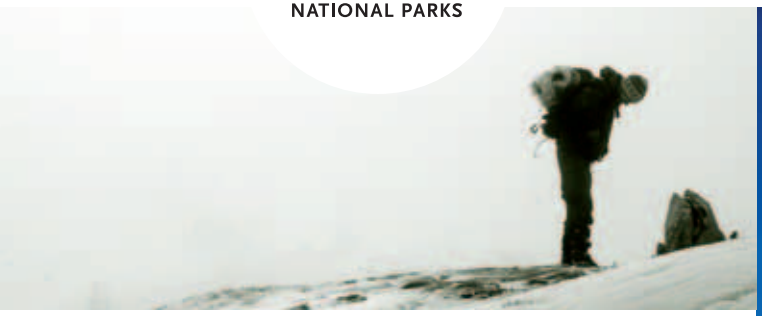
NORWAY'S
NATIONAL PARKS





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FOLGEFONNA
NASJONALPARK

Folgefonna

From fjord to ice cap



BENNETT. Photo: Arild Juul, Stig Tronvold/Samfoto, Jan Rabben, Bjørn Moe, Ingvar Grasheil, Anniken Friis Knut Strand/Bergens Tidende, Stein Byrkjeland and Kjartan Nielsen Friis. Front page: Flowers by the Buerbreen glacier

Norway's national parks – nature as it was meant to be

Norway's national parks are regulated by the laws of nature. Nature decides both how and when to do things. National parks are established in order to protect large natural areas – from the coast to the mountains. This is done for the benefit of nature itself, for our sake and for generations to come.

The national parks offer a wide range of opportunities and experiences. The natural surroundings are beautiful and varied. There is hunting, fishing, plants, birds, animals and cultural monuments.

Accept our invitation – become acquainted with nature and our national parks.

Directorate for
Nature Management

www.dirnat.no



The Sandvikedalen valley

A national park in a national landscape

The first mention of Folgefonna which we know of is in a book written by Peder Claussøn Friis *"Norriges oc Omliggende Øers sandfærdige Bescriffuelse"* in 1613. Friis found the Folgefonn peninsula magnificent and dramatic. The landscape in this part of Hardanger is so beautiful it bears comparison with the most outstanding places in Europe.

Folgefonna is the third largest ice cap in Norway, all of 168 km^2. It probably reaches a maximum thickness of 300–400 m. If we take 150 m as an average, Folgefonna has about 30 km^3 of ice. Its highest point (1662 m a.s.l.) is believed to be one of the wettest places in Norway, receiving an estimated annual precipitation of around 5500 mm.

The entire natural environment surrounding Folgefonna is marked by the proximity of a large ice cap. There are numerous rushing rivers, and many lakes and rivers have the characteristic opaque emerald-green colour of glacier meltwater. The park includes the next largest area without major infrastructure development in the county of Hordaland.



The Bondhusvatnet lake and the Bondhusbreen glacier



Close to the glacier



EXPERIENCE NATURE

From fjord to ice cap

Folgefonna is famous for its dramatic and beautiful scenery. The Folgefonna peninsula with its fjords, mountains, rivers, lakes and icefalls is one of the greatest tourist magnets in Norway. Its diversity is immense, offering a vast choice of scenery to enjoy.

The national park is traversed by ancient tracks and paths used for centuries. Most are still in use today, mainly by hikers enjoying the mountain scenery, for some hours or several days, and who can also take advantage of four self-service tourist cabins inside the park, Fonnabu, Breidablikk, Holmaskjer and Sauabrehytta, which are open for everyone throughout the year.

Folgefonna is most easily accessible from the Nordfonna glacier, where you can ski even on a beautiful summer's day. The Buer and Bondhus glaciers are less accessible, but you can nevertheless see and enjoy these beautiful, famous glaciers. You can contact a local guide and have a strenuous but very rewarding trek in the most challenging terrain in Norway. The local mountaineering association holds courses every year for those who want to learn more about walking on glaciers. You can book a place on treks which the association and various local private companies organise. Folgefonna is especially well known for fantastic skiing trips in spring, but you can ski there practically the whole year round. You can ski and walk both along and across Folgefonna. The route from Sunndal to Odda, which is suitable for inexperienced walkers, is particularly well known, and guided trips are organised there daily in midsummer. You can continue over the glacier to Holmaskjer and down the wooded hillside to Tokheim.

