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WINE FOOD TRAVEL

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THE STATE OF RED WINE

DENMARK
GOURMET GETAWAYS

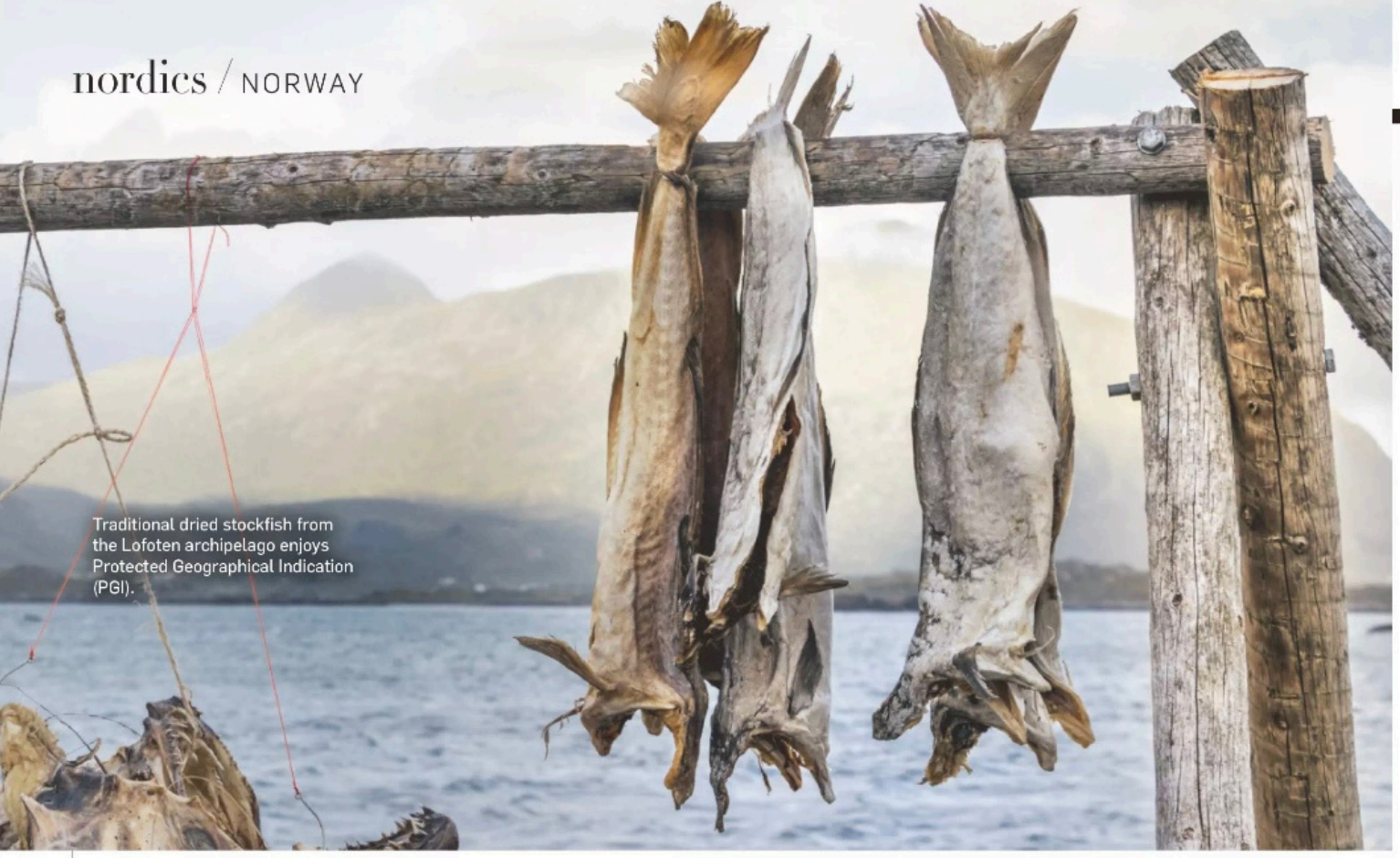
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Winter Escapes

RELAXATION FROM THE ALPS TO THE ARCTIC

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Traditional dried stockfish from the Lofoten archipelago enjoys Protected Geographical Indication (PGI).

