

**Sun**

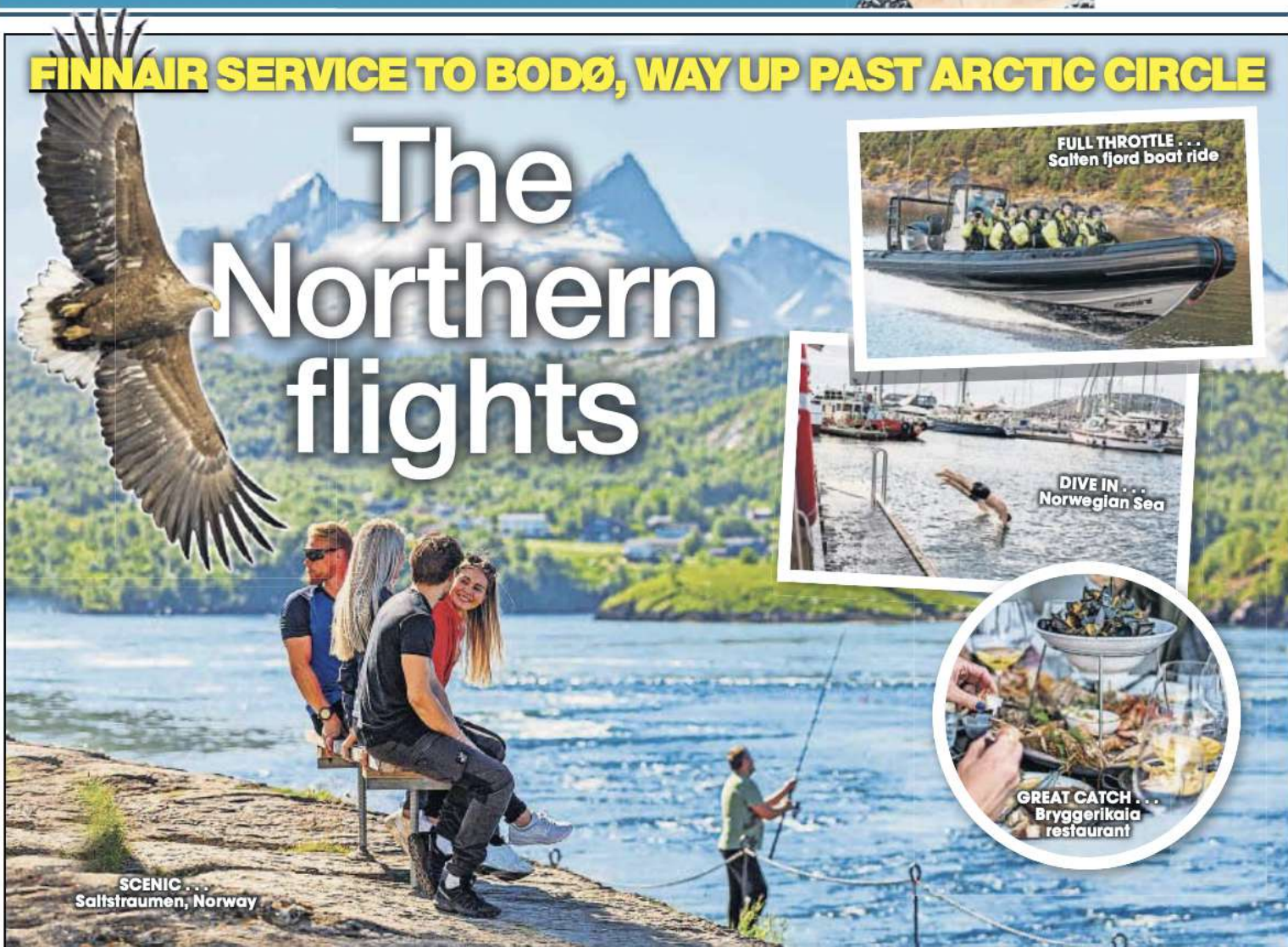
AWARD-WINNING  
**travel**

Edited by LISA MINOT



**FINNAIR SERVICE TO BODØ, WAY UP PAST ARCTIC CIRCLE**

# The Northern flights



SCENIC...  
Saltstraumen, Norway



FULL THROTTLE...  
Salten fjord boat ride



DIVE IN...  
Norwegian Sea



GREAT CATCH...  
Bryggerikaia restaurant

## GO: BODØ

**GETTING THERE:** Return flights from Heathrow to Bodø cost from £379pp. See [finnair.com](http://finnair.com).

**STAYING THERE:** One night's room-only at the Radisson Blu hotel is from £62.45, based on two people sharing. See [radissonhotels.com](http://radissonhotels.com).

**IT'S 10pm and I've just**

## jumped into the freezing Norwegian sea.

The water is a toe-numbing 8C and it feels like there are tiny pins in my legs as I try to catch my breath.

Even summers spent in Yorkshire's Whitby, where the sea often felt like an ice bath, hadn't quite prepared me for this plunge.

The thing I'm really struggling to get used to, though, is not the cold, but the fact that the sun is still shining well into the night.

*We are so far north that the sun will not set tonight at all – or, in fact, any day until late August.*

Those who live in Bodø, in northern Norway, revel in this endless daylight, staying out late in the bars and restaurants.

Our guide Julie Abelsen tells me that locals will even go skiing on the snowy peaks in their bikinis in the midnight sun.

Making the journey this far above the Arctic Circle, is usually reserved for those seeking a glimpse of the wintery Northern Lights.

But now Finnair has launched a new route for summer from Helsinki to Bodø.

From the plane window we saw

glaciers, snowy peaks, and mesmerising mountain streams.

For thousands of years, Norwegian fishermen would stop in Bodø on journeys to the Lofoten Islands, known for their fisheries which provided cod to most of Europe.

Now the town, a former NATO air station, has a bustling collection of high-end restaurants, bars and hotels, including the Radisson Blu, which was our base for the next few days.

The fjord here, which is lit up at all hours of the day during the summer months, is captivating and at the centre of all aspects of life in Bodø.

