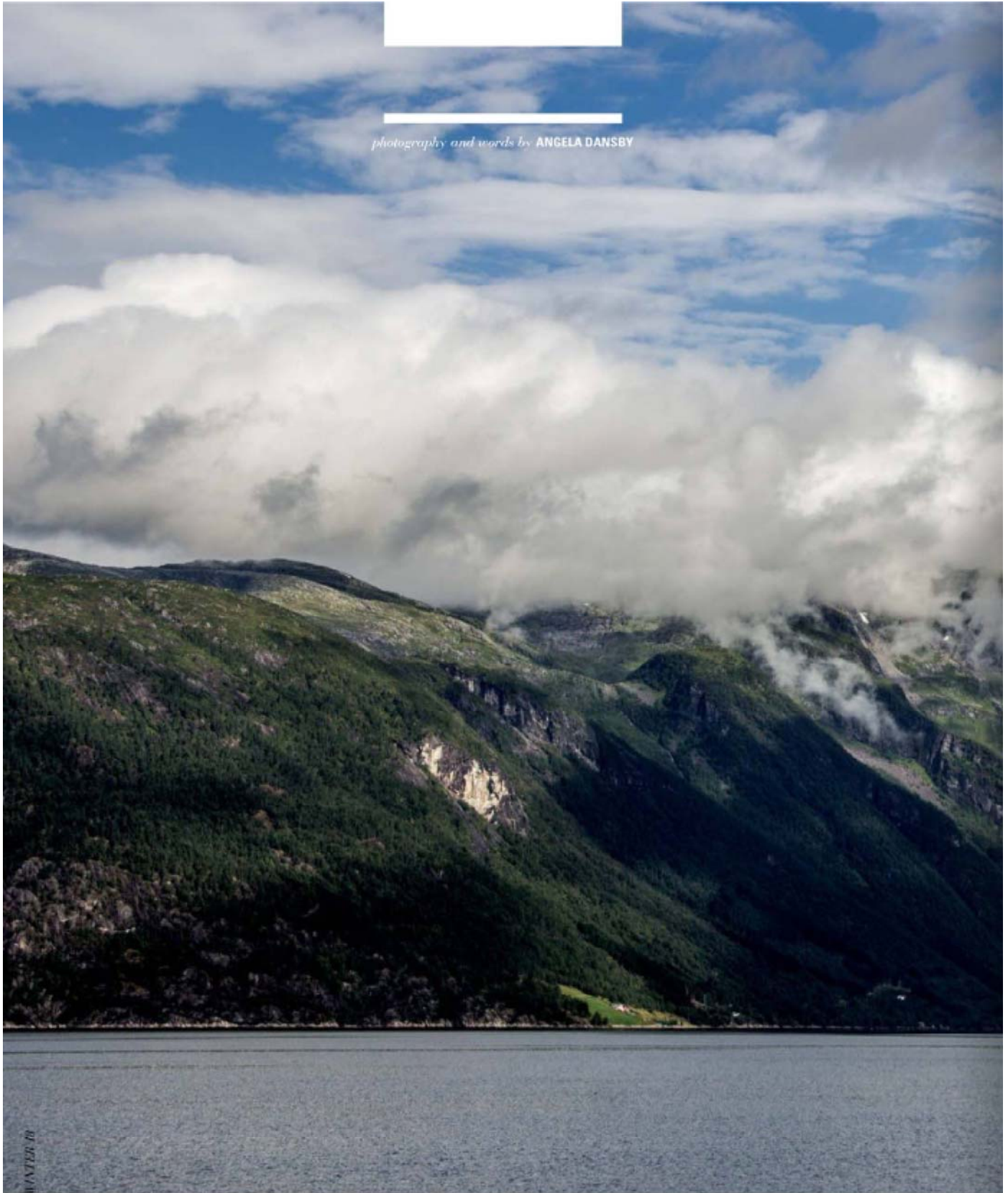


photography and words by ANGELA DANSBY



# FROM RICH TO POOR

In 1969, after searching most of its 63,000 miles of coastline, Norway discovered liquid gold. The country has since recovered oil and gas worth approximately \$1.4 trillion, according to the Norwegian Petroleum Museum in Stavanger. Norway is now a major player in the energy field as the third largest exporter of gas and 12th biggest exporter of oil in the world. In a country whose population is only around 5.2 million, this sector accounts for nearly \$200,000 per citizen in investments.

