LOFOTEN ROAD TRIP (INCLUDING VESTERÅLEN)

If I was asked to describe Lofoten using just one word, then dramatic would be it. That first sight of those roughly chiselled Moskenesøya mountains surging skywards brought to mind the Viking spear-heads tearing through soft human flesh from conquests past. A reminder that wherever you are in Norway, the Viking spirits pervade into the present.

This Lofoten road trip was to be the last stretch of our epic Norway road trip that had started in the traditional village of Skudeneshavn, Rogaland and would end in Nordland (Northern Norway), in the mythical islands of Lofoten and Vesterålen.

This road trip will have you: zig-zagging the Lofoten Scenic Route across archipelagos, hiking mountains, gazing at the Northern Lights, decoding the inner meaning of international sculptures and hunting for geocaches in the search for the best attractions and landscape views on the magical Lofoten and Vesterålen Islands.

Not familiar with Geocaching? It’s an activity that leads you to often discover beautiful and memorable off-the-beaten-path locations that you won’t find in a travel guide and generally those places that only the locals know about. We swear by it.

This Lofoten and Vesterålen Road Trip over 7 days includes:

- Northern Lights photography locations
- Exhilarating mountain hikes
- Picturesque traditional Norsk fishing villages
- Internationally inspired sculptures by Skulpturlandskap Nordland
- Driving the Norwegian Scenic Route Lofoten
- Plenty of stunning landscape locations to whet your appetite.
We’ve spent over 12 months living and travelling through this fairytale country over the summer and autumn seasons for the last few years. Our base in the historic village of Skudeneshavn was the perfect launch point for our Norwegian adventures which never failed to amaze us. No wonder it consistently ranks in the top 10 bucket list destinations of the World.

We’d gradually made our way up from Western Norway taking 2 weeks from Stavanger to Bergen, 9 days from Bergen to Trondheim and taking 7 days to travel from Trondheim to Bodo before casting our eyes west towards the Lofoten islands. With the 3.5-hour ferry crossing between Bodø (on the mainland) and Moskenes, a village on Moskenesøya, a western isle of Lofoten, now behind us, we were itching to get started on this Lofoten road trip.

WHERE ARE THE LOFOTEN AND VESTERÅLEN ISLANDS?
The Lofoten and Vesterålen island chains are clustered together but form different archipelagos.

The Lofoten archipelago, the more famous, consists of the main islands of Røstøyan, Værøy, Moskenesøy, Flakstadøy, Vestvågøy and Austvågøy as indicated with the solid oval below.

The Vesterålen archipelago is shown with the dashed oval and includes the main islands of Langøya, Hinnøya, Andøya and Hadseløya.

![Lofoten and Vesterålen archipelagos](image)
PLANNING YOUR LOFOTEN AND VESTERÅLEN ROAD TRIP
WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO VISIT LOFOTEN?

The most frequently asked question we get is: *when is the best time to visit Lofoten?* There is no best time but different times of the year offer different opportunities and will depend on what it is you want to see and do.

June to August is the summer period which will offer the best opportunities for good weather, long daylight hours, midnight sun and ensure that places of interest are actually open. The downside is that it also coincides with the busy tourist season but this is to be expected almost anywhere in Europe.

The summer is also the drying time for the fish and there will be racks upon racks of drying fish so if you are sensitive to smells – this might not be the best time of year to visit.

Generally speaking, November is notorious for wet weather with December and January offering little improvement. If the Northern Lights is on your agenda then you’ll need to aim to visit between September and April with a serious look at September/October and March/April months.
Our travel tip is to plan an off-season visit, in late September, to avoid the throngs of tourists, enjoy a good amount of daylight, hopefully see the Northern Lights and to pay less than the peak season rates. It worked for us. What we didn’t know was that museums and other public access attractions often close their doors outside of the Summer months (June to August) so this may impact your itinerary.

LOFOTEN AND VESTERÅLEN EVENT CALENDAR

- **Lofoten International Chamber Music Festival and Lofoten Piano Festival** are both classical music festivals, held biyearly in Lofoten. Every summer, in Lofoten’s churches, cultural houses, cafes and galleries music rings out from some of the leading artists in this field. [Find out more here.](#)
- **Lofoten Food Festival** – normally held in the autumn, September or October. [More details here.](#)
- **Viking Festival** – held at Lofotr Viking Museum for 4 days usually at the beginning of August. [Find details here.](#)
- **What’s on in Vesterålen**
  The Norwegian National or Constitution Day is held in nearly every Norwegian village, town and city on the 17th May and is a big celebration.

LOFOTEN AND VESTERÅLEN 7 DAY ROAD TRIP ITINERARY

We begin this Lofoten road trip adventure in the most south-western village of Mosekenesøya, Lofoten and as mentioned, zig-zag our way eastwards through the Lofoten Islands and then north into the Vesterålen islands.

