



Sailing the

Norwegian Sea



<https://youtu.be/Y24B8K3tJhE>

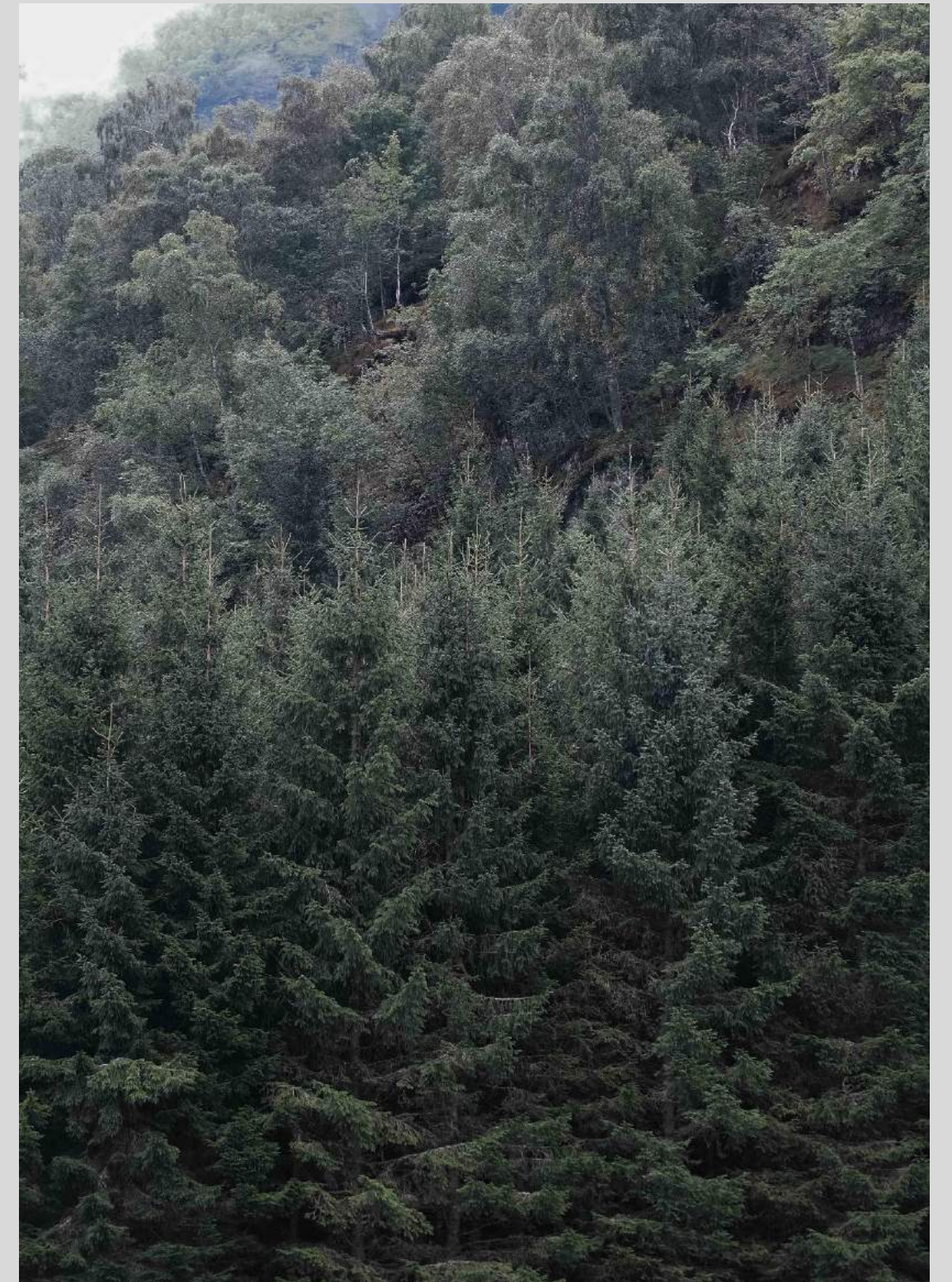


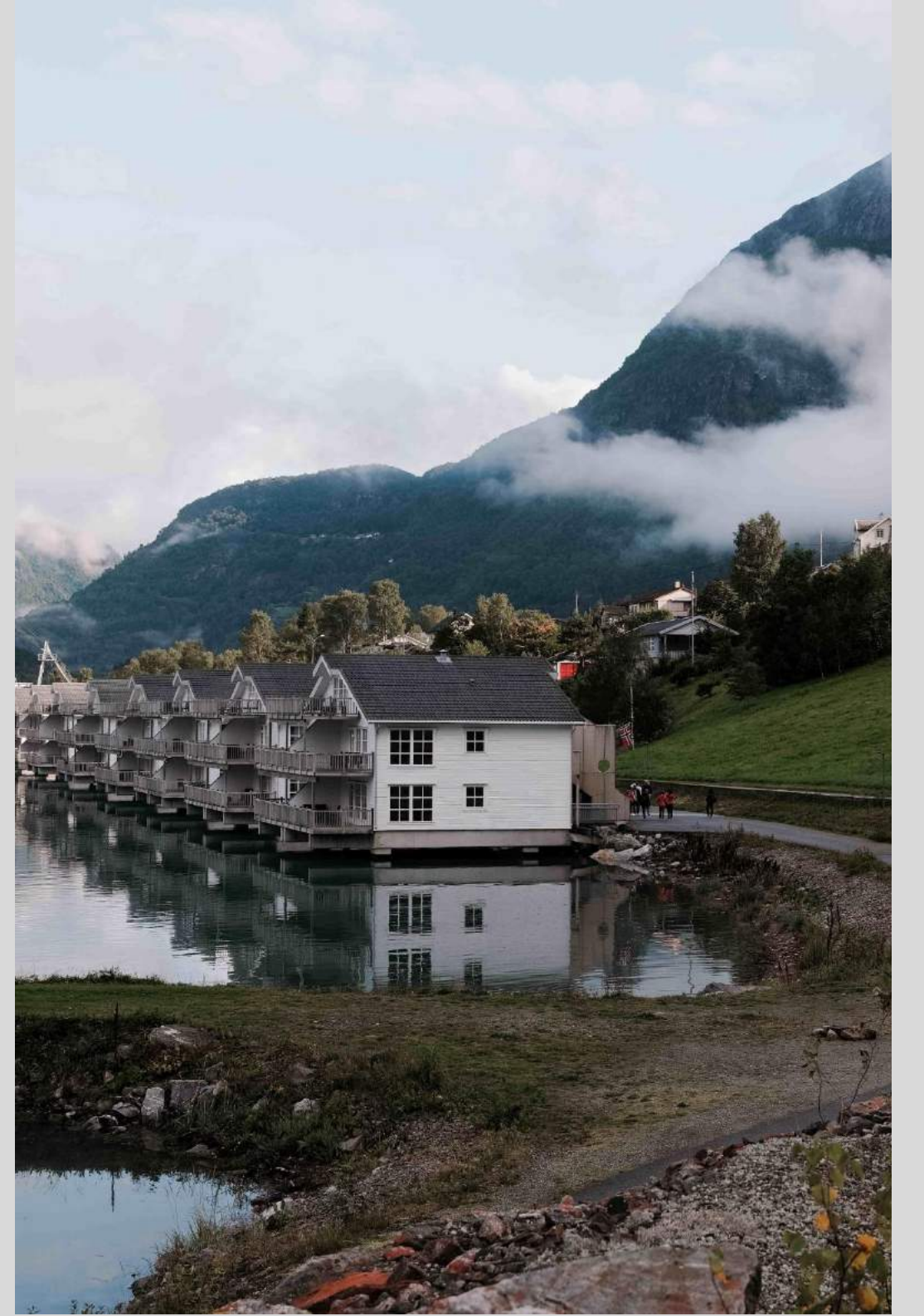
Skjolden

Skjolden

I was beginning to feel very sick, but a day out with Norway's fresh, clean air was really needed. Sweating and hiking were actually therapeutic. We walked to Eide Gard before making the walk to Asafossen waterfall where we met an English couple from the Cotswold (retired 22 years and still adventuring!) and ran in to John and Elaine. "There's no town here," John laughed. "Just 2 shops," Elaine said in disbelief. The conversations we shared with Ben and Christina all day were really wonderful. What a gift from God to have met in Southampton and remain friends. "You should come to Australia," they kept encouraging on our way down from the