

# ARCTIC ENERGY



Kuvateksti,  
Kuvateksti,  
Kuvateksti,  
Kuvateksti,  
Kuvateksti,  
Kuvateksti

**F**amous for its reputation as Europe's northern lights hotspot, northern Norway's Tromsø attracts tourists from as far away as Brazil and Australia. But many focus so much on looking up at the sky that they might miss the other draws of this surprisingly lively Arctic city.

Tromsø is often referred to as the "Paris of Scandinavia," referring to its importance as a trading port and starting point for arctic expeditions in the early 1900s. Central European fashions and customs often arrived in the region before many other areas of northern Europe caught on.

Tromsø's international influence remains today, largely due to the growing university that draws thousands of foreign students to the city. Among its several areas of focus are arctic research and fishery sciences. And these students, as well as visitors, have plenty to do: the city's events calendar is impressive for a place with a population of just 70,000.

January's Tromsø International Film Festival (TIFF), for example, is the country's largest festival devoted to cinema. According to festival director **Marthe Otte**, the nearby borders with Sweden, Finland and Russia, as well as the influence of the local indigenous Sami population, creates a fertile and diverse breeding ground for a fes-

tival. "We have local regulars, but one-third of our audience travels in," she says. Nearly 53,000 people attended TIFF in 2013.

The 24th edition of the festival (January 13 to 19) features a popular regional programme entitled *Films from the North* and an outdoor screen, in front of which local kids can wrap up warm to watch foreign shorts during the dark days of winter; in January Tromsø gets no more than five hours of daylight, and the sun doesn't rise at all during the first half of the month.

"The regional program is one of the most important parts of our work. [A lot of] Film-making happens in places where there are hardly any people living, so we have launched initiatives to bring these creative people to the festival to meet other filmmakers," says Otte.

Tromsø also boasts a fierce musical legacy; Røyksopp, Bel Canto and Lene Marlin started their careers here. This heritage is celebrated with the *Insomnia* techno festival in autumn, Bukta rock festival in July and the genre-hopping *Døgnvill* in August. The gentler Northern Lights Festival (January 25 to February 2), whose 2014 line-up features the world-famous Bolshoi Ballet amid jazz and classical concerts.

As much a part of the music scene is the homely record-cum-coffee shop Backbeat (Vestregata 3), run by Bukta festival organiser **Kari Westergaard**. It's unusual to find thriving independent record shops anywhere, let alone the Arctic.

"We have established a stable operation with the help of a positive and inclusive environment, a little madness and the general boom in vinyl sales," says Westergaard, adding that one reason why Tromsø manages to maintain such a rich cultural programme is a staple of local volunteers. A project called Samdrift coordinates and trains volunteers for various events.

Of course, keeping up with all this fun is thirsty work. Tromsø has you covered with Mack, the world's northernmost brewery that has created beers and sodas since 1877. Although the beer is brewed 70 kilometres away in Nordkjosbotn today the original factory in the heart of Tromsø (Storgata 4, mack.no) is open for tours.

Mack's beer is served in an array of watering holes. Unlike most Norwegian towns, you'll find a bustling bar on any day of the week here. Try the homely Rorbua or Blå Rock, which offers concerts, a dance floor, and a musically-themed bar menu: try the Red Hot Chili Pepper burger.

**FINNAIR FLIES** to Tromsø three times weekly until end of March.

## WHAT ELSE IS ON IN TROMSØ

### POLAR NIGHT HALF-MARATHON

January 4

MSM.NO

### SAMI WEEK

Feb 3-9

MSM.NO

### EXHIBITION: MASTERS OF ITALIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Until March 30

PERSPEKTIVET.NO/EN

BARB LØKEN VISITNORWAY.COM

Kuvateksti, Kuvateksti,  
Kuvateksti,  
Kuvateksti,  
Kuvateksti