

STARTUP GUIDE

#startupeverywhere

Startup Guide Oslo

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STARTUP GUIDE TRONDHEIM

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FOREWORD

Rita Ottervik / Mayor of Trondheim

Dear all,

It brings me great pleasure to introduce and welcome you to Norway's historical capital, Trondheim – a playground for one of the most exciting startup scenes in Northern Europe. For a thousand years the city's residents have been exploring the globe, and now we are inviting you to us. Trondheim strives to be the best environment in the country for startups, especially those sharing knowledge, products and services for a better world.

Having been the center of research and technological development in Norway since 1910, the roots of our activity can be connected to a culture of curiosity, innovation and exploration. Today, our actions are expanded through a dynamic innovation ecosystem that supports extensive knowledge-sharing and collaboration, including our internationally acclaimed educational institutions, Scandinavia's largest research organization, active technology transfer, a dynamic business environment, energetic students, trendsetting startups and a strong grassroots co-working culture. Our civil society is young, with every fifth citizen being a student. Young and old, Trondheim residents are also actively involved and engaged in volunteer work, which contributes to our city being a compact Living Lab. Having just launched a municipal strategy for entrepreneurship, the City of Trondheim is committed, more than ever, to being both a great customer for startups and an active partner in shaping a vibrant city for business development. We are honored to have collected great examples of what Trondheim has to offer in this guide; get acquainted with its spaces, programs, people and startups. I am honored to present you the Startup guide Trondheim.

Rita Ottervik

OVERVIEW

Trondheim / Norway

[Key Features]

- The Trondheim Region has a total population of 250,000 and has more than 500 technology companies employing 10,500 people.
- The dominating technology sectors are ICT and oil and gas.
- The research communities at NTNU and SINTEF employ 5,000 scientists and researchers, and have more than 23,000 students.
- The largest (technology) employers are Statoil Research Centre, Aker Solutions, Autronica, Rambøll, Det norske oljeselskap, Siemens Oil & Gas, Evry, Powel, Atmel, Bredero Shaw, ARM and Nordic Semiconductors.

LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTNER

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What makes a city attractive to an entrepreneur or startup? Does it offer inviting and dynamic events on a daily basis, often at no cost? Perhaps it is a city where ad hoc hackathons, weekend bootcamps, evening talks and pitch competitions are as common as really good concerts. Where you might meet your next investor, or even Nobel Prize winners, while casually sipping a beer at one of the eighteen local breweries. Or where coworking spaces do not just house you, but inspire your next crazy idea. If this appeals to you, Trondheim may just be the next city you will want to call home! Trondheim's vibrant startup ecosystem is here for the long-run. This 1,000-year-old hub in Mid-Norway has contributed to world change since its inception. As a driving force alongside Silicon Valley during the 90s tech boom, and birthplace of touch and smart device technology, Trondheim is now leading the way for ethical business, green technology and high-tech-fields, among others.

While a northern climate can have its challenges, free university for international students and paid salaries for doctorate work might be compensation enough. Though failure is acceptable, one must admit that it is a lot easier to beta test your autonomous-driving boat in a city that strives to be a living lab. Innovation and commercialization are the major driving forces of the region. Trondheim is estimated to become the third wealthiest city globally by 2025 due to its booming tech scene and diversity, but this does not hinder the grassroots nature of its startup scene, which touts the motto: Tech, hugs and rock n' roll.

Startup ecosystems across the globe are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent. How do we navigate these growing communities? The first step is picking up your local go-to-guide. There is no better way to navigate this city and its startup ecosystem than Startup Guide Trondheim. So start reading - you may just find your dream-team, and bring your own idea to life.

Jaya Thomlison

Editor / The List and Tech List

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ESSENTIALS

Trondheim Essentials

Trondheim is like a microcosm of a larger city, with the center neatly enveloped by the loop of the river Nidelva, flanked by Norway's widest fjord.