slippery Asafossen path. From there, we walked to the tourist center. True to Julio's words, there was no one manning the info desk. Even the cafe was self-serve! After lunch, we hiked to Sengajaberget viewpoint, meeting friendly people on our way who encouraged us; "this is the hardest part!" and "only 15-20 more minutes!" The view was beautiful, even in the sun-washed-out afternoon. Before we begrudgingly walked back to the ship, we approached the edge of the Sognefjord. Christina verbalized what I had been feeling, "You can't get sick of these views. Every time I look up, I feel like I need to take another picture!" Turns out, she and my mom immigrated from their home countries at 17yo.

30 Aug 23















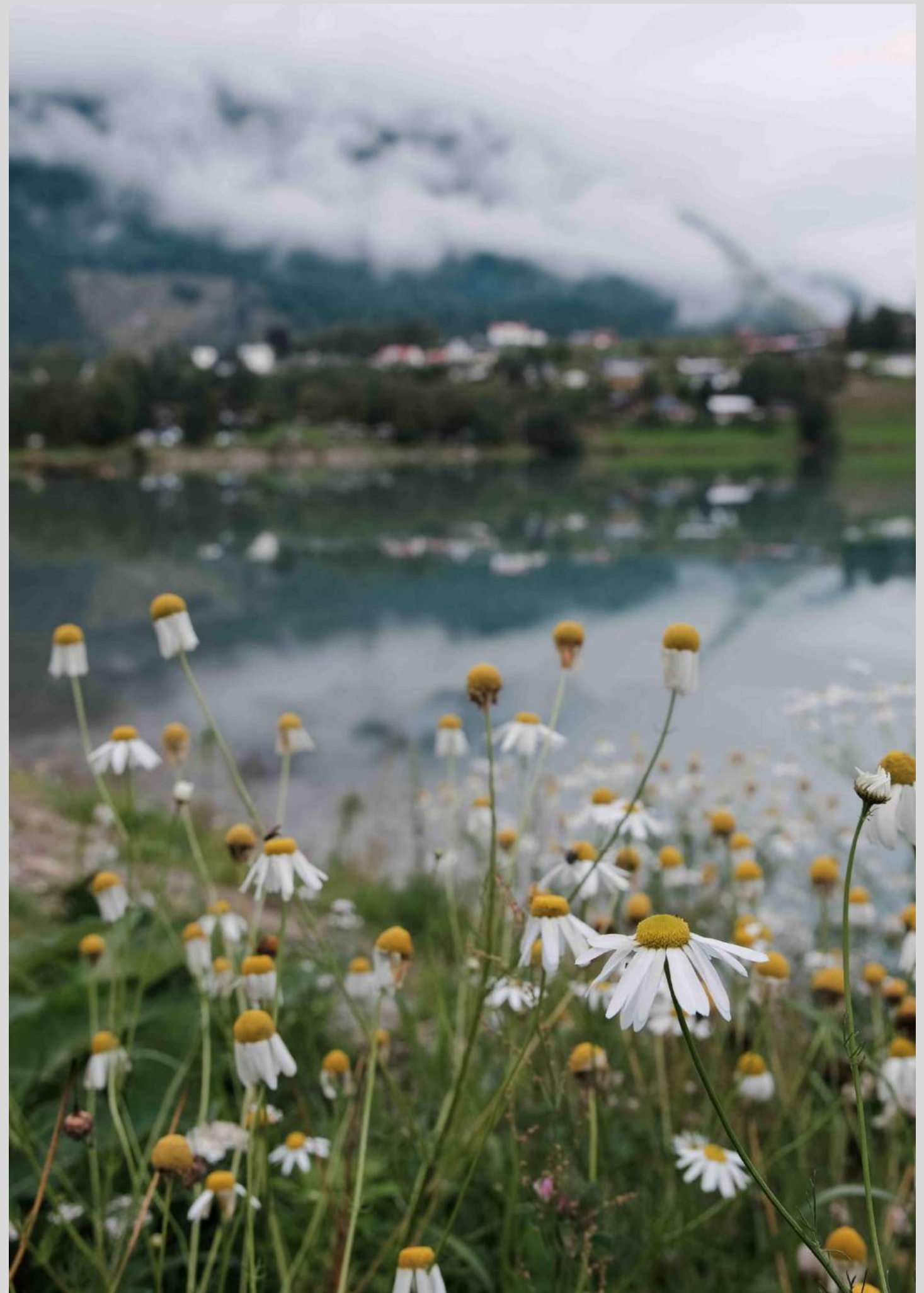
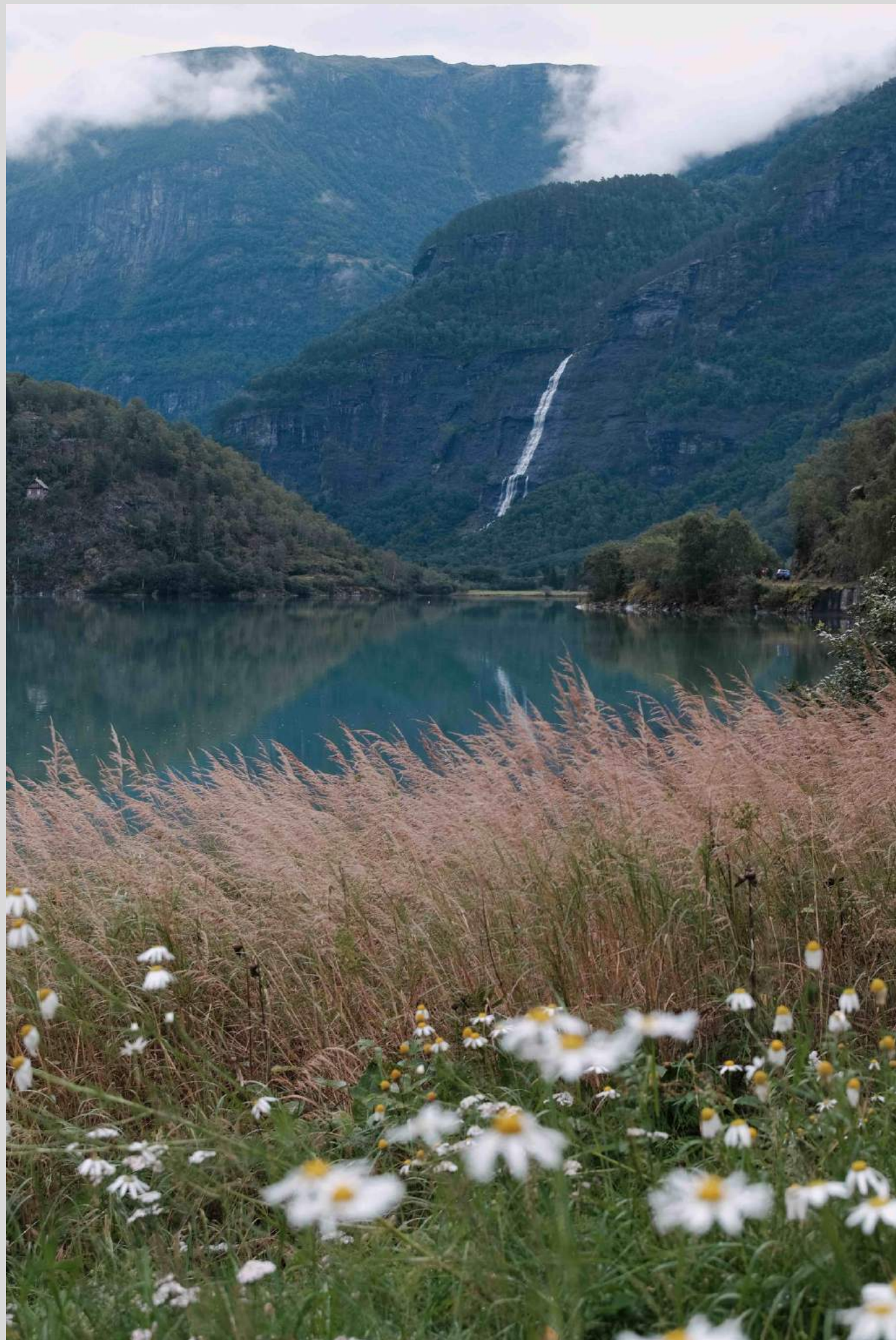
















