ocean. The highest mountain is 882m/2883 ft above sea level and the average height above sea level for the country is 300m/982 ft.



One of the first things that foreigners notice when they arrive in the Faroe Islands is the incredibly fresh air. The next thing that strikes our visitors is the blindingly green grass that covers the islands, all the way up to the highest mountains, giving the characteristic feeling of a country clad in green. The Faroe Islands are of volcanic origin. They are part of the North Atlantic basalt area, stretching from Ireland to Greenland. The mountains are formed in a layering process, from the grey-black basalt formed by lava from the Tertiary period's volcanoes, interspersed by the softer red-brown tuff, which originates from the rain of ash preceding volcanic eruptions. Later the glaciers of the ice period restructured the original plateau, to an archipelago with high mountains, deep valleys and narrow fjords. The basalt covers older geological deposits, where the presence of hydro carbons is very likely.

Animal life is characterized by the ever-present sheep that outnumbers the population by a factor of two to one, and the rich and varied bird life especially seabirds that attracts bird enthusiasts and ornithologist from all around the world.



### Population

The population is 49,692 (as of January 2019). About 21,000 people live in the greater urban area which comprises Tórshavn, Kirkjubøur, Velbastaður, Nólsoy, Hestur, Koltur, Hoyvík, Argir, Kaldbak, Kaldbaksbotnur, Norðradalur, Syðradalur, Hvítanes, Sund, Kollafjørður, Signabøur and Oyrareingir, while about 5,200 people live in Klaksvík, the second largest town in the Faroe Islands.

### People & Culture

These islands in the North Atlantic will fill your heart with wonder as you visit old Viking settlements, modern cities and towns that will leave you in awe. The first settlers may have been Irish monks, probably in the middle of the seventh century, seeking tranquility on these remote islands. The Faroes became a central part of Viking settlements later, and after being governed by many different influences, they are now governed directly out of Copenhagen.



Religion plays an important part in Faroese culture and over 80% of the population belong to the established church, the Evangelical-Lutheran. 10% of the population belong to the Christian Brethren (Plymouth Brethren).

### **Language**

English is widely spoken throughout the islands. The Faroese language has survived through song and dance, orally handed down from generation to generation. The special features of the Faroese dance are the song and story. There is no instrumental accompaniment, only the voices and feet are heard. While a single or a few singers lead the song, the others take part with their dance steps by singing the refrain after each verse. The collection of these ballads, songs and dances has led to the establishment of the written Faroese language in the middle of the 19th century, creating the basis for the language's renewal that has taken place. The Faroese language is still developing today and is the pride of Faroese culture.

### **Economy**

The fishing industry is the most important source of income for the Faroes. Fish products account for over 97% of the export volume. Tourism is the second largest industry, followed by woolen and other manufactured products.



### **Climate & Weather**

The Faroe Islands experience relatively mild seasons. Summers are cool and winters are mild. The climate is classed as Maritime Subarctic and is influenced by the strong warming influence of the Atlantic Ocean, which produces the North Atlantic Current.

During the summer, the days are long and bright (almost 20 hours of daylight on the longest day). In the winter, the days can be as short as five hours.

The islands are generally windy, cloudy and cool throughout the year. The variations in altitude, ocean currents, topography and wind mean the climate differs greatly, even with the short distances between locations. You can experience rain, snow and sun all in one day.

## Temperature

The weather is maritime and quite changeable, from moments of brilliant sunshine to misty hill fog, to showers. The Gulf Stream encircling the island group tempers the climate. The harbors never freeze and the temperature in winter time is very moderate, considering the high latitude. Snowfall occurs but is short lived. The average temperature ranges from 3.5°C in winter to 12°C in the summer. In sheltered areas, the temperature can be much higher, but the air is always fresh and clean no matter what the season. These islands are typically quite windy however, year-round.

## Daylight



Summer visitors who arrive to a bright midnight sky ask when it gets dark in The Faroe Islands, and are sometimes told "in the middle of August". The sun barely sets in the summer in Torshavn and it is light round-the-clock in the north at the peak of summer. In mid-winter, expect only about four to five hours a day of daylight. Spring and autumn daylight hours are, more or less, "normal".

## Clothing & Footwear

When travelling in The Faroe Islands you should always be prepared for both cold and wet weather all times of the year, as the weather can be extremely changeable. Faroese often say, "If you don't like the weather, just wait 15 minutes!" Be sure to bring along lightweight clothing, a sweater or cardigan, a rainproof coat and sturdy walking shoes. Travellers who are camping or heading into the interior will need warm underwear and socks, rubber boots and a warm sleeping bag.

## Electricity



Faroese electrical standards are European (50Hz, 220 volts) so many North American electrical devices will require converters, and all will require plug adapters. Most laptop computers, phones and MP3 player chargers have the converter built in, so you just need a plug adaptor to fit in the outlets. These are usually available at airports. For the converters, it's best to buy one in North America and bring it with you. They are usually found at US and Canadian electronic specialty stores.

## Currency

As a self-governing region of the Kingdom of Denmark, the Faroese government prints its own currency, the krona, although Danish coins are used. The exchange value is equivalent to the Danish krone, and there is no service charge on exchange, as the Danish notes are equally acceptable as the Faroese krona throughout the country. Banks are located in most towns and some will offer an ATM. North American bank cards will allow you to withdraw Danish cash from the ATMs.

