



The Marvelous Islands

AREFE JASBI

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*The Marvelous
Islands*

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Introduction

It is easy to fall in love with Norway landscapes. Norway is well known for its nature. Most of the tourists come here to go sightseeing and search for northern lights as well as hiking in the north, south, and center of Norway. This time we decided to go further north, to a popular Island Lofoten and less known island Senja. The book is for the most part a visual celebration of the most beautiful places in Lofoten and Senja. Although anywhere you look is amazing, we chose top places to visit and top viewpoints of those places to hike. To be honest, it is really hard to rank them and prioritize the ones we love most.

The book hopes to inspire anyone either traveling to North Norway or locals looking for spare-time travel inspiration. If you come to Lofoten, it is not usually to relax in a beautiful hotel or to enjoy good restaurants... No! We come to the Lofoten to admire its sharp mountains that come straight out of the sea, to explore its valleys and fjords, to discover a still wild and preserved nature.

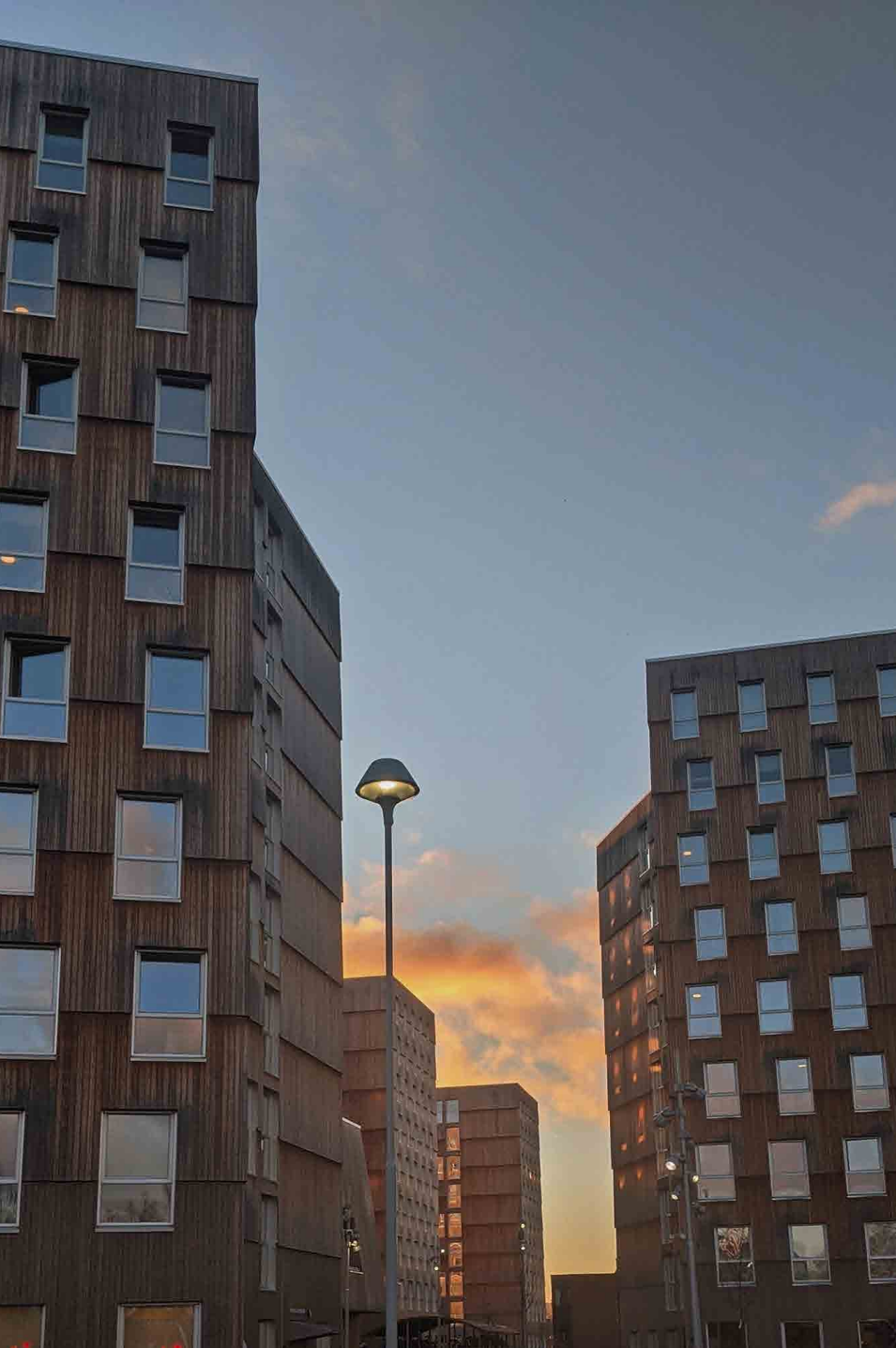
Our Story

We are 5 likable enthusiastic students from 5 different places in the world who have locked down in a student collective in a lovely small city far away from everything, deciding to go further away from other parts of the world to discover more of nature and themselves. Our story starts when we all ended up having a share collective together and spend most of our time sitting in the living room and cooking and baking together, making a movie list to watch, yet watching Friends all the time during the first lockdown due to Covid-19 at the beginning of summer 2020 in a small town yet the 3rd biggest town in Norway _Trondheim. To say a little about who we are, Edgardo from Italy, Fabio from Lichtenstein, Livia and Paul from Germany and me, Arefe, from Iran. After some days coughing ourselves in one place almost all the time, and finding out that we could get along well with each other, why don't we go on a vacation together! That's the time we made up our mind to go on an adventure road trip after lockdown to the north of Norway, to be specific Lofoten islands and Senja.

_ to have a little background information about Norway for those who may not know much about Norway and especially summers in Norway it is the time to say that during June and July, even August, there isn't any darkness at night. Actually, you can't call it a night anymore. Because, seriously, what is night? A time of the day when you can see stars in the black sky and the time that you can sleep. But no, no more stars and the dark sky, just an alone moon in a blue or reddish or sometimes pink sky which you adore as you decide to stay awake all the “night” to cherish it. Maybe the best time of the year to go further north to have sun 24/7 for ourselves.

Sitting around and having one or two meetings to plan almost the whole trip, and we came up to have two holy weeks on the stunning roads and eye-catching places.

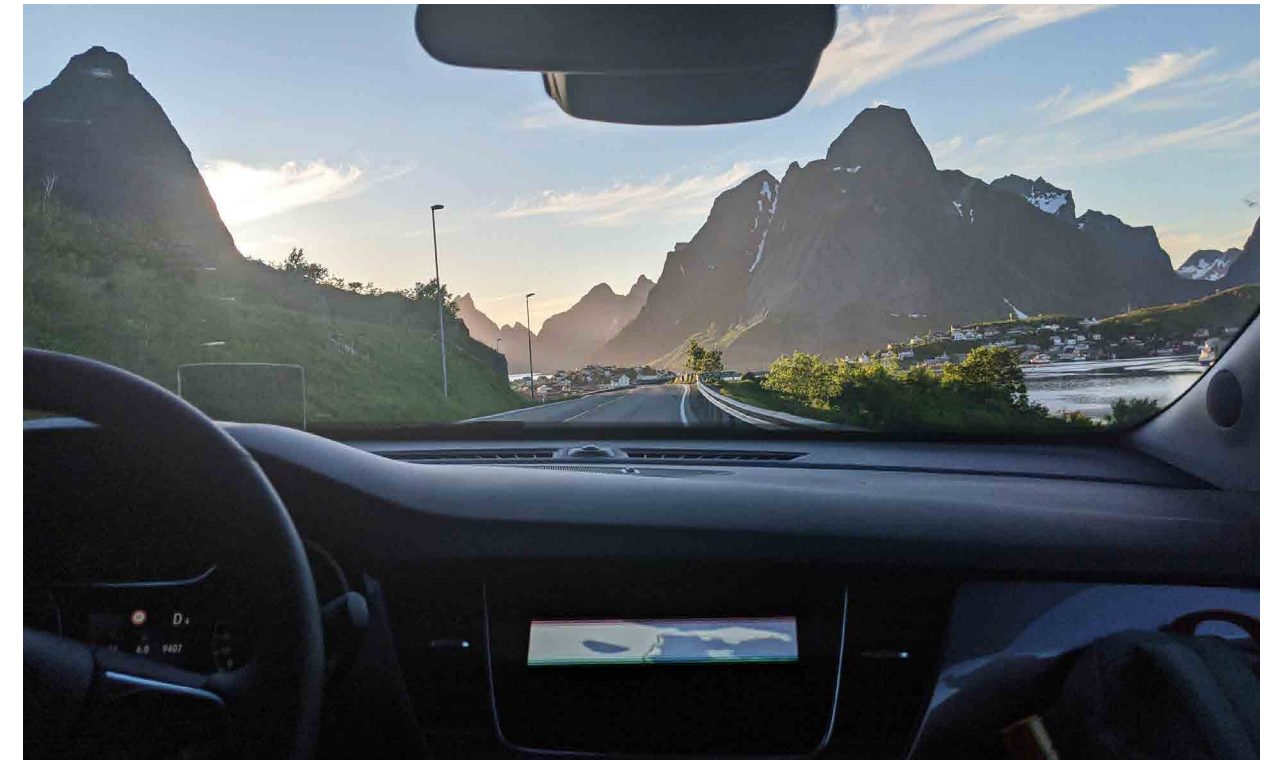
It was Jun 19 ...



Trondheim, Moholt

To pick up the rented car, we should take a bus from Moholt Studentby, where we live, to go to the airport, where our car for 14 days was waiting for us. After an hour of delay in the airport by the rental company, we had to hit the road immediately and drive for 9 hours and 45 minutes to catch the ferry we had paid for in Bodø, otherwise sleeping in the car until the next ferry at 3am was the plan B. So we decided to have no stop in the way and be lucky enough to get the ferry and stick to the plan A.

On the ferry, it was a little windy, but the view was stunning, so it was worth it to be out there on the deck. We could see Lofoten in the distance.

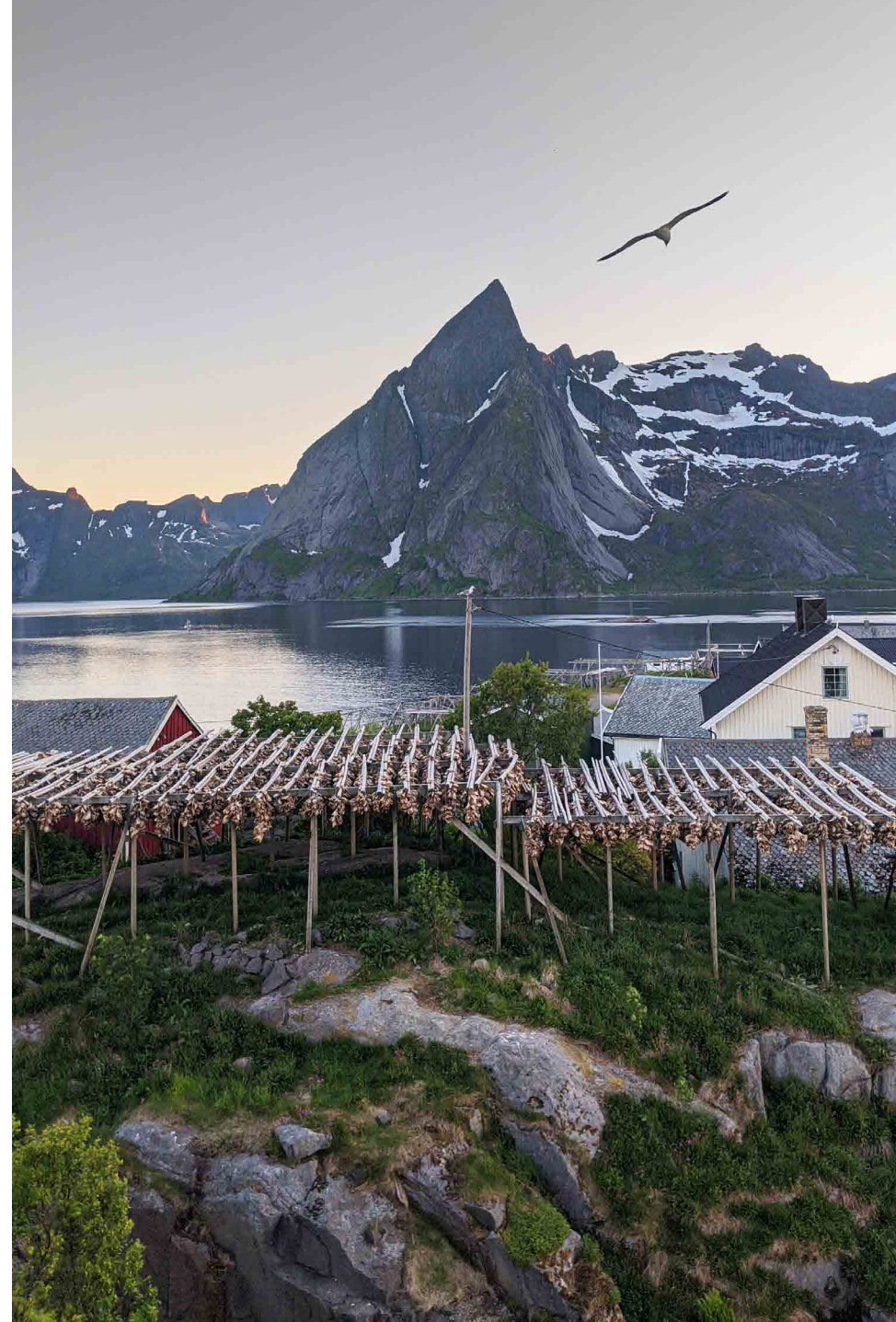






Lofoten, Å

After almost three hours on the ferry, we landed in Moskenes and headed to our first Airbnb which was located in Sund. We were super excited that even after that long day of driving, we headed back to the road and went to the southeast village in the Lofoten islands called Å, the last letter in the Norwegian alphabet, which indicates the last village in the Lofoten islands.





