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Experience the best of Norway's Sunnmøre Alps region

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PEAKS TO FJORDS

Slow travel, sustainability and exhilarating adventures in Norway's Sunnmøre Alps region on the northwest coast

There's a saying in Norway: You'll never regret a hike—which is undeniably true among the cloud-piercing peaks and shimmering snowmelt fjords that characterize this under-the-radar region of the country. Pristine primeval landscapes serve as a playground and backdrop for epic adventures on land, sea and snow. Year-round, an endless array of expeditions from hiking, cycling and surfing to sea safaris, fishing and kayaking brings travelers closer to nature. For a once-in-a-lifetime experience in Sunnmøre, call on 62°NORD, a family-owned and operated travel company known for its swish portfolio of boutique hotels, speed yachts, helicopters, electric Porsches and expert guides, which they blend together in bespoke ways to create unrepeatably experiences. Founded in the early aughts by Knut and Line Flakk, the couple was inspired by geotourism, which focuses on the geographical richness of a destination, including its environment, heritage, culture, and local community.

“We focus on slow travel. Our guests stay with us from four to seven days, so there is an immersive element to every trip,” said Ann Kristin Ytrevik, 62°NORD's Brand Director. “People aren't coming to just tick a box and leave. They are spending time with locals in the community, connecting with the land, and bringing home what they've learned, which fosters cultural empathy and impact-driven change.”

Knut Flakk, who purchased Devold, Norway's oldest knitted garment manufacturer, more than a decade ago, was intent on creating a high-end experiential travel company to generate jobs after the brand's manufacturing was moved abroad. Today, the Flakk family is working towards a more sustainable future by heavily investing in hydrogen fuel to power the many boats and ferries that cruise Geirangerfjord, a local UNESCO World Heritage Site. While the country of Norway derives its significant



WORDS Nora Walsh, IMAGE © Håvard Myklebust/62°NORD

Each spring, after a relentless winter, the skies unveil themselves and the slopes of the Sunnmøre Alps transform into a playground for adventure seekers



Left: An hour by boat or 20 minutes by helicopter from Ålesund, guests can spend time on a private island and enjoy an authentic overnight stay at the Lighthouse keeper's house

Below: Alternatively, a private chef will prepare a vast selection of fresh seafood accompanied by selected drinks at the charming boathouse



wealth from selling the spoils of a massive oil reserve (which, when discovered in the late 1960s, skyrocketed Norway from one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the richest), the Flakks' ultimate goal is to shift energy consumption from oil and gas to hydrogen. "We deeply believe that when people experience unspoiled natural landscapes like this, they'll be more inclined to take better care of the Earth," explained Ytrevik.

When traveling with 62°NORD, guests typically stay at all three hotels, which are utterly distinct in character and history. (The Flakk family recently purchased a landmark building in Oslo alongside the Royal Castle, which is set to become the city's first true luxury boutique hotel when it opens.) "They're like three sisters," Ytrevik mused. "Hotel Brosundet is the cool well-traveled sister, while Hotel Union Øye is the eclectic, artsy and theatrical sibling. Storfjord is the warm and graceful sister who is always the consummate host."

"Even though they're all so different," she added, "you always feel like you're staying with the same family." One of the most unique and thrilling aspects of touring with 62°NORD is hopping between hotels, which are memorable adventures, full of excitement and delight.

HOTEL BROSUNDET

Located in the pretty fishing port of Ålesund, Hotel Brosundet was once a herring processing plant where fish was salted and sold. Set in two former warehouses, the historic waterfront structures received a stylish refresh from Snøhetta, one of Norway's edgiest architecture

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Above: Located in the pretty fishing port of Ålesund, Hotel Brosundet was once a herring processing plant where fish was salted and sold

Below: Listed as one of the world's most beautiful small ports, Ålesund is known for its Art Nouveau architectural style

studios. A massive fireplace anchors the heart of the hotel, where guests can be found quietly talking, reading and relaxing. Forty-seven distinct guestrooms are done up in a rustic Scandinavian aesthetic with original wooden beams and flooring, bare brickwork and modern bathrooms. Room 47, an intimate two-story suite in The Molja Lighthouse, just a short walk from the hotel, is the one to book for total privacy and panoramic views of the open sea. Two alfresco soaking tubs and a glass-enclosed sauna at the spa overlook the scenic harborside (make sure to reserve ahead of time). From sunlit breakfast buffets and traditional afternoon teas to multicourse tasting menus at Apotekergata No. 5, heralded as one of Ålesund's top restaurants, the culinary experiences at Hotel Brosundet are full of Norwegian flavor and friendliness.

In town, amble Ålesund's cobblestone streets, admiring the gabled rooftops and flowing lines of Art Nouveau architecture donning shades of mint-green, sky-blue, rose, and mustard. Visit the charming town center before climbing up to the Fjellstua lookout to take in far-reaching bird's-eye views of the beautiful town and its surrounding peaks and fjords. If weather permits, hop on a fishing boat to angle for cold-water cod and hake, which the chef will prepare for you at the restaurant. Cap off the evening with vintage cocktails at the hotel's Arkivet Bar, a local gathering spot that buzzes with a cool crowd.

