TOP 10 ATTRACTIONS



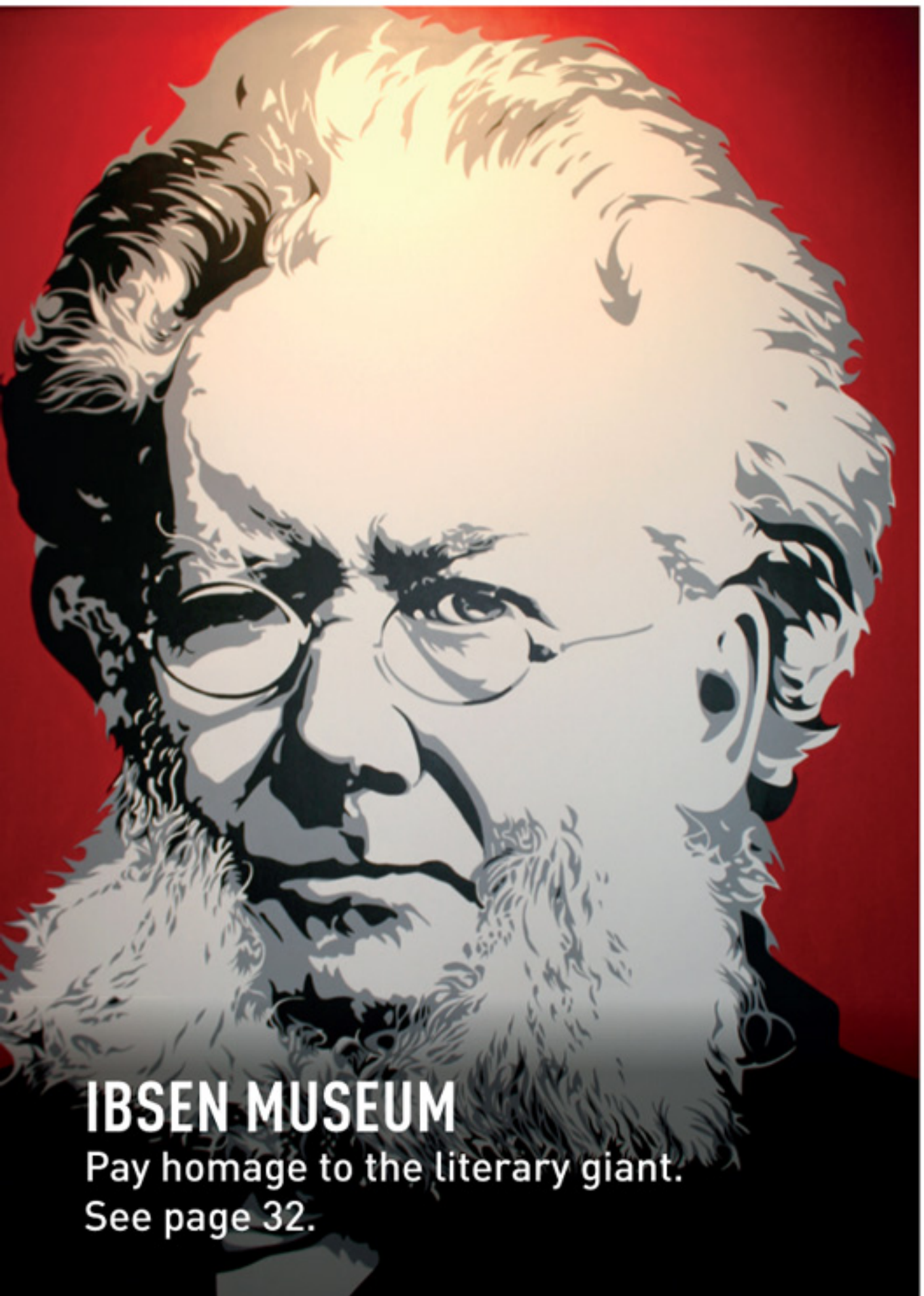
AKERSHUS FORTRESS AND CASTLE

They have presided regally over Oslo's inner harbour for centuries. See page 42.