Fish racks

You can't help noticing the cods hanging from racks all over Lofoten. Mostly because you can't help smell them, from you enter the ferry from Bodø. In Lofoten the world's richest cod-fishing takes place every winter. For nearly 1000 years, dried fish has been exported to Europe from here. In order to preserve the fish, it is dried on large drying racks. It doesn't need to be salted or smoked, as the temperature in Lofoten in the winter is just below freezing (nordnorge/2020). After fish dried in winter and spring they are collected in late spring. With this little introduction can you imagine what we were inhaling and what was the smell in the air all the time? It was a painful and unbearable fish smell.





On the other hand, red houses in this area are appealing to me. Traditionally they were painted a strong red, yellow, or white. The colour the owners chose depended mostly on the family's financial situation, geographic location and profession. The red colour was the cheapest to produce. As a result, many buildings in farming lands or fishing areas where incomes were lower than average were mostly painted in red. This is why so many barns in the countryside were traditionally painted red. The yellow colour was a little more expensive than red (easynorway/2020).

By looking at these two pictures you can clearly feel that each is talking with a different tone with the help of camera angle, frame, and color tone of the picture. Both are taken from Hamnøy Bridge in an area with the same name. It was the 20th of June, half past midnight. Yes, it was almost midnight but completely bright.

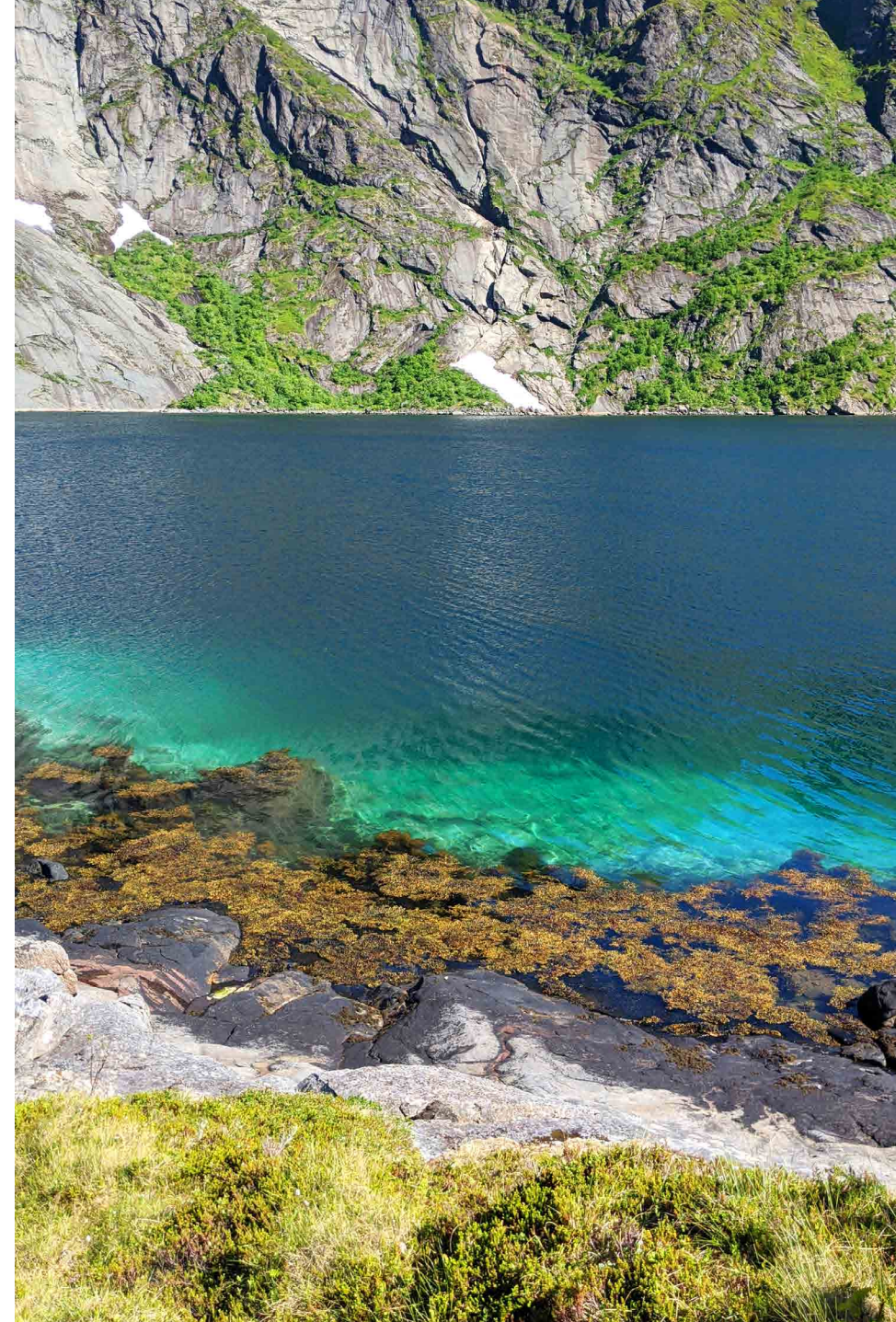




Munken

We started our second day by a long hike in the morning. It started from a place called Djupfjorden towards the highest place in that area called Munken with 797 elevation in 5.5 kilometers. The path was quite interesting itself. It started in the green wood along a lake for almost 2 kilometer, climbing big rocks in the middle, and the steep mountain with a layer of snow on top of Munken.

On the way up we saw a white big wild rabbit and on the way down we heard an avalanche on the other side of the mountain.

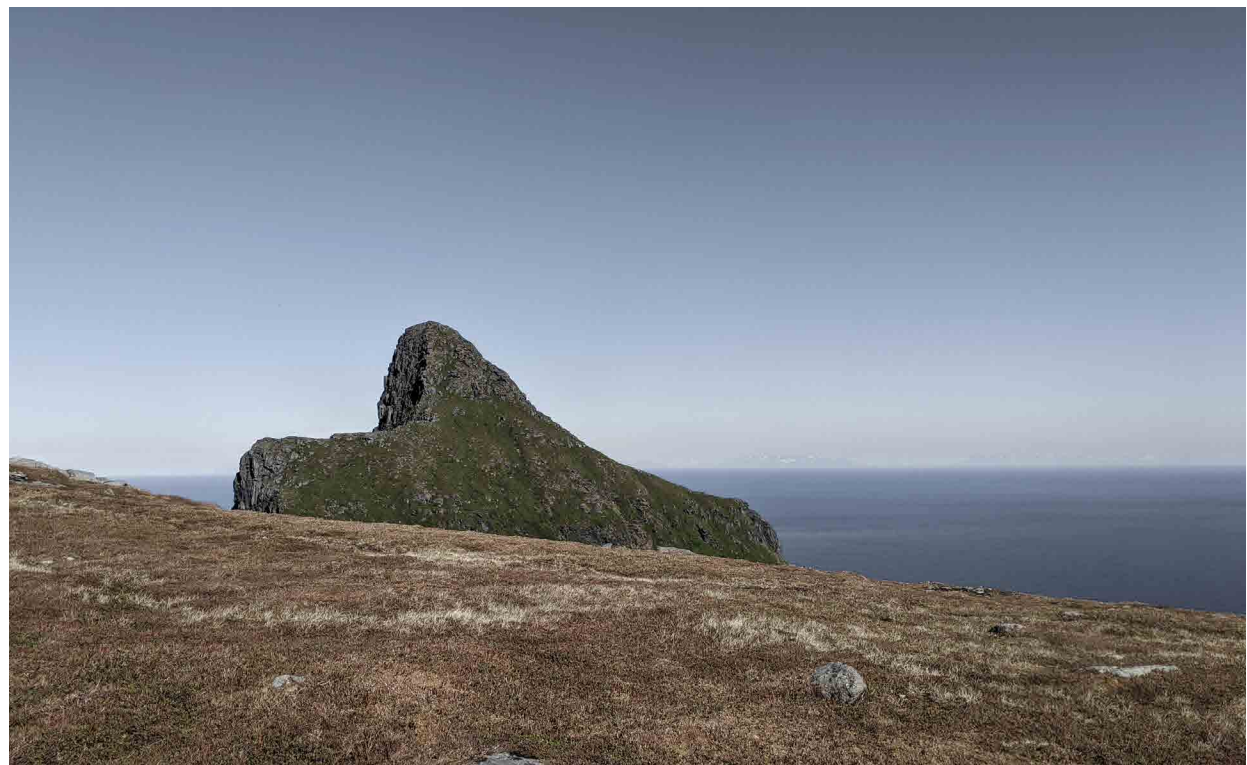




Weather in Lofoten

North of the Arctic Circle, the weather is often very unstable. You can have sun, rain, wind, mist and even snow all in the same day! It is said that you can experience 4 seasons in one day in Lofoten. According to my readings it's almost impossible to predict so we had to be prepared for everything. We had a bikini in our backpack as well as gloves.



