



Sailing the

Norwegian Sea



<https://youtu.be/Y24B8K3tJhE>



Honningsvåg

Honningsvåg

Julio was the destination expert who gave presentations on each of our ports. He amused us to no end. His commentary on Honningsvåg in his Spanish accent: "Well, they'll give-uh you a map when you get off, but why, eh? There's like, 4 houses, eh?"

Fun facts: Norwegian cities need to have at least a population of 5,000 to be considered a "city," but Honningsvåg was grandfathered in. Apparently "Honningsvåg" means "bay between the mountains."

26 Aug 23







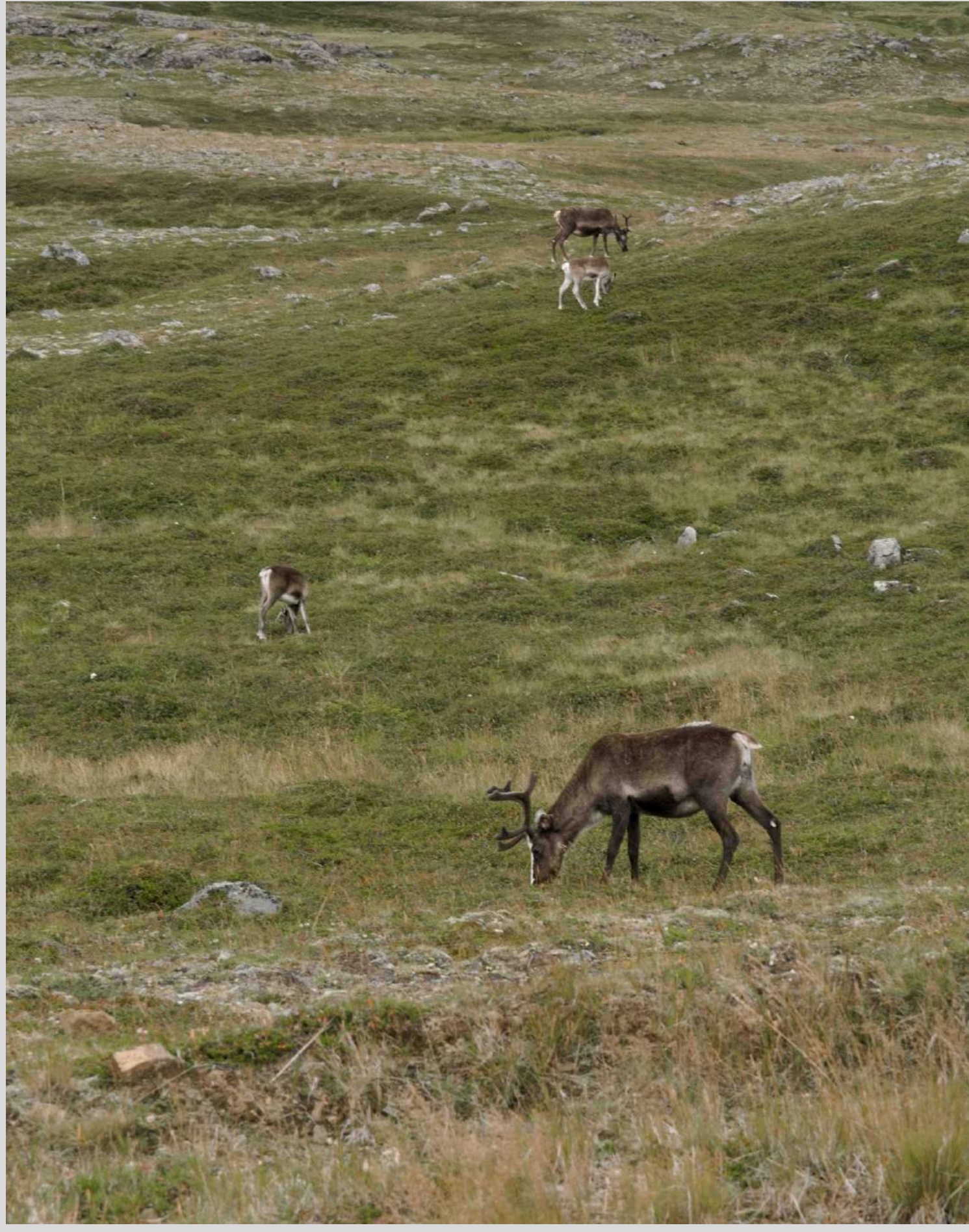








304 NOK (\$30.40) per person for today's adventure far eclipses anything we could've dreamed of. Ben and Christina (our Malaysian-born Melbourne friends I met alone when looking for others to share a ride from Southampton's bus station to our ship's port) found a 9-seater van and recruited John, Elaine, and Joyce from Birmingham, England to join us. We boarded the van and followed tour buses down the path towards the unknown. There were only 4 main roads so it wasn't hard to navigate, but I give much credit to Ben for driving stick on what was the other side of the car and the other side of the road for him.







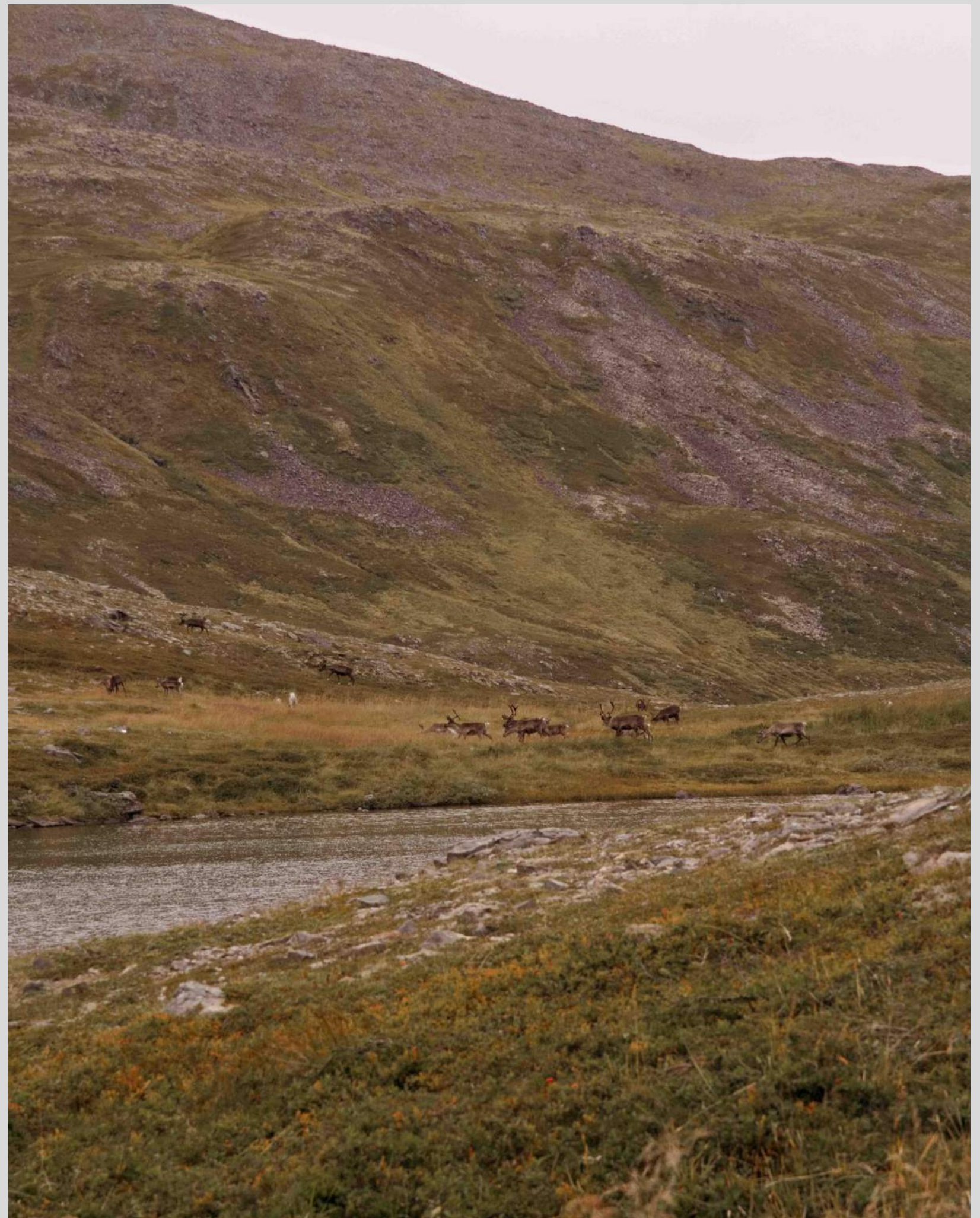




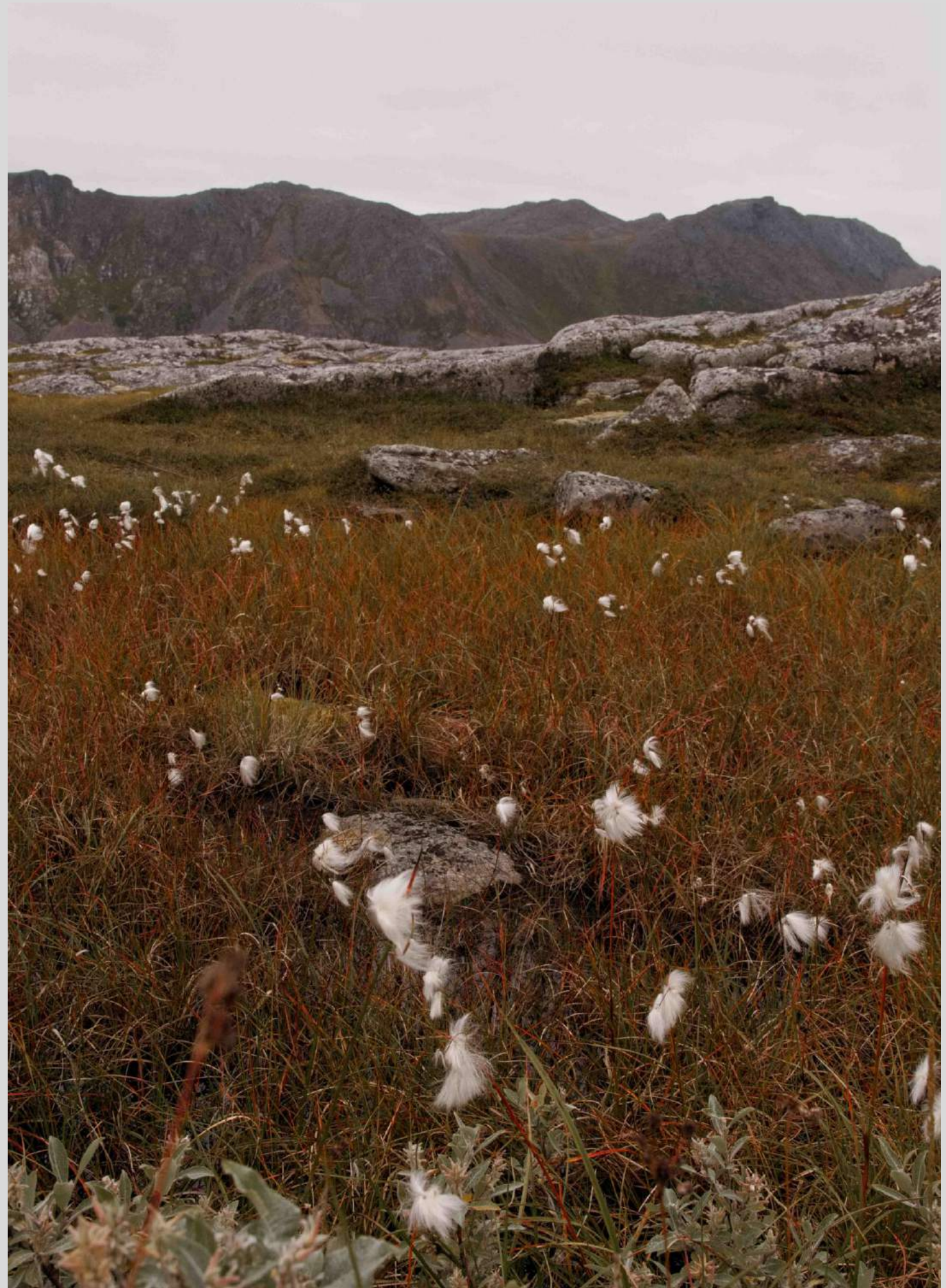




























I met Nil, a Sami reindeer herder who's also the 1st Sami dentist specializing in prosthodontics. The program he attended only accepts 2 students annually. This came up when he pointed to the pin on his lapel and asked me what I thought it was: "a toothbrush?" He asked because he noticed "You have nice teeth."

















Ai Nordkapp

...Dad and John became inseparable. It all started with a conversation about U.S. and U.K politics. I was so fond of John. He's a sweetheart. "You can never have enough Christmas stuff," he said cheerily, as we passed by another Christmas shop in Skarsvåg, where we came across an amazing photo gallery with works by Frits Solvang. John hums, takes photographs (avidly switching between lenses), and is so good-natured in a way that reminds me of Wes. "Best day we've had," John said at the end (...I'm not sure Elaine and Joyce agreed, but they were troopers along our journey in the freezing cold). We probably trespassed onto someone's property looking for a path to get to a lighthouse but ended up meeting a Norwegian diver who just moved 2 weeks ago from the Lofoten Islands to experience life in Honningsvåg and was looking for halibut and crabs. There are tons of seagulls in the fishing village of Gjesvær but the puffins had already migrated. I was very impressed by the cyclists who carried their groceries while biking up steep inclines. Besides them, we saw no one else on the roads. Where are all the Norwegians? We saw houses.



