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DESIGN AT WORK

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CALL OF THE WILD

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Norway's rich seafaring history and vernacular architecture are lovingly preserved at Nusfjord Village and Resort, perched on a picturesque harbour where soaring fjords meet the dramatic seas

Photography Joel Nyponen / David Schartner / James Eric Hensley

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Fishing boats can still be seen around Nusfjord

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The setting is postcard perfect, with clusters of fishermen's houses in brilliant ochre, soft white and brick red set around the harbour

The Lofoten archipelago is a place that is hard to forget. Not least because it particular, Nusfjord village, located high above the Arctic Circle. But once you have arrived after a plane ride or two, the village has much to offer those seeking communion with Norway's rugged, otherworldly landscape.

Ever since the Viking Age, the islands of the archipelago have been a centre for fishing Norwegian Arctic cod, which comes here to spawn in the winter months. And where fish go, fishermen follow. Nusfjord sprang up to cater to the seasonal trade: fishermen would arrive needing a place to sleep, shop and trade their catch. Though times have changed and the industry has modernised, fishing has remained an important source of income to this day. But Nusfjord, with its colourful, well-preserved fishermen's cabins, or *rorbu*, is today better known for the sport and leisure activities that are now its main focus. The village was owned and tended to by the Dahl family for more than 150 years before they sold it to the Krefting family in 2005, who have transformed it into a sustainable, high-end Arctic resort while carefully preserving its history and heritage.

Some 25 colourful fishermen's cabins hug the water here. They have been lovingly refurbished and spruced up to serve the needs of today's modern travellers, yet their rustic quality remains. Traditionally, the fishermen would have used whatever was to hand to fix up their *rorbu*, so guests might well find themselves sleeping under a roof made out of an old fishing boat. →

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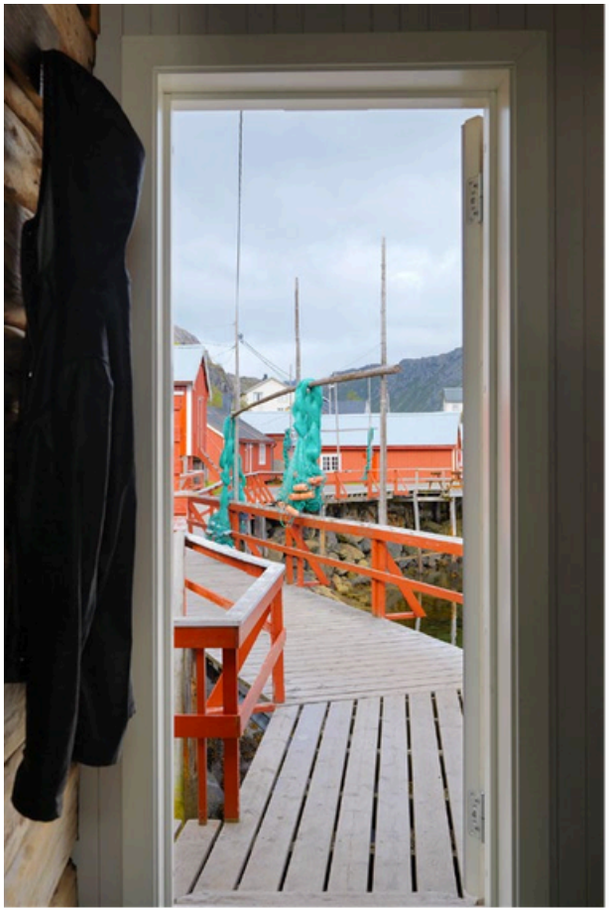
Opening a cottage door to a view of fishing nets: visitors are never far away from reminders of the complex's past as a working village



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Pared-back modern amenities sit happily next to the whitewashed wooden panelling of the fishermen's houses

"Our ambition has never been to make the buildings look new, but to reveal the history that was already there"

Respecting the original craftsmanship was one of the family's guiding principles throughout the restoration of the village. "Wherever possible, we reused existing materials rather than replacing them, and we carefully removed more recent additions to reveal the original timber structures hidden underneath," explains Nusfjord's general manager, Caroline Krefting. "By doing so, many of the buildings were able to tell their own stories again. The traditional fishermen's cabins were originally divided into two sections: a colder area nearest the water where fishing equipment was stored, and a warmer room where as many as eight fishermen would cook, eat and sleep. One detail we were especially keen to preserve can still be seen in the timber walls. Small openings reveal where fishermen repaired their fishing nets during the evenings, sitting inside by the fire while working the nets through the walls. These subtle traces of everyday life are some of the most valuable parts of the restoration. Our ambition has never been to make the buildings look new, but to reveal the history that was already there."

Many of the public buildings have also been carefully converted while retaining their original identity. The fine-dining restaurant, Karoline, is located in what was once the old fish-packing house, where the catch was prepared before being shipped to Europe. Oriana occupies

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The Arctic wellness area offers two traditional hot tubs and an outdoor sauna, which are tucked away in a peaceful spot

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Set in the old general store, Landhandel is now a modern shop and café that invites visitors to step back into history

> “It has been important that these buildings continue to have a purpose. Rather than static museum pieces, we were eager for them to remain active parts of village life”

the village’s former potato cellar, which has now been turned into a pizza restaurant, while casual dining spot Aurora Matbar is housed in the old fish-receiving station, where fishermen once delivered their daily catch. “The original smokehouse dating back more than 100 years also remains in use, and we continue to smoke our own salmon using traditional methods,” says Krefting. “For us, it has always been important that these buildings continue to have a purpose. Rather than becoming static museum pieces, we were eager for them to remain active parts of village life while allowing visitors to experience their history in a meaningful way.”

Visitors might spend their days hiking, skiing, fishing or kayaking along the coast. The Krefings have also added a spa, designed by recent graduates from the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, that has magnificent sea views. The slatted timber structure features a traditional

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Once the home of the original landowner, Dahlgården now offers luxury private accommodation with five bedrooms and a cosy library

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The mountains and sea provide a rugged backdrop for the charming cottages

> "Nusfjord invites you to disconnect from everyday life and reconnect with nature, history and craftsmanship"

wood-fired hot tub, sauna and outdoor shower. "Rather than creating an architectural statement, our ambition was to create spaces that sit naturally within the landscape and complement the historic village," says Krefting.

But contemporary culture has found its way here too. A former salt house has been transformed into Salteriet, a modern-art gallery displaying a rotating line-up of Norwegian and international artists. This year, Fotografiska – Stockholm's museum of photography, art and culture – arrives in Nusfjord for a photography exhibition ahead of the institution's permanent opening in Oslo in 2027.

Catering to all tastes is a tricky business, but at Nusfjord mind, body and soul will surely be very well taken care of. "What makes Nusfjord so special is that the village has remained remarkably intact," says Krefting with an obvious sense of pride. "The characteristic red, yellow and white buildings still tell the story of how people lived and worked here more than 200 years ago.

"Nusfjord invites you to disconnect from everyday life and reconnect with nature, history and craftsmanship. If our guests leave with a deeper appreciation for the generations who built this village and the landscape that shaped their lives, then we have achieved what we set out to do."