Booking ahead and allocating a 2-night minimum stay at each of our accommodations was a wise move as it avoided that feeling of being constantly on the move plus gave us a home-base while we explored the area. It was a good decision however you could easily stay longer at each place if you wanted.

We chose our Lofoten accommodation based on the location being more-or-less central to the area that we wanted to explore:
• Reine (Moskenesøya), Lofoten
• Henningsvær (Austvågøya), Lofoten
• Nyksund (Langøya), Vesterålen.

**DAY 1 / 2 (MOSKENESØYA/FLAKSTADØYA ISLANDS, LOFOTEN)**
• Å,
• Sund,
• Reine

The first day only encompasses a total of 56km of driving. We spent many hours admiring and photographing the spectacular landscape along the way. It was a

Å

Å, is the last letter of the Norwegian alphabet but our first stop on this Lofoten road trip. The tiny village of Å, is at the very south-western end of the island of Moskenesøya and literally at the end of the road going south-west. You can drive no further.

![Norwegian Stockfish Museum](image)

Originally, fishing was the main economic source of this village but with the rise in popularity, due mostly to the movie industry, Norway and in particular, Lofoten, has seen a massive rise in tourism – with the knock-on effect being a boost for the tourism industry.
LOFOTEN FISHING VILLAGE MUSEUM AND NORWEGIAN STOCKFISH MUSEUM
The main attractions in Å are the Lofoten Fishing Village Museum and the Norwegian Stockfish Museum which unfortunately were closed during our September visit. However, there are many interesting late 18th century buildings to admire and it’s hard to miss the beautiful surroundings.

HIKE TO ÅGватNET
We took a rather slushy walk to Ågvatnet, a lake close by Å to hunt for some geocaches. It was on this hike that we firstly smelt, and later eye-balled, the many cod heads stacked in a shed behind the wooden cod drying trellises. Why these dried heads are kept, remains a mystery to us. The smell was quite pungent and clung to the nostrils for some time afterwards.

Want a taste of quintessential Lofoten? Walk towards the town’s small harbour where you’ll find captivating yellow and red coloured homes built opposite the chiselled mountain slopes. If you can, pop into the village ‘corner store’ which is worth a wander just to see some of the local souvenirs and cod displays.

SUND – HISTORIC BLACKSMITH WORKSHOP
Next, we ventured to the village of Sund on Flakstadøya island to pay a visit to a renowned blacksmith, Tor Vegard Mørkved, who owns and operates the blacksmith’s workshop and the Sund Fisheries Museum.
Tor Vegard gave us talk on his past and the history of the workshop then brought his furnace to life to fashion a steel cormorant, swearing by his old but reliable machinery that dated back to the start of the 20th century.

We asked him why a cormorant and not some other bird? He said it was because the Cormorants roost on the rocky outcrops here and to him represent the spirit of Lofoten … plus he really likes their look.

You can also wander the museum grounds to see the fishing boats of old and the motors that were used to power them in the later years. Lining the rails, you can find many different and fantastic examples of his handiwork.

Tor told us that he wants to retire and would like to train an apprentice to take his place but as yet, no-one has stepped forward.

Near the water, you can find many different and interesting examples of Tor Vegard’s handiwork lining the rails.
Wander the museum grounds to see the fishing boats of old and the motors that later on use to power them. Tor Vegard told us that he wants to retire and would like to train an apprentice to take his place but as yet, no-one has stepped forward. Have a look below at this master craftsman in his element.

**REINE – CAPTURE THE NORTHERN LIGHTS**

On the drive back to Reine, we were casing locations to photograph the Northern Lights. With a favourable prediction for the lights to appear, we wanted a spot with a great backdrop. It turned out that just outside of Reine we found such a place that offered both elevation and the mountainous backdrop we were seeking.

We’ve written a separate article on Unveiling the Northern Lights in Lofoten but know that the gods did favour us and we witnessed the dancing and shimmering lights that we so longed to see. What a start to this Lofoten road trip.

![Northern Lights over Reine, Lofoten](image)

**DAY 3, 4 – MOSKENSØYA/FLAKSTADØYA/AUSTVÅGØYA ISLANDS, LOFOTEN**

- Ryten Hike,
- Nusfjord,
- Ramberg Beach,
- Eggum,
- Henningsvær
RYTEN HIKE WITH VIEWS OVER KVALVIKA BEACH
Have a good breakfast as its time to pump those legs on the hike up Ryten mountain to overlook the secluded white-sands of Kvalvika Beach.

The car park marks the beginning of the hike and is just 26 km from Reine. To be fair, on this hike give yourself about 5 hours from start to finish if you’re in average physical condition – there are many photo opportunities.