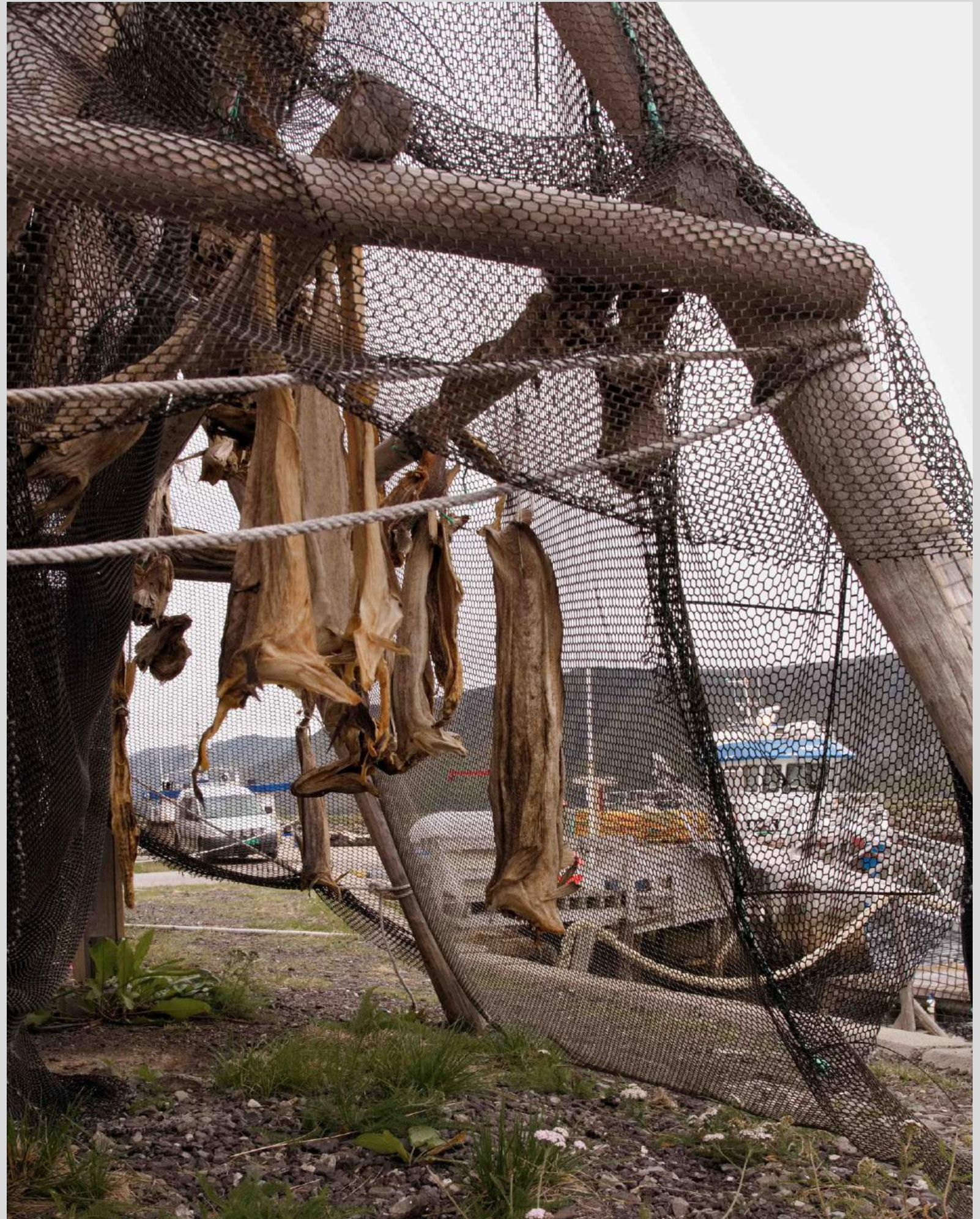


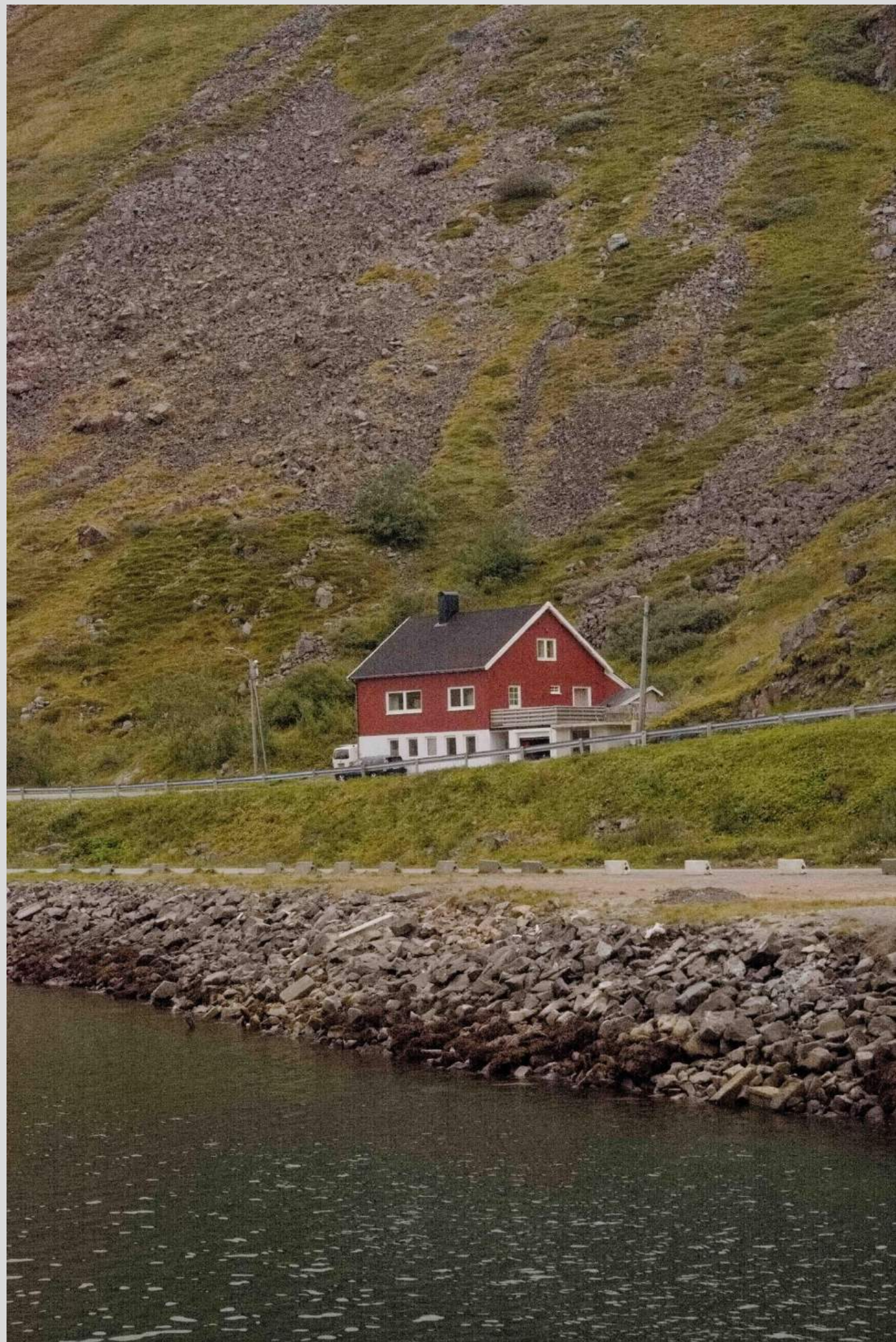






KING CRAB























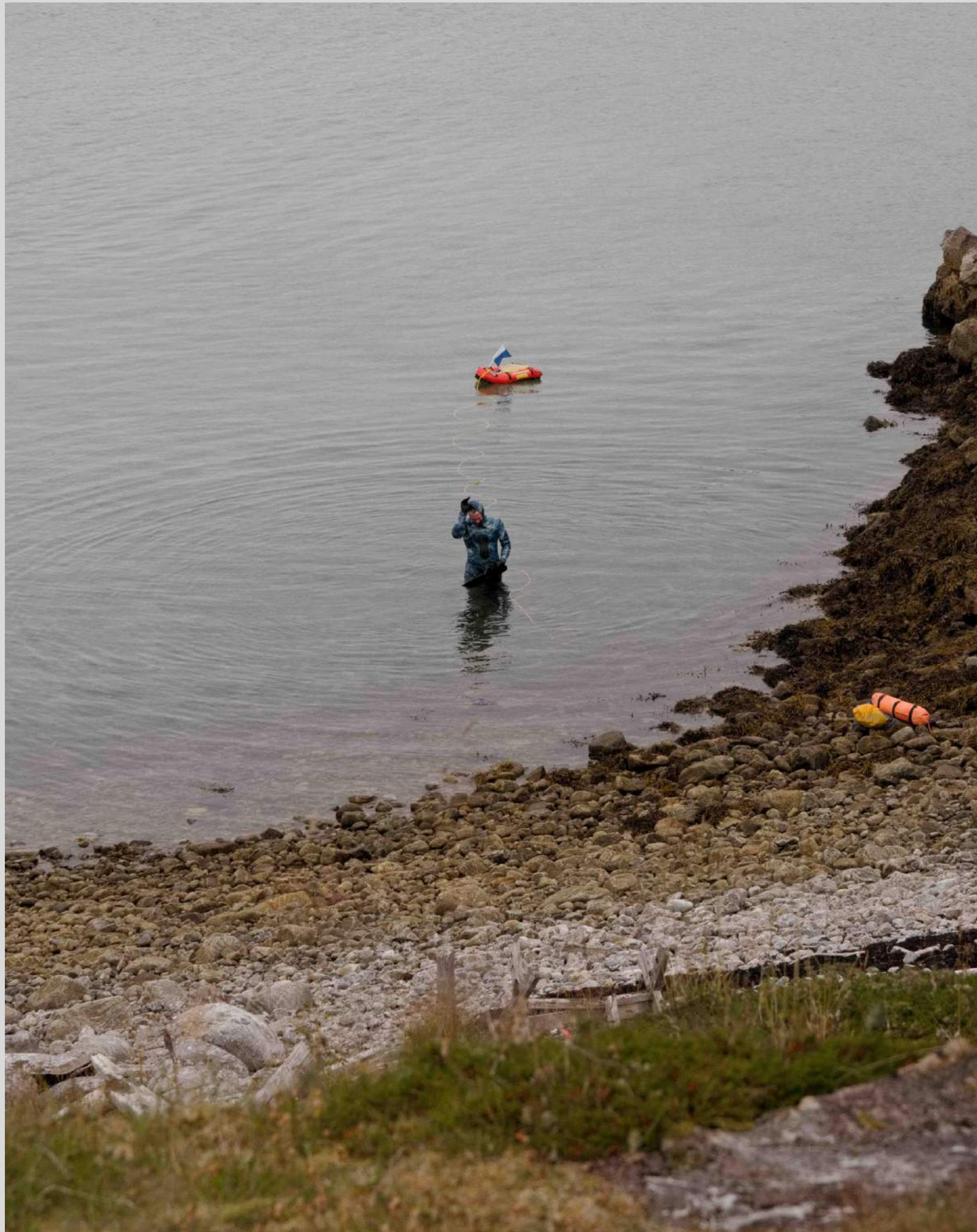








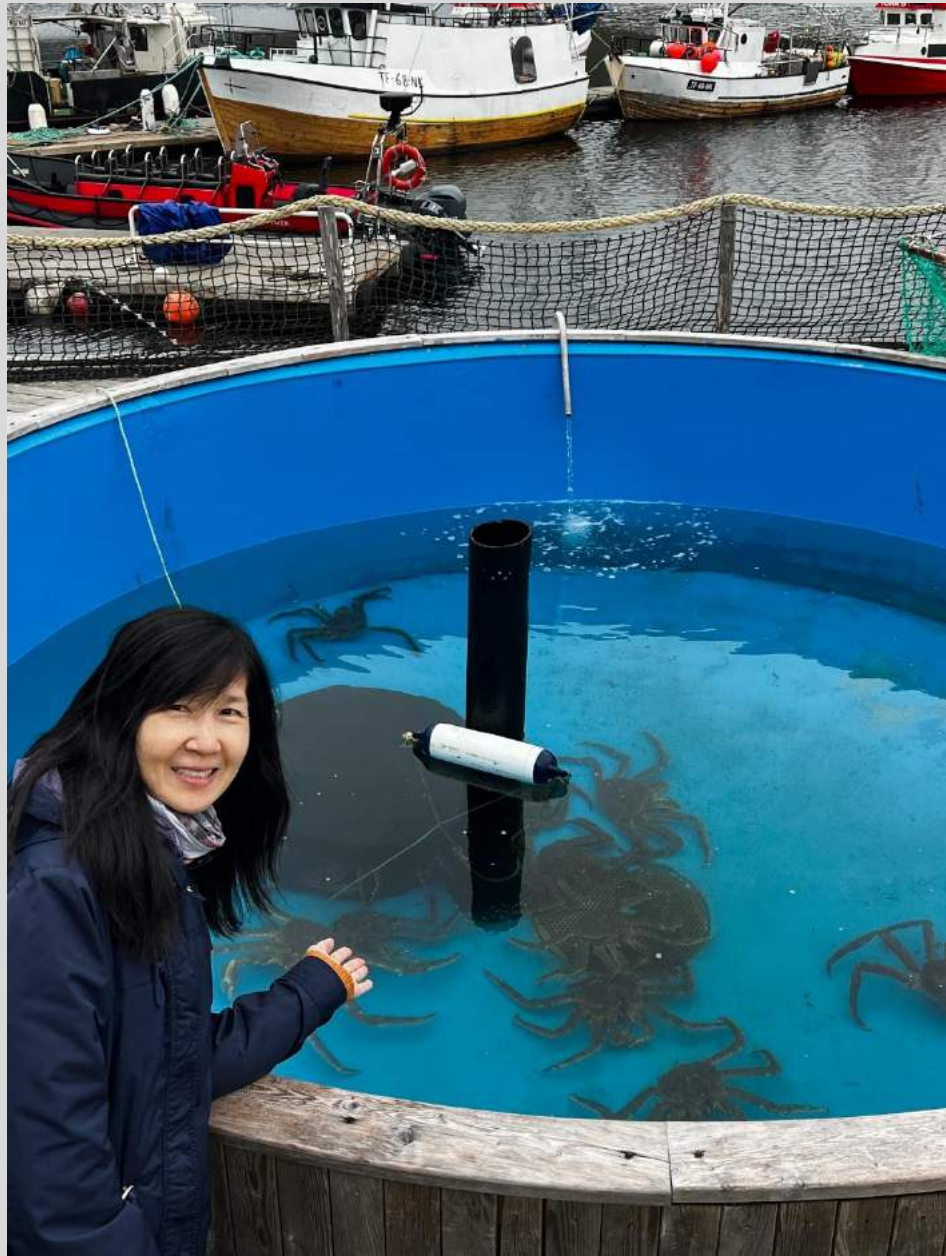















Faris, our Bosnian waiter with an excellent poker face, served us with his sarcastic humor as the 9 of us gathered in the Cielo dining room for a bit more bonding after our adventures. "He's on a roll," Elaine rolled her eyes as she caught John talking to Dad about Boris Johnson and Brexit. I sat closer to the ladies and was amused when they giggled over a recent U.S. president's hair. "It goes that way and then flies this way. Which way will it land next?" Later into our dinner, John noted how it's ironic religions promote "loving your neighbor" yet the Irish Protestant-Catholic divide exists. It was moving to witness how Ben shared photos of his family and men's group later in the dinner - what a natural way to witness.



Tromsø



Norwegian cities are different. They're far humbler than I expected for a wealthy country and they're not suited for cruise ships with 4000 people...Tromsø is at the same altitude as Northern Alaska and is the 12th most populated city in Norway with 80k people. Our first stop was a souvenir store that offered whale sausage (tasted like chorizo and salami) and reindeer sausage (...cheesey) samples. From there, we saw the Domkirke (wooden Lutheran church) and passed by the Catholic Church of Our Lady and the wharf before crossing the bridge to the Arctic Cathedral (didn't seem worth 80 NOK to enter). We picnicked at a "Park for Folks" and watched 2 older Norwegian men play bocce ball. With little to do on a Sunday, Dad suggested we go to Ice Bar. We suited up in heavy ponchos and gloves... I really wished the cruise would offer shuttles for all passengers - the cruise's shuttles are the same as the city's buses, but this way, we wouldn't overwhelm the local transportation system and annoy the poor locals. As much as I wanted to see it, Tromsø turned out to be not ideal for cruise passengers who don't have time for husky excursions or northern light tours. Also, the husky cafe was closed for the season.

