



AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2023
METROSOURCE

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PALL**

USING HIS *Influence*
FOR GREATER GOOD

**MATTHEW
LÓPEZ**

BEAMING *Red*,
White & Royal Blue

KOMBUCHA
IS *Skincare's*
LATEST BUZZ

**ALEX
MICHAELS**
IS *Alexis Michelle*

**STEVEN
ROWLEY**
BRINGS BROAD APPEAL IN
The Celebrants

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2023

JANE LYNCH

NOT JUST PLAYING GAMES



PLUNGE INTO YEAR-ROUND SUMMER VITALITY

BY MARK A. THOMPSON

OSLO

IN PREPARATION FOR IMMERSION INTO AN 8°C POLAR PLUNGE POOL, IT'S NECESSARY TO BREATHE CORRECTLY. THAT'S WHAT THE WIM HOF METHOD INSTRUCTOR TOLD US, A GROUP OF TRAVEL JOURNALISTS ON THE VERGE OF HYPERVENTILATING. Shivering in our swimsuits, we stood in front of the ice-cold Roman bath at Sommerro House in Oslo, uncertain as to who would plunge first. According to the extreme athlete Wim Hof, also known as the Iceman, prolonged exposure to arctic waters is beneficial in combatting numerous physiological ailments. Fortunately, we didn't yet know that the Iceman's corneas had frozen solid and blinded him during an attempt to set the record for the longest under-ice swim.

Whether or not you adhere to Wim Hof's claims and methods, ice bathing has been a Nordic tradition for generations. In recent years, a new generation of young Norwegians have revived the Nordic sport of wild swimming, plunging into the North Sea and espousing the reputed health benefits which include lowered stress levels and reduced rates of inflammation and infection.

All along Oslo's harbor in front of the Oslo Opera House and the Munch Museum, numerous floating saunas await passengers for a journey into Oslo Fjord. Founded in 2018 by a female commercial pilot, KOK has a fleet of nine floating saunas which offer two-hour sauna cruises captained by a slightly sadistic skipper who fuels the sauna to nearly infernal temperatures while insisting, "This hurts me more than it does you." Once your skin has parboiled

like a lobster, there is no choice but to launch into the frigid waters of the North Sea.

Just to be clear, the temperature of an 8°C polar plunge is less than half the normal body temperature of a human. And the North Sea is hardly much warmer, even during the summer months. And yet, no matter where you position yourself along Oslo's waterfront, you're bound to see people plunging into the polar waters of Oslo Fjord.

For years, Oslo residents learned to swim at Vestkantbadet, the city's most historic public baths which opened in 1932 in a massive subterranean space beneath the head offices of the city's electrical company. Ninety years later in the autumn of 2022, Vestkantbadet reopened as an urban wellness center within the new luxury hotel Sommerro House.





KOK Floating Sauna.
Photo by
Kristin Lorange

One of Vestkantbadet's most notable features is its Art Deco swimming pool with its iconic wall-sized mosaic created by Norwegian artist Per Krohg. Rendered in stylized shapes and brilliant colors, Krohg's mural, titled "Swimming Women and Seals," is a testament to Norwegian fortitude and well-being. Krohg received global recognition for his inspirational murals at the United Nations Security Council, and similarly, his Sommerro House murals reflect the luxury hotel's focus on holistic health.

The prevailing philosophy at Sommerro House is a respect for the eight-hour regimen of a 24-hour day: eight-hour workday, eight hours of sleep - and a decided emphasis on a full eight hours of recreation. Regardless of

Located in Oslo's historic Frogner neighborhood, just down the street from Norway's Royal Palace, Sommerro House reopened its landmark Art Deco building after a meticulous two-year reconstruction and restoration. What was once the headquarters for Oslo's electrical company has been transformed into a cultural haven for locals and visitors. Conceived by the London/New York design firm GrecoDeco, Sommerro House honors the building's Art Deco provenance with period architectural details and an original wrought-iron central staircase that climbs to a vertiginous skylight.