The national park has many rivers, but they are often steep, rushing torrents. Nevertheless, some offer good opportunities for fishing, even for salmon and sea trout. The River Ænes has beautiful meanders and is suitable for canoeing and kayaking. The innermost part of its valley is almost pristine and has a marked wilderness character.



THE LANDSCAPE

A great variety of rock types

The national park has areas that are particularly interesting for studying the bedrock and Quaternary geology. A great many different rock types, many with complex structures, provide information about a variety of geological events. The rocks and structures span an enormous period of time, from abround 420 million years ago up until 1.5 billion years ago.

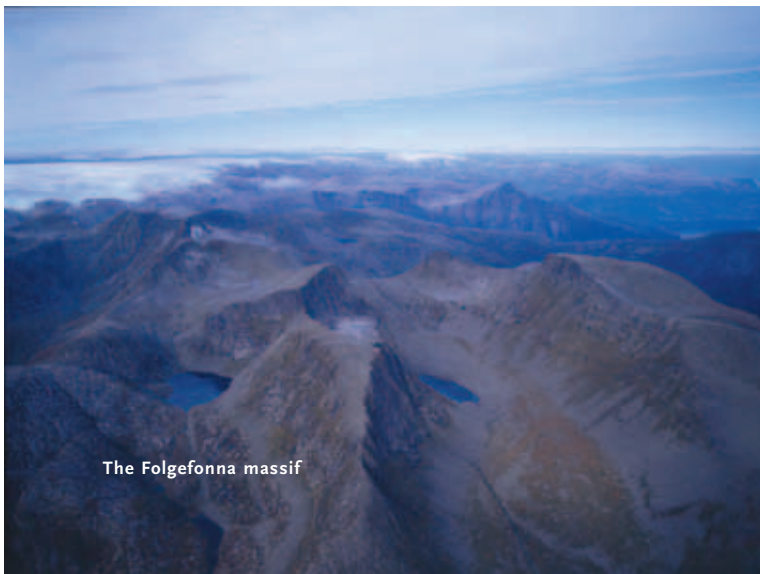
Studies of superficial deposits dating from the last Ice Age and later show how glaciers have shaped the landscape. Many landforms in the area were moulded by the glaciers during the last Ice Age. Virtually the whole of Norway was covered by ice until 10 000–12 000 years ago. The highest peaks in the Rosendal 'Alps' seem to have been exceptions. Their flat summits were shaped much earlier and remained insignificantly modified through the last Ice Age.

Glaciers have dominated the landscape around Folgefonna during and after the last Ice Age. Nevertheless, the glaciers we see today are probably not remains surviving from that cold period. Evidence suggests that Folgefonna melted completely during the Stone Age, from 8000 to about 5200 years ago, and has returned since as a consequence of climate change.

In Rosendal, a geological park has been opened where you can see many local rocks, polished to visualise the fantastic structures they contain. The park offers a rare insight into the numerous geological processes that have taken place in the area.



Ice cap



The Folgefonna massif

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KEY TO SYMOLS

- National park
- Protected landscape
- Accommodation
- National Park Information Center
- Camping
- Self-service tourist cabin
- Unstaffed tourist cabin



