

Summary:

Foreign ski tourists in Norway 2007

Nearly half of the foreign tourists visiting Norway during the 2007 winter season (January – April) were on skiing holiday. This corresponds to approximately 330 000 skiing tourists who spent about 2.16 million guest nights in the country. More than half of the ski tourists are from Denmark, one in four lives permanently in Sweden and the remaining quarter comes mainly from the UK, the Netherlands and Germany. Rental cabins are the most frequently used type of accommodation among the foreign tourists skiing in Norway (roughly 60 per cent), whereas one quarter of all overnight stays takes place in hotels. The expenditure per guest night amounts to NOK 750 which corresponds to more than NOK 4500 per trip. The expenditures have been increasing over the past two years.

Only 15 per cent of the visitors are first time ski tourists in Norway and on average the respondents have been on eight previous skiing holidays in the country. The interests in alpine skiing are widely expressed, especially among visitors from Denmark and Sweden, whereas the orientation towards cross-country skiing is far more pronounced among the British, Dutch and German guests. These interests are also mirrored in the activity interests with regard to prospective skiing holidays in Norway. This diverse pattern of skiing interests indicates that the profiles of winter sports are quite dissimilar within Norway's foreign tourism markets. The differentiation should be taken into consideration both in terms of product developments and marketing strategies.

Good snow conditions are of crucial importance to practically all the foreign tourists when making decisions about where to go on winter holiday. Moreover, a good atmosphere and satisfactory services at the ski resort are also considered significant, as well as the selection of slopes and networks of tracks. In addition, the price of the trip to and from the holiday location and the price level on local services count, but still less than 30 per cent maintain that these price aspects are of very high importance.

A great majority of the foreign tourists skiing in Norway state “fairly good” or “very good” when expressing their overall opinion about their holiday trip. Especially the Swedish tourists deem the total experience as highly satisfactory. However, the price level on food services are considered to be negative as only 14 per cent of the respondents regard this aspect to be satisfying and they also perceive the price level on activities as a concern. On the other hand, there is a general approval of the skiing slopes and tracks, or what we may denote as “the core product”, which explains the high general contentment with the holiday trip.

Alpine skiers and cross-country skiers

At least half of the foreign tourists are exclusively interested in alpine skiing, whereas one in five is solely interested in cross-country skiing. A combination of the two types of skiing activities is found in a quarter of the foreign tourists on skiing holidays in Norway. Danes and Swedes completely dominate the alpine segment while cross-country skiers are recognised among all main nationalities in the present study. More than half of British and Dutch skiers may be classified as cross-country specialists and 40 per cent of the German group belongs to this category.

Rental cabins are widely used for accommodation by the alpine skiing segment, while the cross-country skiers chose to a large extent to stay overnight in both rental cabins and hotels. The cross-country skiers spend more time in the country and they are generally somewhat older than the alpine skiers.

Three of four alpine specialists stay at the four main alpine skiing resorts in Norway, Trysil, Hafjell/ Øyer, Hemsedal and Geilo. The cross-country skiers are on the other hand much more dispersed in their geographical orientation and prefer to stay in various smaller skiing locations. There is reason to assert that there apparently exists a clear-cut physical segregation between the two skiing segments.

The average expenditures per guest night are a bit higher in the alpine skiing segment due to more consumption of services at the holiday location. But because the cross-country skiers tend to have longer stays in Norway their total expenditures per trip exceed what is found among the alpine skiers.

Two of three cross-country skiers are very satisfied with their skiing holiday and every second alpine skier shares this judgement. Furthermore, practically all the respondents are positive in their general assessments of the skiing holiday regardless of their particular skiing interests.