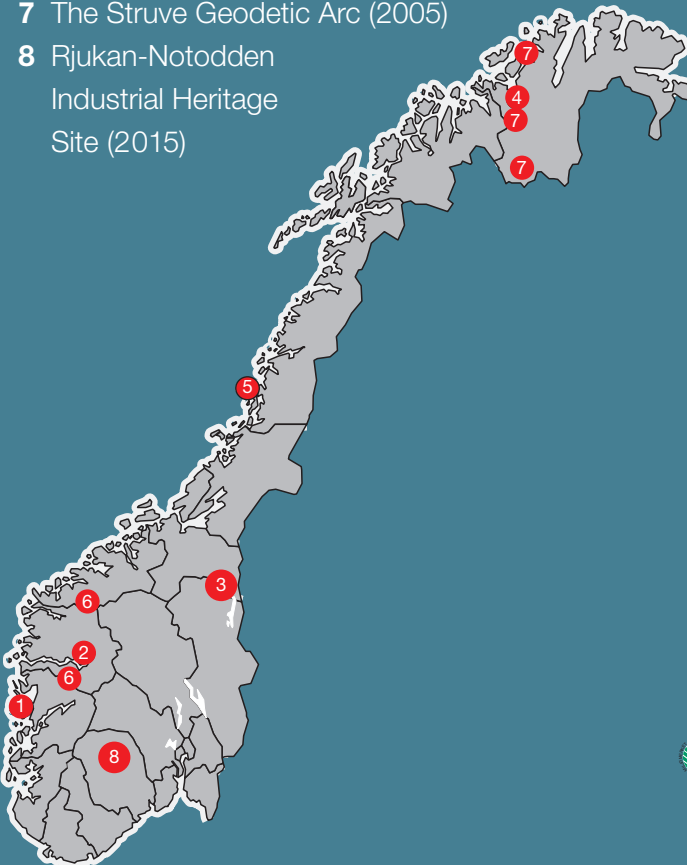


**NORWEGIAN WORLD HERITAGE SITES**

- 1 Bryggen in Bergen (1979)
- 2 Urnes stave church (1979)
- 3 Røros Mining Town (1980) and Circumference (2010)
- 4 The Rock Art at Alta (1985)
- 5 The Vega Archipelago (2004)
- 6 The West Norwegian Fjords (2005)
- 7 The Struve Geodetic Arc (2005)
- 8 Rjukan-Notodden Industrial Heritage Site (2015)



The eider watchers at the the island Lånan, cleance the down for use in eiderdown quilts. PHOTO: Cyril Ruoso



Down from the eiderducks keep the eggs warm in the nests. PHOTO: Lars Lofaldli



Close-up of the eider down. PHOTO: Cyril Ruoso



The newly hatched chicks stay in the nest for a couple of days before starting their hazardous walk down to the sea. They swim with their mother for the rest of the summer. The ducks and drakes do not meet up in the wintering areas before late autumn. By then, the drakes have moulted and regained their beautiful, white plumage, the ring has come full circle and courting begins once more.

Eider ducks do not build nests as such, but instead lay their eggs openly, often on the ground, on a bed of down. To give them better concealment, shelter and protection, the islanders have developed the tradition of building attractive nesting places for these birds with the valuable down. These may be stone constructions, simpler wooden structures made out of driftwood, or small houses with space for several birds. A pile of dried seaweed is shaped into the foundation of a nest.

The duck places down in her nest to conceal and warm her eggs. The colder the area she nests in, the more down she places in her nest. When the chicks leave the nest, the bird tenders can collect the down and start the laborious process of drying, shaking, rough-cleaning, screening and ultimately fine-cleaning the down. 60-70 nests give a kilo of cleaned down, just enough to fill a perfect Norwegian quilt. No down fill is as light and warms as well as the wispy down from eider duck breasts. Unlike the down from other ducks and from geese, eider down has small barbs which allow it to cling together to provide admirable insulation.

Sunset by the island Sola. PHOTO: Erlend Haarberg



The Vega Archipelago and the island Lånan. PHOTO: Inge Ove Tysnes

# VEGA Archipelago



Photo: Cyril Ruoso



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation



World Heritage in Norway The Vega Archipelago



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## UNESCO

UNESCO is the abbreviation for the "United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization". UNESCO's goal is to contribute to peace and safety through international cooperation within these areas. The organization was established in 1945, and Norway became a member in 1946.

### ❖ The UNESCO convention for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage

The convention for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage was approved in 1972, after cultural heritage and natural areas were increasingly exposed to threats from war, natural disasters, pollution, tourism or, more simply, neglect.

