



Bergen Deaf Center, a historic 19th century villa located in the Kalfaret area of Bergen.

Event Venue of the Month, Norway

A house of history, culture and community in Bergen

Just outside the centre of Bergen, in the historic surroundings of Kalfaret, stands an elegant 19th century villa with an extraordinary story to tell. This is the home of Bergen Deaf Center – a place where history and community come together.

By Andri Papanicolas | Photos: Kalfaret

The house itself was built in 1869 by shipowner and industrial pioneer Peter Jebsen as a summer residence. Carefully restored to its original grandeur, it now serves as both a cultural centre and a gathering place, where past and present meet under one roof.

The organisation behind it, NDF Bergen and Vestland, traces its roots back to 1880, when deaf individuals founded the first deaf association in Bergen (Bergen Døvstumme Institut).



Historic display in the King Haakon VII Room.

Although the organisation has evolved, the house is still widely known as Bergen Deaf Center. For members and the wider network, it remains the natural name for the building – the meeting place, the centre and the heart of the community. The name lives on, reflecting the strong connection between people and place.

A living history

Peter Jebsen himself played a key role in developing Norway's railway infrastructure, including Vossebanen and Bergensbanen, and lived a remarkable life both as a businessman and a local politician. Today, his legacy lives on in the building itself, which has been carefully restored to its original gran-

deur and now serves a very different but equally meaningful purpose.

Stepping inside, visitors are met with an atmosphere that blends heritage with contemporary relevance. The building is home to a knowledge and museum department dedicated to deaf culture, language and history.

The museum was officially opened on 5 June, when Rune Anda, head of the museum committee and one of the driving forces behind the project, addressed the audience: "We want this to be a place where people can learn, reflect and feel inspired. It's about sharing our culture, our language and our history – not only with the deaf community, but with society as a whole."

The museum captures this journey. Visitors can learn about important milestones such as the right for deaf individuals to obtain a driving licence in 1967, access to interpreting services, and the recognition of Norwegian Sign Language as an official language. For Anda, the message is clear: "Many victories have been won over the years, but the journey is not over. This house represents both our history and our continued commitment to making everyday life better for future generations."

Unique celebrations

Yet the house is not only about history – it is very much alive. In addition to its cultural role, Bergen Deaf Center functions as a charming and versatile event venue. With its elegant interiors, high ceilings



and thoughtful details, it offers a distinctive setting for everything from weddings and anniversaries to corporate gatherings and festive celebrations. "We are proud to open our doors and invite people in," says Sigrun Ekerhovd. "Whether it's a wedding, a celebration or a professional event, we want guests to feel both welcome and inspired by the surroundings."

The main hall accommodates up to 90 seated guests and offers flexible layouts to suit different occasions. A small stage at one end provides the perfect focal point for speeches, performances or presentations, while modern audiovisual equipment ensures events run smoothly. In addition, a spacious lounge area invites guests to relax and mingle in comfortable surroundings.



The venue also features a fully equipped kitchen, allowing hosts the freedom to arrange catering according to their preferences – whether preparing food themselves or working with external suppliers. On warmer days, guests can step out onto a large terrace, ideal for enjoying fresh air in a peaceful, scenic setting.

Easy access

Accessibility and location are key advantages. Situated just a short distance from Bergen city centre, the building is easily reached on foot, by train or by car, with parking available nearby. Despite its proximity to the city, it retains a sense of calm and privacy that makes any event feel special.

In a world where heritage buildings often become st Scan Magazine, Issue 189, April 2026 Deaf Center stands out as something far more dynamic. It is a place where stories continue to be written, where traditions are honoured, and where new connections are made every day. "For us, this is more than a building," Ekerhovd says. "It's a home for community, culture, advocacy and pride."

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