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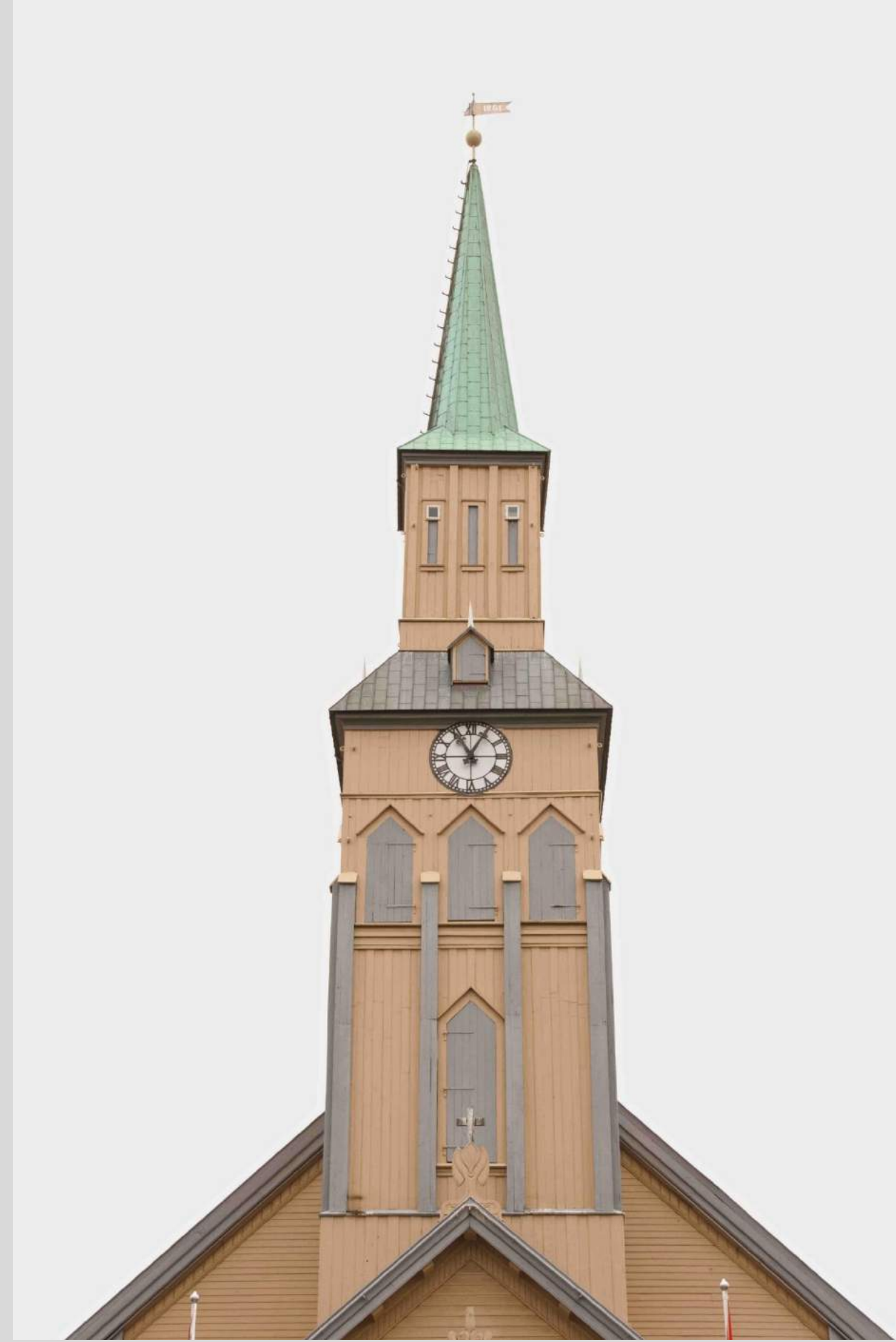














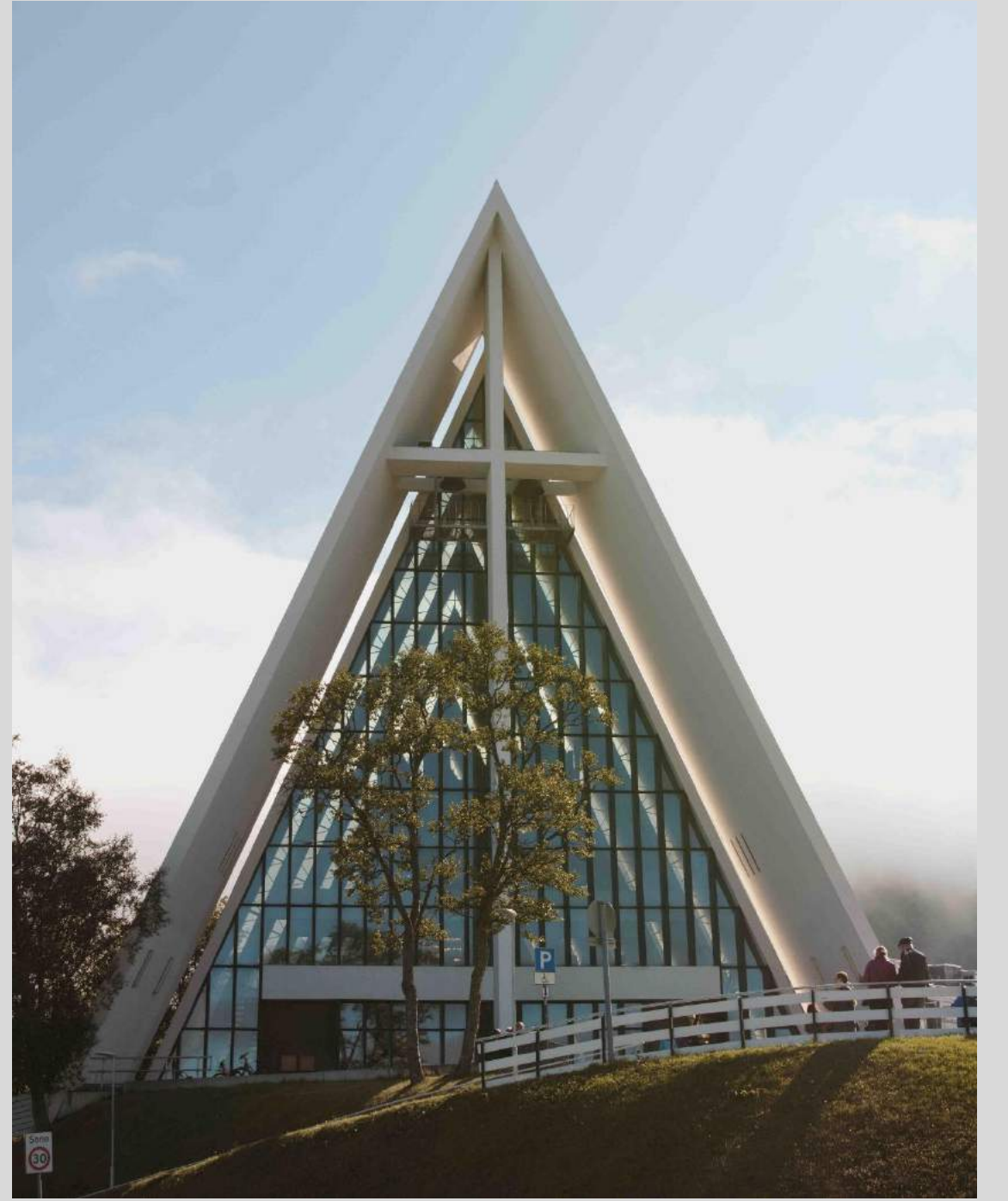
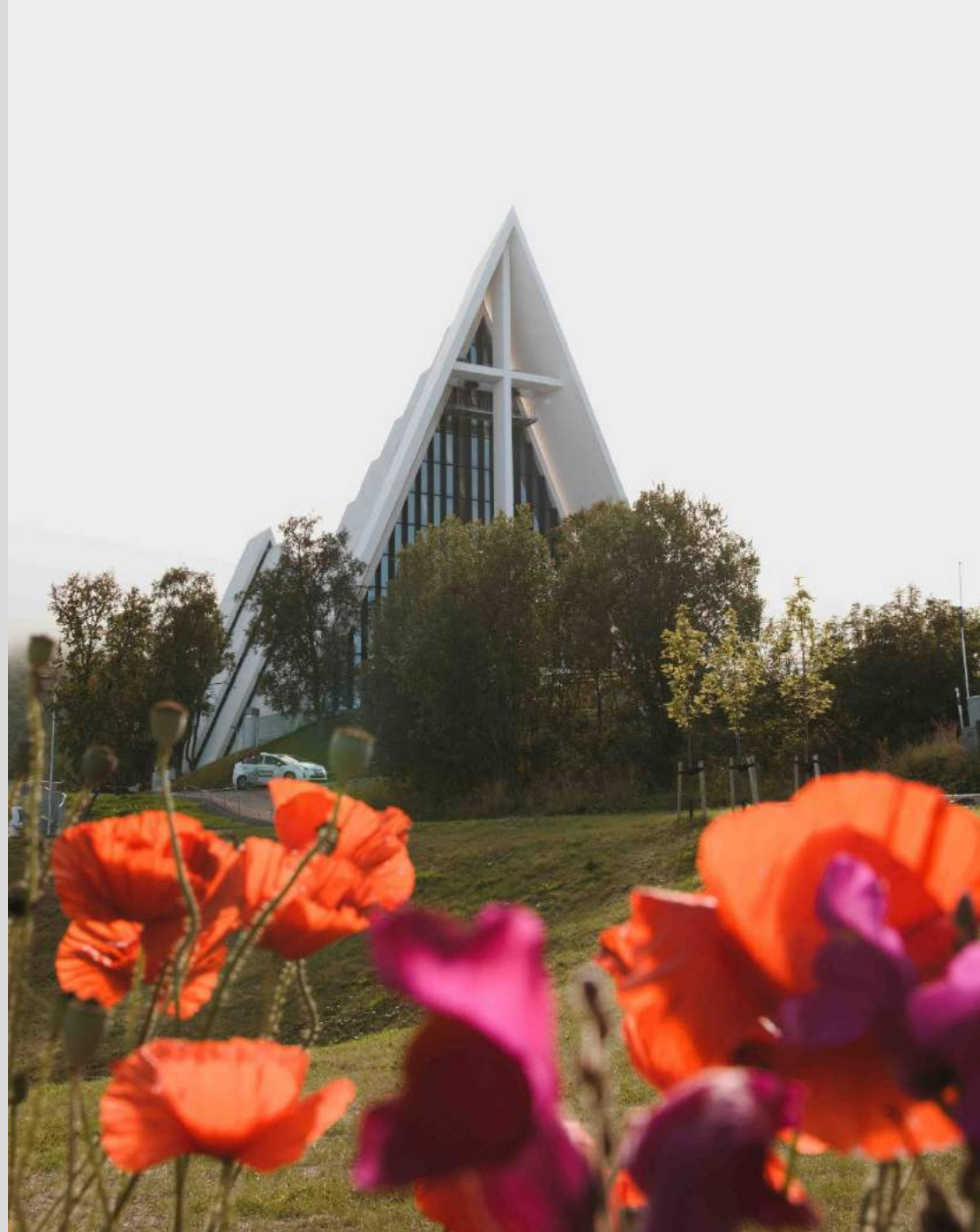


