

The Far North



Norway's northernmost counties of Troms and Finnmark arc across the very top of Europe. Here in this undervisited terrain, broad horizons share the land with dense forest. Part of the thrill is simply the sheer effort of getting where few others go.

Tromsø, the area's only town of any size, well merits a couple of days to catch your breath before pushing deeper into the sparsely inhabited lands to the north and east. It's a sparky, animated, self-confident place whose museums will orient you for the Arctic lands beyond. It makes a great base for winter sports and summer hiking – or a diversion to the lovely, unspoilt island of Senja, every bit as dramatic as Lofoten and 10 times less crowded.

The goal of so many travellers is Nordkapp, North Cape, nearer to the North Pole than to Oslo and the European mainland's most northerly point. Or very nearly so; to reach the *real* point of no return, pack your boots and enjoy an 18km round trek across the tundra. The plateaus of Inner Finnmark and the wild northeastern coast are the Norwegian heartland of the Sami people, whose territory, traditionally known as Lapland, straddles the frontiers with Sweden, Finland and Russia. Build in a stop at Karasjok, the Sami 'capital', to visit its Sápmi Park, the more academic Sami National Museum and the architecturally stunning, all-wood Sami Parliament.

Tiny Kirkenes is the last port of call of the Hurtigruten coastal ferry. With all the feel of a frontier town, its signs are in both Norwegian and Cyrillic script and you'll hear almost as much Russian as Norwegian on the streets. Within Norway, you can go no further...

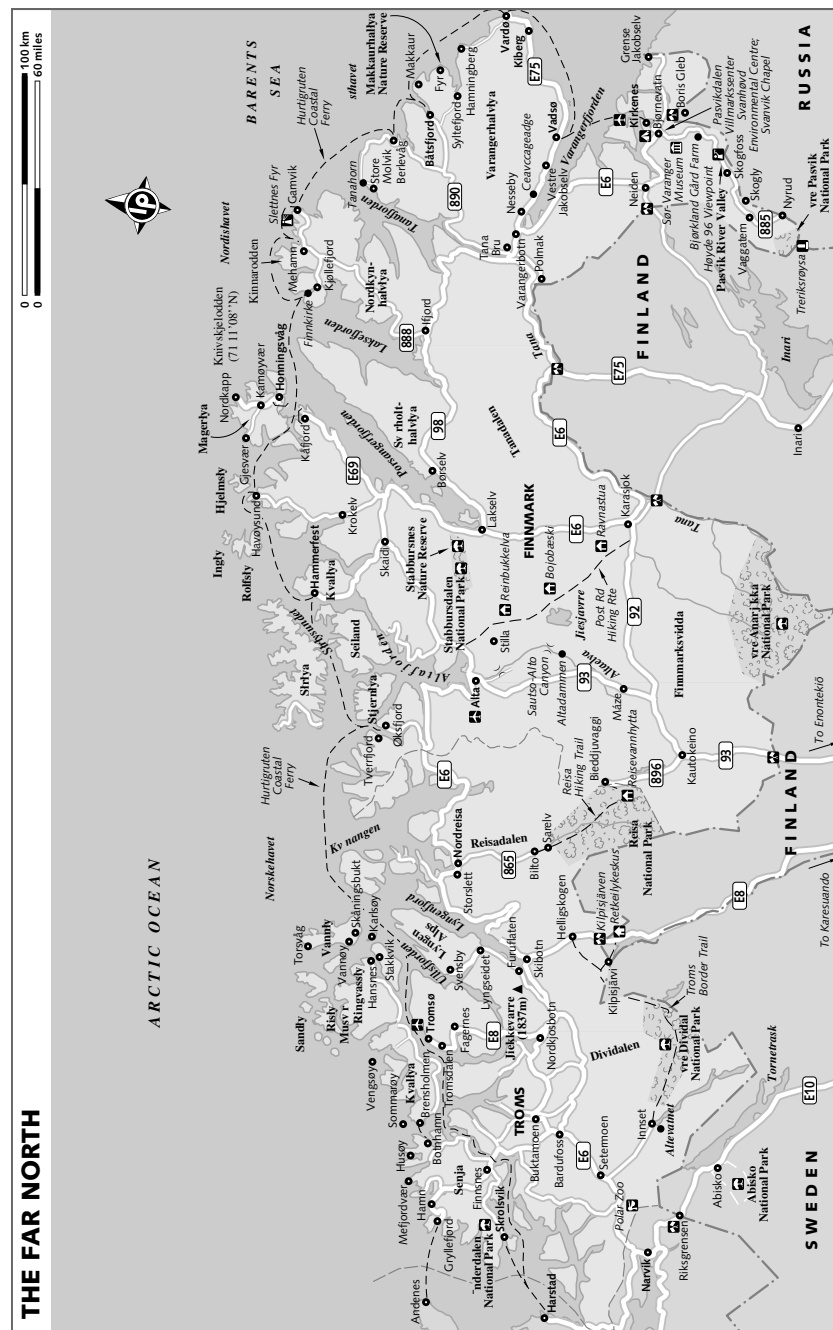
HIGHLIGHTS

- Reaching dramatic **Nordkapp** (p350) after the long haul northwards, then leaving the crowds behind to hike to **Knivskjelodden** (p352), continental Europe's northernmost point
- Learning about the unique Sami culture in **Karasjok** (p367) and **Kautokeino** (p365)
- Exploring **Alta's Stone-Age rock carvings** (p344), a Unesco World Heritage site, and learning more at its award-winning museum
- Dog-mushing through the snow and bruise-blue winter light near **Karasjok** (p369)
- Cycling the spectacular, lightly trafficked northern coast of the island of **Senja** (p342)
- Listening to an organ recital as the mid-night sun peeks through the windows of Tromsø's **Arctic Cathedral** (p335)



■ POPULATION: 226,800

■ HIGHEST ELEVATION: NJUNES (1713M)



THE FAR NORTH

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TROMS

Troms, where the Gulf Stream peters out, mitigating the harshness of winter, boasts a couple of near-superlative places: Tromsø, the only place large enough to merit the name 'city' in northern Norway, and Senja, Norway's second-largest island, a less trodden rival to the Lofotens for spectacular scenery. This section covers the northern two-thirds of Troms county; the Troms portion of the island of Hinnøya features in the Nordland chapter.

TROMSØ

pop 65,000

Simply put, Tromsø parties. The main town of Troms county – by far the largest in northern Norway – is lively with cultural bashes, buskers, an animated street scene, a midnight-sun marathon, a respected university, the hallowed Mack Brewery – and more pubs per capita than any other Norwegian town. Its corona of snow-topped peaks provides arresting scenery, excellent hiking in summer and great skiing and dog-sledding in winter.

Many Tromsø landmarks claim northern-most titles, including the university, cathedral, brewery (not technically – but read on), botanic garden and even the most boreal Burger King. Although the city lies almost 400km north of the Arctic Circle, its climate is pleasantly moderated by the Gulf Stream. The long winter darkness is offset by round-the-clock activity during the perpetually bright days of summer.

Tromsø received its municipal charter in 1794, when the city was developing as a trading centre, but its history goes way back to the 13th century, when the first local church was built. In more recent times, the city became a launching point for polar expeditions, and thanks to that distinction, it's nicknamed 'Gateway to the Arctic' (more appropriate than 'Paris of the North', as suggested by an apparently myopic visitor in the early 1900s).

Orientation

Tromsø's centre is on the east shore of the island of Tromsøya (Map p335), separated by hills from the west shore and Langnes Airport. The lively, central port area runs from the Skansen docks, south past Stortorget (the main square) to the Mack Brewery and waterfront Polaria museum. The city also

spills across a channel to Tromsdalen on the mainland, with suburbs on Kvaløya island to the west. Two gracefully arching bridges link the sections.

Information

Dark Light (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 74 44; Stortorget 1, 1st fl; per hr Nkr60; ☎ 3-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, 6-11pm Sun) Internet access.

Library (Map p336; Grønnegata 94; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat) In a magnificent contemporary building that streams with light and airiness, it offers free internet access.

Tourist office (Map p336; ☎ 77 61 00 00; www.destinasjontromso.no; Kirkegata 2; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun late May-Aug; 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat rest-of-year) Pick up its comprehensive *Tromsø InfoGuide* booklet.

Tromsø Bruktbokhandel (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 39 40; behind Kirkegata 6) Lots of secondhand books.

Via Ferieverden (Map p336; ☎ 77 64 80 02; Strandgata 32) Can book Svalbard flights and accommodation.

Sights & Activities

The tourist office's summer *Tromsø Activity Menu* and its winter equivalent both give a comprehensive checklist of tours and activities.

POLARIA

Tromsø's museum of the Arctic, **Polaria** (Map p336; ☎ 77 75 01 00; Hjalmar Johansens gate 12; adult/child Nkr90/45; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-May–mid-Aug, noon-5pm rest-of-year) is daringly designed. A panoramic film takes you to Svalbard and aquariums house Arctic fish and – the big draw – a quintet of energetic bearded seals. Other exhibits explore nature and human habitation at both poles. Just try to leave without a polar-bear mask from the gift shop.

TROMSØ UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

This **museum** (Map p335; ☎ 77 64 50 00; Lars Thøringsvei 10; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☎ 9am-6pm Jun-Aug; 9am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun rest-of-year), near the southern end of Tromsøya, has well-presented displays on Arctic animals, church architecture, Sami culture and regional history – plus a 'northern lights machine' that gives you a sense of the splendour of the aurora borealis. Catch bus 28 from Torget.

POLAR MUSEUM

The 1st floor of this harbourside **museum** (Polarmuseet; Map p336; ☎ 77 68 43 73; Søndre Tollbugata 11; adult/child/family Nkr50/10/100; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 11am-3pm or 5pm rest-of-year), in a re-

stored early 19th-century customs house near the colourful Skansen docks, illustrates early polar research, especially the ventures of Nansen and Amundsen. Downstairs there's a well-mounted exhibition about the hunting and trapping of fuzzy Arctic creatures on Svalbard before coal became king there. Note the nasty exploding harpoons outside; the whale didn't stand much of a chance.

CABLE CAR

You get a fine view of the city and midnight sun by taking the **Storsteinen Fjellheis** (Map p335; ☎ 77 63 87 37; adult/child/family return Nkr85/40/200; ☎ 10am-1am late May–mid-Aug, 10am-5pm Apr-late May & mid-Aug–Sep), 420m up Mt Storsteinen (421m). There's a restaurant at the top, from where a network of hiking routes radiates. Take bus 26. A combination bus/cable car ticket costs Nkr90/45 per adult/child.

MACK BREWERY

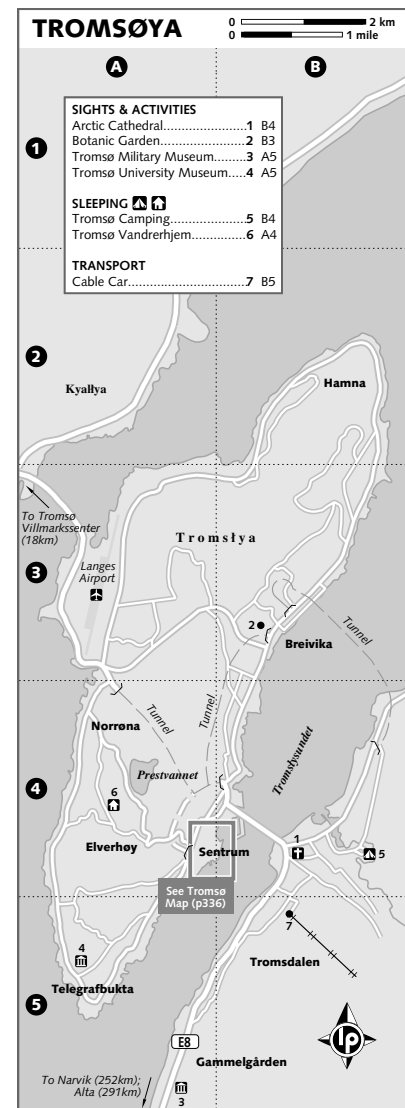
OK, this **brewery** (Mack Ølbryggeri; Map p336; ☎ 77 62 45 80; Storgata 5) isn't really the world's northernmost – a microbrewery in Honningsvåg (p353) takes that title – but it's still a venerable institution that merits a pilgrimage. Established in 1877, it nowadays produces 18 kinds of beer, including the very quaffable Macks Pilsner, Isbjørn, Haakon and several dark beers. At 1pm year-round – plus 3pm, June to August – tours (Nkr130, including a beer mug, pin and pint) leave from the brewery's own Ølhallen Pub (p339), Monday to Thursday.

GLASS-BLOWING

Blåst (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 34 60; Peder Hansens Gate 4; admission free). Pass by the world's most northerly glass-blowing workshop to see the young team puffing their cheeks and perhaps to pick up an item or two.

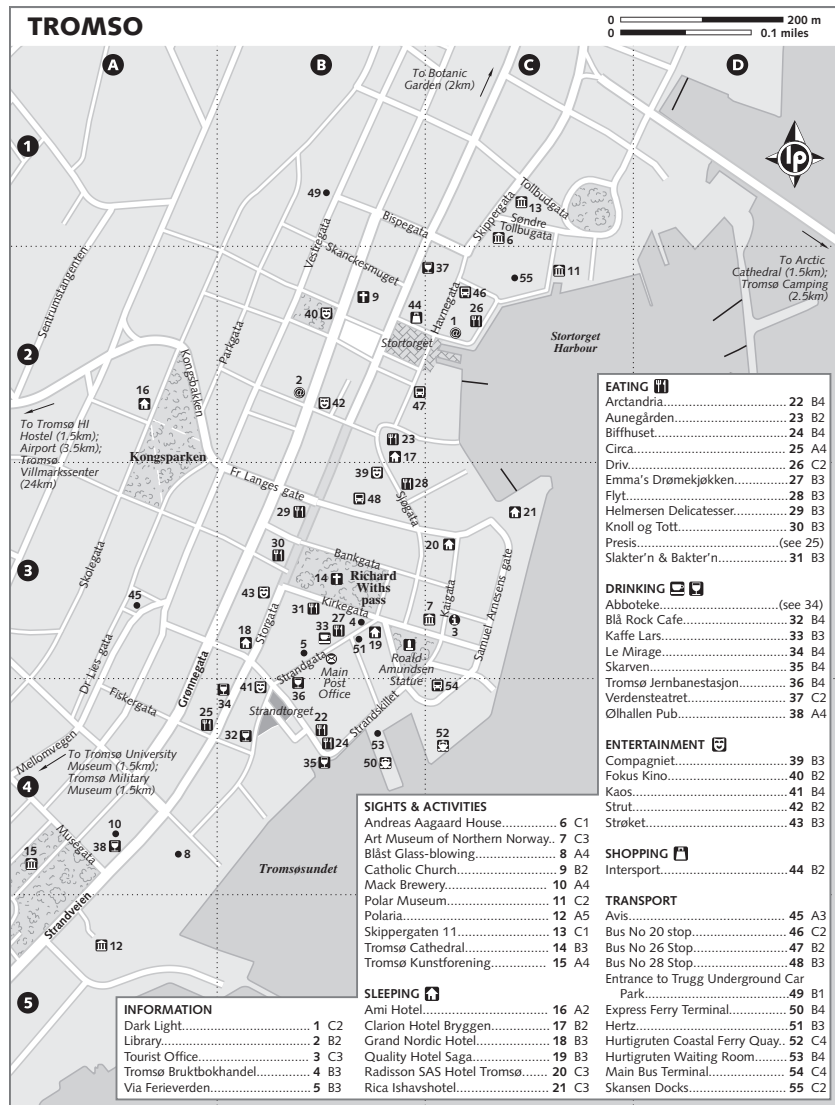
CHURCHES

The 11 arching triangles of the **Arctic Cathedral** (Ishavskatedralen; Map p335; ☎ 77 64 76 11; Hans Nilsensvei 41; adult/child Nkr25/free; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 1-7pm Sun Jun–mid-Aug), as the Tromsdalen Church is styled, suggest glacial crevasses and auroral curtains. The magnificent glowing stained-glass window that occupies almost the whole of the east end depicts Christ redescending to earth. Look back toward the west end and the contemporary organ, a work of steely art



in itself, then up high to take in the lamps of Czech crystal, hanging in space like icicles.

The Church of Norway's **Tromsø Cathedral** (Domkirke; Map p336; Storgata 25; ☎ noon-4pm Tue-Sat) is one of Norway's largest wooden churches. Its opening hours are erratic. Up the hill is the town's **Catholic Church** (Map p336; Storgata 94;



(9am-7.30pm). Both were built in 1861 and each lays claim to be – here comes yet another superlative – ‘the world’s northernmost bishopric’ of its sect.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The booklet *Town Walks*, on sale at the tourist office (Nkr50), is a well-illustrated,

exhaustive run-down of Tromsø’s historic buildings.

You’ll find lots of early-19th-century timber buildings around the centre. **Andreas Aagaard House** (Map p336; Søndre Tollbugate 1), constructed in 1838, was the first building in town to be electrically lit. Explore too the stretch of 1830s shops and merchants’ homes along Sjøgata.

ART MUSEUM OF NORTHERN NORWAY

The **Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum** (Map p336; ☎ 77 64 70 20; Sjøgata 1; adult/child/family Nkr30/20/70; ☹ core hrs noon-5pm Tue-Sun) exhibits mainly 19th- to 21st-century sculpture, photography, painting and handicrafts by artists from northern Norway, and runs an active programme of temporary exhibitions.

TROMSØ KUNSTFORENING

The Tromsø branch of this national contemporary **art foundation** (Map p336; ☎ 77 65 58 27; Muségata 2; adult/child Nkr30/free; ☹ noon-5pm Tue-Sun) makes the most of its late-19th-century premises and promotes rotating exhibitions of contemporary art.

TROMSØ MILITARY MUSEUM

The southern end of Tromsø’s mainland was first developed by the Nazis in 1940 as a coastal artillery battery, complete with six big guns. The cannons have been restored as the basis of the **Tromsø Forsvarsmuseum** (Map p335; ☎ 77 62 88 36; Solstrandveien; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☹ noon-5pm Wed-Sun Jun-Aug, Sun only May & Sep), which also includes a restored commando bunker and an exhibition on the giant German battleship *Tirpitz*, sunk at Tromsø on 12 November 1944. Take bus 12 or 28.

BOTANIC GARDENS

Within the Arctic and alpine landscapes of Tromsø’s **Botanisk Hage** (Map p335; ☎ 77 64 50 00; Breivika; admission free; ☹ 24hr) grows flora from all over the world’s colder regions. And yes, it’s the world’s northernmost... Take bus 20.

WINTER ACTIVITIES

Several companies offer trips out of town to prime northern lights observing sites. You can book lessons in both cross-country (around town are some 70km of groomed trails) and downhill skiing (including that very Norwegian variant, Telemark) at the tourist office. **Intersport** (Map p336; Storgata 87) rents ski equipment.

