

Å - The Town Whose Name Is One Letter Long

Creating the world's longest town name certainly put the village of Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch, Wales on the map - if there are any maps that actually have room for a 58-letter village. But what about the town with the world's shortest name?



You can't get much shorter than the Norwegian town of Å. (pronounced "aw")

Å is a small town in the Lofoten islands of Nordland. The Lofoten islands are among the most beautiful places on the planet. Spires of glacially carved granite rise vertically from the Norwegian Sea, which is about 161kilometers (100 miles) north of the Arctic Sea.

The weather in Å is unexpectedly mild. This is because of the Gulf Stream. Tourists visit Lofoten every summer to climb its mountains, admire its charming red fishing villages, and take pleasure in its 24 hours of daylight. In order to visit L ofoton's fish museum - of course you'd like to do that, right? - you'd have to journey to the southern tip of the archipelago, to a village with a population of 150 people called Å.

Å didn't get its name as a ruse to attract tourists; its name is actually the Old Norse word for "small river." There are a great number of rivers in Norway. As a result there are at least seven villages in Norway called Å, but the Å in the Lofoten islands is the most popular with tourists.

The "Å" road sign was stolen so often by souvenir hunters that the town replaced it with one that said "Å Lofoten," but the locals didn't like it and the original one-letter sign returned. However, extra measures were taken to make it more difficult to steal.

In 2004, a British comedian named Paul Parry came up with the ultimate cycling trip! The idea was to bike from Point A to Point B. From Å, Norway to Bee, Nebraska, USA. (The Atlantic Ocean is between Å and Bee so Parry rode a stationary bike and ran laps on the deck of the boat, the Queen Mary 2.)

More than three months later, when he arrived in the tiny town of Bee Nebraska, the Mayor officially proclaimed it A to B Day.

You could best Parry by doing a route which covered all the vowels: from Å to E (a river in Scotland) to I (a town in China) to Ø (an island in Denmark) to U (a municipality in Micronesia) and maybe Y (a commune in northern France).

A,E,I,O,U and sometimes Y - beat that Parry!