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD IS NOW ONE OF THE RICHEST.



## NORWAY DISCOVERED LIQUID GOLD.

In short, Norwegians are filthy rich, and to visit them at home is to bask in their unmistakable glow, if only momentarily. The quality of life in Norway is so good that the price of living has become tremendously high, and tourists should be prepared. (A small bottle of water costs \$5 and a single bus ride about \$7!) But Norway's diverse natural resources are otherworldly. From fjords to mountains to lakes to waterfalls to the midnight sun and northern lights, a trip to the Viking paradise is well worth the high price tag. It's a place to catch one's breath in pure air, locking arms with Mother Nature while hiking, biking, kayaking, or boating around.

The capital city of Oslo is known throughout Europe for its cultural sites and maritime history. In particular, visitors should seek out the Vigeland Museum and Sculpture Park, the Opera House (with a walk up its slanted roof for a lovely coastal view), the Fram Polar Ship Museum, the Viking Ship Museum, the Nobel Peace

Center, and the Royal Palace for its gardens.

Not surprisingly, seafood gets top billing on most menus in Oslo (and all of Norway). The fish of the day can be anything from cod, salmon, halibut, wolffish, monkfish, king crab, or scallops. There are no wrong answers. Restaurant Fjord and Kafeteria Sentralen are great bets for dinner and a drink in the city.

The best way to get a sense of Norway's life on the water is a boat trip in Oslo Fjord. With about 45,000 islands and so few citizens, a significant number of upwardly mobile Norwegians own islands. It's a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages, when 12th-century Cistercian monks built a monastery on Hovedøya, turning the island into one of the country's richest institutions. (Eventually, the monks fell out of favor and their abbey was looted and set on fire.)



# THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN NORWAY IS SO GOOD.

Among Norway's 1,200 fjords (narrow inlets of water), Sognefjord is the largest and is worth seeing en route to Flåm, a valley village known for outdoor adventures. There, travelers can ride the famous Flåm Railway up a mountain to see waterfalls at distance, then rent a bike on the way back for a closer view. In town, Ægir BrewPub is a popular attraction. Norwegians like to drink, which makes sense, especially in the north, where the sun might not rise for months at a time. Locals enjoy good beer, and also aquavit, a flavored liquor that dates back to the 15th century.

