

TRAVEL LUST

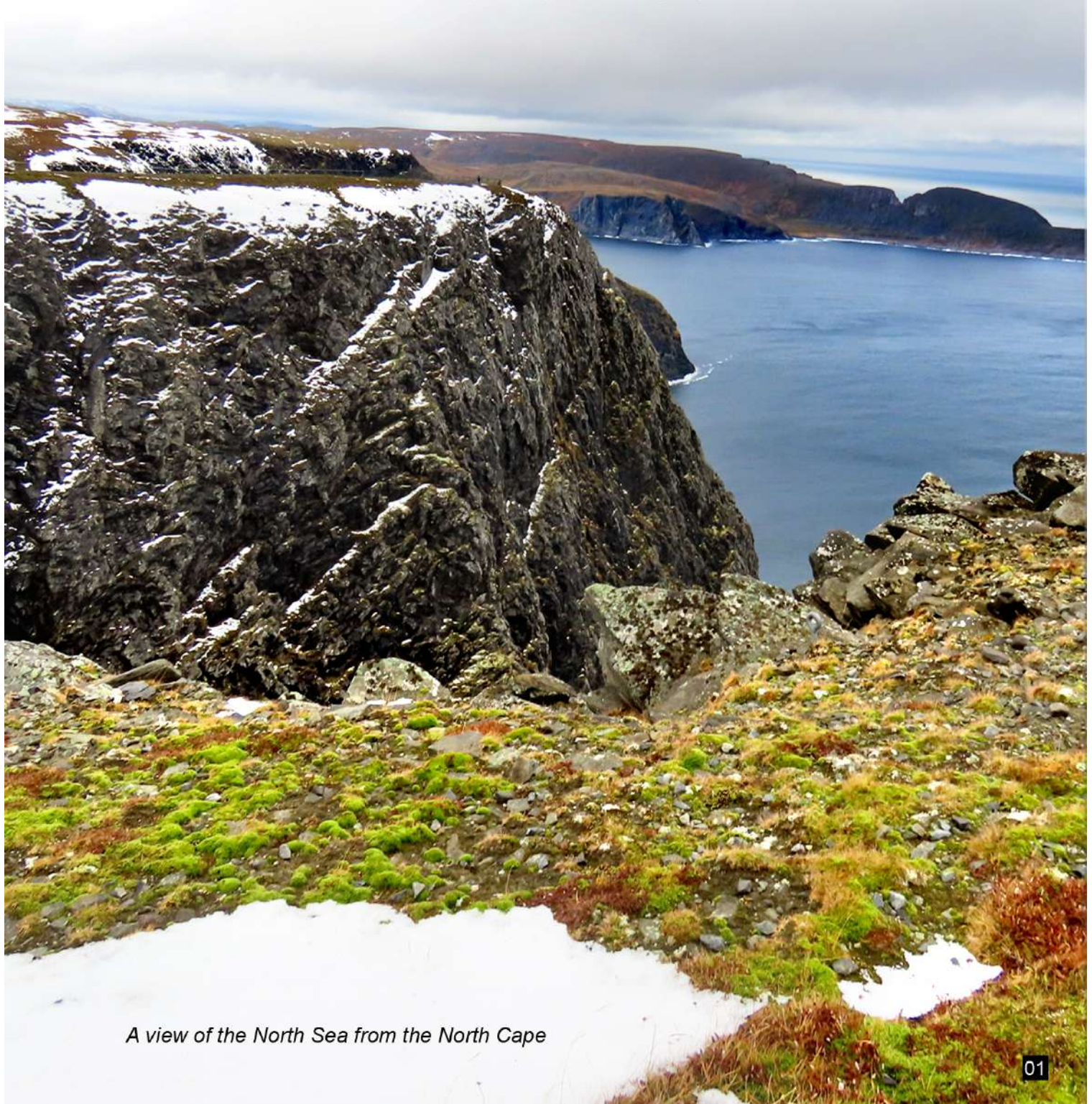
APRIL

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6500 kms road trip through Scandinavia (Part -2)

Text and pics by Abbas Tyabji



A view of the North Sea from the North Cape

Mountains, mountains, mountains everywhere as viewed from our lunch spot, about 80kms from Honnesvag, our first halt in Norway



I just couldn't stop admiring the beautiful mountainscape from our lunch spot



A fiery sunrise makes a halo on a cottage at Honnesvag



We had entered Norway after exiting Finland on the fourth day of our travel and we were driving through mountainous terrain, different from Finland. The mountains were higher and steeper and most of them were covered in snow. Enjoying this changing scenery, we were also full of anticipation and excitement about our next adventure.....staying two nights in one of Europe's northernmost towns, Honnisvag, and driving to the northernmost point of the continent, North Cape, the next day..

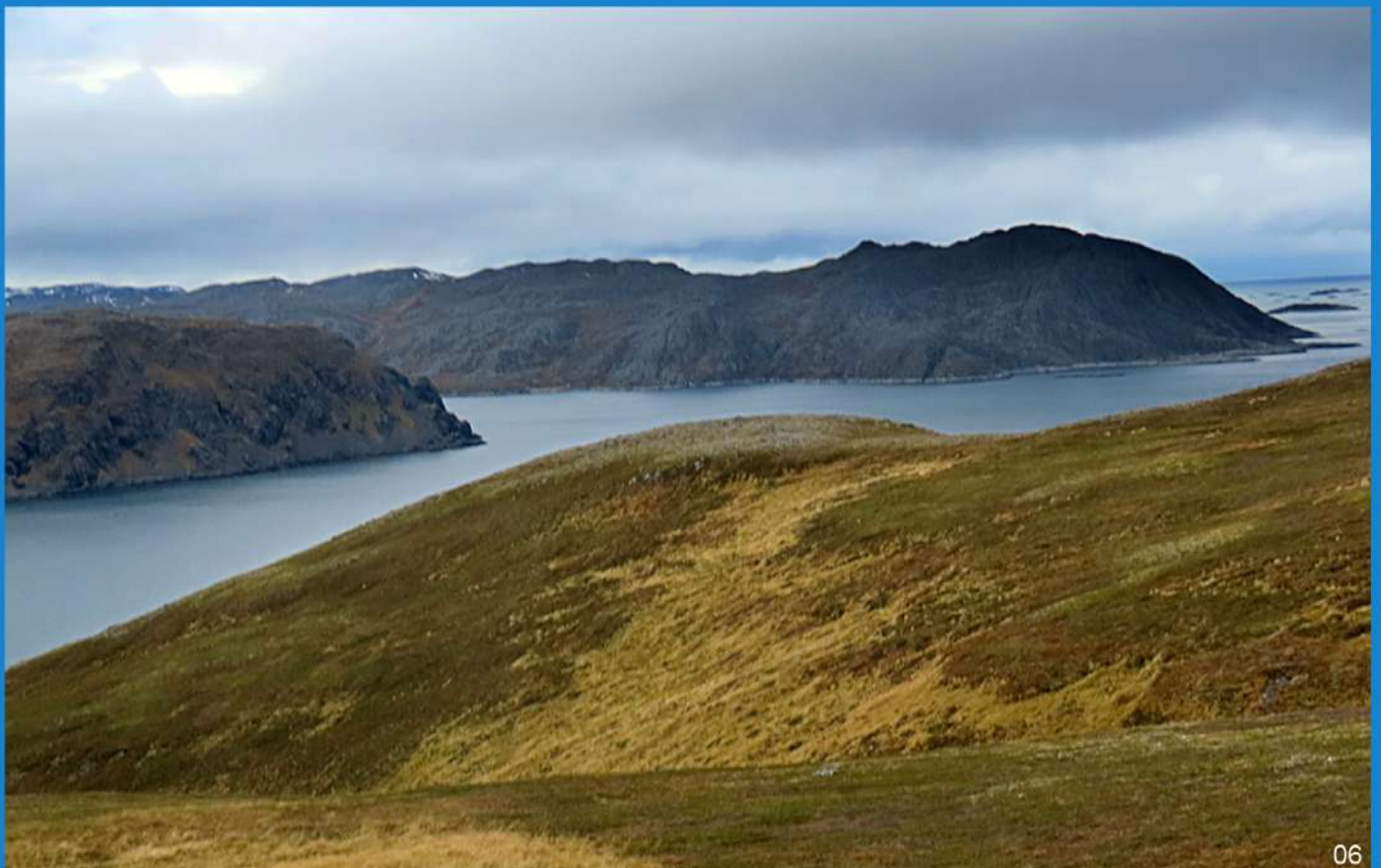


Our lunch stop was at such a magnificent spot that I left my food untouched and rushed out to capture the delectable views of snow covered mountains all around. As we continued our drive towards Honnisvag, the road skirted a very expansive fjord, which seemed like a lake but narrowed as we reached our destination for the day.