NORWAY

SKREI FIDELITY

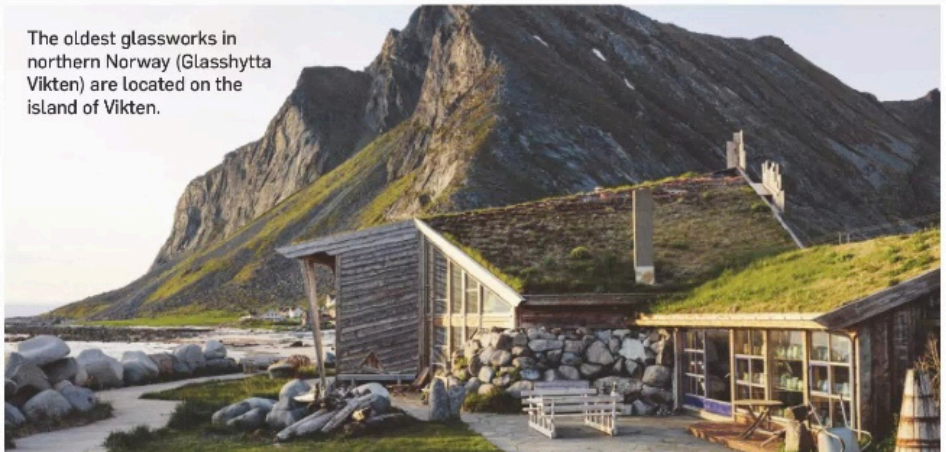
The mountainous Lofoten archipelago is famed for both its rugged landscape and a storied delicacy: Skrei, Norwegian Arctic winter cod.

TEXT LISA ARNOLD

You'll find it every winter on the menus of upscale fish restaurants the world over: skrei, also known as winter cod (Gadus morhua). But what makes it so special? Unlike "normal" cod from the North Atlantic and its smaller cousins from the Baltic Sea, they live above the Arctic circle in the icy Barents Sea. As soon as skrei reaches maturity after five to seven years, they migrate south to spawn in the waters off the northern Norwegian coast, where the Gulf Stream ensures a stable water temperature of seven degrees Celsius. This journey of over a thousand kilometers takes place between January and April and makes their meat particularly firm. Fillets are so tender that they fall apart under the fork, and skrei tongue is considered a delicacy when fried.

The largest skrei (which means "wanderer" in Norwegian) can be found in the waters around the Lofoten Islands, and the neighboring Vesterålen Islands. The name 'Lofoten' translates as "lynx's paw" and refers to the shape of the archipelago, which consists of around 80 islands and juts out into the Norwegian Sea. The largest and easternmost island is called Austvågøya and has the town Svolvær, the only town on the islands with just under 5,000 inhabitants.

In addition, one of Norway's 18 national tourist routes (Nasjonal turistveg Lofoten) begins at the northeastern tip of Austvågøya, by the Raftsundet strait



The oldest glassworks in northern Norway (Glasshytta Vikten) are located on the island of Vikten.

Photos: Ruben M Ramos/Shutterstock Lisa Arnold (2), Dan Mariner (2)

that separates the Lofoten and Vesterålen archipelagos. The 230-kilometer route connects numerous islands, towns, and attractions. Halfway along the route is the Lofotr Viking museum, and at the very end, the village of Å i Lofoten offers fascinating insights into island life with its year-round fishing village museum (Norsk Fiskeværsmuseum) and the world's only stockfish museum.

THE COD SQUAD

For centuries, the lucrative first months of the year shaped the lives of Lofoten fishermen. There were times when up to 30,000 mariners manning 6,000 boats were catching cod in these waters. As they only stayed here during skrei season, they did not build proper dwellings, but rather stayed in simple "rorbuer" (fishing huts) – small wooden cabins painted red with fish oil. Many of these are now rented out as vacation homes.

