



## Frequently Asked Questions – FAQ

Voss og fjordane Guideservice (VGS)

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### General

#### **Do I need to be Norwegian or from Voss to become a guide?**

Some of our guides are Norwegian while others are from different parts of the world. You do not need to be Norwegian or from Voss to become a guide with Voss og fjordane Guideservice, but you do need to be genuinely in love with Norway. Working as a guide means working in an international environment, and we see the cultural diversity of our guides as an asset.

#### **Do I need to know Norwegian to become a guide?**

You don't need to know Norwegian to become a guide, as the core literature and information is in English. Nevertheless, knowing Norwegian is very useful to connect with your colleagues as well as to go more in depth about the content that you present. That is why we warmly encourage you to learn Norwegian and use it if you don't already.

#### **What is the guiding season in Voss and the fjords?**

The guiding season is defined by the tourist activity in the ports of Flåm, Eidfjord, Vik and Ulvik. Even though there are travellers, the high season starts from the end of April to mid-October, with June usually being the busiest month of the season. Cruises are a significant part of tourist activity in our region.

#### **How can I apply?**

Firstly, take your time to carefully read the job description on our website to familiarize yourself with our offer and the job requirements. After you have decided that becoming a guide with VGS is something for you, you need to apply via our online form. Then we take it from there together.

#### **What are the most required languages for guiding?**

English, German and Spanish are the three main languages that most cruise passengers/tourists coming to our region speak. Italian is also in high demand, along with some French with a little Dutch and Portuguese. A guide's language skills are a large factor in the number of possible assignments they will be offered during the season.



### **How well do I have to speak the languages?**

Your language skills should fall between B2 and C2 according to EU standards (see "Europass language self-assessment grid"). All applicants will undergo language proficiency tests adapted for guiding. Knowing Norwegian is not mandatory.

Remember, if you have B1 and have been speaking frequently in the language, you may well be underestimating your grade!

### **What do I get in return for working with VGS?**

We are passionate about guiding and we view it as a profoundly human experience. Working with guides gives us a chance to help them become better and do the best work they can. The skills you acquire as a guide will help you for the rest of your life: how to speak to large groups of people so that they will listen; how to lead a group of people, how to manage emergencies and difficult situations; how to react professionally to complaints and emotional outbreaks, and many other skills in addition to that. We deliver over 90% of the cruise calls, which means our guides have a significant percentage of the guiding assignments in our region. You will also benefit from an international environment of professionals to work with and a chance to develop and certify skills to build a career.

### **Can I develop a career with VGS?**

Once you become a VGS guide you can work as a guide for many years going forward. Some of our guides have been guiding for more than 20 years! VGS is also a part of a larger network of companies all over Norway and Northern Europe. Working as a guide with VGS might just be the steppingstone towards a future career in the tourism and service industry. Our network is continuously growing, and should you apply for other positions, starting as a guide is a great way to get noticed.

### **What are the steps towards becoming a guide?**

You will find details of the application process on our website.

## **Guide Certification and Training**

### **Do I need to hold a certification to become a guide?**

Yes, everyone who wants to become a Guide with VGS must possess certification from a recognised Norwegian course to meet the high standards required by our guests. We also want our guides to feel equipped and confident in performing their assignments.

But don't worry, there are several Guide certification courses available on the market, and if you don't already have a certificate, we recommend the Certification Programme organised by Guide Academy (<https://guideacademy.no/>). The Guide Academy training program consists of an engaging online course



that you can complete from anywhere in the world, complemented by an intensive onsite training session scheduled for the last weeks of April. No prior guiding experience is required to apply—just bring your passion and enthusiasm!

All guides must have undergone a recognised Guide Certification in Norway, proving extensive local knowledge, have comprehensive knowledge of the specific routines and procedures for cruise assignments and first aid training certificate.

### **Do I have to pay for the certification?**

Most guide certification courses charge a fee, up to 27000 NOK (Oslo Certification). You can find the costs of these guide courses online.