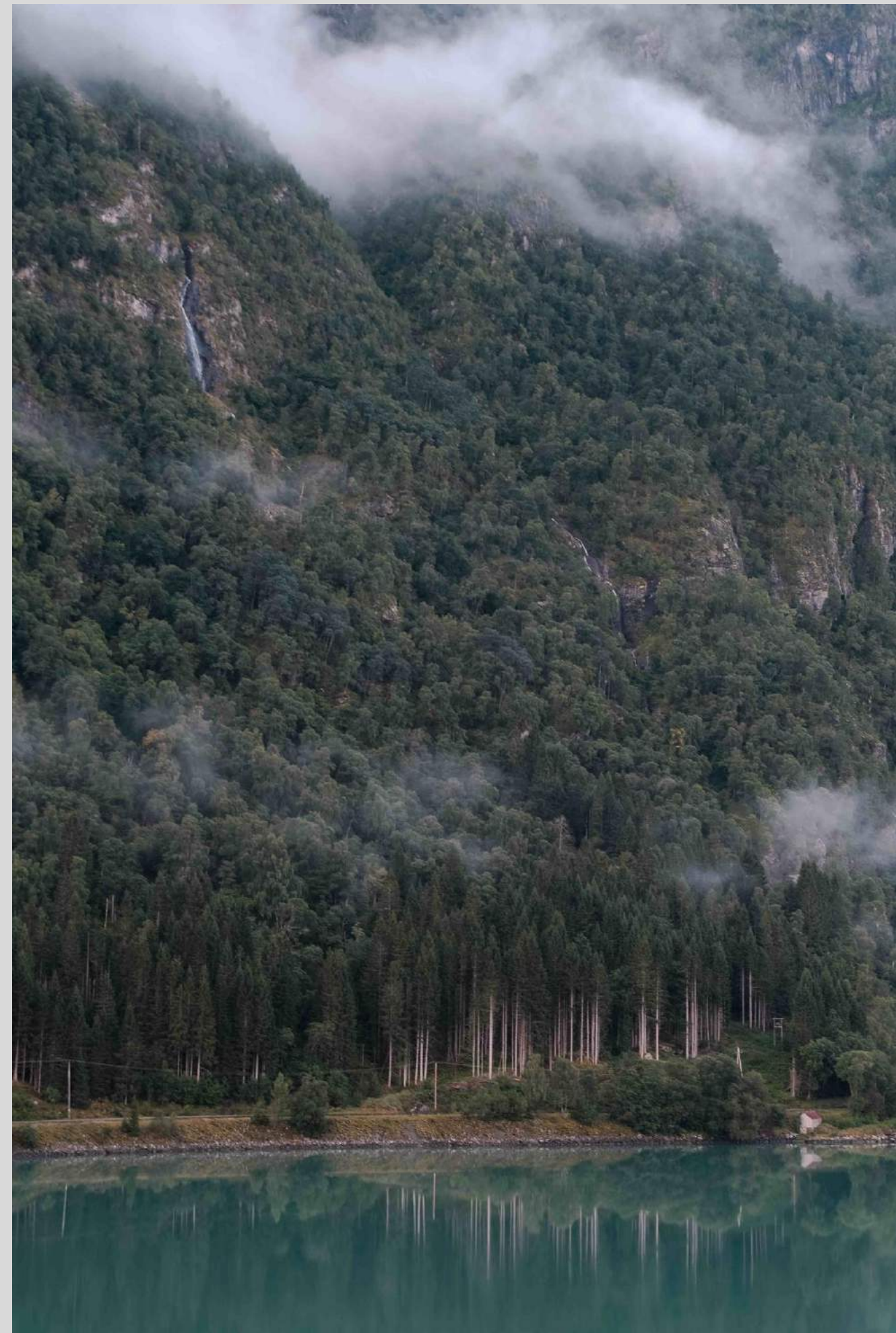
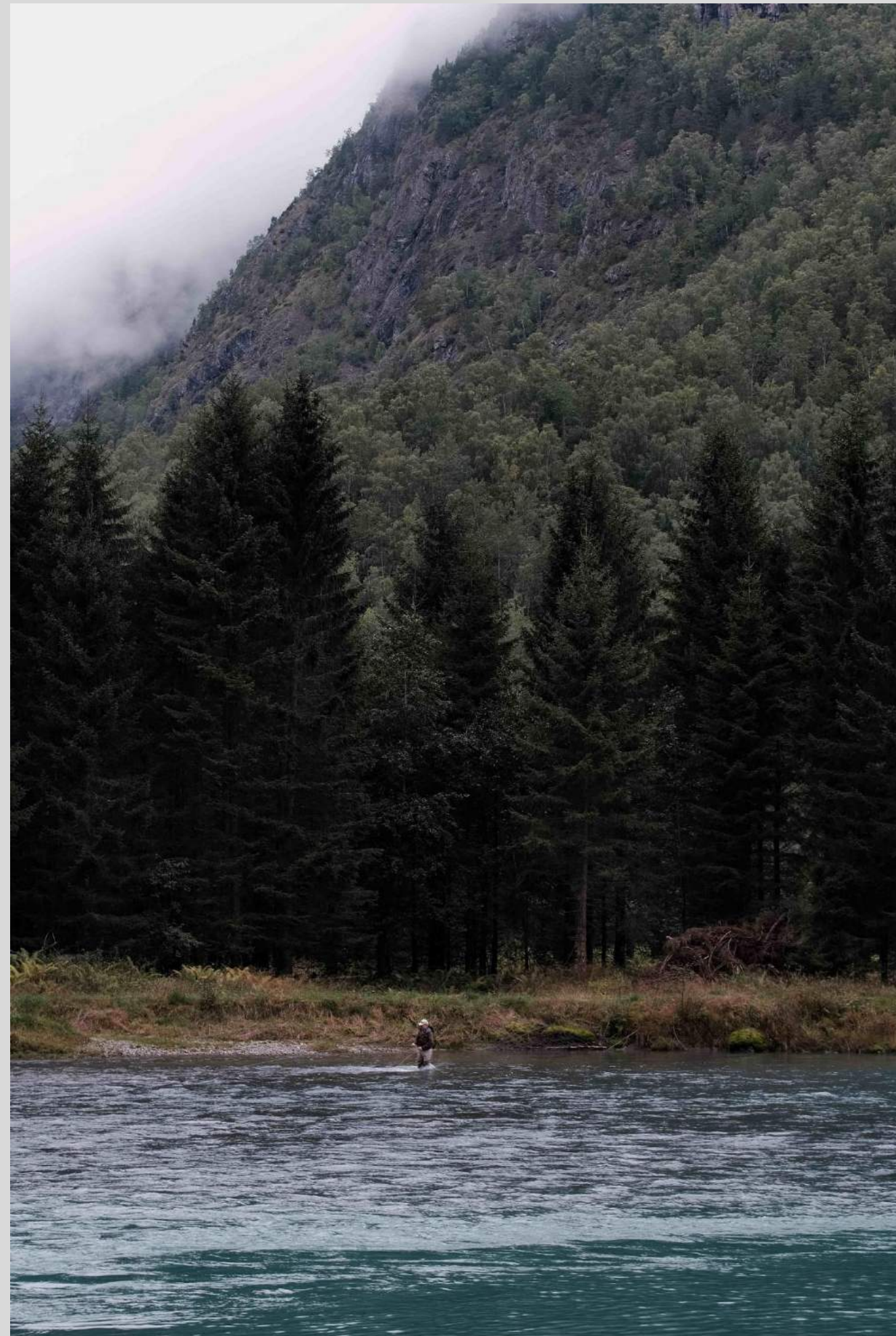


