

48th hours on STØTT Helgeland





We hear a distant sound of a motorboat. Tuk tuk, tuk tuk, tuk tuk. We're standing inside a large harbor warehouse, surrounded by locals on the quay at Ørnes in Helgeland. A new adventure is about to begin. We're heading to a small island paradise just 15 minutes away, and the express boat approaching us is Nordlandsekspressen

By: Camilla Iversen, De Historiske

The deckhand ties up the boat and lowers the ladder. We greet him and step aboard, settling in by one of the large glass windows. We want to take in every bit of the breathtaking Helgeland coastline. You can also reach this island paradise from Bodø city in just one hour by express boat.

A hidden treasure on Helgeland

The island of STØTT is a hidden gem that we're about to get to know a little better. We're greeted at the dock 15 minutes later by owner and host Eva Ann Andersen. Along with her brother, Sverre Kristian Sørensen, she has transformed this old trading post into a truly unique place to stay.

"Hello and welcome," she says, smiling broadly with her vibrant northern dialect.

It all began one April day in 2011 when Eva Ann packed ten suitcases, gathered her three children, and boarded a train. After more than 25 years in Oslo, she was finally coming home to her childhood island. As she puts it: "A dream was finally about to come true."



Photo: Benjamin A. Ward / Visitnorway.com



The Fisherman cabin

We leave the dock and walk up the gravel road that runs across the island. On both sides, restored fishermen's cabins and charming old homes appear. Room assignments begin immediately.

"You'll be staying in the Rorbua," Eva Ann says with a smile, pointing to a yellow, charming wooden house. The keys are already waiting in the door — classic island hospitality.

The Rorbua has four bedrooms over two floors, two bathrooms, and a cozy shared living room.

My room has delicate lace curtains that feel like they belong to another era. The gentle sound of waves and a beautiful view of the harbor from the window make me feel right at home. A handwritten card from Eva on the table reads: "Wishing you a wonderful stay at STØTT – Top of Helgeland." Next to it? Two chocolates wrapped in paper stamped with the hotel logo. I drop my suitcase and sneak a taste before heading back outside.

STØTT has three main guesthouses: Rorbua, Bakeriet, and Stabburet, offering 16 rooms and 34 beds in total. A perfect getaway for a group of friends, romantic retreat, or a cozy family trip. Eva Ann and Sverre Kristian also gladly host private company retreats, festive gatherings, or romantic weddings.

The heart of the Island

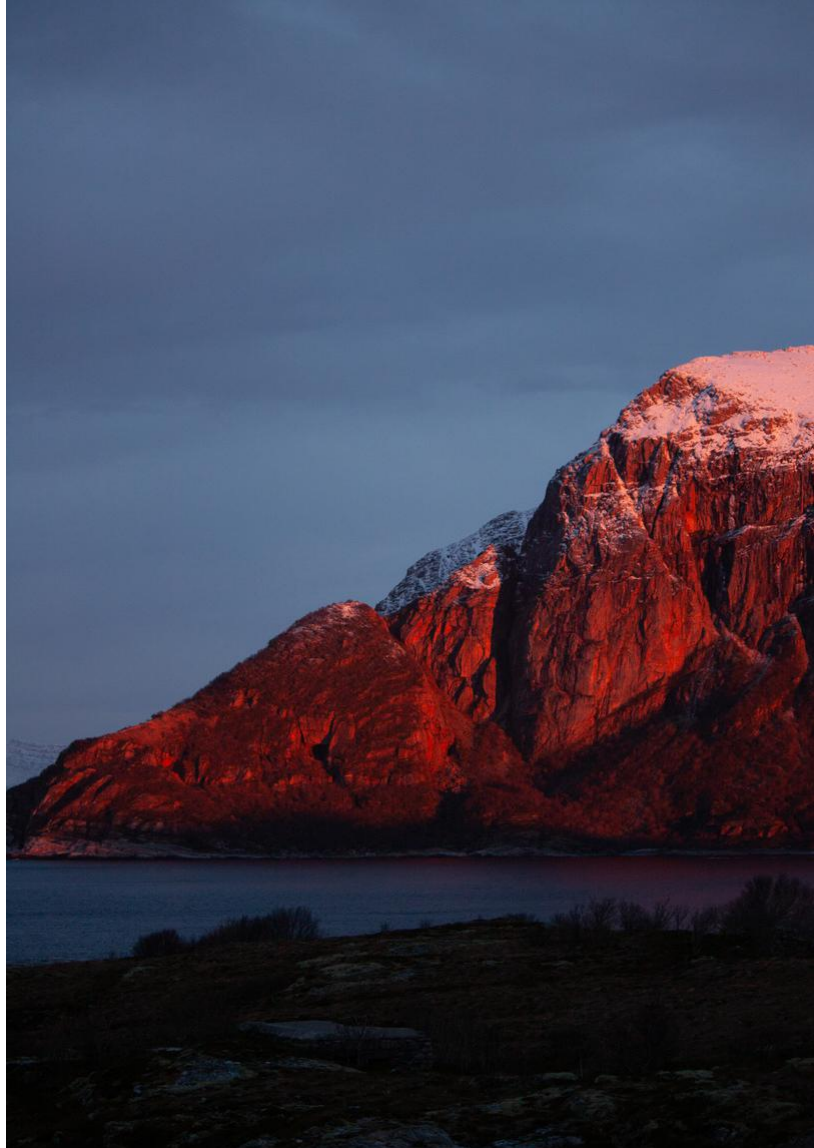
The heart of the hotel - and the island's social hub - is the yellow main building at the middle of the dock: *Gammelbutikken*. Until 1959, it sold all sorts of trade goods.