Excitement mounted as we woke up the next morning with hopes of an exhilarating ride to the North Cape. And it was indeed a highlight of our tour, with snow covered lakes surrounded by rainbow coloured moors rising to the crests of snow laden peaks. North Cape itself was a flat piece of land whipped by the strongest breeze we have ever encountered.... we were being pushed from one side to the other and almost whirled around, making it extremely difficult to hold the camera and click pictures.

Our convoy makes its way towards North Cape

Two delectable views enroute North Cape



A typical Arctic landscape near North Cape





The coloured moors, frozen lakes and snow covered peaks make a wonderful combination

After bearing the bone chilling wind and temperature hovering below -10C, and wandering the snow-laden piece of land jutting out into the North Sea, we gratefully accepted the warmth of the Museum cum civic center. We walked through the museum depicting life on that God forsaken territory, warmed our insides with some steaming coffee though the price was exorbitant and then went back to Honnesvag, where we spent the evening wandering the streets of this fishing village.

The next 2 days were probably the most scenic of this drive in North Norway, with a series of fjords and snow laden plateaus intervening. The fjords were backed by tall mountains covered in snow interspersed with picturesque villages hugging the small strip of land between the fjords and mountains. We had numerous scenic halts along the way where tea and coffee warmed us in this frigid atmosphere.

We passed the large town of Alta which has an airport, and reached the largest town of northern Norway, Tromsø. Here we had a scenic cruise around the fjord, during which we could see the town from all angles, besides the mountains flowing into the sea. Our next port of stay was the University town of Trondheim, most famous for the large and beautiful Nidaros Cathedral which most of us visited to admire the golden altar and stained glass windows.

Between Trondheim and our next stop at scenic Alesund, we passed over what is known as the Atlantic Ocean Highway, actually a flyover over an arm of the fjord, a little hyped drive which we did twice, for reasons I could not fathom. I did not find anything worth spending so much time over, but the organisers felt otherwise!!! After another scenic drive, we enjoyed a much needed rest at Alesund before continuing to THE MOST SCENIC VILLAGE IN NORWAY, FLAM.



*A waterfall tumbles down the mountainside near Honnesvag and
a cottage located scenically on a fjord*



A village nestles between a fjord and snow capped mountains





Such superb views make the drive along Norway's fjords most enjoyable





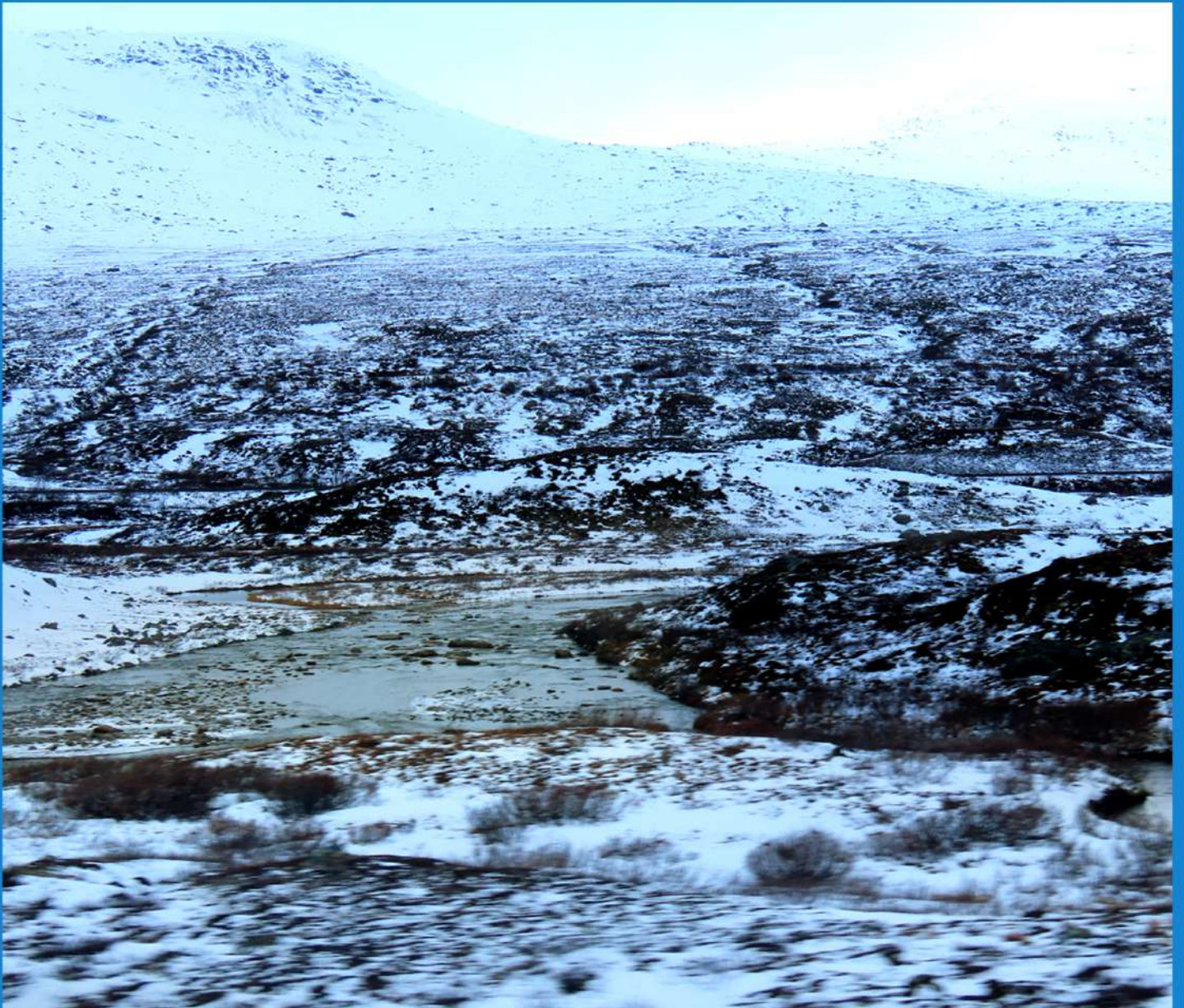
A view we got during our cruise at Tromso (above) and the much hyped Atlantic Highway near Alesund





Viking style houses backed by snow capped mountains can be seen at numerous spots in Northern Norway (above) and a herd of reindeer crossing the road between Alta and Tromsø





The scenic snow laden plateau between Alta and Tromso (above), Akshay Chandra at the wheel of our lead car (bottom left) and Akshay Chandra with Prachur, both leaders of our tour

