

Svolvær

Nordland · Norway

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Svolvær is the largest town in the Lofoten Islands, wedged onto a narrow strip of land where jagged granite peaks drop straight into the Norwegian Sea. It works as both a destination and a base: ferries, flights, and the coastal ferry all stop here, and a marked hiking trail starts a short walk from the harbor.

The town grew on cod. Every winter for centuries, fishing crews came north to catch skrei, the migrating Arctic cod, and dry it on wooden racks for export across Europe. That history still shapes the harbor today, alongside a small but lively arts scene — the painter *Gunnar Berg* was born here on the Svinøya peninsula, and several galleries keep that tradition going.

Svolvær suits a stay of two or three nights: enough time to hike above the town, take a boat trip to a nearby fjord, and use it as a hub for exploring the wider archipelago.

When to visit

Svolvær lies north of the Arctic Circle, so the seasons swing hard. Summer (June–August) brings the midnight sun and the mildest weather for hiking and boat trips. Winter is cold, dark, and often stormy, but it's prime time for the northern lights.

The town's biggest annual event is the World Cod Fishing Championship each March, when fishing crews compete to land the biggest catch and the harbor fills with spectators watching the boats come in.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for aurora viewing	2° / 6° Feels like -7°	-1° / -7°	19 rainy days · Dry air · Windy
February	Good Good for aurora viewing	1° / 6° Feels like -7°	-1° / -7°	18 rainy days · Dry air · Windy
March	Poor Poor for hiking	2° / 6° Feels like -6°	-1° / -6°	19 rainy days · Dry air
April	Poor Poor for hiking	4° / 7° Feels like -3°	2° / -3°	16 rainy days · Dry air
May	Poor Poor for wildlife watching	7° / 12° Feels like 1°	5° / 1°	14 rainy days · Dry air
June	Fair Fair for hiking	11° / 16° Feels like 5°	8° / 5°	12 rainy days · Dry air
July	Good Good for hiking	14° / 19° Feels like 10°	11° / 8°	12 rainy days · Dry air
August	Good Good for hiking	14° / 18° Feels like 10°	11° / 8°	15 rainy days · Dry air
September	Poor Poor for hiking	11° / 15° Feels like 6°	9° / 5°	18 rainy days · Dry air
October	Fair Fair for aurora viewing	7° / 11° Feels like 1°	5° / 1°	21 rainy days · Dry air
November	Good Good for aurora viewing	5° / 9° Feels like -3°	3° / -2°	21 rainy days · Dry air
December	Good Good for aurora viewing	3° / 7° Feels like -5°	0° / -5°	20 rainy days · Dry air · Windy

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Rain is common here even in summer, so pack a waterproof jacket regardless of when you visit.

Top sights



Svolvær's setting is its main attraction, but a handful of specific places round out a visit.

A Svolværgeita is the twin-horned rock spire that towers over the harbor and appears in almost every photo of the town. Expert climbers scale it to jump between its two peaks, a tradition dating back over a century; a hiking trail from the same trailhead branches off toward it, though reaching the spire itself takes a mountain guide.

B Devil's Gate is a huge boulder wedged between two cliffs further up that same trail, on the way to Fløya, the mountain rising directly behind town. It's a steep but manageable hike on marked stone steps, and the gorge and the view back down over the harbor make the climb worth it.

Down in town, C Svolvær Church is a striking white concrete church completed in 1934, built entirely with private donations and designed as a single long hall seating up to 400 people.

D Lofoten War Memorial Museum covers Lofoten's German occupation during the Second World War through an extensive collection of wartime uniforms and personal items.

For contemporary art, E North Norwegian Art Centre is a free gallery and a hub for artists from across northern Norway.

F Gunnar Berg remembers the Svolvær-born painter who captured the town's fishing life in the late 1800s.

On a cold or rainy evening, G Magic Ice Bar Svolvær is a bar built entirely from ice, with sculptures depicting local history and drinks served in glasses carved from ice.

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What to experience

Some of the best things to do here are seasonal and active, not just sightseeing:

- In summer, hike up Fløya, the peak behind town, during the midnight sun — the trail stays lit well past midnight from late May into July.
- Take a RIB or larger boat safari with Trollfjord Sea Eagle Safari into Trollfjord to look for white-tailed sea eagles along the cliffs.
- In winter, join a northern lights tour, or simply walk away from the harbor lights on a clear night; Svolvær is far enough north that displays are common from September to April.
- Watch the fishing boats unload their catch at the harbor in winter, when the cod season peaks and drying racks fill the hillsides with rows of stockfish.

