

Home > Travel > Destin... > Europe > Norway > Articles

# 14 hours by air, land and sea - is this remote subarctic cabin worth it?



Vega Island Hideaway, in the far north of Norway CREDIT: AKE ESON LINDMAN

Follow

By

Annabel Fenwick Elliott

14 MAY 2019 • 4:44PM

A lone, wide-eyed woman sat crumpled beneath a duvet in the corner of a cavernous, remote property, miles from the nearest human, flinching at every shadow, the brutish wind roaring as heavy rain thrashed the windows; mountains blackened by the night looming overhead. Anything could happen, and not a soul would hear.

No, this is not a scene from *The Shining*, but I, the lone woman, was watching the Kubrick cult classic, and perhaps I shouldn't have, given my frighteningly similar circumstances.

I was spending my weekend on a tiny Norwegian island just beneath the Arctic Circle, in a far-flung, weather-beaten abode that was once a fisherman's cottage and is now a modern, stylish Scandi-style hideout.

*The Shining* was the only English DVD on the shelf, and I'd already watched it thrice. "Why on earth would you watch a horror movie about a person who goes mad in an isolated hotel, when you're alone and isolated?" a friend hissed at me down the phone. "You might go mad yourself."

— ADVERTISEMENT —



I was already well on my way to insanity by the time I arrived. Getting to this neat, glowing cube in the wilderness from London involved a somewhat perilous 14-hour voyage over land, air and sea, but it proved worth it - isolation being exactly what I'd ventured there for. I was completely alone, with not another building or person in sight, in a house with no Wi-Fi; no distractions or responsibilities other than to keep the log fire alive.



Jack Nicholson's character in the 1980 horror movie gets serious cabin fever CREDIT: SUNSET BOULEVARD

Modelled on a traditional naust boathouse and tucked into the coast's mossy bedrock, Vega Island Hideaway is an understated architectural triumph. It's built into, rather than on top of, the surrounding craggy domain; with dark grey pine cladding to match the hue of the twisted trees scattered behind it, and a structure arranged over two levels designed to follow the land's topography. Inside, a white-walled open-plan medley of wood and glass. All about as cool and calming as my journey there was not.

First, a flight from London to Oslo - easy enough. Then, venturing further north, a hopover to the small town of Bronnoystund by way of a little propeller Bombardier plane. It was getting dark as we touched down, I was the only passenger in the tiny airport, the car park was empty, and there was no trace of the hire car I was expecting. A few phone calls to the travel agency and a 15-minute wait later, my car showed up and I was handed the keys. From thereon in: chaos.

I'd forgotten that not only am I a terrible driver at the best of times, but that I hadn't driven a car in years - let alone on the wrong side of the road, in the dark, alone, with indecipherable Norwegian signs to follow and only a paper map to guide me to the ferry port.



Annabel may or may not have crossed this bridge on the wrong side of the road CREDIT: WIKIPEDIA

I tried my very best, I really did: one fist clutching the steering wheel, the other hand grappling for a gear stick that did not exist to my left, wincing as I circled roundabouts, windscreen wipers wagging in lieu of indicators - at all times praying that a police car would pull me over and at least haul me into a cell and out of my misery.

I'll never know whether I drove the right or the wrong way, without my headlights on, across the towering, meandering, one-way bridge that straddled a slice of the ocean because, thankfully, I didn't encounter another car.

Astonishingly, I made it to the port, wobbled my vehicle onto the ramp of the wrong ferry, reversed it back off to the tune of a furiously-ranting transport officer, waited an hour at the desolate shore for the right one to arrive, tentatively boarded it, and then, at some time approaching midnight, emerged on the other side to arrive at Vega Island.





Vega Island has been sparsely populated for more than 10,000 years CREDIT: LINDMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Part of a mostly uninhabited Unesco-listed archipelago off Norway (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/norway/>), its Helegland coast and around 63-square-miles in size, Vega has been sparsely populated, mainly by small fishing communities, for more than 10,000 years and remains delightfully undisturbed to this day.

Having got my head around the basic rule of driving on the wrong side of the road - do, at all times, the exact opposite of what your instincts tell you to - all I had to do was find this wretched cottage. I'd lost all respect for the supplied printed instructions, and merely, I think, to provide myself with some sort of comic relief, I plugged the cabin's coordinates - 65°36'20"N, 11°50'20"E - into Google maps on my phone and waited for the digital 'ha ha, you're lost' to appear.

