

# A letter from Svinøya Rorbuer



DE HISTORISKE





**Roaring propellers and majestic Lofoten pointy mountains. We're approaching Svolvær Airport. Snow-covered mountaintops, a brisk sea breeze, and pink powdery clouds welcome us as our feet touch the runway. The sun is already starting its descent here in Northern Norway.**

**By:** Camilla Iversen, De Historiske

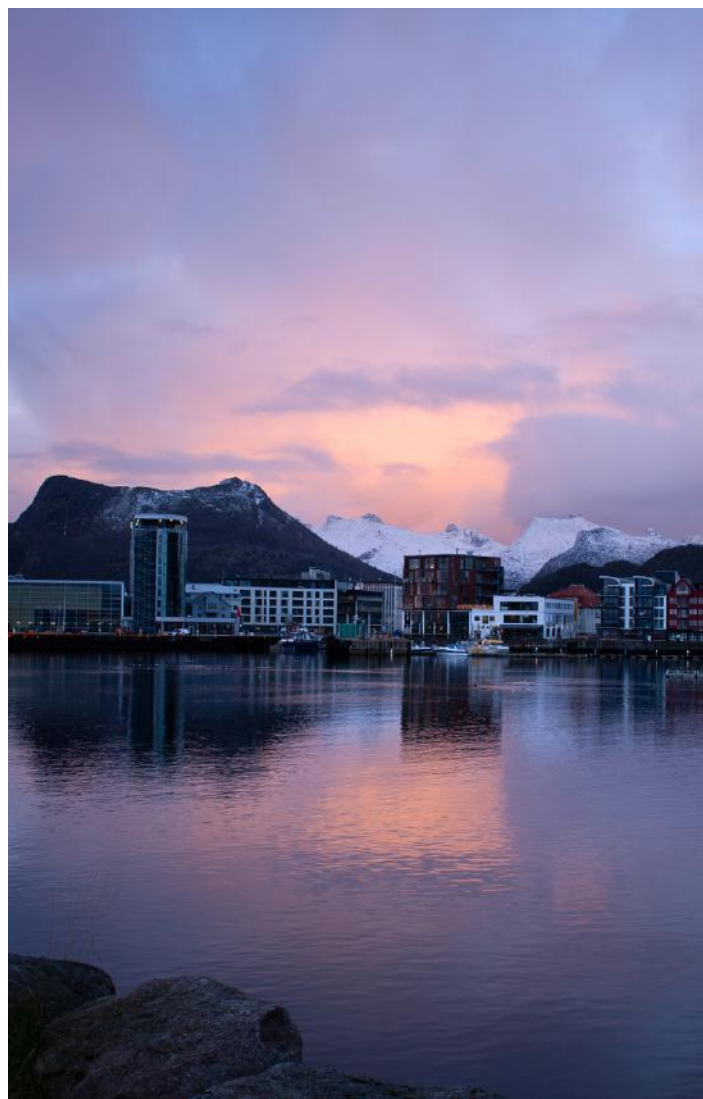
Charmingly enough, Svolvær Airport has only one baggage carousel—but it doesn't take long before our bags start rolling out, one by one.

Outside, Anders Løvik, Sales and Marketing Manager at Svinøya Rorbuer, is waiting for us. We hop into his white Tesla and head down winding country roads, towering mountains to our right and endless ocean to our left. We're on our way to the vibrant fishing village of Svinøya in Svolvær.

Anders explains that the days are getting shorter, and soon the Polar Night will arrive - a time when the sun never rises above the horizon. It lasts from December 7 to January 5. Though it may sound dark, the atmosphere up here is magical during this time of year.

### **A living fishing village**

The island is a delightful mix of fisheries, saunas, hotel amenities featuring restored fisherman's cabins ("rorbuer"), a historical manor house, a renowned restaurant and private homes. This is a 100% family-run business, dating back to 1828 when Gunnar Berg bought half of Svolvær from his brother-in-law for 3,000 speciedaler. Roughly 12,000 Norwegian kroner today.















**Photo: Svinøya bildearkiv**

A few years later, in 1843, Gunnar had 84 cabins for visiting fishermen. Many of them had fallen into disrepair until his descendant, John Berg, began restoring them in 1993 for tourist rentals. The following summer, three of them were ready.

Two years later, on May 23 1995, Svinøya Rorbuer and the Børsen Spiseri restaurant officially opened with 13 cabins and 46 beds.

Today, the resort is the largest locally-owned travel destination in Lofoten, with over 100 beds. The current owner of Svinøya Rorbuer is Ola Skjeseth, a close friend of John Berg, who continues to restore and expand the property.