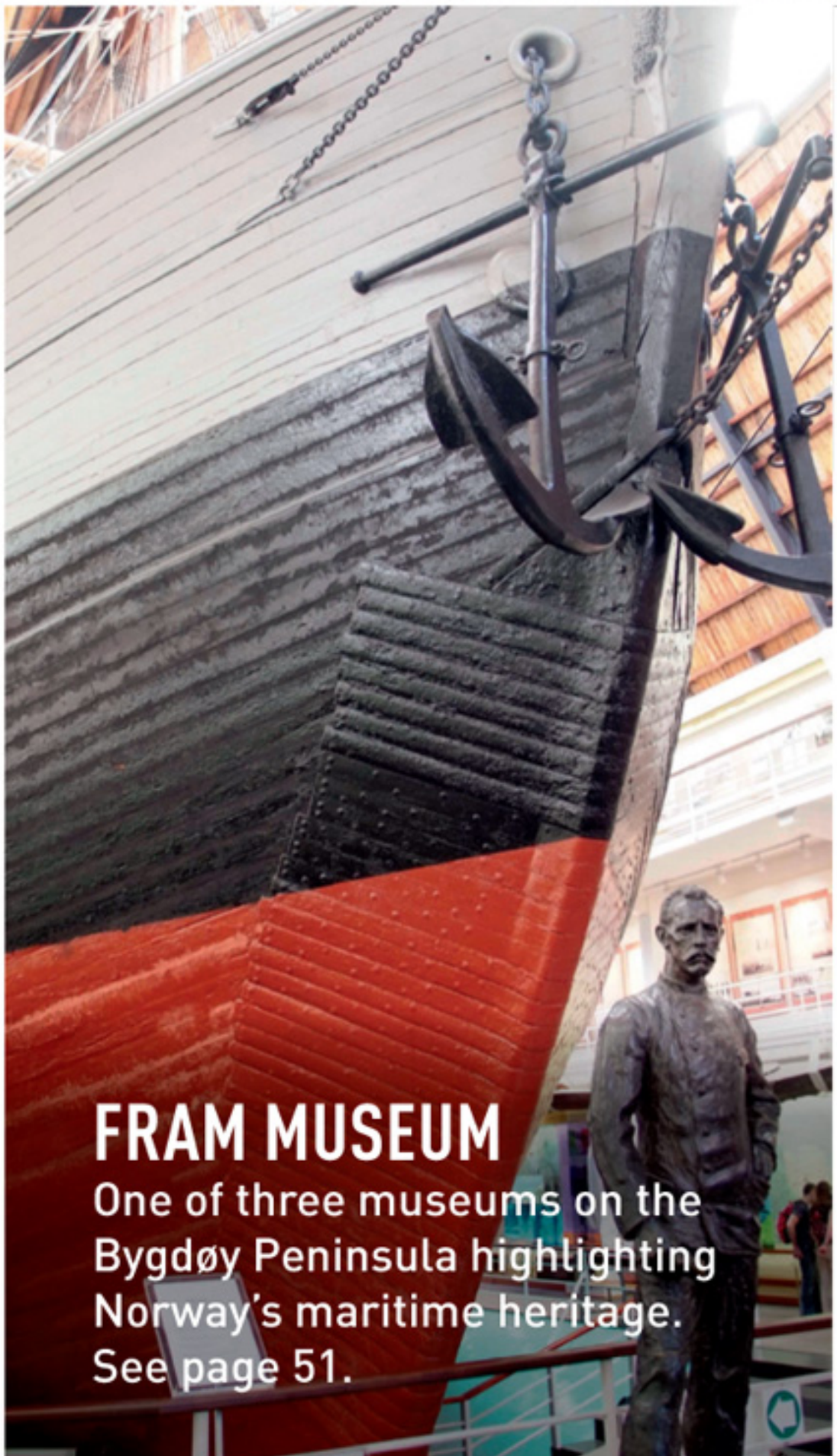
NORWEGIAN FOLK MUSEUM

Get a feel for the country's rich cultural heritage. See page 50.



IBSEN MUSEUM

Pay homage to the literary giant. See page 32.



FRAM MUSEUM

One of three museums on the Bygdøy Peninsula highlighting Norway's maritime heritage. See page 51.