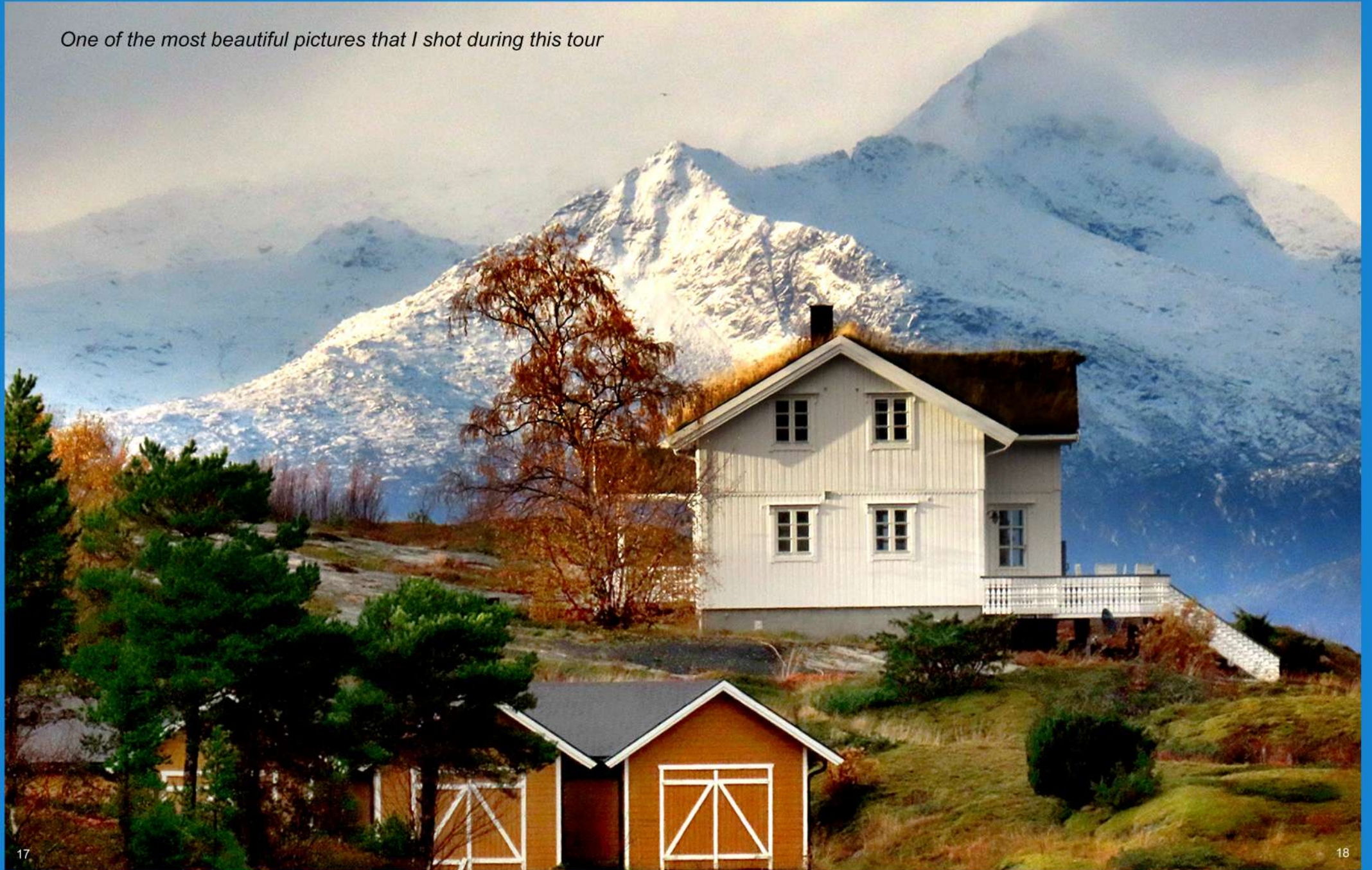




One of very scenic ferry points (above) and a rainbow that greeted us at this point