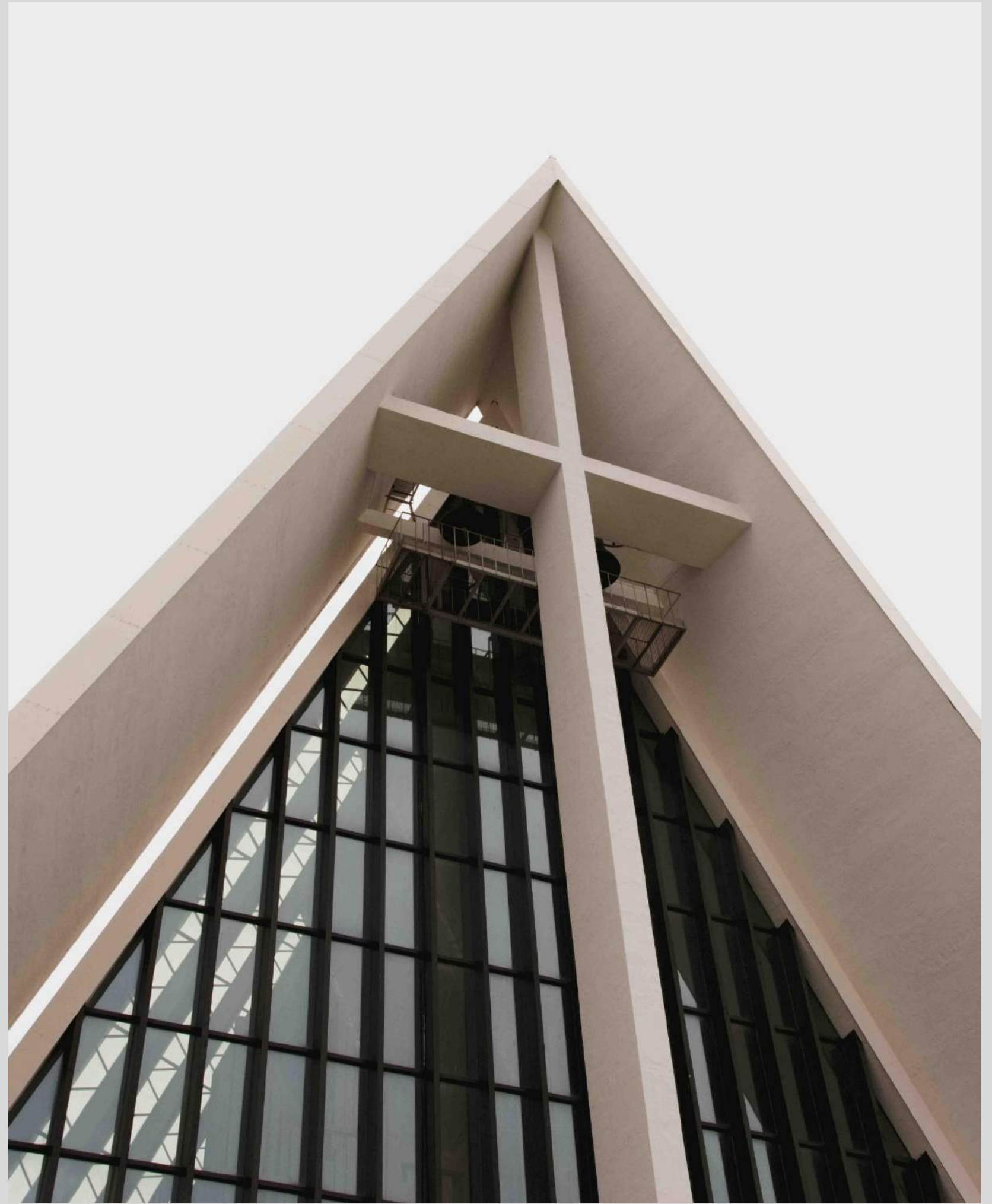
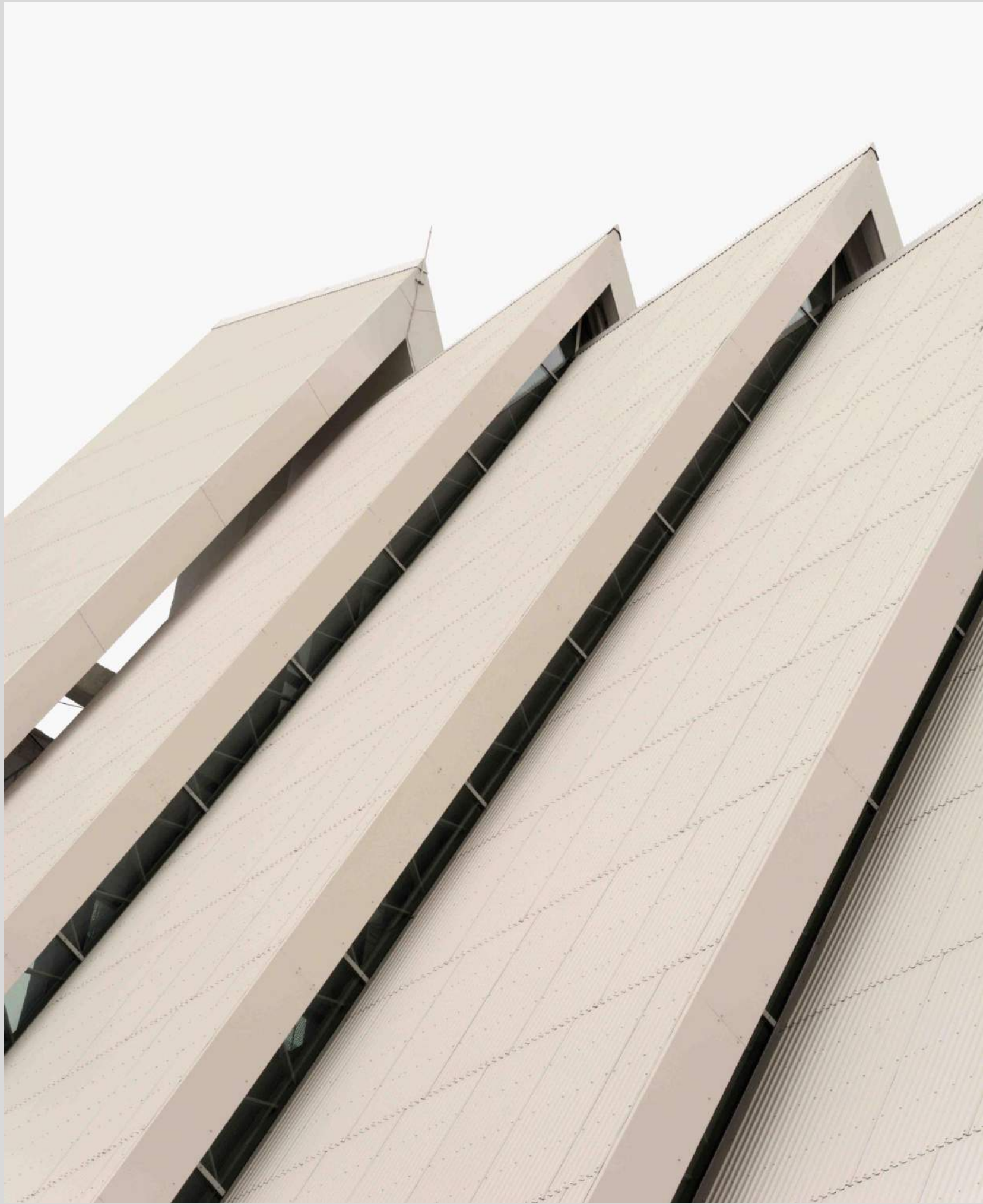
Tromsø's facades

