The Lofoten archipelago stretches westward into the North Atlantic—draped in winter like a snowy string of pearls across Norway's northwestern shoulder. Caressed by the swirling warmer water of the Gulf Stream, this land of the Vikings is significantly more temperate than much of northern Europe, bestowed with a mild, yet snowy, winter climate.

Picture-postcard fishing villages nestled between deep fjords and serrate maritime mountains combine to form awe inspiring and photogenic scenery—the islands are considered by many to be the most beautiful setting in Norway. Located well above the Arctic Circle at 68°N, these high-latitude islands are a visual masterpiece, often bathed in low, soft and "magic" arctic twilight.

Much of Lofoten is comprised of some of the oldest rock formations known. These so-called "primeval rocks" are the remnants of a once enormous 3-billion-year-old plateau. Yet the islands' "younger" sharp-peaked "alpine" mountains are high enough that geologists believe they were not covered with ice during the glaciated periods of the Pleistocene—its last ice age ending between 10,000 and 14,000 years ago. It is these ragged mountains, jutting dramatically from the sea, that rank high among our photography targets. Traveling between three photo hubs—Reine, Leknes and Svolvær—our February sojourn starts in the westward islands and travels east towards the sunrise. During the time of our trip, the winter day length increases and provides good opportunities

https://photosafaris.com/Photo-Tours/2019-Tours/Lofoten
for daylight landscapes, yet the nights are still long, dark and free of light pollution—delivering excellent prospects for absolutely stunning images of aurora borealis.

The Lofoten Islands rank among the top locations in the world to see and photograph intense aurora borealis—and no one will argue there is any place more beautiful for aurora photography! Towering snow-clad mountains, ice-choked beaches, hoar-frosted trees, and cozy fishing villages—with warm cabin lights glowing like burning embers—create a sensational foreground for the spectacular display of northern lights above. In "olden times," local fishermen believed the flickering northern lights were large shoals of herring reflecting from the sea.

We reside in hotels as well as comfy traditional fishermen's "rorbuer" cabins—each with two bedrooms, an "open concept" living room/kitchen, and an occasional shared bath for an authentic Lofoten experience. We sample traditional Norwegian cuisine (seafood a specialty, of course) and get a taste of the quiet life in these iconic villages.

Don't delay in enrolling in this exceptional landscape photo safari. Expect to work hard—up very early for breakfast to be in a great position for the sunrise and then out at night to be in a prime location for the aurora after dinner. We follow the ever-changing winter light from the sun's first glow on jagged snow-clad peaks rising directly out of the sea until the lights of cozy fishing villages reflect in quiet harbors under the dancing aurora.

Check out Joe Van Os' trip report from our previous Lofoten photo tour

Tour Itinerary

Day 1 (Mar 3)
Depart home. Participants arrive at Harstad/Narvik Airport, Evenes, Norway. Depending on your flight schedule from home it may be possible to fly to Evenes in one very long day. However, it is recommended to fly to Oslo, Norway, on March 2 and spend the night at an airport hotel. Then fly to Evenes on the morning of March 3. A shuttle is available from the airport to the hotel. (D)

Days 2–4
Following breakfast we load our vans and head west towards Reine—a tiny, and picturesque fiskevær (fishing hamlet) located on the southern shore of Moskenesøya (Moskenes Island). The village population of 300 makes its living from the sea catching cod, haddock, halibut, pollack and coalfish.

From our base in Reine we explore several breathtaking areas on
Moskenesøya which afford a wide variety of seascape, mountain and village photo opportunities. Here we hope to capture images of aurora borealis over the village and the iconic triangular peak of Olstinden mountain rising steeply behind it. Besides Reine, we visit the unusually named one-letter village of Å (“Small River”) situated between a dramatic rocky coastline and menacing, sheer-walled mountains. Other photogenic locations include the expansive Flakstad area with broad, mountain-reflecting marshlands and unspoiled beaches, the wintry landscapes of Fredvang, and the idyllic 19th-century fiskevær of Nusfjord. The fishing hamlet of Nusfjord is a living museum—considered to be one of the best preserved fiskevær in Norway—and is now classified as a UNESCO-protected site.

Moskenesøya played a pivotal role in World War II. Early in the war the island was occupied by the German Army. In December 1941 a British commando raid supported by British, Norwegian and Polish navy ships destroyed two land-based German radio transmitters. More importantly, several German patrol ships were sunk during the operation prompting the salvage of an operational Enigma coding machine—allowing the allies to crack German codes—hastening the end of the war! (BLD)

Days 5–8
We drive to Leknes, the trading and commercial center of the Lofoten Islands—only rivaled by Svolvær. During the summer months, the town's harbor, Leknes Havn, is one of Norway's most important and most-visited tourist harbors for cruise ships—but it's very quiet in winter! The "vibe" here is very different from little Reine as the village population is more than ten times larger. Residing in the Leknes "suburbs," our focus is a fantastic stretch of beaches on the western side of Vestvågøya (Vestvåg Island).

Utakleiv Beach features black wave-sculpted stones on an out-of-the-way beach and colorful rock-bound tide pools against a backdrop of craggy maritime peaks—and a very good location for shooting the aurora borealis, too! Haukland Beach voted one of the five most beautiful beaches in Norway, and Vareid—a wonderful spot for seascapes with a great view towards the jagged mountains of Flakstad. In Unstad—most famous for being the number one spot for surfers in Lofoten—there is always someone crazy riding the Arctic swells—even in winter! Scenic Valberg is a premier location for sunrise on the eastern side of the island—our choices are endless. (BLD)

Day 9 (Mar 11)
Following breakfast we load our vans and drive to Evenes. Participants should schedule their return flight to Oslo for no earlier than 1 PM. (B)

Trip Details

Mar 03 - Mar 11, 2019
Fee: $6,595 from Evenes, Norway
Deposit: $800
Limit: 12

A great tour in a beautiful place with the quality you always expect of a Van Os Photo Safaris tour.
—B. Thompson

Tour Leaders

TODD W. PIERCE
And local photography leader