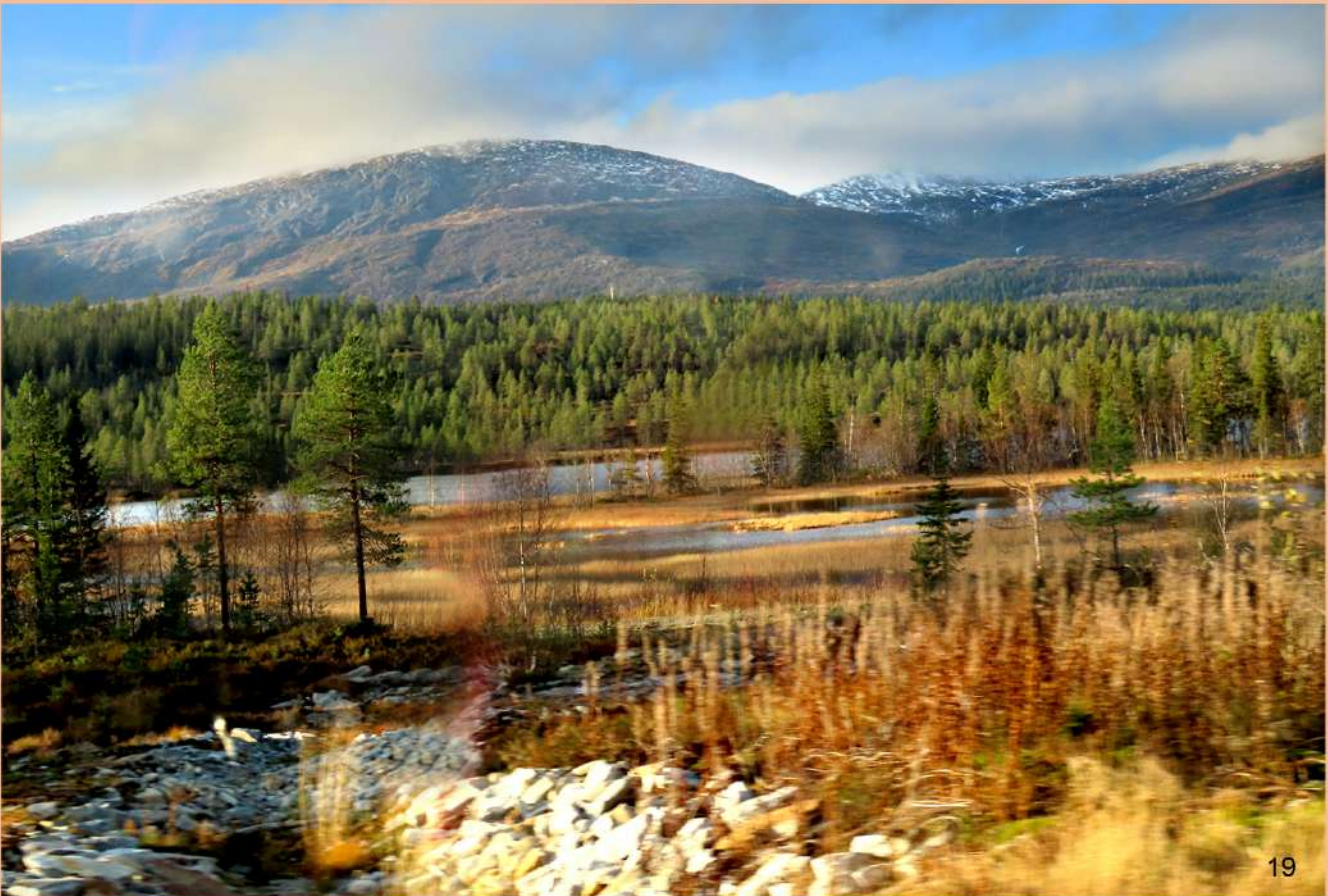


One of the most beautiful pictures that I shot during this tour

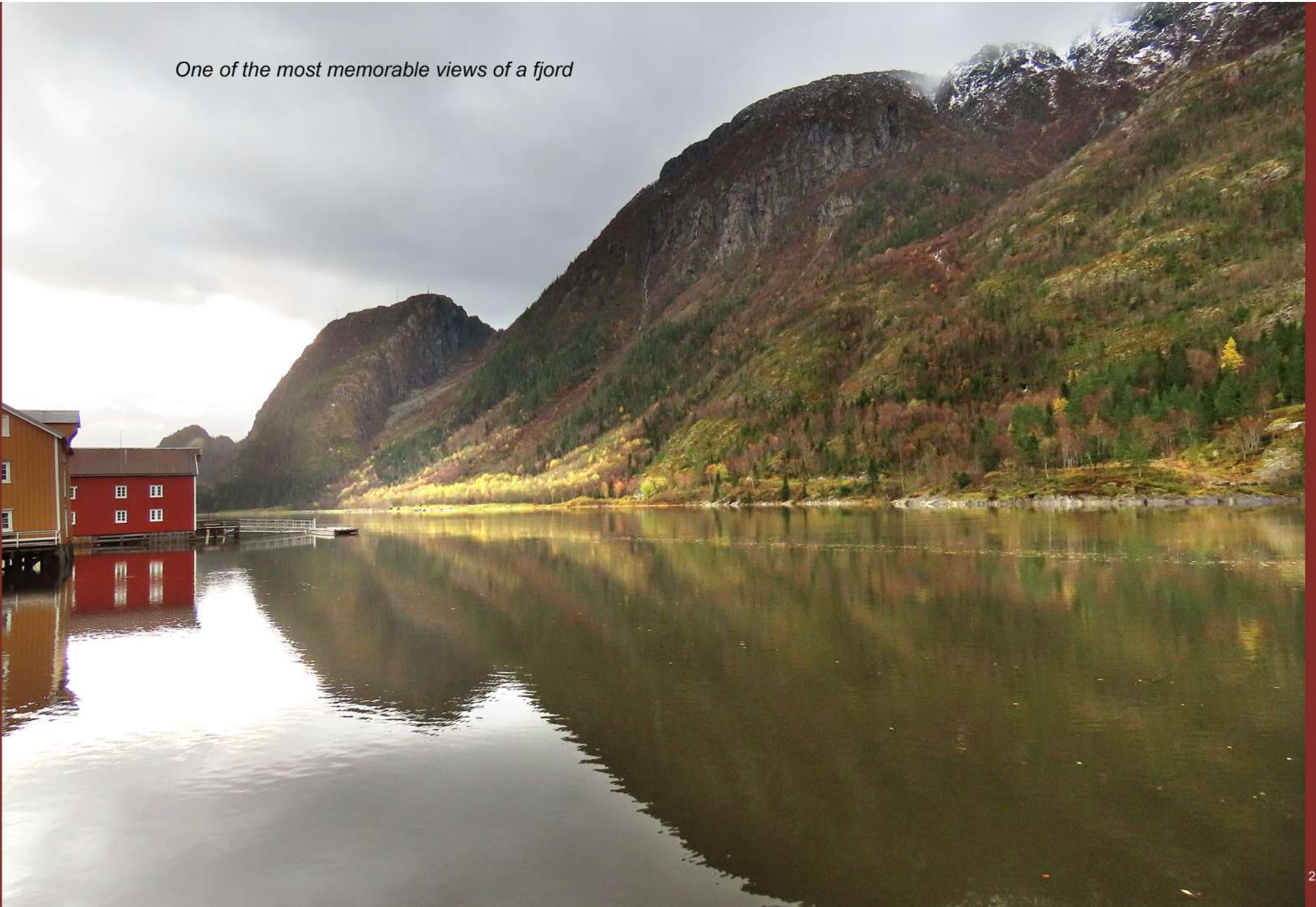




Exquisite scenes like this are part and parcel of a road trip across Norway



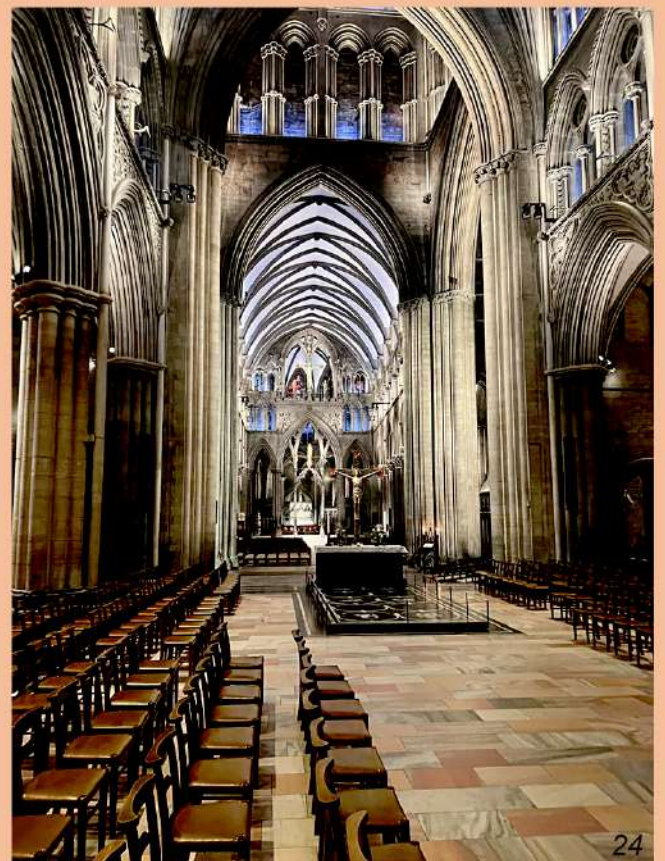
One of the most memorable views of a fjord



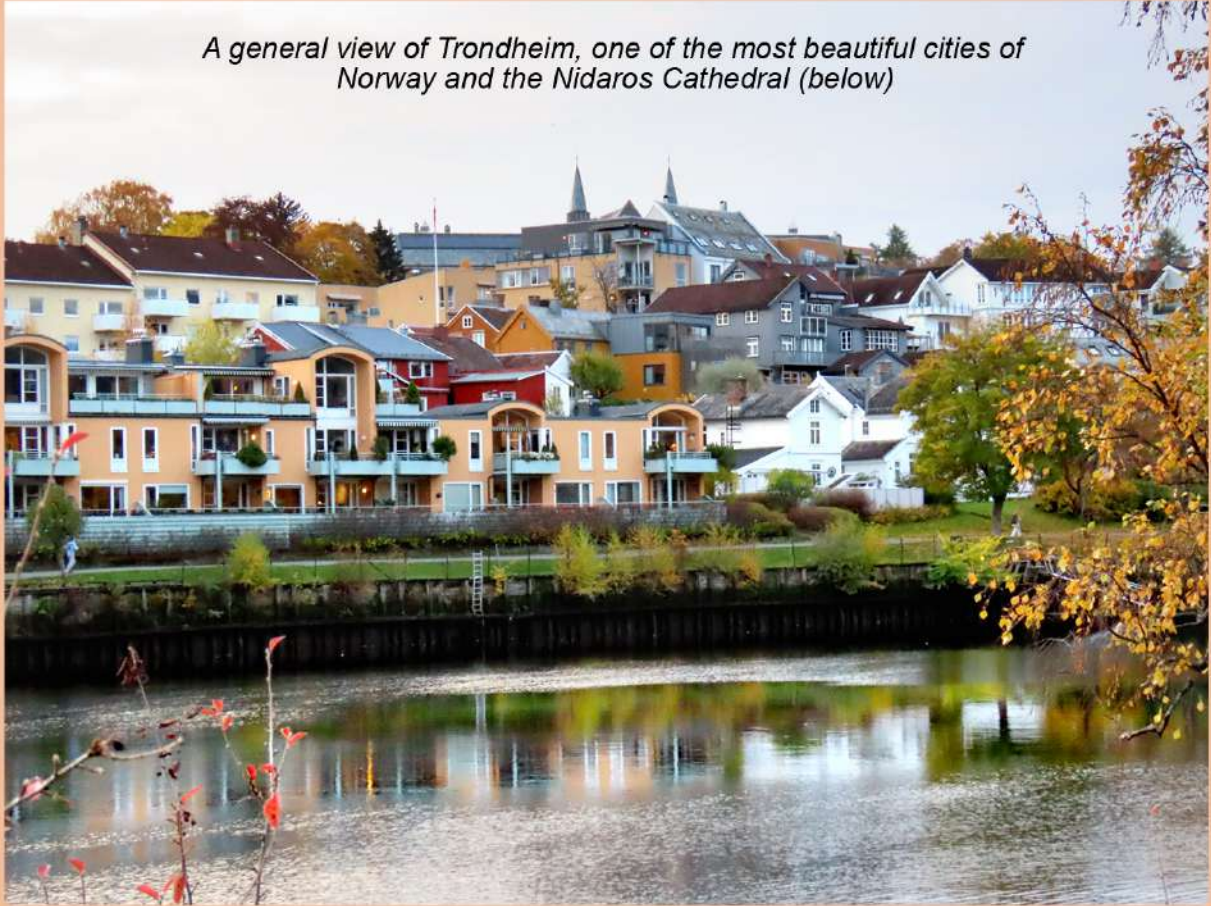
An otherworldly scene as we approached Tromsø