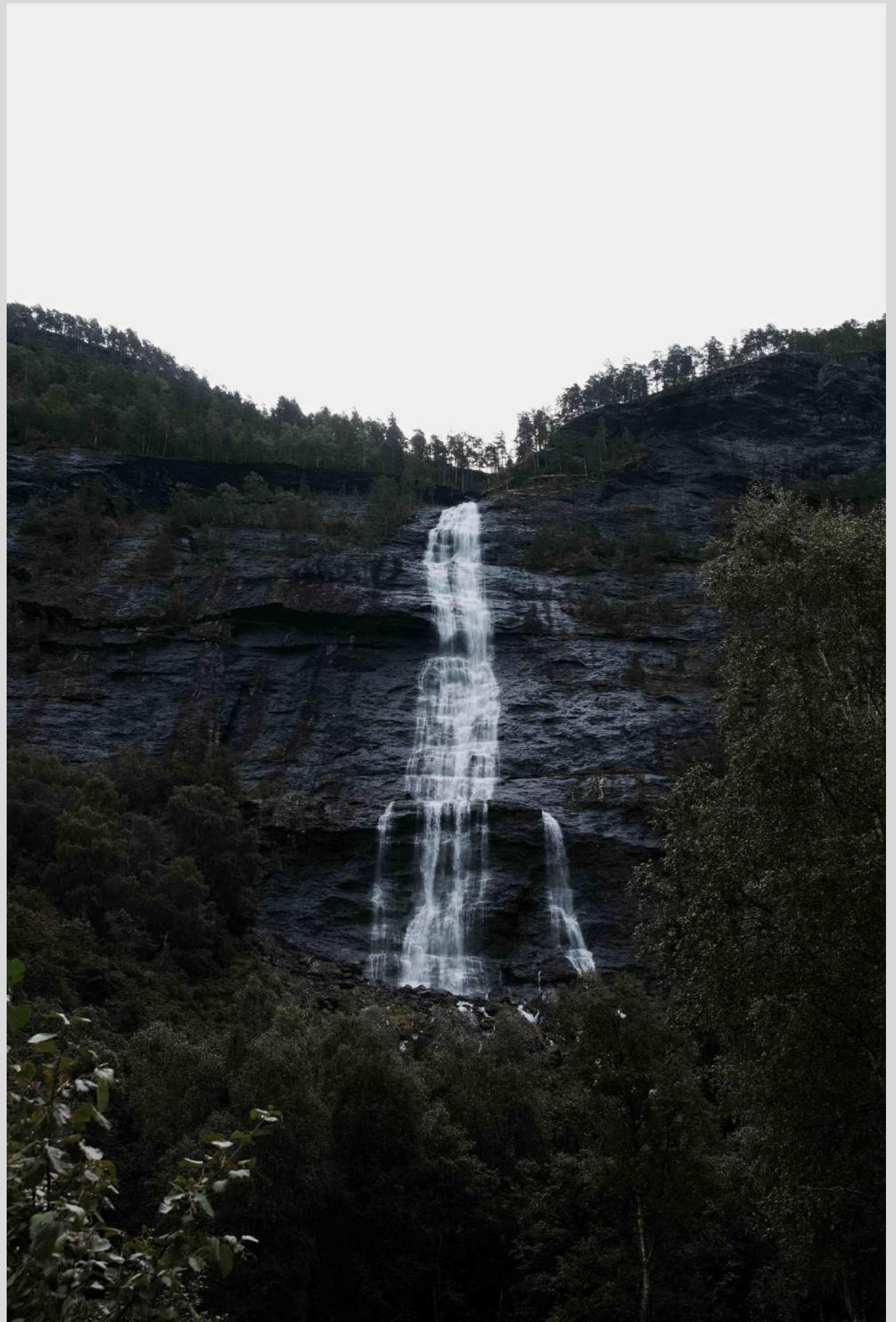














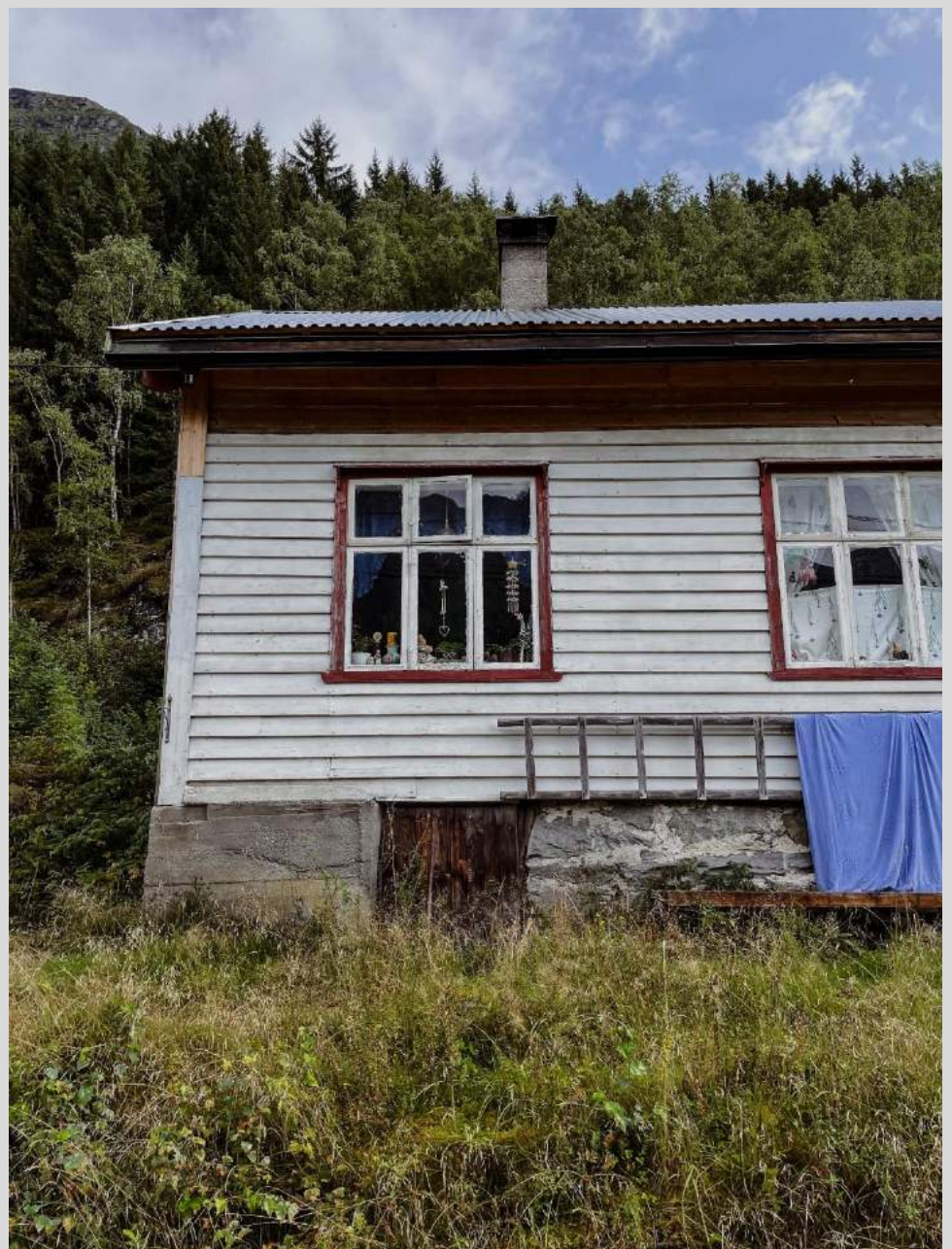




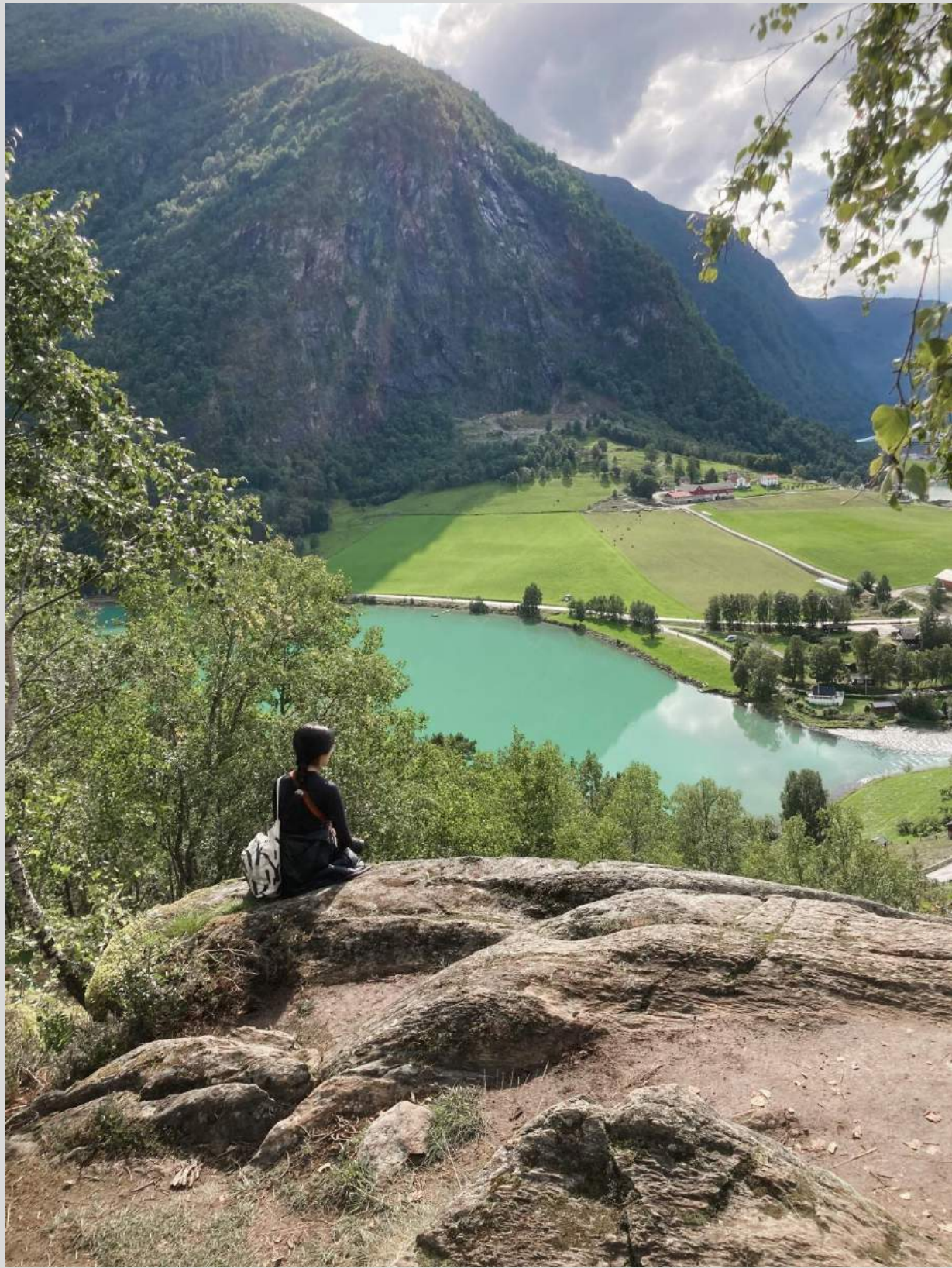












Norwegian-isms

- antique/second hand shops with a coffee bar
- candles on tables and windows. Wool blankets on chairs
- paper stars in windows
- shiplap walls
- hair salons are everywhere
- stopping (every time) for pedestrians to cross
- Norwegian children are taken on school hikes weekly, no matter the weather.
- it's so safe people leave their doors unlocked and their babies in strollers outside restaurants unattended
- the prison system: each inmate has an en suite bathroom and a beautiful view. There, they work to learn skills for employment once released. Only 20% released prisoners commit a crime in the next 5 years.

Travel Tips: Norway

- Flåm: Take the early train to Myrdal because the sun is unpredictable and can wash out views later in the day. Sit on the right side of the train (facing forward) going up and the ride side of the train (facing forward) going down
- Åndalsnes: Head straight to the Romsdalsgondolen (it'll become much more crowded later in the day) to the Rampestreken Mountain and don't bother climbing if it's too wet and cloudy. There is a platform that requires some hiking down to from where the gondola drops you off - it might not be worth going to if the rocks are slick.
- Honningsvåg: rent a car and go explore
- Tromsø: \$20pp cruise shuttle (no line and no pushing) or \$12pp full-day Tromsø city bus ticket (but lots of lines and pushing + lots of waiting because the buses don't run frequently). Honestly, while in Tromsø's city center, you can walk. The cruise shuttle might be more worth it. If you want to brave the public bus, take Bus 42 from Breivika to Sentrum (there are several stops in the city center you can get off at).
