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The Faroe Islands – a Betwitched World in the Northern Atlantic Sea

Everyone that wants to take a sunbath on the beach during daytime and to go for clubs during the night is completely wrong on the faroe islands. This island group in the northern atlantic sea is known to be the most closely guarded secret of Europe and is a paradise for individual tourists who want to witness the primordial nature.

The Faroe Islands are reminiscent of many things, but they are always quite their own. The spectacular cliffs are reminiscent of Ireland or Scotland, the archipelagos and small red wooden houses make you think about Swedish summer nights, while the visitors wouldn't be surprised when hobbits, trolls or other fabulous beings would populate the green valleys as well. The atoll in the harsh northern atlantic sea invites you to dream and yet is as real and ground-floor as just a few other places in this world.

Where are Those Mysterious Islands exactly ?

The Faroe Islands belong to the Danish crown but are an autonomous island group between Scotland, Iceland and Norway. Thousands of years ago, the first vikings settled here and whoever travels to the islands by ship will understand why the rough northern men dreamed of settlements when they discovered this spot of land.

These islands are grouped like a triangle with a tip in the south in the stormy sea. The islands are separated and connected by the sea and fjords at the same time, as if the ancient gods had thrown gigantic stones of basalt into the sea back then to see what the people would make out of it. The whole area of all eighteen islands sums up to 1399 square kilometers and the coast line sums up to 1289 kilometers allows a view on the spectacularly surging waves from nearly any spot. The atoll is also called sheep islands and indeed sheep are as omnipresent as in the endless vastness of New Zealand. As the Danish crown supplies these secluded islands magnificently, the infrastructure is surprisingly good. A flight from island to island is barely more expensive than a bus ticket, there are two small schools with only a few pupils which are not falling behind in their education compared to the pupils on the mainland at all and the Faroe people feel like Danish people but keep their own identity. For example, this is reflected in the fact that the Danish and the Faroese languages are recognized as official languages, and everyone is able to pay with Faroese and Danish crowns.

Not Only Seeing the Unique Nature But Also Feeling It.

The sea is everywhere on the atoll and can be felt at any time. The air drizzles everyone who takes the time to breathe deeply and to look into the endless vastness. Often one can observe how the clouds embrace the jagged peaks. In these moments, the sky and the sea seem to flow into one another, and the limits are often blurred for the eye as fog banks sink down and wet the skin like a fine mist suddenly. The weather in this part of the world is like the sea itself - always moving. Whoever expects a fortnight's sun and shallow rippling waves should rather fly to the Caribbean.

On the other hand, The Faroe Islands promise all the weather extremes in one day, from bright sun to downpours, soaking the unprompted vacationers to the skin. So it's worth adapting the look of the locals - practical raincoats and the "onion look" with different layers are the best outfit to explore the islands.

The landscape is characterized by rich green colors. Trees are almost not existent. The wind, the climate and the soil is just too rough and barren. Nevertheless, the landscape is always breathtaking and never gets old. Wild mountains and gentle valleys with rustic villages alternate with romantic waterfalls that fall directly into the sea from the cliffs. If you like to play your imagination, you can observe wild warriors on raids and see magical fabulous creatures dance in the torn crags of the mountains and the omnipresent, low-hanging clouds.

The whole picture is also continually broken by low natural stone walls, streams and small lakes, and huts with grass roofs that nestle in the landscape as if they had always been there. Mosses are greening the islands, wherever they were able to find a hold on the barren rocks, and the bleating of the sheep, which are also called "lawnmowers" is carried by the wind through the fresh sea air and keep the islands in order. The national flower of the islands is the yellow shining kingcup which is sprinkling the meadows with colored dabs together with other wild flowers in the summer.

There are probably not many places in this world, where you can forget the time and feel the rhythm of nature anymore. Anyone who goes hiking here will be quite self-conscious and soon realizes how the hectic life in his hometown falls off of him. If you sit down in the soft moss, enjoy the fascinating view and simply wander around your thoughts until you forgot which day of the week it is, you have truly arrived in the Faroe Islands.

