



The scenic setting of Honningsvåg seen from Perleporten.

Northernmost amazement

Perleporten Kulturhus in Honningsvåg is a rare gem, presenting a sincere fervour for the arts by preserving history and showcasing a northern way of life.

By Pernille Johnsen | Photos: Perleporten Kulturhus

Perleporten Kulturhus has been refurbished and is well looked after, but it did not start out that way. Birgit L. Johansen and Tore Fosse believed in the potential of the near-demolished house used as a gospel hall and accommodation for fishermen after World War II. It was one of the first houses built after the war, when the whole township was set on fire and burned to the ground. Only the church was left.

The couple purchased it for next to nothing and began the long process of applying tender love and care to bring

out the historic charm and character of the house. The goal was always clear: to construct a meeting place for cultural appreciation in the town centre. Johansen and Fosse invested faith and plenty of elbow grease and made it happen. "We had some believers in our idea but, of course, not everyone had a great deal of faith in it becoming a sustainable livelihood," Fosse explains.

Tourist and musical mecca

The tiny town of Honningsvåg, next to the North Cape, is unique in many ways. Firstly, the population is only 3,000 – but

during the summer it is one of Norway's most popular cruise and tourist destinations, hosting more than 250,000 tourists in the summer season.

Fosse and Johansen share a background in cultural work as well as the enthusiasm for the field. The idea of presenting the history of the north by emphasising their way of life and cultural roots soon came to fruition. After enlisting scriptwriter and composer Øystein Skårset as well as other local forces, the result was *Our Northernmost Life*, a musical depicting the history and way of life up north. The best part? It is performed exclusively by youngsters aged 16 to 25, whom Johansen and Fosse employ all summer to put on shows for tourists twice a day.

The reviews have been nothing short of amazing. TripAdvisor is flooded with goose bump-inducing reviews describing how moved audience members were and how it reminded them of their hometown. The universal elements presented in the show naturally appeal to everyone – pride in where you come from and the sentiment that there is truly no place like home. Travelling to new places and getting under the cultural skin of the town is what creates the most durable travel memories, and there is no doubt that *Our Northernmost Life* has done just that.

"We called in to see this show while visiting by cruise ship. The show was wonderful; we laughed until we cried. The four young people were so talented and pas-

sionate in telling us how and where they lived. Just wonderful, would highly recommend," writes one enthusiastic visitor.

The actors all have musical and theatrical experience. The talent displayed by the performers is apparent, with one of them accepted to the renowned, sought after Norwegian Theatre Academy on the first audition attempt.

Tailored events

Perleporten Kulturhus is also available to rent for events, and Johansen and Fosse can tailor events and performances to your liking. It is also a family business, and during the summer Simen, 24, and Lisa, 21, return home and host an informal Wednesday Jam, among several

other activities. Furthermore, throughout the summer the stage is set to plug in and play. Even international artists have stopped by to perform.

"I think most people believe that you have to live in urban areas to create something special, because that's where all the opportunities are," says Johansen. "I don't think that is true. If you have the drive, enthusiasm and a strong will, you can create something special anywhere." If anyone is a perfect example of how far hard work and dedication can take you, it is the Perleporten couple.

For more information, please visit:
www.perleportenkulturhus.no



Birgit L. Johansen and Tore Fosse, the masterminds behind Perleporten Kulturhus.



The actors are youngsters aged 16 to 25, pictured here are Kati Heimen and Emil Elde Skårset.

The Honningsvåg bay area photographed by Kjell-Bendik Pedersen.