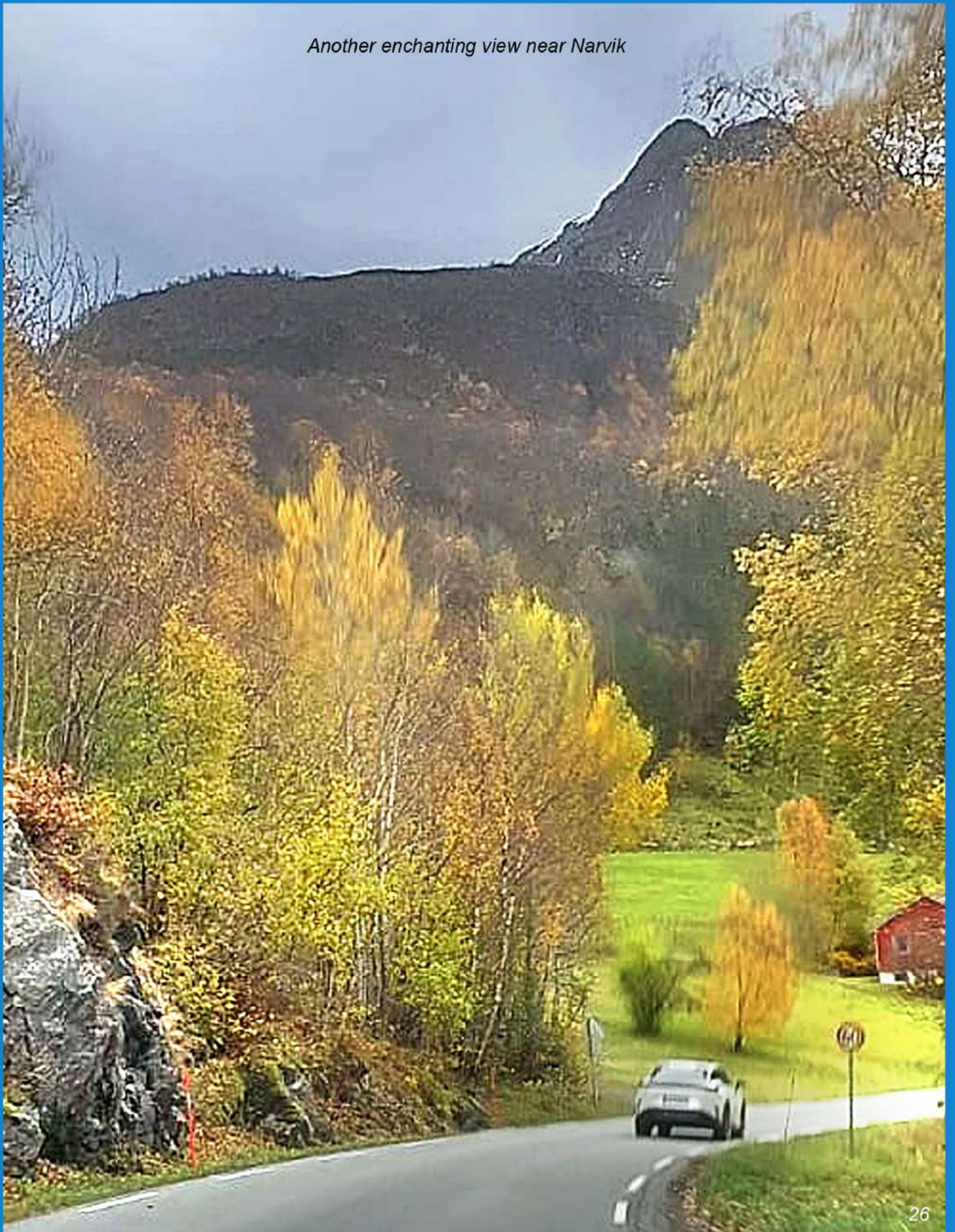
The Nidaros Cathedral at Trondheim is one of the Architectural masterpieces of Norway. My co travellers Mrs & Mr Manek are seen in photo on top right while Mr. Vineet Nagrani is at bottom left



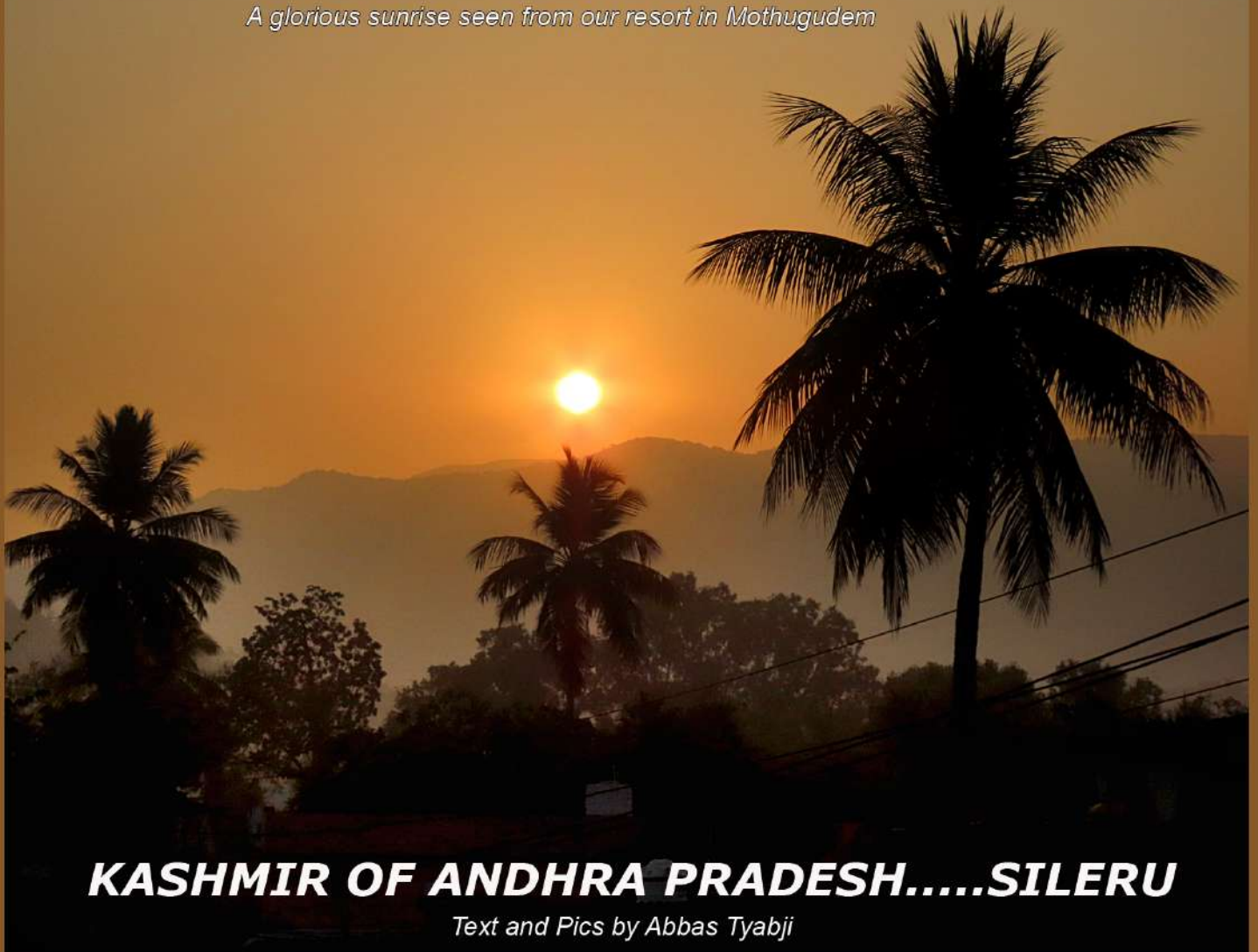
A general view of Trondheim, one of the most beautiful cities of Norway and the Nidaros Cathedral (below)