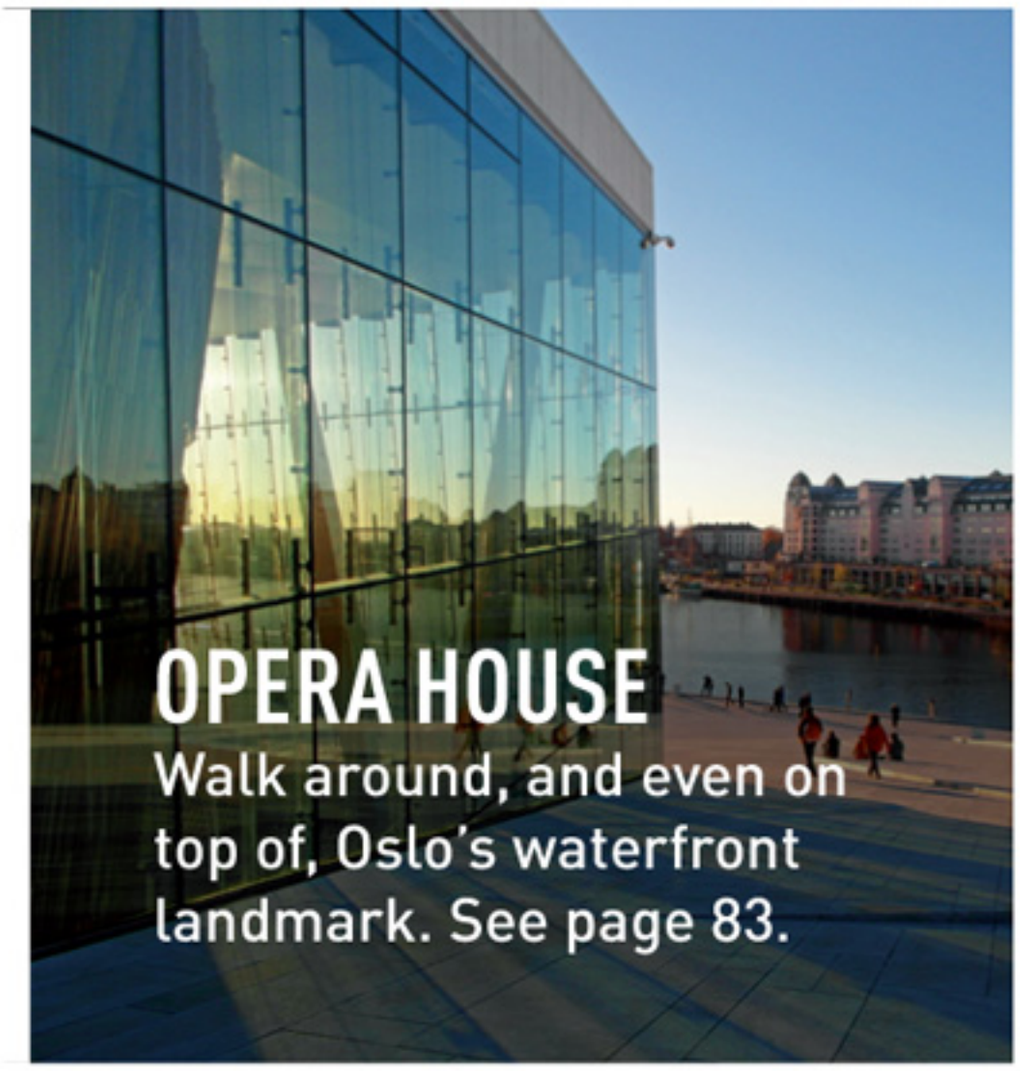
FROGNER PARK

Stroll, play, picnic and admire the statues of prolific sculptor Gustav Vigeland. See page 58.



VIKING SHIP MUSEUM

Visit some of Norway's most important national treasures. See page 48.