PLANT LIFE

Great contrasts

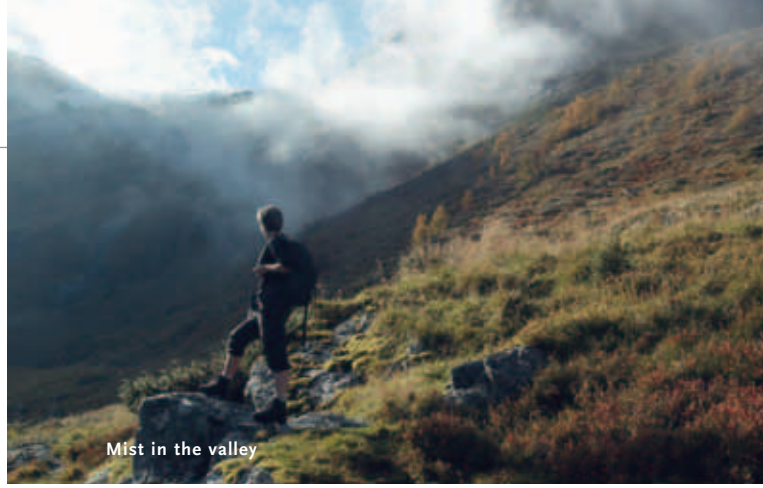
There are comparatively few species of plants in most of the mountainous part of the area because acid rocks dominate and the growing season is short. Hardy species like three-leaved rush, dwarf willow and stiff sedge occur widely on the poor soils. Mossy mountain heather, rufine sedge and Arctic cottongrass are well suited to tackle the extreme snow conditions, and can grow right up to the edge of the glaciers.

Decorative plants like yellow saxifrage, purple saxifrage, moss campion and alpine bartsia grow on steep rock faces just above the screes. Mountain avens are found in a few places, such as Skjeggesnuten and Sauanuten since these two mountains have carbonate-bearing bedrock and therefore are botanical oases with a rich alpine flora.

Purple gentian does not require nutrient-rich soil, and is common here and there in the upland woodlands and the lower parts of the alpine belt. Hikers often notice this tall, stately plant. Mountain queen, with its large clusters of white flowers, is also an attractive sight when it grows in its hundreds. No other plant is so well adapted to the steep cliff faces close to Folgefonna.


Moss

Precipitation is high on the west side of Folgefonna and down in the valleys, and you can find many plants there that thrive in a moist climate. Even Wilson's filmy-fern, an extreme westerly plant, grows as far east as the Fureberg waterfall, because of the constantly wet local climate in the spray zone. Coastal plants like foxglove, bog asphodel, cross-leaved heather, hard-fern, lemon-scented fern and great wood-rush characterise the vegetation from the fjord up towards the tree line.


Mist in the valley

Maiden saxifrage



ANIMAL LIFE

Animal life on the barren mountains and in the woods

High in the mountains, it is too barren for many creatures to thrive, but it is precisely here we find a good population of the hardy ptarmigan. The good supply of ptarmigans to prey on is an important reason why golden eagles nest in several valleys that reach up towards the glacier. In years when there is a good supply of small rodents, the rough-legged buzzard is a common bird of prey. Meadow pipits are the most abundant species above the tree line.

Red deer are abundant in woodlands on the Folgefonn peninsula, and more are shot in Kvinnherad than in any other municipality in the country. Black grouse are common near the tree line, and capercaillie can be observed lower down in the pinewoods. The natural woodlands in west Norway are now one of the last refuges of the white-backed woodpecker in Western Europe. On the Folgefonna peninsula, avalanches have left numerous dead trees, and such sites are particularly favoured by woodpeckers.



Golden eagle



Ptarmigan



HISTORY

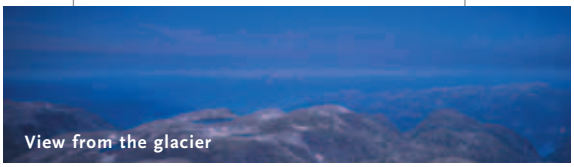
A popular area for tourists

The natural environment has formed a good basis for permanent settlement in the valleys surrounding the Folgefonna glacier ever since prehistoric times. Most of the cultural heritage relics we see today are significantly younger, often linked with the period when transhumance dairy farming was widespread in sub-montane districts. This provided a vital supplement in helping lowland farmers to eke out a living, but today this traditional practice has largely died out.



