



The many colours of Bergen

Step into the past at Bryggen, the Hanseatic wharf of Norway's second city

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To locals, the 61 colourful wooden buildings of Bryggen are a reminder of Bergen's history as a key trading post between Scandinavia and Western Europe, but to most tourists this part of the city is simply a beautiful area to explore and people-watch.

Today Bryggen (which means 'the wharf' in English) is home to shops, restaurants, cafés, a hotel and a nightclub, its origins stretching back to the 14th century and the days of the powerful Hanseatic League. Back then, German traders filled storerooms with stockfish and grain, taking up winter residence inside the tight accommodations. Bryggen was essentially a German colony for almost 200 years, until the gradual demise of the Hanseatic League during the 16th century. By 1754, all the surrounding farmland had been sold to Norwegians.

Despite being ravaged by fire several times, the original medieval structures of Bryggen remain, thanks to substantial restoration works. Since Bryggen's placement on UNESCO's list of world heritage sites in 1979, the most recent restorations have focused on maintaining traditional construction methods and materials. Careful consideration is given to the choice of paint, nails and even to the use of original tools wherever possible.

To truly experience everything that Bryggen has to offer, don't restrict yourself to the attractive façades. Take the time to explore the tight alleyways between the shops and you'll discover a courtyard, a stone warehouse and beautifully restored three-storey medieval buildings.

Those keen to learn more about Bergen's Hanseatic history can visit two museums. Children will enjoy exploring

the tight rooms and creaky floorboards of the Hanseatic Museum, set in a former trading house complete with authentic living quarters, offices and a trading room. Further along the wharf is the more modern Bryggens Museum, built on the site of the Bryggen fire of 1955. Here you can learn more about the history of the area, based on archaeological excavations after the conflagration.

To see Bryggen in contrast with the modern city and surrounding mountains, take one of the many boat trips on offer from Bergen's harbour. Or, to save money, take a walk along *Strandkaia* on the opposite side of the narrow bay. On the way, stop by *Fisketorget* – Bergen's fish market – for the freshest seafood you'll ever taste, accompanied by a glass of *Hansa*, the local brew named after the Hanseatic traders who once presided over Bryggen. **BO**