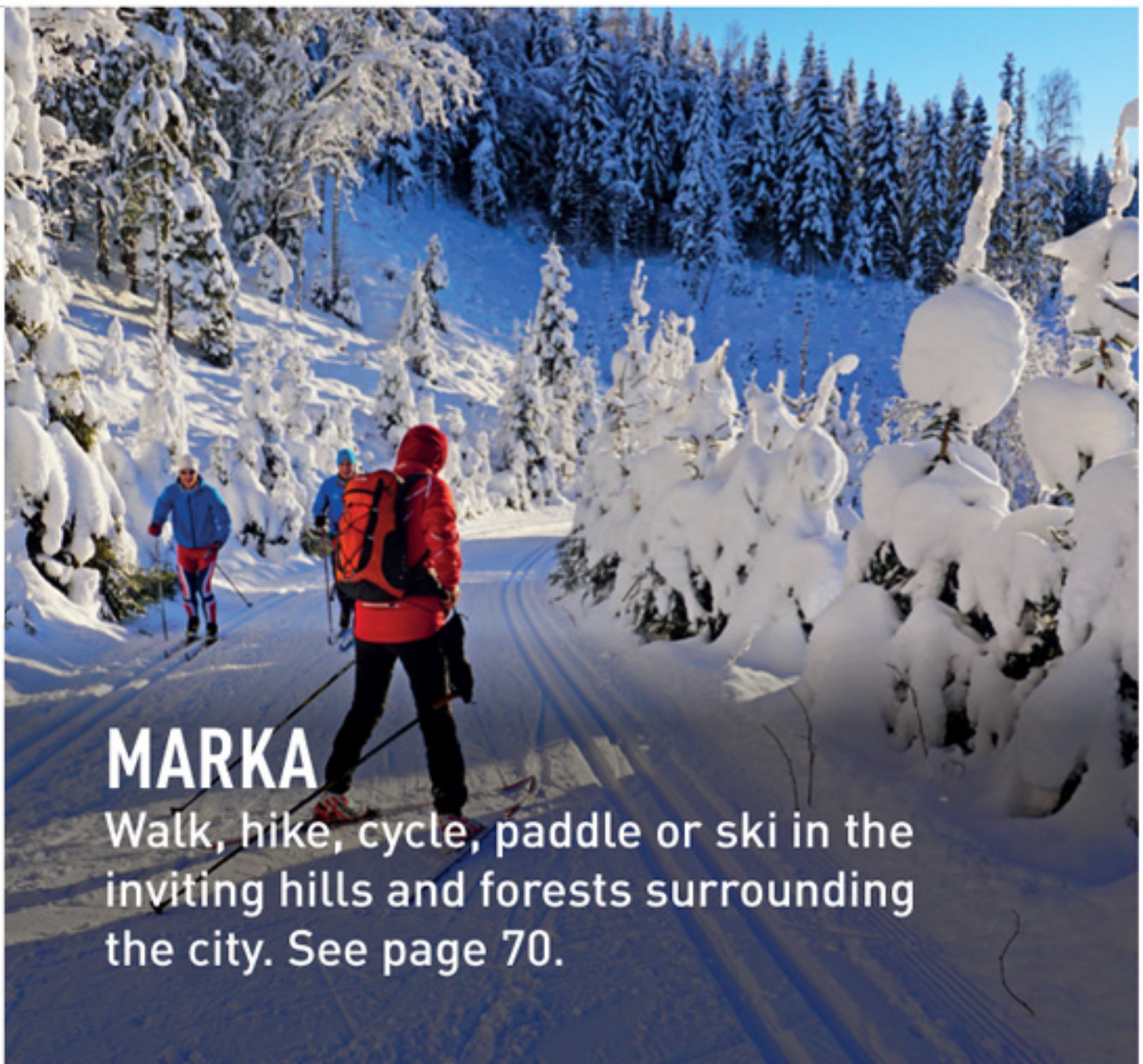
OPERA HOUSE

Walk around, and even on top of, Oslo's waterfront landmark. See page 83.



NOBEL PEACE CENTER

A showcase for the Nobel Peace Prize. See page 46.



MARKA

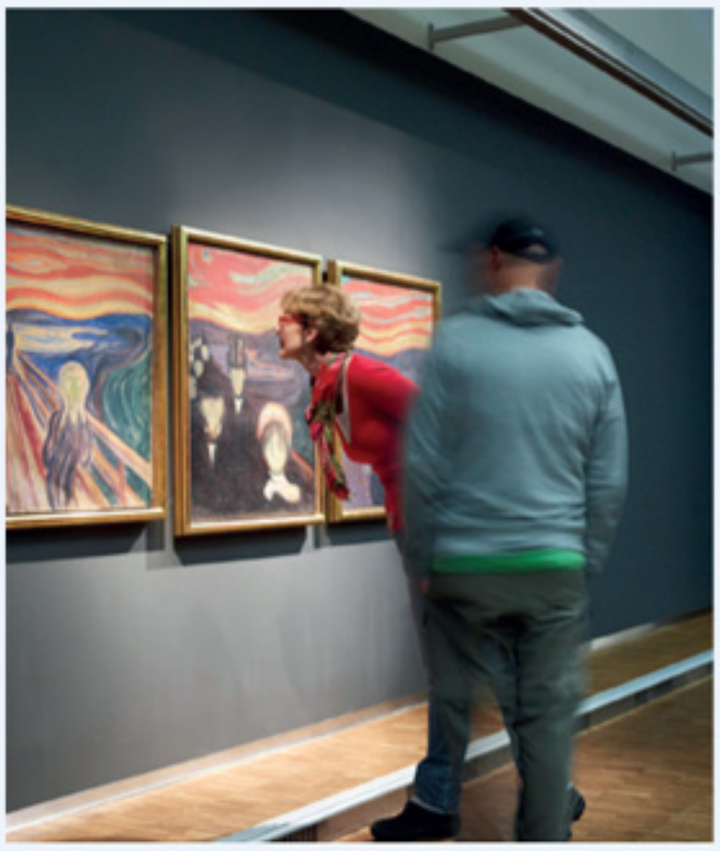
Walk, hike, cycle, paddle or ski in the inviting hills and forests surrounding the city. See page 70.