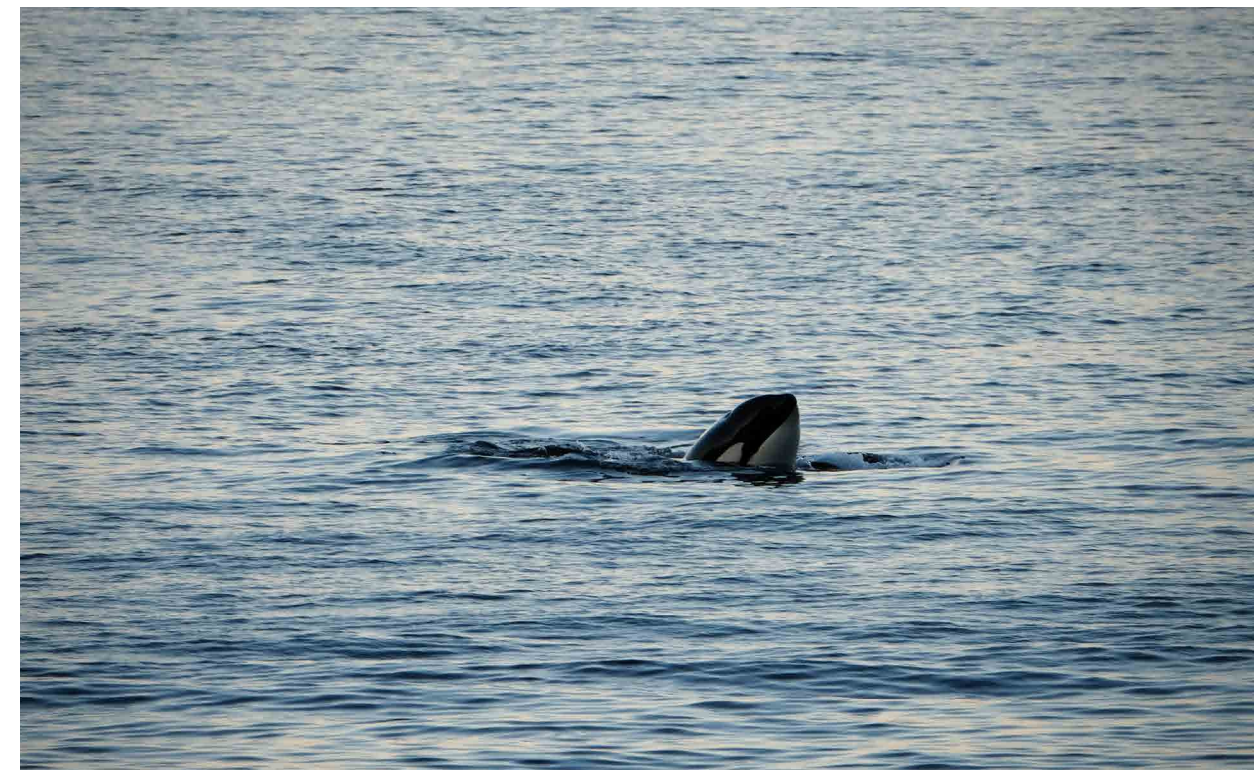


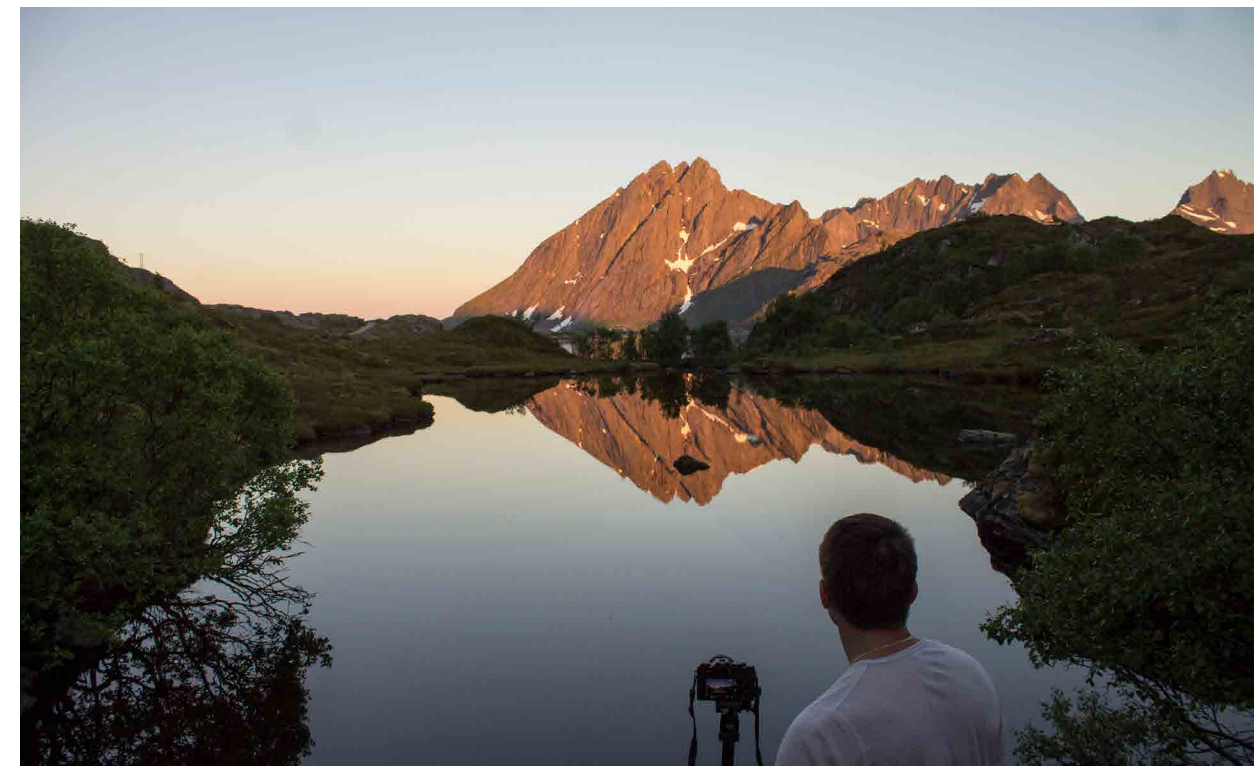


Sleepless Nights

Here is a thing. Believe me or not, these pictures were taken at half past midnight. This natural phenomenon is called the midnight sun that occurs in the summer months in places north of the Arctic Circle. We were on our way home, almost 250 kilometers above the Arctic Circle. I noticed something on the other side of the road, something big floating in the water. We experienced a rare happenstance during summer. What we saw was several orcas swimming around. That was a unique experience watching orcas with a spectacular view in the background and the midnight sun around us.





