

# TREASURE ISLANDS

The Lofoten archipelago has been described as one of the world's crown jewels of biodiversity. There are activities for everyone here, but above all, there's varied unspoiled nature, clean air and pure water

By **Johan Augustin** Photos by **Dennis Janssen/Getty**

**W**hat visitors to Lofoten remember most is its striking natural scenery. The archipelago has long been known for fantastic fishing but in recent years, its other attractions have become increasingly popular, and no wonder. Who can resist hiking in the mountains, whale watching in the bays and wandering around picturesque villages such as Nusfjord, where you can stay in quaint red fishermen's cabins called *rorbuer*.

Our guide is native islander Børge Iversen, who lives in the village of Ballstad on Vestvågøy.

The sea has always been an important part of life for the 58-year-old fisherman and local politician. Just as it has been for his father and grandfather. It's not only the fishing that gets him out on his boat. "Life is perfect with the wonders of nature all around," Iversen says. "My job is more like a hobby."

The best thing about living in Lofoten?

"The freedom and the clean air. And the people. People here are hard-working, and there is almost no crime on the islands." ▶

## A vital habitat

▶ The Barents Sea is one of the cleanest and most productive marine areas in the world – and therefore extremely rich in biodiversity. Several different habitats are found here, including sandy bottoms, coral reefs and sponge communities. These are important living and spawning environments for many species of fish, marine mammals and sea birds.

## Best time to visit

▶ You can visit Lofoten all year round. January and February are the coldest months, with average temperatures below zero. July and August are the warmest months, with average temperatures around 12C.

[visitlofoten.com](http://visitlofoten.com)

**L**ike many other islanders, Iversen is happiest outdoors. In winter, locals ski on the peaks surrounding the fjords and in the summer, the villages compete in soccer matches.

Soccer is Iversen's favorite sport. He would like to attend a match in London or Barcelona, but beyond that, big cities don't appeal to him. He has only visited Oslo and Stavanger a few times.

In his role as a local politician, Iversen works to promote the active cultural life of the islands and to prevent oil drilling that might disturb the fish.



**Børge Iversen**

The family tradition is set to continue. One of Iversen's daughters has chosen a path similar to her father's and is training to be a sea captain.

Although the Gulf Stream gives Lofoten a milder climate than other places at the same latitude, the weather can still be challenging. Conditions can change quickly when icy Arctic winds sweep in across the area. In summer, the temperature rarely rises above 15°C. If Iversen could wish for anything, it would be warmer weather now and then.

"Sometimes I wish for that," he says. "But then I just take the family on vacation somewhere warmer!" ●



Photo by Shutterstock

# BØRGE'S LOFOTEN

## Stay in Nusfjord

► Nusfjord is an authentic fishing village that has changed little over the years. Stay in the small red fishermen's cabins – *rorbuer* – that sleep up to 11 people. The cabins perch atop wooden columns in the harbor and offer views of the cliffs and the sea.

[classiconorway.com](http://classiconorway.com)

## Sport fishing

► People come from all over the world to fish in Lofoten. Iversen runs sport fishing trips where you can learn how to get meaty *skrei* (cod that has swum in from the Barents Sea to spawn) on your hook in early spring, and other species later in the year. Combine a fishing trip with an overnight stay in one of the *rorbuer*

[rorbuer.info](http://rorbuer.info)



## Lofoten Stockfish Museum

► A display of a traditional preservation method. The fish drying on wooden racks are known as stockfish. The mild climate from February to June, accompanied by salty breezes, provides the ideal conditions for this technique.

[lofoten-info.no](http://lofoten-info.no)

## The beach at Flakstad

► The long white sandy beach on the island of Flakstadøya is wild and deserted. There's a

campsite and cabins if you want to stay.

[skagencampinglofoten.com](http://skagencampinglofoten.com)

## Cod tongue at Ramberg Gjestegård

► The Iversen family loves fish and especially *skrei*. The specialty here is cod's tongue with boiled potatoes in a white creamy sauce, which you can try at this traditional guest house.

[ramberg-gjestegard.no](http://ramberg-gjestegard.no)

## Hiking

► There are lots of hiking trails and relatively easy routes. One of Iversen's favorite peaks is Glomtind (419m), which gets morning sun on one side and evening sun on the other.

[lofoten.info](http://lofoten.info)



## Tips and map

For more things to do in Lofoten go to [scandinaviantraveler.com](http://scandinaviantraveler.com)



## Whale watching

► Lofoten is a good place to see sperm whales and killer whales though smaller species can also be spotted. The best time is mid-May to mid-September. A few operators organize trips all year round.

[arcticwhaletours.com](http://arcticwhaletours.com)

## Scuba diving

► Strap on your tanks and discover an exciting underwater

world. The clear waters are perfect for wreck diving and viewing the many local aquatic species.

[lofoten-diving.com](http://lofoten-diving.com)