Culture, Way of Life and the Hotspots of the Islands

The whole archipelago is separated into six regions which are all having their own charme. Therefore, it is worthwhile to plan your time to get the various impressions and moods. It is clear that the ubiquitous nature and the heritage of the Vikings strongly influences the culture. Art and culture are a matter of course for the people's lives.

The Faroe Islands are people which are very interested in culture and since they have to cover a whole state of the population with 48,000 inhabitants, they consider it perfectly normal for many citizens to have two or three functions at once. Thus, many of the inhabitants of the island are free artists besides their other professions, there is no separation between artists in the ivory tower and real life. Art is appreciated at any time, regardless of whether it is considered to be "professional".

The center of the island culture is the capital at the same time. In the city of Tórshavn on the largest island of Streymoy, the "House of the North" is the most important venue. Here, many cultural events take place, which also always serve the exchange with other - mostly Scandinavian - cultures. Also in Tórshavn there is the National Gallery, the country theatre, an art museum and a music school.

A visit to the numerous events is particularly worthwhile if one wants to experience the originality of the region, because global trash for tourists is foreign to the Faroe Islands. As almost half of the entire population is bustling in the culturally vibrant capital, the range of concerts, exhibitions with fine arts, literary readings and folkloric events, which also bring classical ballads to life, is so diverse that there is something for everyone.

On the island of Streymoy which is also worth a detour to the southern end - because here you can admire a unique monument in its own way. In the picturesque village of Kirkjubøur the Magnus Cathedral is located, which however has not much in common with other world famous cathedrals. Because this cathedral was - unlike the Cologne Cathedral - never finished after a construction block. One can see how the magnificent building from the year 1300 was meant to be, but obviously the building owner had taken over and is now widely regarded as megalomaniac. Nevertheless, this testimony of a great vision demands true respect from its visitors.

Quirky Islanders and Discovering Lovely Stories

If you visit the Faroe Islands, you should not miss the lively exchange with the local people, as it is a great experience to get to know the islanders - as on every island. The Faroese even share a lot with the Germans, because they love cars and football. The Faroese people are of the opinion that a car is still the best raincoat and every island has its own football team of course.

The locals are grounded and cosmopolitan at the same time. Their children help in the courts as they did hundreds of years ago, and then, when they come back from keeping the sheep, they take violin lessons via the Internet. Culture, modernity and the Middle Ages are simply not a contradiction, but the real life. The food is like the life, marked by the sea and the fishing, the specialities fill you up, are

rich and fresh and last long. And that's a good thing, because if you discover the Faroe Islands, it always pulls you out to move around and explore nature.

Faroese are true family people, as are the gravestones in the lovingly cared for cemeteries, which recall the green cemeteries of the Celts, and the stories of whole generations can be read on the gravestones. Whoever lives here also knows where he will be with his family when he dies.

This relationship is characteristic of the Faroe Islands, because family and nature are the most important things to them and belong together. Many young people leave the islands to study, work in Denmark, England, or the rest of the world, but they return because they get homesick. Perhaps this is the secret why these special islanders are considered to be the people with the highest happiness factor in Europe – they don't seem to need anything else besides their family, the calm and the view of their stunning.

Conclusion

The secluded world in the middle of the lonely North Atlantic Sea is not a destination for mass tourism and club holidays. Rather, it is necessary to discover the diversity of an almost sunken world, which has its very own character. Living cultural life, a world-class Internet generation and medieval charming villages, where locals live like their ancestors, are connecting the islands just as the bridges, tunnels and ferries.

If you want to explore the islands as a hiker, the fascinating Faroe Islands will seem a little crazy, but you can discover just as much as travelers who book roundtrips or get on the road with the camper to explore the atoll on their own.

Accommodations are available from luxury hotels in the capital to private apartments in the seclusion of nature. Hiking, climbing, motorcycling, eating in trendy restaurants and lively nightlife in the bars are just as possible as boat trips to the bird islands. A special highlight of the year is the "Midsummer Night" ("Mittsomernacht"), in which numerous people flock to the Sornfelli mountain to experience the nature spectacle. The Faroe Islands simply offer unforgettable experiences.

By Thomas Vitali