To travel to Hotel Union Øye, you'll set off from the Hotel Brosundet's private pier on the Fjord Adventurer, a sleek speed yacht that will cruise you through Norangsfjord, a nature-carved waterway flanked by glacier-draped crests and historic red-and-white farmhouses hugging the shore.



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HOTEL UNION ØYE

At the end of Norangsfjord sits a sleepy village home to Hotel Union Øye, a chalet-style property that has been a magnet for royals, mountaineers and luminaries since 1891. The hotel's whimsical character was thoughtfully preserved during a recent two-year renovation that earned it the designation of Norway's first Relais & Châteaux property. Twenty-two wood-burning fireplaces are scattered throughout the alpine retreat, providing cozy nooks to warm up with a hot tea after days spent exploring the storied Sunnmøre Alps by foot, bike and boat in the care of a local guide. The hotel maintains the allure of a bygone era with carefully selected antiques, a staff dressed in traditional countryside attire, and a storytelling hour post-dinner where guests learn about the property's history through anecdotes and century-old artifacts.

Like a living museum, each of the 30 individually decorated rooms in the main house—all named after notables who've stayed at the hotel, including William Cecil Slingsby, King Oscar, Queen Maud, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and the famed explorer Roald Amundsen—are left open when unoccupied for guests to peruse and enjoy. Check into the new King or Queen's Suite in the main building, whose firelit lounge, private balconies and oversized soaking tubs with buttons to request champagne and gin and tonics are truly fit for nobility. Five new standalone guesthouses reflecting traditional Norwegian farm settlements are ideal for larger families traveling together. The extensive transformation also saw the addition of a library, wine cellar, sizable gardens and The Conservatory, where the chef's refined culinary arts are presented and savored in a glass-enclosed dining room with a crackling fireplace and views of the soaring alps.

Upon check out, guests get behind the wheel of 62°NORD's electric Porsche Taycan Cross Turismo for a two-hour joyride to Storffjord Hotel. The impossibly scenic route weaves through Norangsdalen's serrated cliffs, spectacular valleys, snowmelt waterfalls, and flocks of resident sheep. A ferry crossing takes you to Magerholm, where the storybook setting continues all the way to Glomset.



Left: At Hotel Union Øye, 22 wood-burning fireplaces are scattered throughout the retreat, providing cozy nooks to warm up with a hot tea



Above: Nonsvik Farm is a charming and authentic fjord farm located close to Storffjord Hotel in the village of Glomset



EMBRAER TIP

Travel from Quebec, Canada, to Oslo, Norway, in just over six and a half hours with unparalleled comfort in the Praetor 600 due to its ultra-quiet environment and best-in-class cabin altitude.



Left: Inspired by Norwegian traditions with a modern twist, the rooms at Storffjord Hotel are both spacious and comfortable

Below: The Storffjord Hotel is a secluded, family owned, luxury boutique hotel built with hand-cut logs and a grass roof

STORFFJORD HOTEL

This stunning 29-room hideaway built with hand-cut logs and a grass roof (a traditional construction feature used to insulate homes from the harsh elements) looks as if it's grown out of the nearby conifer forest. Indoors, an alpine chic aesthetic feels like a warm embrace with timber paneled walls, woolen rugs and large bay windows gazing over the glittering Storffjord and lofty alps beyond. The hotel bills itself as more than a place to stay, but rather a state of mind (one that feels somewhere between a mountaintop and heaven). Muted palettes in the guest rooms don't compete with the picture-perfect panoramas that can be enjoyed from the comfort of a pillowy bed or wooden Adirondack chairs on spacious covered porches. In the main house, a cozy sitting room with a curated library (and Devold's iconic sweaters for purchase) is the perfect place to unwind, as is the sauna and outdoor jacuzzi overlooking the forest.

While Storffjord is a haven of respite, adventure awaits right outside your doorstep, from breathtaking hiking trails and roaring waterfalls to Norway's most scenic ski resort, Strandafjellet. Glomset is also full of amiable and interesting locals whom you'll meet on excursions with local guide Anniken Aakvik, where you can hunt for chanterelle mushrooms and berries in a moss-filled forest, go wild swimming in the fjords, or spend an afternoon at Nonsvik Farm with the Gurines, a husband-and-wife duo that will introduce you to Norwegian culinary traditions through seven-course tasting menus featuring smoked salmon, rhubarb soup and lefse flatbread all sourced and prepared by the couple. You'll eat just as well at the hotel, whose restaurant focuses on the freshest local ingredients prepared with the expert craftsmanship of a world-class kitchen. "Our approach is all about helping our guests slow down and reconnect with themselves, the culture and the landscapes of this region," said Ytrevik. "Nature really is the best spa in the world." ◀



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