Tromsø Villmarkssenter (☎ 77 69 60 02; www.villmarkssenter.no) offers dog-sled excursions, ranging from a one-day spin (Nkr1220) to a four-day trek with overnight camping (Nkr8000). The centre, 24km south of town on Kvaløya island, also offers a range of summer activities such as trekking and sea-kayaking.

Natur i Nord (☎ 77 66 73 66; Nansenveien 34) puts on snowmobile trips (five hours, Nkr1400),

ice fishing (four hours, Nkr1200), cross-country ski tours (four to eight hours, from Nkr750) and snowshoe treks (three hours, Nkr750).

Tours

The *Cetacea* does a two-hour scenic **cruise** (adult/child Nkr450/200; ☹ noon Mon-Thu mid-Jun–mid-Aug) around Tromsø island, sailing at noon.

You can fish from the *Signe I*, then have your catch sizzled on board. Built in 1908, she sails on three-hour evening **fishing trips** (adult/child Nkr350/200; ☹ 6pm Mon-Sat late Jun–mid-Aug).

For both outings, reserve at the tourist office.

Festivals & Events

The classic **Midnight Sun Marathon** (☎ 77 67 33 63; www.msm.no), held on a Saturday in June, has something for all levels of fitness. In addition to the full-monty 42km marathon, there’s also a half-marathon and a children’s race.

However, Tromsø’s two big annual bashes both take place in deepest winter. The **Northern Lights Festival** (www.nordlysfestivalen.no) is six days of music of all genres, held in late January. It’s followed closely in early February by **Sami Week**, which includes the national reindeer sledge championship, where Sami teams whoop and crack the whip along the main street.

MUSICAL RECITALS

In July and August the Arctic Cathedral has nightly organ recitals (Nkr50) at 7.30pm and musical concerts (Nkr80) at 11.30pm. The swelling organ and the light of the midnight sun streaming through the huge west window can be one of the great sensory moments of your trip.

At 5.30pm in July, the Church of Norway cathedral has daily concerts (Nkr80) of classical music and both Norwegian and Sami folk tunes.

Sleeping

Atypically, Tromsø’s peak tourist time is June, when the university’s still in full throe and when reservations are essential. For a fee of Nkr30, the tourist office can book accommodation (including rooms in private homes, where singles/doubles average around Nkr350/500) for callers-in.

Tromsø Camping (Map p335; ☎ 77 63 80 37; www.tromsøcamping.no; Tromsdalen; car/caravan sites Nkr175/220),

2-bed cabin with outside bathroom Nkr450, 4-bed Nkr550-650, 4-/6-bed with bathroom Nkr950; (🚿) Tent campers enjoy leafy green camp sites beside a slow-moving stream. However, bathroom and cooking facilities at this veritable village of cabins are stretched to the limit. There's internet access (per 30 minutes Nkr20) and bike rental (a bargain Nkr50 per day). Take bus 20 or 24.

Tromsø Vandrerhjem (Map p335; ☎ 77 65 76 28; tromsostel.vandrerhjem.no; Åsgårdveien 9; dm/s/d Nkr150/290/380; 🗓 mid-Jun–mid-Aug) This summer-time HI-affiliated hostel occupies university-student residences 1.5km west of the town centre. It accepts only Norwegian credit cards and signing from town is inadequate. To get there, go west along Fredrik Langes gate and up Kirkegårdsveien, turning into Holtveien where Kirkegårdsveien turns abruptly right, then turn right down Åsgårdveien. There are lovely views from most bedrooms, though, and good self-catering kitchens. Bus 26 runs within 100m.

Ami Hotel (Map p336; ☎ 77 62 10 00; www.amihotel.no; Skolegata 24; s/d without bathroom Nkr495/595, with bathroom Nkr595/695, all incl breakfast; (P) 🚿) Beside a traffic-free road and park, this is a quiet, friendly, family-owned choice. There's a well-equipped kitchen for self-caterers and a couple of communal lounges, each with TV, internet access and free tea and coffee (nibble on something more substantial and simply pop Nkr20 in the honesty box).

Clarion Hotel Bryggen (Map p336; ☎ 77 78 11 00; www.choice.no; Sjøgata 19/21; s/d Nkr795/995 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1400/1500 Sun–Thu, Nkr1200/1300 Fri & Sat rest-of-year, all incl breakfast; (P) 🚿) This stylish 121-room waterside hotel, poking towards the sea like the prow of a ship, is architecturally stunning with its odd angles, aluminium trim, images on bedroom ceilings, sauna – and a top-floor Jacuzzi where you can savour the picturesque harbour and mountain views as you bubble and boil in the hot tub.

Grand Nordic Hotel (Map p336; ☎ 77 75 37 77; www.nordic.no in Norwegian; Storgata 44; s/d Nkr845/995 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1400/1500 rest-of-year; (P) 🚿) The Grand Nordic is Tromsø's oldest hotel. There's little that's antique inside, however, since the place has twice burnt to the ground. Both bedrooms and public areas have been recently renovated. Rates include a particularly ample breakfast with fresh fruit and hot dishes.

Quality Hotel Saga (Map p336; ☎ 77 60 70 00; www.sagahotel.no/international; Richard Withs plass 2; s/d

Nkr885/1095 mid-Jun–mid-Aug; Nkr1475/1675 Sun–Thu, Nkr885/1095 Fri & Sat rest-of-year; (P) 🚿) This comfortable option offers free afternoon waffles and 67 modern rooms, each with tea- and coffee-making facilities plus – when did you last come across this particular feature? – a trouser press.

Radisson SAS Hotel Tromsø (Map p336; ☎ 77 60 00 00; www.radissonsas.com; Sjøgata 7; s/d Nkr806/1035 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1200/1650 Sun–Thu, Nkr1000/1200 Fri & Sat rest-of-year; (P) 🚿) What a change since our last visit! Bedrooms have been comprehensively renovated and onto the solid, dull rectangular block of the original building has been grafted an attractive new wing. Of its 269 rooms (it's worth the Nkr100 extra for one in the new wing), around half have harbour views and eight are handicapped-equipped. Reception, with two staff and two desks to receive arrivals, is swift, smart and friendly. It runs a decent pub, the Rorbua, and a fine Arctic Menu restaurant, the Aurora (open 3pm to 10pm).

our pick Rica Ishavshotel (Map p336; ☎ 77 66 64 00; www.rica.no; Fredrik Langes gate 2; s/d Nkr900/1150 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1740/2015 Sun–Thu, Nkr1030/1230 Fri & Sat rest-of-year; 🚿) Occupying a prime quayside position with fishing boats and freighters almost at arm's length, this hotel is immediately recognisable by its tall spire resembling a ship's mast. It sometimes swallows as many as seven tour groups per day so summer reservations are essential. Of its 180 attractive rooms, 74, including many singles, have superb views of the sound.

Eating

In Tromsø, the line is blurry between restaurants, cafés and pubs and many places function in all three modes, simultaneously or at different times of the day.

Helmersen Delikatesser (Map p336; ☎ 77 65 40 50; Storgata 66) This great little delicatessen carries a good range of cheeses, cold meats and salad items to fill your sandwich.

Slakter'n & Baker'n (Map p336; ☎ 77 61 06 65; Kirkegata 12) Long established 'Butcher & Baker' is the place to stock up on your picnic fare. To the left, meat balls, cold cuts, hanks of sausages, salads and dips. To the right, richly scented breads and tempting pastries.

Knoll og Tott (Map p336; ☎ 77 66 68 80; Storgata 62; 🗓 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat) Run by a cheerful young team, this popular upstairs-downstairs place with its fresh salads, crisp

baguettes and house pies is ideal for a filling midday snack.

Driv (Map p336; ☎ 77 60 07 76; Tollbugata 3; mains Nkr85-120; 🗓 11am–7pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 2pm–2am rest of year) This student-run converted warehouse serves meaty burgers, great salads (Nkr95), focaccias with a variety of fillings (Nkr85) and a vegetarian pasta (Nkr95). It organises musical and cultural events (notably the self-styled Fucking North Pole Festival) and sometimes has a disco. In winter you can steep yourself in good company within its open-air hot tub.

Flyt (Map p336; ☎ 77 69 68 00; Sjøgata 25; mains Nkr120-165) Build your own burger at this friendly restaurant and bar, picking the size of your meat, fish or veggie filling and selecting its extras and trimmings. With an outdoor activities theme, its beer's ice-cold and the music's heavy metal and rock. The intimate upstairs cocktail bar fills to capacity after midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Brasseriet (Map p336; ☎ 77 66 64 00; mains Nkr190-280) Rica Ishavshotel's excellent restaurant serves creative dishes, such as reindeer with puréed carrot and blueberry sauce (Nkr280).

our pick Aunegården (Map p336; ☎ 77 65 12 34; Sjøgata 29; mains Nkr120-150, cakes around Nkr65; 🗓 Mon–Sat) You can almost lose yourself in this wonderful café-cum-restaurant that's all intimate crannies and cubby holes. In a 19th-century building that functioned as a butcher's shop until 1996, it's rich in character and serves excellent salads (from Nkr117), sandwiches (from Nkr75) and mains. If you don't fancy a full meal, drop by just to enjoy a coffee and one of its melt-in-the-mouth cakes.

Circa (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 10 20; Storgata 36; mains Nkr174-194) Circa (Approximately) and its upstairs neighbour Presis (Precisely), under the same ownership, complement each other. Circa, downstairs, cavernous, both bar and light-meal venue, has free wi-fi. It serves tasty pastas, salads and sandwiches (Nkr90 to Nkr100) until 4pm. Thereafter, its cool jazz and electronic music attracts a 25- to 35-year-old crowd. There's occasional live music plus, at weekends, a live DJ. Wednesday, wine night, is normally packed.

Presis (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 10 20; Storgata 36; tapas Nkr70-90; 🗓 kitchen core hrs 6-11pm Tue–Sat, bar until very late Tue–Sat) Step upstairs, above Circa, to snack on Presis' great range of Nordic-style tapas. The air's calmer here, in a more rarefied atmosphere, furnishings are hip and original,

and frequently changing artwork decorates the walls.

Kaffe Lars (Map p336; ☎ 77 63 77 30; Kirkegata 8; 🗓 Mon–Sat) This cosy café is another example of Tromsø flexibility: it serves great coffee and mouthwatering pastries by day, then metamorphoses into an intimate pub on the dot of 6pm.

Emma's Drømekjøkken (Map p336; ☎ 77 63 77 30; Kirkegata 8; mains Nkr270-325; 🗓 6-10pm Mon–Sat) Upstairs from Kaffe Lars, this stylish and highly regarded place pulls in discriminating diners with its imaginative cuisine. Advance booking is essential.

There's one common entrance to Arctandria, Biffhuset and the much more pubby-style Skarven (p340).

Arctandria (Map p336; ☎ 77 60 07 25; Strandtorget 1; mains Nkr205-260, menus Nkr395-460; 🗓 from 4pm Mon–Sat) Upstairs and upscale, Arctandria serves filling and supremely fresh ocean catches, including a sample starter of whale steak and seal (Nkr85). Save a cranny for its crème brûlée with cloudberry dessert.

Biffhuset (Map p336; ☎ 77 60 07 28; Strandtorget 1; mains Nkr175-330; 🗓 from 3.30pm) On two floors, wood-panelled and low-beamed, the Beef House is a seriously meaty place, strictly for ardent carnivores. Just tick/check your menu card, indicating size, cut and accompanying sauce, hand it to the server and sit back.

You can buy fresh boiled shrimp from fishing boats at the Stortorget waterfront.

Drinking

At Mack Brewery's **Øhallen Pub** (Map p336; 🗓 9am–5pm Mon–Thu, 9am–6pm Fri, 9am–3pm Sat) you can sample its fine ales right where they're brewed. Perhaps the world's only, never mind most northerly, watering hole to be closed in the evening, it carries eight varieties on draught.

Blå Rock Café (Map p336; ☎ 77 61 00 20; Strandgata 14/16; 🗓 core hrs 11.30am–2am) The loudest, most raving place in town has theme evenings, over 50 brands of beer, occasional live bands and weekend DJs. The music's rock, naturally.

Le Mirage (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 52 34; Storgata 42; 🗓 core hrs noon–1.30am) A less rowdy crowd, many of them seasoned regulars, gather at Le Mirage, with its deep leather armchairs and a gilded cherub gazing benignly down. It also serves reasonably priced sandwiches, salads, pastas and casseroles.

HARD DRINKING, TROMSØ STYLE

It takes stamina to stay the course. With work over, friends will meet for *Fredagpils*; Friday drinks to plan the campaign ahead. Then it's time for *Vorspiel*, or foreplay, a preliminary oiling at a friend's house before setting off around midnight for a club or bar. At the statutory throwing-out time of 3.30am, it's *Fyllemat*, fill-up time, when you pick up a burger, kebab or hot dog from one of the street stalls that lurk outside major venues before heading once more to a friend's pad for a few hours' *Nachspiel*, or afterplay.

By now it's bed for middle-distance runners while the marathon crowd stamp its feet outside Ølhallen's, waiting for the sliding of bolts that marks its 9am opening. 'If you can stand, we'll serve you', is the bar staff's rule of thumb.

Abboteke (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 21 50; Storgata 42; ☎ 8pm-3am Wed & Thu, 6pm-3am Fri & Sat) At this retro cocktail bar (the music's bebop, big band or bland Ray Conniff), upstairs from Le Mirage, the barman shakes a selection of award-winning cocktails. Behind him shimmer over 40 brands of single malt whisky and an equally impressive range of rums and brandies. There's also a reputable restaurant open for dinner Monday to Saturday.

Skarven (Map p336; ☎ 77 60 07 43; Strandtorget 1; ☎ from 6pm Tue-Sat) Companion to Arctandria and Biffhuset, Skarven has an extensive waterfront terrace and offers fine bar meals and well-priced fish dishes – unsurprisingly since it includes selections from these two choice restaurants.

Tromsø Jernbanestasjon (Map p336; ☎ 77 61 23 48; Strandgata 33; ☎ core hrs 3pm-2am) This engaging railway-themed pub is typical local humour – Tromsø has never, ever had a railway station.

Verdensteatret (Map p336; ☎ 77 75 30 90; Storgata 93b) Norway's oldest film house will satisfy both cinephiles and thirsters after great cafés. The bar is a hip place with free wi-fi, occasional live music and weekend DJs. At other times, the barperson spins from its huge collection of vinyl records, so expect anything from classical to deepest underground. Peek into the magnificent cinema, its walls painted roof to ceiling with early 20th-century murals. It shows art house and independent films on an ad hoc basis.

Entertainment

Tromsø has plenty of thriving nightspots. On Friday and Saturday, most stay open until 3.30am and many also serve light meals.

Strut (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 46 00; Grønnegata 81; ☎ 10pm-3am Fri & Sat) This is a place of contrasts. Downstairs, with beers on draught

and pool tables, is pubby while upstairs, where 1970s and '80s disco music pounds, is decidedly retro.

Kaos (Map p336; ☎ 77 63 59 99; Strandgata 22; ☎ core hrs 8pm-2am Mon-Sat, 3-11pm Sun) A cool basement hangout with low beams and bare brick walls, Kaos engages arthouse and underground DJs (Friday and Saturday) and bands (up to three times weekly). Carrying UK and Norwegian football, it also has a faithful following of armchair sporting regulars. Capacity is 90, squeezed close, so show up early for big games and band nights.

Compagniet (Map p336; ☎ 77 66 42 22; Sjøgata 12; ☎ 9pm-3.30am Fri & Sat) Both a bar and nightclub, this is another lively weekend venue.

Strøket (Map p336; ☎ 77 68 44 00; Storgata 52; ☎ 9pm-2am Wed, 9pm-3.30am Fri & Sat) This place attracts a young, post-acne crowd and gets down and dirty on weekend nights. Climb to the top of its three levels to watch the masses writhing below.

Fokus Kino (Map p336; ☎ 77 75 63 00; Grønnegata 94) Tromsø's new six-screen cinema shares premises with the town hall.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Destinations with direct SAS flights to/from Tromsø's **Langnes Airport** (Map p335; ☎ 77 64 84 00), the main airport for the far north, include Oslo, Bergen, Narvik/Harstad, Bodø, Trondheim, Alta, Hammerfest, Kirkenes and Longyearbyen.

Norwegian (www.norwegian.no) flies to and from London (Stansted) and Oslo.

BOAT

Express boats connect Tromsø and Harstad (2¾ hours), via Finnsnes (1¼ hours), two to four times daily. Tromsø is also a major stop on the Hurtigruten coastal ferry route.

BUS

The main bus terminal (sometimes called Prostneset) is located on Kaigata. Nor-Way Bussekspres has at least two daily express buses to/from Narvik (Nkr360, 4¼ hours) and at least one to/from Alta (Nkr469, 6¼ hours), where you can pick up a bus for Honningsvåg, and from there, on to the Nordkapp.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

A two- or four-wheeled vehicle is the best way to negotiate Norway's far-northern reaches. Among car-hire companies are **Avis** (Map p336; ☎ 90 74 90 00; Strandskillet 5), **Eurocar** (☎ 77 67 56 00; Alkeveien 5), **Hertz** (Map p336; ☎ 77 62 44 00; Richard Withs plass 4) and **Budget** (☎ 77 65 19 00). All have desks at the airport. Contrasting with steep rates in summer (when it's essential to reserve in advance), car rental can be very reasonable in winter.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Tromsø's airport is about 5km from the centre, on the western side of Tromsøya island. The **Flybuss** (☎ 77 67 75 00; Nkr45) service runs between the airport and Radisson SAS Hotel, connecting with arriving and departing flights and stopping by other major hotels along the way. Alternatively, take city bus 40 or 42 (Nkr23); when you arrive, wait for it on the road opposite the airport entrance.

Metered taxis between the airport and centre cost around Nkr125.

BICYCLE

You can hire town bikes from **Intersport** (Map p336; ☎ 77 66 11 00; Storgata 87; per day/weekend/week Nkr175/400/1000).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Tromsø has ample paying parking in the centre. There's also the huge Trygg underground car park tunnelled into the hill, its entrance on Vestregata (closed to trailers and caravans).

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Local buses cost Nkr23 per ride – purchase your ticket on board. For a **taxi**, call ☎ 77 60 30 00.

AROUND TROMSØ Sommarøy & Kvaløya

From Tromsø, this half-day trip is more for the drive than the destination. It's an

extraordinarily pretty, lightly trafficked run across Kvaløya, much of it down at wet-your-feet shore level as far as the small island of Sommarøy. Here you can grab a drink or a snack and even overnight at **Sommarøy Kurs & Feriesenter** (☎ 77 66 40 00; www.sommaroy.no; s/d Nkr875/1095 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1215/1465 Sun–Thu, Nkr1090/1340 Fri & Sat rest-of-year, 6-8-person cabins Nkr1490-1800; ☎ ☎) with its restaurant, bar, small children's playground, hot tub and sauna.