- Olden/Loen: Book an excursion as far in advance as possible. There are very few rental cars. If you can't get any excursions, try to enjoy walking around and exploring by foot. You won't get to the glaciers, but Norway is still so beautiful and you'll still have a great day. The Loen sky lift for \$58pp round trip doesn't seem worth it (the one in Åndalsnes is much better and for \$9-11pp round trip).
- Norwegian is a tougher language, but it has some German roots for those who know German, and learning just a few words can go such a long way. During my second trip to Norway, I met shop owners and an immigration officer who thought I was Norwegian or was fluent because I just said "tusen takk!"
- Be prepared to walk 20-25k steps daily!

Ai Sea









Bruges



Bruges

Bruges is absolutely beautiful - remarkably quaint and ornate, other-worldly compared to the U.S., though Zeebrugge looked more like Southampton or any other industrial shipyard. Only in Norway do the ports look that spectacular. We walked through winding streets to the Church of Our First Lady and took a boat ride in the rain through the canals. We wandered to Dumond's chocolate shop where the shop owner was as warm and funny as she was gracious. She speaks 5 languages and said thank you in Cantonese and Mandarin. "How about you" (pointing to Dad) "come run my shop while I travel New Jersey with your wife, eh?!" Her laughter sent rays of sunshine through the cozy shop and cut through the drizzly gloom. There are 41 bridges, 21 churches (18 Catholic and 3 Protestant), 2 breweries. And tons of cute local shops and boutiques that also reminded me of Dublin.