Organised tourism began as early as 1833 when tourists went by foot and, for a time, by horse-drawn sledges over the glacier from Sunndal to Tokheim in Odda. A century ago, many cruise ships started coming to the fjords. The Bondhus and Buer glaciers and the many impressive waterfalls were tourist magnets and Odda was the most important Norwegian port of call for cruise ships at that time.

Rosendal Barony is just outside the national park. The manor house dates from the 1600s and has been listed as a cultural relic since the 1920s. Norway has never had another barony, and the buildings, standing in a beautiful rose garden, now form a unique cultural heritage site, which is one of the major tourist attractions in Norway.



View from the glacier

You are a guest of nature in a national park

- You may go wherever you like, on foot or ski, but the basic rule is that anything with an engine is prohibited.
- You can stop wherever you like and pitch a tent. Always tidy up after yourself and don't leave litter.
- You can light a fire, but remember the general ban on lighting fires in forests from 15 April to 15 September. Be considerate when collecting firewood.
- You can pick berries, mushrooms and common plants for your own use. Be considerate of cultural relics, vegetation and fauna. Be extra careful during the breeding and nesting season.
- Make use of the hunting and fishing opportunities. Remember a hunting/fishing licence. Never use live fish as bait, or transfer live fish from one watercourse to another.
- You can take your dog with you, but remember to keep it on a lead from 1 April to 20 August.



Glacier climbing

Folgefonna National Park in brief

Where:
Etne, Jondal, Kvinnherad, Odda and Ullensvang municipalities in Hordaland county.

Foremost characteristics:
The third largest ice cap in Norway. Valleys, mountains and rivers combine to give beautiful, dramatic scenery. Outstanding geology.

Outdoor recreation:
Hiking and glacier trekking. There are many marked tracks and paths, and four self-service cabins. You can book on a glacier trek led by a qualified guide. Skiing on the ice cap is popular in spring.

How to get to Folgefonna National Park:
You can reach the Folgefonn peninsula by car, bus or express boat. If you want to go into the national park and the surrounding valleys, you can start at Jondal, Sunndal, Rosendal, Blådalen in Matre, Sørdalen in Etne, Odda and Ullensvang, for example. You need to arrange for a boat to take you over Åkrafjord to reach Mosnes and Sandvikedalen in Etne. Popular routes up to the ice cap are from Jondal and the Folgefonna Summer Ski Centre, Mauranger, Sunndal and the Gardshammar road, Murabotn and Svartevatn, Blådalsvatnet and Kjerringbotn, Bergstø and Sauanuten, Espeland and Sauabreen, Buerdalane and Reinanuten, and Egne Hjem and Tokheimslia.

Information on accommodation and other services:
Jondal Tourist Office, Jondal, Tel.: +47 53 66 85 31, www.jondal.kommune.no
Kvinnherad Tourist Information Office, Rosendal
Tel.: +47 53 48 42 80, www.kvinnherad.kommune.no
Ullensvang Tourist Information Office, Kinsarvik
Tel.: +47 53 66 31 12, www.ullensvang.herad.no
Odda Tourist Information Office, Tenestetorget
Tel.: +47 53 65 40 00, www.odda.kommune.no
Etne Tourist Information Office
Tel.: +47 53 75 80 00, www.etne.kommune.no

Maps:
1:50 000: Jondal – 1315 IV, Odda – 1315 III, Varaldsøyna – 1215 II, Kvinnherad – 1214 I and Fjæra – 1314 IV
Walking map (1: 100 000): Folgefonna – Hardangerfjorden

Established:
2005

Area:
545 km²

Adjacent protected areas:
Bondhusdalen Protected Landscape
Ænesdalen Protected Landscape
Hattebergsdalen Protected Landscape
Buer Protected Landscape

National Park Information Center:
Folgefonna Nasjonalparksenter, Rosendal. Tel.: +47 53 47 02 35

Administration and supervision:
County Governor of Hordaland
Tel.: +47 55 57 20 00, www.fylkesmannen.no/hordaland

More information:
www.norgesnasjonalparker.no