If you're arriving from Senja (p342) by the **Botnhamn–Brensholmen ferry** (www.senjafergene.no), the vistas as you cross Kvaløya island, heading westwards for Tromsø, are equally stunning.

Karlsøy pop 2350

After WWII, the population of this historic fishing community declined drastically until by 1970 there remained only 45 mostly elderly people. Then an emergent counterculture recognised the appeal of this remote island. Over the next decade, young people from elsewhere in Norway and abroad moved to the island to create a sort of Arctic utopia, complete with communes, 'flower power' and an artists' colony. New farmland was cultivated and a fresh economy emerged, based on the arts, tourism and the production of goats' milk. For the full story on Karlsøy, see the booklet *Among Church Cottages & Goats in Alfred Eriksen's Kingdom* (Nkr60), available at the tourist office in Tromsø.

While you're in the area, you may also want to visit nearby Vannøy island, with its sandy beaches, classic lighthouse and wild coastline. You can reach the port of Skåningsbukta by car ferry daily from Hansnes and several times weekly from Karlsøy.

Lyngen Alps

Some of the most rugged alpine peaks in all Norway ruck up to form the spine of the heavily glaciated Lyngen Peninsula, east of Tromsø; you get the best views of them from the eastern shore of 150km-long Lyngfjord. The peaks, the highest of which is Jiekkevarre (1833m), offer plenty of opportunities for climbers but this challenging glacial terrain is strictly for the experienced.

The Lyngsdalen Valley, above the industrial village of Furuflaten, is an altogether more accessible and popular hiking area. The usual route begins at the football pitch south of the

bridge over the Lyngdalselva and climbs up the valley to the tip of the glacier Sydbreen, 500m above sea level.

The best map for hiking is Statens Kartverk's *Lyngenhavøya* at 1:50,000.

SENJA

pop 16,500

Senja, Norway's second-largest island, rivals Lofoten for natural beauty yet attracts a fraction of its visitors (we meandered the length of its northern coastline and saw only one non-Norwegian vehicle).

A broad agricultural plain laps at Innersida, the island's eastern coast facing the mainland. By contrast, birchwoods, moorland and sweetwater lakes extend beneath the bare craggy uplands of the interior. Along the northwestern coast, Yttersida, knife-ridged peaks rise directly from the Arctic Ocean. Here, the Rv86 and Rv862, declared a National Tourist Route, link isolated, still-active fishing villages such as Hamn and Mefjordvær and traffic is minimal. The now flat, now mildly bucking road, almost always within sight of the shore, is a cyclist's dream. On the way, pause at the Tunganestet viewing point and scramble over the broad slabs of weathered rock to savour the spiky peaks to the west and, eastwards, more gently sculpted summits.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 77 85 07 30; www.visit troms.no; Storgata 17; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Jun-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) in Finnsnes, on the mainland just across the bridge for Senja, has plenty of information and sells *Opplev Midt Troms* (Nkr20), an invaluable map of the island and its environs.

Sleeping

Hamn i Senja (☎ 77 85 98 80) A restored fishing hamlet, Hamn i Senja was until recently a delightful get-away-from-it-all place. Following an extensive and disastrous fire it promises to be so again, once it's up and running in late 2008. Nearby is the small dam that held back the waters for what is claimed to be the world's first hydroelectric plant, established in 1882.

Getting There & Away

Two to three daily buses run from Finnsnes to Tromsø (2¾ hours) and Narvik (three hours) with a connection in Buktaemoen.

Express ferries connect Finnsnes with Tromsø (1½ hours) and Harstad (1½ hours)

two to three times a day. A summertime car ferry connects Skrolsvik, on Senja's south coast, to Harstad (1½ hours, two to four daily).

With the completion of a final tunnel in 2006, it's now possible to drive the whole of the northwest coast from Gryllefjord (linked by car ferry with Andenes) to Botnhamn, with its car ferry link to Brensholmen, west of Tromsø.

Finnsnes is also a stop for the Hurtigruten coastal ferry.

BARDU

pop 3850

The rural district of Bardu is located south of Tromsø.

Setermoen

The wooded town of Setermoen is the commercial centre for the Bardu district and a staging point for visits to Øvre Dividal National Park (opposite). Visitors to its **tourist information point** (☎ 77 18 53 00; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) in the town hall are greeted by a stuffed wolf with a dejected-looking lamb in its jaws. The village is best known to Norwegians as a military training centre and venue for NATO exercises.

In the porch of Setermoen's early-19th-century **church** (☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat late Jun-early Aug) is a bell dating from 1698. The ingenious heating system, with wood stoves and hot-water pipes beneath the pews, must encourage attendance during even the longest sermons.

Those who are aroused by war games will have fun at the **Troms Defence Museum** (Forsvarsmuseum; ☎ 77 18 56 50; adult/child Nkr40/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 10am-3pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) with its evocative interior dioramas and over 20 military vehicles to explore outside.

SLEEPING

Bardu Camping & Turistsenter (☎ 77 18 15 58, 91 31 60 90; tent/caravan sites Nkr100/175 plus per person Nkr10, 2-/3-/4-bed cabin with outdoor bathrooms Nkr300/450/550, with bathroom Nkr800-1000; ☎ Jun-Aug; 📍) At the northern limit of Setermoen, dad can slope off for a little river fishing while the kids splash in the pool and zoom down the waterslide of this well-tended camp site.

Bardu Hotell (☎ 77 18 59 40; barduhotell@bardu.online.no; Toftakerlia 1; s/d Nkr800/950 mid-Jun-mid-Aug, Nkr1050/1200 rest-of-year; 📍 📺 📶) The lobby,

with pelts splayed across its walls, has a hunting-lodge feel while rooms are decorated in a variety of twee themes such as spring and summer, Adam and Eve. With plenty of character, it's popular with adventure tour groups and visiting military, not least for the comfortable bar and its restaurant Trollstua. There's a sauna, Jacuzzi and year-round heated pool, all free to guests.

Polar Zoo

The **Polar Zoo** (☎ 77 18 66 30; adult/child/family Nkr135/70/340; ☎ 9am-6pm Jun-Aug, 9am-4pm May & Sep) features wildlife of the boreal taiga in spacious enclosures that, but for the metal fencing, are virtually indistinguishable from the surrounding birch forests. Here you can watch and photograph those elusive faces that peer out from postcards all over Norway: brown bears, deer, musk oxen, reindeer, wolves, lynx, wolverines, badgers and both red and polar fox. Follow the keeper around at feeding time (noon or 2pm; check at reception). The zoo is 23km south of Setermoen and 3.3km east of the E6, where the express bus between Narvik and Tromsø passes three to four times daily.

ØVRE DIVIDAL NATIONAL PARK

Between Setermoen and the Swedish and Finnish borders lies the wild, roadless, lake-studded Øvre Dividal National Park. While the park lacks the spectacular steep-walled scenery of coastal Norway, this remote, semi-forested, 750-sq-km upland wilderness still boasts plenty of challenging peaks and fine views.

Activities

The most popular hike is the eight-day **Troms Border Trail**, linking seven unstaffed DNT huts. The route begins along the northern shore of the artificial lake, Altevatnet, about 3km east of the settlement of Innset, and twists north-eastward, curling in and out of Sweden before winding up near the point where Sweden, Finland and Norway meet. At the easternmost hut, Galdahytta, the track splits. Here, you can head for either Helligskogen in Norway or better-equipped Kilpisjärvi in Finland. Many hikers also use the trail between the western end of Altevatnet, in Øvre Dividal, and Abisko National Park, in northern Sweden, where you'll find the start of Sweden's renowned Kungsleden hiking route.

The map to use for the Troms Border Trail and the Abisko Link is Statens Kartverk's *Turkart Indre Troms*, at a scale of 1:100,000. In summer, the mosquitoes will drive you to distraction; use a head net, smear yourself liberally with repellent and swat every single last buzzing bastard you can, in the interests of those who follow your footsteps.

Tours

Winter visitors can join a dog-sled trip through Arctic Norway led by renowned musher **Bjørn Klauer** (☎ 77 18 45 03; www.huskyadventure.com) and colleagues. In addition to tours through the national park he runs expeditions into Sweden; typical all-inclusive costs are Nkr15,000 for eight days and Nkr21,000 for 11 days.

In summer he and his team organise cycle and canoe tours, or you can do your own thing and hike any of several signed trails that pass nearby. His farm (below) is also a delightful place to stay.

Sleeping

Seven unstaffed DNT huts run the length of the main hiking route through Øvre Dividal: Gaskashytta, Vuomahytta, Dividalshytta, Dærtahytta, Rostahytta, Gappohytta and Galdahytta.

Klauerhytta (☎ 77 18 45 03; www.huskyadventure.com; adult/child Nkr200/80) At the village of Innset, 35km southeast of Setermoen, dog-musher Bjørn Klauer runs a lovely, rustic hut plus a cabin for hikers and other travellers. There's a sauna, a well-equipped kitchen for guest use and you can hire bikes and canoes.

Helligskogen Fjellstua (☎ 77 15 54 60; helligskogen.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; dm/d Nkr175/345; ☎ mid-Jun-mid-Aug) Near the eastern end of the park on the E8, 30km east of Skibotn, this hostel is surrounded by wild open highlands. It's handy for travel between Norway and Finland, and serves hikers finishing the Troms Border Trail.

Kilpisjärven Retkeilykeskus (☎ 358-16 537 771; Kilpisjärvi, Finland; d Nkr510, 4-bed cabins Nkr590; ☎ Mar-Sep) Just over the Finnish border, this friendly, inexpensive place anchors the eastern end of the Troms Border Trail. It has simple rooms, a good-value café and cooking facilities for guest use. You can arrange boat trips across Lake Kilpisjärvi and take a choice of scenic hikes through Finland's highest mountains.

WESTERN FINNMARK

Norway's northernmost mainland county, Finnmark has been inhabited for up to 12,000 years, first by the Komsa hunters of the coastal region and later by Sami fishing cultures and reindeer pastoralists, who settled on the coast and in the vast interior, respectively.

Finnmark's wild northern coast, dotted with fishing villages, is deeply indented by grand fjords, while the vast interior is dominated by the broad Finnmarksvidda plateau, a stark wilderness with only two major settlements, Karasjok and Kautokeino.

Virtually every Finnmark town was decimated at the end of WWII by retreating Nazi troops, whose scorched-earth policy aimed to delay the advancing Soviets. Towns were soon reconstructed in the most efficient, yet boxy, building style. So, in contrast to the spectacular natural surroundings, present-day Finnmark towns are architecturally uninspiring.

Dangers & Annoyances

Do keep an eye out for reindeer on the road. They're not dangerous and they're more charming than annoying but they might slow your progress and bring you to a very abrupt halt if you hit one at speed. Sometimes wandering alone, now and again in herds, they might not be fazed by your inanimate car. If they refuse to budge, just get out, walk towards them and they'll amble away.

ALTA

pop 14,000

Although the fishing and slate-quarrying town of Alta lies at latitude 70°N, it enjoys a relatively mild climate. The Alta Museum, with its ancient petroglyphs, is a must-see and the lush green Sautso-Alta Canyon (see p346), a quick hop away, is simply breathtaking.

The river Altaelva, which runs east of town, was once a Sami fishery and a popular haunt of sporting 19th-century English aristocrats. In the late 1970s, it became an environmental cause célèbre when, despite fierce local and national opposition, a 100m-high dam, the Altadammen, was built to exploit this rich salmon-spawning stream for hydroelectric power.

Orientation & Information

Alta, stretching along some 15km of coastline, has a large footprint. Its two main centres are about 2km apart: hilly Bossekop to the west, and Sentrum in – well, just that – with its uninspiring blocks and parking lots and a pleasant enough traffic-free central square.

Studentbokhandelen (Sentrumsparken 2) Maps and a selection of books in English.

Tourist office (☎ 78 44 95 54; www.altatours.no; Parksentret Bldg, Sentrum; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 78 44 50 50; Sorekskriverveien, Bossekop; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri Jun & Aug, 10am-8pm daily Jul) Has internet access (per min Nkr1).

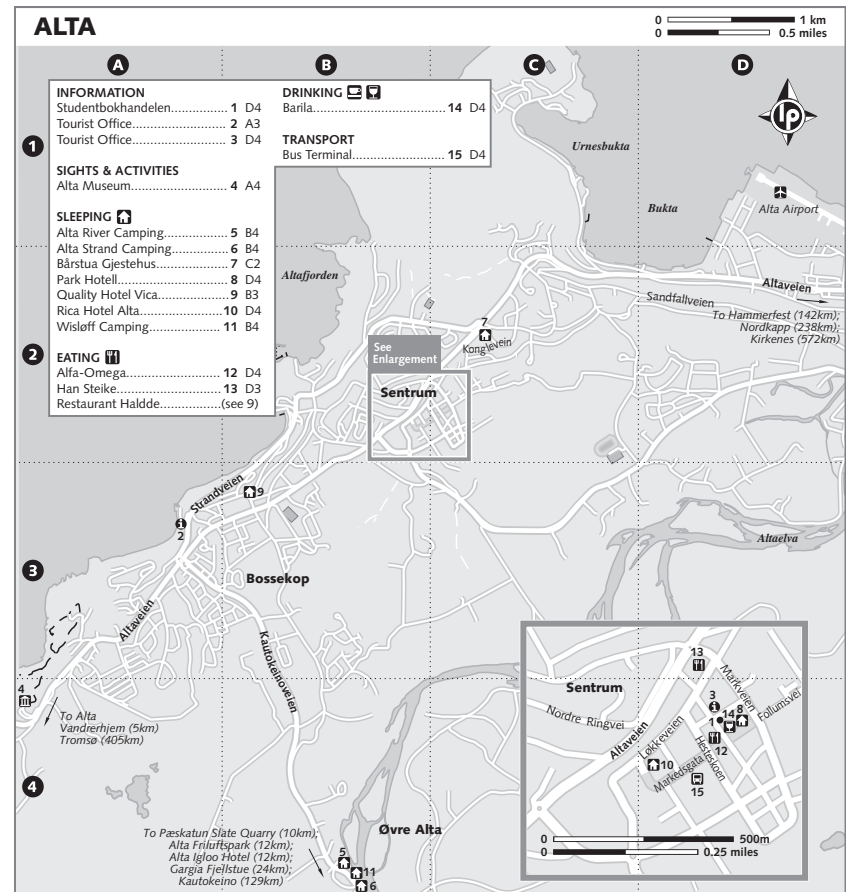
Sights

Alta Museum (☎ 78 45 63 30; Altaveien 19; adult/child Nkr75/free; ☎ 8am-9pm Jun-Aug, 9am-6pm May & Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun rest-of-year) is in Hjemmeluft, at the western end of town. The cliffs around it, a Unesco World Heritage site, are incised with around 5000 late-Stone Age carvings, dating from 6000 to 2000 years ago. As the sea level decreased after the last ice age, carvings were made at progressively lower heights. Themes include hunting scenes, fertility symbols, bears, moose, reindeer and crowded boats. The works have been highlighted with red-ochre paint (thought to have been the original colour) and are connected by 3km of boardwalks that start at the main building. The short loop (1.2km; allow around 45 minutes, including viewing time) is the most visited. You can also graft on a second loop (total distance 2.1km), a pleasant seaside walk that takes in more sites.

Inside, the superb award-winning museum features exhibits and displays on Sami culture, Finnmark military history, the Alta hydroelectric project and the aurora borealis (northern lights).

Festivals & Events

The **Borealis Alta** winter festival in March is five days of concerts and culture, designed to dispel winter's gloom. It also marks the start of the **Finnmarksløpet 1000km dog-sled endurance race** (www.finnmarksløpet.no), Europe's longest. In late May the **Alta blues and soul festival** (www.altasoullogblues.no) brings in top Norwegian bands and stars from afar (Nazareth topped the bill in 2006).



Sleeping

You'll find three excellent riverside camp sites, open year-round, in Øvre Alta, 3.5km south of the E6 along the Rv93 to Kautokeino.

Alta River Camping (☎ 78 43 43 53; www.alta-river-camping.no; car/caravan site Nkr120/150, cabin with outside bathroom Nkr500-700, 6-bed with bathroom Nkr1200) Special features are its sauna, from which you can plunge straight into the river, and a couple of cute little barbecue huts, furnished with skins.

Wisloff Camping (☎ 78 43 43 03; www.wisloff.no in Norwegian; per person/site Nkr20/150, 2-bed cabin with outside bathroom Nkr400, 4-bed with bathroom Nkr750) Declared Norwegian Camping Club 'campground of the year' in 2000, it still well deserves the accolade.

Alta Strand Camping (☎ 78 43 40 22; www.alta-camping.no; site for 2/4 persons Nkr160/190, 2-/4-bed cabin with outdoor bathroom Nkr360/440, with bathroom Nkr650-750; self-catering apt s/d Nkr600/750) This spacious camp site has mountain views, table football (a cultural rarity east of Tromsø) and a small children's playground.

Alta Vandrerhjem (☎ 48 24 11 69; alta.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; dm/s/d Nkr250/350/600; ☎ Jun-Aug) Alta's youth hostel has recently changed premises and is now at Kvenvik, off the E6 and around 5km west of town.

Bårstua Gjestehus (☎ 78 43 33 33; www.baarstua.no; Kongleveien 2a; s/d incl breakfast Nkr760/900) This friendly, recently opened B&B lies right beside the E6. Its eight rooms, decorated with striking photographs, are spruce and well

furnished. Each has self-catering facilities and there's a common room and sauna for guest use.

Park Hotell (☎ 78 45 74 00; www.parkhotell.no; Markedsgata 6; s/d Nkr895/1195 mid-Jun–mid-Aug; Nkr1235/1345 Sun–Thu, from Nkr860/1075 Fri & Sat rest-of-year, all incl breakfast) Here's another friendly choice, owned by a consortium of three women and sporting the coveted Swan label (see p21) for its environmentally sensitive practices. Its 34 rooms are spacious, each with a sofa or pair of armchairs, and bathrooms are white-tiled and sparkling. Although just off the main square, it's a tranquil spot with a roof terrace that's ideal for summer sunbathing and northern-lights observing in winter. Guests can use the sauna and rent bikes, skis and kick-sledges at very reasonable rates.

Quality Hotel Vica (☎ 78 48 22 22; www.choice.no; Fogdebakken 6; s/d Nkr1295/1505 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1200/1400 Sun–Thu, Nkr1070/1180 Fri & Sat rest-of-year; P) In a timber-built former farmhouse, the Vica, right from the stuffed brown bear that greets you at the door and the birds and furry mammals winking from above reception, is a welcoming place. It has a free sauna, steaming outdoor Jacuzzi (wonderful in winter when all around is snowcapped) and Alta's finest restaurant (see right).