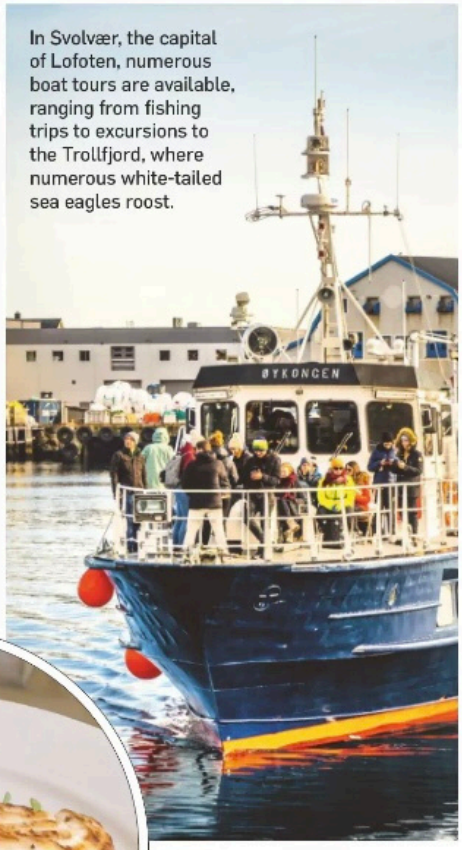
Today, there are still around 2,000 commercial fishermen in Lofoten, and skrei has achieved the status of a certified specialty: In order for cod to be sold under this name, it must have been caught under certain conditions: no nets, only sustainably with a line or fishing rod. The Norwegian Seafood Council (NSC) regulates procedures and the speed of fish processing.

Dating back to the time when there were no refrigerators or freezers, two traditional methods of preservation by drying were developed: Either by hanging fish whole on huge wooden racks to make tørrfisk (stockfish); or salted, cut in half, and laid on rocks to dry, resulting in what is known as klippfisk. Skrei preserved in such manners was already being shipped to southern Europe in medieval times, making it Norway's oldest export product. These traditional methods are still used today, and stockfish from Lofoten (Tørrfisk fra Lofoten) has enjoyed Protected Geographical Indication since 2014, same as Champagne or prosciutto di Parma.

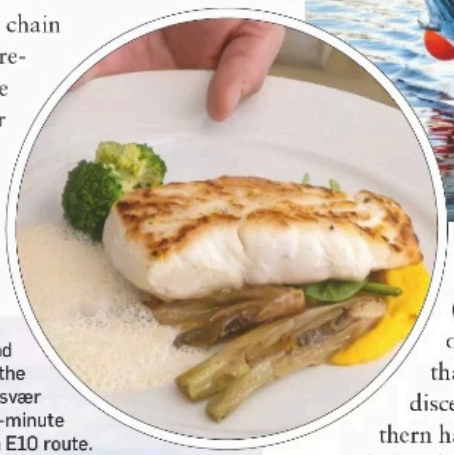
Along the island chain you'll find several restaurants that serve stockfish and other regional dishes. The fact that the Michelin Guide does not (yet) rate restaurants north of Trondheim does not mean that there are no places for discerning palates in the northern half of the country. The most exclusive dining experience is offered by Roy Magne Berglund: His Lofoten Food Studio is set up in his own garage and consists of an open kitchen surrounded by a chef's counter with fifteen seats. Gourmets from all over gather here to experience the culinary entertainer's showmanship. He really does everything on his own: cooking each dish, pouring each glass, shaking each cocktail, and washing each plate. Nevertheless, he manages to keep the entire service running smoothly.

The brothers Thomas and Jørgen Asheim run Fiskekrogen with the same personal touch – originally their parents' restaurant, it opened 35 years ago, making it the oldest existing restaurant in Henningsvær. This picturesque fishing village in the south of the Lofoten Islands has a lot to offer in terms of cuisine and culture considering its small population (around 500).

Besides the fish restaurant, there is, among other things, a youthful looking >



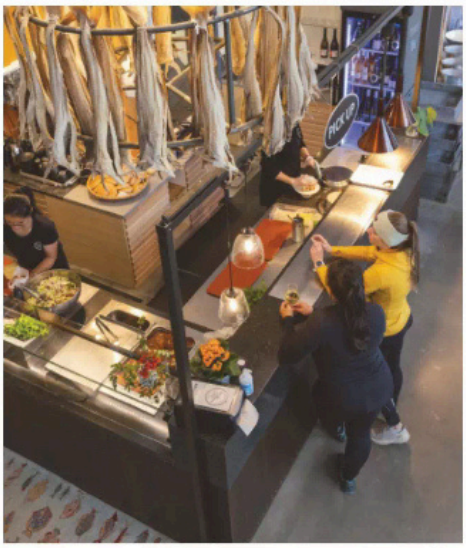
In Svolvær, the capital of Lofoten, numerous boat tours are available, ranging from fishing trips to excursions to the Trollfjord, where numerous white-tailed sea eagles roost.