Day trips

Lofoten rewards a day away from Svolvær as much as time in town. These are listed roughly closest to farthest.



- Kabelvåg (about 10 minutes by car): Lofoten's historic capital, built on the site of Vágar, one of the first towns in the Arctic. Its wooden church, nicknamed the "Lofoten Cathedral," was built in 1898 and is the largest wooden building in northern Norway. The town also has an aquarium and a heritage museum with restored fishermen's cabins.
- Ⓐ Henningsvær (30–40 minutes by car): A fishing village spread across a cluster of small islands, nicknamed "the Venice of Lofoten." Its football pitch, wedged against the rocks at the water's edge, is one of the most photographed sports grounds in the world from above, though at ground level it's a modest local field surrounded by rock. Come for the galleries, cafés, and narrow streets between the islets.
- Trollfjord (about 3 hours round trip by boat from Svolvær): A narrow fjord only 2 km long, with cliffs rising up to 1,100 meters straight from the water. Boat and RIB tours run from the harbor and often spot white-tailed sea eagles along the way.
- Ⓑ Reine (about 2 hours by car): Widely considered one of Norway's most scenic villages, with red fishing cabins set against sheer granite peaks rising straight from the fjord.

Getting there

- **By air**: Svolvær Airport (SVJ) is a small domestic airport a few minutes from the town center, with Widerøe flights connecting mainly through Bodø. If arriving from outside Norway, connect through Oslo or Bodø first.
- **By sea**: The Hurtigruten coastal ferry calls at Svolvær on its route along the Norwegian coast — a scenic way to arrive if you're already sailing that route.
- **By road**: There's no railway into Lofoten. The nearest train station is in Bodø, on the Nordland Line from Trondheim and Oslo; from there, continue by car ferry, express boat, or a short flight. Driving in from the mainland, the E10 highway crosses a chain of bridges and tunnels linking the Lofoten islands.
- **By bus**: Long-distance buses run along the E10, connecting Svolvær to Leknes, Å, and Narvik.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The town center is small and mostly flat, easy to cover in an hour or two.
- **Car**: Renting a car is the easiest way to reach hiking trailheads, Kabelvåg, and the rest of Lofoten; rental agencies operate from the town center.
- **Buses**: Local and regional buses connect Svolvær to nearby towns along the E10; buy tickets through the regional transport app.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The town center is compact and flat, easy to explore on foot in an hour or two.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Steep terrain and narrow mountain roads make cycling impractical beyond the town center.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not for the town itself — it's small and walkable — but yes for exploring the rest of Lofoten, since buses run infrequently outside summer.
- **Parking**: Free and paid spaces are available near the harbor and town center; pay via the EasyPark app, used nationwide in Norway.
- **Roads**: The E10 is well maintained but narrow and winding in places; drive cautiously and watch for tour buses and cyclists.

Food & drink

Cod defines the table here, the way it defines the town's history. Look for **skrei**, the migrating Arctic cod caught each winter, served fresh, dried as tørrfisk, or turned into bacalao, a Portuguese-influenced salt cod stew that has become a local specialty on Lofoten menus.

For a meal out, head to the cluster of restaurants around the harbor near Torget, the town's old market square, where several kitchens serve local seafood within a short walk of each other.

What to eat & drink

DINNER

Fårikål
Lamb and cabbage stew simmered with whole peppercorns; widely regarded as Norway's national dish, especially in autumn.

Cured salmon · Gravlaks
Salmon cured in salt, sugar, and dill, served thinly sliced with a mustard-dill sauce.

Fermented fish · Rakfisk
Trout fermented for months, eaten cold with flatbread, sour cream, and onion. A strong-smelling acquired taste.

Dried salted cod · Klippfisk
Cod salted and air-dried, then rehydrated and cooked into stews such as bacalao.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Brown cheese · Brunost
A caramel-colored whey cheese with a sweet, slightly tangy flavor, typically sliced thin onto bread or waffles.

Potato flatbread · Lefse
A soft flatbread made from potato, rolled up with butter and sugar or cinnamon.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Waffles · Vafler
Heart-shaped, thin waffles served with sour cream and jam, a common café treat.