1 Sep 23













Bruges' facades









































LE PANIER D'OR

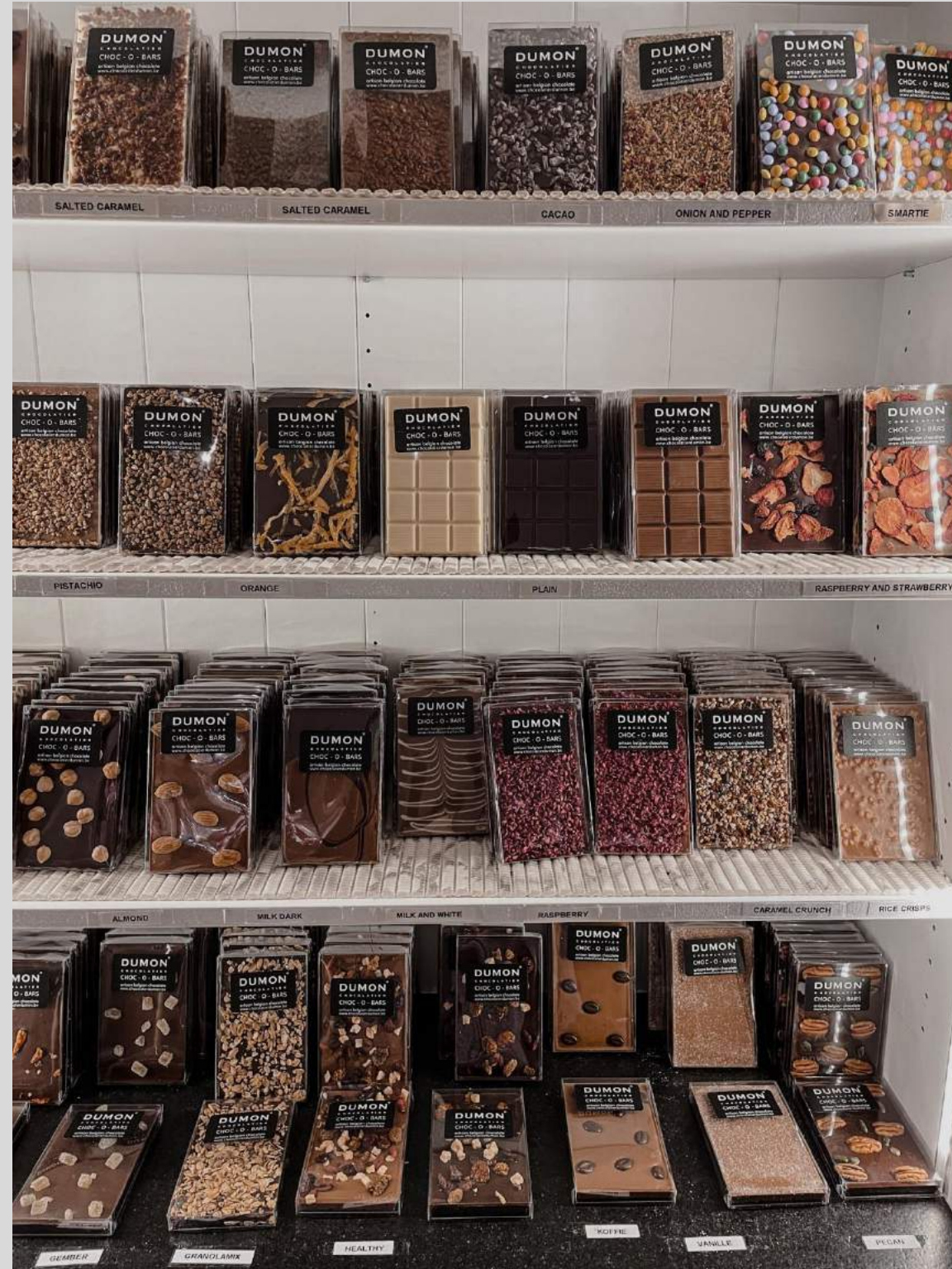
SINT JORIS