The Certification Programme organised by Guide Academy provides great value and a comprehensive education for a successful guiding season. We sponsor most of the certification fee of the Certification with Guide Academy for those who commit to working a full season exclusively with us, and we will be happy to discuss this further with our applicants.

### **Is there further guide education during the season?**

Additional optional educational activities will be open to anyone with the yearly membership, which is included in the certification fee. These activities will take place during the season and will consist of visits and seminars. Additionally, you can join your fellow guides on tours as observers. For certain tours, such as the full-day Nutshell tours, you will observe these as part of your training, before being assigned to lead them on your own.

### **Is there any training from VGS?**

Within your first days at work, you are required to participate in a mandatory training session where the practicalities, logistics, and booking system will be explained in detail.

## **Tours**

### **What kind of tours will I be doing?**

Throughout a season, guides will experience and lead a variety of tours, such as: two-hour panoramic tours by coach, tours via coach and ferry along the fjords, bus and ferry tours to the Glacier Museum and Boyabreen glacier, scenic boat tours with 100 + guests along the World Heritage Nærøfjord, bus tours to the famous sites of Stegastein, Vøringsfossen, Tvindfossen, Skjervsfossen, The Viking Village of Gudvangen, a cider tasting tour in Ulvik, visiting the Stave Churches of Borgund, Hopperstad, Undredal, a world famous scenic train tour on the Flåmsbana and many other tour varieties.

You may also experience other parts of Norway while guiding from other ports.



### **Will I guide in the Voss region only?**

You will primarily guide in the Voss region, where we are based. Voss is central to the ports that we serve, Flåm, Eidfjord, Vik and Ulvik. Occasionally, you may be asked to guide in the Bergen City area for our sister agency, or from other ports in Norway. Transportation will be arranged and covered by us, and you will receive additional hourly compensation, including paid travel time to the port.

### **How can I practice and improve my guiding skills?**

As well as online and printed sources, some of the best sources of information are your VGS colleagues, driver colleagues, and our other partners in the restaurants, museums, and other venues we visit. Your guests will also provide you with feedback. Additionally, evaluations from the HR manager or a member of the office team provide a valuable opportunity to receive constructive feedback, which can help you improve your performance and gain confidence through recognition. This feedback is invaluable in refining your skills and ensuring the highest level of service for our guests.

### **What is the company culture and conditions for guides?**

We operate with a very flat and supportive structure, with a strong focus on working as one team.

We listen to our guide feedback constantly and, wherever possible, we act upon this and will always keep our guides informed about progress

We organise individual personal meetings with all our team throughout the season to not only provide constructive evaluation feedback, but for our team to highlight any matters of concern or praise for other guides or partners.

We have regular team meetings with all guides and office team, which is a great opportunity to discuss collectively improvements, future planning and historical performance.

WE ask our guides to complete questionnaires after training and at the end of the season, so that we can learn and improve all the time. The results of the feedback and the actions taken are always shared with our guides.

Our guides elect a guide representative from amongst the guides who have been nominated. This person will liaise routinely with the office and management team on behalf of all the guides.

We have a nominated Health and Safety representative whose role it is to ensure assessments of all potential risks are made, and that any deviations to agreed processes are reported and acted upon by the company.



We have a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of harassment or bullying, and any reported issues are dealt with swiftly, confidentially and decisively. This applies not just within our company but with our partners as well. Thankfully, such incidences are extremely rare.

With most of our guides living in a central location, there is much opportunity for building a good network of colleagues, which helps greatly for language practice, sharing tour information and socialising.

Guiding is not only work, most of our guides will also say that it is enjoyable, rewarding and fun! See the comments from our guides on our website.

## Employment Conditions

### Am I guaranteed paid assignments after the guide certification?

Once you have fulfilled the contractual requirement of becoming a certified guide by successfully passing the exam, your employment contract will become valid, and you will be able to work as a guide with VGS. We will then strive to offer you as many assignments and hours as possible, based on your availability, qualifications, and the needs of our clients.