The convention encourages all countries to promote the protection of cultural and natural heritage of both local and national significance. The most important goal of the convention is to identify cultural and natural heritage of universal value. The need for a coordinated effort, both human and economic, was demonstrated by the international rescue of cultural heritage monuments in Egypt and Nubia, when the Aswan dam was built in the 1960's. Sixty countries, including Norway, participated.

Cultural and natural heritage can include monuments, single buildings or groups of buildings, cultural landscapes or natural areas. These can be created by nature, or by people in cooperation with nature. They can be buildings representing important historic developments, or natural phenomena of exceptional esthetic or scientific value.

Norway ratified the convention on May 12.1977. The World Heritage Committee has so far approved eight Norwegian nominations to the World Heritage List. Being nominated as a World Heritage Site does not include any new form of legal protection, rather it offers additional recognition and status.

### Norway on the World Heritage Committee

The World Heritage Committee consists at any time of the representatives of 21 nations. The Committee's primary mandate is to implement the World Heritage Convention.

Norway has been a member of the World Heritage Committee on two previous occasions, from 1983 to 1989 and from 2003 to 2007. Norway has also now been elected to the Committee for the period 2017–2021.

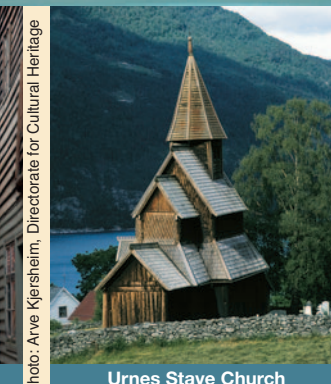
As a member of the Committee, Norway will prioritise improving the protection of existing World Heritage sites and also contributing to a more representative World Heritage List. After more than 40 years, the developing countries in particular continue to be under-represented on the List.

It is also important to raise awareness through the involvement of local communities and to highlight best practices in the management of sites on the List through the World Heritage Leadership programme. Norway will also stress the importance of List nominations being made on the basis of professional assessments rather than political interests. A further goal will be a more holistic approach to and management of the global natural and cultural heritage.

The Directorate for Cultural Heritage and the Norwegian Environment Agency represent Norway on the World Heritage Committee.