Rica Hotel Alta (☎ 78 48 27 00; www.rica.no; Løkkeveien 61; s/d from Nkr1035/1235; P) The vast Rica was about to complete a massive extension programme when we last visited, creating 86 new rooms and adding a few curves to what was a boring cube with parking-lot views. Its Arctic Menu restaurant merits a visit in its own right. The hotel's Pernille nightclub generally has live music on Fridays and a DJ every Saturday.

Eating & Drinking

Apart from the Vica and Rica hotel restaurants, pickings are slim indeed.

Alfa-Omega (☎ 78 44 54 00; Markedsgata 14-16; mains Nkr85-120; ☺ Mon–Sat) As its name suggests, this place has two parts: Omega, its contemporary café, open 11am to midnight, serves salads, sandwiches, pastas and cakes. Alfa, a pleasant, casual bar, comes into its own from 8pm. There's also a terrace, ideal for taking a little summer sunshine, overlooking Alta's bleak central square.

Han Steike (☎ 78 44 08 88; Løkkeveien 2) This steakhouse, all dark wood and grey flagstones, is the place if you're after something red and raw.

Restaurant Haldde (lunch dishes Nkr110-170, dinner mains Nkr230-330) There's even more quality from this excellent restaurant within Quality Hotel Vica. It relies almost entirely upon local ingredients in the preparation of choice dishes such as the Finnmark Platter of grouse, reindeer and elk, or its Flavour of Finnmark dessert of cloudberry and cowberry-blueberry sorbet within a nest of spun caramel.

Barila (Parksentret Bldg, Sentrum; ☺ 11am-1am) is a chic, sassy little place that serves great coffee, good beer and exotic cocktails. You may be tempted by a 'Blow Job' (Nkr78).

Getting There & Away

Alta's **airport** (☎ 78 44 95 for flight information) is 4km northeast of Sentrum at Elvebakken. SAS has direct flights to/from Oslo, Tromsø, Hammerfest, Kirkenes, Lakselv and Vadsø. **Norwegian** (www.norwegian.no) connects Alta with Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger.

Nor-Way Bussekspress has one daily run from the bus terminal in Sentrum to/from Tromsø (Nkr449, 6¼ hours), Narvik (Nkr656, 11½ hours) and Honningsvåg (Nkr367, four hours).

FFR (Finnmark Fylkesrederi og Ruteselskap; www.ffr.no) buses run to/from Karasjøk (Nkr391, 4¼ hours, two daily except Saturday), Kautokeino (Nkr220, 2¼ hours, four days per week) and Honningsvåg (Nkr367, four hours, one to two daily).

For Hammerfest, FFR's fast ferry (Nkr230, 1½ hours, daily except Saturday) is swifter than the bus.

Getting Around

Fortunately, this sprawling town has a local bus to connect its dispersed ends. On weekdays, buses run more or less hourly between the major districts and to the airport. Services are less frequent on Saturday and don't run at all on Sunday.

Taxis (☎ 78 43 53 53) cost about Nkr100 from airport to town.

AROUND ALTA Sights

SAUTSO-ALTA CANYON

The Altaelva hydroelectric project has had very little effect on the most scenic stretch of river, which slides through 400m-deep Sautso, northern Europe's grandest canyon. The easiest way to see this impressive forested gorge is to take the four-hour tour (Nkr500

that the tourist office organises each Monday, Wednesday and Friday in July, leaving at 4pm, numbers permitting (minimum five people). In addition to spectacular views of the Sautso-Alta Canyon, the tour also includes a pass through the Alta Power Station dam and a snack.

KÅFJORD

Kåfjord's **Tirpitz Museum** (☎ 92 09 23 70; www.tirpitz-museum.no; adult/child/concession Nkr60/30/50; ☺ 10am-6pm Jun-Aug) is the achievement of local resident Even Blomkvist, who has single-handedly collected, bought, begged and borrowed the artefacts, uniforms, memorabilia and nearly 1000 evocative photographs relating to what was the world's largest battleship, its time in Kåfjord, where it hid from March 1943 to October 1944, and its eventual sinking near Tromsø.

At its peak in the 1840s, this tiny settlement 18km west of Alta was a prosperous town of over 1000 inhabitants thanks to the copper works (Kåfjord Kobberværk), which were then Norway's largest. You can follow an easy 1.3km signed trail around the little that remains (you'll find plenty more information in Alta Museum). Half hidden in the grass opposite the explanatory panel is a plaque in memory of three British midget submarines that entered the fjord and severely damaged the *Tirpitz* in 1943.

To the right of the E6, a 9km cart track begins 250m north of the parish church and leads past copper-mine tailings up to the observatory at the summit of Mt Haldde (904m), a mountain venerated by the Sami.

PÆSKATUN SLATE QUARRY

Some 13km south of town in Pæskatun, the **Alta Skifferprodukter** is one of Alta's economic mainstays. In summer, you can visit the quarry and historical exhibits, enjoy a fine view over the canyon – and have a little hands-on experience with the slate cutting tools. It also sells a range of Finnmark minerals and souvenirs made of slate. Contact the tourist office for current times and tariffs.

Activities

HIKING

For experienced hikers, Alta makes a good launching pad for long-distance hiking trails that follow historic routes across the Finnmarksvidda plateau to the south. Alta's

tourist office can advise and you can pick up hiking maps at Studentbokhandelen (p344).

BOAT TRIPS

From **Alta Friluftspark** (☎ 78 43 33 78; www.ice-alta.no), beside the Altaelva river, 16km south of town then a further 6.5km off the Rv93, you can choose from several riverboat rides, lasting from 20 minutes to three hours and costing between Nkr195 and Nkr495 per person. They leave at 1pm and 3pm daily from June to August.

WINTER ACTIVITIES

Alta Friluftspark has 80 snowmobiles, the largest such herd in northern Norway. It offers guided outings, and, your exertions over, you can relax in its steaming hot tub. You can also scud over the snow with **Gargia Fjellstue** (see below), then replenish your energy with a hot Sami meal. **Holmen Hundesenter** (www.holmenhundesenter.no) specialises in dog-sledding with outings ranging from three hours to five days. For all, reserve directly or through the tourist office.

Sleeping

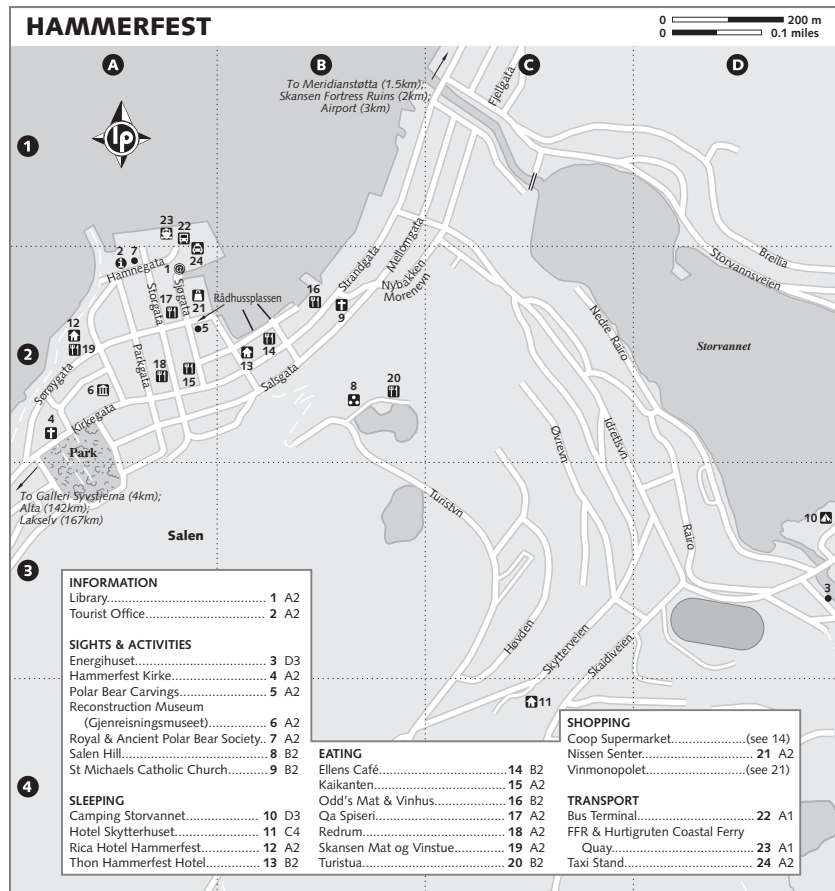
Alta Igloo Hotel (☎ 78 43 33 78; www.ice-alta.no; per person incl breakfast Nkr2195; ☺ mid-Jan–mid-Apr) This seasonal hotel with a capacity for 80 guests is constructed block by block each winter within Alta Friluftspark. It's Norway's first lodging made entirely of snow and ice, right down to the drinking glasses.

Gargia Fjellstue (☎ 78 43 33 51; www.gargia-fjellstue.no in Norwegian; s/d Nkr775/990, cabin Nkr600 with outdoor bathroom, with bathroom Nkr875) Around 25km south of Alta, direction Kautokeino, this mountain lodge offers a forest getaway and a range of summer and winter outdoor activities, including the best foot access to the Sautso-Alta Canyon.

HAMMERFEST

pop 6800

Because of its strategic location and excellent harbour, Hammerfest has long been an important way station for shipping, fishing and Arctic hunting. In its heyday, ladies wore the finest Paris fashions and in 1890 Europe's first electric street lighting was installed. Nowadays it proudly claims to be the world's northernmost town (other Norwegian communities, while further north, are, Hammerfest vigorously argues, too small to qualify as towns!).



Neither man nor nature have been kind to the town: it was decimated in a gale in 1856, burned severely in 1890, then burned again by the Nazis in 1944. Its parish church has gone up in flames five times over the centuries. All the same God may at last be smiling on the town in a way that is having a huge impact. The world's longest under-sea pipeline runs for 143km from the huge Snøhvit natural gas fields in the Barents Sea to the small island of Melkøya out in the bay. With estimated reserves of 193 billion (yes, billion) cu metres, the pumps, which came on tap in 2007, are expected to pound for at least 25 years.

If you're arriving on the Hurtigruten coastal ferry, you'll have only a couple of hours to

pace around, pick up an Arctic souvenir and scoff some fresh shrimp at the harbour. For most visitors that will suffice.

Information

Library (Bibliotek; Sjøgata; ☎ 10am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) Has free internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 78 41 31 00; www.hammerfest-turist.no; Hamnegata 3; ☎ 9am-5pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm Sat & Sun rest-of-year)

Sights

GJENREISNINGSMUSEET

Hammerfest's **Reconstruction Museum** (☎ 78 40 29 30; Kirkegata 21; adult/child/concession Nkr40/15/30; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-2pm rest-of-year) recounts the forced evacuation

and decimation of the town during the Nazi retreat in 1944; the hardships that its citizens endured through the following winter; and Hammerfest's post-war reconstruction and regeneration.

ENERGIHUSET

The **Energy House** (☎ 78 42 82 00; adult/child Nkr45/20; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Fri mid-Jun-mid-Aug), a new interactive centre, explains natural gas extraction, which is bringing increasing wealth to Hammerfest, and also alternative energy sources such as wind and tidal power. Coincidentally, it's on the site of northern Europe's first hydropower station.

ROYAL & ANCIENT POLAR BEAR SOCIETY

Dedicated to preserving Hammerfest culture, the **Royal & Ancient Polar Bear Society** (adult/child Nkr40/free) features exhibits on Arctic hunting and local history and shares premises with the tourist office. The place is, it must be said, a bit of a come-on (the Norwegian name, Isbjørklubben, simply Polar Bear Club, lacks the portentousness of the English but is nearer the mark). For Nkr160, you can become a life member and get a certificate, ID card, sticker and pin. For Nkr195, you also receive a schnapps glass and, as the demure young receptionist will explain without blanching, get dubbed with the bone from a walrus's penis. It's well worth that extra Nkr35 for the conversation this unique honour will generate down the pub, once you're home.

FUGLENES

On this peninsula, just across the harbour, are the foundations of the **Skansen Fortress**, which dates from the Napoleonic Wars, when the British briefly held and plundered the town; and the **Meridianstøtta**, a marble column commemorating the first survey (1816-52) to determine the arc of the global meridian and thereby calculate the size and shape of the earth.

HAMMERFEST KIRKE

Behind the altar of Hammerfest's contemporary **church** (Kirkegata 33; ☎ 7.15am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat, noon-1pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug), consecrated in 1961, the glorious stained-glass window positively glows in the summer sun. The wooden frieze along the organ gallery depicts highlights of the town's history. The chapel in the cemetery across the

street is the only building in town to have survived WWII.

SALEN HILL

For panoramic views over the town, coast and mountains (there's a free pair of binoculars for you to sweep the bay), climb **Salen Hill** (86m), topped by the Turistua restaurant (see p350), a couple of Sami turf huts and a lookout point. The 15-minute uphill trail begins at the small park behind the Rådhus.

GALLERI SYVSTJERNA

Local artist Eva Arnesen designed the Nobel Peace Prize diploma that was awarded to Jody Williams and the campaign to ban land mines. Her **gallery** (☎ 78 41 01 60; Fjordaveien 27; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) is about 4km south of town, opposite the Statoil petrol station. Arnesen's paintings evoke the colours of the region from the northern lights to the bright palette of summer. The handsome pair of carved and silvered polar bears on Rådhus Plass was fashioned by her husband, wood-carver Knut Arnesen.

ST MICHAELS CATHOLIC CHURCH

With a strong claim to be the world's most northerly catholic church, **St Michaels** (nr Strandgata & Mellomgata), serving a congregation of barely 90 souls, is immediately recognisable by the striking mosaic of the eponymous saint that extends the length of its facade.

Sleeping

Camping Storvannet (☎ 78 41 10 10; storvannet@yahoo.no; Storvannsveien; car/caravan sites Nkr140/185, 2-/3-bed cabin Nkr360/410; ☎ late May-late Sep) Beside a lake and overlooked by a giant apartment complex, this pleasant site, Hammerfest's only decent camping option, is small so do book your cabin in advance.

Hotel Skytterhuset (☎ 78 41 15 11; www.skytterhuset.no; Skytterveien 24; s/d Nkr795/995 Sun-Thu, Nkr595/795 Fri & Sat; ☎) The three spurs of this secluded hotel, overlooking the town, look decidedly barrackslike from the outside and with good reason; it was originally built as living quarters for summertime fishwives from Finland who worked in the large Findus processing factory. Long ago converted to a friendly, cosy hotel (reindeer frequently hop over the fence to browse the garden and seek a stretch of shade), it's a good option with free sauna and solarium.

Rica Hotel Hammerfest (☎ 78 41 13 33; www.rica.no; Sørøygata 15; s/d Nkr852/1102 mid-Jun–mid-Aug; Nkr1320/1525 Sun–Thu, Nkr835/1085 Fri & Sat rest-of-year; 📍) Constructed in agreeable mellow brick, this hotel has an attractive bar and lounge and well-furnished rooms, most with harbour views. Its Arctic Menu restaurant, Skansen Mat og Vinstue, serves excellent local fare.

Thon Hotel Hammerfest (☎ 78 42 96 00; www.thonhotels.com; Strandgata 2-4; s/d Nkr1190/1390 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1400/1600 Sun–Thu, Nkr850/1050 Fri & Sat rest-of-year; 📍) Overlooking the fjord and only a stone's throw from the cruise-ship jetty, this hotel has bags of character, three bars, free sauna and solarium and Bernoni, its tempting restaurant. Rooms overlooking the fjord come at no extra cost. Those in the newer wing replicate a ship's cabins, complete with bunk beds, dark woodwork and nautical décor.

Eating & Drinking

Ellens Café (Strandgata 14-18; mains Nkr65-75; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Upstairs from the Coop Supermarket, this is an unpretentious, inexpensive cafeteria.

Kaikanten (☎ 78 41 49 00; Sjøgata 19) An appealing café that serves light meals by day, the Quayside becomes a popular evening pub serving pizzas. Nautically themed (the backdrop to the bar represents old Hammerfest's dockside, and sail canvases billow beneath the ceiling), it has a pool table and comfy sofas into which you sink deep.

Redrum (☎ 78 41 00 49; Storgata 23; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Thu, 11am-3am Fri & Sat) Just around the corner and similarly split in character, Redrum, with its attractive contemporary décor, saves its energy for weekend wildness, when there's regularly live music.

Turistua (☎ 78 42 96 00; Salen; mains Nkr145-190) From atop Salen Hill, Turistua offers great views over the town and sound. The off-putting name is for a lady named Turi, though 'tourist' buses often stop here too.

Qa Spiseri (☎ 78 41 26 12; Sjøgata 8; mains Nkr150-265; ☎ Mon-Sat) Run by a young team, this welcome recent addition to Hammerfest's limited dining options offers reliable cuisine with a great price-to-quality ratio, whether you opt for a main course or one of its lunchtime snacks (Nkr90 to Nkr110). Whichever, save a cranny for a hunk of one of its mouthwatering homemade cakes.

our pick Odd's Mat & Vinhus (☎ 78 41 37 66; Strandgata 24; mains Nkr245-355; ☎ Mon-Sat) Drop downstairs to one of the finest restaurants in all Norway, offering dishes such as grouse steak, fillet of hare and salmon marinated in gin. Hanks of plaited rope are festooned from ceiling and windows, and there's plenty of attractive dark woodwork. Reservations are all but essential.

Vinmonopolet, for wine and hooch, is within the Nissen Senter shopping complex.

Getting There & Around

Buses run to/from Alta (Nkr229, 2½ hours, two daily), Honningsvåg (Nkr321, 3¼ hours, one to two daily) and Karasjok (Nkr344, 4¼ hours, twice daily except Saturday), with one service extending to Kirkenes (Nkr831, 10 to 12 hours) via Tana Bru (Nkr616, 7½ to 10 hours) four times weekly.

For Alta, FFR's fast ferry (Nkr230, 1½ hours, daily except Saturday) is faster than the bus alternative. The Hurtigruten coastal ferry also stops in Hammerfest for 1½ hours in each direction.

To call a taxi, ring ☎ 78 41 12 34.

NORDKAPP & MAGERØYA

pop 3300

Nordkapp is the one attraction in northern Norway that everyone seems to visit even if it is a tourist trap. Billing itself as the northernmost point in continental Europe, it sucks in visitors by the busload, some 200,000 each summer.

Nearer to the North Pole than to Oslo, Nordkapp sits at latitude 71° 10' 21"N, where the sun never drops below the horizon from mid-May to the end of July. Long before other Europeans took an interest, it was a sacrificial site for the Sami, who believed it had special powers.

Richard Chancellor, the English explorer who drifted here in 1553 in search of the Northeast Passage, first gave it the name North Cape. Much later, after a highly publicised visit by King Oscar II in 1873, Nordkapp became a pilgrimage spot for Norwegians. It's also, bizarrely, one for Thais, of all people, thanks to a visit by King Chulalongkorn in 1907.