In addition to Vestkantbadet's swimming pool, there's also a heated rooftop pool and year-round sauna with sun terrace which is particularly alluring during the golden hour. The

NORWAY



The Twist,
Kistefos Museum.
Photo by Kim Eriksen

where you wander, and even when attired in a spa bathrobe, the relaxed atmosphere at Sommerro House seeps into your bones.

Named for the Norwegian word "sommerro" which translates to "summer calm" in English, Sommerro House evokes Henry James' iconic quote, "Summer afternoon, summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language." Oslo's summers are notable for their long days and white nights, a season of light and brightness which is refracted throughout the sun-dappled Sommerro House.

panoramic rooftop views of Oslo and its fjord provide a perfect complement to the cocktails served at TAK Oslo where award-winning chef Frida Ronge serves her acclaimed Nordic-Japanese cuisine.

The numerous amenities at Sommerro House include various restaurants and cocktail lounges, as well as a private screening room, library, and bakery, which makes it very easy to linger on property - especially when so many attractive Norwegians fuel the buzz. Let's not forget that Norway is one of the world's most LGBTQ-friendly nations, with same-sex marriage and adoption rights, and full rights in the

Francisco Nogueira



Piggin Kitchen
at Villa Inkognito



Villa Inkognito
Suite Bathroom



Villa Inkognito Study.
Photos by
Francisco Nogueira

military. Sommerro House's reopening has infused the Frogner district with new energy, which is evident nearly every evening at Ekspedisjonshallen (the former Expedition Hall) where locals and visitors revel in the sounds of the Sommerro Soul Band.

A member of Legend, Preferred Hotels & Resorts and Historic Hotels Worldwide, Sommerro House is only a short walk from Oslo's new waterfront cultural district dotted with "starchitecture." The opening of the Oslo Opera House in 2008 was followed by the Astrup Fearnly Museum in 2012 and the Munch Museum in 2021- and now the newly-completed National Museum has become the latest must-see attraction. In spite of numerous construction delays and the public's initial distaste for its fortress-like exterior, the National Museum opened to visitors in June 2022. As a repository for Norway's largest collection of art, the \$650 million museum checks all the boxes for an immersive visual experience with more than 80 galleries.

Further afield, about an hour's drive from Oslo, is Kistefos, a spectacular sculpture park with more than 50 sculptures, many of which are site-specific. Named for the waterfall that once powered a paper pulp mill, Kistefos includes works by Olafur Eliasson, Yayoi Kusama, Fernando Botero, and numerous other artists whose sculptures coexist in blissful harmony with nature. Certainly, the most well-known building at Kistefos is Bjarke Ingels Group's The Twist, a mesmerizing sculpture that bridges the water with a suspended art gallery. Fascinating



Conservatory of
Lily Pad Lounge
at Villa Inkognito



To Sæstre at Sommerro House. Photos by Francisco Nogueira



Heritage Suite at Sommerro House



Ekspedisjonshallen Seating



Exterior Terrace at TAK restaurant atop Sommerro House

from every angle, The Twist has become one of Norway's most celebrated attractions.

For those visitors to Oslo who prefer a curated collection of decorative objects in a sumptuous setting, Villa Inkognito offers the pleasures of a private residence, complete with house staff and personal chef. Originally built for a wealthy industrialist, the 19th century Italianate mansion housed the Algerian Embassy in the 1980s before its recent reopening as Villa Inkognito. Comprising a total of 11 rooms and suites, the Villa is connected to Sommerro House via a skywalk outside the fourth-floor Tower Room. Guests at the Villa have access to all the amenities at Sommerro House, including Vestkantbadet and its multiple treatment rooms, gym, infrared sauna - and, of course, that cold-plunge pool.

According to various studies, a two-minute ice bath can reduce wrinkles. Still not tempted? One polar plunge a day can burn off 200 calories while reducing stress. Need more motivation? There's also the relief of sore muscles and greater circulation. "Control your breath, slow and steady," commanded the Wim Hof instructor as she counted down the seconds. And once you've hit that two-minute mark, your reward is the infrared sauna - where you might consider doing it all over again.

That's how they do it in Oslo. That's the key to all-year summer vitality that keeps Norwegians healthy and looking good. And that's why they're so happy. So, plunge into Oslo - you'll be glad you did. ■