The best way to see it – when you're not jumping in it – is by boat which can take you to the Saltstraumen strait.

It has one of the strongest tidal

currents in the world and every six hours up to 400million cubic metres of sea water forces its way through a 150-metres-wide strait in the fjord, creating a natural spectacle that's unlike anything I've ever seen.

The current can gain speeds of up to 20 knots, or 23mph, which can create whirlpools up to ten metres in diameter.

Our RIB boat takes us right on to the currents, where our guide, Esten, cuts the engine off so we can feel the full force of the water.

As we sail through the Salten fjord, Esten spots a sea eagle swooping down in the distance.

## Delicious fish

This is Northern Europe's largest bird of prey and its wingspan can reach up to 2.4 metres.

He throws fish into the water near our boat and one of the huge birds swoops down to scoop them up just metres from where we are.

It turns out it's not just the birds that love the fish and this water, though. Everyone I spoke to in Bodø has an affinity with the water of the fjord.

The local speciality meal is stockfish, made with cod and using a method which dates back to the times of the Vikings. From February

to May, the fish are hung by the sea using huge wooden stocks and exposed to the elements above the Arctic Circle.

With temperatures around freezing and just the right balance of wind, sun and rain, the climate is ideal for drying the fish, which results in a delicious flavour.

We sampled it at Bryggerikaia restaurant, on the harbour.

Almost everything I eat in Bodø is local, unsurprisingly.

Why would they travel elsewhere for fresh ingredients when there is a huge fjord full of delicious fish on their doorstep?

And the berries grown here are excellent too, with a super-sweet flavour thanks to the long hours of sunshine they get.

After dinner, we set out on a hike up to Keiservarden, Bodø's city mountain from which you can see the border with Sweden and the Lofoten Wall, a collection of mountain peaks.

It is close to midnight but the skies are still blue and the sun is still shining. And with just a few magical days to spend here, I was rather glad.

*I didn't want to sleep through any of it.*

**JULIA ATHERLEY**