Now here's a secret: Nordkapp isn't continental Europe's northernmost point. That award belongs to Knivskjelodden, an 18km round-trip hike away, less dramatic, inacces-

FRIDTJOF NANSEN

Fridtjof Nansen (1861–1930), the Norwegian all-rounder, explorer and diplomat, pushed the frontiers of human endurance and human compassion.

Growing up in rural Store Frøen outside Oslo, he enjoyed a privileged childhood. An excellent athlete, he won a dozen or so national nordic skiing championships and broke the world one-mile skating record. Studies in zoology at the University of Christiania led to a voyage aboard the sealing ship *Viking* to study ocean currents, ice movements and wildlife. His first tantalising glimpses of Greenland planted the dream of travelling across its central icecap.

He didn't hang around; in 1888 Nansen, still only 27, headed a six-man expedition. He overwintered in Greenland and his detailed observations of the Inuit (Eskimo) people formed the backbone of his 1891 book, *Eskimo Life*.

In June 1893, aboard the 400-tonne, oak-hulled, steel-reinforced ship *Fram*, Nansen's next expedition left Christiania (current-day Oslo) for the Arctic with provisions for six whole years. Nansen left behind his wife Eva and six-month-old daughter Liv, not knowing when, if ever, he'd return.

On 14 March 1895, he and Hjalmar Johansen set out in the *Fram* (see p102) for the North Pole and journeyed for five months, including 550km on foot over the ice, before holing up for nine winter months in a tiny stone hut they'd built on an island. On heading south, they encountered lone British explorer Frederick Jackson (for whom Nansen later, magnanimously, named the island where they'd spent the winter). Having given up on reaching the Pole, all three headed back to Vardø.

In 1905 a political crisis arose as Norway sought independence from Sweden. Nansen, by then a national hero, was dispatched to Copenhagen and Britain to represent the Norwegian cause.

Upon independence, Nansen was offered the job of prime minister but declined in order to keep exploring (he's also rumoured to have turned down offers to be king or president). He did, however, accept King Håkon's offer to serve as ambassador to Britain. In 1907, after the sudden death of his wife, he abandoned his dreams of conquering the South Pole and – again with a generosity untypical of the competitive world of polar exploration at the time – allowed fellow Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen to take over the *Fram* for an expedition north of Siberia.

After WWI Nansen threw himself into large-scale humanitarian efforts: the new League of Nations, repatriating half a million German soldiers imprisoned in the Soviet Union and an International Red Cross programme against famine and pestilence in Russia. When some two million Russians and Ukrainians became stateless after fleeing the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, 'Nansen Passports' enabled thousands of them to settle elsewhere. Perhaps Nansen's greatest diplomatic achievement was the resettlement of several hundred thousand Greeks and Turks after the massive population shifts in the eastern Mediterranean following WWI.

In 1922 Nansen received the Nobel Peace Prize – then gave it all away to international relief efforts. After 1925 he concentrated on disarmament and lobbying for a non-Soviet homeland for Armenian refugees. Although this never happened, he is still revered among Armenians worldwide.

On 13 May 1930, Nansen died quietly at his home in Polhøgda, near Oslo, and was buried in a garden nearby.

The standard biography of this extraordinary man is *Nansen* by Roland Huntford.

sible by vehicle – and to be treasured all the more for that.

Nordkapp & Around NORDKAPPHALLEN

So you've finally made it to Europe's northernmost rip-off – an opinion shared by the regular letters we receive from readers who've felt exploited. To reach the tip of the con-

tinental, by car, by bike, on a bus or walking in, you have to pay a **toll** (adult/child/student/family Nkr195/60/110/390). This allows unlimited entry over two days but it's small compensation for the vast majority who simply roll in, look quickly around, take a snap or two and roll out.

This vast bunker of a place, topped by a giant, intrusive golf ball, is a love/hate kind

of place. Within are a tediously detailed account of WWII naval actions off the cape, a cafeteria and restaurant, the striking Grottan bar with views of Europe's end through its vast glass wall, a one-room Thai museum, the St Johannes chapel ('the world's northernmost ecumenical chapel'), a post office (for that all-important Nordkapp postmark) and an appropriately vast souvenir shop. A five-screen, 120-degree theatre runs an enjoyable 17-minute panoramic film.

But it's the view that thrills the most. In fair weather – which is a lot of the time – you can gaze down at the wild surf 307m below, watch the mists roll in and simply enjoy the moment.

KNIVSKJELLODDEN

The continent's real northernmost point, Knivskjelodden, is mercifully inaccessible to vehicles and devoid of tat. You can hike to the tip of this promontory from a marked car park 6km south of the Nordkapp toll booth. The 9km track isn't difficult despite some ups and downs, but it's best to wear hiking boots since it can be mucky after precipitation. When you get to latitude 71° 11' 08" N, at sea level, sign the guest book. Should you wish, note down your reference number from the book and you can buy – nothing but the hike comes free on this island – a certificate (Nkr50) authenticating your achievement from Nordkapp Camping or the tourist office. Allow about five hours return.

SLEEPING

Astoundingly, you can spend the night in your motor home or caravan at Nordkapp itself (fill up on water and electricity though, because you won't find any there for the taking).

Nordkapp Camping (☎ 78 47 33 77; www.nordkappcamping.no; E69, Skipsfjorden; person/site Nkr30/100, d Nkr550, 2-/4-bed cabin with outdoor bathroom Nkr500/550, with bathroom Nkr950-1150; ☹ May–mid-Sep) The well-equipped communal kitchen, friendly service and variety of lodging options more than compensate for the stark location of this place, north of Skipsfjord.

Kirkeporten Camping (☎ 78 47 52 33; www.kirkeporten.no; Storravnsvæien 2, Skarsvåg; person/site Nkr25/150, cabin with outdoor bathroom Nkr475-550, 5-/6-bed with bathroom from Nkr775/850; ☹ mid-May–Aug) Just outside the hamlet of Skarsvåg, this is another welcoming camp site, a favourite of British adventure tour groups. Its claim to be the 'world's

northernmost camping' stands up; there's a rival on Svalbard but it's without cabins. The cosy café does reindeer (Nkr115) and a fresh-fish dish daily special (Nkr130 to Nkr145).

Honningsvåg

Honningsvåg is by far the island's largest settlement. Magerøya's **tourist office** (☎ 78 47 70 30; www.visitnorthcape.com; Fiskerveien 4B; ☹ 8.30am–8pm Mon–Fri, noon–8pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 8.30am–4pm Mon–Fri rest-of-year), beside the harbour, has one internet point (per 15 minutes Nkr23).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Honningsvåg's small **Nordkapp Museum** (☎ 78 47 72 00; www.nordkappmuseet.no; Fiskerveien 4; adult/child Nkr30/5 incl guided tour in English; ☹ 10am–7pm Jun–mid-Aug, noon–4pm rest-of-year), co-located with the tourist office, illustrates the impact of early visitors to the cape, Sami culture, the hard days in the immediate aftermath of WWII and the daily life of a town that, until the advent of tourism, lived from the sea.

The 19th-century **church** (Kirkegata; ☹ 8am–10pm Jun–mid-Sep) was the only building in town to survive the Nazis' scorched-earth retreat in 1944. For a time it was a communal dwelling until the first new houses were hastily erected.

SLEEPING

Northcape Guesthouse (☎ 47 25 50 63; www.northcapeguesthouse.com; Elvebakken 5a; dm Nkr200, d/q Nkr520/880; ☹ May–Sep) A 15- to 20-minute walk from the Hurtigruten quay, this bright, modern hostel is an excellent budget choice. There's a cosy lounge, washing machine, well-equipped kitchen for self-caterers – and great views over the town below. Relatively new but already with a reputation, it's often full so do reserve well in advance.

Honningsvåg Brygge (☎ 78 47 64 64; Vågen 1a; s/d Nkr1150/1300; ☹ year-round) This family-owned renovated former fishing warehouse has unbeatable views from its pier location. Rooms with harbour views come at no extra cost but you'll need to book ahead to reserve one. Its excellent restaurant is for hotel guests only.

EATING & DRINKING

Corner (☎ 78 47 63 40; Fiskerveien 1; mains Nkr145-175) This café serves seafood and pizza and also has a bar with an inviting outdoor terrace overlooking the water. Enjoy crispy cod

tongues (Nkr145), whale (Nkr145) or, more conventionally, fried halibut (Nkr160).

Arctico (☎ 78 47 15 00; Sjøgata 1a; adult/child Nkr120/free; ☹ 10am–9pm Apr–Sep) For a shiver in summer and sense of how Nordkapp must hit the senses in winter, visit this ice bar. Owner José Milares, himself a polar adventurer, talks with passion of the shapes, bubbles and inadvertent abstract art in the pure ice that he garners freshly each season and there's an igloo for the kids to crawl in.

Bryggerie (☎ 78 47 26 00; Nordkappgate 1) The splendid Mack Brewery in Tromsø has been supplanted as the world's northernmost by Honningsvåg's microbrewery. Among beers brewed on the spot is Ole Anton (Uncle Anton), named after the uncle of one of the owners.

Nøden Pub (☎ 78 47 27 11; Larsjorda 1; ☹ 8pm–2am Tue–Sun) This local favourite near the Rica Hotel often has live music.

Gjesvær

It's a stunning drive to the remote fishing village of **Gjesvær**, 34km northwest of Honningsvåg. Rolling taiga, punctuated by dark pools and cropped by reindeer, gives way to a stark, rocky landscape, and then a sudden view of low skerries and the Gjesværstappan islands.

Bird Safari (☎ 41 61 39 83; www.birdsafari.com; adult/child/youth under 12 Nkr450/free/225) sails two to three times daily between June and late August to the offshore bird colony on the Gjesværstappan islands. There are an estimated three *million* nesting birds, including colonies of puffins, skuas, razorbills, kittiwakes, gannets and white-tailed eagles. Reserve this 1½-hour tour directly or at the Honningsvåg tourist office. Bird Safari can also arrange **accommodation** (s/d with shared bathroom & kitchen Nkr350/40, cabins Nkr750; ☹ Jun–Aug).

Stappan Sjøprodukter (☎ 95 03 77 22; www.stappan.no) is an altogether smaller concern. Fisherman Roald Berg will take you bird-watching (Nkr1000 for up to two passengers, Nkr450 each for three to six) in his small boat. Or join him for a fishing expedition (Nkr2000 per hour, maximum four passengers). He also runs a splendid waterside summer **café** (☹ core hrs 11am–5pm) offering delights such as smoked wild salmon sandwiches (Nkr75), cloudberries and cream (Nkr75) and waffles with home-

made blueberry jam (Nkr40); he runs a well-furnished **apartment** (d/tr/q Nkr850/1000/1250).

Kamøyvær

A short detour from the E69 brings you to this tiny, sheltered fishing hamlet, its pastel-shaded cottages and cabins encircling the small harbour.

Ourpick Arran (☎ 78 47 51 29; www.arran.as; s/d from Nkr700/1050; ☹ mid-May–Aug; ☐) has 44 rooms spread over three quayside buildings. The Sami family who run it bake their own bread and the menu is always the freshest of fish, hauled from the sea, often by its own boat. To vary the cuisine it also offers a reindeer special (Nkr140).

If you find it full, several other houses in the village advertise rooms. And should you fancy a cultural diet, call by **The Gallery East of the Sun** (☹ noon–10pm mid-May–mid-Aug), featuring the sinuous shapes and bright canvases of artist Eva Schmutterer.

Getting There & Away

The Hurtigruten coastal ferry makes calls at Honningsvåg. Its 3½-hour northbound stop allows passengers a quick buzz up to Nordkapp (Nkr645).

An express bus connects Honningsvåg with Alta (Nkr367, four hours, one or two daily) and there's also a run to/from Hammerfest (Nkr321, 3¼ hours, one to two daily).

The road approach from the E6 is via Olderfjord, where the E69 branches northwards. The one-way toll for the 6.8km-long Nordkapp tunnel is a swingeing Nkr145 for a saloon car and driver plus Nkr47/24 per adult/child passenger.

Getting Around

CAR & MOTORCYCLE
Until the blacktop road to Nordkapp was constructed in the mid-1950s, all access was by boat. Nowadays, the route winds across a rocky plateau past herds of grazing reindeer. Depending upon snow conditions, it's open to private traffic from April to mid-October. In fringe months, ring the tourist office if the weather looks dicey.

A taxi to/from Nordkapp from Honningsvåg costs around Nkr1050, including an hour of waiting at the cape – plus that Nkr195 admission charge per passenger.

In Honningsvåg, **Avis** (☎ 78 47 62 22) has a special five-hour deal on car hire for Nkr850,

including petrol and insurance. The **Shell petrol station** (☎ 78 47 60 60) offers a similar four-hour deal for Nkr600.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Between June and late August, a local bus (adult/child Nkr90/45, 45 minutes) runs daily at 10.45am and 9.30pm between Honningsvåg and Nordkapp, setting off back from the cape at 1.15pm and 12.15am (so that you can take in the midnight sun at midnight). If you're on a budget, scan carefully the terms of any inclusive tours, which probably charge considerably more for similar services. And bear in mind that even if you arrive by bus, you still get dunned for that Nkr195 entry fee.

LAKSELV & AROUND

pop 3000

The plain fishing village of Lakselv, at the head of long, slim Porsangerfjord, has little to detain you. The name means 'salmon stream', which reflects its main appeal for Norwegian holidaymakers.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 46 07 00; www.artic-active.no; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun early Jun-mid-Aug, 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) is in the lugubrious Porsanger Vesthus hotel.

Its products may not be from the juice of the grape but **North Cape Wine** (☎ 78 46 23 73; Meieriveien 11) is the world's northernmost winery, making its own special vintages from Arctic berries. Ring the winery or tourist office for a tour and tasting, or pick up a bottle at the Vinmonopolet in the Torgsentret shopping centre.

Sleeping & Eating

Lakselv Vandrerhjem (☎ 78 46 14 76; lakselv.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; dm Nkr200, d Nkr450, cabins with bathroom & kitchen Nkr500-600; ☎ Jun-Aug) This HI-affiliated hostel is in a secluded site amid the trees and surrounded by small lakes. It makes a great base for gentle strolls and has self-catering facilities. Follow the E6 southwards from Lakselv for 6km, then take a dirt road to the left for 2km.

Lakselv Hotell (☎ 78 46 54 00; www.lakselvhottel.no; Karasjokveien; s/d Nkr910/1175 mid-Jun-mid-Aug; from Nkr940/1290 Sun-Thu, Nkr795/50 Fri & Sat rest-of-year; ☎) Just 2km south of town beside the E6, it has cosy rooms, hilltop fjord views, a sauna that's free for guests and a restaurant that does a good summertime dinner buffet (Nkr280). Guests can rent bikes (per day Nkr80).

our pick **Bungalåven Vertshus** (☎ 95 77 82 11; www.bungalaaeven.com; Børselv; basic d Nkr350-450) Some 40km up the Rv98 northeast of Lakselv, take a signed turning to reach this convivial converted farmhouse after 2km. It serves dinner in summer with traditional food for a bargain Nkr150. The lounge is a cosy haven and the owner plays a mean squeezebox so you may find yourself up and dancing. There are also a couple of simple cabins (Nkr350), a big one with bathroom (Nkr900) and a small camping space too (car/caravan site Nkr75/100).

Don't expect anything fancy to eat in Lakselv itself. Your best of few options is **Åstedet Café & Bistro** (☎ 78 46 13 77), beside Porsanger Versthus and the tourist office. Both pub and café-restaurant, it serves a range of decent meaty mains (around Nkr150) plus the usual burgers, pizzas and salads.

Getting There & Away

Lakselv's North Cape Airport, an important link for central Finnmark, has up to three daily flights to/from Tromsø.

Buses run to/from Alta (Nkr275, 3½ hours), Karasjok (Nkr123, 1¼ hours) and Honningsvåg (Nkr266, 3¼ hours) once or twice daily except Saturday. In summer, a daily bus running between Nordkapp and Rovaniemi via Ivalo (both in Finland) calls by.

STABBURSNEs

At Stabbursnes, 16km north of Lakselv and beside one of the most attractive sectors of Porsangerfjord, there are a couple of important protected areas.

Stabbursnes Nature Reserve

The Stabbursnes Nature Reserve extends over the wetlands and mudflats at the estuary of the River Stabburselva. Bird-watchers come to observe the many species of duck, plus geese, divers and sandpipers that rest in the area while migrating between the Arctic and more temperate zones. Among the more exotic species are the bar-tailed godwit, dunlin, knot and the increasingly rare lesser white-fronted goose. Coastal marshes are closed to visitors during the nesting season (May and June) and also from mid-August to mid-September.

A signed nature trail (2.8km one way) leads along the estuary and beside the shore of Porsangerfjord. Ask at the visitors centre for its useful trail description in English.

The **Stabbursnes Naturhus og Museum** (☎ 78 46 47 65; ☎ 9am-8pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-6pm early Jun & late Aug, noon-3pm Tue-Thu rest-of-year) serves both the nature reserve and national park. It sells field guides, maps and fishing permits and has a well-mounted **exhibition** (adult/child/concession Nkr50/10/40 incl a 20min DVD) about the birds, animals and geology of the interior high plateau, river valleys and coast.

Stabbursdalen National Park

No roads cross through the 747 sq km of Stabbursdalen National Park, which offers a spectacular glacial canyon and excellent hiking in the world's most northerly pine forest. For hikers, there are two mountain huts, Rørkulphytta and Ivarstua, as well as a turf hut. For longer treks, consult the Stabbursnes visitors centre, which carries the relevant walking maps: Statens Kartverk's *Stabbursdalen* and *Laksdal*, both at 1:50,000. Less arduously, there are three signed trails, the longest requiring around four hours.

Sleeping

Stabbursdalen Feriester (☎ 78 46 47 60; www.stabbursdalen.no; car/caravan site Nkr120/160 plus per person Nkr20, 2-bed cabin with outdoor bathroom Nkr450, 2-6 bed with bathroom Nkr650-850; ☎ mid-May-mid-Sep) Beside the salmon-rich River Stabburselva and packed with gumbooted fisherfolk in quest of The Big One (the café's TV relays live, real-time images from the riverbed), this extensive camp site enjoys a beautiful position. Facilities, however, are stretched in high season.

EASTERN FINNMARK

Relatively little visited, Eastern Finnmark, heartland of the Eastern Sami culture, has some charming coastal villages and a unique frontier history that embraces Finns, explorers and wartime destruction.

NORDKYN PENINSULA

The church-shaped rock formation known as the **Finnkirke** marks the entrance to the village of Kjøllefjord and provides a majestic introduction to this remote corner of Finnmark, a treasure trove for collectors of 'northernmosts'.

Across the peninsula, the tiny coastal village of Gamvik claims the world's northernmost museum. The **Latitude 71 Museum** (☎ 78 49 79 49; Strandveien 94; adult/child/concession Nkr50/10/25; ☎ 9am-4.30pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year), in a former fish-drying shed, reveals the fishing cultures of these far-flung environs. Nearby, a bird-watchers' trail runs through the **Slettnes Nature Reserve**, frequented by nesting and migrating ducks and wading birds (accessible only on foot or by private vehicle), and **Slettnes Fyr** is the world's northernmost mainland lighthouse.