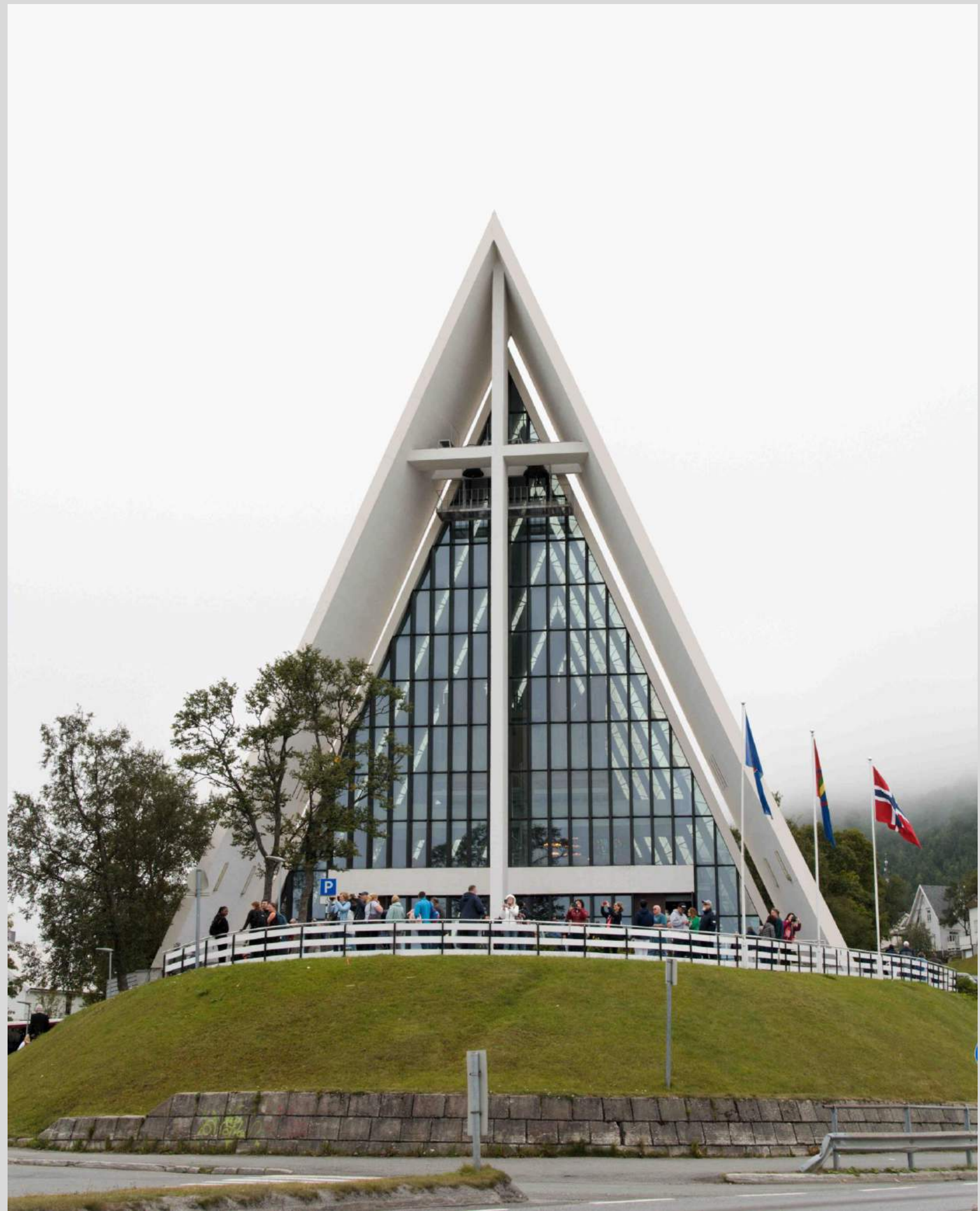








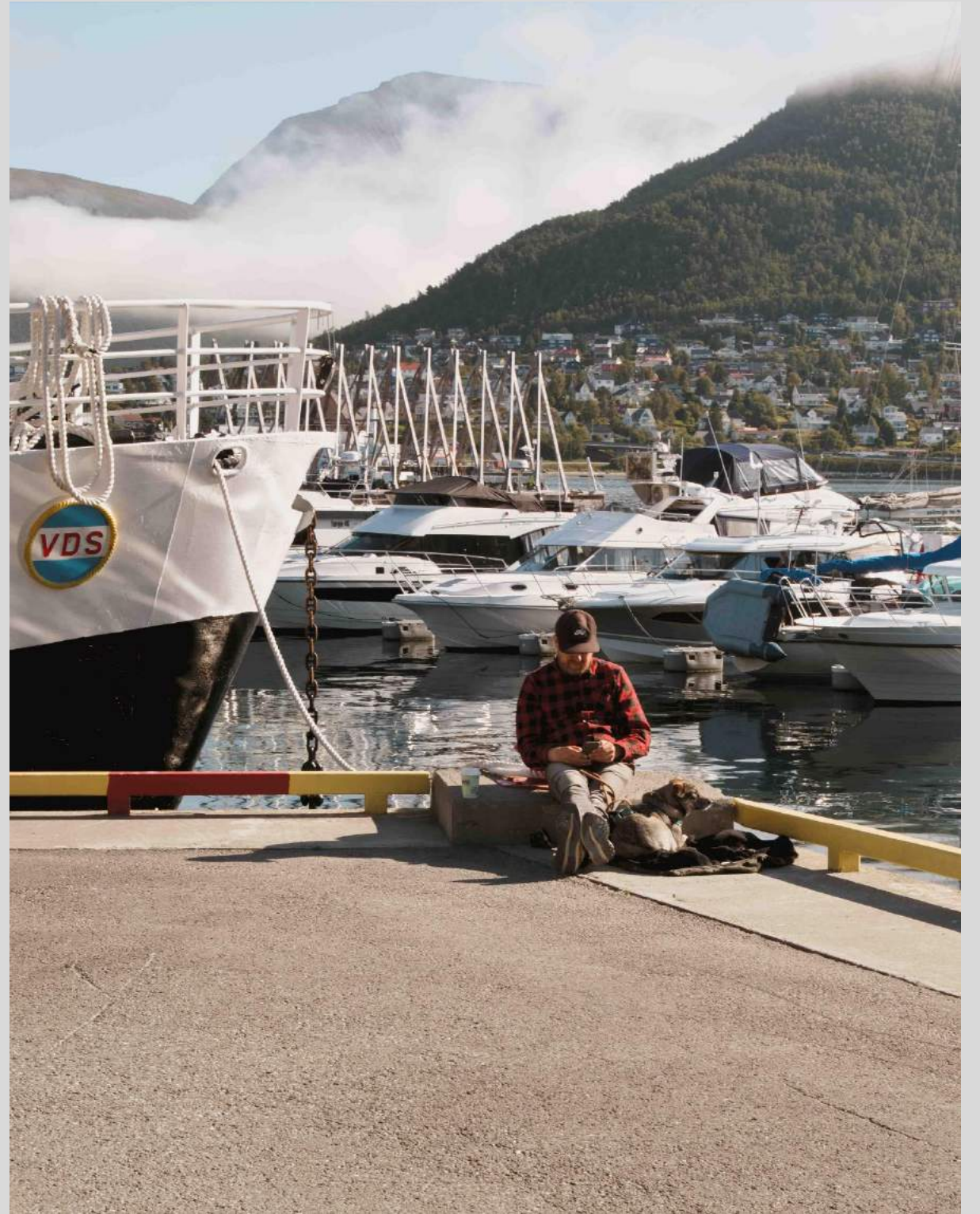




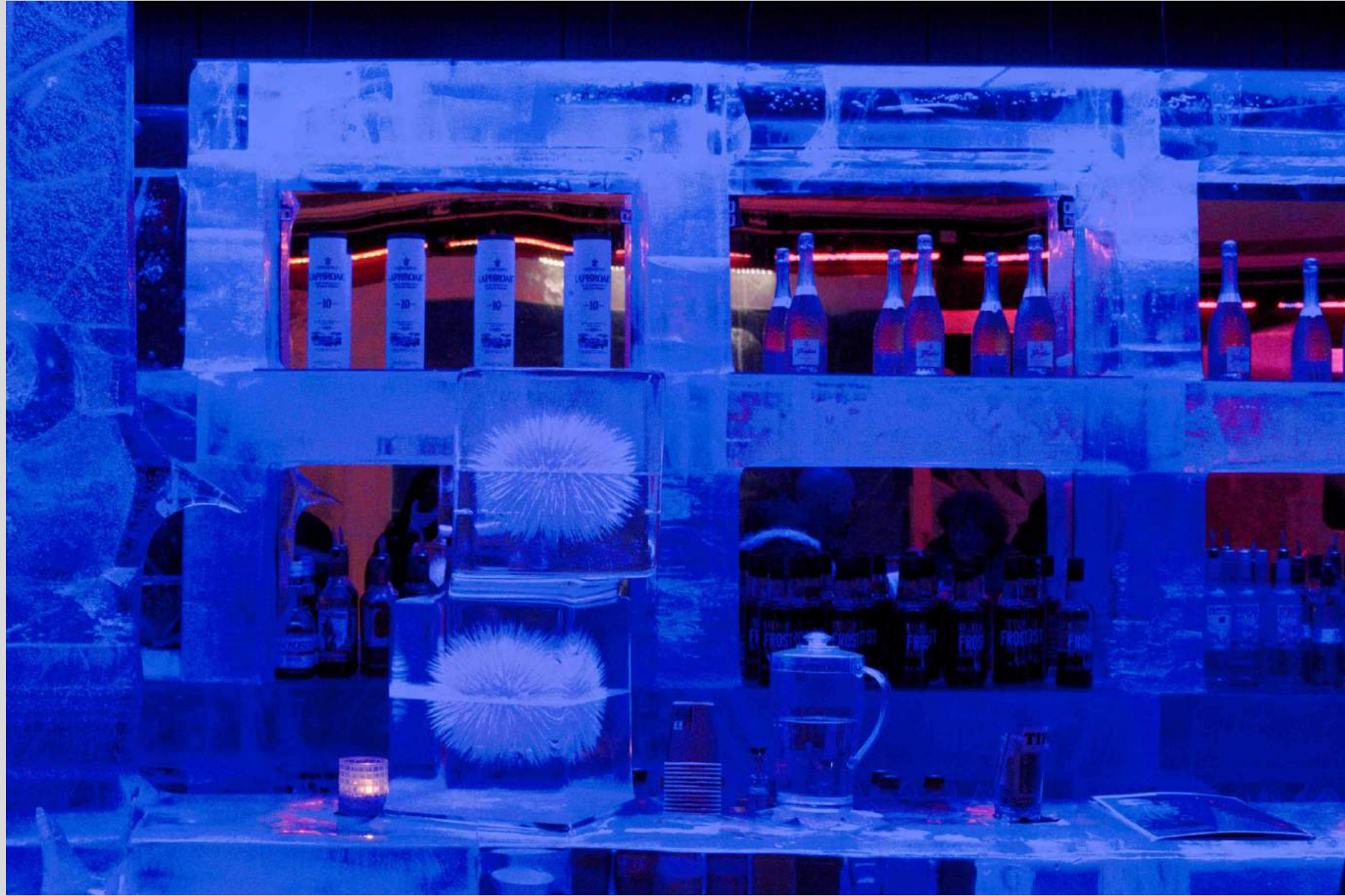


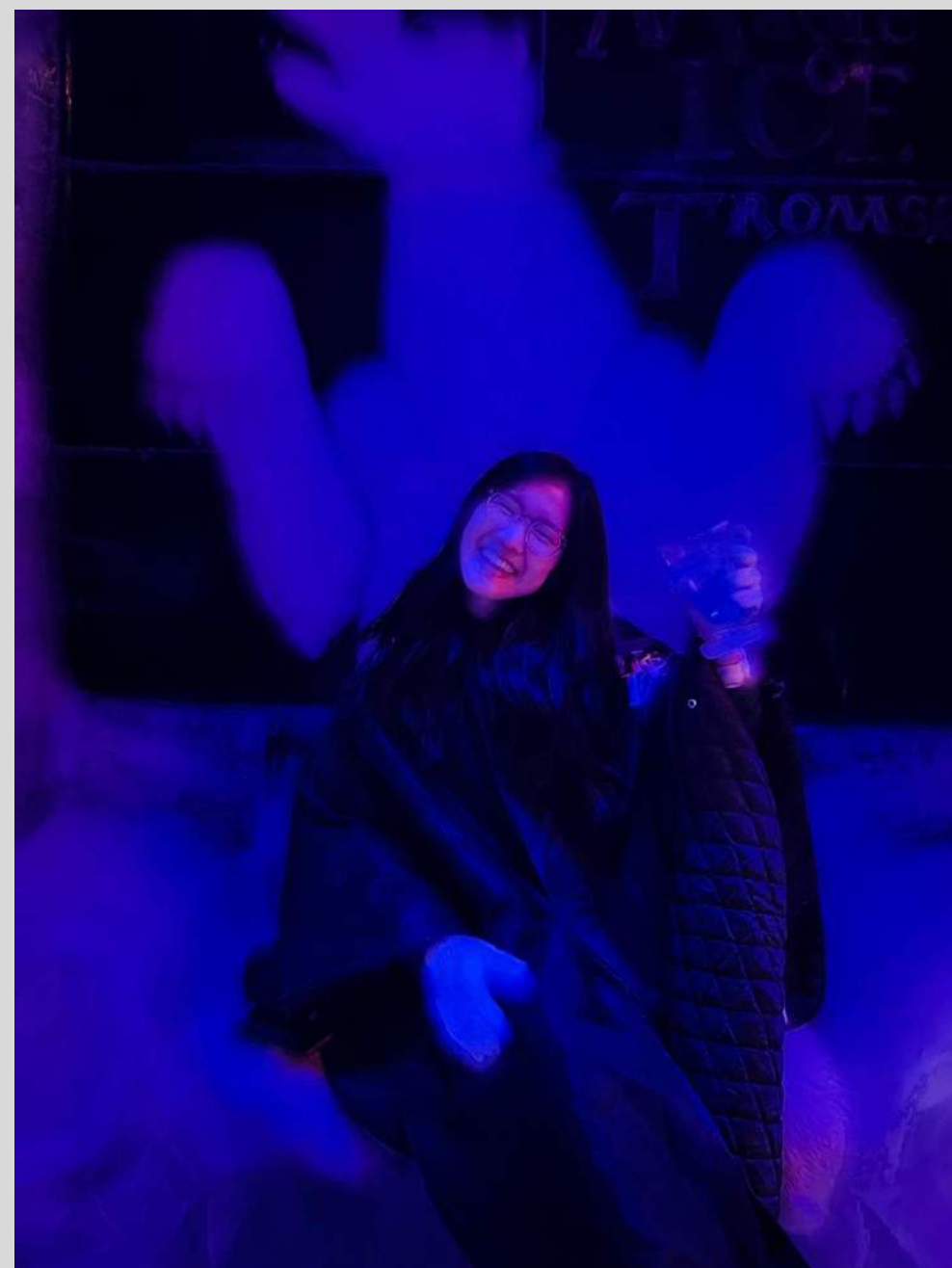




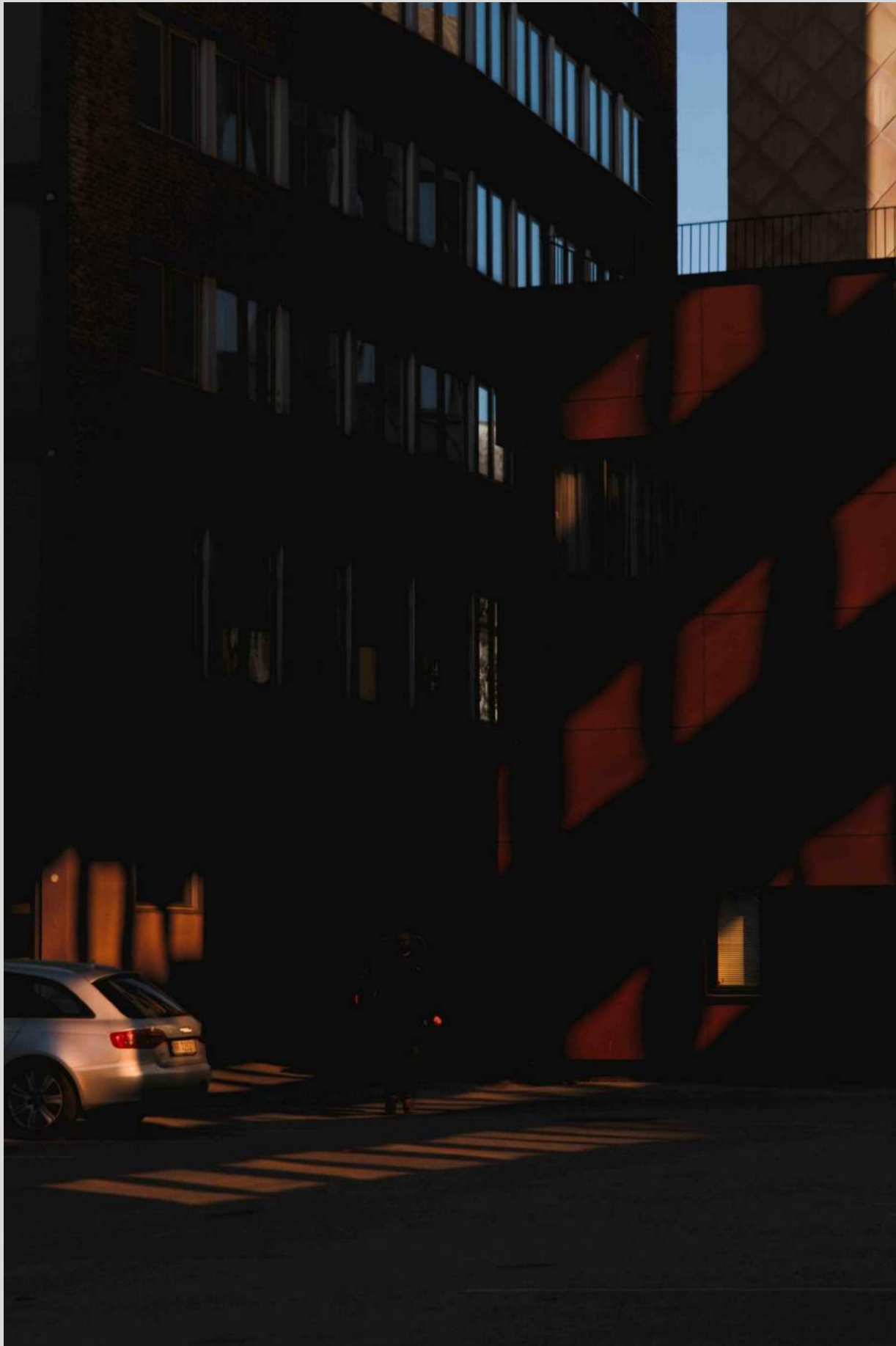






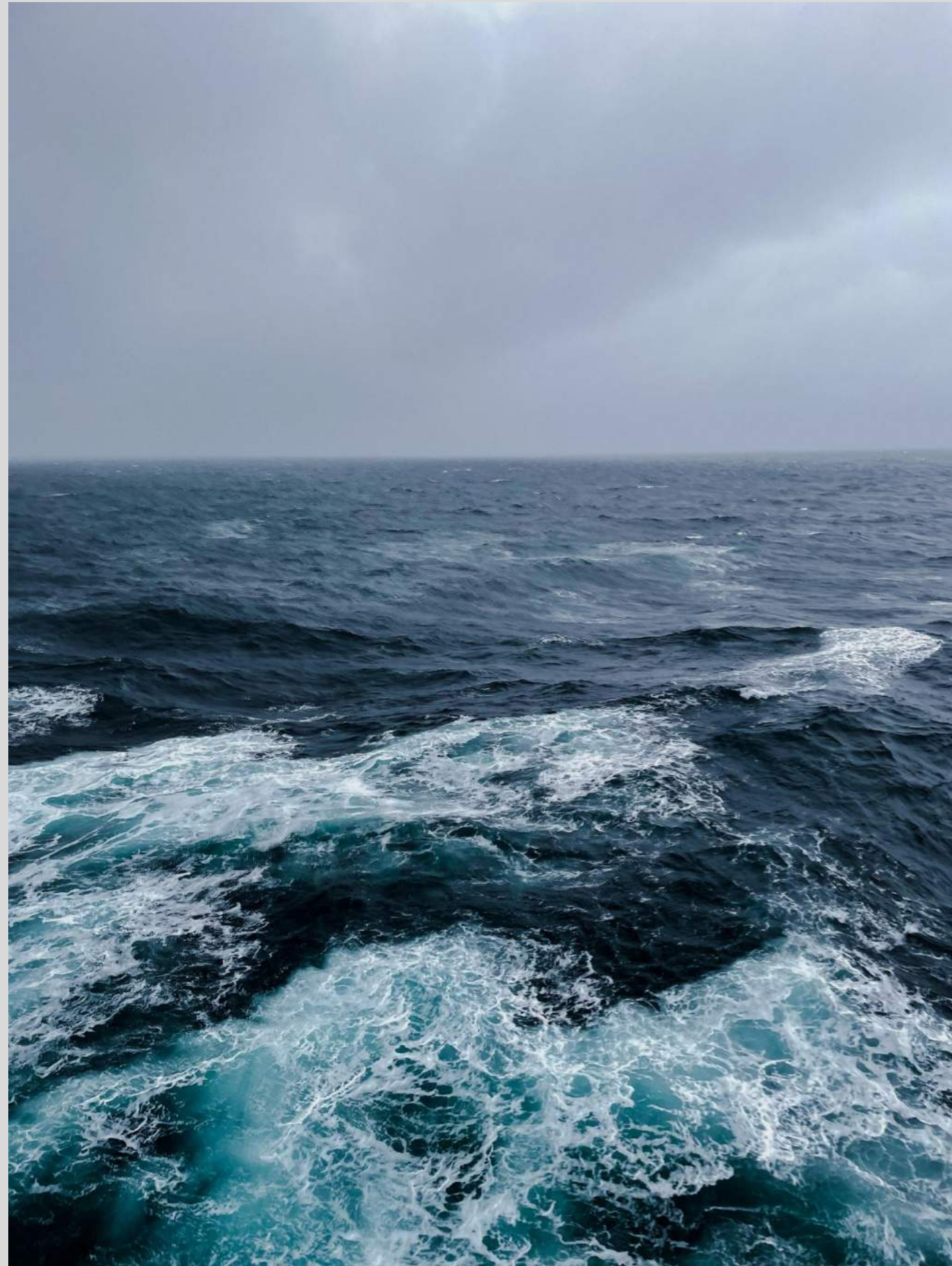


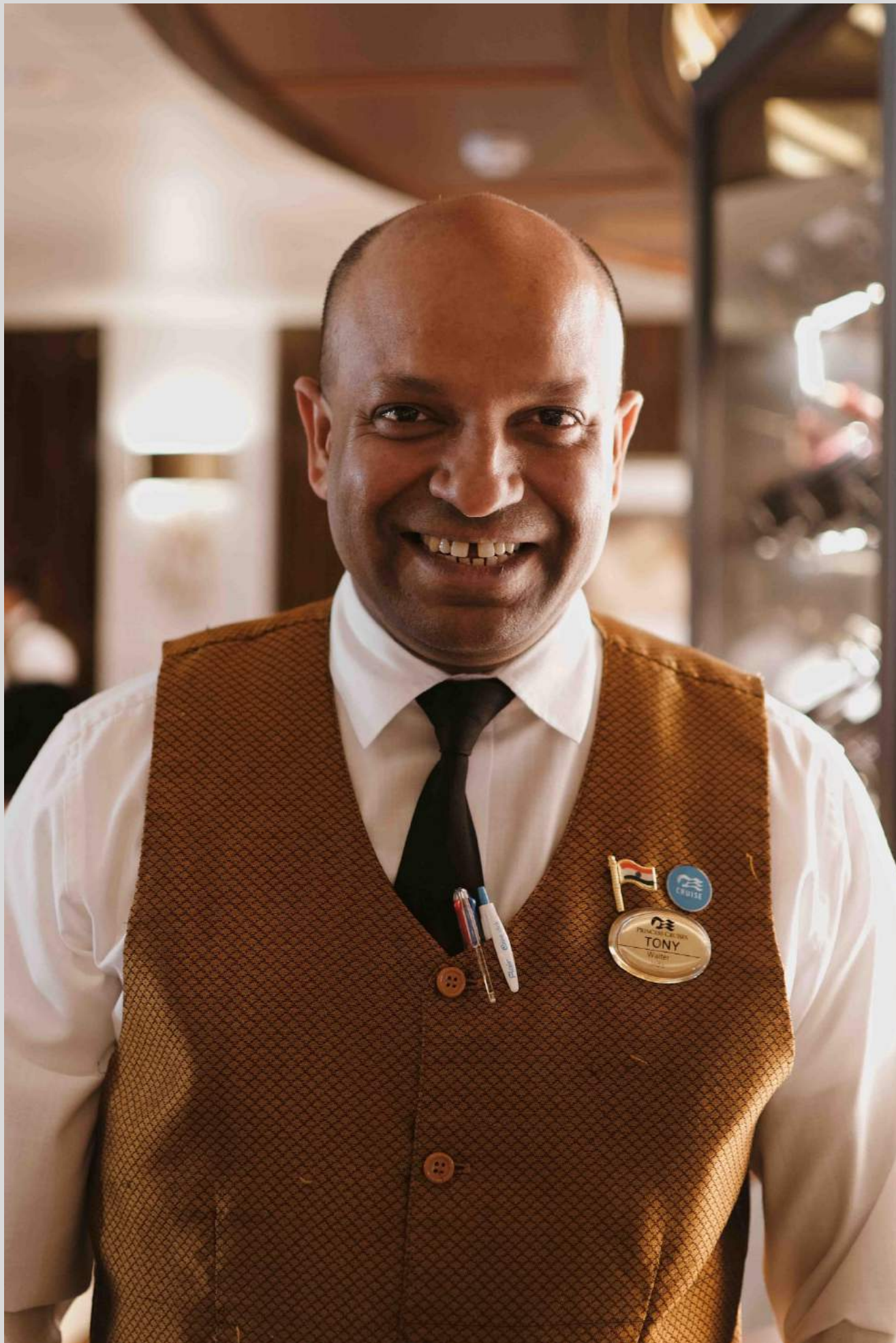






Ai Sea





A sleepless night prompted me to head up early to the buffet for coffee and quiet reading. The early staff is less chatty but Tony and John ("Double 0-7") showed up eventually. Tony asked what I was reading (Psalm 83) and said, "Psalm 91 is my favorite." I asked if he grew up reading the Bible. "Yes... I've never seen anyone reading their Bible here. You made my day." He reads the bible daily at 4am before work but still calls me the early bird for getting up before the family. He also saw me studying Proverbs and said he learned the importance of mining the Bible's reaches at a conference in India 1.5 years ago. "Everything you need is there!"