Astoundingly, Google got me there, along bumpy forest-trimmed dirt roads and past swathes of frost-bitten tundra, to the very end of a coastal track where I parked, scurried up a narrow path, and met the polite, ice-blond local who handed me the keys, gave me a quick tour and then vanished into the night. I wouldn't see another person for days.



The log fire was roaring, the fridge fully stocked with an array of delicacies - wine and fresh local bread among them - and the beds dressed with cloud-soft duvets and crisp white linen. There are two bedrooms downstairs and one in the sloped attic: a venue ideal for a group of friends and family, I noted, as I chose my room, laid down my head, and slept for a very long time.

I awoke to the most astonishing view. What was last night a lonely, illuminated house shrouded in inky darkness was now the window to a landscape-painter's dream. So much so that despite not having picked up a brush for years, I noticed a children's watercolour set on a shelf, dusted it off, and got painting.

Gargantuan mountains stood to either side, silvery waves gasped and exhaled to reveal new patterns on the empty beach with every changing tide, and graceful sea birds cartwheeled across tempestuous skies that morphed on a moment's notice from white, to blue, to navy and thunderous grey.



Inside, a white-walled open-plan medley of wood and glass CREDIT: AKE ESON LINDMAN

The property's vast glass panels and various carefully-positioned skylights allows an ever-changing flood of sunshine to dance rhythms across the floor. The snow outside doesn't settle - the wind, impatient, whips it away.

There's plenty to do on Vega Island, whatever the season: hiking, kayaking and bird-watching, should you wish. You can also visit, season permitting, the nearby island of Lanan where the world's most expensive duvets are hand-crafted

(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/norway/articles/most-expensive-eiderdown-duvets-lagan-remote-arctic-island/>) using millennia-old methods.

I merely ventured, once, to the island's famed and suitably mad restaurant at Havhotell (<http://www.havhotellene.no/>): a moss-covered converted fisherman's cabin with salmon pink walls, dim oil lamps and tattered lace curtains, strewn with nautical knick-knacks and with a set menu that doesn't come in English. I couldn't tell you what I ate, but it was fantastic.

Other than that, I had a hard time leaving the cabin, such was its comfort and seclusion. There's something almost perversely fun about having an entire place like this all to yourself. So save for my daily wheelbarrow trip down to the woodshed for more logs, I found myself, mentally-imposed at least, snowed-in.



One of the cabin's three bedrooms CREDIT: AKE ESON LINDMAN

I slept in a different room each night, woke with the sun, scattered food scraps across the rocks for the foxes and seagulls, painted by the window, dipped in and out of the many books lining the shelves and eventually started muttering to myself.

By the last day, and upon my third viewing of *The Shining*, I was arguably veering too close to Jack Nicholson territory. *I'm never going to leave*, I thought. *They can't make me. Who needs other people anyway? Never mind the job. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy...*

But the time had come for me to find my way back to the ferry, to the dinky airport, on to Oslo and then home to London. The journey back wasn't nearly as fraught. Any stress I'd been carrying when I arrived had long dissipated by the time I closed the cabin door behind me.

## The essentials

Vega Island Hideaway can be booked through [Off Grid Hideaways](https://offgridhideaways.com/hideaway/vega-island-norway/) (<https://offgridhideaways.com/hideaway/vega-island-norway/>), costs from €550 (£447) a night, for a minimum of 5 nights, and sleeps 6-7 guests.

## Inspiration for your inbox



## Sign up to Telegraph Travel's new weekly newsletter

(<https://secure.telegraph.co.uk/secure/newsletter/travel/>) for the latest features, advice, competitions, exclusive deals and comment.

You can also follow us on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/TelegraphTravel>), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Telegraphtravel/>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/telegraphtravel/>).

---

Contact us

About us (<https://corporate.telegraph.co.uk/>)

Rewards

Archive (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/archive/>)

Reader Prints (<http://telegraph.newsprints.co.uk/>)

Branded Content

Syndication

Guidelines

Privacy

Terms and Conditions

Advertising terms (<http://spark.telegraph.co.uk/toolkit/advertising/terms-and-conditions/>)

Fantasy Sport (<https://fantasyfootball.telegraph.co.uk>)

Voucher Codes (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/vouchercodes>)

Modern Slavery

© Telegraph Media Group Limited 2019