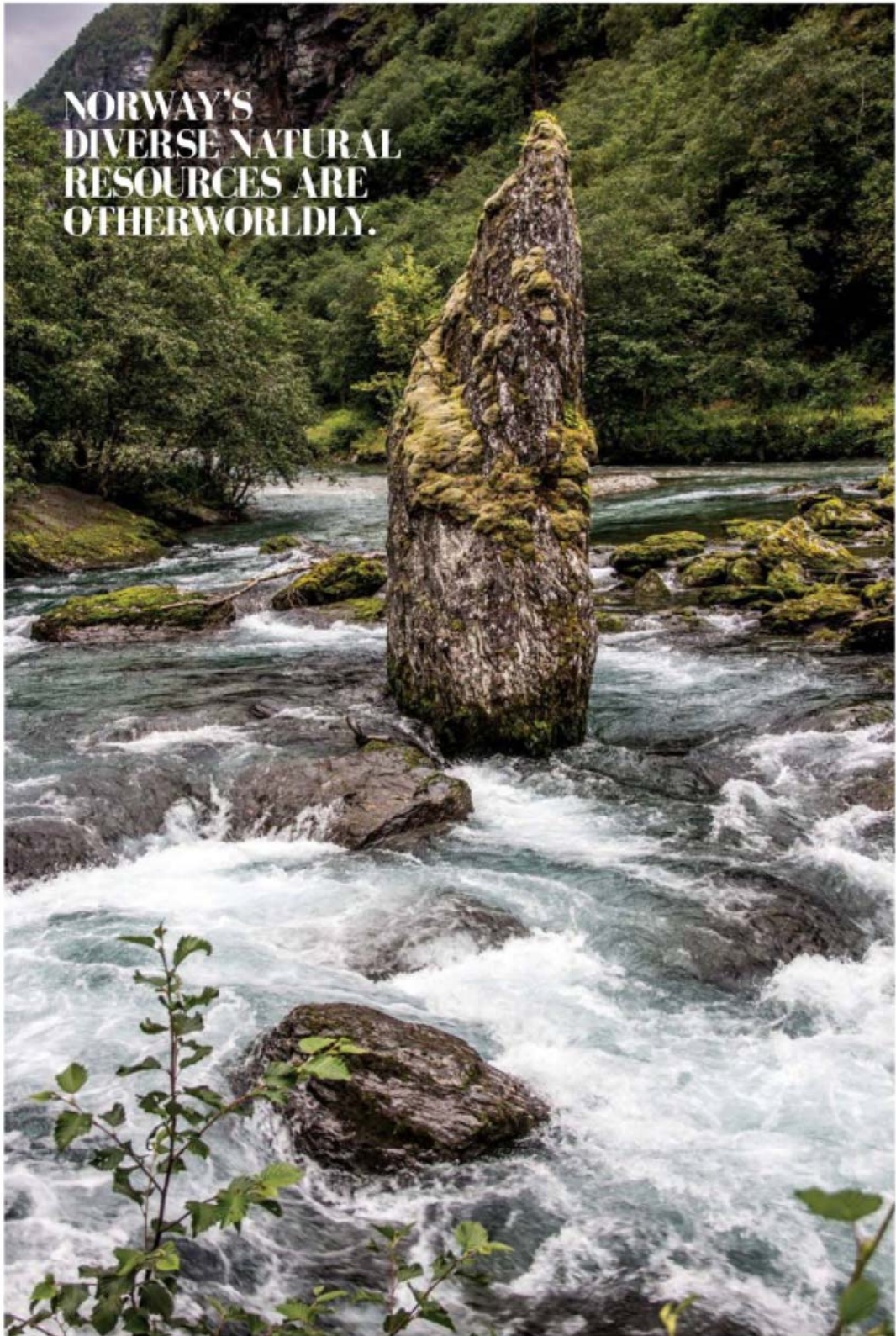
Famous for its offshore oil rig, Stavanger—arguably the country's most charming major city—is a gateway to fjords, waterfalls, mountains, and the Michelin-starred restaurant RENAA. Stavanger is a short boat ride from the hiking trail of Pulpit Rock, aptly named for its shape and "heavenly" ascent.