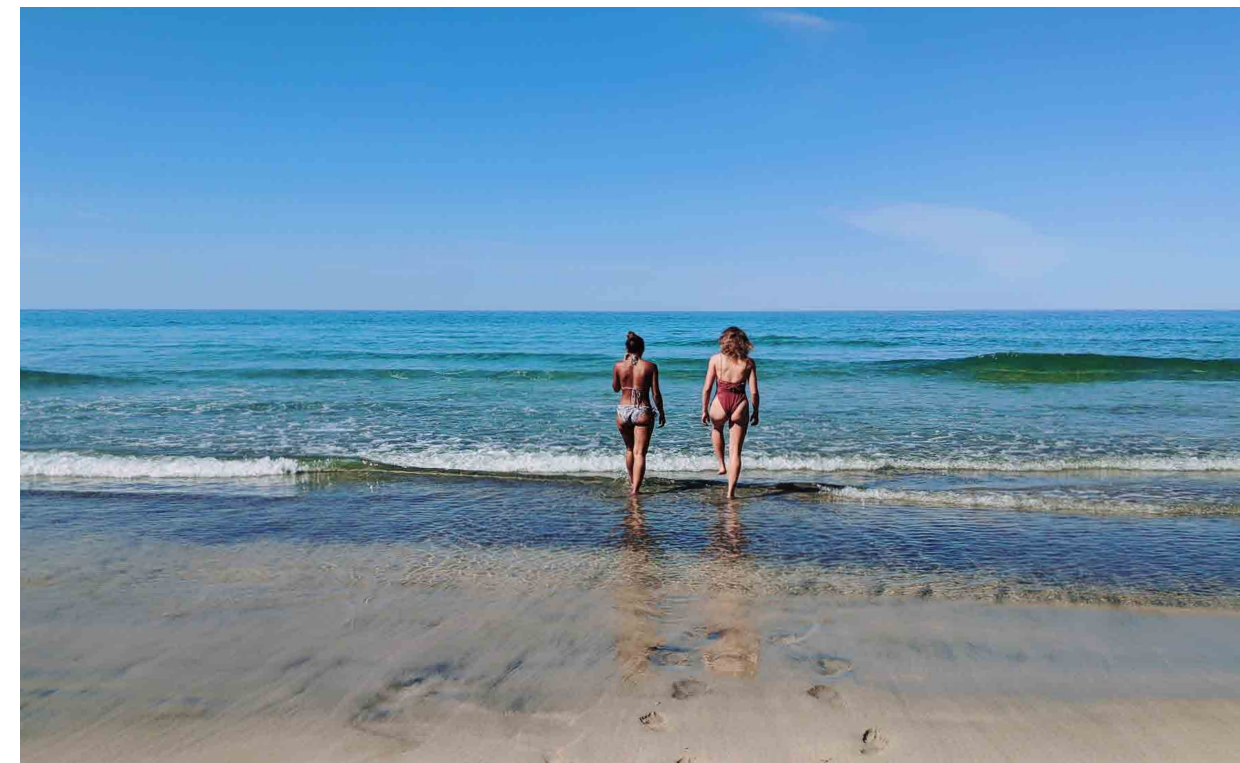


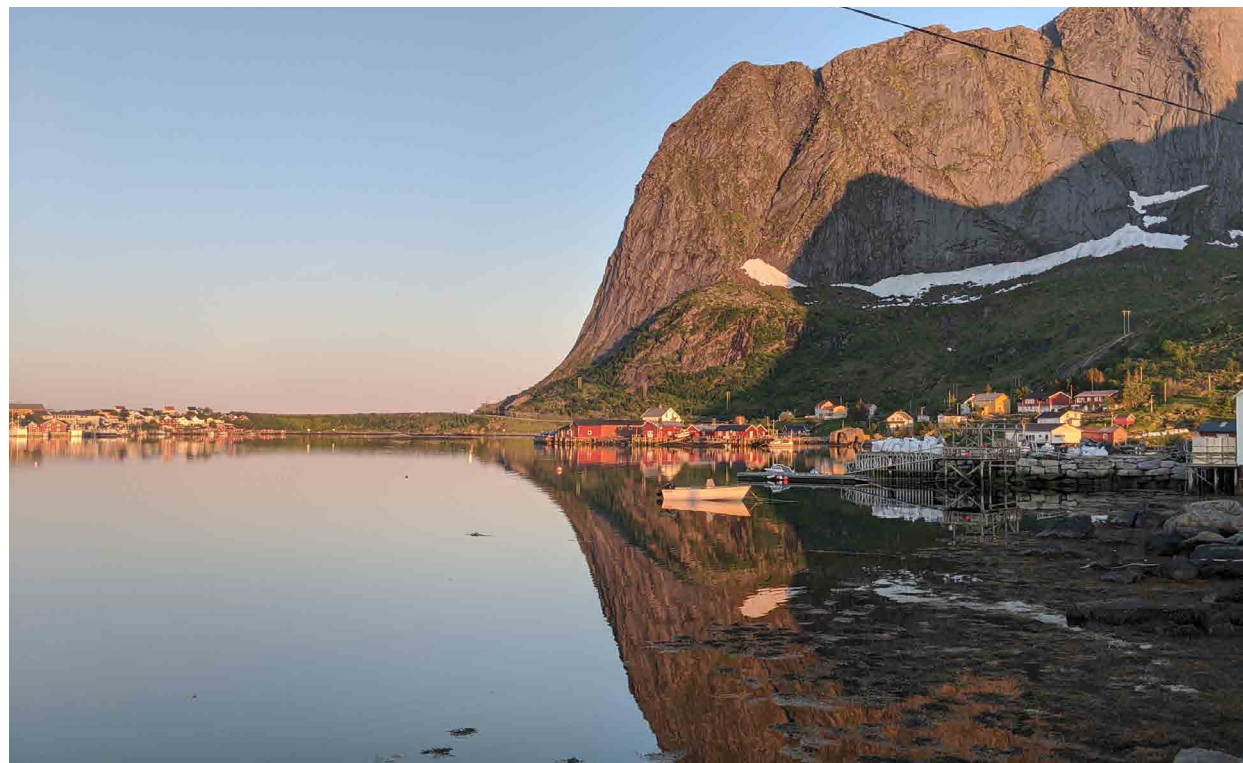


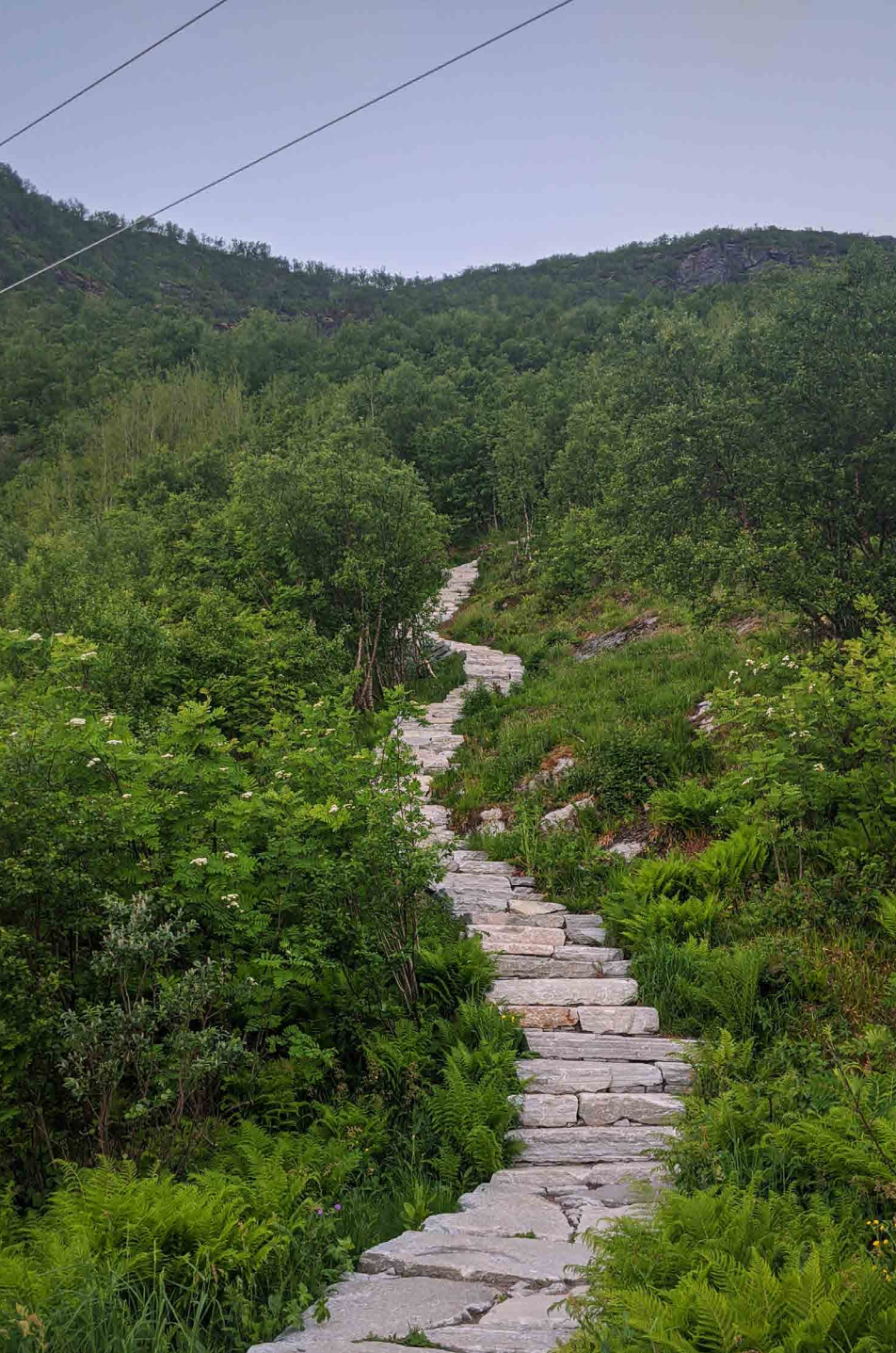


Kvalvika

Kvalvika is the most popular beach and reached after a fairly easy 45 minute – 1-hour hike. The beginning of the trail is like a Narnia mystical forest vibe to it. At high tide, the beach is separated into two parts, the larger right side and a smaller beach on the left, beyond the rocks. Set deep in a broad bay, a ring of high mountains surround Kvalvika. The best views of Kvalvika are not from the beach itself, but rather from the slopes of Ryten, the 500-meter high mountain that towers over the right side of the beach. Crystal clear water and huge white sand beach. How can you say no to it? Even though it was 22 degrees outside, the water was icy cold, and we dared to take a dip there.







Stairway to heaven

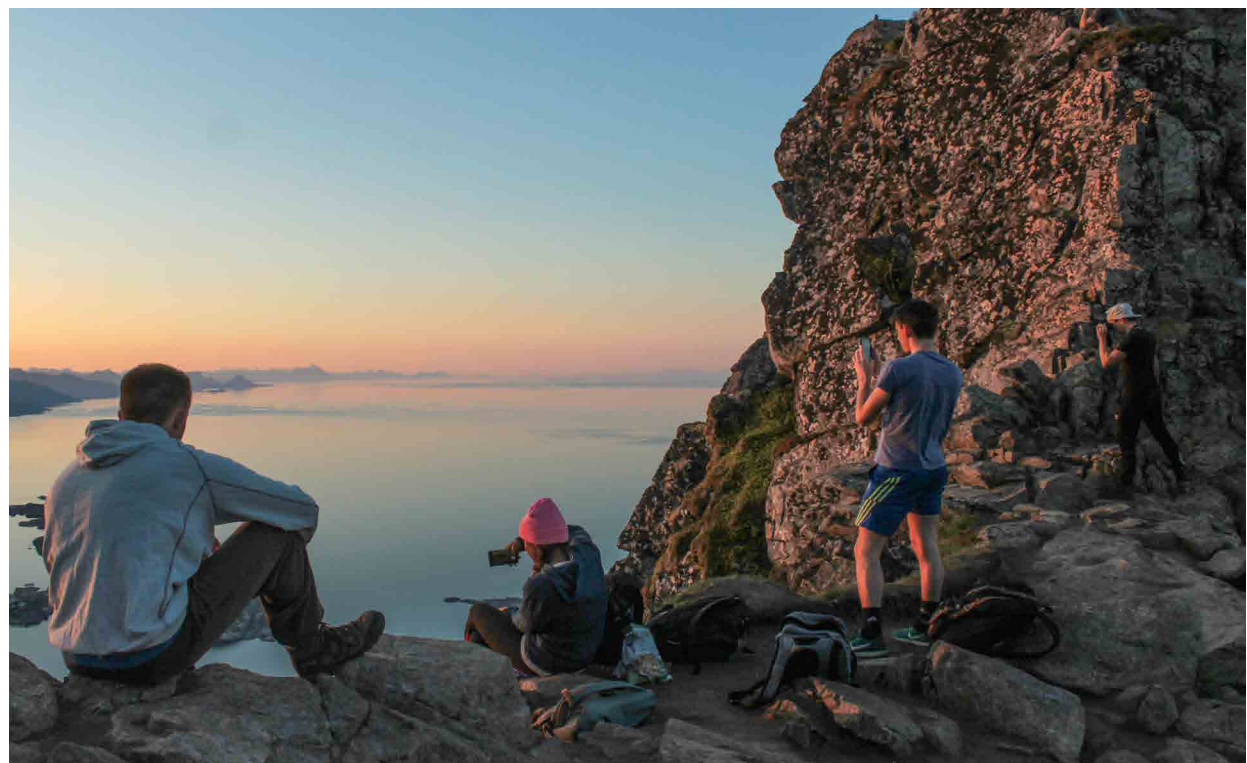
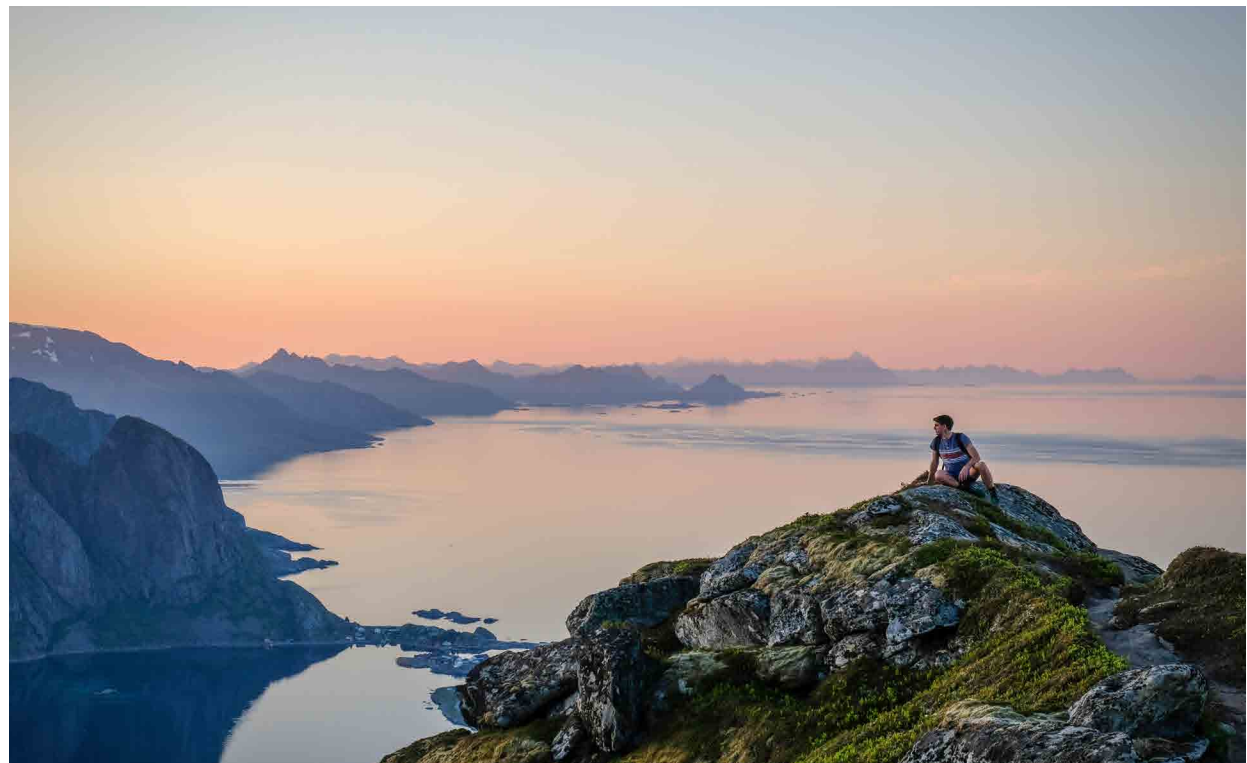
After a nice day in the beach, time to hike a nice mountain as well. At a modest 448 meters high, Reinebringen trail head known as stairway to heaven is far from one of the highest peaks on the Lofoten islands. Yet this is more than made up for by the iconic view from the summit. After 1560 steps, they currently end at around 400 meters elevation. Leaving you with another 50 meters of ascent on the old trail which is the top, steep section and still very dangerous to hike. The trail at the top is very eroded.





Climbing up mountains during night with midnight sun was the favourite, where you can see sunset and sunrise in almost an hour. These two pictures were taken at 00:40 and 01:40am over the small fishing village of Reine.