Another enchanting view near Narvik



A glorious sunrise seen from our resort in Mothugudem



KASHMIR OF ANDHRA PRADESH.....SILERU

Text and Pics by Abbas Tyabji

Sileru. ...Sileru.....Sileru? Where is that and why are you going there? My friends and family asked me with surprise, when I told them about my proposed trip to that quite off-the-beaten track location. "Well, it's a riverside village right at the northernmost border of Andhra Pradesh where this south Indian state borders with Odisha. It's a forested, hilly tribal area right in the lap of nature." They were not convinced, no one had ever heard of it and they all scoffed at my judgement. Anyway, my wife and a friend who always accompanies us on such adventurous expeditions, agreed to join me, my wife mainly because she thought she could be a restraining factor in case the adventure got out of hand!!!

So, one recent Monday morning we outfitted our faithful Tata Safari, picked up a driver-cum-mechanic and our friend, and proceeded towards Vijaywada. We would be turning in a somewhat northerly direction from the town of Suryapet, 140 kms from Hyderabad, and driving towards the well known temple town Bhadrachalam, on the banks of the Godavari river, about 350kms from our city.

After Bhadrachalam, the surroundings got greener and hills started to appear, which grew in size as we raced toward our destination, Sileru. Small tribal villages with thatched huts started appearing with fields of chillies lining both sides of the road, and chillies drying in flaming red heaps at regular intervals. At around 2:30 pm, after a drive of about 8 hours, we reached Mothugudem, the village where the first of many dams on the Sileru river has been built. Our homestay, Greenland River Resort, was at the end of a very narrow lane lined with tribal houses and as we approached, we could hear the roar of the river, which was in full spate, as water had been released from the dam upstream.

Our homestay was absolutely basic, keeping up with the atmosphere around but we were welcomed by the wife of the Owner Velapu Ganesh Babu, who was at work at the bank at the time. While the lady spoke Telugu, we all spoke Hindi but luckily our driver, who had not taken the wheel even for a minute, spoke a little Telugu, so we just managed to get ourselves understood. Anyway some hot tea arrived and we enjoyed the very natural setting of the Sileru river gushing by right next to the property.



The Sileru river gushes past our resort

A Kashmir - like scene near the Pushpa Dam on the Sileru river



Waiting to fish

After a good rest the next day we had breakfast at a tea shop down the road and started our journey of discovery of the Sileru area. Our first halt was the Pushpa dam about 10kms from our homestay, which we reached after driving on a winding, thickly forested road. And what a scene opened before our eyes as we drove along a gushing canal towards the huge lake formed by the dam. Fully surrounded by high mountains, the absolutely green lake looked like a postcard picture taken in the Kashmir valley, minus the snow mountains. We spent quite some time sipping tea which we had brought from Mothugudem, while enjoying this superb landscape. Just surprising that no tourists except locals, have taken advantage of this soul stirring area.

We then proceeded towards the town of Sileru, passing crystal clear streams rushing from forested hills, small villages built in the same style with bamboo boundaries and thatched huts, with cattle roaming around and occupying large chunks of the road, which got steadily worse as we proceeded. I had been to Sileru three times earlier, but about ten years ago, and expected many changes, but the area still retained it's natural charm, a good thing. The whole area was part of Andhra Pradesh Genco, the company which ran a number of generating plants along the Sileru. It reminded me of company run towns but the houses seemed to be in need of repairs.

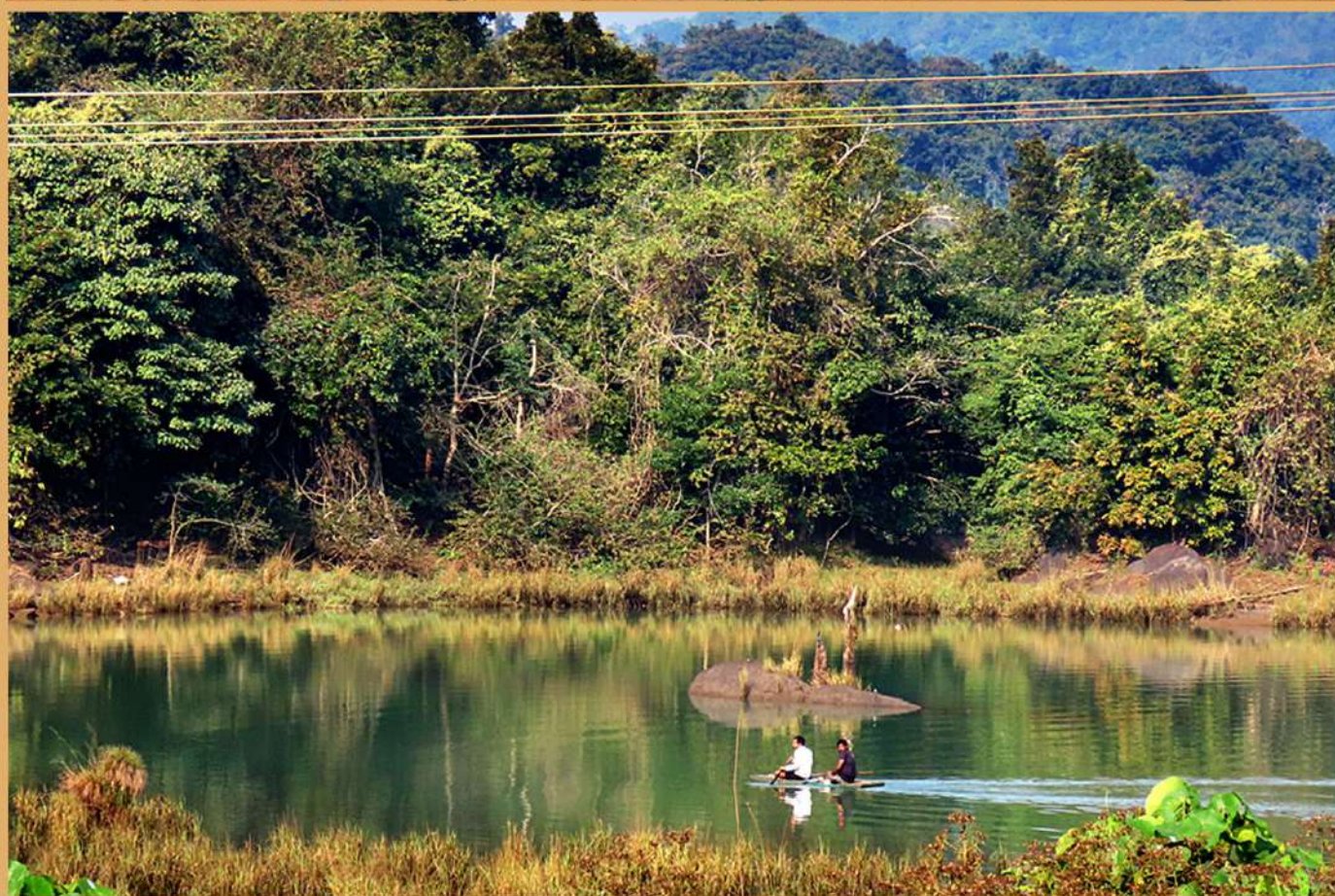
After a look around we turned back to visit the Polleru waterfall quite close to where we were staying.