## Credit Cards

They are accepted by most shops, restaurants and organizations and are widely used. The major credit cards in Faroe Islands are Visa, MasterCard and EuroCard, although other cards may be accepted in some areas.

### **Business & Banking Hours**

Banks in major towns and some villages are open from 9:30 – 16:00 on weekdays. All banks are closed on Saturdays and Sundays. ATMs are available from 6:00 – 2:00 every day. Most shops are open from 10:00 – 17:00. On Thursdays and Fridays, many are open until 18:00. On Saturdays, shops close at 14:00, but the SMS shopping Centre in Tórshavn is open until 18:00. Most shops are closed on Sundays. Kiosks, petrol stations and most bakeries do not close until 23:00, also on a Sunday.

### **Shopping, Tax & Duty Free**

Among Faroese souvenirs, there is a lot of interest in the numerous woolen goods, stuffed birds, ceramics, wood articles, jewellery, music, stamps and posters. As a guest in the Faroes, the holiday and business traveler is exempt from the 25% value added tax (VAT) on purchases over DKK 300. Look for the blue and white 'Tax Free for Tourists' sign in the shop window. There are many shops at various locations throughout the country that are members of the 'Faroese Tax-Free System' and will gladly help you obtain your tax refund. As the sales clerk at the time of purchase for a 'Tax Refund Cheque'.

### **Tipping**

Although it has not been the custom to tip in the Faroe Islands, it is becoming more widespread especially in restaurants, bars, cafes and taxis. You are not obliged to tip, but a gratuity for good service would be appreciated.

### **Telephone & Emergency**

Dial 112 for any type of emergency assistance anywhere in the country. There are hospitals located in Torshavn, Klaksvik and Tvoroyri.

Most North American and European cell phones will work on the GSM network in the Faroe Islands. Faroese Telecom and Vodafone have many roaming agreements with other countries, so that foreign visitors can make use of their own mobile phones while they are in the Faroe Islands.

Prepaid telephone cards can be purchased at post offices, some hotels and petrol stations. Internet cafes can be found in the Tourist Information Offices in Torshavn, Sandoy and Runavik.

### **Health Information**

Should you need assistance, dial 112 for any type of emergency. First aid is provided at the hospitals in Tórshavn, Klaksvik and Tvoroyri. General Practitioners can also be contacted for non-emergency consultations over the phone, usually between 8:00 and 9:00. If you require urgent medical treatment outside those hours, you should call the emergency medical service at 1870. Emergency dental service is also available in Tórshavn and the clinic is open Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays from 10:00 to 11:00. To make an appointment, call (+298)314544.

Travelers should take out enough health and travel insurance, including emergency evacuation coverage and bring regularly prescribed medicine, as your brand may not be available.

### **Public Holidays & Events**

#### **January:**

*New Year's Day* – A public holiday and almost everything is closed.

#### **April:**

*Maundy Thursday* – A public holiday in which most businesses and schools are closed.

*April 25 - National Flag Day* – This is a day off for the general population, and schools and most businesses are closed.

**May:**

*Prayer Day* – This is a public holiday for the general population and schools and most businesses are closed.

*Ascension Day* – This is a public holiday for the general population and schools and most businesses are closed.

*Boat Festival* – In Vestmanna  
*Norðoyastevna Festival*

**June:**

*June 5 - Constitution Day* – In 1849, the first constitution of Denmark was enacted, making it a limited, Constitutional monarchy instead of an absolute monarchy. Today is a half-day public holiday

*Whit Sunday* – A public holiday for the general population and most businesses are closed.

*Whit Monday* – A public holiday for the general population and schools and most businesses are closed

**July:**

*July 28 – Ólavsøkuafтан (St. Olav's Eve)* – A half-day public holiday

*July 29 – Ólavsøkudagur (St. Olav'e Day)* – National Day – Named after King Olav II of Norway. Festivities begin on the eve of the 28<sup>th</sup> and continue for several days. A parade takes place in Torshavn, along with many other events throughout the day. It is considered a public holiday and most businesses and banks are closed.

**August:**

*Sjómannadagur* – Seaman's Day in Klaksvik. Plenty of exciting activities for all ages.

**December:**

*Christmas Eve* – A public holiday for the general population and schools and most businesses are closed.

*Christmas Day* – A public holiday for the general population and schools and most businesses are closed.

*Boxing Day* – A public holiday for the general population and schools and most businesses are closed.

*New Year's Eve* – A public holiday for the general population and schools and most businesses are closed.

## Tourist Information Centers

### **Visit Faroe Islands**

Bryggjubakki 12  
P.O box 118  
Fo 110 Tórshavn  
Tel +298 306100  
Fax +298 306105  
visitfaroeislands@mfa.fo  
[www.visitfaroeislands.com](http://www.visitfaroeislands.com)

### **Eysturoy Information Office**

Runavík  
Heiðavegur  
FO-620 Runavík  
Tel. 417060  
Fax 417001  
kunningarstovan@runavik.fo  
[www.visitesturoy.fo](http://www.visitesturoy.fo)

### **Streymoy Information Office**

Nólsoyar Kunningarstova  
FO-270 Nólsoy  
Tel. 327060  
info@visitnolsoy.fo  
[www.visitnolsoy.fo](http://www.visitnolsoy.fo)