28 Aug 23

"So what's the Good News, today?" Tony asked. Parable of the sower. "Ah, the seeds, huh?" He mentioned a 1x weekly community group where they worship and study together at 10:30pm. By that time, though, he's exhausted. "I can talk directly, ah?" He pointed up.

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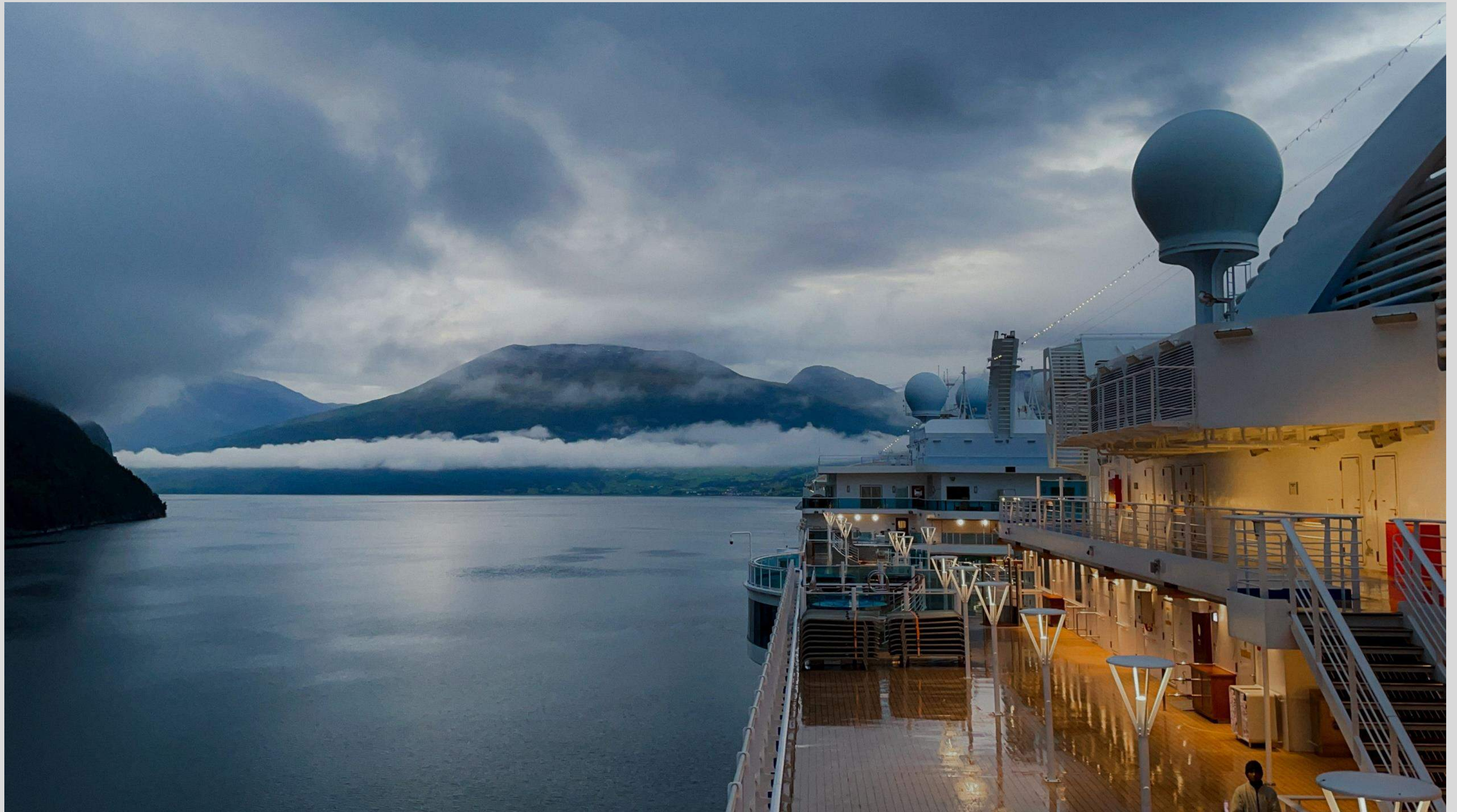
Loen/Olden



Loen/Olden

It's remarkable how small these Norwegian villages can receive two cruise ships full of people (7-8k). Here in Loen, the water is aqua and clear. The clouds veil the mountains, each packed densely with evergreen trees. A waterfall sat at the base of the cable car mountain. Our guide, Sylvia, speaks 4 languages with a sweet, lyrical voice and is from Sardinia. Apparently coral reefs exist in the fjord and pilot whales, orcas, dolphins, and seals live there. The Oldedalen River is rich in salmon and trout. The pristine Olden lake is still and turquoise blue from all the minerals (note: not safe for drinking). We visited the Briksdal glacier, an arm of Jostedal glacier. The house colors signify financial status (red = poor, yellow = middle, white = wealthy). While Norway is rural and villages are quaint, the traditional buildings are pristine and well maintained.

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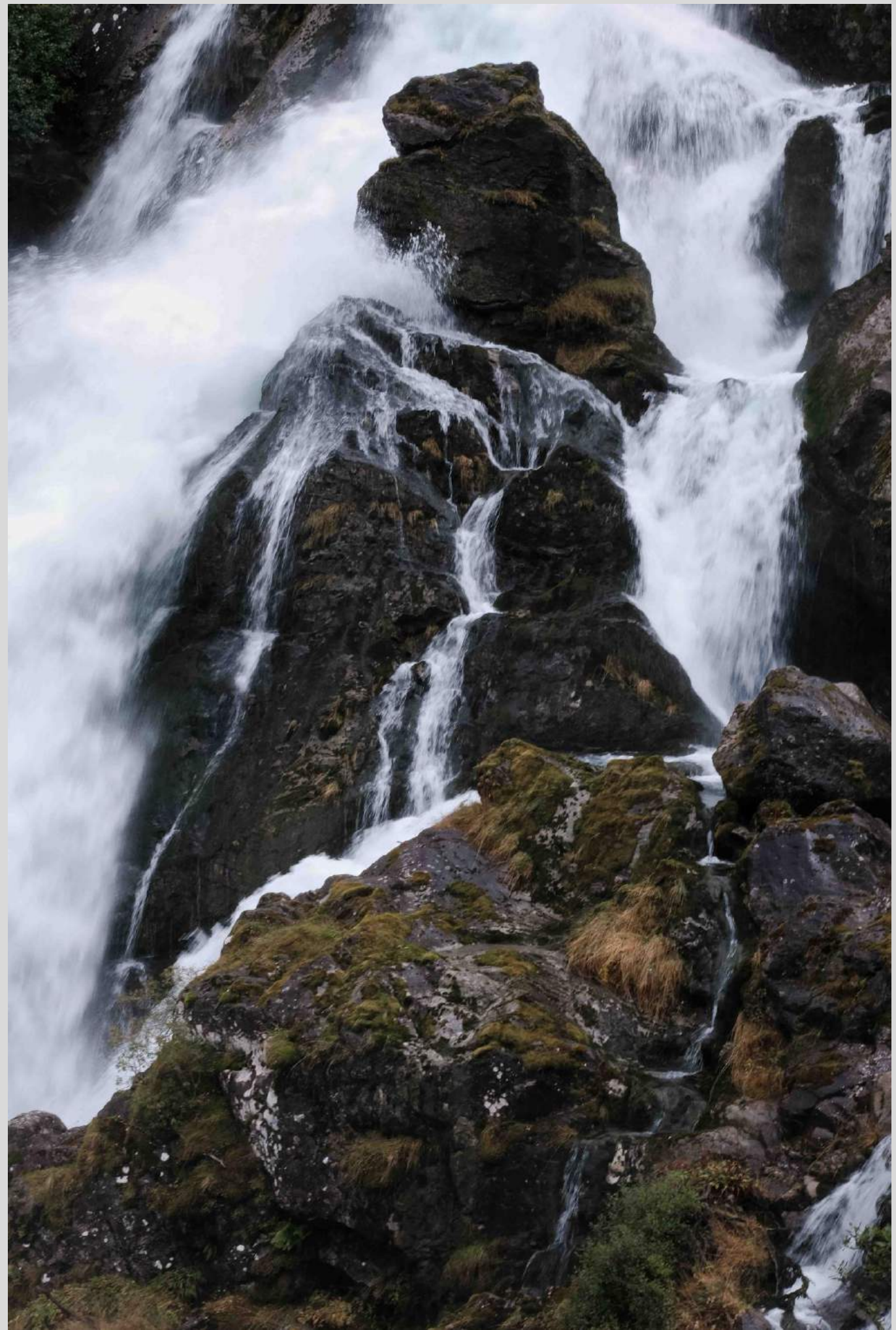
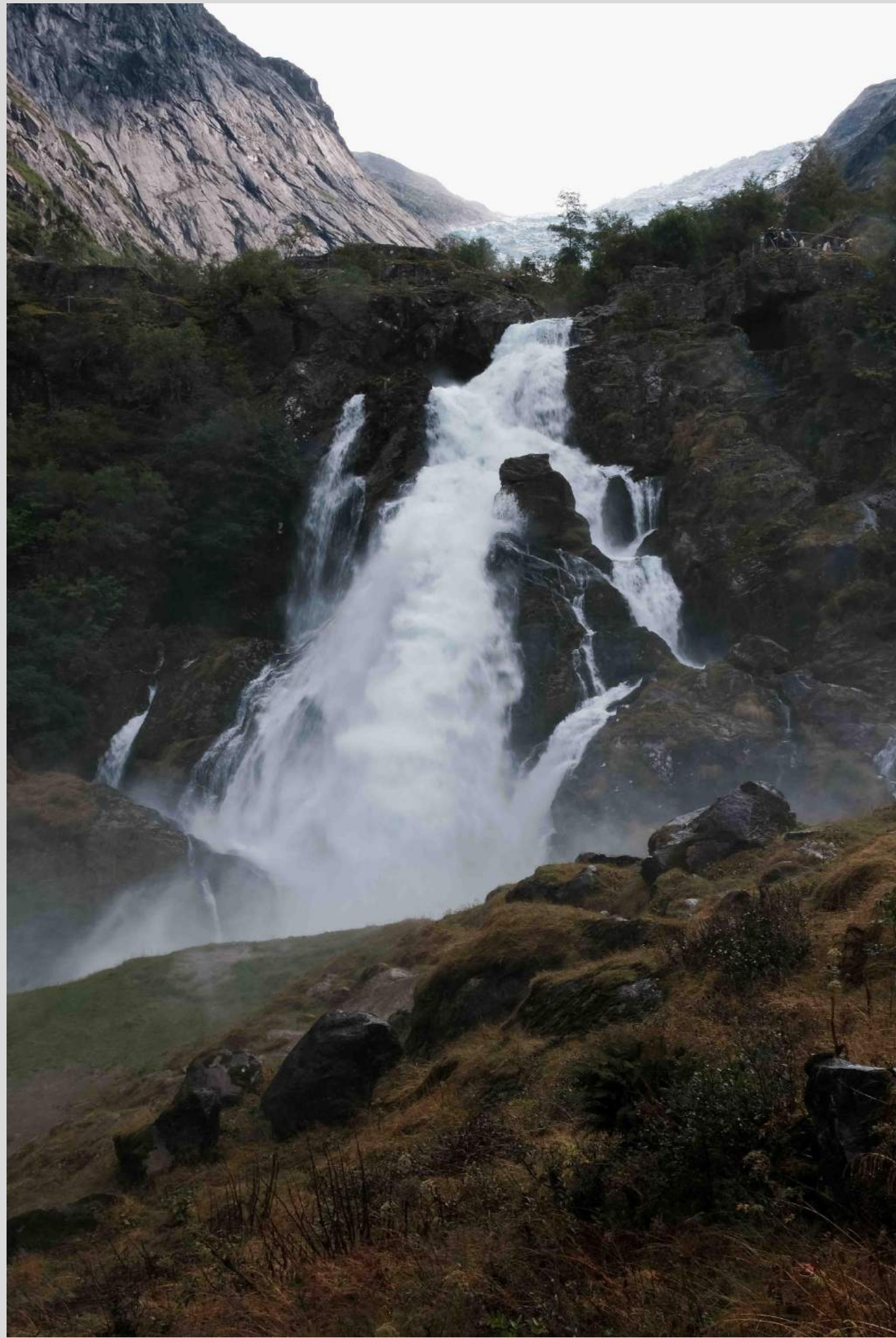