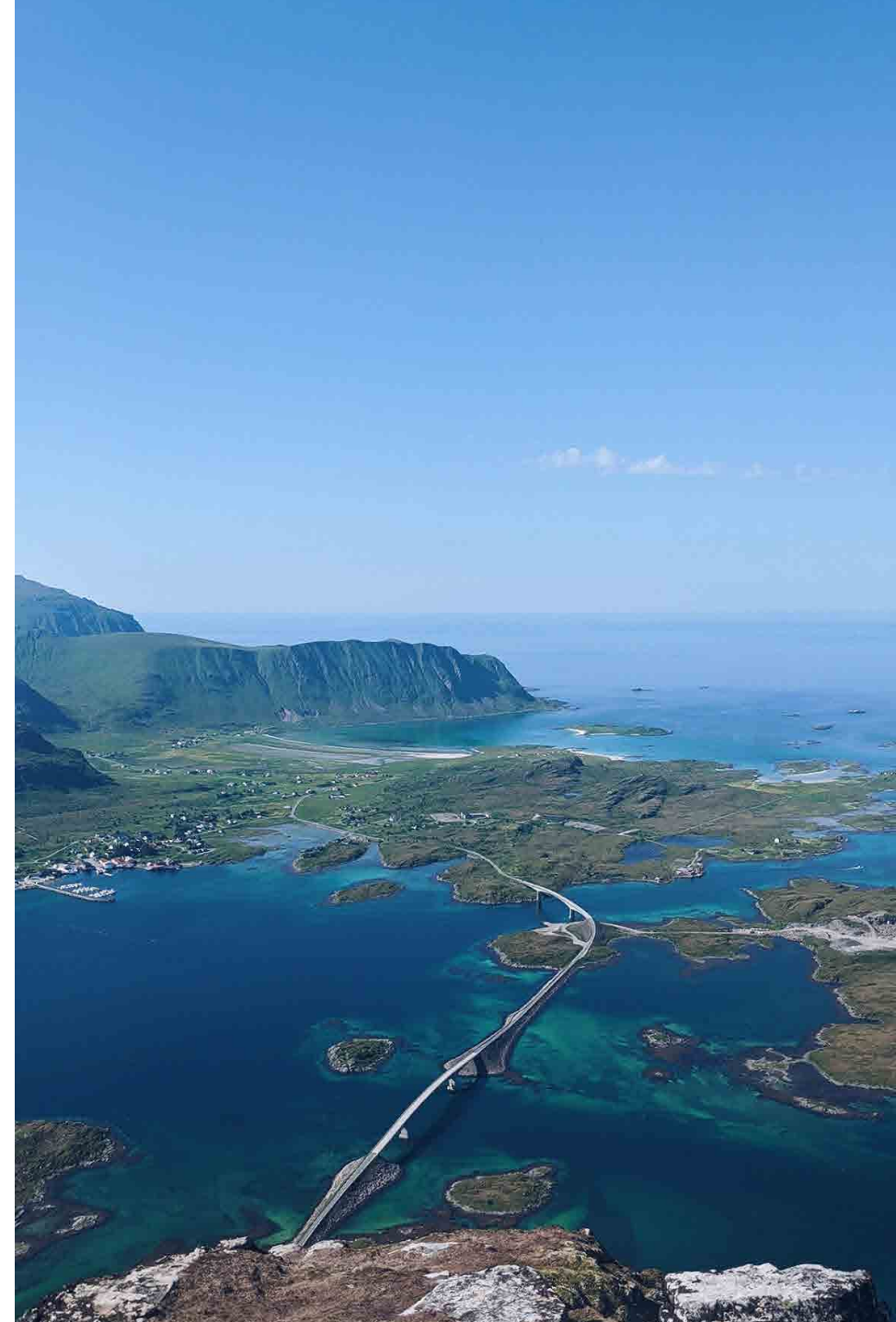


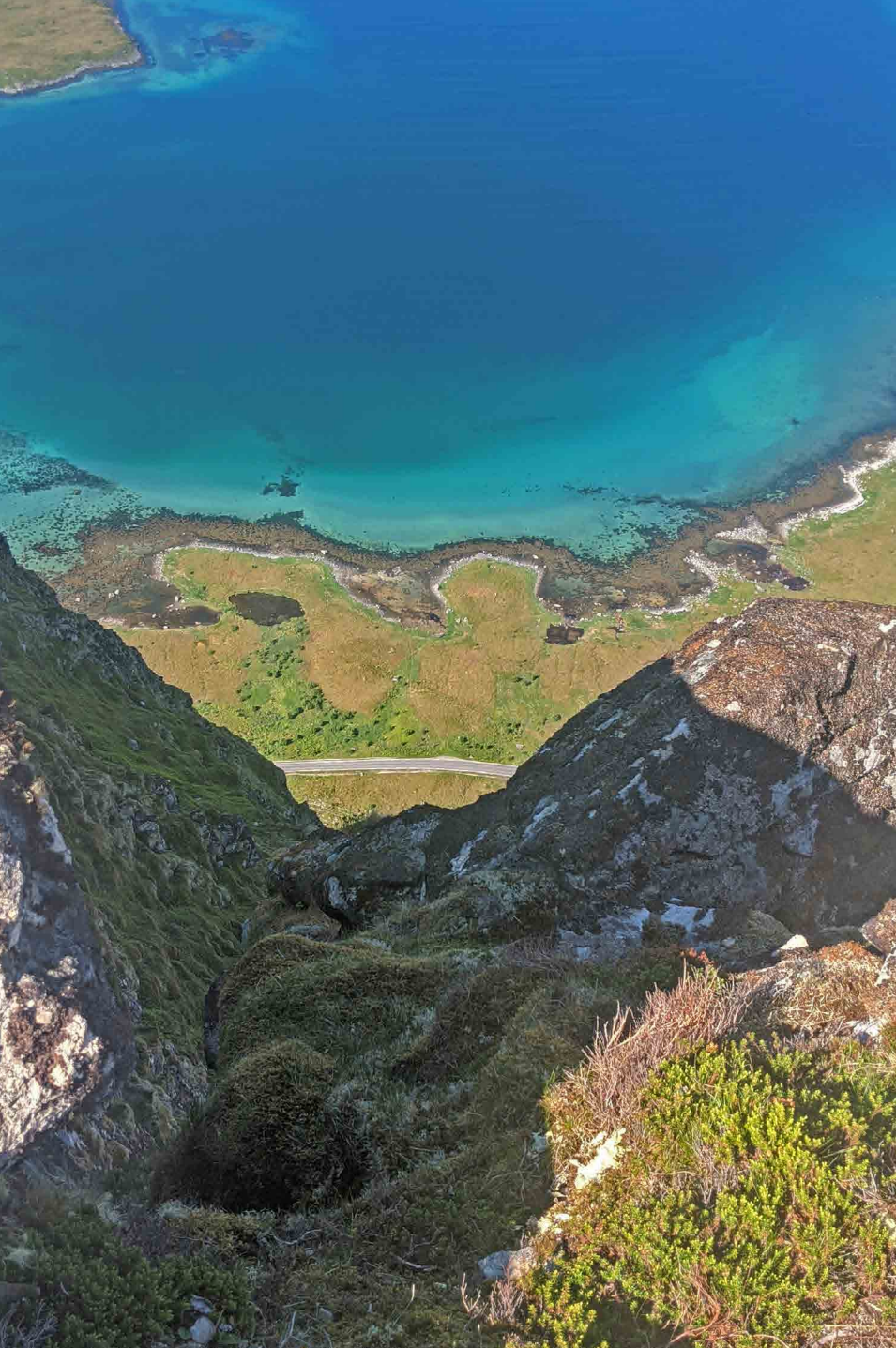


Vollandstind

“ This is only our 4th day in Lofoten. “ That was my dialog with Livia on the way up to Vollandstind. She laughed at me and said: “ Arefe, are you tired already?” -“No, but I’ve seen a lot during the last three days.” I replied.

Though the mountain looks imposing from below, the route to the summit is well worn and easy to follow. This is a nice and easy trail for the most part, with a couple of big steps and then some rocky sections on the upper slopes of the mountain. This is a good introduction to hiking on Lofoten. Vollandstind peaks at 457 meters above sea level and 2.25 kilometers. You can see 360 degrees around you _ an incredible view _ with views of Ramberg and Fredvang to the north and the Skjelfjord to the south.





Despite all the beauty of this hike, no one was there or on the way except us. It is worth mentioning that as soon as we arrive at the peak of the mountains, we eat our lunch which typically is sliced bread with hummus, guacamole or hunny. Chocolate bars, apples or bananas are mostly our snacks during hikes or on the way to home.

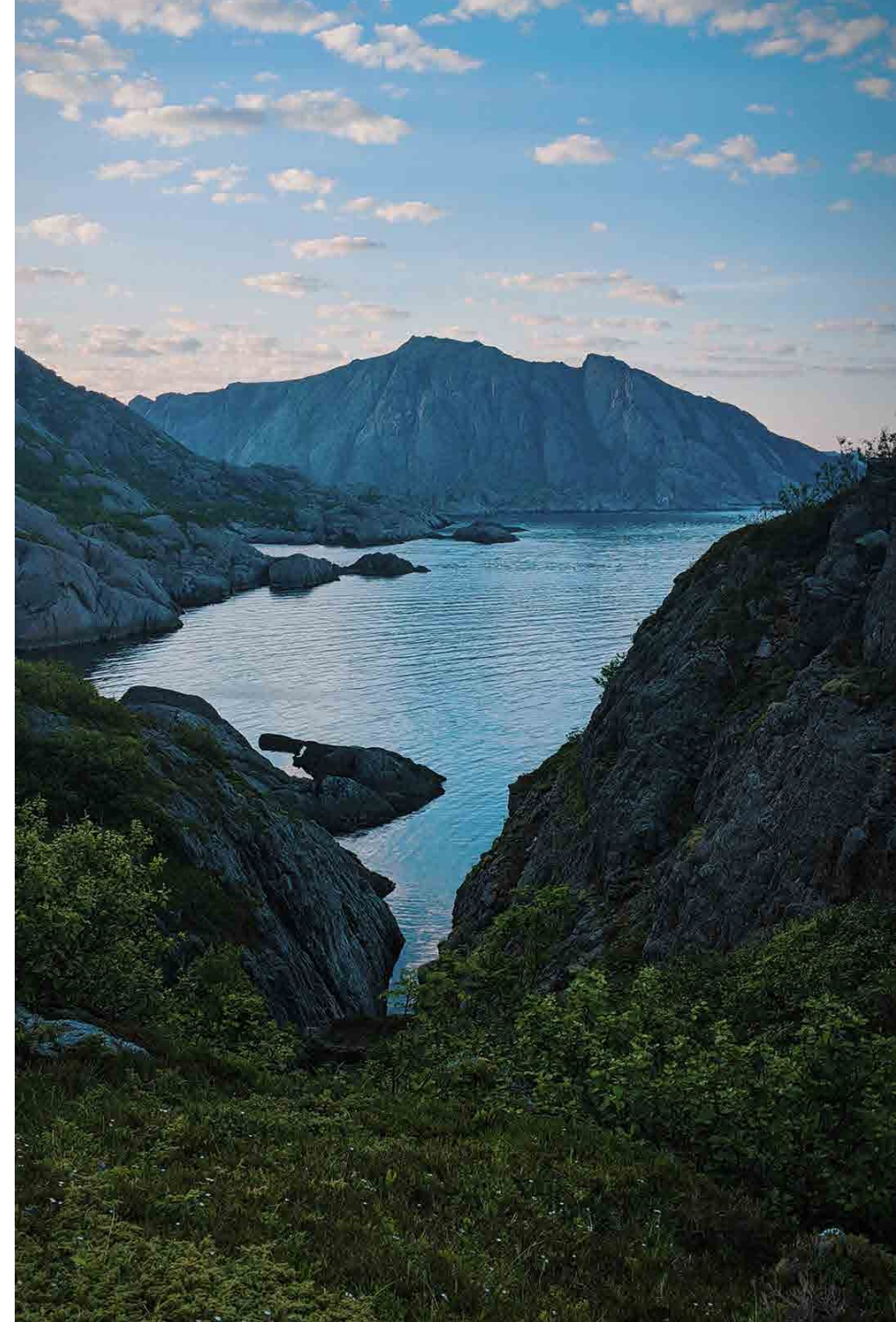




Nesland to Nusfjord

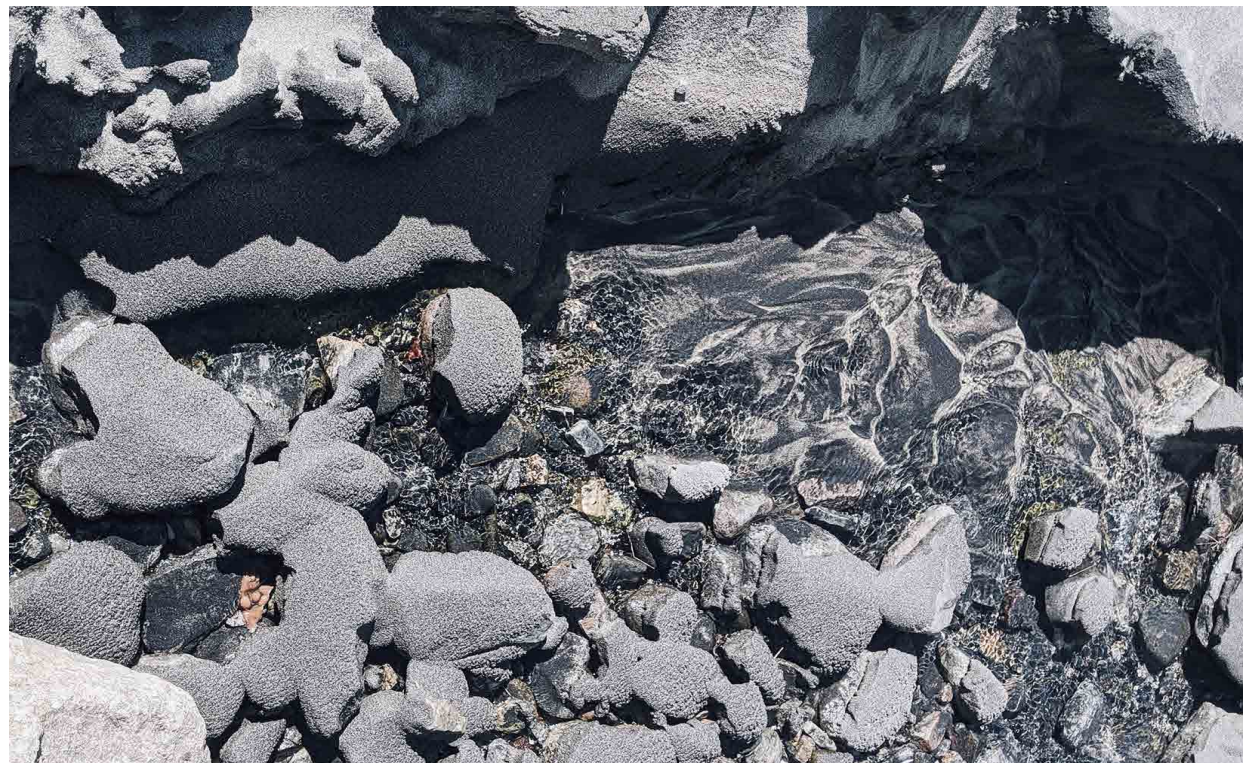
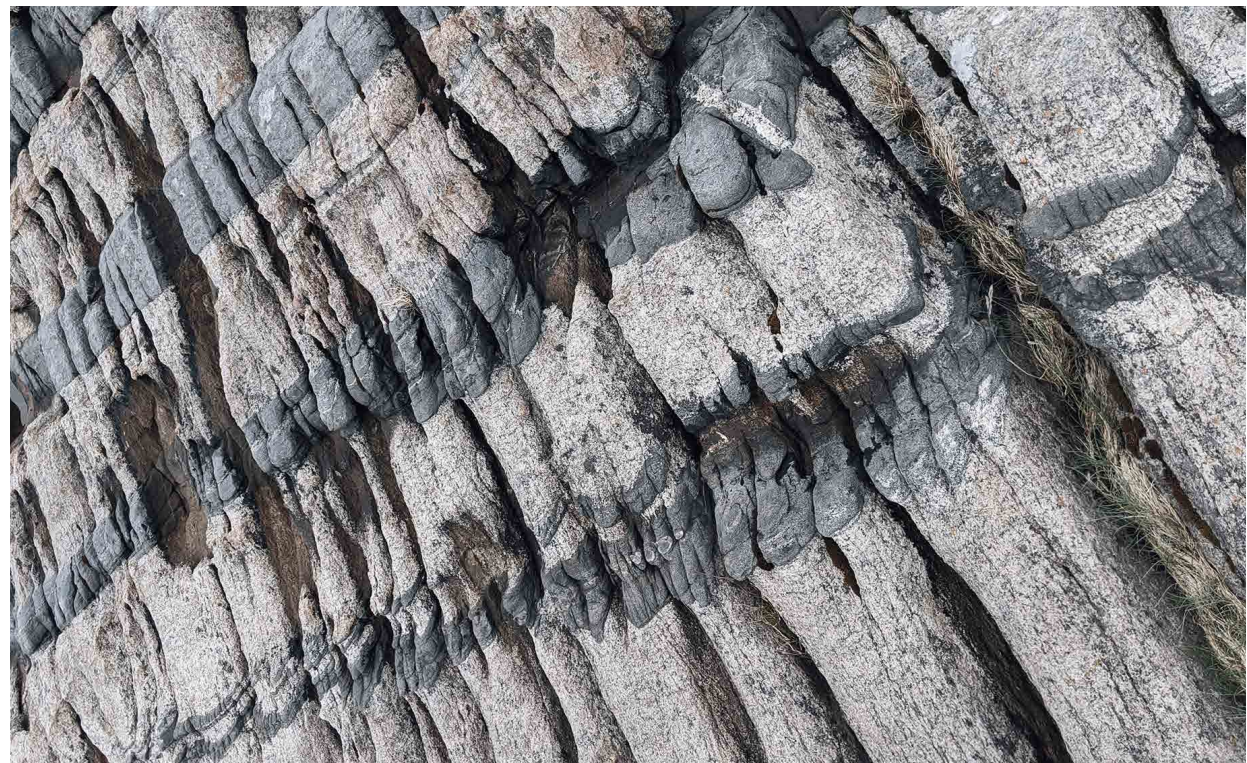
This hike was our 2nd hike in the day like some other days. It was an easy hike with 160 elevation and 7.9 kilometers. These pictures show the summer night between 10pm and 2 in the morning.