STØTT was well known for its location along the shipping lane, where fishermen passed by in traditional boats - often without engines. They stocked up here while waiting for good weather to be able to cross the Vestfjord to Lofoten. The shop even had its own liquor counter.

STØTT was a cultural and social gathering place for the entire region. Today, Gammelbutikken houses a restaurant downstairs and a function room and museum upstairs. It was the first building the siblings restored back in 2012.

"Deliveries, please use the kitchen stairs," says a charming sign on the front door. I press down the slightly crooked golden handle and are greeted by the smell of fresh bread and sizzling bacon. The walls are lined with vintage signs, ads, and antiques from an ancient time. The floors creak in the most delightful way.





A shared meal

Guests gather here for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Today, Eva Ann and her friendly helpers have arranged a joint lunch for our group of international travel agents, here to explore STØTT and Helgeland over the next 48 hours. On the old counter: fresh apple and orange juice in retro milk glasses, next to an antique fish scale. Freshly baked bread, warm croissants, soft-boiled eggs, fresh veggies, chia pudding, and all sorts of toppings.

From the very first second we arrive, we're well looked after.

We fill our plates and find our seats around the two round tables. Eva Ann begins by sharing her story and how this dream came to life. She and Sønn Kristian are fourth-generation owners, and it was their great-grandfather Johan Sørensen who first bought the trading post and opened the store in 1897. He ran the business until his tragic death at sea in 1926. Then their grandfather, Sigurd, took over and continued with buying fish, producing cod liver oil, and drying cod and stockfish — traditions that still live on and are proudly served at the restaurant.

Fishing village hike

After lunch we change into outdoor gear for the day's first activity - a guided island walk with Sønn. As we wander along the gravel road, he shares stories about the island's history, its development, and what life is like here today. One stop is the old bakery — where a full-time baker once made 60 loaves at a time for the fishing fleet. This house, restored in 2018, now houses up to 16 guests.

The trail continues up to one of STØTT's highest peaks — *Sønningsplatået*. But before the summit, we explore WWII German bunkers at the base of the hill. Sønn hands out headlamps and one by one we step into the darkness. One bunker served as a field hospital, and today it even hosts candlelit concerts—a truly magical experience.

From the top of Sønningsplatået, the view is spectacular: the Vestfjord and Lofoten peaks to the north, Helgeland's islands to the south, and the Meløy Alps in the distance. It's a natural wonder worth every step. On the way down, just when we think the day can't get any better, Sønn suddenly leads us off the path.