Cross-disciplinary collaboration is a strong force driving the city, which offers a diverse mix of culture, music, technology, food and entrepreneurship. Subcultures thrive through volunteer work, art, new businesses, microbreweries and festivals. As the technology capital of Norway, Trondheim is best known for its large technical university, which engineers strong collaboration with industry across the world. Entrepreneurs in Trondheim find it easy to connect across many industries. The many co-working spaces and incubators that have popped up over the past years have made it easy to connect and start businesses. Add to the mix established industry, a healthy public sector, many 'grassroot' movements, engaged academia and practical entrepreneurship and you have a collaborative ecosystem fit to compete.

With abundant historical landmarks such as the Nidaros Cathedral, Munkholmen and Festningen, and smaller gems like the café 'Baklandet Skydsstation', there is little wonder why so many people come to live and work in Trondheim. Whether you are a tech geek or fashionista, there's something for everyone.

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Before You Come

Trondheim is a hassle-free destination, with abundant support and security. Bureaucracy and living costs will most likely dominate your early conversations, but compared to most expat destinations, Trondheim offers a relatively orderly and friendly introduction. Of course, it is wise to arrive with enough in the bank to cover your initial outlay on rent, deposit, groceries and bills. Eye-watering prices will take the unprepared by surprise. Most services are digitized and app-supported, so you can use the free wifi at the airport, on the train and even on the airport bus. Apart from a passport and credit card, perhaps the most important commodity you need is a fully-charged smartphone. Get in touch with co-working spaces before you come and you will be rewarded with tons of advice and encouragement, and maybe even a place to stay.

Cost of Living

Your initial stipend may be swallowed up in purchasing appropriate clothing. Norwegians tend to want the best quality in their equipment, and you will be encouraged to follow suit. Food and transport are relatively expensive. A half liter of the local brew costs around 80 NOK (€9). Takeaway meals may become treats rather than cheap dinners. But childcare and family allowances are both better and more generous than most countries, as are homegrown treats such as salmon and shrimp (which are spread lavishly on open-topped sandwiches (smørbrød) in canteens and cafeterias all over the city. Use the respective apps for parking, bus and train travel to save kroner and hassle where you can. All this should be taken in context: Norway has one of the highest average wages in Europe. A PhD degree holder earns around 429,000 NOK (€48,000) annually. The average minimum wage is 170,000 NOK (€19,000), though different industries have different minimums.

Cultural Differences

Norway has a lot of charm, with its dramatic landscape, largely wooden building stock and pine trees growing on top of cabins. On arrival in Trondheim, this unique land may just release the poet in you. Regardless of the month, be prepared for the weather. As the local saying goes: 'There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing.' Participating in outdoor life is integral to Norwegian society. Hiking in the Norwegian mountains and cross-country skiing in minus 15 degrees Celsius are not activities to be taken lightly (even if your Norwegian colleagues and friends make them look like walks in the park).

The working environment is not so different from what you'd find in similar high-performing economies in Europe and North America, though the days are a bit shorter. Norwegians enjoy long holiday allowances (typically five weeks for professional jobs), with many businesses closing down in July for the three-week national summer period (fellesferie), as well as over Easter and Christmas breaks. Many people head out of town for their holidays. That is not to say that the Norwegians are

work shy: it is a country that became wealthy as recently as the 1970s (with the discovery of offshore oil), and practical knowledge of farming, hunting, carpentry and fishing are still highly regarded.

Renting an Apartment

Rooms in shared properties can be found for 5,000 NOK upwards, and small one-bedroom flats start around 9,000 to 10,000 NOK, often furnished and with commodities included. The prices are a relatively good value, however, and are levelling out as the development of new residential areas finally catches up with demand. Deposits can be a strain when transferring large amounts from weaker economies: Norwegian law states that landlords have the right to charge up to four months' rent. On the plus side, the money will be held in a holding account, minimizing the risk of unscrupulous landlords (see the New in Norway webpage nyinorge.no).