Their efforts have won awards, including the Olavsrosa from the Norwegian Heritage Foundation.

### **A Historic Hotel Reception**

Krambua - the first general store in Svolvær - is now the hotel reception. Stepping inside is like traveling back in time. Floor-to-ceiling shelves stacked with colorful tins of Sætre Kjeiks, Hjortetakksalt, and Sunlight soap. Dried fish, worn fisherman's boots, and vintage milk pails dangle from the ceiling.

At the counter stands an ornate cash register. You could walk around here for hours, exploring and soaking it all in.

We're greeted by the receptionist, Kristian. "We invite you to sleep in Væreiergården - our manor house, right across the road" he says. We are delighted to get a chance to explore the island crown jewel.







## Væreiergården

Anders greets us outside the manor house and gives us a tour. The house has stood here since 1828 and was the Berg family's private home.

In the 1950s, it was bought by Police Chief Waldahl and later acquired by Svinøya Rorbuer in 2017. It's now beautifully restored, ideal for groups and gatherings.

You can cook your own meals here in the manor's kitchen or hire chefs from Børsen Spiseri.

Each room has its own story and big, cozy beds that practically call you in. There's even a private sauna in the garden for guests. A larger sauna near the restaurant is also available for everyone - perfect after a long and refreshing winter day.



## Børsen Spiseri

Our dinner is served at Børsen Spiseri, housed in the old 1828 trading wharf. For centuries, this was the heart of the local rumor mill—a place where fishermen, buyers, and townsfolk met to exchange news.

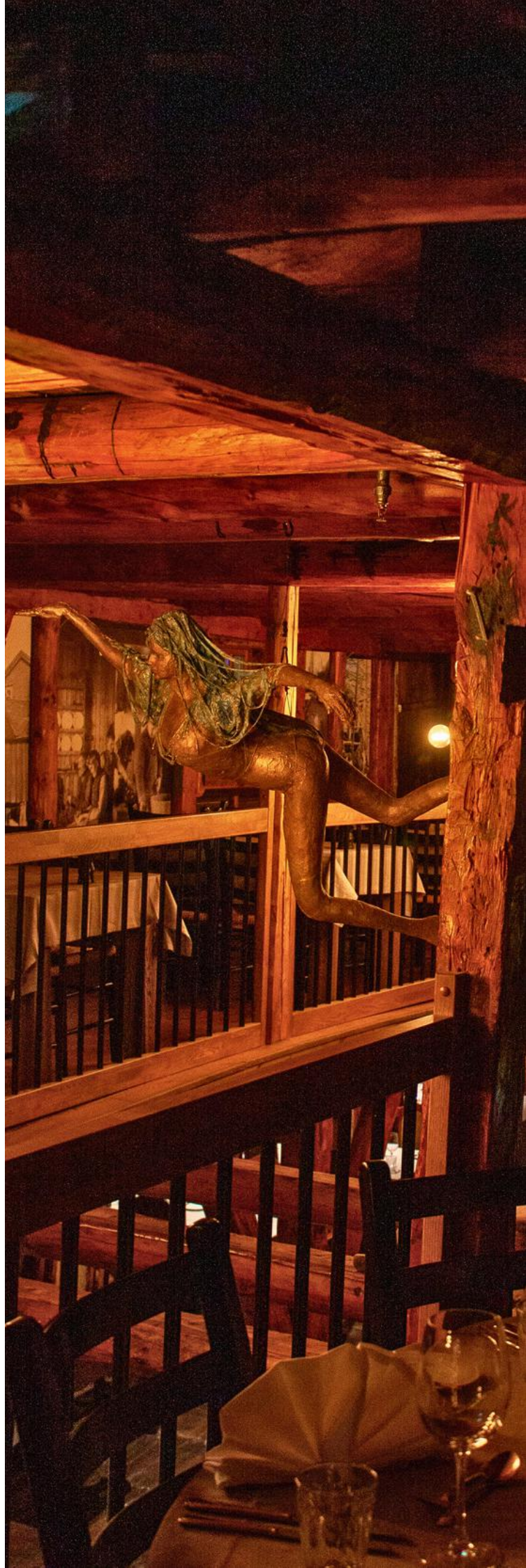
It remains one of the best-preserved buildings of its kind in Northern Norway. Step inside, and you're enveloped by the scent of tar and rope. A roaring fireplace keeps it warm and inviting.

The menu features fish soup, fallow deer, halibut, and today's catch. The star on the menu though, is the signature dish: "Tørrfisk Royal"—locally sourced stockfish with carrot purée, egg butter, and bacon. Fun fact: Queen Sonja named the dish herself after it was served to her during the 2007 opening of Lofoten's mainland road connection.