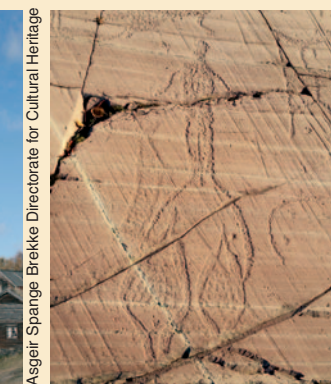
Bryggen in Bergen



Urnes Stave Church



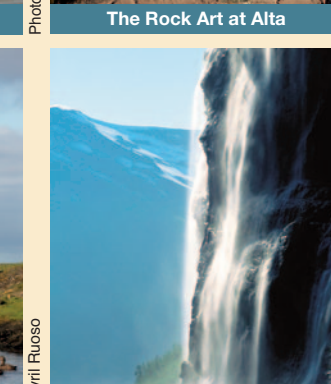
Roros Mining Town



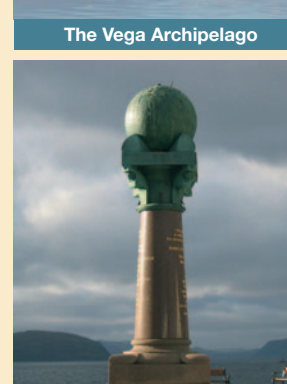
The Rock Art at Alta



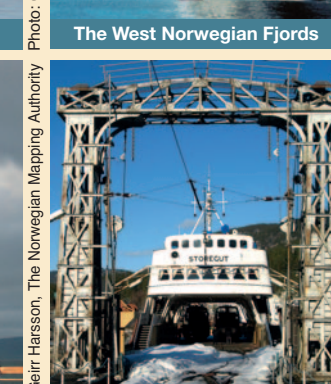
The Vega Archipelago



The West Norwegian Fjords

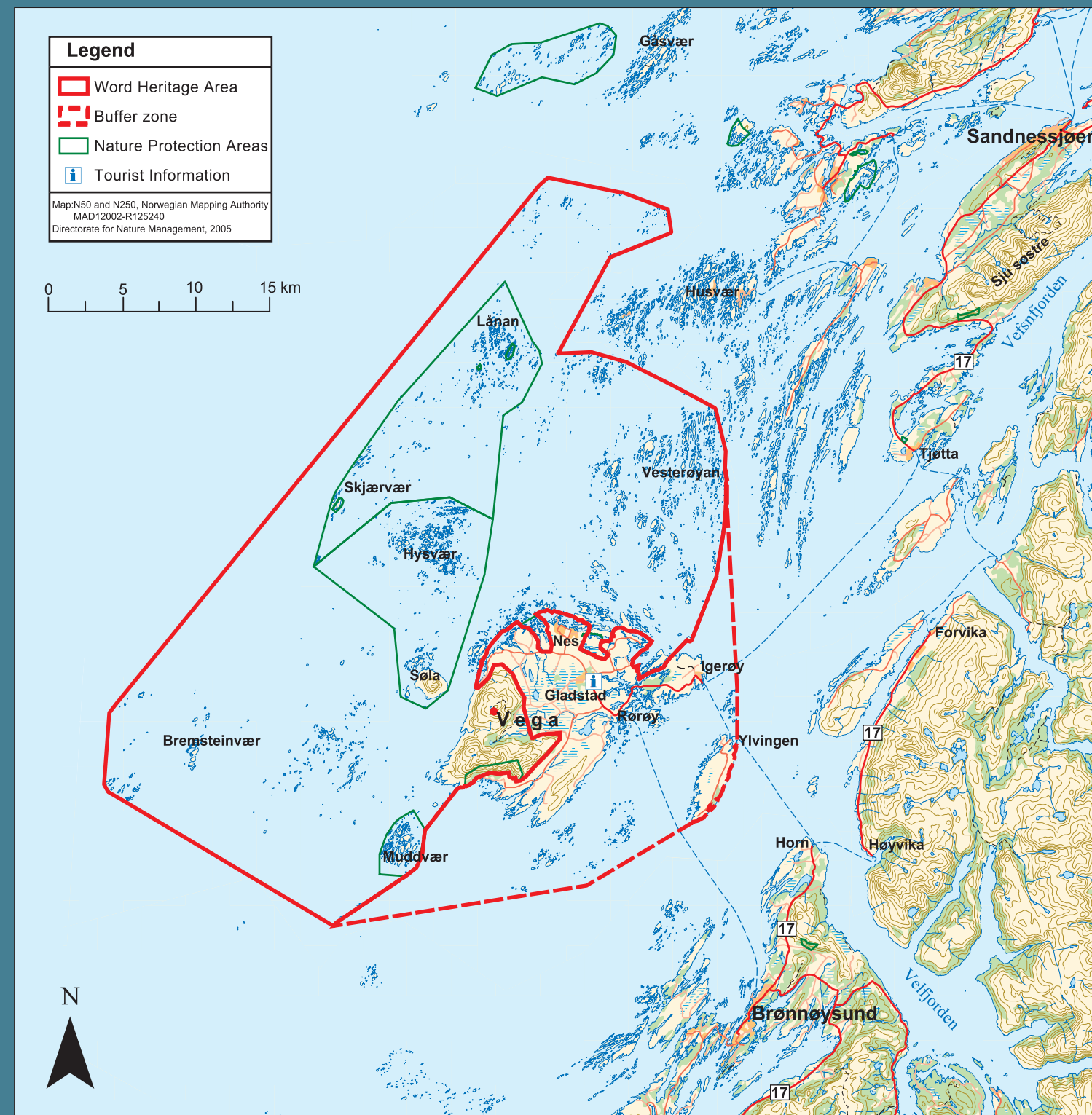


The Struve Geodetic Arc



Rjukan-Notodden Industrial Heritage Site

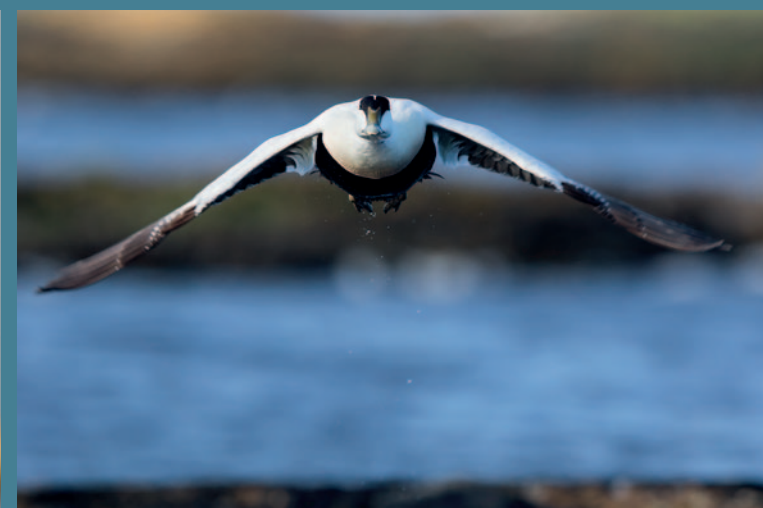
## THE VEGA ARCHIPELAGO



A house at the island Store Emårsøy.  
PHOTO: Tore Olsen



White-tailed eagle flying over the Vega Archipelago.  
PHOTO: Sverre Nilsen



Eider duck flying. PHOTO: Cyril Ruoso



Houses at a small farm at Skjærvær. PHOTO: Rita Johansen

### The Vega Archipelago

The Vega Archipelago on the Helgeland coast comprises 1072 square kilometres of open cultural landscape made up of a myriad of islands, islets and skerries, where fishing and trapping have been taking place for ten thousand years. As the first islands gradually became settled, the characteristic landscape was shaped little by little through the interplay between fisherman-farmers and inhospitable, but rich nature. The Vega Archipelago is not famous for large monuments or the ingenious creations of architects. Its universal value lies in the way the area has handed down history and cultural traditions evolved on an exposed coast with rich natural resources. New commercial enterprises have left few traces to break the long lines back in time.

The Vega Archipelago is not self-explanatory for those travelling through the landscape for the first time. But if you have an eye for detail, the history of the toils and pleasures of generations become clearly apparent. Today, the island landscape stands out as a living witness to the life and work of islanders inhabiting an extremely exposed coast. The Vega Archipelago was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004.

The committee justified its decision as follows:  
**The Vega archipelago reflects the way generations of fishermen/farmers have, over the past 1500 years, maintained a sustainable living in an inhospitable seascape near the Arctic**

**Circle, based on the now unique practice of eider down harvesting, and it also celebrates the contribution made by women to the eider down process.**

### Coastal nature – the frame surrounding life and work

Parts of the Norwegian west coast are fringed by a strandflat. A strandflat coast typically consists of numerous low islands and scattered coastal peaks. This type of landscape is only found in a few other parts of the world. The strandflat in the Vega Archipelago is all of 30 kilometers broad, and the World Heritage Area contains more than 6500 islands, islets and skerries. The peaks on Vega and Sola form towering coastal mountains.

A marked bedrock boundary divides the World Heritage Area in two. Calcareous rocks dominate the northern half, giving a rich flora, while the bedrock is acid and the vegetation poorer in the south.

