



## **My Drift**

**Title: The Lofoten Islands**

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**I'm betting not more than 1 or 2 of my article readers have ever heard of the Lofoten Islands. I have never heard of them until a couple of weeks ago when this interesting and beautiful picture appeared on my computer screen when I turned it on.**



Lofoten is a group of islands in northern Norway. These islands are known for their distinctive scenery with dramatic mountains and peaks, open seas and sheltered bays, beaches, and untouched lands. Its second largest town, Leknes, which is on the island of Vestvagoy and in the center of the Lofoten Islands is approximately 105 miles inside the Arctic Circle and approximately 1,500 miles away from the North Pole, making Lofoten one of the world's northernmost populated regions.



The principal islands, running from north to south are:

**Austvågøy** is largely made up of several mountains with lowland almost exclusively at the coastal beaches, the brim of lowland around the coast. The highest mountain on the island (and all of Lofoten) is the 3,760 feet tall Higravstinden, located on the eastern part of the island. The total area of Austvågøy is 203 square miles making it the largest Lofoten Island.



**Austvågøy Mountains**

The population of Austvågøy island is about 9,000 people. The main town on the island is Svolvær (the biggest town in the Lofoten Islands) with a population of 4,720 people.



Svolvær

Austvågøya with its many beautiful mountains is popular among mountain climbers.

**Gimsøy** is the smallest Lofoten Island with 17.9 square miles with a population of 1,551 people at last count. The main population centers on Gimsøy include Vinje (where Gimsøy Elementary school is located), Hov (where the golf course is located), Hovsund (where the marina is located), Barstrand (where some fishing industry is located), Gimsøysand (where Gimsøy Church is located), and Årrstranda (where the primary beach is located).



All of the Lofoten Islands are Great for Viewing the Northern Lights

**The European route E10 highway passes through Gimsøy linking the island to Austvågøy by the Gimsøystraumen Bridge and to the island of Vestvågøy by the Sundklakkstraumen Bridge.**



**Gimsøystraumen Bridge**



**Sundklakkstraumen Bridge**

**The southern and eastern part of Gimsøy is mountainous. The highest point is the 2,516 feet tall Bardstrandfjellet mountain. In the north and west, the island is flat and marshy, with the exception of the 1,207 feet tall Hoven mountain. There are large protected areas in Gimsøy related to animal and bird life.**



**Gimsøya's Marshes are great for Birdwatchers**

**Vestvågøy** is located in the middle of the Lofoten Islands. It is the second largest with 158.7 square miles and has the largest population with 11,433 people. This island is among the most scenic in Norway. The island has rugged cliffs and peaks facing the southeastern coast. Towards the northwest, however, the land is flat, with extensive farmlands. Most people are found in the town of Leknes and in its "twin town" Gravdal, where Nordland Hospital is located. Along the

southeastern coast, one finds picturesque fishing villages like Ballstad and Stamsund, where the Hurtigruten (coastal ferry) stops.



**The Town of Leknes in the Winter**



**Leknes in the Summer**

Leknes (population 3,560) is the municipal/administrative and shopping center of the Islands, only rivaled by Svolvær. Leknes Airport is for smaller aircraft, with 7 daily scheduled flights to Bodø (mainland Norway) and some daily flights to Svolvær. There is a small bus terminal which serves as a hub with bus links to the rest of Lofoten. The Leknes Havn (harbor) is one of Norway's most important and visited harbors for cruise ships. The coastal steamer has been an important means of communication for a century. It leaves the docks twice every night, one heading south towards Bodø the other heading north towards Svolvær.



