

SURFER

Thinking About a Surf Trip to the Arctic Circle?

Forget the tropics. A new expedition aboard the ice-strengthened vessel, the Vikingfjord, is opening up some of Northern Europe's most remote coastlines.

By Jake Howard | September 28, 2026



Since California surfers started stowing away on Hawaii-bound Matson liner ships, the boat trip has been a staple of surf adventure. Load up a boat, point it toward somewhere remote, and go chase waves that most of the world doesn't even know exist. From the jump, that's meant heading to the tropics. Think Indonesia, the Maldives, or even Tahiti or Fiji's outer islands. Warm water, palm trees, reef passes, and the promise of scoring waves far from the crowds. But what if you took that same concept and moved it north? Way north.

Aboard the M/V Vikingfjord, a purpose-built, ice-strengthened expedition vessel, surfers have the opportunity to explore the remote coastlines of Iceland's Westfjords, where cold-water surfing takes on an entirely different meaning. Dramatic fjords, towering cliffs, pristine Arctic waters, and the possibility of catching waves beneath the Northern Lights. Charters are organized through EYOS Expeditions, which specializes in out-of-bounds adventures.

Northern Europe isn't exactly the easiest place to explore for surf. The weather is unpredictable, the coastline is rugged, and access to many stretches of shoreline is limited. In Iceland's Westfjords, roads eventually disappear altogether, leaving some of the most remote stretches of coastline accessible only by boat. That's where Vikingfjord comes in.

Rather than relying on a fixed itinerary or trying to navigate the region overland, the vessel serves as a floating basecamp, allowing the expedition team to adjust plans around conditions. When the weather cooperates, the goal is to find uncrowded Arctic waves in places where few surfers have ever ventured. When it doesn't, there's still an entire wilderness to explore, from the abandoned settlements of Hornstrandir Nature Reserve to towering bird cliffs and hidden fjords. And while the prospect of surfing beneath the Northern Lights certainly makes for a compelling pitch, the



real draw is something a little more fundamental: discovery.

The Vikingfjord accommodates just 12 guests, with seven crew members and an experienced expedition team. The 41.8-meter vessel features Zodiacs for accessing remote shorelines, dedicated gear storage, and, of course, a sauna and a hot tub for defrosting after a chilly session.

Extensively refitted in 2023, the 41.8-meter vessel features a Scandinavian-inspired interior, six double/twin ensuite cabins, two single ensuite cabins and a shared bunk room. There's a panoramic observation lounge and dining area, and a bridge observation lounge. The ship also features a new energy-efficient propulsion system that reportedly reduces nitrogen oxide emissions by 95 percent.

In a region as remote and difficult to access as Iceland's Westfjords, being prepared for whatever the conditions throw at you is critical, and surfing in the Arctic isn't for the faint of heart. Expeditions are built around winter conditions, cold water, and rapidly changing weather that demands being able to constantly adjust plans. There's no guarantee of waves, but that's all part of the adventure.

This isn't a tropical surf charter where the biggest challenge is deciding which reef to surf first. It's an expedition into the unknown, where patience, preparation, and a little luck are essential ingredients. Light-hearted surfers need not apply. Winter water temps in this region dip into the 30s, meaning thick-ass wetsuits, booties, gloves, hoods, the works. And that bag of shortboards you'd bring to Indo, think again. More foam, heavier glass jobs, you're going to need boards that are built to last.



Be forewarned, this isn't exactly a budget surf trip. Vikingfjord is a private expedition vessel, and the experience is priced accordingly. While the cost of a specific four-day Westfjords surfing expedition isn't publicly listed, charter broker Pelorus advertises the vessel at rates starting around \$200,000, depending on the itinerary and season. That's a significant investment, but for a group looking to put together a private Arctic expedition, it offers a pretty unique proposition: a floating basecamp capable of taking you into some of Europe's least-explored surf territory. And given that the Surf Ranch in Lemoore runs between \$50,000 to \$75,000 to rent for the day, it's not as crazy a figure as it may seem at first.

Surf travel has always been about chasing the horizon, which is exactly why boat trips have captured our collective imagination for so long. And while the world's tropical

playgrounds will always have their place, there's something undeniably compelling about taking the tradition to the other ends of the Earth. Sometimes the best surf trip isn't about finding another perfect wave in paradise. It's about finding out what else may be out there.