Grand Cafe - Central - Brasserie

CAFE RESTA

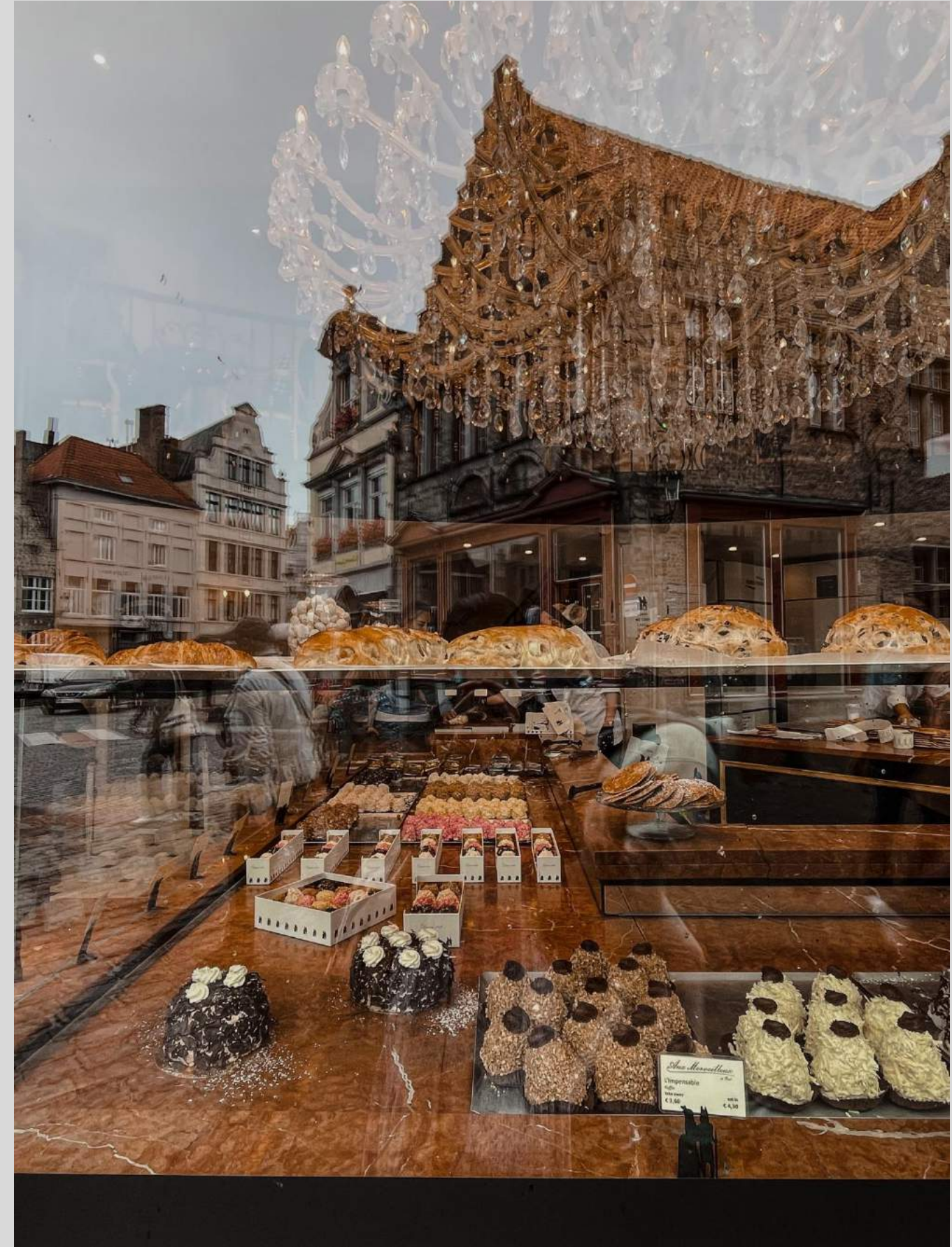
Pasta

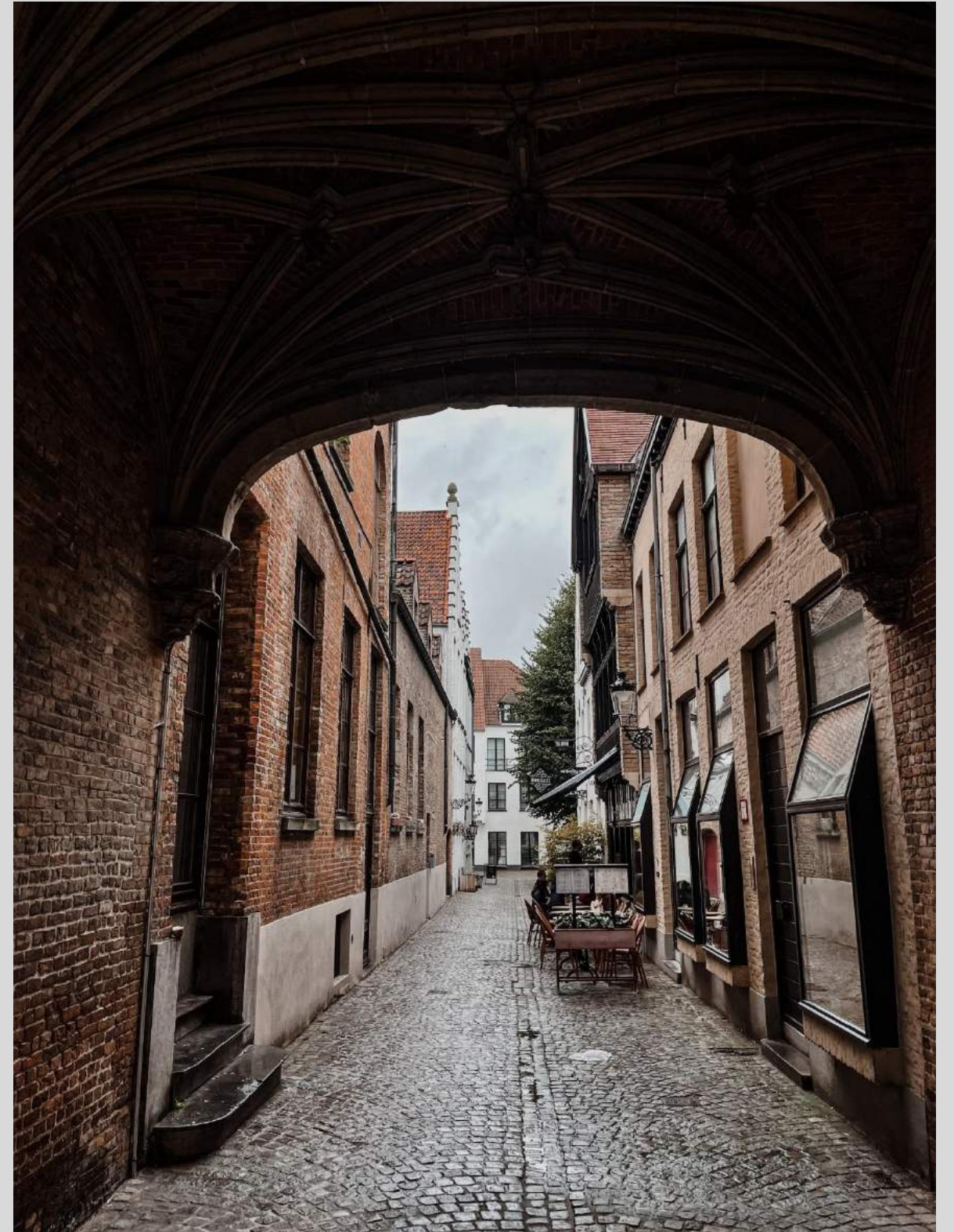
MUS MO