A Tribal Village we passed on the way to the Pushpa Dam





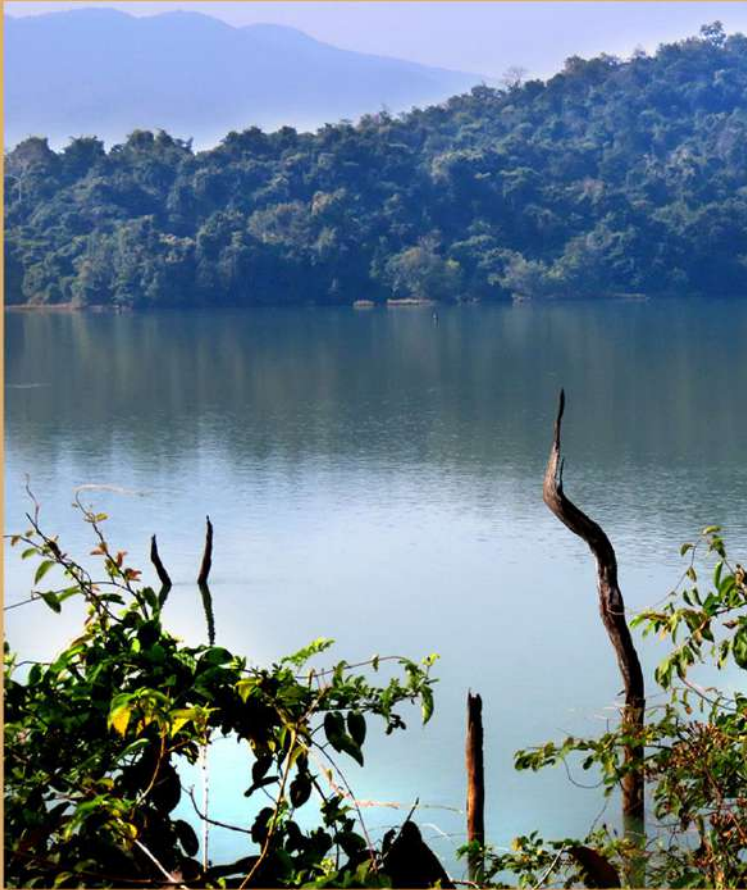
Our faithful Tata Safari at the canal site near Pushpa Dam



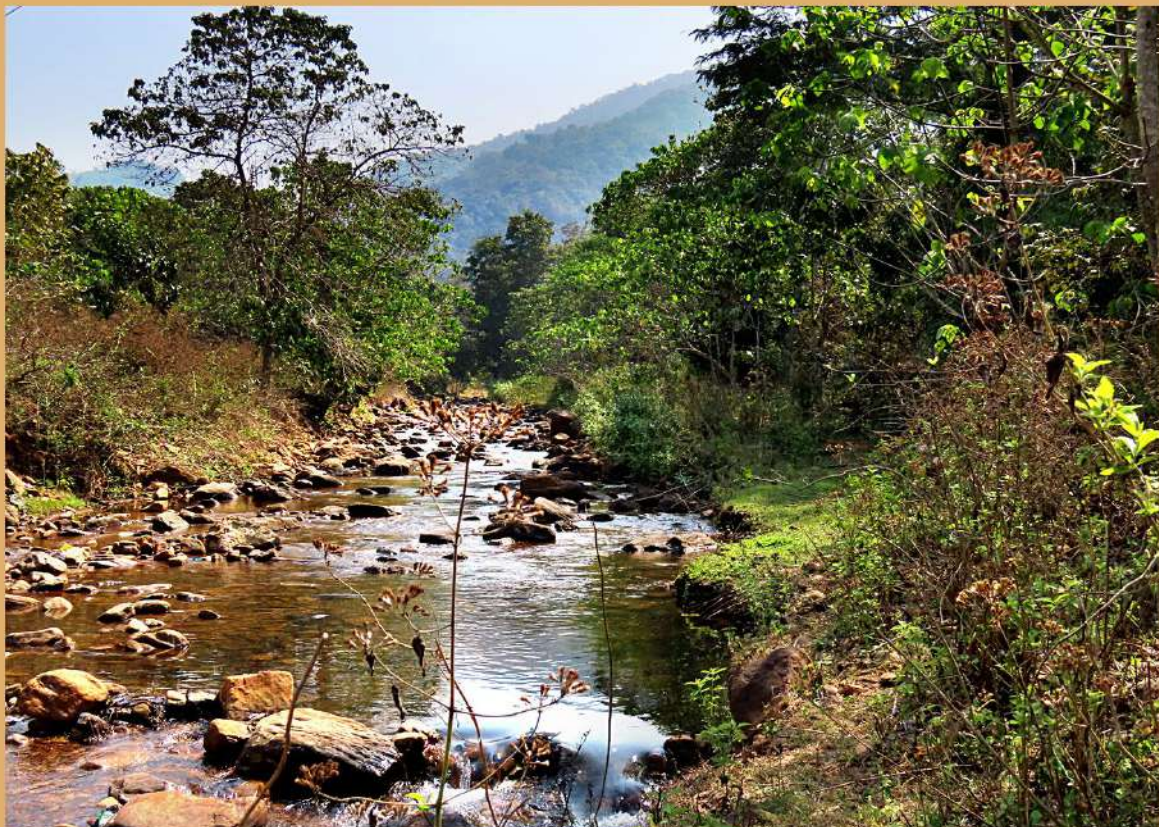
A fisherman plies a wooden raft on the lake formed by the Pushpa Dam