Once you are settled, you may want to consider buying a property. Norwegian banks offer favorable mortgage terms and interest rates, especially for people under the age of thirty-four. The saving program 'Boligsparing for ungdom' (BSU) allows young people to save up to 25,000 NOK a year in a high-interest savings account, and rewards savers with excellent tax breaks to boot. Many young working people are property owners by their late twenties.

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Finding a Coworking Space

Trondheim's co-working spaces offer an impressive array of social activities, infrastructure and appliances, networking opportunities and support. In a country where labor is one of the biggest costs, these spaces have revolutionized the chances for startups to grow. In the heart of Trondheim, for example, DIGS offers flex desks, private offices, a makerspace, a podcast studio, meeting rooms, a café and a bar. There are specialized hubs such as Work-Work for programming and gaming, Sosiologisk Poliklinikk for sociologists and TrollLABS for product development. There's a co-working space to suit every aspiring startup.

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Insurance

Norway has universal access to healthcare, although with nominal fees for consultation and treatment (approximately 180 NOK for a GP visit). Children, students, the elderly, pregnant women and the unemployed are all exempt from the charge, though prescription charges may still apply. Norway is outside of the EU but a member of the European Economic Area (EEA), so access to the Norwegian social security system is dependent on your country's agreement with the state. Anybody who has approval to stay longer than 12 months (see visa section below) will receive the same medical treatment as Norwegian citizens. If you fall ill or become unemployed, the welfare state agency, NAV, offers excellent security, including 65 percent of a self-employed person's average wage if they are ill longer than two weeks. If you would like full coverage, you can choose to pay for improved insurance. NAV's terms, conditions and processes can be difficult to decipher, but with 49 weeks of paternity/maternity leave at 100 percent pay (or 59 weeks at 80 percent) split between the mother and father, it is a process worth enduring.

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Visas and Work Permits

Anyone from an EU/EEA member state is entitled to work, study or live in Norway, but must register with the police for the right to remain after three months. For more information, visit the UDI website: udi.no. Depending on your country of origin and your employment status, you will be granted a conditional visa or a letter with leave to stay for an indefinite period of time. If you find a job in Norway, you must register as an employee, which also entitles you to bring your immediate family to Norway. If you come to Norway without a job, you can stay for a maximum of six months as a job-seeker.

Norway has very low levels of unemployment, but a recent rise in immigration has made the job seekers' market for foreigners fiercely competitive. Regardless of your country of origin, if you plan to work in Norway, you will need a letter of employment guaranteeing that you have a minimum of 16 hours a week paid work. Use the co-working network to find a part time job, which will not only make the visa process immeasurably easier, but will provide you with invaluable language skills and cultural insights.

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Starting a Company

Once established in Norway, setting up a 'one-man business' (enkeltmannsforetak) is a relatively simple process. Most forms are available in English. Once you have invoiced for over 50,000 NOK in a year, you will have to apply to become VAT registered (merverdiavgift). The VAT rate in Norway is high, at 25 percent, but professional customers are used to paying this on top. Private customers will expect it to be included in accordance with Norwegian law. You can choose to report your VAT once every two months (advisable) or once per year. For more information, see skatteetaten.no.

You may wish to consider registering your company, or upgrading your freelance business to a limited holding. This is known as an 'AS' in Norway, and you will typically have to pay shareholdings of 30,000 NOK. The positives are that you can have salaried employees (yourself included) and better social security as a result. Larger, more established businesses may be more inclined to do business with an AS, and if you ever intend to seek investment, a properly structured AS is the minimum you should consider.

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Opening a Bank Account

Plastic is king in Norway, and getting a local bank account should be one of your initial priorities. This can be a tricky 'chicken and egg' situation, as the bank will require a D-number (an eleven-digit code given to you when you apply to stay), which in turn may be difficult to acquire because you need an employer and a local residence – processes complicated by the absence of a local bank account. You may have to go backwards and forwards once or twice, but common sense tends to prevail. Sometimes banks will offer newcomers 'youth accounts' which only award recipients with a cash card. Try Danske Bank, which is typically more open to the needs of international residents.

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