*The signature dish  
"Tørrfisk Royal" was  
born when Her Majesty  
Queen Sonja visited  
Børsen Spiseri in 2007.*

We order it, paired with a crisp white wine. The wine list and cellar here is impressive, and the waiters clearly know their pairings. After we finish our dinner, we understand why Tørrfisk Royal is the star of the show.

### **Northern Lights Hunt**

Next up, a Northern Lights safari with Lofoten Insight. Owner and aurora enthusiast Dave Williams and his colleague Bjørg Elin pick us up outside Børsen Spiseri. Dave's spent years studying the aurora and knows exactly where to go.

We drive into a remote valley and stop on a bridge near a starry beach. Eyes scan the stars. It's tricky tonight—the aurora isn't visible to the naked eye.

But through our phone cameras, green and purple lights dance gracefully across the sky. Dave shares stories of the lights' origins while Bjørg Elin serves us hot cocoa. Pure magic.

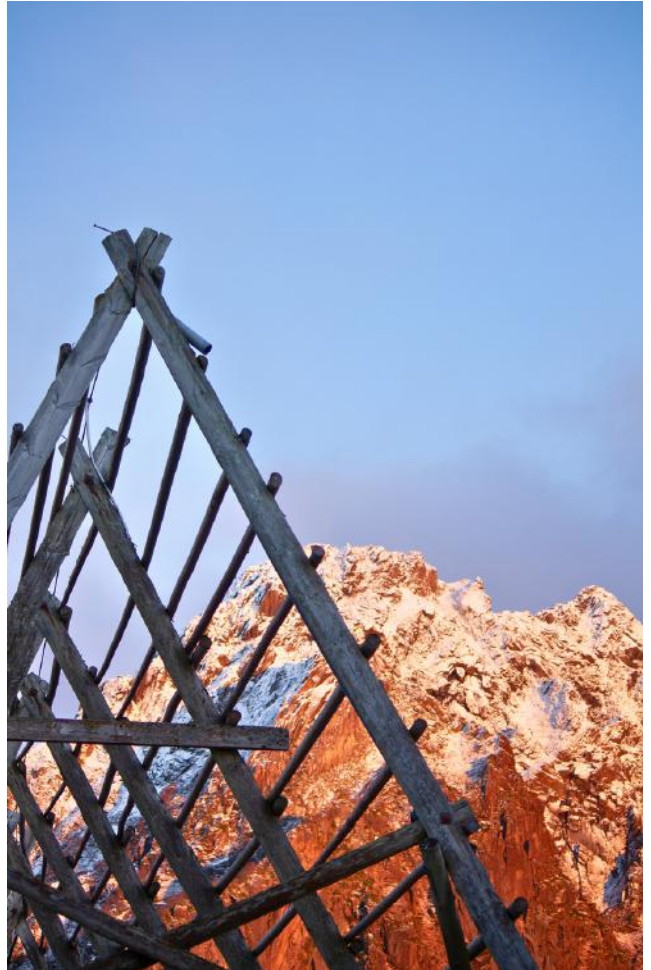
Lofoten Insight offers nightly aurora hunts from August to April, plus seasonal trips to Reine, kayaking, and reindeer feeding—often in collaboration with Svinøya Rorbuer.

We're starting the journey home. It will be nice to lie down in the soft bed so that we're fresh and ready for tomorrow's activities.













**Photo:** Philip Isaksen

## Homemade breakfast

My bed is just as soft as it looks. It's hard to leave the warmth of the duvet as the northern wind whistles outside.

At breakfast, the smell of fresh bread and the warmth of the fireplace at Børsen Spiseri greet us.

The buffet is stocked with local produce—everything from spreads and yoghurts to freshly baked bread and hot drinks.

After breakfast, Anders takes us on a walking tour of Svinøya. The accommodation options truly cater to all: larger houses for families, traditional rorbuer for groups, and romantic cabins for two.

All with breathtaking views—either of rugged peaks or endless sea.



## Homemade fish soup

We end our walk at the charming *Museumsbua*, an 1800s historic building originally used as lodging for fishermen.

Today, it's a mini-museum sharing Lofoten's fishing culture and history. Inside, you'll find antique gear and hear the stories of fishermen's lives.

Ragnar Palsson, former operations manager at Svinøya Rorbuer, greets us with freshly made fish soup, warm bread, and an ice cold beer.

His tales are the perfect side dish.

After lunch, it's time for an adrenaline boost. We walk to Svolvær's dock and meet Lofoten Explorer for a RIB tour to the magnificent Trollfjord. We gear up in our thermal suits and get a safety briefing from our local guides. The sky glows pink and orange—perfect conditions.