The hike from Nusfjord to Nesland follows a scenic trail along the southeast coast of Flakstadøya, the island in the heart of Lofoten. It takes you up, down, and over a variety of terrain on the historical “fiskesti”, fish trail. Nesland and Nusfjord are both historically known fishing villages dating back centuries and this trail between the two villages has been used by fishermen even longer. During this trip, we found lots of plastic bottles and bags. We tried to collect them as much as we could.











Lofoten's most scenic Beaches

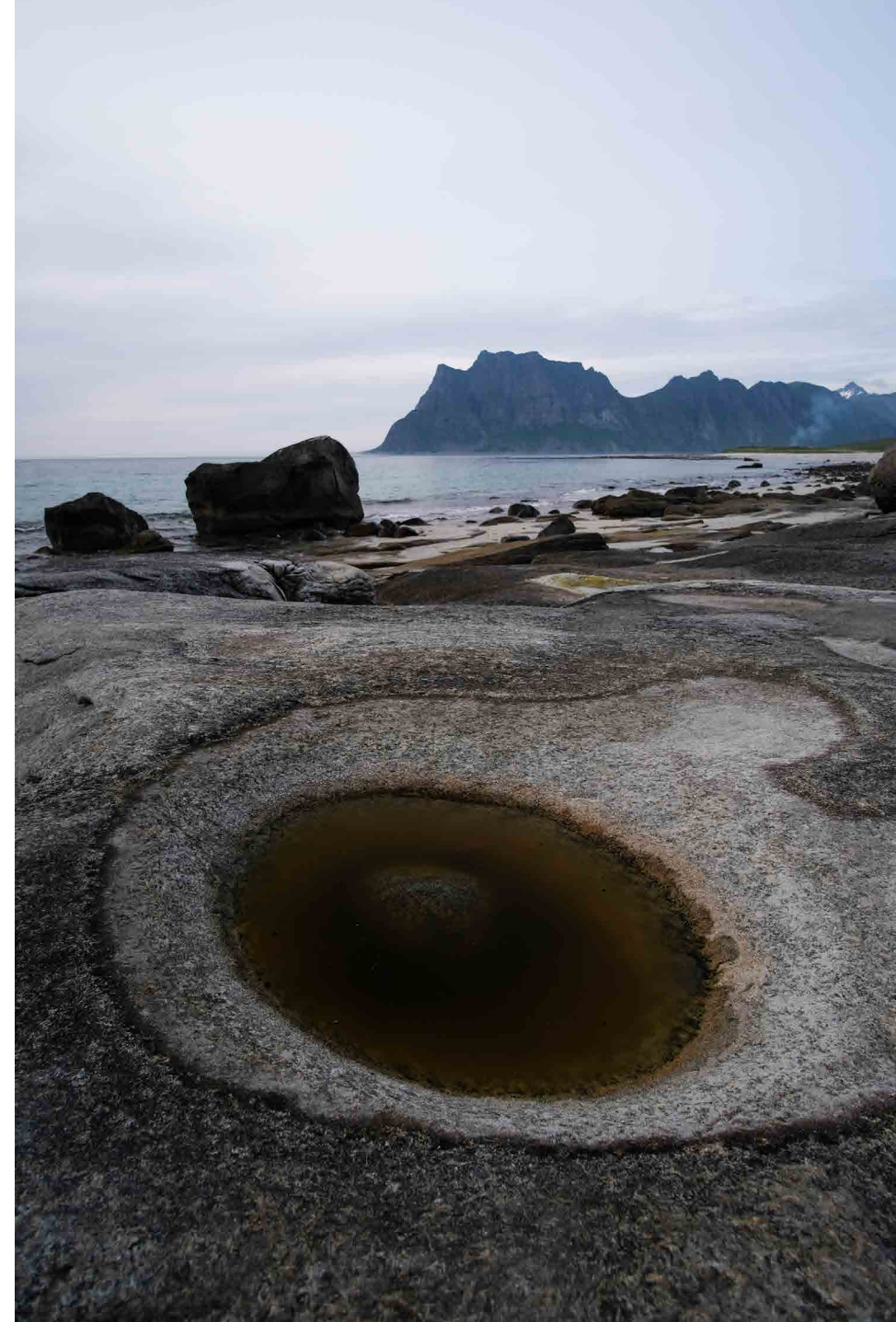
Haukland Beach

White sand and turquoise blue water. Small waves of turquoise blue water wash gently across the white sand while mountain peaks rise into the blue sky above. Typically the words arctic and beach are not usually mentioned together in the same sentence, however, on the Lofoten islands, there are perhaps some of the most spectacular beaches you will ever see.

The water might be a bit on the cold side, though the local kids don't seem to mind, you'll soon find the dramatic settings of most of the beaches more than make up for this. And on a summer evening, as the sun hangs above the sea in the north, there is not much better than a barefoot stroll through the waves or a nice driftwood-fire to bring in the new day.

Uttakleiv Beach

Uttakleiv is the most photographed beach on Lofoten. The scenic rocky shoreline on the left side of the beach provides near limitless photographic possibilities.





Straumnes is a village in the municipality of Vågan in Nordland county, Norway. It is located just east of the village of Laukvika along the Vesterålsfjorden (a part of the Norwegian Sea) on the northwestern side of the island of Austvågøya in the Lofoten archipelago.

You can find lots of Lofoten options on Airbnb, a centrally located apartment, a cozy cabin, or this house only 700 meters from the ocean and this stunning view from the window.





Fløya

There are two ways to get a spectacular view over the town of Svolvær. Hike to the top of Svolvær Fløya or climb Svolværgeita. Svolvær is one of the largest towns in the Lofoten Islands. Fløya is the mountain that forms the backdrop of the town. From the top of Fløya, you can look over not only the town of Svolvær but over nearby mountain peaks and islands off in the distance. Svolværgeita, also called The Goat, is a pinnacle of rock that is very popular with rock climbers. It's located on the slope of Fløya and it's from the top of this rock.

The first part of the trail is the most difficult, in my opinion. This section is steep and you need to be prepared to use your hands to rock scramble up the steeper sections. There is one 10 meter section of smooth granite rock where you can pull yourself up with a chain. This first section takes about 45 minutes, quicker if you are a fast hiker. This hike is about 4.5 kilometers with 590 elevations.





The Devil's Door

This is a chunk of rock, wedged between Frosken and Fløya. The rock looks somewhat like a bridge, and you can even stand on it. The whole time we were there despite all the good weather, it wasn't that crowded because of the Corona virus. But in this hike, we were actually waiting in line to go on the cliff to take a picture.





Festvagtinden

Festvågtind is one of those peaks that seems to rise directly from the sea. From the road, it looks impossibly steep, but the route to the summit wraps around the mountain and never becomes too steep (by Lofoten standards). Located just north of Henningsvær, the easily accessible summit provides fantastic panoramic views over the islands of the village below. Somewhat reminiscent of Reinebringen, Festvågtind's views make for a rewarding finish to this short hike.

On the half way up it started to rain and to not get wet or risk our lives in muddy and slippery trails we came back really fast. That is 2 hour in 1.5 kilometer with 541 elevation. Lofoten has one of the world's most unique football pitches. The pitch rests on a rocky islet which has no actual seats. An image of Lofoten featuring the uniquely situated football pitch has been used as the start up screen image for Microsoft Windows.



Senja Island

Often described as a miniature Norway, Senja is a compact destination with beautiful and diverse landscapes. Hiking trails are sprinkled all over the island, and commonly lead to the top of the nearest mountain. Beautiful Senja is Norway's second largest island, located far above the Arctic Circle. Here you are greeted by an awe-inspiring mix of sea, mountains, beaches, fishing villages and inland areas, all within a few hours drive. The Ocean-side of the island is precipitous with sculptural rocks and colourful fishing villages in sheltered coves. The inland is filled with mountains, lakes and forests, and the mainland-facing coast sports unexpectedly green fields.

On halfway through our trip, we drove to Senja to explore that island too. We took a ferry from Andenes to Gryllefjord. We rented a cabin in the woods but not far from the road and it was accessible by car. Cabins in Norway usually don't have electricity and running water but, fortunately, we have electricity. It was a nice and big cabin located in the heart of Senja. There were a group of Italian exchange students who are our friends in Trondheim, going to Lofoten after a couple of days in Senja. They came to our cabin for an hour of reunion and we both groups shared our experiences and hikes with the other.

Before having pizza as one of the traditions in our flat during the last three months every Saturday, we went for a walk into the woods to maybe see a reindeer or moose. Just a muddy trail, we found nothing. So we came back hungry to have homemade Italian pizza.

