

Trips



FLEX TIME: IN THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER, SEE THE VIEW FROM LOFOTEN'S HIGHEST PEAK, HERMANNSDALSTIND, DAY OR NIGHT.

©Jack Brauer

Life List: Norway's Lofoten Islands

Where the sun never sets, the adventure never ends. If you can keep up.

➔ It's 11 p.m. when I shoulder my daypack, step out the door of a red-shingled fisherman's cabin, and head into the sunshine toward the mossy, tundra-covered granite coastline of the Norwegian Sea. A few hours earlier, my husband Peter and I finished a full day's worth of rock climbing, lapping a 600-foot spire—twice. On any other vacation we'd be wrapping up our epic day with nightcaps and an early bedtime. But we're above the Arctic Circle in Norway's Lofoten Islands, where from May 25 until July 17, it never gets dark. This evening, we're feeling the full effect of the endless daylight, and the treasures it reveals: clear water lapping the pebble-lined shoreline, mountains glowing amber under the soft blue sky. Instead of heading to bed, we set out scrambling on a series of giant stone puzzle pieces that make up the coastline of the small bay of Kalle. We have no destination and no goal other than to be outside and to see as far and as much as our eyes and the sky will allow. We don't bring headlamps.

Within two days of our July arrival, Peter and I learn to dispense with any conventional understanding of time. We live in a new reality: either in the midst of an adventure, or about to start one. In this landscape of twisted fjords, glacially chiseled mountains, and lush greenways, sleep can wait. We look at the tide charts and debate whether we should kayak at 2 p.m. or at 1 a.m.; both are equally viable and offer the same calm seas.

We choose a 2 p.m. departure based on a promised evening feast of mussels at the home of some new friends. We sluice off into the dark blue sea and alternate between open water and channels tucked between micro-islands of granite dotted with lichen patterns. Even the sea seems to take on the unbounded summer energy. It pulls us farther offshore so that we can look back at the archipelago and make ambitious plans for the coming week: a two-night backpacking trip across fjords and a local summit (3,375-foot Hermannsdalstind); a climbing linkup of two of the islands' tallest crags; a surf trip to a beach on the northern shore. We paddle back to land in the delirium of possibility. It's when I stagger out of my kayak with a long night of festivities ahead that I realize the price of nighttime's absence. Ahead of us stretch 10 more days of sunlit adventure. Ahead of us, I finally admit, will also have to be some rest. —*Majka Burhardt*



DO IT You can get to the Lofoten Islands by plane (fly to Svolvær) or by a ferry from Bodo. Rent a *rorbuer* (fishing cabin; about \$125/night) or camp on virtually any uninhabited land in Norway due to a philosophy of *allemannsretten* (every man's right). **SEASON** Mid-June to mid-September feature the driest conditions. **CONTACT** Northern Alpine Guides (alpine-guides.no) have beta on backpacking, climbing, biking, and more—and can also guide you on your dream ascent.

PHOTO BY JACK BRAUER

More adventure See a slideshow from this trip at backpacker.com/lofoten; find another Norwegian trek at backpacker.com/jotunheimen.