In the centre are **Kinnarodden**, the northernmost point of mainland Europe (Nordkapp is, technically, on an island) and the town of **Mehamn**, unremarkable except as the site of one of Norway's earliest environmental movements. In 1903 troops were brought in to subdue local fishermen, who protested that whaling was exterminating the whales that had historically made fishing easy by driving cod towards the shore.

Alone beside the seashore, **Gamvik Gjestehus** (☎ 78 49 62 12; Strandveien 78, Gamvik), a renovated fishermen's cabin, has a good restaurant serving king crab and fresh fish.

Kjøllefjord and Mehamn are both brief stops on the Hurtigruten coastal ferry.

BERLEVÅG

pop 1100

This pint-sized fishing village has produced one big thing, the **Berlevåg Mannsangforening**, a male voice choir that was the subject of Knut Erik Jensen's 2001 documentary *Heftig og Begeistret* (Cool and Crazy). Something of a Nordic *Buena Vista Social Club*, the film caused a national sensation when it was released and earned international respect.

Sights & Activities

The **Harbour Museum** (Havnemuseum; ☎ 78 78 20 55; Havnegate; adult/child Nkr40/10; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 1-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, noon-3pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) has the usual maritime displays as well as an unusual old expedition dory, the *Berlevåg II*.

About 12km away is a **Sami sacrificial site** atop the 269m Tanahorn, with a wonderful view over the Arctic Ocean. The 8km return walk begins 9km west of town, along the gravel road towards the evocative abandoned

fishing village of Store Malvik (20km west of Berlevåg).

Berlevåg Trolling & Deep Sea Fishing (☎ 78 98 18 80; www.trollingnorway.com; Storgata 13) runs four-hour fishing trips (Nkr1180) and two-hour king crab safaris (Nkr980) aboard a genuine deep-sea fishing boat.

Sleeping

Berlevåg Pensjonat og Camping (☎ 78 98 16 10; www.berlevag-pensjonat.no; Havnegate 8b; person/site Nkr15/130, s/d Nkr500/600) This friendly, well-kept complex also houses the tourist office. Between them, they can arrange a visit to a fish farm, scuba diving and fishing excursions; and you can rent a bike here.

Getting There & Away

Bus routes from Tana Bru (Nkr215, 2½ hours) and Båtsfjord (Nkr151, 1¼ hours) at least once a day except Saturday. The run takes you by the spectacular, polychrome folded sedimentary layers in the Gamafjellet cliffs, along the eastern shore of Tanafjord. Berlevåg is also a stop on the Hurtigruten coastal ferry route.

BÅTSFJORD

pop 2100

If Berlevåg is rustic, its neighbour, the small port of Båtsfjord, has a much more bustling, industrial feel to it.

The main site in town is the **Båtsfjord church** (☎ mid-Jun–mid-Aug). Constructed in 1971, its mundane exterior contrasts sharply with the view from within of its glowing 85 sq metres of stained glass.

A 25km hike eastward along the fjord's southern shore leads to Makkaur, an **abandoned fishing village** that dates from medieval times and escaped bombing during WWII. There are all sorts of interesting junk to poke around, including the remains of a German POW camp.

Båtsfjord's best accommodation choice is **Polar Hotell** (☎ 78 98 31 00; www.polarhotel.no; s/d Nkr1050/1350; ☎ Apr–Oct). It's trim and tidy with a bar and restaurant. Beside it there's limited **camping** (site Nkr150) with access to the hotel's facilities.

Getting There & Away

Flights run from the airport, 5km from town, to Tromsø and Kirkenes, offering excellent

views of the Arctic landscape, complete with grazing reindeer.

Bus routes connect Båtsfjord with Tana Bru (Nkr174, two hours) once or twice daily except Saturday. Båtsfjord is also a stop on the Hurtigruten coastal ferry.

TANA BRU

pop 600

Tiny Tana Bru takes its name from the picturesque bridge over the great Tana River. Here, on one of Europe's best salmon reaches, locals use the technique of constructing barges to obstruct the upstream progress of the fish; the natural barrage at Storfossen falls, about 30km upstream, is one of the finest fishing spots in all Norway. Test its waters, though you'll need singular good luck to pull out anything to compare with the record 36kg specimen that was once played ashore.

Tana Gull og Sølvsmie (☎ 78 92 80 06; www.tanagull.ogsolv.com) was established over 30 years ago as eastern Finnmark's first gold- and silversmith. Andreas Lautz creates some very fine gold, silver and bronze jewellery, inspired by traditional Sami designs. The shop also displays quality textiles, ceramics and glassware.

You'll find camping, comfortable rooms, a restaurant, bar and the summertime tourist office at **Hotel Tana** (☎ 78 92 81 98; camp sites Nkr150; s/d Nkr695/795 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1095/1345 rest-of-year; ☎), a convenient staging post where the Rv98 meets the E6/E75. Hotel prices include breakfast and a light evening meal, and the new owners have grand plans for development and expansion.

There are daily services to/from Kirkenes (Nkr229, 2¼ hours) and Vadsø (Nkr114, 1¼ hours). Local buses run to/from Berlevåg (Nkr215, 2½ hours) and Båtsfjord (Nkr174, two hours) daily except Saturday. Westbound, the Kirkenes to Alta bus passes through four times weekly.

SAMI MUSEUMS

Between Tana Bru and Vadsø are two Sami treasures, each worth a brief visit.

At **Varangerbotn**, the **Varanger Sami Museum** (Várjjat Sámi Musea; ☎ 78 95 99 20; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☎ 10am–6pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 10am–3pm Mon–Fri rest-of-year) mounts temporary exhibitions on Sami culture and history, and displays art by contemporary Sami artists. There's also a small permanent open-air display of Sami turf huts, fishing equipment and domestic life.

SAMI CULTURE & TRADITIONS

Sami life was for centuries based on hunting and fishing, then sometime during the 16th century reindeer were domesticated and the hunting economy transformed into a nomadic herding economy. While reindeer still figure prominently in Sami life, only about 15% of Sami people are still directly involved in reindeer herding and transport by reindeer sledge. These days, a mere handful of traditionalists continue to lead a truly nomadic lifestyle. The majority these days fish or are engaged in tourist-related activities.

A major identifying element of Sami culture is the *joik* (or *yoik*), a rhythmic poem composed for a specific person to describe their innate nature and considered to be owned by the person it describes (p43). Other traditional elements include the use of folk medicine, Shamanism, artistic pursuits (especially woodcarving and silversmithing) and striving for ecological harmony.

The Sami national dress is the only genuine folk dress that's still in casual use in Norway, and you might see it on the streets of Kautokeino and Karasjok. Each district has its own distinct features, but all include a highly decorated and embroidered combination of red-and-blue felt shirts or frocks, trousers or skirts, and boots and hats. On special occasions, the women's dress is topped off with a crown of pearls and a garland of silk hair ribbons.

To learn more, look out for *The Sami People* published by Davvi Girji (1990) or *The Sami: Indigenous People of the Arctic* by Odd Mathis Hæлта, both available in English translation. *The Magic of Sami Yoik* by Dejoda is one of several CDs devoted to this special genre, while the tracks on *Eight Seasons* by Mari Boine, a Karasjok singer, offer a greater variety of Sami music.

On the E75, about 15km east of Verangerbotn is an affiliated site: the **Ceavccageadge** (Fish Oil Stone; Mortensnes; admission free; ☎ noon–6pm mid-Jun–late Aug), where you can stroll towards the shore amid traces of 10,000 years of Sami culture. At the western end, past burial sites, the remains of homesteads and a reconstructed turf hut, is the namesake *ceavccageadge*, a pillar standing near the water, which was smeared with cod-liver oil to ensure luck while fishing. On a hill to the east the Bjørnstein, a rock resembling a bear, was revered by early Sami inhabitants.

VADSØ

pop 5500

The administrative centre of Finnmark, Vadsø was the site of large-scale immigration from Finland; in the mid-19th century the town's population was 50% Kven, as the Fins were known. A monument at the north end of Tollbugata commemorates this cultural heritage. Vadsø is also renowned as a site for polar exploration, with several expeditions having started or ended here. Like other Finnmark towns, it was badly mauled, by both Russian bombers and retreating Nazi troops, in WWII.

In the cemetery on Vadsø island, across a short bridge from the mainland, rest the remains of several Pomors, Russian traders and fisherfolk from the White Sea area, who prospered here in the 17th century. There are

also traces of several protected prehistoric turf huts. If visiting in early summer, watch for the rare Steller's eider, a duck that nests here.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 94 04 44; www.varanger.com; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9am–3pm Mon–Fri rest-of-year) is at Kierkegate 15.

Sights

The **Vadsø Museum** (☎ 78 94 28 90; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 10am–3pm Mon–Fri rest-of-year) has three elements. The **Tuomainengården** (Tuomainen estate, Slettengate 21) is a mid-19th-century Finnish farmhouse, with its own bakery, sauna and blacksmith. From the same era, **Esbensengården** (Esbensen estate, Hvistendalsgata), just around the corner, is an altogether more opulent merchant's dwelling, complete with stable and servants' quarters. Admission to each costs Nkr30 (Nkr40 for both sites) and children are free.

The third site, the **Kjeldsen Fish Plant** (adult/child Nkr30/free; ☎ noon–6pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug) is at Ekkerøy, 15km east of town. It retains its old stores and lodgings, a mass of arcane fishing equipment, the old shrimp processing and bottling room and – to make you wince at childhood memories – a vast black vat and boiler for extracting cod-liver oil. Plan to arrive when hunger is beginning to bite and you can enjoy an excellent fish meal in the **Havhesten Restaurant** (☎ 90 50 60 80; mains

Nkr120-180; ☎ core hrs 2-10pm Tue-Sun), housed in one of the outbuildings. Its maritime artefacts could be an extension of the museum and, if the wind isn't whipping, you can dine on the jetty with the sea sloshing beneath you.

The oil-rig-shaped **Luftskipsmasta** (airship mast) on Vadsø island was built in the mid-1920s as an anchor and launch site for air-borne expeditions to the polar regions. The expedition of Roald Amundsen, Umberto Nobile and Lincoln Ellsworth, which flew via the North Pole to Alaska in the airship *Norge N-1*, first used it in April 1926. Two years later it was the launch site for Nobile's airship, *Italia*, which attempted to repeat the journey but crashed on Svalbard. Amundsen – together with 12 steamships, 13 planes and 1500 men – joined the rescue expedition and disappeared in the attempt, becoming a national martyr as well as a hero. It's well worth the breezy 600m stroll across the grass flats with a rich variety of aquatic birds that quack and croak in the small lake just beyond.

As so often in these small Finnmark communities, the **church** (Ammannsgate 1b; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Mon-Fri mid-Jun–mid-Aug) is the most interesting structure architecturally – and all too often the only building to have survived the devastation wreaked by retreating Nazi forces. Vadsø's didn't. Built anew in 1958, it's simple enough yet rich in symbolism. The twin peaks are intended to recall an iceberg, the Orthodox-inspired altarpiece looks metaphorically over the frontier and the rich stained glass depicts the seasons.

Sleeping & Eating

Vestre Jakobselv Camping (☎ 78 95 60 64; Lilledalsveien; person/site Nkr10/115, 4-/5-bed cabins Nkr350/420, 4-/6-bed r Nkr350/500, 3-bed r with bathroom & kitchen Nkr700; ☎ May-Sep) Rooms and cabins are very reasonably priced at Vadsø's nearest camp site, 17km west of town. Only 200m from a fast-flowing salmon river, it's a popular venue for fisherfolk.

Vadsø Apartments (☎ 78 95 44 00, 92 06 86 03; Tibergeveien 3; s/d Nkr400/600) The town's only mid-range choice is three blocks from the harbour. It's an excellent deal. The five singles and three doubles are furnished in homely style and have both bathroom and mini-kitchen. Capacity is limited, so book in advance.

Nobile Hotell (☎ 78 95 33 35; www.nobilehotell.no; Brugata 2, Vadsøya island; s/d Nkr700/1000 Jun-Jul

Nkr850/1250 Sun-Thu, Nkr800/1000 Fri & Sat rest-of-year, all incl breakfast; (P) (Q)) Named after the Arctic explorer – blown-up photos of him and his contemporaries gaze down at you from the walls – the Nobile is a short stroll from the Hurtigruten quay. Ask for room 217, slightly larger than the rest and with good views over town and sound.

Rica Hotel Vadsø (☎ 78 95 25 50; www.rica.no; Oscarsgate 4; s/d Nkr650/900 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1395/1645 Mon-Thu, Nkr1125/1395 Fri & Sat rest-of-year, all incl breakfast; (P) (Q)) Plumb in the centre, the friendly Rica has recently renovated rooms with parquet flooring. Complete with free sauna and mini-gym, it represents Vadsø's best choice.

Oscar Mat og Vinhus restaurant (mains Nkr188-317; ☎ 4-10pm) at the Rica Hotel Vadsø is the town's finest, offering a great buffet breakfast and a daily fish or meat special (Nkr145).

Hildonen Café (☎ 78 95 15 06; Kirkegata 20) The aroma of warm bread and sweet cakes draws you into this bakery and café, hugely popular with locals and bang opposite the tourist office.

Påls Matopplevelser (☎ 78 95 33 84; Hivstendalsgata 6b; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Pål dishes up tasty baguettes (Nkr33 to Nkr50) and salads (Nkr50 to Nkr90) and does a fresh-fish daily special (Nkr100 to Nkr140), all to eat in or take away.

Indigo (☎ 78 95 16 81; Tollbugata 12; mains Nkr150-255; ☎ Tue-Sat) It makes no such claim but surely the long-established Indigo must rank as Europe's, if not the world's, northernmost Indian restaurant. Its related takeaway adjunct is something of a culinary UN, dishing up kebabs, burgers, pizzas and Tex-Mex as well as curries.

Getting There & Away

Vadsø is a stop only on the northbound Hurtigruten coastal ferry, which heads for Kirkenes at 8.15am. There are at least two buses daily to/from Tana Bru (Nkr114, 1¼ hours) and Vardø (Nkr128, 1½ hours).

VARDØ pop 2100

It's a pancake-flat 75km drive between Vadsø and Vardø, well off the beaten track for all but the most die-hard travellers. But the ribbon of road has a lonely charm as it threads its way between the shoreline, hardy grasses and tough, low shrubs.

Vardø qualifies as Norway's easternmost town. Although this butterfly-shaped island

HAMNINGBERG

A warmly recommended 88km round trip northwards from Vardø along the coast brings you to the tiny, semi-abandoned, timber-built settlement of Hamningberg.

The wisp of a single-lane road runs through some of northern Norway's most fascinating geology: inky tarns, copses of scrubby bushes clinging to the meagre topsoil for dear life, flecks of snow even in late July and looming, lichen-covered eroded stone pillars, the remnants of sedimentary layers turned on end. En route, you'll pass reindeer herds and several sandy beaches. Save the bucket-and-spading, though, until the return journey when, 7.3km south of Hamningberg, you can walk to the broadest beach through the small nature reserve of **Sandfjordneset**, with its protected sand dunes set back from the shoreline.

What makes the village special is that, being so remote, it was saved from the general destruction of the Nazi retreat in WWII. Only one house was destroyed – and that by a Russian bomber. The rest, abandoned in the 1960s except for summer visitors, still stand as living reminders of what was once one of eastern Finnmark's largest fishing villages. Here where the road ends, there's a small **café** (☎ 10am-6pm Jun-Aug).

is connected to the mainland by the 2.9km-long Ishavstunnelen (Arctic Ocean tunnel), locals maintain that theirs is the only 'mainland' Norwegian town lying within the Arctic climatic zone (its average temperature is below 10°C). Once a stronghold of trade with the Russian Pomors, it's now a major fishing port and home to many Russian and Sri Lankan immigrants.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 98 69 07; www.varanger.com; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, noon-7pm Sat & Sun Jun–mid-Aug) is in a smart wooden building beside the Hurtigruten quay.

Sights & Activities

In summer the tourist office runs **boat trips** (Nkr200 return; ☎ hourly 9am-3.30pm) to the island of **Hornøya** with its picturesque lighthouse and teeming bird cliffs. To be all alone after the last shuttle pulls out, reserve one of the only three beds at the lighthouse (Nkr250).

The star-shaped **Vardøhus Festning** (Vardøhus Fortress; ☎ 78 98 85 02; Festningsgate 20; admission Nkr30; ☎ 8am-9pm mid-Apr–mid-Sep, 10am-6pm rest-of-year) – yes, of course it's the world's most northerly – was constructed in 1737 by King Christian VI. For a fortress, it's painted in gentle fairy-tale colours. On a nice, sunny day it's pleasant to stroll around the flower-festooned bastions, past turf-roofed buildings and Russian cannons. You pay the admission fee either at the guard office or by dropping it into the WWII sea mine that guards the entrance.

Vardø's recently established **Pomor Museum** (☎ 78 98 80 75; Kaigata; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☎ 11am-5pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 4-5pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) recalls

the historic trade between Russia and Norway, which involved bartering fish against corn. This lasted until the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.

Between 1621 and 1692, around 90 Vardø women were accused of witchcraft and burned; a sign and flag at Kristian IV gate 24 commemorate the site. On **Domen**, a hill about 2km south of town on the mainland, is the cave where they were supposed to have held their satanic rites and secret rendezvous with the devil.

And those huge spheres on Vardø's hill-tops? The official version is that they're space-tracking equipment.

Tours

Hexeria (☎ 78 98 84 04; www.hexeria.no; Kaigata 12) organises bird-watching and fishing trips and also rents boats and bikes.

Sleeping

Hexeria (see above; s/d from Nkr300/450; ☎ Jun-Aug) Rents student hostel rooms during the summer vacation, and also has apartments (from Nkr650) on its books. Hostel rooms have corridor bathrooms and self-catering facilities.

Kiberg Bed & Boat (☎ 41 32 86 79; www.kiberg.bedandboat.com; Ordfører Halvaris Gate 11, Kiberg; s/d Nkr350/490) We recommend this quirky place in Kiberg, 13km south of Vardø, with a degree of diffidence. Genial owner Ronny Larsen and most of his guests were happily out of their skulls on wine when we overnights as it was the night in the year when the community celebrates the return of the salmon from the deep ocean. So we'd welcome your feedback

about this renovated fisherfolk's sleeping quarters with its lounge and well-equipped guest kitchen. Rooms are trim and tidy with corridor facilities and there's no better place in all Norway to suck on the limbs of a giant king crab (Nkr350). Ronny can organise four-hour fishing trips (Nkr1500 per boat) and bird-watching walks (Nkr150). Reception is open between the hours of 6pm and midnight.

