

RV17 – From Namsos to Bodø

The Passageway to the Polar Circle

The most famous and stunning highway in Norway takes you beyond the Polar Circle for a journey in the heart of the North. Namsos marks the entry point to the Great North, characterized by its sparsely populated villages, rigorous climate, sculpted hills, and a wild and unforgiving terrain. However, the landscape is also a marvelous mix of fjords, lakes, islands, and small fishing villages.

Route 17 is 630 km (391 miles) long from Steinkjer and full of surprises. It is much longer and more challenging than its comrade, route E6, however well worth the challenge. Stretching along the coast, where route E6 provides almost direct inland access to **Bodø**, it has long been the sole passageway to the north, and uniquely historic.

The first thing to know if you plan to take this route: you will need to take several ferries, so plan accordingly in your budget. However, the numerous ferries are all a benefit of discovering the area. You will get a nice taste of this mode of travel which is prevalent in the daily life of the region.

When following the route from the south to the north, departing from **Namsos**, you will already be in a **surprising landscape of snow capped** mountains which mix with lakes and forests bordering the highway. A first stop for experienced hikers searching for a magnificent panorama as far as the eye can see, check out the isolated peak of Heilhornet Mountain (1058m).

After taking your first ferry, you will approach the Island of Torghatten, visible from the coast due to its famous mountain, and known for its large crater accessible by hike.

From Brønnøysund or Horn, the next step is the **Vega Archipelago**. It's a lot to see in one day, by why not! These **islands are a UNESCO World Heritage site**, and host to a very particular way of life, adapted to the harsh environment. Exploring by bike or kayak are just some of your options.

Another stop to consider is Mo i Rana. The rest of the itinerary is not as long but made to savour. The highway is surrounded by a spectacular view of ocean on one side and the peaks of **Saltfjellet-Svartisen National Park** on the other. From here you will experience **magnificent fjords, glaciers, and islands**, before arriving at the Saltfjord and Saltstraumen channels, one of the strongest ocean currents in the world.

Finally you have reached Bodø. Route 17 ends here, but in your motorhome or campervan the adventure continues. For example you could return by route E6, down the opposite side of Saltfjellet National Park for even more breathtaking views. For those not already frozen by the Great North, check out the area around Vestfjord, or for the more ambitious, the **Lofoten Islands**.

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