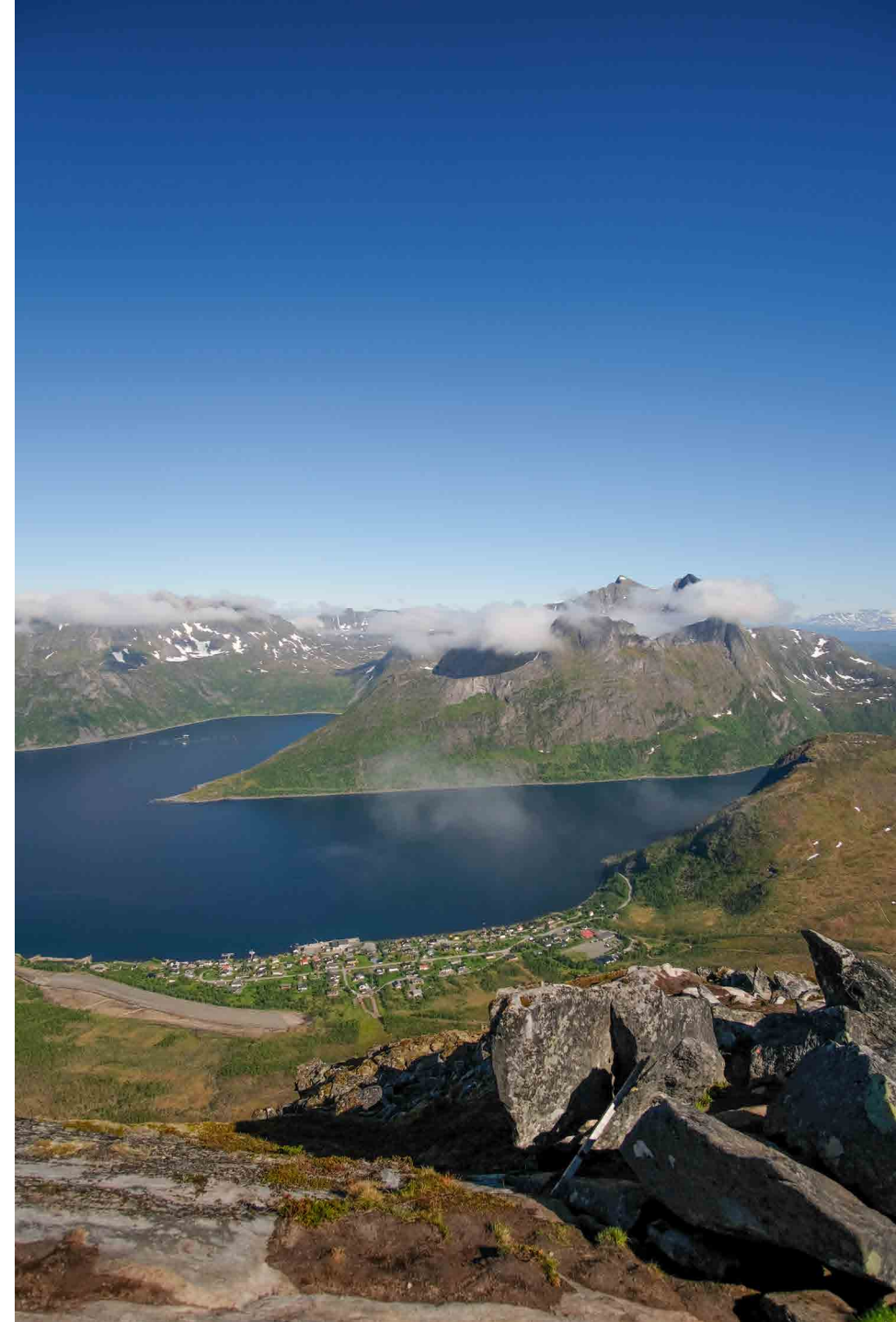






Segla

Segla is Senja's most popular hike. A steep trail leads up the southern side of the mountain to the peak 639 meters above the ocean below. At the top, there are wonderful views of Mefjord and the surrounding mountains. The sheer western cliff will give an adrenaline kick to anyone game enough to peer over the edge. It is said that sometimes there it is so crowded that there is a line at the top to get out on the cliff where Segla drops 640 meters into the sea. We were so lucky again.



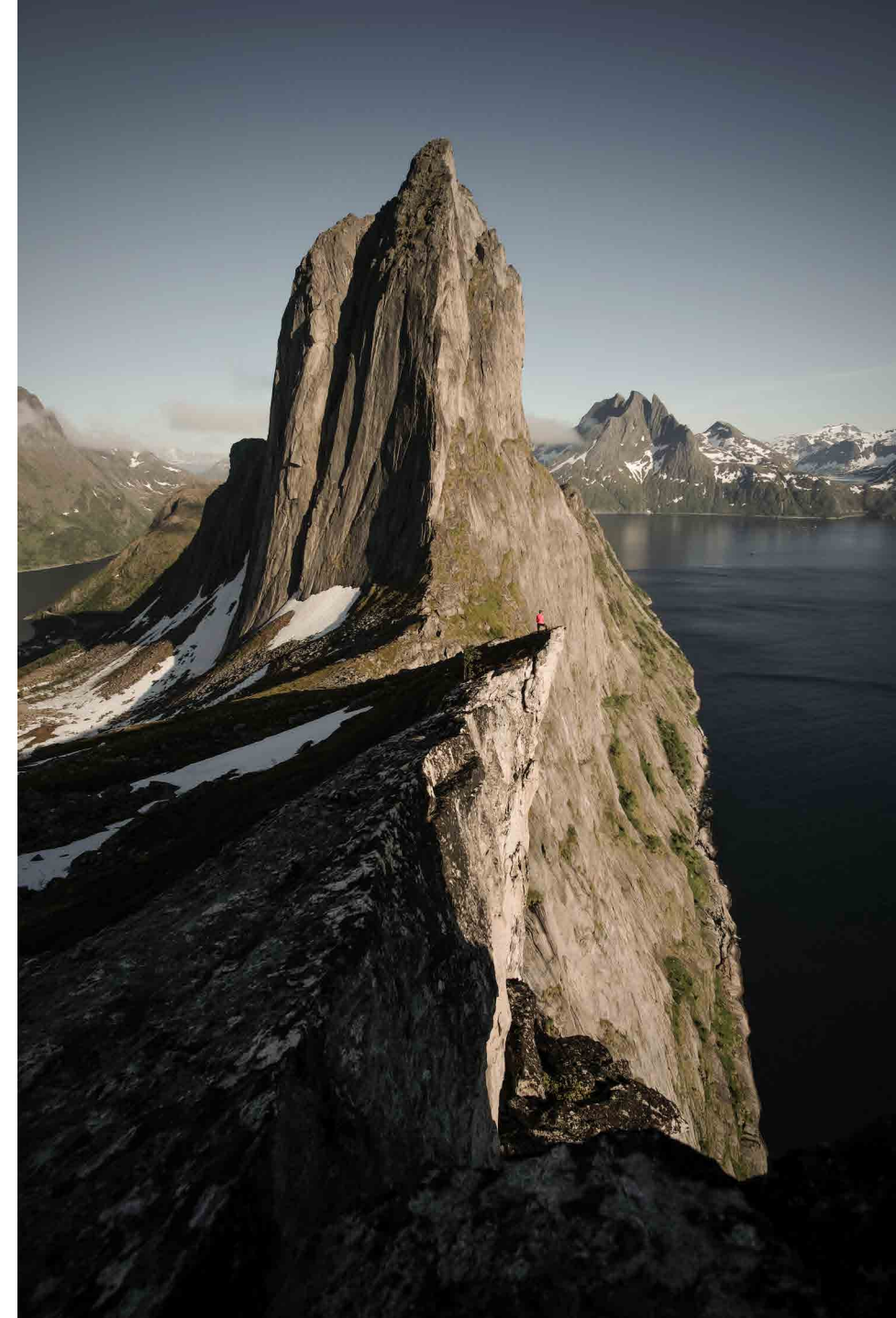


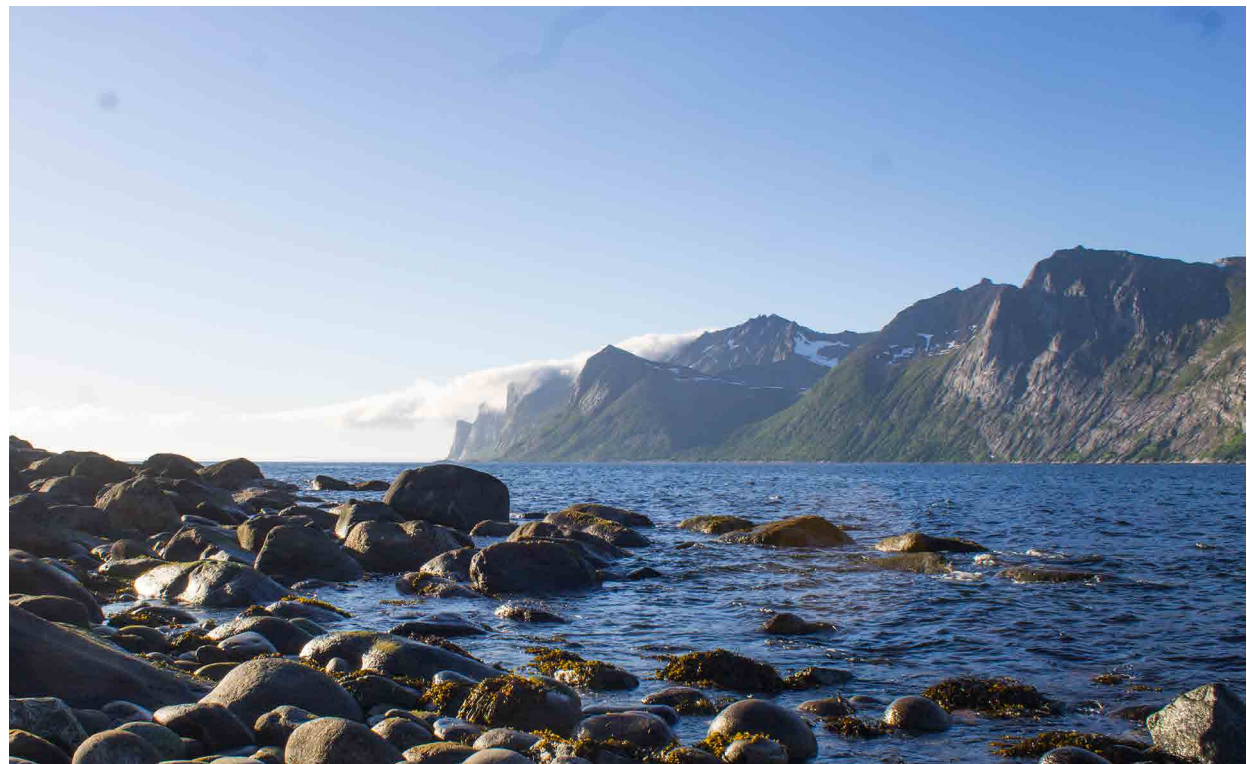
Hesten

Hesten is Segla's neighboring mountain and where most of the popular photos of Segla found on Instagram are taken. Much like Segla, Hesten has a sharp drop into the fjord below, but doesn't reach quite as tall, at 556 meters above the sea. Apart from Segla, Hesten delivers wonderful views over Meffjorden to the west, and Inste Kongen Mountain and Korkedalen Valley to the north.

The trail is very popular and you can expect to hike in a queue and meet many people at the top, regardless of the season.

Again to different perspectives, frame, camera angle, photo edit, and moods in these two pictures are clearly obvious. That is, to me, the beauty of the human's mind.







Devil's Teeth

This location is called the Tungeneset picnic. This is a must-see viewpoint in Senja. Visit this walkway during the day for a stunning view of the mountains with sharp peaks that are known as Devil's Teeth. We stopped by there to see the view and take some pictures. It was very windy and cold in July! We came here for the second time as we loved this place. Such a breathtaking view and quiet, hearing only waves.





Tungeneset on Senja brings viewpoints and picnic areas to the next level, with its Nordic design structure nestled between the Steinfjord and the Ersfjord. From this walkway constructed with Siberian larch wood, you will enjoy views of the Norwegian Sea in the west, and the intense Okshornan mountain range, also known as Devil's Jaw, in the north.