Beautiful views await you on every part of this challenging trail. We’ve written a separate article on this hike, Ryten Lofoten – Incredible Hike Above Kvalvika Beach, which includes photos, the hike, parking and extra handy information.

NUSFJORD
This beautiful, picturesque little village lies on the southern shore of Flakstadøya island and claims the title as one of the oldest traditional fishing villages in Norway. In fact, signs of human existence have been traced way back to 425 B.C.

This secluded harbour is home to but a handful of renovated buildings including rorbu or old cabins used by fisherman that, in Lofoten, are often transformed into cosy accommodation spaces. Here in Nusfjord, you get to step back in time and experience the Lofoten of old.
RAMBERG BEACH
Quite the surprise, Ramberg Beach, found just north of Ramberg, is a scene from one of those Caribbean islands. The long, stretch of pristine white sand gently curves around a bay of bright blue-green water. It’s hard to believe that you’re actually inside the Arctic Circle.

EGGUM
Ready for something different? Our search for one of the works of art by Skulpturlandskap Nordland, and our first find in Lofoten, is found just outside of the village of Eggum, on the island of Vestvågøy. Follow the road Eggumsveien until it ends at a car park. From here you take to foot and walk a path that divides a pristine lake bounded by mountains and wild, rocky shoreline.

The work of art named ‘Head’, is of granite and iron construction. Viewing the sculpture from different angle shifts the perspective from upward facing to down.
‘Head’ is representative of the varying colours and surfaces of the water and landscape in the area. It is a thought-provoking piece of work.

If you want to escape civilisation, this is definitely the place to head for.

Leaving Vestågøy for Austvågøya island on the way to Henningsvær, another sculpture, ‘Uten Tittel’ is worth a stop. Consisting of two huge concave mirrors (2.5m x 3.0m), it reflects the surrounding water and mountains beautifully. Another example of great creativity.
The picturesque traditional village of Henningsvær is spread over several islands, adding to its charm. We spent two nights here and used a whole day to just wander and enjoy its vibe.

The picturesque village of Henningsvær

The shops and cafes are beautifully presented, the people are friendly and there is lots to see during your wanderings. We can personally vouch for Kafé Lysstøperiet, the pastries are exquisite.

We fired up our Geocache app which also led to us some amazing locations within easy walking distance in and around Henningsvær.

We booked our 2-night stay at the beautifully kept BnB Lysvoldbrygga, right in the heart of Henningsvær.

Visiting Lofoten out of season had its advantages: lower prices, minimal tourists and a feeling of real Lofoten life.
This BnB also had something of interest; a verandah with a northerly aspect and an uninterrupted view of the nearby mountains meaning that with the right weather conditions, we could shoot the Northern Lights from here.

With the setting of the sun, the Norsk Gods proved again to be in fine spirits by allowing the Northern Lights to dance and play across skies for us. It was mesmerising. As we mentioned earlier, if you want further details on Northern Lights in Lofoten, then you can take a look at our separate article: Unveiling the Northern Lights in Lofoten.

DAY 5/6 – AUSTVÅGØYA, LOFOTEN AND VESTERÅLEN

- Vågan Church,
- Svolvær
- Bø
- Nyksund

VÅGAN CHURCH
Also known as the Lofoten Cathedral, this late 19th-century church is the largest in northern Norway, seating 1200 people and is sited in Lofoten’s ancient capital, Købelvag. A church has always claimed this position, dating way back to the 12th-century and was sought by visiting fisherman for blessings prior to undertaking the winter’s fishing.

![Vågan Church, Købelvag](image1)

**SVOLVÆR**

This large, well-serviced town forms the administrative centre for the region with shops catering to any needs.

Svolvær is the closest town to the famous *Svolværgeita* or Svolvær Goat, where you can jump from one granite mountain top to another. Resembling goat horns, they are hard to miss even when viewed from the town itself. This wasn’t something that particularly interested us but if you are thinking it might be for you, then have a look at this footage first.

There are quite a few activities that you may be interested in that run from Solvær.

**BØ**

Leaving the Lofoten islands behind and coinciding with the end of the Scenic Route Lofoten, turning north brings you to the fabled and much less frequented Vesterålen islands.

The far west coast is home to the town of Bø and another of Skulpturalandskap Nordland famous works of art – *The Man from the Sea*. 
This thought-provoking piece is wrought from cast iron and crystal representing a man who has left the sea to now walk on land, holding a crystal offering. At 4.3m in height, it is definitely an imposing sight.

The Man from the Sea

**NYKSUND**

Driving north from Bø we arrived at our base for the next two nights, Nyksund, the once-abandoned fishing village that has found a new lease on life. Tourism is contributing to its revival with many interesting activities on offer both on land and at sea.

Pretty entrance to Nyksund

It is also a perfect place to launch an assault on the *Dronningruta* hike or *The Queen’s Route*. This is a demanding 15-kilometre hike over all types of mountainous terrain with the typical majestic panoramas you can expect from a famous Norwegian hike.