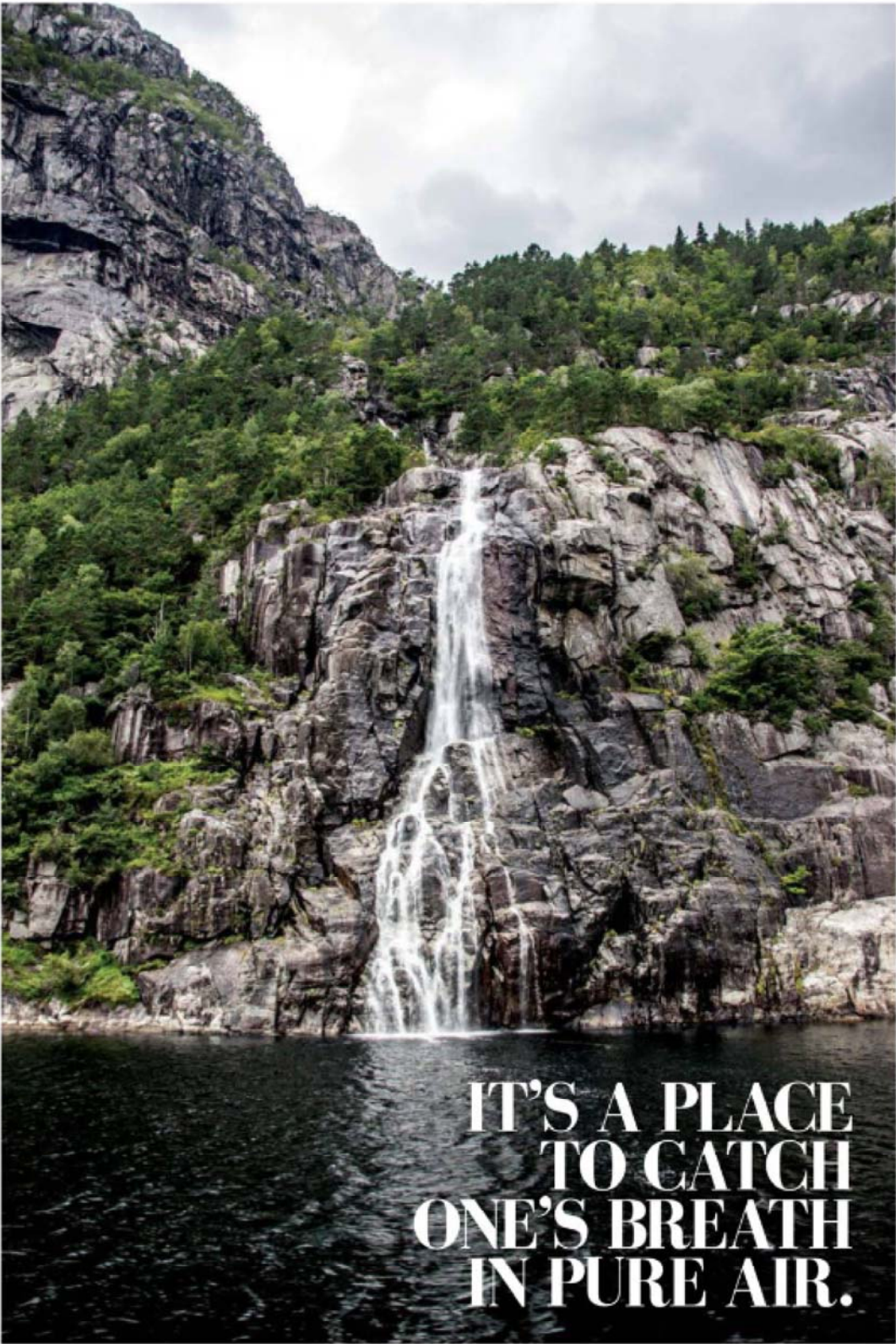
Bergen, Norway's second largest city, is even more beautiful than Oslo, with its picturesque Bryggen Wharf, mountain views, and charming street and fish vendors hawking local delicacies. Licorice, which is practically a national flavor, as well as arctic berries—such as bright orange cloudberries and red lingonberries—can be purchased in various markets in town or tried at local restaurants Fjellskål Fisketorget and Bryggen Tracteursted. The city is also home to the KODE Art Museums, which house works by famed Norwegian painter Edvard Munch.

Norwegians live well, taking advantage of the raw beauty and richness of their country while enjoying a little bit of the high life. It's an enviable existence, and for anybody traveling to the country, a hint of jealousy is inescapable. But on the merit of its people, fjords, fish, beers, art, and traditions, this small Scandinavian nation is at its best these days, and not to be missed. ●



**NORWAY'S  
DIVERSE NATURAL  
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**IT'S A PLACE  
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