**The Coastal Steamer Ferry**

The coastline is dominated by high mountains, such as the 2,201 feet tall Skottinden mountain, and on the west coast also sandy white beaches. Uttakleiv is the most romantic beach in Europe, according to the British newspaper The

**Times, and the neighboring Hauklandstranden is ranked by the Norwegian newspaper Dagbladet as the best beach in Norway.**



**Uttakleiv Beach**



**Hauklandstranden Beach**

**Since the Lofoten Islands are located inside the Arctic Circle, the sun (midnight sun) is above the horizon from May 26 until July 17, and in winter the sun does not rise from December 9 until January 4. The warmest month is July with an average temperature of 55 degrees and the coldest month is January with an average temperature of 32 degrees.**

**The Lofotr Viking Museum in Bostad (near Leknes) and many other Viking artifacts are popular tourist attractions in the Lofoten Islands.**



**Vikings**

**Just in case you didn't know, the Vikings were the seafaring Norse people from southern Scandinavia (present-day Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) who from the late 8th to late 11th centuries raided, pirated, traded, and settled throughout parts of Europe.**

**Flakstadøy** island has an area of 42.4 square miles and the smallest population with only 1,120 people. The administrative center and town with the most people is Ramberg (population 350). Other towns on Flakstadøy include Fredvang, Nusfjord, Sund, Vikten, and Napp.



**Town of Ramberg**

The island is connected to the neighboring island of Moskenesøy (to the south and west) by the Kåkern Bridge and Fredvang Bridges. It is connected to the island of Vestvågøy (to the northeast) through the undersea Nappstraum Tunnel.



The 5,827-foot (1.1 miles) Nappstraum Tunnel is located on the European route E10 highway, connecting the islands of Flakstadøy and Vestvågøy. The village of Napp lies just south of the west entrance to the tunnel.

**Note to tourists wanting to visit the Lofoten Islands.** While just a few years ago most people had never heard of the islands, now – largely thanks to Instagram – they're very much on people's radar. But Lofoten's big reputation doesn't mean that it's set up as a big tourist destination (at least not yet).

**That means that you'll need to book your accommodation well in advance, especially if you're visiting in the summer (not many people want to visit in the winter because it is dark, snowy, and cold), as it's not uncommon for all the islands to be booked solid.**



**Mountains of Flakstadøy in the background the road to Nusfjord village**



**Port of Nusfjord**



**Sund Fishing Village and Shipyard**

**Moskenesøy** is at the southern end of the Lofoten Islands. It has an area of 72 square miles and a population of about 1,263. The island consists of several glaciated hills with the highest peak being the 3,376 feet tall Hermannsdalstinden mountain. The mountain lies on the west side of the island, about 4 miles west of the municipal center of Reine.



**Hermannsdalstinden Mountain**



**Reine – Population 314**

The island is connected to the nearby island of Flakstadøya by the Kåkern Bridge which is part of the European route E10 which ends on the Moskenesøya island at the Village of Å which is located on the southern part of the island. The Village of Å is a traditional fishing town and home to the 150 years old Norwegian Fishing Village Museum,

The northern part of the island has several villages including Fredvang, Selfjord, and Krystad. The eastern part of the island has Hamnøy, Moskenes, Reine, Sakrisøy, Sørvågen, and Tind. There were several settlements on the western coast, but the last ones were abandoned in 1950s due to many severe storms.



**Village of Å**

### **Recap of what we learned about the Lofoten Islands:**

- The Lofoten Islands are located within the Arctic Circle.
- There are a total of 24,367 hardy souls living on these islands.
- The two largest towns are Svolvær (population 4,720) and Leknes (Population 3,560).

- Most towns or villages have less than 500 people and are located near the Norwegian Sea.
- The Lofoten Islands have some of the worst weather on the planet.
- In the winter, the sun does not come up, so it is dark, freezing, and snowy.
- In the summer, the sun does not set, and the average temperature is around 50 degrees. Great beach weather!
- The Lofoten Islands have many beautiful mountains and yes, some great beaches.
- Many tourists want to visit the Lofoten Islands but there is very limited logging and other facilities. It seems that the locals don't want a bunch of outsiders invading their beautiful islands.

**What do these people do during the long dark winters?**



**Most Villages have a Church**



**Most Villages have a Pub**



**There are a lot of Pretty Girls**



**Ringnes is the most Popular Beer**

**You can use your imagination but remember that the Norwegian people are among the “MOST HAPPY PEOPLE” in the world.**

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