DRINKS

Caraway spirit · Akevitt
A potato-based spirit flavored with caraway and other spices, traditionally aged in oak sherry casks and served at holidays.

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Safety & health

Svolvær is a small, low-crime town, and violent crime against tourists is rare. The main risks are weather-related: conditions on the trails above town can change fast, so bring layers, a waterproof jacket, and good boots even on a sunny morning.

Winter brings icy pavements, so good winter boots help on the steeper streets. If you're driving, watch for black ice on the E10 outside town from late autumn through spring.

History

Long before Svolvær existed, the nearby settlement of Vágar (today's Kabelvåg) was one of the first towns in the Arctic. Saga tradition credits King Øystein with ordering the first rorbuer, or fishermen's cabins, built there around 1120 — a claim historians treat as part legend, part fact, though the rorbu went on to become the standard fisherman's lodging across Lofoten for centuries. Svolvær itself grew later, gaining official town status only in 1918, built entirely on the winter cod trade that still shapes the harbor today.

That fishing identity produced real conflict more than once. In 1890, hundreds of rowboat fishermen broke through ropes that steam-trawler owners had strung across nearby Trollfjord to block their access to the fishing grounds, a clash the Svolvær-born painter *Gunnar Berg* captured in a well-known painting now on display in town. Half a century later, in March 1941, British commandos raided the harbor and destroyed Svolvær's fish-oil factories as part of a wider strike on four Lofoten ports; Lofoten War Memorial Museum covers that wartime period today.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Norway at a glance:

CURRENCY
NOK kr

ELECTRICITY

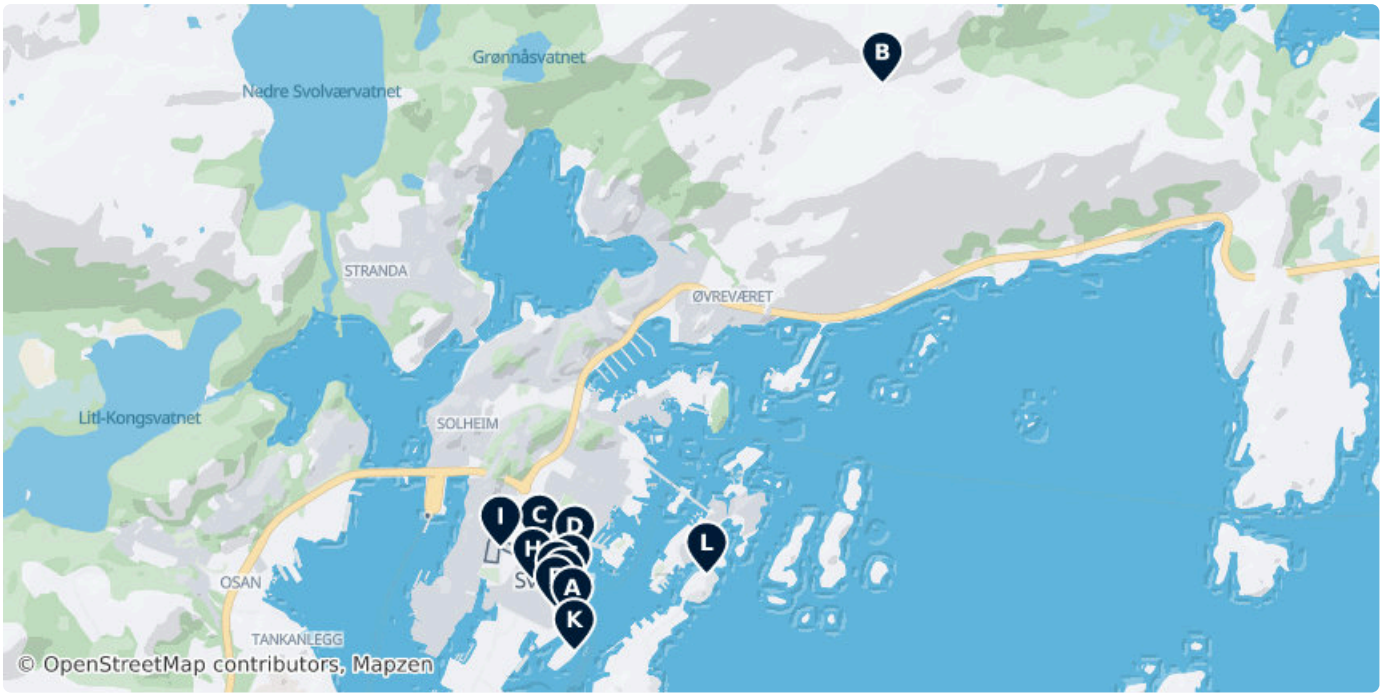
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Norwegian Bokmål, Norwegian Nynorsk

