

History

Stavanger's roots go back to the Ice Age and the time of the Vikings. The city itself is 873 years old, and preserves still some of last century's appearance. In the 1960s, exploratory oil-drilling in the North Sea changed the situation for Stavanger. It is located close to the oil-fields, and Stavanger with its good harbour and plane-connections was well-positioned to take advantage of the increased activity. After petroleum-exploration and production became the most important business sector in the Stavanger area during the mid 1970s, business and cultural climate has changed considerably. Yet Stavanger is also a modern, lively place of culture. You can enjoy all kinds of music, galleries and museums, festivals, theatre and cabaret here.

People have lived in the Stavanger area ever since Norway has been populated. Traces from before the last Ice Age show the hardy people who lived and battled with nature around here. At the Archaeological Museum you can study the oldest relics of our culture, the first signs of life in our environs. Stavanger as a city was founded in 1125, when it was made a bishopric and building on the Cathedral started. The huge medieval Cathedral loomed over the little water front settlement around Vågen and its 200 or so people. It was not much of a city for the first 700 years and even in 1800, Stavanger had just 2.500 inhabitants.

And then, the boom times arrived in rapid succession: herring fisheries, shipping, and the canning industry increased population ten-fold over the next 100 years. Yet another resource from under the sea - oil has brought the development of the town even further these last 30 years. The history of Stavanger is illustrated by a new exhibition at the Stavanger Museum. The history of seafaring and trade is shown at the Maritime Museum, located in two seaside warehouses on Strandkaaien quay. The Canning Museum you will find in the midst of the old town of small wooden houses.

Stavanger region is a popular tourist destination, especially in summer. The hotels in the city have good occupancy year round due to a lot of commuters who travel to work and meetings in Stavanger. In recent years, Stavanger has also become one of the most popular ports of call for cruise ships, with the number of cruise ships increasing steadily, making Stavanger one of Europe's fastest growing ports of call for cruise ships north of the Mediterranean.