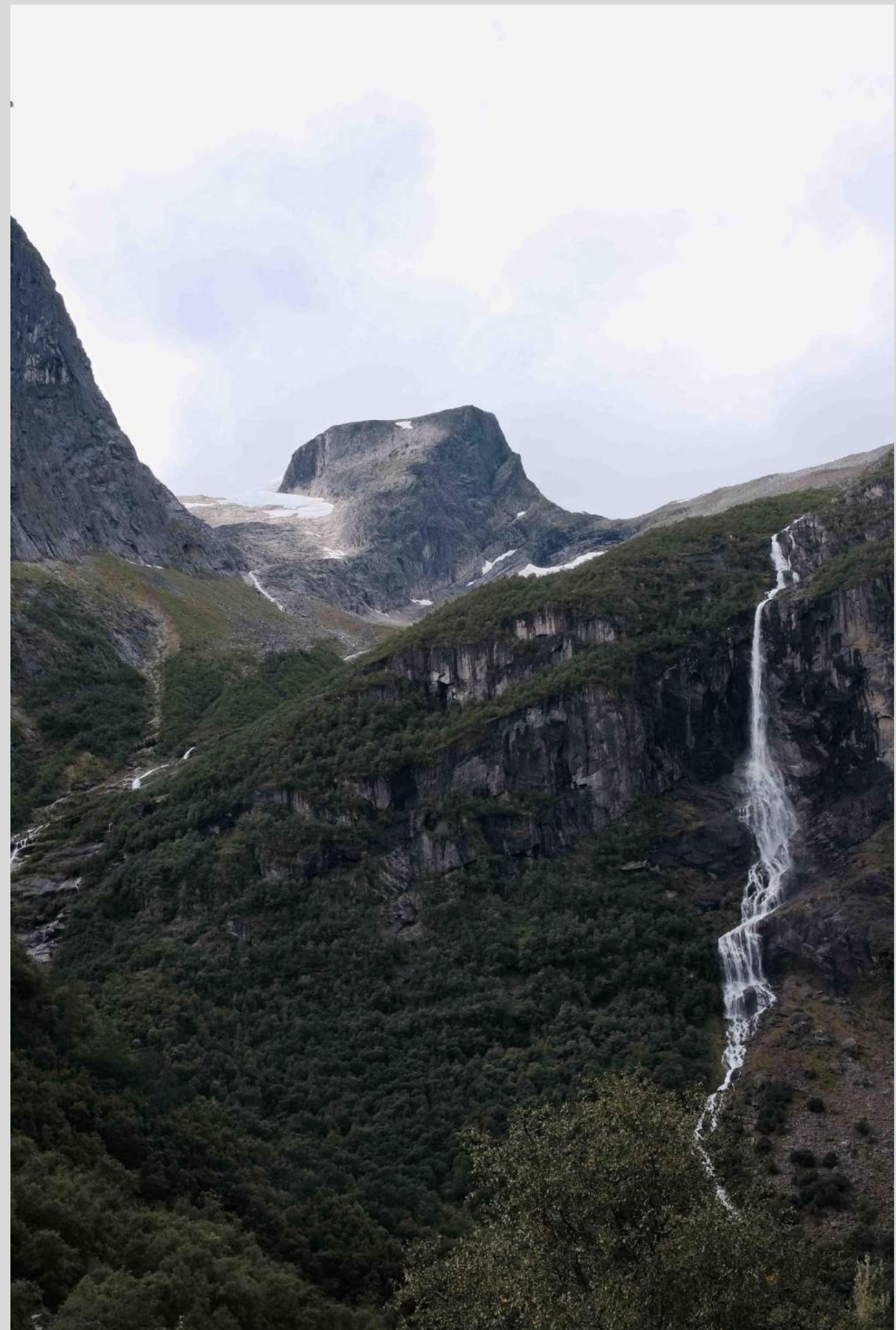
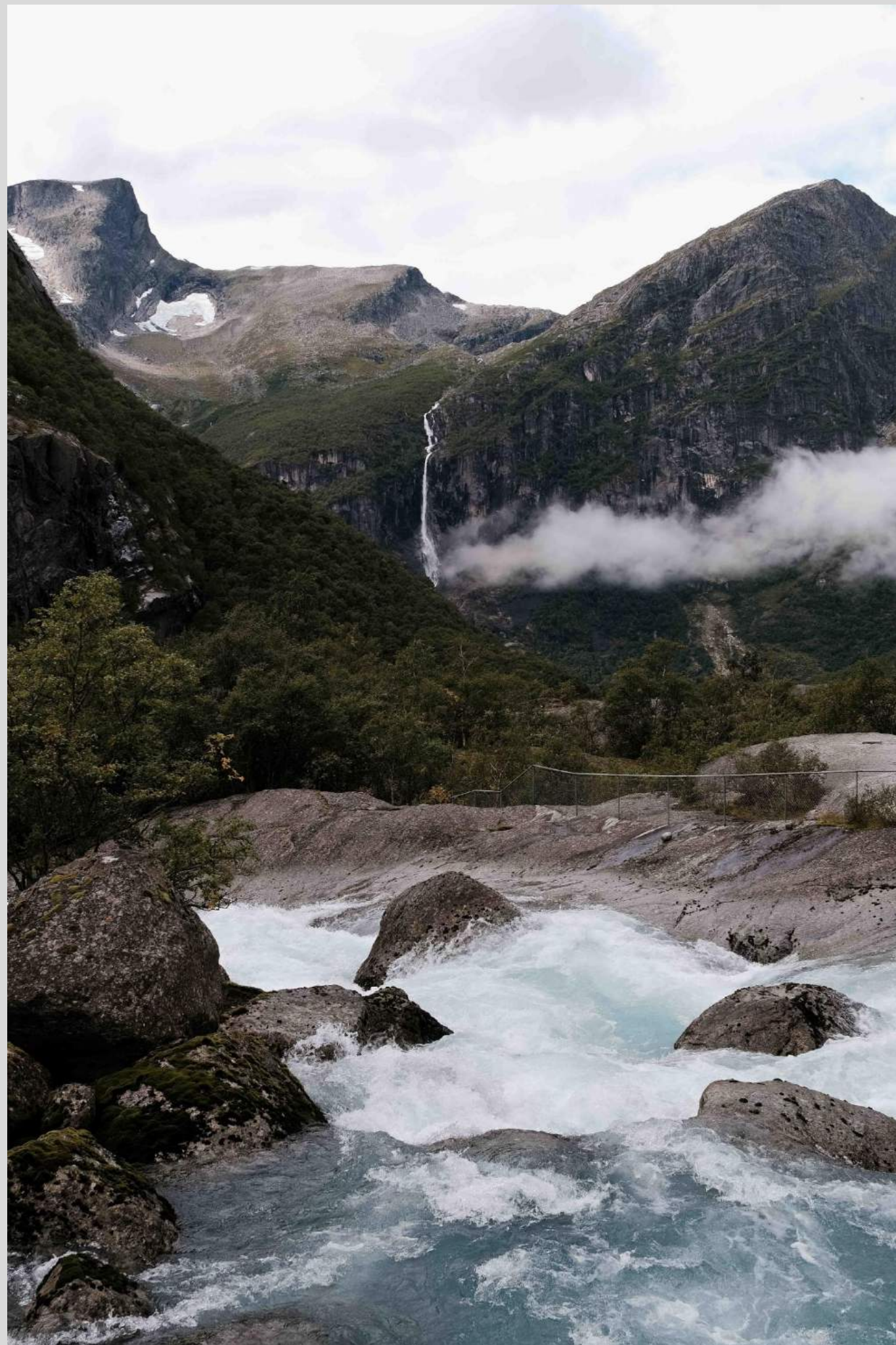


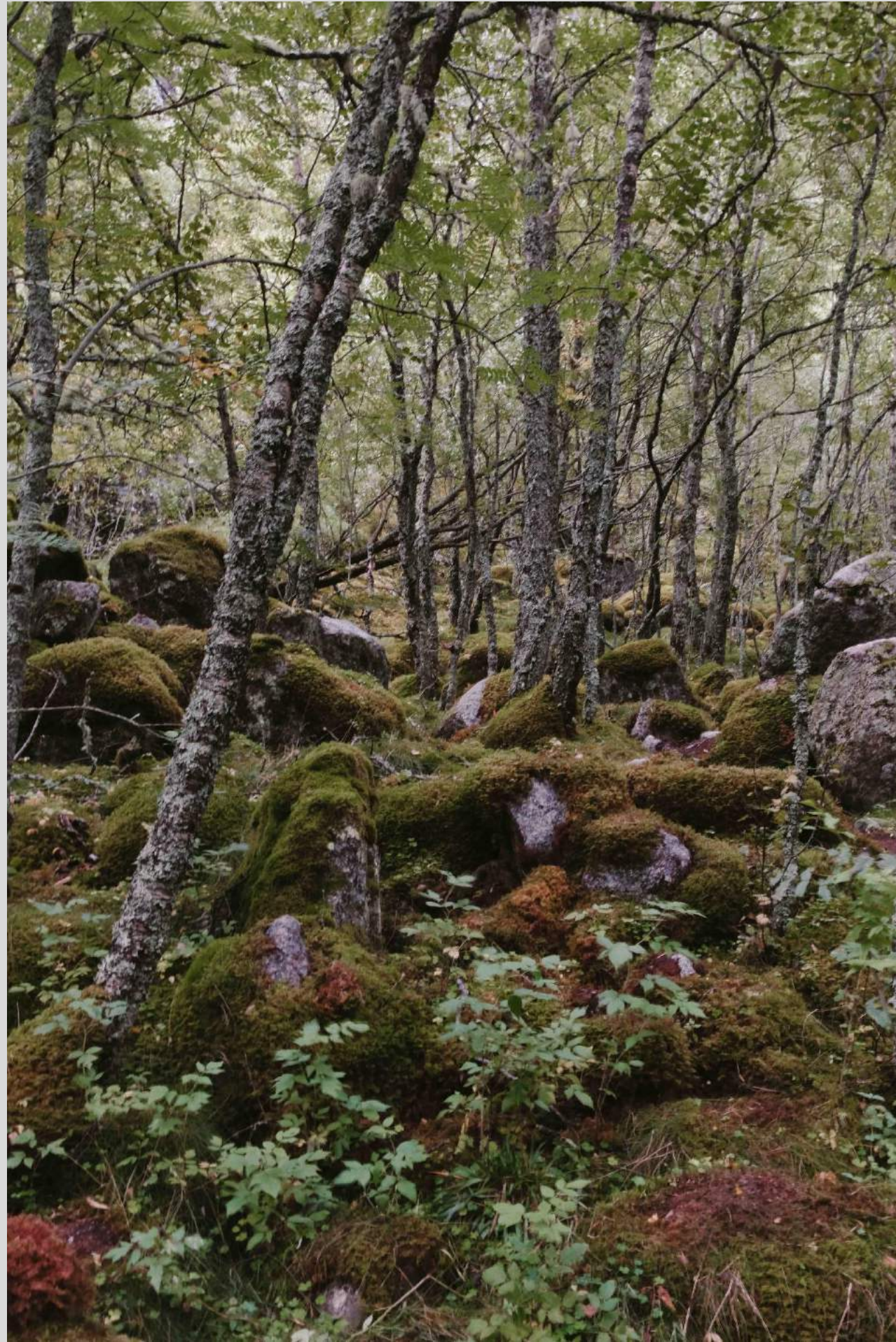
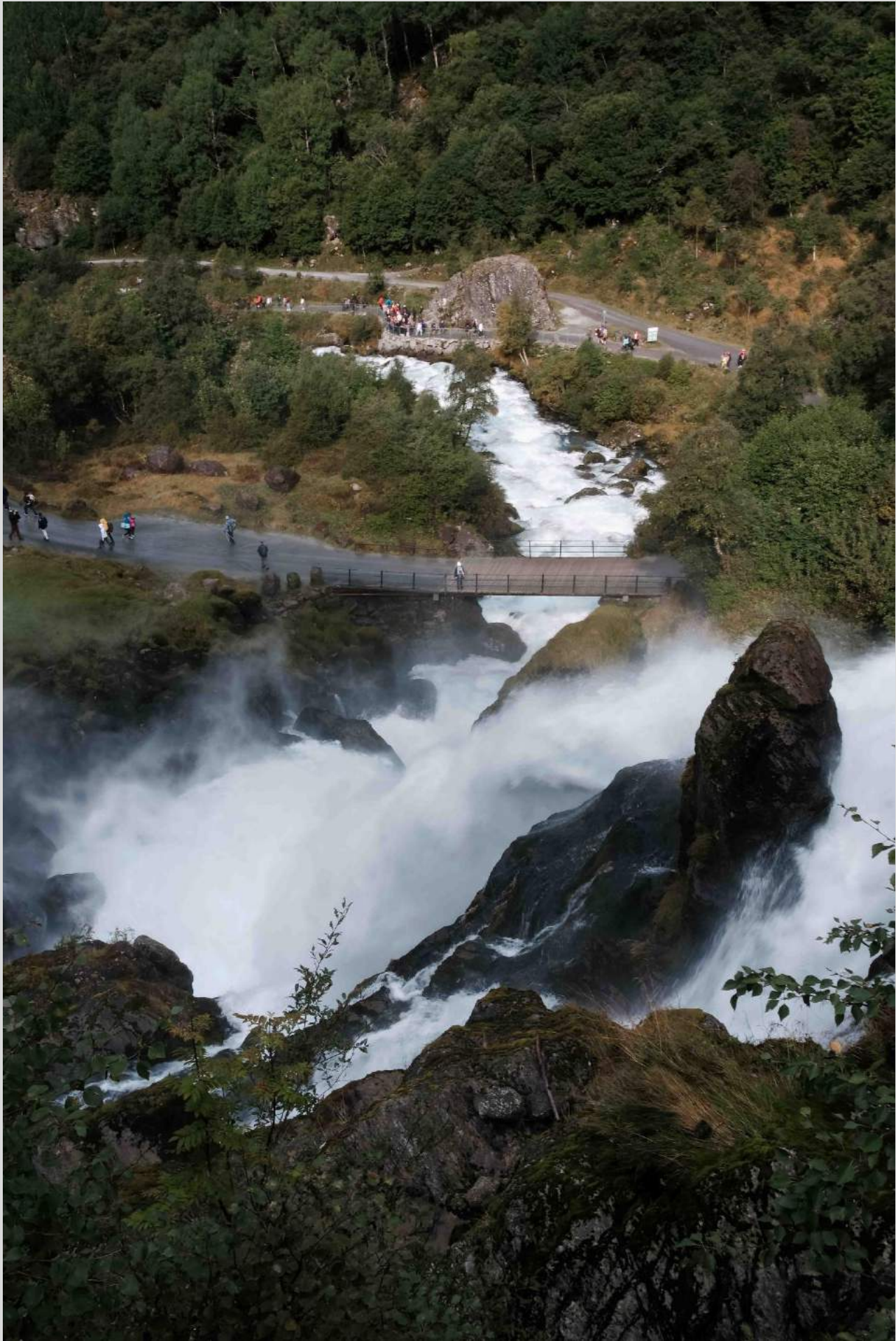