Not only people have derived benefit from the rich maritime resources of the Vega Archipelago. As many as 228 species of birds have been observed in the archipelago, which is considered to be the most important wintering area for seabirds in the Nordic region. A significant part of the Svalbard population of barnacle geese rests in the Vega Archipelago on its passage northwards. The largest

colony of cormorants in the world breeds on one of the outermost skerries in the west. A number of sanctuaries have been designated to preserve this outstanding birdlife and it is forbidden to land there during the breeding season.

### History

Strandlines that mark former levels of the sea around the Vega coastline carry many remains of Stone Age settlements. The first Vega people lived here in a damp, stormy climate with a summer temperature four degrees lower than it is today. Numerous new islands gradually rose from the sea allowing the people to extend their territory. Over the past 1500 years, generations of islanders have evolved a livelihood based on a combination of fishing, hunting, sealing, farming and collecting eggs and down.

The Vega Archipelago consists of fifteen groups of small islands (øyvær), and 59 of the islands have been inhabited. Such a group of inhabited and uninhabited islands and islets forms a social entity. All the buildings in one of these groups, Skjærvær, have been legally protected. The settlement is tightly grouped round the best harbour. Between the houses and spread across neighbouring islands and islets are small patches of arable land, haymaking land, pastures and simple, small houses built to shelter nesting wild eider ducks. The harbour at Skjærvær is now a convenient base near the

fishing grounds for fishermen living in inner parts of the archipelago.

Many kinds of beacons form an important part of the landscape in the hazardous, rock-strewn waters. Recycling of buildings and variations in building traditions are a characteristic feature of the region. Driftwood and flotsam and jetsam have always been important building materials.

### Tending eider ducks – a unique interplay between people and nature

The tending of eider ducks is mentioned as an occupation in Norway in a documentary source from as early as the end of the 9th century. Throughout the Middle Ages and on to the present day, collecting eggs and down from wild eider ducks has been an important livelihood on the Helgeland coast. The tradition of collecting down to fill quilts is still upheld on several islands in the World Heritage Area. The work is performed in the original manner, but on a much smaller scale than previously.

The eider ducks return to their breeding ground in the Vega Archipelago in February and March, and form flocks around the islands in April. The females always return to the same breeding sites, and after finding a choice spot to nest, they lay their eggs from May into June. The males then leave the breeding site.