**Photo: Philip Isaksen**

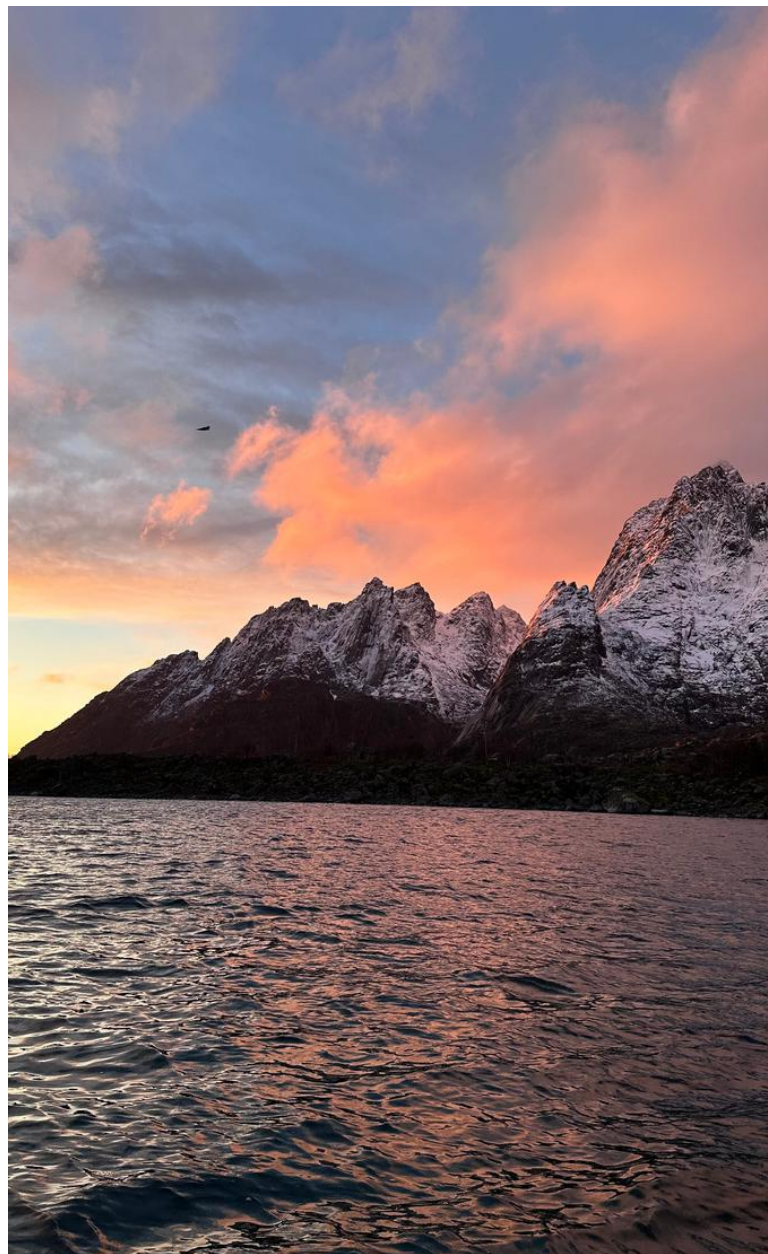
## **Trollfjorden and Eagle Safari**

Five minutes in, we stop to watch sea eagles. The guide whistles and tosses fish into the water—soon, giant eagles swoop down to catch the fish.

What a royal creature, with its majestic eagle wings.

We continue by boat and suddenly we enter the stunning, snow-covered *Trollfjorden*. The guide lets out a roar, and the echo bounces across the cliffs of the fjord.

More eagles appear as we head back, silhouetted by the setting sun. It's unforgettable and definitely an experience to remember.







**Photo:** Philip Isaksen

### **Celebration dinner**

Back at Svinøya, we freshen up before our final dinner at the Manor House. The long table in the grand salon is set for a feast.

Chefs from Børsen Spiseri are working in the kitchen. Chef Marius Vonheim and his team serve a delightful three-course meal: lamb croquettes with pickled kohlrabi and mushroom mayo, fallow deer with celery cream and port wine sauce, and a cloud-like sea buckthorn mascarpone dessert with biscotti. It tastes delicious.

We wish we could stay longer—but the bus to Hurtigruten ship at Svolvær quay awaits. We're full, content, and deeply grateful to Anders and his team. We'll definitely be back.

Would you like to visit Lofoten and Svinøya Rorbuer?  
<https://www.dehistoriske.com/destinations-in-norway/lofoten/hotels/svinoya-rorbuer/>







**Foto:** Philip Isaksen