



Lofoten Festival

Chamber music above the Arctic Circle

5–12 July 2026 (MM 111)

8 days

Lecturer: Dr Michael Downes

International artists including Leif Ove Andsnes, Arvid Engegård, Roderick Williams, Lise de la Salle, Pavel Haas Quartet, Nils Mortensen, Paul Lewis, Benjamin Grosvenor, Engegård Quartet.

A stunning backdrop of mountains, lakes and fjords on a string of islands off northern Norway, above the Arctic Circle, with midnight sun.

Optional cruise, introduction to the history of the area, visits to local galleries.

The Lofoten archipelago juts into the sea off northern Norway, beyond the Arctic Circle. This string of islands is of extraordinary natural beauty, with craggy mountains, sheltered inlets, unspoilt wilderness and, in high summer, the midnight sun. Svolvær is one of two towns in the district; its population is less than 5,000. The Lofoten International Chamber Music Festival must be one of the most remote such events on the planet, and one of the most beautifully located.

To the attractions of landscape and location are added a quite exceptional collection of performers. The line-up for 2026 includes Leif Ove Andsnes, Arvid Engegård, Roderick Williams, Lise de la Salle, Pavel Haas Quartet, Nils Mortensen, Paul Lewis, Benjamin Grosvenor and the Engegård Quartet.

Concert venues range from intimate churches (some with their own Steinway Grands), to Lofoten Cathedral, the largest wooden building north of Trondheim. This is an intensive experience, with two or three concerts of between an hour and an hour and a half over six days. On more than one occasion, late night concerts take wondrous advantage of the midnight sun.

Some concerts take place in the hotel, and some are elsewhere in Svolvær a few minutes away on foot. Others are on other islands and involve drives of up to 75 minutes, the islands being linked by bridges – opportunity to experience more of the wonderful landscapes. The tour includes an optional cruise to the Trollfjord, experiencing the unique Norwegian landscape.

The full programme will be published in January 2026.



Hauklandssanden in the Lofoten Islands, ©Baard Loeken and courtesy of the Lofoten Islands Festival.

Itinerary

Day 1: Oslo. Fly at c. 9.00am from London Gatwick to Oslo (Norwegian). A guided walking tour of Oslo by Frank Høifødt in the afternoon, followed by a lecture and dinner in the hotel restaurant. Overnight in Oslo.

Day 2: Svolvær. Fly at c. 1.00pm from Oslo to Svolvær (Widerøe). The remaining 6 nights are spent in the pretty coastal town of Svolvær.

Days 3–7: Svolvær. The final programme will be announced in the new year. There will be a selection of visits in the region planned around the performances.

Day 8: Svolvær to London. Fly from Svolvær to London Gatwick via Oslo, landing at c. 7.00pm.

Lecturer

Dr Michael Downes. Director of Music at the University of St Andrews, musical director of St Andrews Chorus and founding artistic director of Byre Opera. He writes programme notes for Wigmore Hall and Aldeburgh Music and reviews music for the *Times Literary Supplement*. He is author of a highly praised study of British composer Jonathan Harvey.

Practicalities

Included: transport by private coach; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, five dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Internal flights: domestic flights with Widerøe (economy class, DHC-8 100) from Oslo to Svolvær on day 2, and from Svolvær to Oslo on day 8 are included in the tour price for all participants.

Accommodation. Grand Hotel, Oslo (grand.no): 5-star hotel in the heart of the city, a short walk from the National Gallery. **Thon Hotel, Svolvær** (thonhotels.com): a comfortable, 4-star hotel on the waterfront with fjord, harbour, or mountain views. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? While the days are reasonably relaxed, there are several late nights where the group does not return to the hotel until between 11.30pm and 12.30am after late-evening concerts. One or two of the late

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evening concerts may be optional, if they are within walking distance of the hotel. In Lofoten the sun does not set in July so daylight is constant. We advise you to bring an eye mask. A good level of fitness is required when taking part in the excursions.

Average distance by coach per day: 65 km.

Group size: between 10 and 24 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Finland: Aalto & Others*, 25 June–3 July 2026; *Savonlinna Opera*, 12–16 July 2026.