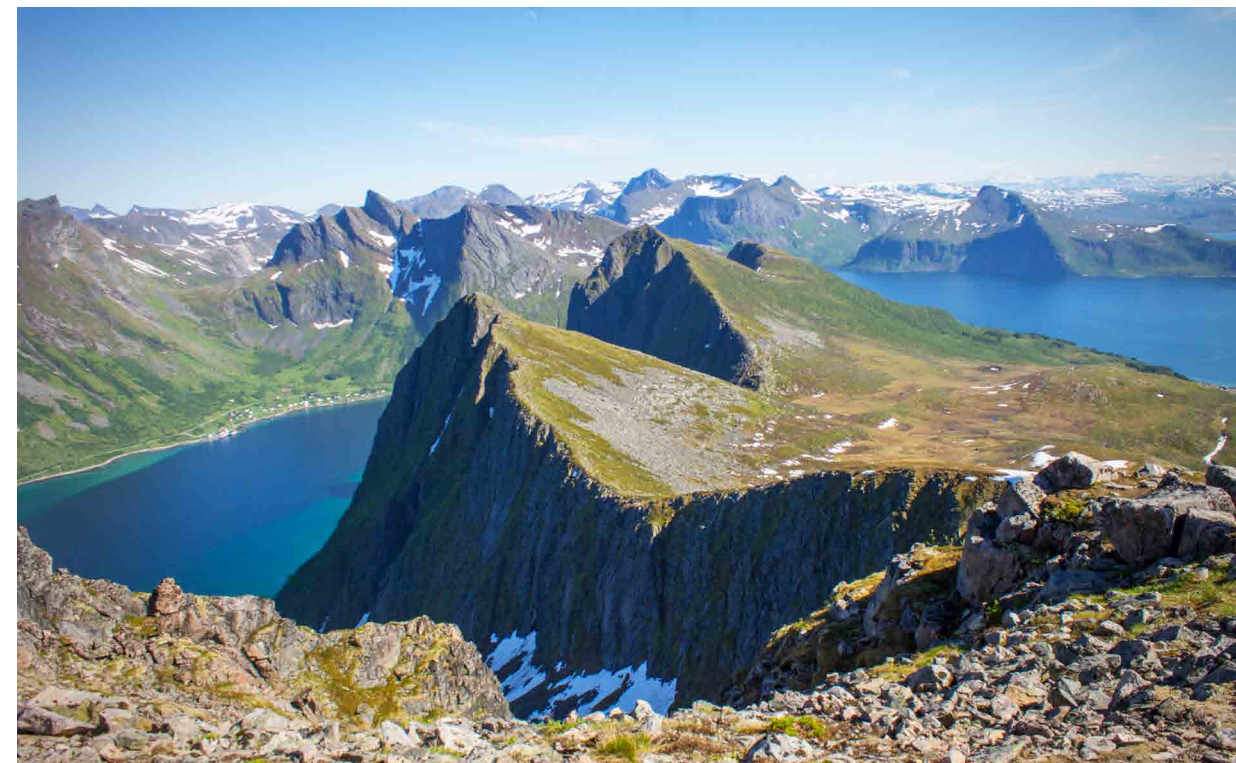
Husfjell

Feeling small in this great big world. Husfjellet is one of the best viewpoints on Senja island in Northern Norway. It's also a fantastic couple of hours hike, well rewarded with panoramic view to nearby fjords - Ersfjorden and Bergsfjorden. The latter is especially spectacular sight, as it's dotted with dozens of small islands. Husfjellet doesn't disappoint with mountain views either, from its top you can admire many of Senja's amazing peaks.





Visit to Husfjell was our last hike on Senja island. Having known it's one of locals' favourites, we ensured to have plenty of time to enjoy it. Indeed, the hike was brilliant, and views so fantastic that we stayed longer at the summit area.





Hytte

The Norwegian name for a cabin is hytte. We stayed for three nights in this beautiful cabin with more beautiful nature around it. As we had a barbeque on our terrace, why not have a BBQ night to remember. Stick bread or german name, stockbrot, was our starter and my first try. the preparation and cooking was part of the fun. But because of the mosquitos, we had to run into the cabin after dinner.





Rest days

We are almost at the end of our trip, on the way back home and we missed Lofoten already. In one of the hikes Paul and Edgardo bet on who reach the peak faster for a bottle of wine. It doesn't matter who won, the important part is that we had some wine to refresh.

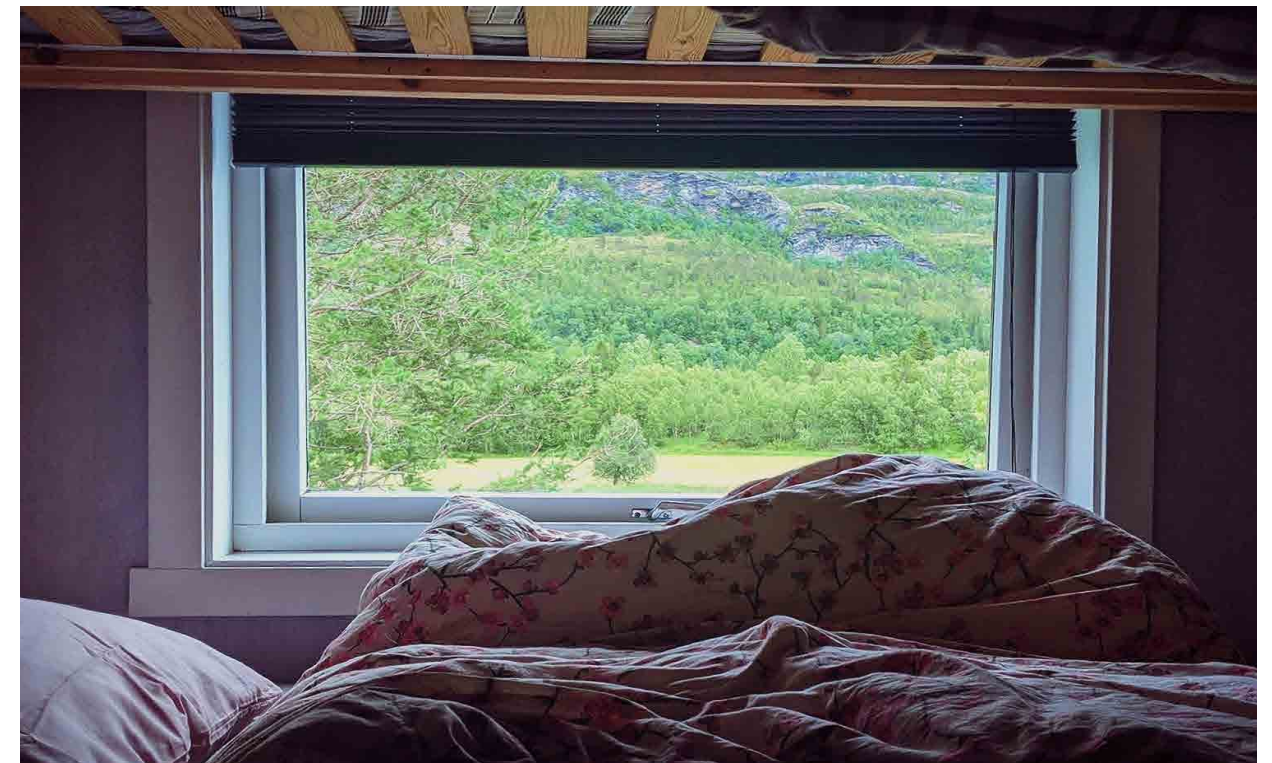
This Airbnb was located 60 kilometers south of Narvik. Still 836 kilometers away from home. Our window had wonderful view of fjord.

On the other hand, the next Airbnb (the picture on right) was a farmhouse close to Mo i Rana, 6 hours away from home. That was a nice house, well equipped, two floors, with a farm view on one side and a mountain on the other side of the building. It was raining and cold so we couldn't sit outside on the bench they had in the garden and we were so pooped after all these hikes that we even didn't think about going hiking there.





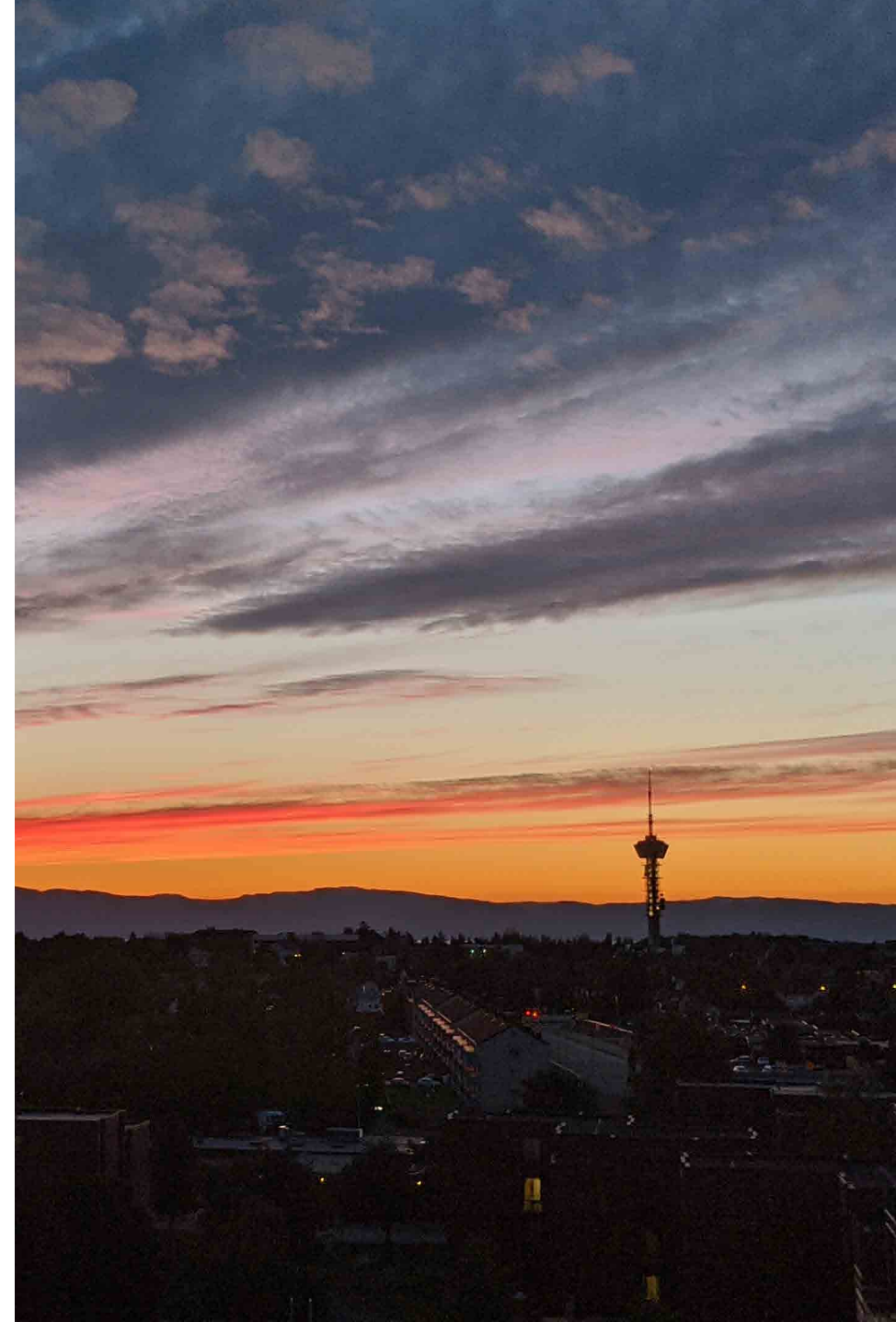
During the last 13 days, except for 2 times that we went to a restaurant, we almost always cooked for our dinner. Of course, on the hikes, we had some sliced bread, but for meals that we had time to cook, we had warm, delicious dishes. Imagine eating lunch next to a window that opens to a farm, then suddenly you see a moose coming to have lunch as well. That last day that we were so excited to see that in the backyard was the second time we saw moose on our trip.





Back to Trondheim

Worth mentioning that the people I traveled with are so nice, and I really enjoyed this trip even more with them. It is also pleasant to be home again after two weeks and hug your pillow. We keep talking about how amazing was this place and we should go back there someday soon. shortly after this trip everyone spread in different parts of the Europe to their homes. For me, home is Trondheim which is a lovely city itself. Trondheim is not above the Arctic Circle but midnight sun is with us here as well!



Thanks to all of us that we were adventurers enough to give ourself the chance to see some of the most charming places in the world. And special thanks to my trip group that are absolutely nice and fun people to travel with. Also, I should thank Livia and Fabio for sharing their great shots with me to make this diary. Lastly thanks to Lofoten and Senja Islands which gave us some pleasant days with the sun shining on us all the time. You can see 5 lucky people in one frame who had 14 magical days. From left to right, Arefe, Edgardo, Paul, Livia, and Fabio who are in a different part of the world right now and looking forward to gathering around in Lofoten again.



Acknowledgments

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page 6, 10, 11, 12, 21, 25, 37, 44, 56, 66, 68, 71, 74, 77 and 84 by Livia Audrey
page 13, 14, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 41, 47, 51, 52, 54, 55, 58, 64, 65, 67, 75 and 76 by Fabio Schober

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First edition 2020

The book is a story of 5 students' road trip to the north of Norway who are sharing their experiences and hikes.

Whether you want to travel to Lofoten or Senja or enjoy yourself by watching pictures of those places, this book is bursting with stunning places. It profiles 11 hikes and 82 breathtaking photos that capture hikes' view-points and life around it.