Kashmir and Kerala combine in this delectable scene



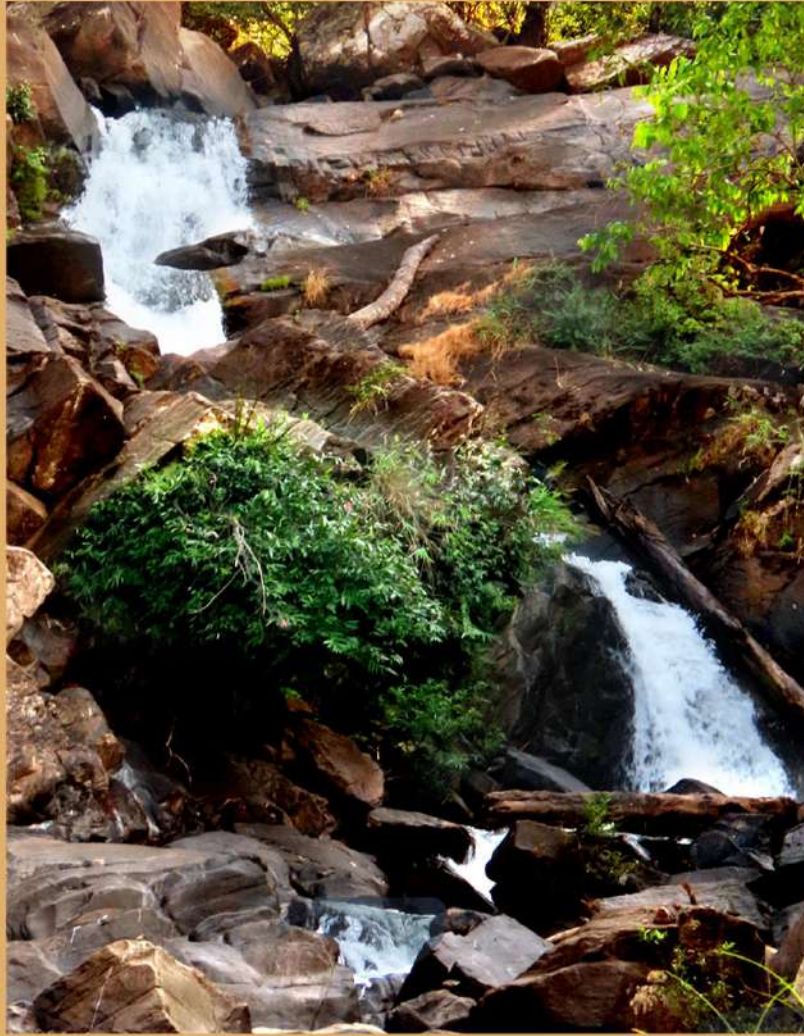


Different views during our trip to the Sileru region. Photo on top right shows my wife (right) and our friend Tasneem



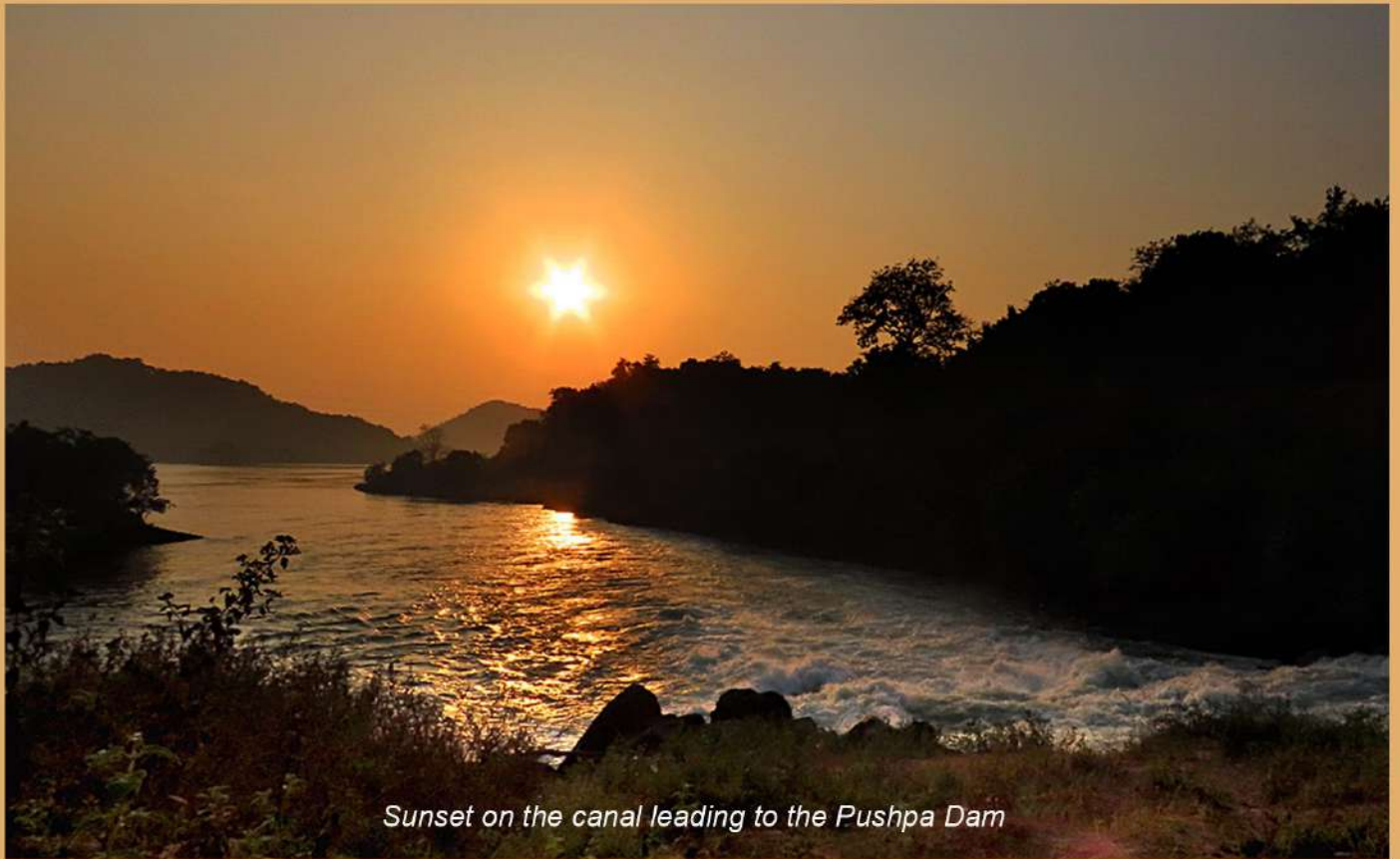
The sun bids goodbye to the Sileru in a glorious burst of flame





The Polleru falls (above) and what looks like frost on the rocks below the falls





Sunset on the canal leading to the Pushpa Dam



A tribal hut in the Sileru area

Though in a picturesque, hilly setting surrounded by thick forests, the fall itself was not very tall and fell in two drops over huge boulders. The km long walk through the woods was also quite invigorating. Though my wife didn't think it worthwhile, I had a plan to go back to Pushpa dam and watch the sunset on the lake, which we did. It is such a peaceful place, away from it all, as if we were transported to a part of Kashmir. After watching a fiery sunset as the sun dipped over the mountains, we made our weary but satisfied way back to our digs, had umpteen cups of tea and a simple dinner at the same tea house down the road, and bedded down for the night.

At 7.00 am the next morning, we bade goodbye to Ganesh Babu, his wife and father, who stays on the property, and made our way back to Hyderabad..... but not before my wife had her desire to look closely at the red chillies drying along the roadside, fulfilled. She even managed to get a handful of the fiery chillies from the lady who was looking after this precious produce.

Our driver-cum-mechanic Razzakh who hardly took the wheel during the whole tour



ABOUT THE EDITOR

Abbas A. Tyabji is a Hyderabad, India, based photo journalist, who left Tata Motors, one of the largest auto makers in India after heading the Publications Division of the Company over a career spanning nearly 3 decades.

During his tenure he travelled all over India and to neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Mauritius and the Middle East on photo journalistic assignments. His articles, pictures and photo features appeared not only in the Company publications but in national and international magazines.

He was invited by the then People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (S Yemen) to photograph the natural and man made wonders of that ancient land and prepare publicity material for their govt. The effort was appreciated by Govt officials and even India's Ambassador to S Yemen wrote an appreciation letter to Tatas on his efforts.

He is the recipient of over 50 national and international awards including:

The President of India's Award for Excellence in Designing and Printing on TWO OCCASIONS

Best Feature Writer Award from the Association of Business Communicators of India 4 times

Best Photo Feature Award from the Association of Business Communicators of India 5 times

The internationally circulated magazine "Bus Ride" from the US found his pictures so exceptional that they selected 2 for the First Place Award in their 1989 Worldwide photo competition, the only time in their history that two pictures were given this honour.

Almost half a dozen of his pictures appeared in Japanese calendars and dozens have graced Indian calendars.

He has also published a book on Hyderabad, for which the text, photography and design was done by him.

For his photo journalistic achievements he has found mention in "Who's Who of India", and "Reference Asia".

He also operates guided, customised tours from Hyderabad and is listed in LONELY PLANET as a Tour Guide.

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Abbas Tyabji receiving the President of India Award for Excellence in Designing and Printing from then President of India Dr. N. Sanjeeva Reddy