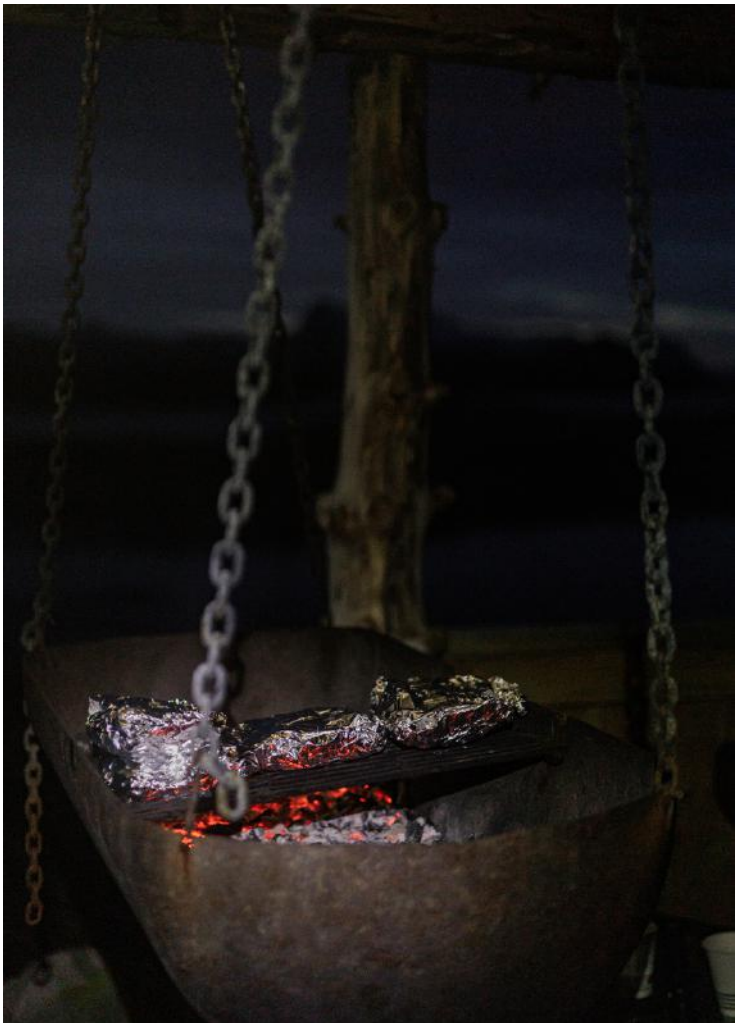


Photo: Philip Isaksen



Grilled salmon by the fire

Five minutes later, we hear the crackle of a campfire. A charming *gapahuk* (lean-to shelter) appears by a rose-tinted beach, glowing in the last light of sunset.

Eva Ann is there with grilled salmon and hot blackcurrant toddy. We gather around the stone table and warm ourselves by the fire. For dessert: fresh cinnamon rolls and Norway's pride, Freia milk chocolate. The perfect end to a perfect hike.



A son that cooks

That evening, a three-course dinner is served at Gammelbutikken. We're all rosy-cheeked after the fresh air. Tonight's chef is fifth-generation and Eva Ann's talented son, Carl Wilhelm Andersen - a law student in Oslo.

He often returns home to help with the family business - marketing, development, and of course, cooking. First up: a creamy Jerusalem artichoke soup with crispy bacon. Then, perfectly cooked local cod with vegetables and white sauce. Dessert? A silky smooth crème brûlée.

Happy and full, I say goodnight. I can't wait to curl up under my warm duvet and fall asleep to the sounds of the northern Norwegian nature.







Photo: Kari Lie, De Historiske

First time in a kayak

The sun streams through my lace curtains. I'm ready for another day here on STØTT. After a fresh croissant for breakfast, I meet up at the island's grocery shop near the dock.

Today, we can choose between two activities; fishing or kayaking. I go with the latter. In the shop, drysuits hang in neat rows. Shoes and gloves wait in bins. After squeezing into the tight suit, we're given life vests - safety first.

Our guide is Paul Erik Herstad from Padleheimen, joined by kayaking enthusiast and destination developer Kristin Johansen from Visit Helgeland.

In the kayak house, we each pick a kayak, adjust our foot pedals, and carry them past Gammelbutikken to the bay.

One by one, we paddle out. It's wobbly at first—most of us are beginners—but soon, core muscles kick in and I find my rhythm. Let's hope it lasts!