MUNCH MUSEUM

Dedicated to the life and works of Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. See page 64.

A PERFECT DAY





9.00am

Breakfast

Get the day off to a thoroughly Norwegian start with a buffet breakfast at your hotel. It's bound to include salmon and pickled herrings. If that's not your style, head for a coffee in the sedate and sophisticated surrounds of the Grand Café.

10.00am

Opera & Munch

To catch the essence of this harbourside city's personality, wander down to the waterfront and climb the roof of the daringly designed Opera House. After enjoying the views and architecture, catch a T-bane train out to the Munch Museum, artistic home to many masterpieces by Edvard Munch: the earlier in the day you go the better because crowds can be overwhelming as the day goes on.

12 noon

Inner harbour

After a quick T-bane ride back into the centre, visit City Hall, poke around the shops of Aker Brygge and visit the avant-garde art and architecture of the Astrup Fearnley Museum. Lunch at Solsiden, if you are visiting between May and September. Otherwise, try Café Skansen or Kaffistova.

2.00pm

Museums

After lunch, jump on a ferry bound for the Bygdøy peninsula where the four museums – the Norwegian Folk Museum, Viking Ship Museum, Polar Ship Fram and Kon-Tiki Museum – provide a fascinating stroll through Norway's history and the city's pioneering spirit.

IN **OSLO**





5.30pm

Grünerløkka

As locals finish work, a good many of them gravitate towards Grünerløkka, the vaguely alternative early-evening haunt for Oslo's artsy and professional crowd. Soak up the bar atmosphere, window shop and then have dinner at SüdØst, which is this funky neighbourhood in microcosm.

4.00pm

City stroll

A ferry ride back to the main harbour allows you to appreciate the beauty of Oslo from the fjord. Then it is time for a stroll the length of Karl Johans Gate, all the way up to the Royal Palace, with some time built in for shopping on the way back.

10.00pm

On the town

After a taxi back into the city centre, you will have some choices to make. Those looking for a quiet end to the night should consider the atmospheric Fridtjof, followed by last drinks at Dagligstuen. If, however, you are keen to dance your way towards dawn, then it simply has to be Blå, Jaeger or Last Train.

7.30pm

Cocktails

If you're enjoying the Grünerløkka vibe, join the crowds at Café Mir or sit back and sip cocktails at Fru Hagen, one of those places where Oslo's love affair with Grünerløkka began. Olympen is another excellent choice among many.

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INTRODUCTION

Norway's energetic capital sits at the top of its own horseshoe-shaped fjord, relishing its role as the well-endowed gateway to a stunningly beautiful country. The Oslo Fjord juts into south-eastern Norway from the waters that join the Baltic to the North Sea, and a cruise or ferry up the fjord from, for example, Copenhagen, is a spectacular way to approach this oldest of Scandinavian capitals.

A PROSPEROUS CAPITAL

Whichever way you arrive, the signs of Oslo's prosperity are apparent at once, from the new Mercedes and Volvos in the taxi



Picnic on the waterfront

fleet to the construction cranes that constantly reshape the city's landscape. It was not always like this. Oslo was the capital of one of Europe's most disadvantaged countries until the discovery of offshore oil in 1969. The resulting transformation was dramatic and today Norway ranks as one of the world's largest oil exporters – not bad for a small country of just 5 million people on the northern fringe of Europe.

Its capital, along with the rest of the country, enjoyed prosperity when oil prices soared. Oil revenues led to low unemployment and a windfall for a state treasury that nevertheless continues to tax its citizens (and visitors) heavily. While a significant proportion of the revenues is locked away in a fund for future generations, the unmistakeable affluence of Norwegians and an easing of strict government controls have clearly revolutionised what was once considered one of Europe's dullest and most expensive capitals.

It wasn't too long ago that state law forced Oslo stores to close by 5pm, cafés couldn't serve cocktails unless the customer ordered food as well, and eating out was something done only on special occasions. Buying beer, wine, cosmetics or other so-called 'luxury' or 'unnecessary' items remains an expensive affair, but wine with dinner is no longer something reserved for weekends. Gradual political liberalisation, especially in the 1980s, relaxed many of the old rules and Oslo's inhabitants have spent the years since then making up for lost time. With oil-driven affluence spreading through the population and fuelling consumer demand, Oslo has evolved into a vibrant city packed with museums, galleries, shops and an astonishing assortment of bars and restaurants, given its small population. All of this complements a bounty of well-preserved historic sites and the local scenic beauty of the fjord, surrounding hills and forests.