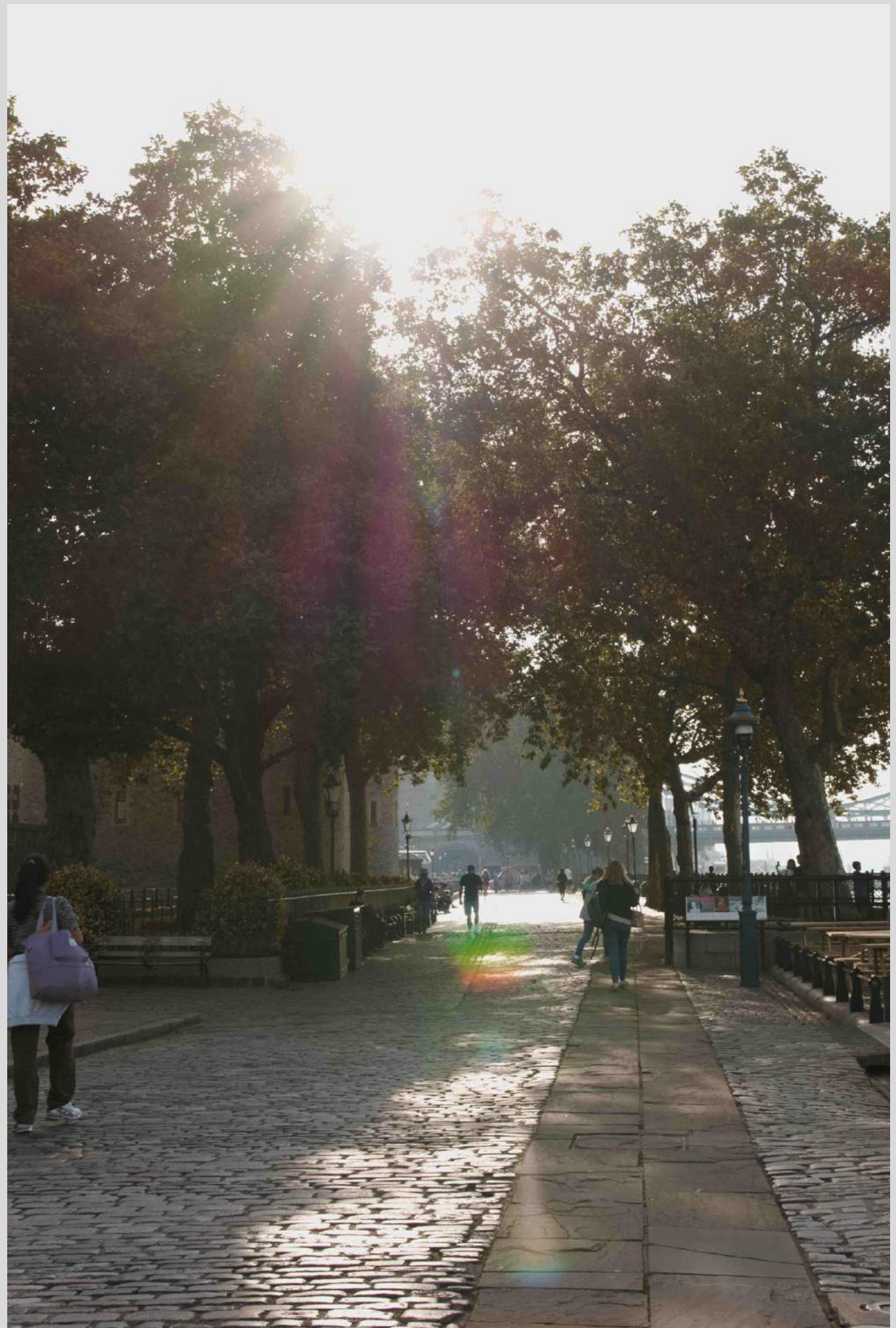
London









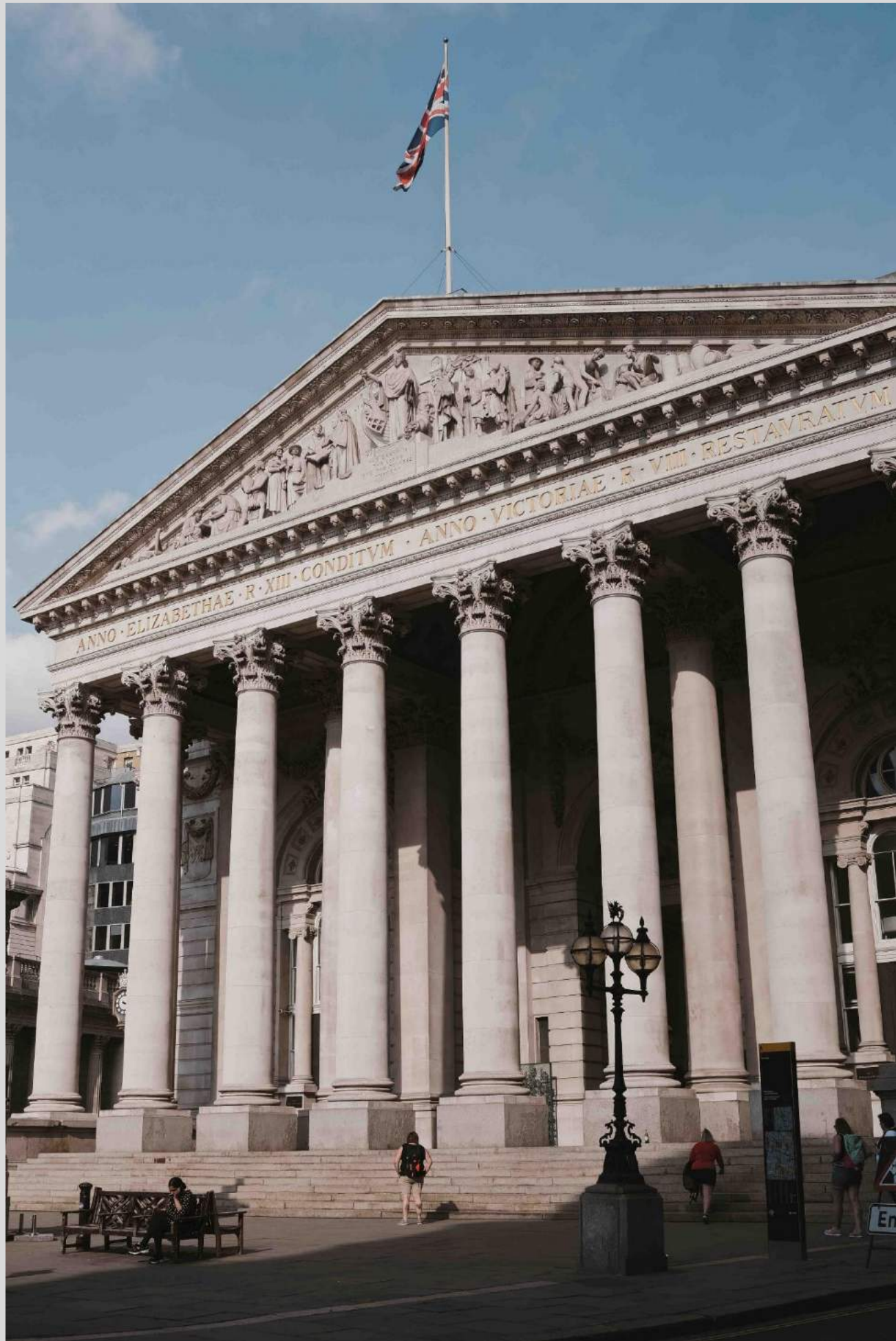








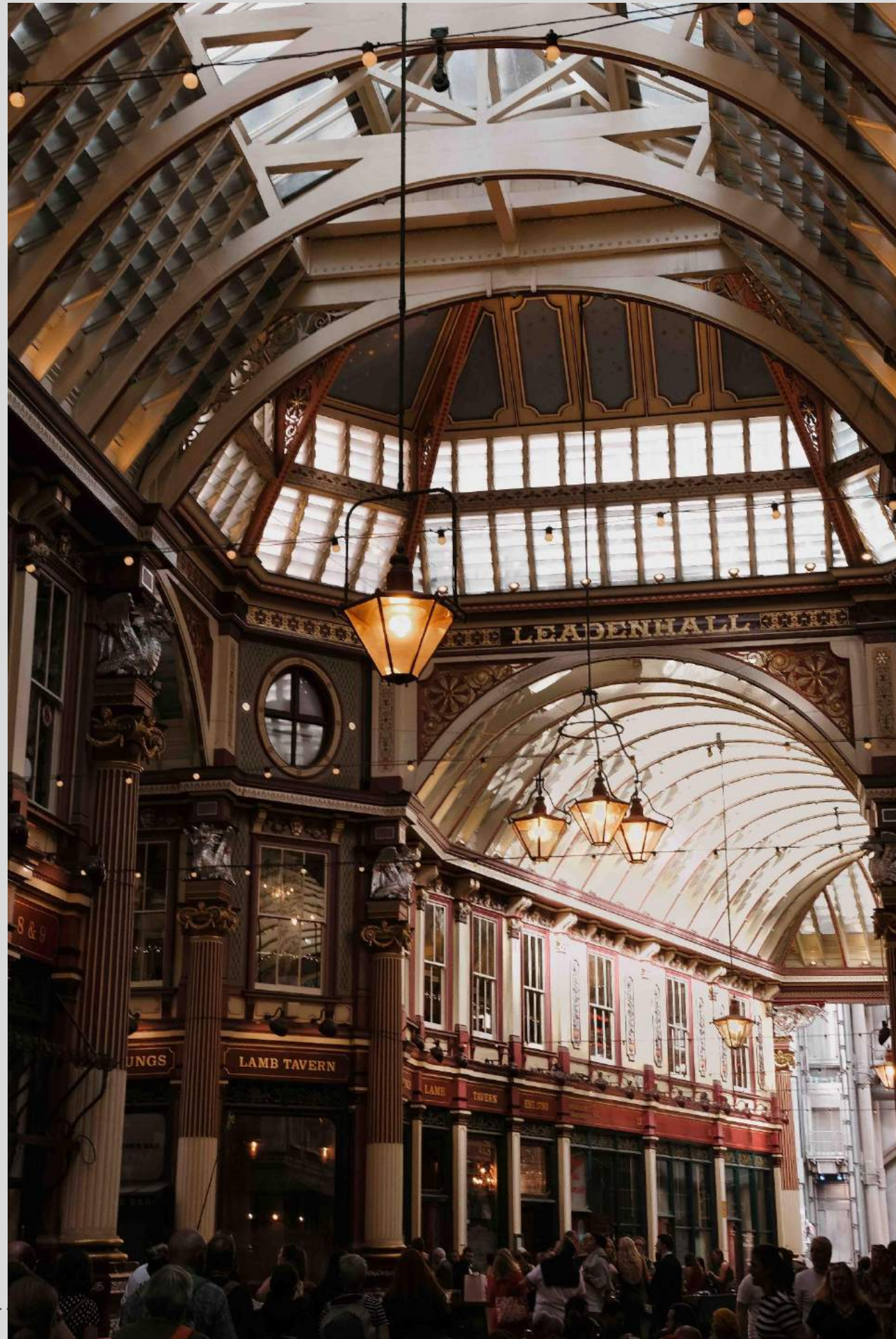












**