Photo: Kari Lie, De Historiske

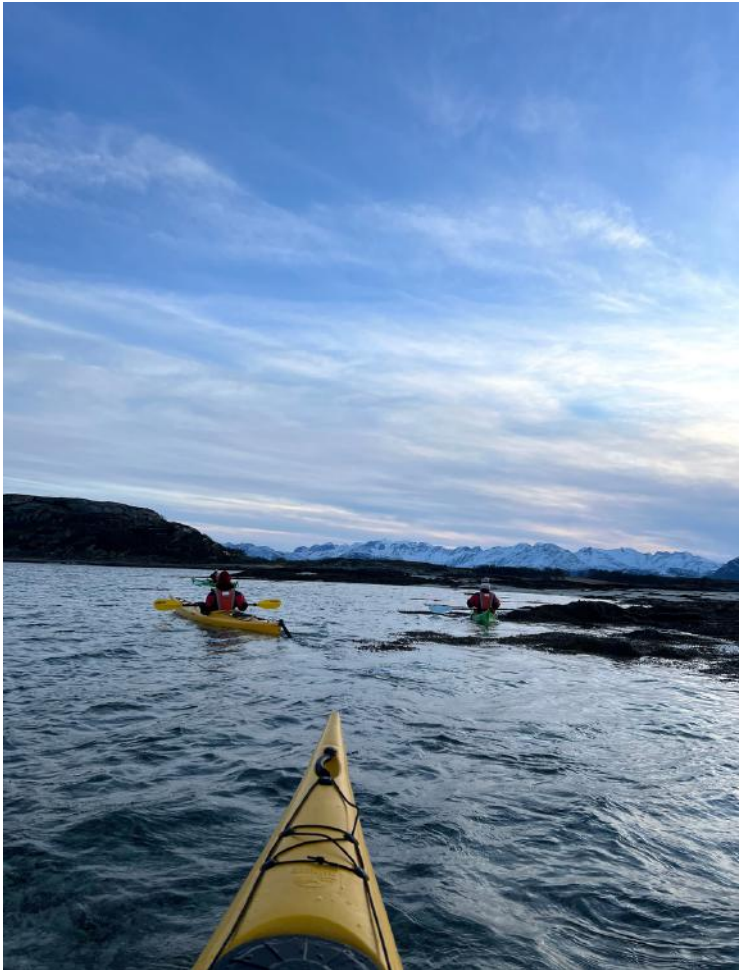


Photo: Kari Lie, De Historiske

Winemakers dinner

STØTT offers all sorts of exciting activities year-round: rib boat trips, mountain hikes, glacier walks at Svartisen, and in winter, the Northern lights. In summer: the midnight sun.

In Northern Norway, the Northern Lights are colorful lights in the winter sky, caused by solar particles hitting the atmosphere. In summer, the Midnight Sun means the sun stays up all day and night, with no darkness for weeks. A truly spectacular phenomenon to put on your bucket list.

