

The Northern Heart

Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark - where nature, culture and people come together to create unforgettable experiences.



Nyhavn, Copenhagen, Denmark



Flåm Railway, the Fjords, Norway

Magic of the *Nordics*

By Rachel

I absolutely adore the Nordics: Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark!

I first travelled to the Nordics in 2007 and was captivated immediately - not only by the landscapes, but by the people, the food and a way of life that feels quietly profound. Time behaves differently here. Work and leisure are clearly defined, nature is not an afterthought but a constant presence, and meals, conversation and moments of stillness are given the respect they deserve. Even in winter, the gentle comfort of hygge (creating warmth, intimacy and ease) and the measured balance of lagom, with its emphasis on moderation and contentment, set a calm, unhurried rhythm that lingers long after you return home.

The landscapes are endlessly varied: intricate archipelagos, rolling farmland, deep forests, mirror-bright lakes, dramatic fjords and the stark, elemental beauty of the High Arctic. Many of these environments have been shaped with care over centuries, particularly by the Sámi, whose reindeer herding traditions and eight-season calendar reflect

an intimate understanding of land, light and survival. Immersed in such harmony between people and place, I find it impossible - and unnecessary - to rush. It offers a rare contrast to the pace of everyday family life and gently invites you to slow down, notice more and truly immerse yourself.

What also fascinates me is the seamless way culture, design and innovation coexist with nature. These are societies that value functionality, beauty and sustainability in equal measure, and it shows in everything from architecture to daily rituals. Above all, though, it is the people who make this region so unforgettable. Far removed from the fierce Vikings of legend, they are warm, open and generous with their time - for family, friends, visitors and themselves. Coffee breaks, shared fika or leisurely meals are never rushed; conversation, laughter and genuine connection matter as much as the activity itself.

Over the years, many of my encounters have evolved beyond professional exchanges into friendships I now deeply cherish. Some of my fondest memories are evenings spent deep in the wilderness, gathered around a crackling fire in a lavvu, a bowl of hot soup in hand as stars quietly emerge overhead. Summer

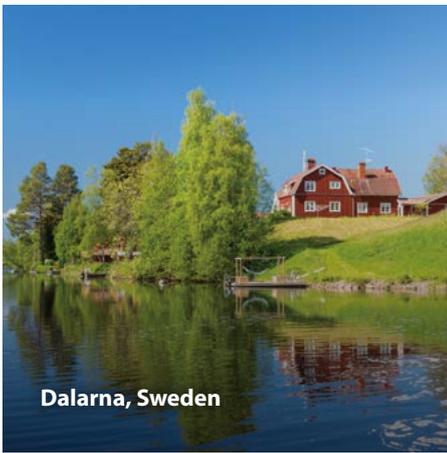
brings a contrasting pleasure: Skagen toast at a fjord-side café, sunlight dancing on the water, the easy rhythm of local life unfolding around you. And then there are the skies - the Northern Lights brightening the winter nights with waves of greens and violets, or the Midnight Sun stretching long summer evenings into an irresistible invitation to wander.

Ultimately, the magic of the Nordics lies in this rare balance between landscape, culture and people. I still feel a tingle of excitement each time I return, and I always come home calmer, more centred, more myself. The countdown has already begun for the next journey, the next quiet adventure.



“Every visit fills me with wonder.”

Rachel



Dalarna, Sweden



Mirror Cube, The Treehotel,
Swedish Lapland



The Lofoten Islands, Norway

Must-see Highlights

Discover the places, people and landscapes that make this region truly extraordinary.



Langfossen waterfall, the Fjords, Norway

Cities

Urban Life Meets Nature

Nordic capitals combine history, culture and innovation, with nature never far away, and it is this thoughtful integration that makes them so entrancing. Even in urban centres, green spaces, waterways and accessible public parks invite a pause from the bustle, reminding you that life here is lived with attention, harmony and respect for the environment. Copenhagen exemplifies this: a city of cycle paths, clean waters, vibrant design and outstanding cuisine.

Exploring these cities is a delight. I love exploring Stockholm's islands, pausing in cafés along Djurgården, cycling along Copenhagen's streets, visiting Oslo's excellent museums and swimming in Helsinki's sea pools. Each city has its own rhythm, where design, nature and culture intersect, making it easy to slow down, notice the details and savour the experience.

The Countryside

Nature and Tradition

The countryside is equally captivating. Rolling southern plains, dense forests and towering mountains form a patchwork of natural beauty.

I'd highlight Dalarna, Sweden, a region which feels like a miniature Nordic landscape: southernmost Sámi communities, traditional red farmhouses and abundant wildlife (moose, wolf, lynx and bear). Midsummer is a highlight, with dancing around maypoles, sunlit celebrations and local feasts. Walking, cycling, wild swimming or simply pausing by a lake allows you to embrace the slower pace and appreciate the balance of nature and culture.

The Archipelago

Islands, Waterways and Summer Life

Nordic archipelagos stretch across thousands of islands - from Oslo to Kirkenes, along Sweden's West Coast, and between Stockholm, Turku and Helsinki - creating some of world's most striking coastal landscapes. Summers bring sunlit waters - long daylight hours, colourful harbours and vibrant island life, boats and yachts galore.

Norway's rugged coast is celebrated among the continent's most dramatic, while the Stockholm archipelago, with its 30,000+ islands, is one of the largest coastal wildernesses in Europe. Thanks to Allemansrätten (a right to roam), you can walk freely, explore the islands and swim in pristine waters.



From the Northern Lights to the Midnight Sun, the Nordics captivate with landscapes, culture and adventure at every turn.



The Fjords

Norway's Glacial Masterpieces

Norway's fjords are among the world's most dramatic landscapes, carved by glaciers and bordered by steep mountains.

The Sognefjord stands out with thundering waterfalls including Vettisfossen, Norway's highest free-falling waterfall; deep blue waters and sheer cliffs reaching 1000m tall. Activities range from riding the Flåm Railway and day cruises to kayaking, rib boat safaris and relaxing in a floating sauna on the fjord. Visitors can reach Briksdal Glacier, explore stave churches or marvel at incredible viewpoints along the way - my favourite is at Skomakarnipa, a 3 hour hike (7 hours return) or more easily accessible at Stegastein. Adventure, culture and breathtaking scenery are always within reach.

The Arctic

Swedish Lapland

Swedish Lapland is one of my favourite destinations, offering beauty and activity year-round. Autumn paints the forests gold and red; winters are crisp and quiet, ideal for snowshoeing or watching the Northern Lights. Sámi culture is central here: reindeer herding shapes the land and the eight-season calendar reflects subtle environmental changes.

Villages, wilderness lodges, unique and visionary accommodation (the ICEHOTEL, the TreeHotel, Arctic Bath) and guided experiences allow you to connect with nature, observe wildlife and discover local traditions, all while enjoying the vast open spaces that define this extraordinary region.

Svalbard

The High Arctic

Svalbard is a land of contrasts, where the polar night and Midnight Sun define the year. Longyearbyen, a historic mining town, remains the northern frontier base for exploration, offering access to glaciers, dramatic fjords and Arctic wildlife. Its stark landscapes are simultaneously humbling and exhilarating, a reminder of nature's scale and beauty.

To understand how life here evolved, a visit to the Svalbard Museum is essential. The exhibitions trace more than 400 years of human and natural history. Equally fascinating is a visit to Coal Mine 3 - a preserved mine that offers a rare glimpse into Longyearbyen's mining past. Mini-cruises and expedition trips reveal polar bears, reindeer, walrus and seabird colonies, while hiking, boat trips, and wildlife encounters provide rare glimpses into life at the top of the world.