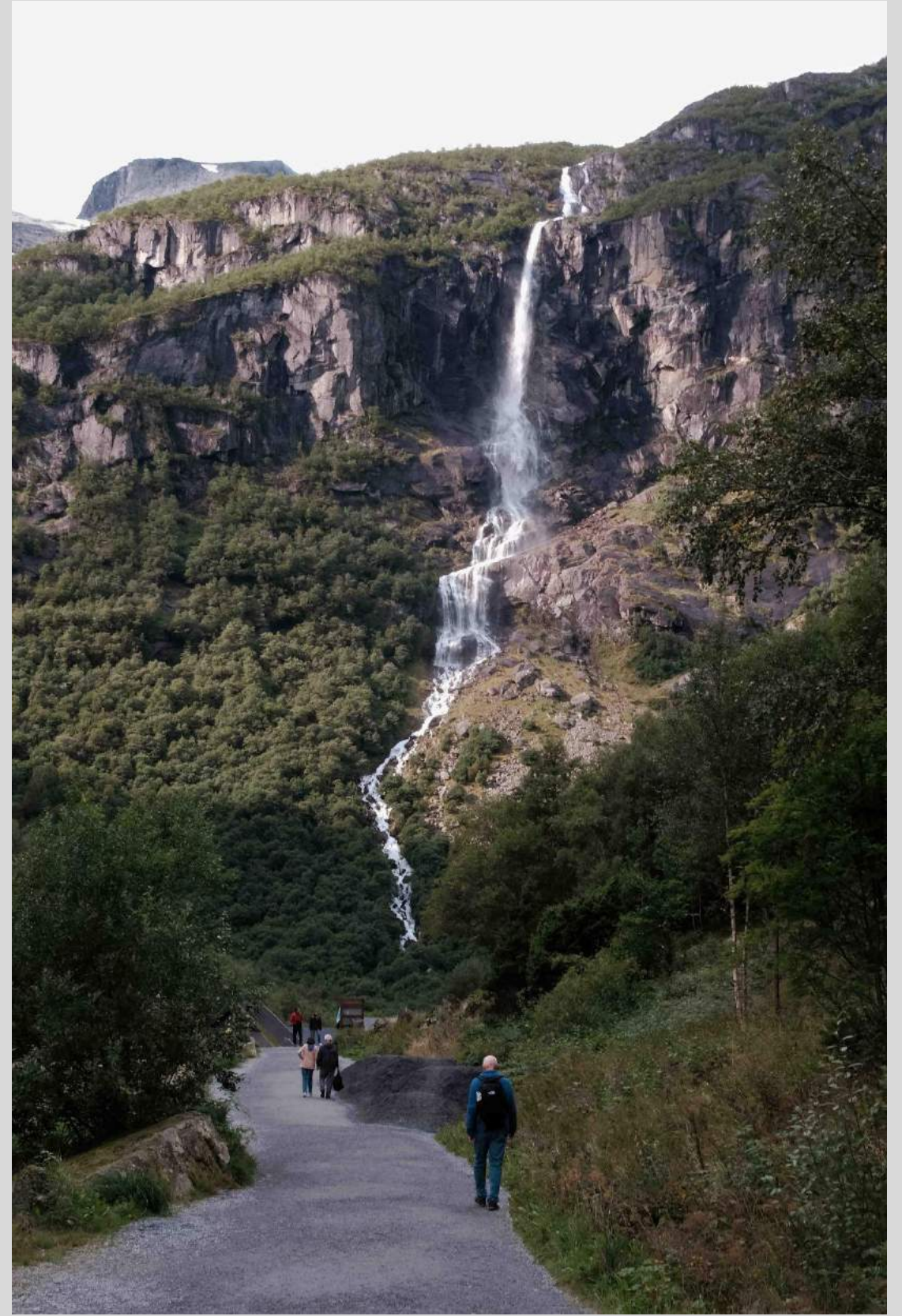






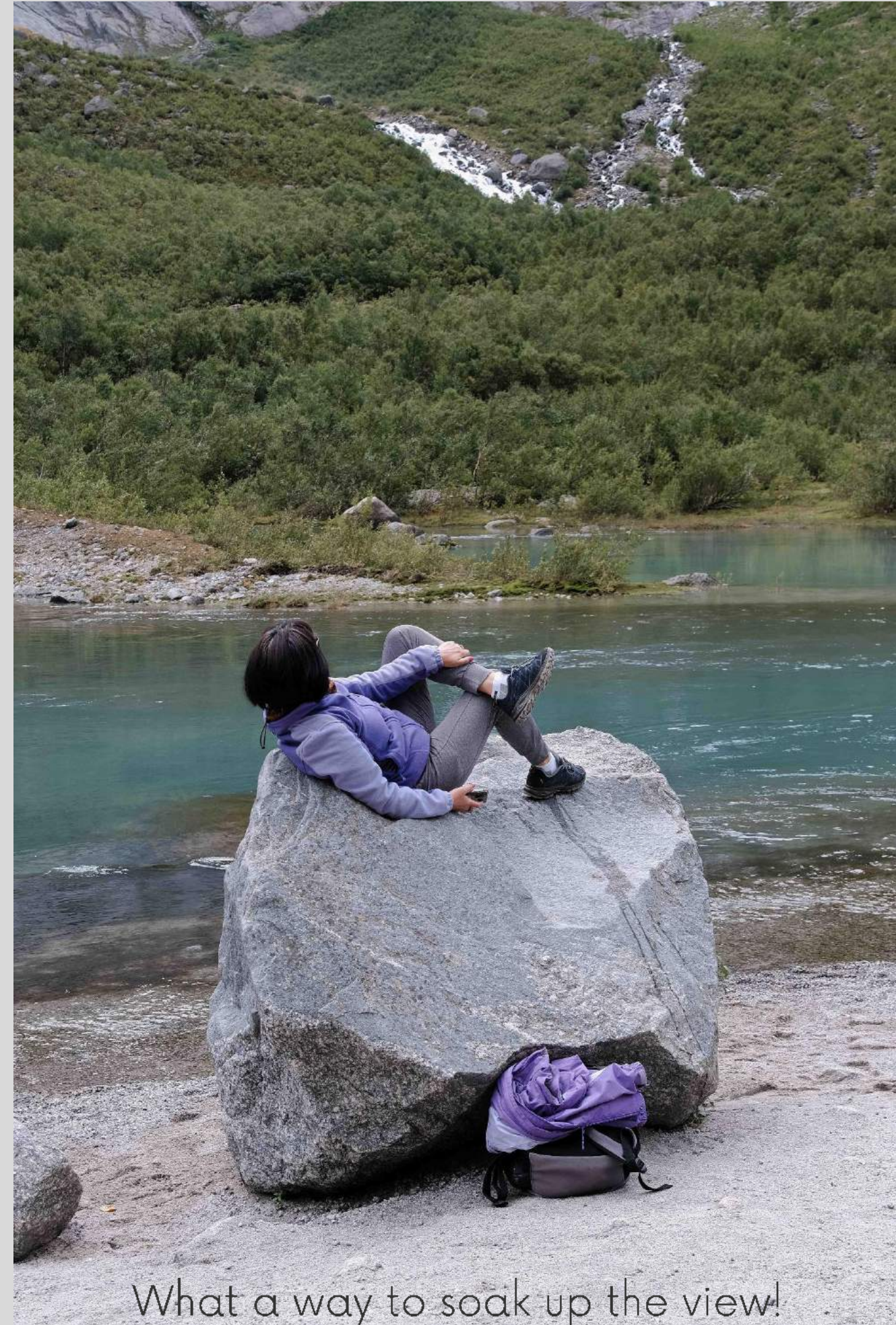
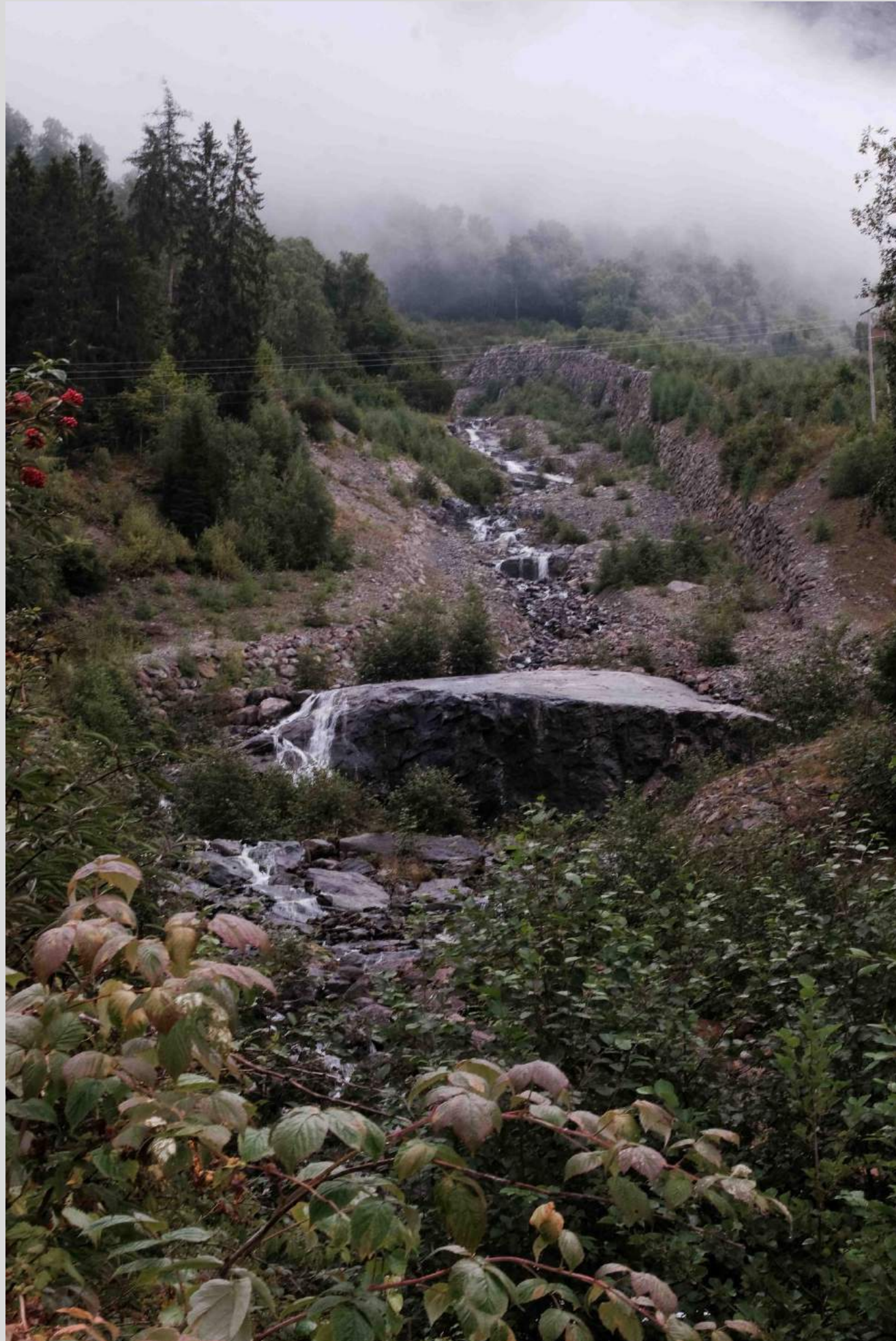








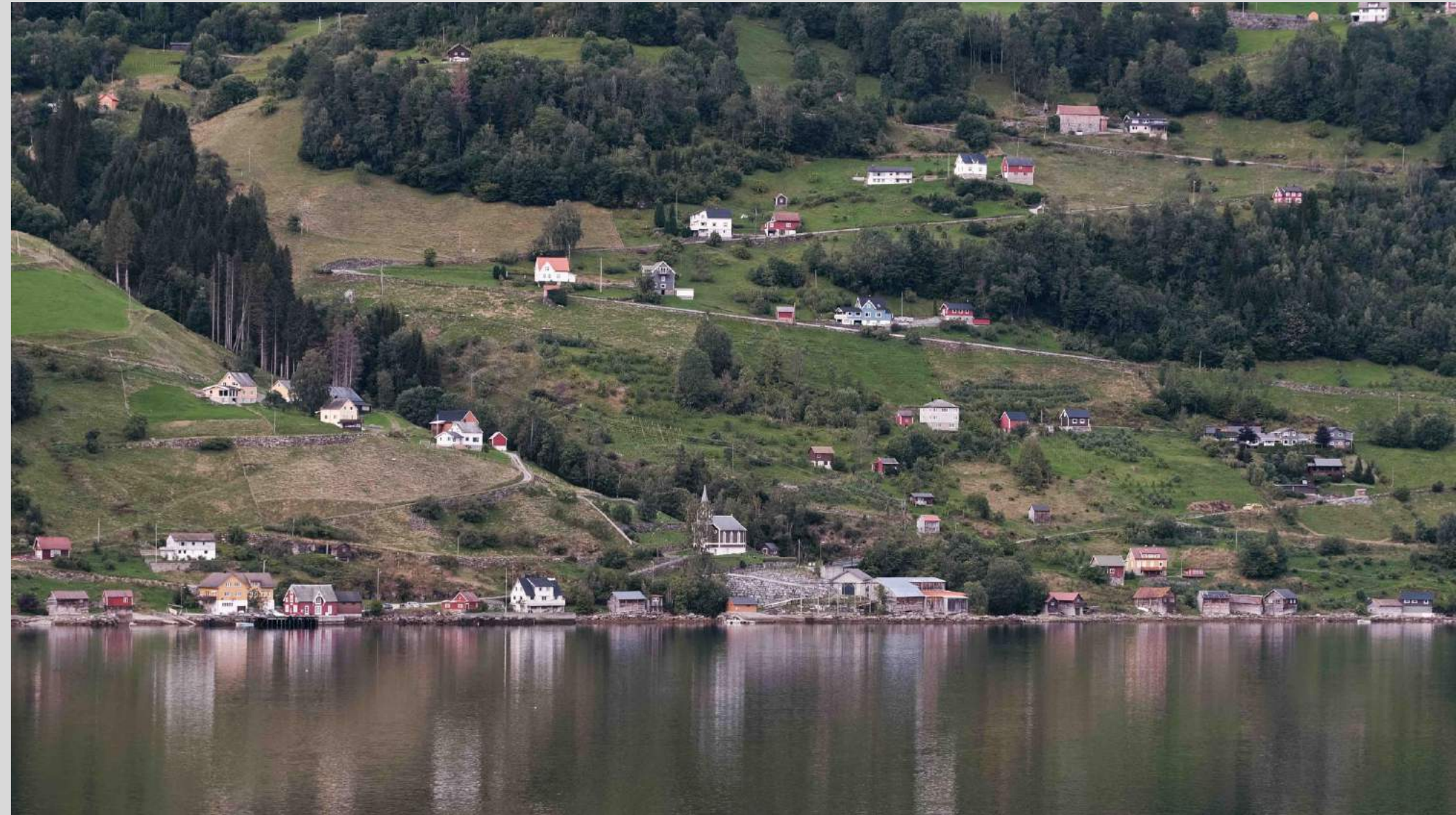




What a way to soak up the view!







Psalm 104:16-34

The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has her home in the fir trees.
The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.

He made the moon to mark the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting.
You make darkness, and it is night,
when all the beasts of the forest creep about.
The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.

When the sun rises, they steal away
and lie down in their dens.
Man goes out to his work
and to his labor until the evening.

O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom have you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
Here is the sea, great and wide,
which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both small and great.
There go the ships,
and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

These all look to you,
to give them their food in due season.
When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with
good things.
When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works,
who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke!
I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.