### Is this a full-time job? How much can I expect to work?

Guiding is not a full-time job, and hours vary based on demand, which depends on cruise calls, private tours, and visitor numbers. During peak months like June, July, and August, you may work full-time, while in slower months, there may be fewer hours. Many guides use this time to explore the beauty of Norway.

To provide more stability for our guides, we offer a minimum average guaranteed monthly guarantee, based on their skills and availability. Most of our guides typically work more than this guaranteed minimum per month.

If you have other commitments and need more flexibility, you can opt for a flexible on-call contract.

This will be discussed in more detail during an interview.

### How much can I expect to earn?

We offer an extremely competitive wage package, which we will be very happy to discuss this with you during an interview

### When do guides get paid?

Guides are paid on the 15th of every month.

After the contract ends, you will receive your accrued Holiday Pay.



### **What happens if I get sick?**

All guides are entitled to self-certification (egenmelding) in case of illness, which can be used for up to three calendar days at a time. You can learn more on the NAV website:

<https://www.nav.no/en/home/benefits-and-services/Self-certification-egenmelding#chapter-1>

### **Can I take holidays?**

Due to the seasonal nature of the job taking time off during the season affects your overall income. If you plan to take extended holidays during the peak season, it's important to communicate this before signing the contract so we can plan accordingly. All holidays must be requested and approved by the office to ensure proper scheduling and coverage.

### **Do I have to pay tax?**

Yes, you will have to pay tax. Unless you are registered as self-employed in Norway, VGS is legally required to automatically pay tax for you in accordance with your registered Norwegian tax card. You must make sure you apply for and have the correct tax card registered with the Norwegian tax office (Skatteetaten). Tax is paid by our accounting department from your gross amount before you are paid your net salary for each working month.

### **Do I get employee insurance?**

You will be covered by an obligatory Norwegian occupational injury insurance for medical emergencies when at work. If you are a resident of Norway, then you have the standard health insurance provided by the social security system. EU/EEA citizens are covered for most health expenses by their European Health Insurance. Very often our guides from other countries obtain travel insurance for convenience.

### **Do I have to stay and work the entire season?**

As we normally source accommodation for our guides, we do need our guides to stay for a fixed minimum period of 5 months, although, subject to agreement this can be marginally altered. To plan the season, it is important for us to agree on the period during which you are available to take on assignments before signing the contract. The contract is a legally binding commitment towards the duration of the work relationship.

VGS will prioritise guides who can and show the desire to work for the entire season. A guide's availability is a large factor in the number of possible assignments they will be offered during the season.

### **Do I need a mobile phone and Norwegian phone number? Do I get refunded for the costs of using my phone?**

You must have a contactable mobile phone to work as a guide; mobiles are required for receiving and confirming assignments, as well as for during the tours (e.g. emergencies, contacting the office).



Guides with a mobile telephone with a Norwegian sim card activated and working, will be provided compensation.

You can use your own country mobile, but the compensation will not be applied.

Norwegian SIM cards can be obtained using a national ID card, passport or a Norwegian D number. There are both pay-as-you-go (*kontant*) and subscription plans available in Norway.

### **Is there a uniform? Do I have to pay for it?**

Our guides must wear:

- A white or red shirt/polo shirt/collared shirt
- Black trousers/skirt
- Dark shoes
- An VGS-branded red jacket

You will receive a red jacket, to use for the entire season. These must be returned at the end of the contract. If returned clean and in good condition there will be no charge, however if the jacket is not cleaned or is damaged you may be required to reimburse the cost of the jacket.

Some clients may also require that we wear accessories with their own logos or symbols, which will be provided.

### **Are there any other clothing requirements?**

Since Norway has relatively high rainfall, we recommend that you are prepared for the weather with rain boots, rain trousers, wool underwear, etc.

## **International applicants considering moving to Voss**

### **Is there anything I need to do to be able to work in Norway?**

It is your responsibility to check whether you can work in Norway. Please consult the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) website at [www.udi.no/en](http://www.udi.no/en) and the Service Centre for Foreign Workers (SUA) at [www.sua.no/en](http://www.sua.no/en) for more information.

