



Northern winter destinations gets bombarded by selfie-taking tourists

Description

Tromsø had a 126% increase in passengers on international flights in January compared with the same month in 2023, according to [statistics](#) from Avinor, the state-owned company operating airports.

Norwegian this January started direct flights from Tromsø to Milano, Paris and Berlin. Photo: Thomas Nilsen

Commenting on the numbers, Avinor's Gaute Skallerud Riise points to the snow and cold. "We particularly see an increased interest in certain parts of the winter product that Norway can offer," he says.

Tromsø receives flights directly from 20 European cities this winter. "The world wants to Northern Norway," Avinor said in a press release.

Tourists can now fly directly to Tromsø from continental European cities like Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Milano, Gdansk, Copenhagen and others. Tromsø Airport recently opened an expanded terminal with more gates for international flights.

"Until December we had triple the amount of bookings for this year's winter season", Trond Arne Kongsli, CEO of the tour guiding company Best Arctic, recently told the [Barents Observer](#). "We have never seen this before. It's amazing," he said with a big smile.

A similar trend is seen in Norrbotten, Sweden's northernmost region. Winter tourism increased by 9% in 2023. That is more than the southern regions of the country, [Affärer i Norr](#) reports.

In Rovaniemi, the Nordic capital of winter tourism, counted a record-breaking with more than a million overnight stays last year. The Finnish town on the Arctic Circle has for decades marketed itself as the home of Santa Claus.

Although not all figures are counted yet, the tourist organization Visit Rovaniemi believes the winter season 2023/24 will see a 30% increase compared to the previous year.

Several new flights from Europe give increase in the number of seats by 40-50,000 travelers, the organization says. There are now 24 direct international flights to Rovaniemi, of which 12 are new this winter.

Santa Claus' village north of Rovaniemi has more than half a million visitors per year. Photo: Thomas Nilsen

While a boost in tourism is good for hotels and jobs, debates are now heating up in both Rovaniemi and Tromsø about the burdens tens of thousands of tourists bring to the environment.

“The city is for its residents, so it would be justified to consider a tourist tax or a voluntary payment, chair of the Rovaniemi City Council, Susanna Junttila,” said to broadcaster [YLE](#).

Tromsø Mayor Gunnar Wilhelmsen says to [NRK](#) that without a dedicated tourist tax, the municipality has to take money from its ordinary budget and give less to other urgent needs.

A photo of a tourist pooping on a bus stop has [made headlines](#) in Tromsø media, highlighting the need for more public toilets at popular tourist stops.

Tromsø panorama attracts tourists from around the world. Photo: Thomas Nilsen

Category

1. Uncategorized

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