Blessed with art and culinary delights, the town of Henningsvær is about a fifteen-minute drive off the main E10 route. Inset: The Fiskekrogen always has cod on the menu.





The typical architecture of the fishermen's huts called "rorbuer" – meaning renovated or newly built – is currently all the rage. Right: Stockfish is used to decorate the Gadus restaurant in Reine.



> "climbing café" ("Klatrekaféen"), where vacationers gather to enjoy burgers, fish soup, or cappuccino. The town also has two galleries: the museumesque Galleri Lofoten, which boasts the country's largest collection of early 20th century northern Norwegian art, and the contemporary Kaviar Factory, which has already exhibited works by Ai Weiwei, Marina Abramovic, and Yoko Ono.

Those who follow the Panorama road to its western end can treat themselves in Sørvågen – Conveniently located at the harbor, the restaurant Maren Anna awaits. Named after a sailing boat, they offer stockfish, cod tongue, and catch of the day. Want more? The nearby boutique hotel Holmen Lofoten organizes long culinary weekends several times a year under the motto "Cuisine at the Edge of the World", with guest chefs and artisans who give lessons in carving, leather crafting, or paper making during the day. Fish is no longer the sole source of income for the people of Lofoten – but the island would not be as idyllic, creative, and delicious today if the skrei had chosen another place to spawn. <

FOR CENTURIES, THE ISLANDS WERE DEFINED BY SKREI: THERE WERE TIMES WHEN UP TO 30,000 MARINERS WERE CATCHING COD.

HOTELS

HOTEL NUSFJORD VILLAGE & RESORT
Nestled in one of Norway's best-preserved fishing villages, this luxury resort beckons with red cabins, wooden piers, and t
Nusfjordveien 11(
T: +47 76 0930

TREVAREF
A former industrial buil
carpentry workshop (h
translates as "wood proc
manufactured cod liver o
hly designed hotel rooms and a popular pizzeria.
Dreyers gate 72, 8312 Henningsvær
T: +47 96 008000,
trevarefabrikken.no

HATTVIKA LODGE
Traditional fisherman's cabins meet sleek Scandinavian design in the heart of Lofoten. A farmhouse-style restaurant serves seasonal, locally sourced dishes, and direct access to hiking and kayaking makes it ideal for modern explorers.
Hattvikveien, 8373 Ballstad
T: +47 907 99 855
hattvikalodge.no

HOLMEN LOFOTEN
Opened in 2018, this boutique hotel on a small island near Å is the brainchild of Ingunn Rasmussen, the daughter of a Lofoten fisherman. She has
cabins and added
od measure.
rvågen
ofoten.no

HOTEL NUSFJORD VILLAGE & RESORT
Nestled in one of Norway's best-preserved fishing villages, this luxury resort beckons with red cabins, wooden piers, and tranquil fjord views.
Nusfjordveien 110, 8380 Ramberg
T: +47 76 093020, nusfjord.com

S

A former shipyard dating back to 1828 now hosts this renowned restaurant, which can afford to offer a short, but delectable, menu: just four classic dishes featuring fish and meat, as well as desserts inspired by regional cuisine.
Gunnar Bergs vei 2, 8300 Svolvær
T: +47 76 069931, svinoya.no

FISKEKROGEN
Founded in 1989, the fish restaurant is now run by the second generation with dedication and hospitality.
Dreyersgate 29, 8312 Henningsvær
T: +47 760 74652, fiskekrogen.no

LOFOTEN FOOD STUDIO
Chef Roy Magne Berglund welcomes foodies to the table surrounding his open kitchen, preparing a tasting menu made from regional ingredients right before their eyes.
Jacob Jentofts vei 29, 8373 Ballstad
T: +47 91 108430, lofotenfoodstudio.no

MAREN ANNA
If you make it to the end of the Lofoten Panorama Road, you will find this first-class fish restaurant serving stockfish and other seafood specialties.
Gamle Sørvågen 12, 8392 Sørvågen
T: +47 76 092050, marenanna.com

GETTING THERE

The small airport in Svolvær (SVJ) is served by Widerøe airlines from Oslo during certain months. Harstad/Narvik Airport (Evenes, EVE) has several daily connections to Oslo, as well as seasonal direct flights from Copenhagen via SAS. Sweden has rail connections to Narvik, including a direct overnight train – a scenic alternative route. A rental car is required to drive the Lofoten Panorama Road.

Photos: Lisa Anneli (2)