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Svolvær Must-Sees

Svolvær serves as the administrative and cultural hub of the Lofoten archipelago. This selection highlights the town's maritime heritage at the ferry terminal, its wartime history at the Krigsminnemuseum, and contemporary arts at the Nordnorsk Kunstnersenter. Natural landmarks include the Djevelporten rock formation and boat excursions to the narrow Trollfjord. The list also features local icons like the 1934 Svolvær Church and the Magic Ice Bar, showcasing the town's blend of Arctic tradition and modern amenities.





A Svolvær

The primary maritime hub for Svolvær, serving the Hurtigruten coastal express and local passenger ferries connecting to Bodø and nearby islands.

18 O. J. Kaarbøs gate, Svolvær 8300, Norway (68.23074, 14.56654)

global.hurtigruten.com/ports/svolvar/



B Devil's Gate

A natural rock bridge wedged between two mountain faces on the hiking trail toward Mount Fløya, offering views over the town and Vestfjorden.

8300, Norway (68.25084, 14.59798)

visitnorway.com/listings/hike-to-floya-and-djevelporten-5...

C Svolvær Church

A reinforced concrete church built in 1934, featuring a simplified Gothic style designed by architect Harald Sund.

2 Kirkegata, Svolvær 8300, Norway (68.23346, 14.56323)

D Trollfjord Sea Eagle Safari

High-speed RIB boat tours departing from the harbor to explore the narrow Trollfjord and observe white-tailed sea eagles.

12B John E. Paulsens gate, Svolvær 8300, Norway (68.23305, 14.56680)

lofoten-explorer.no, +479752248

E Lofoten War Memorial Museum

A museum housing one of the world's largest collections of unique uniforms and artifacts from World War II, focusing on the German occupation of Norway.

6 O. J. Kaarbøs gate, Svolvær 8300, Norway (68.23116, 14.56483)

Mo–Fr	10:00–22:15
Sa	11:00–15:00, 18:30–22:15
Su	12:00–15:00, 18:30–22:15

lofotenkrigmus.no, +4791730328

F North Norwegian Art Centre

A regional art center and gallery that showcases contemporary exhibitions from Northern Norwegian and international artists.

Torget, 8300 Svolvær, Norway (68.23173, 14.56496)

Tu–Su	10:00–16:00

nnks.no/en

G Excursion to Trollfjord

Departure point for boat tours into the two-kilometer-long Trollfjord, famous for its steep 1,000-meter-high mountain walls and narrow entrance.

(68.23199, 14.56637)

H Svolvær Filmteater

The town's local cinema, screening a variety of Norwegian and international films.

29 Storgata, Svolvær 8300, Norway (68.23219, 14.56257)

Mo–Su	Open 24/7

I Alti Svolvær

A central shopping mall featuring over 20 retail stores including fashion, electronics, and grocery outlets.

33 Lofotgata, Svolvær 8300, Norway (68.23342, 14.55928)

Mo–Fr	10:00–19:00
Sa	10:00–18:00

J Lofoten kulturhus

A modern waterfront venue hosting theater, concerts, and cultural events, serving as a social centerpiece for the Lofoten region.

(68.23143, 14.56567)

K Magic Ice Bar Svolvær

An indoor gallery and bar maintained at sub-zero temperatures, featuring intricate ice sculptures that depict local fishing history and Arctic lore.

38 Fiskergata, Svolvær 8300, Norway (68.22953, 14.56676)

Jun 01-Sep 01 Mo–Su	12:00–22:00
Sep 02-Sep 18 Mo–Su	14:00–22:00
Sep 19-May 31 Mo–Su	18:00–22:00

magicice.no/listings/svolvaer-lofoten/, +4745418535



L Gunnar Berg Statue

A memorial on Svinøya dedicated to the 19th-century painter Gunnar Berg, known for his classic works depicting Lofoten's landscape and fishing life.

13 Gunnar Bergs vei, Svolvær 8300, Norway (68.23242, 14.58017)

DATA SOURCES

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