Vardø Hotell (☎ 78 98 77 61; www.vardohotel.no; Kaigata 8; s/d Nkr490/590 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1070/1170 Mon–Thu, Nkr860/960 Fri & Sat rest-of-year) The staff are willing and cheerful at Vardø's only hotel. However, rooms and corridors are decidedly threadbare and passé. On the plus side, summer prices are very reasonable, many rooms overlook the harbour and a couple are handicapped-equipped.

Eating & Drinking

Asia Burger Café (☎ 78 94 46 00; Kristian IV gate 4; mains Nkr130; ☎ Tue–Sun Feb–Nov) Disregard the off-putting name, shun the burgers and order a dish of tasty, authentic Thai cooking in – you've guessed it – mainland Europe's most northerly Thai restaurant. Accompany this with one of the 36 kinds of bottled beer on offer, including equally authentic Thai Singha beer.

Nordpol Kro (☎ 78 98 75 01; Kaigata 21; ☎ 10am–midnight) No, despite the name, the Northpole Pub isn't another 'northernmost'. But, dating from 1858 with wooden boards and antique bric-a-brac, each telling a story about the island, it does lay good claim to be northern Norway's oldest. Your friendly landlord, Bjørn Bredesen, has what must be just about anywhere's most comprehensive collection of beer mats. Pick the right night and you can enjoy live music too.

Getting There & Away

Vardø is a stop on the Hurtigruten coastal ferry route. Buses do the scenic seaside run between Vadsø and Vardø (Nkr128, 1½ hours) at least twice daily.

KIRKENES

pop 4600

This is it: you're as far east as Cairo, further east than most of Finland, a mere 15km from the border with Russia – and at the end of the line for the Hurtigruten coastal ferry. This tiny, nondescript place, anticlimactic for

many, has a distinct frontier feel. You'll see street signs in Norwegian and Cyrillic script and hear Russian spoken by trans-border visitors and fishermen, who enjoy better prices for their catch here than in their home ports further to the east.

The town reels with over 100,000 visitors per annum, most stepping off the Hurtigruten to spend a couple of hours in the town before travelling onward. But you should linger a while here, not primarily for the town's sake but to take one of the many excursions and activities offered by the useful one-stop tourist office.

History

The district of Sør-Varanger, with Kirkenes as its main town, was jointly occupied by Norway and Russia until 1926, when the Russian, Finnish and Norwegian borders were set.

In 1906 iron ore was discovered nearby and Kirkenes became a major supplier of raw materials for artillery during WWI. Early in WWII the Nazis coveted its resources and strategic position near the Russian port of Murmansk, occupied the town and posted 100,000 troops there. As a result, tiny Kirkenes was, after Malta, the most bombed place during WWII, with at least 320 devastating Soviet raids. The town was also an internment site for Norwegians from all over the country who did not cooperate with the Nazi occupiers.

The retreating Nazis burned to the ground the little left of Kirkenes before advancing Soviet troops liberated its ruins in October 1944. Subsequently rebuilt, it continued to supply iron ore to much of Europe but costs were too high to sustain the industry and in 1996 the mines closed down.

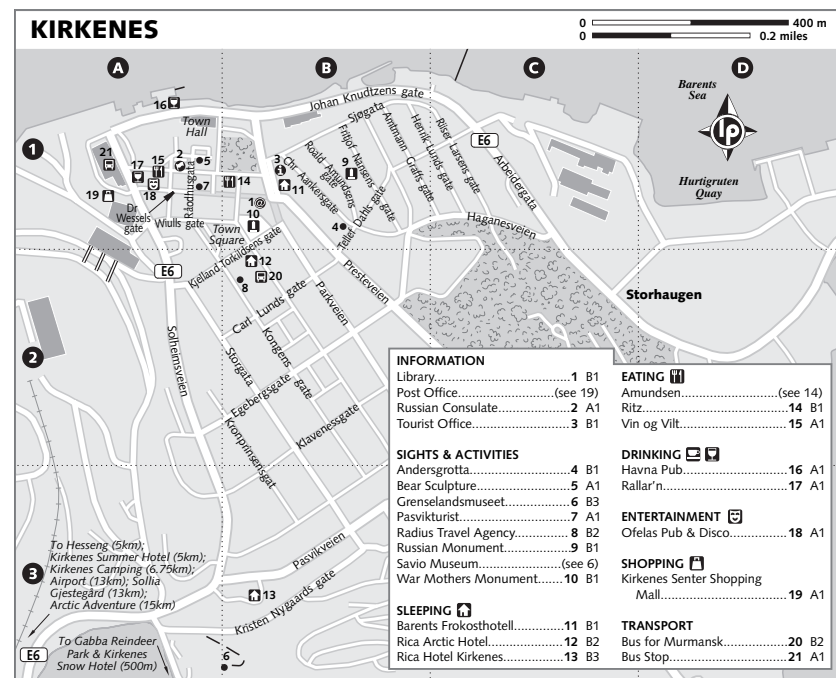
Information

Library (Bibliotek; ☎ 78 99 32 51; Town Sq; ☎ core hrs 9.30am–3pm Mon–Fri) Has internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 78 99 25 44; www.kirkenesinfo.no; Presteveien 1; ☎ 8.30am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat & Sun Jun–Aug, 8.30am–4pm Mon–Fri rest-of-year)

Dangers & Annoyances

Don't even think about stepping across the Russian border for a photo. Nowadays, in addition to vestiges of old Cold War neuroses on both sides, Norway, as a Schengen Agreement country, is vigilant in keeping illegal immi-



grants from entering. Both Norwegian and Russian sentries are equipped with surveillance equipment and the fine for any illegal crossings, even momentary ones, starts at a whopping Nkr5000. Greeting people on the other side, tossing anything across, using telephoto or zoom lenses or even a tripod all qualify as violations. As the guidance document sternly warns: 'any attempts at violations will be punished as if they had been carried out'.

Sights & Activities

For such a tiny place, Kirkenes offers a wealth of tours and activities in and around town. For an overview according to season, pick up one of the tourist office's comprehensive brochures, *Summer Activities* and *Winter Activities*.

Principal tour agencies are:

Arctic Adventure (☎ 95 15 07 55; www.arctic-adventure.no; Jarfjordbotn)

Pasvikturist (☎ 78 99 50 80; www.pasvikturist.no; Dr Wessels gate 9)

Radius (☎ 78 97 05 40; www.radius-kirkenes.com; Kongensgate 1-2)

Summer activities, in addition to the ones we describe following, include:

- Visiting a Russian trawler (Nkr275)
- Helicopter flights to the Russian border (Nkr895)
- King crab safaris (Nkr990)
- Visiting the old iron-ore mine (adult/child Nkr400/200)
- Half-day tours of the Pasvik Valley (adult/child Nkr650/350)

Winter fun includes:

- snowmobile safaris (from Nkr1150)
- ice fishing (Nkr790)
- dog-sledding (from Nkr1250)

You can book all through the tourist office or directly with the operators.

GRENSSELANDSMUSEET

This well-presented **frontier museum** (☎ 78 99 48 80; Førstevanslia; adult/child/concession Nkr40/free/30; ☎ 10am–6pm early Jun–mid-Aug, 10am–3.30pm rest-of-year), 1km from the centre, presents the geography and culture of the border region with special displays on WWII and mining.

VISAS FOR RUSSIA

It's possible to pass through the border at Storskog, Norway's only crossing point for Russia, but you need to plan far ahead. We strongly recommend using the services of either Pasvikturist or Radius (p361), rather than going solo via the **Russian consulate** (☎ 78 99 37 37, if you insist) and risking your sanity and a minor heart attack. Each agency can obtain a visa for you whether or not you sign on for one of its tours. You can download the application form from their websites, which give full details of other requirements. A one-/three-/up-to-29-day visa costs Nkr500/675/825. It normally takes up to two weeks to be issued but you can shortcut the process by paying an extra Nkr800/700/600 for same-/two-/three-day service.

Within it, the **Savio collection** displays the distinctive woodblock prints of local Sami artist John A Savio (1902–38), whose works evoke the tension between indigenous life and the forces of nature.

ANDERSGROTTA

Drop down the steep stairs of **Andersgrotta** (Tellef Dahlgate; admission Nkr100; ☞ visits 11.30am & noon) into this cave that once served as an air-raid shelter and bunker as wave upon wave of Russian bombers sought to knock out the Nazi ore shipping facility. There's a multilingual presentation and a nine-minute video also tells the tale. Wrap up warmly since the temperature is 3°C, even in summer.

MONUMENTS & SCULPTURES

Up a short hill, the **Russian Monument** is dedicated to the Red Army troops who liberated the town in 1944. The **War Mothers Monument** in the town square commemorates women's efforts during the war and there's an engaging little **sculpture** of a bear mounting – in every sense of the word, it would appear – a lamp-post outside the Russian consulate.

GABBA REINDEER PARK

This **reindeer safari park** (admission Nkr275; ☞ tours 2pm daily) may not be so much of a treat for the children if you've been driving in Eastern Finnmark and stopped to relate to browsing roadside reindeer but it's worth the visit if you've rolled in on the Hurtigruten.

RUSSIAN MARKET

On the last Thursday of most months, Russian merchants set up shop around the town centre, selling everything from crafts and knitted tablecloths to binoculars. Prices aren't as cheap as in Russia, but they're still a bargain for Norway.

Tours

Barents Safari (☎ 90 19 05 94) runs a three-hour boat trip (adult/child Nkr790/400, at least twice daily from June to mid-September) along the Pasvik River to the Russian border at the historic village of Boris Gleb (Borisoglebsk in Russian). Tariffs include a salmon meal with cloudberry and cream in a Sami-style hut.

Pasvikturist offers a day's trans-border visit to the Pechenga valley and mining city of Nikel (Nkr990), and a guided weekend in Murmansk (Nkr1690). For both you need a visa.

Independent travellers armed with a visa can hop aboard one of the two daily buses to Murmansk (one way/return Nkr300 to to Nkr800, five hours). See Lonely Planet's *Russia & Belarus* for more information.

Sleeping

Kirkenes Camping (☎ 78 99 80 28; Maggadalén, Hesseng; tent/caravan sites Nkr90/140 plus per person Nkr25, 4-bed cabins Nkr370-770; ☞ Jun-Aug) Beside the E6 and 8km west of Kirkenes, this friendly spot is the sole option for campers. Reception opens only between 9am and 8pm (no way to run a camp site in high season) so reserve in advance if you're after a cabin.

Kirkenes Summer Hotel (☎ 78 97 05 40; www.radius-kirkenes.com; Hesseng; s/d Nkr440/890; ☞ late Jun–mid-Aug; ☐) In the village of Hesseng, 4km southwest of Kirkenes along the E6, this option serves as student accommodation during the academic year. Singles have corridor bathrooms while all doubles are en suite.

Barents Frokosthotell (☎ 78 99 32 99; gcelius@fri surf.no; Presteveien 3; basic s/d Nkr500/700, with bathroom Nkr650/800) Reception and most of your fellow guests will probably be Russian at this unpretentious place. Right beside the tourist office, its 14 bog-standard rooms are fresh and comfortable.

our pick Sollia Gjestegård (☎ 78 99 08 20; www.storskog.no; 2-6-bed cabins Nkr500-950, d Nkr750) The Sollia, 13km southeast of Kirkenes, is a wonderful getaway haven, offering both cabins and apartments. The whole family can sweat it out in the sauna while the children will enjoy communing with the resident huskies.

Rica Arctic Hotel (☎ 78 99 29 29; www.rica.no; Kongensgate 1-3; s/d Nkr895/1145 mid-Jun–mid-Aug; Nkr1415/1665 Sun–Thu, Nkr880/1130 Fri & Sat rest-of-year; ☐ ☞ ☞) The Rica Arctic, a pleasing modern block, boasts Norway's most easterly swimming pool, heated and open year-round. The other special attribute, its Arctic menu restaurant (summer buffet Nkr295), is one of the best of Kirkenes's hotel dining options.

Rica Hotel Kirkenes (☎ 78 99 14 91; www.rica.no; Pasvikveien 63; s/d Nkr895/1145 mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Nkr1355/1605 Sun–Thu, Nkr825/1075 Fri & Sat rest-of-year, all incl breakfast) This Rica really does feel like an overspill hotel, similarly priced to the Rica Arctic yet with none of the latter's charm. All the same it's comfortable enough, and being above town, has panoramic views from the restaurant and many bedrooms.

Eating

Ritz (☎ 78 99 34 81; Dr Wessels gate 17; pizzas Nkr160-186; ☞ core hrs 3-11.30pm) Kirkenes' pizza place has an all-you-can-eat dinnertime taco buffet (Nkr110) on Wednesday and pizza buffet (Nkr105) each Friday.

Amundsen (☎ 78 99 34 80; ☞ core hrs 8.30am-4pm) A neat little café attached to Ritz with a good selection of sandwiches, salads and cakes. It's equally pleasant inside or, the wind willing, outdoors on the terrace flanking pedestrianised Dr Wessels gate.

Sollia Gjestegård (mains Nkr220-340; ☞ Tue-Sun) This hotel also runs a 1st-class restaurant, offering a grand panorama of the Russian frontier from its broad picture windows.

Vin og Vilt (☎ 78 99 38 11; Kierkegata 5; mains Nkr270-475; ☞ 6-11pm) This gourmet choice, its décor simulating an elegant hunting lodge, has an enticing à la carte menu, where reindeer, hare and grouse (in season) plus Arctic char all feature.

Drinking & Entertainment

Havna Pub (Johan Knudtzens gate 1; ☞ 3pm-1am Wed-Sun), an earthy sailors' hang-out overlooking the harbour and a rusting Russian hulk, is a

great place to play pool or darts. **Rallar'n** (☎ 78 99 18 73; Storgata 1), while by no means snooty, is less rough-and-ready.

Ritz (☎ 78 99 34 81; Dr Wessels gate 17) is a disco and pub attracting a mainly younger crowd. **Ofelas Pub & Disco** (Dr Wessels gate 3) pulls in a slightly older clientele. Both open on Friday and Saturday nights.

Getting There & Away

From **Kirkenes airport** (☎ 78 97 35 20), there are direct flights to Oslo and Tromsø. Savvy locals save money by flying in/out of Ivalo, Finland, in summer, when a daily bus (see below) runs the 250km between Kirkenes and Ivalo's airport.

Buses run to Karasjok (Nkr504, 5½ hours), Hammerfest (Nkr831, 10 to 12 hours), Alta (Nkr876, 15 hours) and many points in between three or four times weekly. From late June to mid-August, **Lapin Linjat** (www.eskelisen-lapinlinjat.com) runs once daily to Ivalo town and airport (Nkr320, 4½ hours).

Kirkenes is the terminus of the Hurtigruten coastal ferry, which heads southwards again at 12.45pm daily. A bus meets the boat and runs into town (Nkr25) and on to the airport (Nkr70).

Getting Around

The airport, 13km southwest of town, is served by the Flybus (Nkr70, 20 minutes), which connects the bus terminal and Rica Arctic Hotel with all arriving and departing flights. **Kirkenes Taxi** (☎ 78 99 13 97) charges Nkr225/305 for a day/evening run between town and airport.

Hourly buses (less frequent at weekends) run between the centre and Hesseng (Nkr20, 15 minutes).

Car rental agencies include **Hertz** (☎ 78 99 39 73) and **Avis** (☎ 78 97 37 05), both in Hesseng and both prepared to deliver a car to your hotel.

PASVIK RIVER VALLEY

Even when diabolical mosquito swarms make life hell for warm-blooded creatures, the remote lakes, wet tundra bogs and Norway's largest stand of virgin taiga forest lend appeal to little Øvre Pasvik National Park, in the far reaches of the Pasvik River valley.

Some 100km south of Kirkenes and 200 sq km in area, this last corner of Norway seems more like Finland, Siberia or even Alaska. Here, wolves, wolverines and brown bears still roam freely. The park is also home to elk and a host of relatively rare birds that

OPORINIA AUTUMNATA

Throughout Finnmark and over the border in Finland too, you'll come across desolate forests of birch, leafless, their trunks blackened as though fire had swept through. But the culprit is something smaller, slower, more insidious and just as destructive.

The *Oporinia autumnata* moth is dowdy and looks harmless; the caterpillars come bright green, up to 2cm long and hungry as hell, devouring the leaves and swinging on gossamer threads to their next chlorophyll meal.

Eventually, they'll eat themselves out of house and home and numbers will drop but until that time, their impact can be devastating for fragile taiga forest. What's needed for them to be eradicated is at least two consecutive days of temperatures below -35°C . But, while winters are harsh up here, years can go by before it gets *that* bitter.

includes the Siberian jay, pine grosbeak, red-poll and smew.

The Stone-Age Komsa hunting culture left its mark here in the form of hunters' pitfall traps around lake Ødevann and elsewhere in the region; some date from as early as 4000 BC.

Information

The **Øvre Pasvik National Park Centre** (☎ 46 41 36 00; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Fri & Sat mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) is set in lovely gardens about 40km south of Kirkenes.

Sights & Activities

It's worth a stop at the Strand branch of the **Sor-Varanger Museum** (☎ 78 99 48 80; 🕒 Jul-mid-Aug), which preserves Norway's oldest public boarding school and illustrates the region's ethnic mix. Visit, too, the timber-built **Svanvik chapel** dating from 1934, and a couple of 19th-century farms, **Bjorklund** and **Nordre Namdalen**.

The Cold War lookout tower **Høyden 96** offers a view eastward to the Russian mining town of Nikel.

HIKING

Douse yourself liberally in mosquito repellent before heading off into the wilds. The most accessible route is the poor road that turns southwest 1.5km south of Vaggetem and ends 9km later at a car park near the northeastern end of Lake Sortbrysttjørna. There, a marked track leads southwestward for 5km, passing several scenic lakes, marshes and bogs to end at the Ellenvannskoia hikers' hut, beside the large lake, Ellenvatn.

Also from the Ødevasskoia car park, it's about an 8km walk due south to Krokfjell (145m) and the **Treiriksrøysa**, the monument marking the spot where Norway, Finland and Russia meet. Although you can approach it

and take photos, you may not walk around the monument, which would amount to an illicit border crossing!

The topographic sheet to use is Statens Kartverk's *Krokfjellet*, which conveniently covers the entire park at 1:25,000.

Sleeping & Eating

There are several hunting and fishing huts scattered around the park but the only one that's practical for casual hikers is Ellenvannskoia, which is free.

Øvre Pasvik Café & Camping (☎ 78 99 55 30; www.pasvik-cafe.no in Norwegian; Vaggetem; cabin Nkr300-570) This place rents canoes and bicycles, and provides information on local wilderness and attractions.

Pasvik Taiga Restaurant (☎ 78 99 54 44; www.pasvik-taiga.no in Norwegian; Skogfoss; 3-4 course dinner Nkr500) This highly acclaimed place presents a range of gourmet fish and game dishes prepared using local herbs and berries. There are only seven rooms (per person including breakfast Nkr800) so it's essential to book ahead – for the restaurant, too, since all food is freshly prepared on the day.

