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THE STUFF THAT SURROUNDS YOU

The Great Escape

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This Arctic fishing town may be summer's most cultured getaway

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Culture has found a stellar playground in Nusfjord, one of Norway's oldest and most dramatic settlements on the Lofoten archipelago.





Waves crash against the side of the boat as the sun slips behind the clouds. Ahead, the jagged wall of mountains that frame our basecamp at Nusfjord Village & Resort fade into a distant smudge on the horizon. Our lines are cast sixty metres below the surface, each of us decked out in windproof flotation suits, weathering the choppy swell of the Vestfjorden in search of dinner.

Whatever we catch will be cooked by the chef back at the resort, but for me – a vegetarian and somewhat reluctant angler – I’m more interested in Svein, the fisherman guiding our trip who has been navigating these Arctic waters for the best part of sixty years. From the brine-scrubbed deck of Elltor, our 60-year-old fishing boat, he reels off stories that read like a Mark Jenkin plotline; weeks spent toiling on storm-tossed seas – all that rigging, baiting, icing. I ask about the biggest catch of his career. ‘A whale,’ he offers, casually, as if describing his breakfast.

What to see and do in Nusfjord, Norway

Fishing has been the lifeblood of the Lofoten Islands since the Viking Age. This archipelago of spindly crags that stretches into the Norwegian Sea from its tether to northern [Norway](#) once drew up to 30,000 seasonal fishermen during the region's annual cod migration. Today, that number is much smaller, but the economic shortfall has been plugged by a recent boom in tourism. It's no mystery why; so otherworldly are Lofoten's landscapes that Norse mythology claims they were shaped by feuding trolls.

Between the eagle-scoured peaks of the region's rugged mountains and the glassy fjords shadowed by orcas, it's also one of the premier places on the planet to witness the northern lights, which the ancients believed were lit green by supernatural warrior women, the Valkyries.



Though while it may be nature that draws most people here, the islands' bubbling cultural scene is starting to summon a different kind of traveller. Not least in Nusfjord, where a former salt house has been transformed into [Salteriet](#), a contemporary art gallery displaying the work of HM Queen Sonja alongside a rotating roster of Norwegian and international artists. This year, the resort's creative momentum accelerates as [Stockholm's](#) Fotografiska takes over Nusfjord for a landmark photography exhibition ahead of the institution's permanent opening in Oslo in 2027.

Founded in 2010, Fotografiska have established galleries in Stockholm, Berlin, Shanghai and Tallinn, each guided by the unifying belief that photography is the most influential, accessible and inclusive art form of our era. In Nusfjord, the exhibition is split across two historic sites. Across the ground floor of the village's Salteriet gallery – where roe was once salted and dried – Japanese photographer Rinko Kawauchi presents A faraway shining star, twinkling in hand, a series of works that zone in on the beauty in life's small moments, our temporality and oneness with nature. In a place like Lofoten, where people have lived at the mercy of nature for centuries, these works have a resonance that goes beyond their frames.



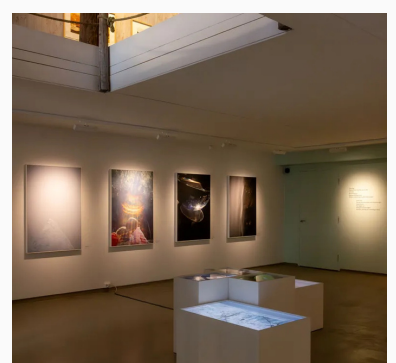
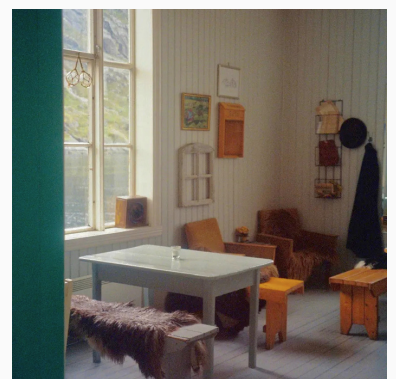
Elsewhere, in an old power station filled with relics from bygone times – vintage maritime radio transmitters, heavy-duty dials, and bulky cathode-ray fishfinders – Elizaveta Porodina's project The Wall People features uncanny, dreamlike images that speak to the region's mythological mystique. 'It was the contrasts that struck me most,' noted Caroline Krefting, owner of Nusfjord Village & Resort. 'The rawness of nature against the refinement of art, the silence of the mountains meeting the pulse of human creativity.'



Creativity is everywhere in this peaceful pocket of the Arctic, from the made-over 'robru' fisherman huts to the sculptural spa built by the Oslo School of Architecture and Design that mimics the rocks it rests on. It shows up in the kitchen, too, thanks to a programme of culinary take-overs that invites global chefs to interpret the Arctic landscape on the plate. This May, for example, Swedish chef Niklas Ekstedt took advantage of the region's famous midnight sun to create a four-day culinary immersion where guests were invited to join him and his team to fish, forage and cook together over fire.



This cultural boom is spilling out into other parts of the islands, too. To the east, the village of Henningsvær has repurposed its industrial heritage: an old caviar factory now operates as KaviarFactory, a sleek contemporary art gallery housing works by Warhol, Munch, and Melgaard, while Trevarefabrikken, a former fish processing plant, has found new life as a vibrant gig venue and creative hub (home to the popular Trevarefest music festival every July).





If you're travelling by car, [Artscape Nordland](#) has five site-specific sculptures dotted across the islands and embedded in the landscape. The regional renaissance is set to grow later this year with the debut of [Skrei](#) in Storvågan, a museum dedicated to the deep cultural impact of the 'fish that built Norway', the Arctic cod. Masterminded by LPO Arkitekter, it marks Northern Norway's most ambitious museum project to date, cementing the archipelago's status as a top-tier cultural destination.

For the Vikings who once navigated these shores, the world was inherently enchanted. They didn't seek salvation from the landscape or escape from

strife. Instead, they marvelled at it and found purpose in responding to it. That spirit is alive and well in Lofoten, where nature and culture are parts of the same story, inextricably linked. Back on deck, the wind bites as Svein turns us around.

As we pull into Nusfjord's colourful harbour, it's clear that Lofoten is no longer just a place people come to witness the sublime expanse of nature. It is also a place to witness humanity answering back. As Bárbara García, chief executive officer of Fotografiska, puts it, photography – and perhaps culture itself – should travel as far as our curiosity does. And in Lofoten's rugged perch at the edge of the world, curiosity has found a stellar playground.

[Nusfjord x Fotografiska](#) runs from 20 March to 31 October 2026