We’ve written a comprehensive article on the hike here, so you will know what to expect: *Dronningruta Hike – The Queen’s Route.*
Whilst in Nyksund, look carefully in the town area and you’ll see the last sculpture that we found on this road trip. A spoiler photo is below – it’s hard to tell from the photo but there is a face in this lamp.

We ended our road trip here in Nyksund having thoroughly enjoyed the best from both the Lofoten and Vesterålen islands. From Nyksund, we drove eastwards into Norway and then Sweden to stay in the Icehotel at Jukkasjärvi and visited the reindeer at Nutti Sami Siida.

TRANSPORT FOR YOUR LOFOTEN ROAD TRIP
Self-drive is definitely the way to go. You have the freedom to go where you want when you want. We campervanned around Europe for a year and it was not only great fun but the best way to travel.

Public transport does service some of these places but honestly, a rental car or campervan hire will get you mobile and allow you to pick the perfect travel routes for you that suit your plans.

Here you can find hire car and campervan hire options.

CAR AND MOTORHOME RENTAL
Rentalcars.com gave us the best car rental deals in Europe. Motorhome Republic found us the best hire deals for campervan hire for our year-long road trip around Europe. They found better pricing than we could find going direct ourselves therefore making the process so much easier.
DRIVING IN LOFOTEN

- Most of Norway has a maximum 80km/hr speed limit on the open roads. Speed and trip (average speed between locations) cameras are in abundance, so driver beware.
- Norway’s traffic rules can be found on the Norwegian Public Roads Administration site vegvesen.no or you can make direct contact with the Traffic and Road Information on +47 815 48 991.
- To check to see if any of the Lofoten Scenic Route is closed, follow this link to the Norway Tourist Routes site.

HANDY PHONE APPS AND EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

- yr app (as in the 2 letters y and r) This is an accurate Norway weather app for both IOS and Android devices
- outtt app provides detailed trail maps for Norway for both IOS and Android devices
- maps.me app is an off-line map for both IOS and Android devices
- Smart Parking app is available for both IOS and Android phones and allows you to pay for parking online and not have to worry about carrying around coins or credit cards
- Emergency Phone Numbers – Fire: 110; Police: 112; Ambulance: 113

WHAT TO PACK FOR YOUR LOFOTEN ROAD TRIP

- Even in Summer, there is a fair bit of variability in temperatures and the weather can change quickly. It can be quite cold and wet in the morning but turn into a blistering hot day. Layering your clothing is the best option and having waterproof top and bottom means you won’t have to hike in wet clothes.
- We strongly recommend waterproof hiking shoes/boots
- If you have weak or sore knees then consider using walking poles to prevent shock loading on your joints. Some of these hiking downhill descents are quite steep and can cause jarring which is not pleasant
• A backpack with a waterproof cover is super handy to carry water, food and any camera accessories

We’ve been on the road for over three years now and have added some useful travel items to our Lifejourney4two page on Amazon.  

  Check out our Recommended Travel Items Here

WHERE TO STAY IN LOFOTEN

REINE  
Lofoten B&B  
Clean, economical and great location in Reine. Free wifi and good breakfast.

Rating: Very Good Reviews 8.4  
Search other accomodation in Reine here

HENNINGSVÆR  
Lysvoldbrygga B&B  
Situated in Henningsvær, 25 km from Svolvær, Lysvoldbrygga has a shared lounge and free WiFi. Guests at the bed and breakfast can enjoy a delicious continental breakfast.

Rating: Exceptional Reviews 9.6  
Search other accommodation in Henningsvær here

NYKSUND  
Holmvik Brygga  
Situated at Nyksund Harbour, this family-owned, eco-certified guesthouse offers a restaurant and rooms and apartments with free Wi-Fi access.

Rating: Very Good Reviews 8.1

Search other accommodation in Nyksund here
BOOK YOUR ACCOMMODATION

*Note:* When booking accommodation, some of the cheaper establishments do not include sheets and pillowcases as part of the standard booking and needs to be added at an extra charge. Make sure to check the booking details carefully.

Use our [Airbnb link](#) and get up to **€31 credit** for your first Airbnb stay.

We use [Booking.com](#) as we can find a variety of cheap and budget accommodation such as local guesthouses and cheap hotels.

LOFOTEN ROAD TRIP ROUND-UP

The Vesterålen islands are quite beautiful in their own right but the Lofoten islands are major drawcard and it’s easy to see why. Those steep mountains that plunge into the sea right by your feet, the Rorbu (old fisherman huts), the dramatic and contrasting scenery, the shimmering Northern Lights; all tell the story of why Lofoten has endeared itself to admirers worldwide. A visit to this part of the world is guaranteed to enthral.

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