Getting There & Away

A weekday bus leaves Kirkenes for Skogfoss (Nkr100, 1½ hours) and continues to Vaggetem (Nkr156, 2½ hours) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

GRENSE JAKOBSELV

The first settlement at Grense Jakobselv probably appeared around 8000 years ago, when the sea level was 60m lower than it is today. Only a small stream separates Norway and Russia here, and along the road you can see the border obelisks on both sides. The only real attraction – apart from the chance to

gaze over the magic line – is the 1869 stone church. It was constructed within sight of the sea to cement Norway's territorial claims after local people complained to the authorities that Russian fishing boats were illegally trespassing into Norwegian waters; it was thought that the intruders would respect a church and change their ways.

During school holidays, you can make a day trip between Kirkenes and Grense Jakobselv (Nkr105, 1½ hours) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The bus leaves at 9am and returns at 11.30am, allowing an hour to explore.

INNER FINNMARK

Nestled against the Finnish border, Norway's 'big sky country' is a place of lush greenery and epicentre of the semi-political entity known as Sápmi, the 'land of the Sami'. Kautokeino, a one-street town if ever there was one, is the traditional heart of the region, although Karasjok is altogether livelier and has more Sami institutions.

KAUTOKEINO pop 2000

While Karasjok has made concessions to Norwegian culture, Kautokeino, the traditional winter base of the reindeer Sami (as opposed to their coastal kin), remains more emphatically Sami; some 85% of the townspeople have Sami as their first language and it's not uncommon to see a few nontourist-industry locals in traditional costume. The *kommune*, or municipality, is Norway's largest, covering nearly 10,000 sq km. That's an awful lot of forest and lake. The town is, frankly, dull in summer since so many of its people are up and away with the reindeer in their warm-weather pastures (in winter, by contrast, around 100,000 reindeer live hereabouts). What makes a visit well worthwhile is Juhls' Silver Gallery, just out of town and a magnificent repository of the best of Scandinavian jewellery design.

From as early as 1553, during the gradual transition between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles, records reveal evidence of permanent settlement. Christianity took hold early and the first church was built in 1641.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 48 65 00; www.kautokeino.no; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug) is on the ground floor of the all-purpose complex beside the main road that also

houses a bank, the town post office and the Coop supermarket.

Sights & Activities JUHL'S SILVER GALLERY

Juhls' Sølvsmie (Silver Gallery) is a wonderful building, all slopes and soft angles, designed and built by owners Regine and Frank Juhls,

KAUTOKEINO 0 400 m / 0 0.2 miles

To Reisa National Park (36km) | To Alta (131km); Karasjok (130km) | To Finland (44km)

Streets: Alttjuoddá, Svanvikveien, Avviltjuoddá, Sammaluoddá, Cuhmbiljuoddá

Landmarks: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

INFORMATION

Bank.....	1	A1
Police Station.....	(see 1)	
Post Office.....	(see 1)	
Tourist Office.....	(see 1)	

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Juhls' Silver Gallery.....	2	A3
Kautokeino Church.....	3	A2
Kautokeino Cultural Centre.....	4	B1
Kautokeino Museum.....	5	A2
Samekniv.....	6	A2

SLEEPING 🛏️ 🏠

Arctic Motell & Camping.....	7	A2
Kautokeino Villmarksenter.....	8	A1
Thon Hotel Kautokeino.....	9	A1

EATING 🍴

Alfred's Kro.....	10	A1
Coop Supermarket.....	(see 1)	
Kautokeino Villmarksenter.....	(see 8)	

DRINKING

Caffé Galleriat.....	(see 1)	
Maras Pub.....	(see 10)	

TRANSPORT

Bus Stop.....	11	A1
Taxi Stand.....	(see 11)	

REGINE & FRANK JUHLS

It's over half a century since Frank Juhls, despairing of the incestuous art scene in his native Copenhagen, travelled alone to Sami country. 'I've always looked eastwards, never to the west', he says, sipping a coffee as the light of summer streams through the windows of his gallery. And it's nearly as long since his wife, Regine, fetched up here. A slip of a girl aged only 18, she too came alone, leaving her native Germany to spend her early months as maidservant to an itinerant Sami family. Frank hunted, painted and built himself a log cabin – and a reputation among the Sami as a practical man who could fix anything. Silver for the Sami was both adornment and wealth – 'art to wear', as Regine expresses it, recalling the early days when they were the only non-Sami in town, apart from the teachers at the local school, 'so they would bring their broken pieces for Frank to fix'. And from the Sami the Juhls first derived inspiration for their exquisite silverwork.

But envy is a snarling beast and, as the years passed, jealous eyes looked up from the valley below. The Sami became more sedentary. Snow-scooters replaced reindeer sleds as the preferred mode of transport and many of the old traditions faded away. 'They came with nothing and look at them now,' malicious tongues wagged. 'They patronise us', spat Sami radicals and the Juhls' children had a hard time in the local school. Years have gone by since then and time heals raw wounds. The Juhls will never be fully integrated but the couple who live on the hill are now accepted more readily by a younger generation who have sloughed off some of the complexes of their parents.

For the rest of the world, their lovely gallery with its soft, sweeping angles is the prime reason for making the long detour to Kautokeino. 'It's grown organically', says Regine, explaining how they grafted soaring wings and extensions onto the original simple wooden cabin that remains at the heart of their home.

who first began working with the Sami half a century ago. Their highly acclaimed **gallery** (☎ 78 48 43 30; www.juhls.no; Galaniitluodda; admission free; ☞ 8.30am–8pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9am–6pm rest-of-year) creates traditional-style and modern silver jewellery and handicrafts, and displays the best of Scandinavian design. One wing of the gallery has a fine collection of oriental carpets and artefacts, reminders of their work in support of Afghan refugees during that blighted country's Soviet occupation. Staff happily show you around and you're welcome to buy items.

KAUTOKEINO CULTURAL CENTRE

If you're interested in fine modern architecture, make a similar small detour to the outskirts of town and the **Kautokeino Cultural Centre** (Bredbuktnesveien 50), winner of several awards. It's the base for the Nordic Sami Institute and also Beaivváš, the world's only professional Sami theatre company, which tours throughout the region.

KAUTOKEINO MUSEUM

Outside, this charming little **museum** (☎ 78 48 71 00; Boaronjårga 23; adult/child Nkr30/free; ☞ 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, noon–7pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9am–3pm

Mon–Fri rest-of-year) presents a traditional Sami settlement, complete with an early home, temporary dwellings and outbuildings such as the kitchen, sauna, and huts for storing fish, potatoes and lichen (also called 'reindeer moss' and prime reindeer fodder). Inside are Sami handicrafts, farming and reindeer-herding implements, religious icons and artefacts, and winter transport gear.

KAUTOKEINO KIRKE

The timbered Kautokeino **church** (Suomalvodda; ☞ 9am–9pm Jun–mid-Aug), which dates from 1958, is one of Norway's most used, particularly at Easter. Its cheery interior, alive with bright Sami colours, has some fixtures salvaged from the earlier 1701 church that was torched in WWII.

SAMEKNIV

Samekniv (☎ 78 48 62 84; Galaniitluodda; admission free; ☞ 9am–8pm Jun–Aug, 9am–4pm rest-of-year) is the gallery of local Sami knifsmith Josef Per Buljo.

CANOEOING

Between June and August you can hire canoes (per day Nkr300) to potter around on the river. Ask at Alfred's Kro (see opposite).

Festivals & Events

Easter week is a time for weddings and an excuse for a big gathering to mark the end of the dark season, before folk and flocks disperse to the summer grazing. It's celebrated with panache: the reindeer racing world championships, the Sami Grand Prix – no, not a souped-up snowmobile race but the premier *yoik* (rhythmic poem) contest – and other traditional Sami and religious events. Check out www.saami-easterfestival.org for more details and programme information.

Sleeping & Eating

When we last passed by, pile-drivers were pounding, laying the foundations of a new hotel belonging to the Thon chain that's projected to open in late summer, 2008.

Arctic Motell & Camping (☎ 78 48 54 00; www.kauto.no; Suomaluoadda 16; car/caravan sites Nkr130/150, cabin with outdoor bathroom Nkr400, with bathroom Nkr750–1400, motel r Nkr600) Campers and cabin dwellers have access to a communal kitchen at this friendly place. Its Sami *lavvo* (tepee) is a warm and cosy spot to relax by a wood fire and sip the steaming coffee, laid on nightly at 8pm. If you ask, the small café will also rustle up *bidos*, the traditional reindeer meat stew served at Sami weddings and other rites of passage.

Kautokeino Villmarksenter (☎ 78 48 76 02; isakma this@hotmail.com; Hannoluohkka 2; s/d Nkr610/810, 4-bed cabins Nkr500) Set above the main road, this is a functional, cheerless sort of place whose main asset is its café-restaurant (mains Nkr90 to Nkr160) with an attractive open-air deck.

Alfred's Kro (☎ 78 48 61 18; Hannoluohkka 4) With Mack beer on draught, this amiable self-service café does a whole range of traditional Finnmark dishes such as pike fishcakes and – its speciality – juicy reindeer steak. A buffet plus main dish and coffee cost around Nkr150, representing outstanding value.

Drinking

Caffé Galleriat, above the tourist office and with its principal entrance on the main drag, is a convivial little place for a relaxing coffee.

Tucked away below Alfred's Kro, **Maras Pub** (☞ 8pm–midnight or 2am Thu–Sun) is an animated dive that sometimes has live music, both pop and traditional. Once the ale starts flowing, patrons are quite likely to spontaneously break into a *yoik* or two.

Getting There & Away

Public transport is slim. FFR buses run between Kautokeino and Alta (Nkr220, 2½ hours) four times weekly. From June to mid-August, the Finnish Lapin Linjat bus connects Kautokeino with Alta (1¼ hours) and Rovaniemi (eight hours), in Finland once daily.

REISA NATIONAL PARK

Although technically in Troms county, Reisa National Park is most readily accessible by road from Kautokeino. For hikers, the 50km route through this remote Finnmarksvidda country is one of Norway's wildest and most physically demanding challenges. The northern trailhead at Sarelv is accessible on the Rv865, 47km south of Storslett, and the southern end is reached on the gravel route to Reisevannhytta, 4km west of Bieddjuvaggi on the Rv896, heading northwest from Kautokeino.

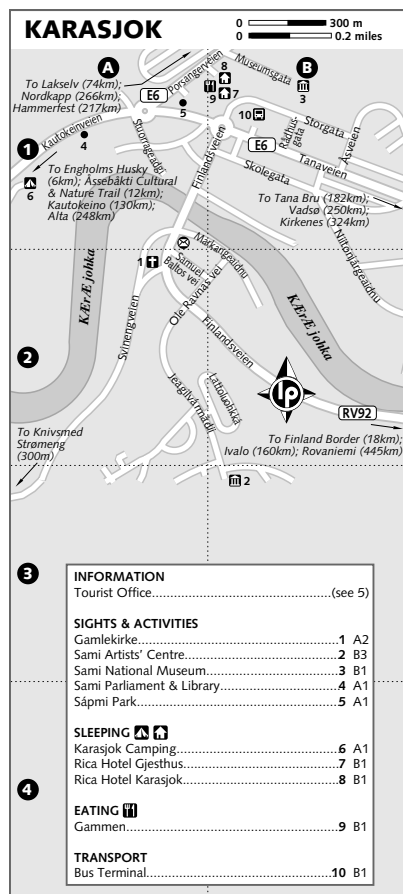
Most people walk from north to south. From Bilto or Sarelv, you can either walk the track up the western side of the cleft that channels the Reisaelva river or hire a riverboat for the three-hour 27km trip upstream to Nedrefoss, where there's a DNT hut. En route, notice the 269m Mollesfossen waterfall, east of the track on the tributary stream Molleselva. From Nedrefoss, the walking route continues for 35km south to the Reisaevannhytta hut on lake Reisaevävi, near the southern trailhead.

KARASJOK pop 1500

It's a lovely drive between Kautokeino and Karasjok, following, for the most spectacular stretch, the River Jiešjokka.

Kautokeino may have more Sami residents, but Karasjok (Kárásjohka in Sami) is Sami Norway's indisputable capital. It's home to the Sami Parliament and library, NRK Sami Radio, a wonderful Sami museum and an impressive Sami theme park. Karasjok is also the site of Finnmark's oldest timber church, **Gamlekirke**, constructed in 1807 and the only Karasjok building to survive WWII destruction. Only 18km from the border with Finland, the town pulls in coaches, caravans and cars by the hundred, all heading for Nordkapp.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 46 88 10; www.koas.no; ☞ 9am–7pm Jun–mid-Aug, 9am–4pm Mon–Fri rest-of-year) is in Sápmi Park, near the junction of the E6 and the Rv92. It will change money if you're



stuck with euros after crossing the border from Finland.

Sights & Activities

SÁPMI PARK

Sami culture is big business here, and it was only a matter of time before it was consolidated into a **theme park** (☎ 78 46 88 00; Porsangerveien; adult/child/family Nkr100/60/270; ☽ 9am-7pm Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year). There's a wistful, high-tech multimedia introduction to the Sami in the 'Magic Theatre', plus Sami winter and summer camps and other dwellings in the grounds, and of course, a gift shop and café. It's actually very good and presents the Sami as the normal fellow human beings they are rather than as exotic anachronisms.

If you want more substance, the smaller Sami museums in Karasjok and Kautokeino are less flash and more academic.

SAMI PARLIAMENT

The **Sami Parliament** (Sámediggi; ☎ 78 47 40 00; Kautokeinoveien 50; admission free) was established in 1989. In 2000 it moved into a glorious new building, encased in mellow Siberian wood, with a birch, pine and oak interior. The main assembly hall is shaped like a Sami tent, and the **Sami library**, lit with tiny lights like stars, houses over 35,000 volumes, plus other media. From late June to mid-August, there are 30-minute tours leaving hourly between 8.30am and 2.30pm (except 11.30am), Monday to Friday. The rest of the year, tours are at 1.30pm on weekdays. There are similar Sami parliaments in Finland and Sweden.

SAMI NATIONAL MUSEUM

The **Sami National Museum** (Sámiid Vuorká Dávvirat; ☎ 78 46 99 50; Museumsgata 17; admission Nkr70; ☽ 9am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri rest-of-year) is also called the Sami Collection. Smaller and more serious, it's been rather upstaged by the genial razzmatazz down the road. Devoted to Sami history and culture, it has displays of colourful, traditional Sami clothing, a bewildering array of tools and artefacts and works by contemporary Sami artists. Outdoors, a homestead reveals the simplicity of traditional Sami life. Signing is only in Norwegian and Sami and the English guide sheet is difficult to follow.

SAMI ARTISTS' CENTRE

This dynamic **gallery** (☎ 78 46 90 02; Jeagilvármádi 54; ☽ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sun) mounts temporary exhibitions by contemporary Sami artists and is well worth the short journey to the limits of town.

ÁSSEBÁKTI CULTURAL & NATURE TRAIL

On the Rv92, 12km south of Karasjok heading for Kautokeino, this 3.5km trail (signed 'Kulturminner' on the highway) is well worth undertaking for a taste of the forest even though, despite its name, it doesn't actually have much that's cultural. This said, around 25 minutes out (allow two hours for the full out-and-back route), there are traces of trappers' pits, store mounds and, across the river, turf huts.

Tours

Engholm's Husky, in the lodge bearing the same name (below), offers winter dog-sled and cross-country skiing tours, as well as summer walking tours with a dog to carry your pack – or at least some of it. All-inclusive expeditions range from one-day dog-sled tours (per person Nkr1100) to eight-day, off-piste Arctic safaris (Nkr11,500). Consult the website, www.engholm.no, for the full range of activities.

Sleeping & Eating

Karasjok Camping (☎ 78 46 61 35; halonen@online.no; Kautokeinoveien; person/site Nkr10/110, dm Nkr150, cabin with outdoor bathrooms Nkr275-450, with bathroom Nkr650-990) Friendly Karasjok Camping occupies a hillside site with river views and a range of cabins. Lay back on reindeer skins to the crackle of the nightly birch-wood fire in the cosy *lavvo* or cook your own thing in the equally relaxing barbecue hut.

our pick Engholm's Design Lodge (☎ 91 58 66 25; www.engholm.no; cabins Nkr300-400 plus per person Nkr200) About 6km from Karasjok along the Rv92, Sven Engholm, the owner of Engholm's Husky, has built from nothing this wonderful haven in the forest. Each rustic cabin is individually furnished with great flair, all have kitchen facilities and two have bathrooms. You sink into sleep to the odd bark and yelp from the sled dogs. A plentiful dinner costs Nkr250. Signed trails lead through the forest and barely a five-minute stroll away there's a salmon stream with a fine beach, where you can rent a double canoe (Nkr350 per day). Sven's place also serves as Karasjok's HI-affiliated youth hostel (dorms/singles/doubles Nkr175/355/500).

Rica Hotel Karasjok (☎ 78 46 88 60; www.rica.no; Porsangerveien; s/d Nkr950/1165 mid-Jun-mid-Aug, Nkr1375/1625 Sun-Thu, Nkr830/1080 Fri & Sat rest-of-

year; ☎ ☎) Adjacent to Sápmi Park, this is Karasjok's premier lodging, with handsome rooms and Sami motifs throughout, plus an impressive Arctic Menu restaurant. In addition to wi-fi, there's an internet point for guests which, at Nkr3 per minute, may rank as the world's most expensive. The hotel's **Gjestehus** (s/d Nkr590/700 mid-Jun-mid-Aug, Fri & Sat year-round Nkr645/860 Sun-Thu rest-of-year) is substantially cheaper and also in the park grounds, and has corridor bathrooms.

Gammen (☎ 78 46 88 60; mains Nkr215-310; ☽ 10am-11pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug) It's very much reindeer or reindeer, with a token trout dish, at this rustic complex of four large interconnected Sami huts run by the Rica Hotel. Although it may be busy with bus tour groups, it's an atmospheric place to sample traditional Sami dishes from reindeer stew to fillet of reindeer or simply to drop in for a coffee or beer. And hey, although cigarettes are banned from all Norwegian eateries, tenacious puffers may derive more than cold comfort from this dark, smoky environment.

Shopping

Knivsmed Strømeng (☎ 78 46 71 05; Badjenjårga; ☽ Mon-Fri) This craft shop calls on five generations of local experience to create unique and original handmade Sami knives for everything from outdoor to kitchen use.

Getting There & Away

Twice-daily buses (except Saturday) connect Karasjok with both Alta (Nkr391, 4¼ hours) and Hammerfest (Nkr344, 4¼ hours). There's a service to Kirkenes (Nkr504, 5¼ hours) three times weekly.

A daily Finnish Lapin Linjat bus runs to Rovaniemi (Nkr500, eight hours) via Ivalo (Nkr200, 3½ hours), in Finland; it also runs from Karasjok, year-round.

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