Also find more information at <http://www.robinhoodhuset.no/about-us/activities/advice-and-guidance/>.

### **Do I need a work permit?**

Citizens of an EU/EEA country are allowed to visit and work for 3 months. After 3 months you must register with the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). It is your responsibility to check whether you need a



work permit. Consult the UDI website at [www.udi.no/en](http://www.udi.no/en) and the Service Centre for Foreign Workers (SUA) at [www.sua.no/en](http://www.sua.no/en)

#### **How can I apply for a tax card?**

You can book an appointment online at the Service Centre for Foreign Workers (SUA) in Bergen, where you will have to go in person to obtain your tax card. You will need to fill in the relevant forms and provide documentation to prove your requirement to pay tax. Refer to:

<https://www.skatteetaten.no/en/person/foreign/are-you-intending-to-work-in-norway/tax-deduction-cards>

#### **Do I need a visa to come to Norway?**

Citizens of Nordic and EU/EEA countries do not need a visa to come to Norway. It is, however, your responsibility to check if you do need a visa to come to Norway. You can do that here: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/>

#### **Does Voss og fjordane Guideservice organise accommodation?**

VGS will be happy to organise accommodation should you wish us to. It is not easy to find accommodation in Voss without knowing the area, or someone who can assist you.

We can talk about this more during your interview.

#### **How do I find a place to stay in Voss?**

Most people looking for a place to rent use websites such as [www.hybel.no](http://www.hybel.no) or [www.finn.no](http://www.finn.no)  
Look at local transport connections on [www.skyss.no/en/](http://www.skyss.no/en/)

### **My application**

#### **I have worked with a different guide agency in the past. Can I still apply?**

We welcome guides that have worked with other companies within our network.

#### **The deadline has passed. Can I still apply?**

If the deadline for applications has passed you can submit your interest to work as a guide with us. We will get back to you with information on what you should do next.

#### **I am not available throughout the whole season. Can I still apply?**

You can still apply but guides who are available for the whole season have an advantage in the recruitment process.





**I want to move to Voss, but I do not have enough funds to support myself until my first salary. Can I still apply?**

It is your responsibility to provide for yourself until your first salary payment.

**I do not have any previous work experience. Can I still apply?**

Not having work experience does not stop you from becoming a fantastic guide. You must however prove in the application process that you have experience of being committed to work, such as an employee or volunteer in a charitable or non-governmental organization, and that you have people that can endorse you as a worker.

**I do not live in Voss yet. Can I still apply?**

Yes. But you do eventually have to be in Voss and ready to start working as a guide by the beginning of the contract.

**I do not have a passport/ID card and I live outside of Norway. Can I still apply?**

You must make sure to obtain a passport/ID card by the time you travel to Norway. Our guides who have come to Norway and did not have a passport/ID, have had difficulties with the paperwork (opening a bank account, getting a tax card etc.)

**I am not an EU/EEA citizen. Can I still apply?**

Unfortunately not, unless you already reside in Europe and have the appropriate documentation to live and work in Norway. It is your responsibility to check that you are entitled to live and work in Norway. Check via <https://www.udi.no/en/>

**I don't currently live in Voss. If I get invited for an interview how will that work?**

Once you have completed the application questionnaire and downloaded your CV you will be asked to complete an online video call. We will then communicate about the next steps. If we do not receive a Video Interview within 48 hours we may contact you to inquire if you have had any difficulties, and to advise you of the next steps.

**I don't have a visa for Norway. Can I still apply?**

You must be entitled to work and live in Norway by the time you apply. This includes the visa if required. It is your responsibility to check that you are entitled to live and work in Norway. Check via <https://www.udi.no/en/>



**I don't have a work permit for Norway. Can I still apply?**

You must be entitled to work and live in Norway by the time you apply. This includes the application for a work permit if required. It is your responsibility to check that you are entitled to live and work in Norway. Check via <https://www.udi.no/en/>