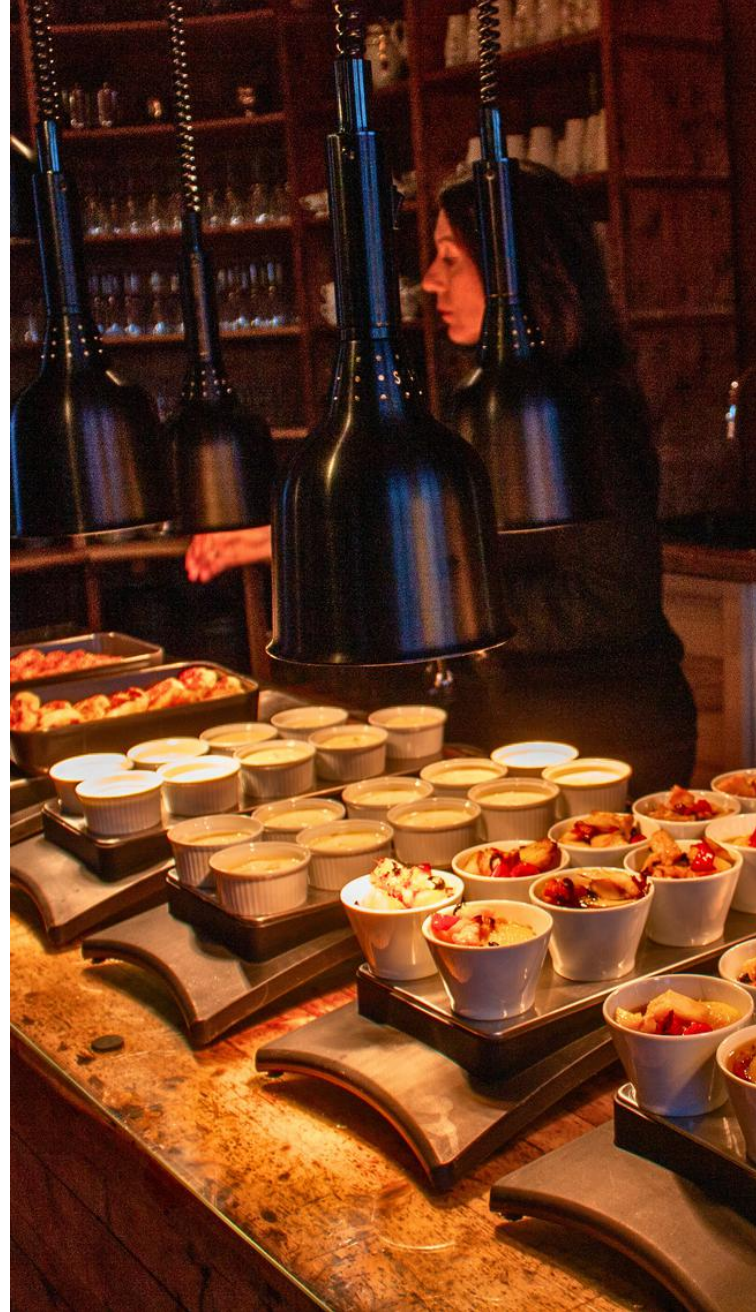
They also host events like concerts and winemaker's dinners. On Friday, August 29th, 2025, they'll welcome Marchesi Antinori - one of Italy's most renowned wineries. A night not to be missed.

Back in the bay, we test our kayaking skills before heading into open water. The sea is calm, the sun low in the sky. We wave to the fishing group as we glide past. The next hour is spent exploring the coast before we head back. What a fantastic experience - highly recommended and accessible to all - beginner to advanced.

A taste of the sea

After the day's activities, we gather at Gammelbutikken for a tempting seafood buffet. Homemade fishcakes, burgers, and fish soup. There's nothing like enjoying local seafood in Northern Norway.

The fishing group proudly reports they caught something - and Eva Ann hints we might see it on tonight's menu. Can't get much fresher than that.







Later on, we toast with aperitifs upstairs in the fish museum, surrounded by fishing nets, old photos, and vintage artifacts. You could easily spend hours here, soaking up the history of STØTT and the fishermen who once waited here before heading out to sea.

Guided tours and storytelling by the hosts are all part of the STØTT experience.

A night to remember

Before dinner, Eva presents everything STØTT has to offer—and her exciting future plans—to the international guests. It's clear she and Svenn dream big, and her enthusiasm is contagious.

Kristin Johansen from Visit Helgeland follows up with a beautiful overview of the Helgeland-region and its many hidden treasures, including STØTT.

The audience is captivated by the stunning images and places that runs on the screen. We end the night with a spectacular five-course dinner prepared by Carl Wilhelm and his team.

A fresh tuna and veggie starter, followed by a rich mushroom soup with local fish. Next: creamy risotto with local greens. Then: reindeer with vegetables, potatoes, and a velvety sauce.

Finally: a dreamy cheesecake with homemade sorbet.

Cake recipe

The dessert is such a hit that several guests ask for the recipe. Eva Ann doesn't hesitate - she disappears into the kitchen and returns moments later with a handwritten note. Just like everything else here, it feels like home.

Kari Lie, our Head of International Relations, gives a heartfelt thank you speech to wrap up the meal—and our fantastic stay.

As we say our goodnights, many around the table are already dreaming of returning. Tomorrow, we take the express boat back to Bodø and off to new adventures. Thank you, STØTT—it's been nothing short of magical.



Photo: Philip Isaksen



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