Norway's national mountains

In 1814, the members of the first Norwegian parliament swore in Eidsvoll that they would remain "United and faitful until the Mountains of Dovre should crumble", effectively making Dovrefjell a national mountain.

For over 200 years, amateur and professional botanists have come here from around the world to study and enjoy the unique, rich mountain flora. The area has a practically intact mountain fauna with wild reindeer, wolverine, Arctic fox and golden eagles, and a herd of musk ox that is also unique to Dovrefjell.

Musk ox on Dovrefjell. Photo: Pål Hermansen / Samfoto



From wild glacial mountains to open plateaux

The trip from Sunndalsfjella to Knutshøene allows you a glimpse of the heart and soul of mountain nature in all its diversity. The beautiful pristine areas in the west are gradually replaced by smoother, gentler shapes as you move east across the National Park. The towering mountain Storkalken in the west, followed by the majestic Storskrymten and the famous Snøhetta farther east are the dominant peaks.

The flora changes too; the west is dominated by more barren types of rock, while the east has calcium-rich soil that supports a flourishing and varied plant life. This area is home to the famous Knutshøene mountains, which botany researchers have been visiting for more than one hundred years. Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella National Park also has several rare plants that survived the last ice age, such as Norwegian wormwood and various subspecies of the delicate mountain poppy. And of course no visit to the area would be complete without seeing the convergence of watercourses at Åmotan. The spray and roar of the thundering waterfalls are an impressive reminder of the strength of primal forces unchecked.



From Storkalken near Sunndalsøra. Photo: Aslak Aastorp



The realm of the vulnerable mountain reindeer

Wandering pioneers, the reindeer have stayed put on Dovrefjell despite numerous trials and tribulations. One hundred years ago, the wild reindeer were almost wiped out as a result of intense hunting. More recently, roads, railways, power stations and other disturbances have obstructed the animals' migration. The seasonal migration is what allows the wild reindeer to survive on the poor grazing grounds in the mountains. Further division of the mountain areas will make the herds even more vulnerable, causing them to overgraze the few areas left to them and deplete their food supply. This is why it is so very important to preserve large areas unfragmented.

Sunndalsfjella provides the wild reindeer with excellent summer pastures and calving grounds, and in the winter they move to the drier areas in the east to graze.

The population in Dovrefjell is the only remainder of the wild reindeer that used to inhabit much of Northern Europe. Our main priority now is to gather as much knowledge about them as we can and always apply the "better safe than sorry" principle, to ensure that future generations will also be able to experience the migration of these cautious animals over the mountain plains.



Pits used to catch wild reindeer near Strålsjøene. Photo: Per Jordhøy



A complete cross section of mountain nature

The original "equilibrium" in the mountain ecosystem has been upset by the activities and encroachments of modern man. Nevertheless, in the Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella region man has managed to preserve some remains of the original mountain nature intact.

There are wild reindeer and also a small number of wolverines. The rare Arctic fox has also managed to survive in the wild here, despite intense hunting and trapping in earlier times. Particularly unusual are the musk oxen that settled here after being reintroduced in 1932 and 1947-53. Previously, this was the natural habitat of this ancient species, but they died out in Europe during the last ice age. Birds of prey are particularly well represented here, including gyrfalcon, golden eagle and rough-legged buzzard.

The area also houses a large spectrum of landscapes and flora, ranging from rich wetlands with posturing ruff to lush heaths with clucking grouse. The landscape, plants and wildlife found in Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella National Park and the neighbouring conservation areas are one of Norway's national treasures.



Mountain poppy. Photo: Bjørn Brendbakken



From hunters to pilgrims and farmers

Cultural-historical traces indicate that people have been using the natural resources in Dovrefjell and Sunndalsfjella for almost 10 000 years. The oldest traces have been found in the western parts, where the first hunters pursued the reindeer northwards with their bows and arrows as the ice began to retreat. The series of reindeer pits across Dovrefjell are the largest in southern Norway and bear witness to the importance of reindeer and the mountain resources for our ancestors.

These unassuming hunters ruled the land here long before the first pilgrims crossed the mountains on their way to Nidaros cathedral in Trondheim. Mountain cabins and inns were built, and the development of the route between the "land north of the mountains" and the "land south of the mountains" led to an increase in trade and communications. Farms were built and the cattle were taken up into the mountains in the summer to graze. Villages began to grow.

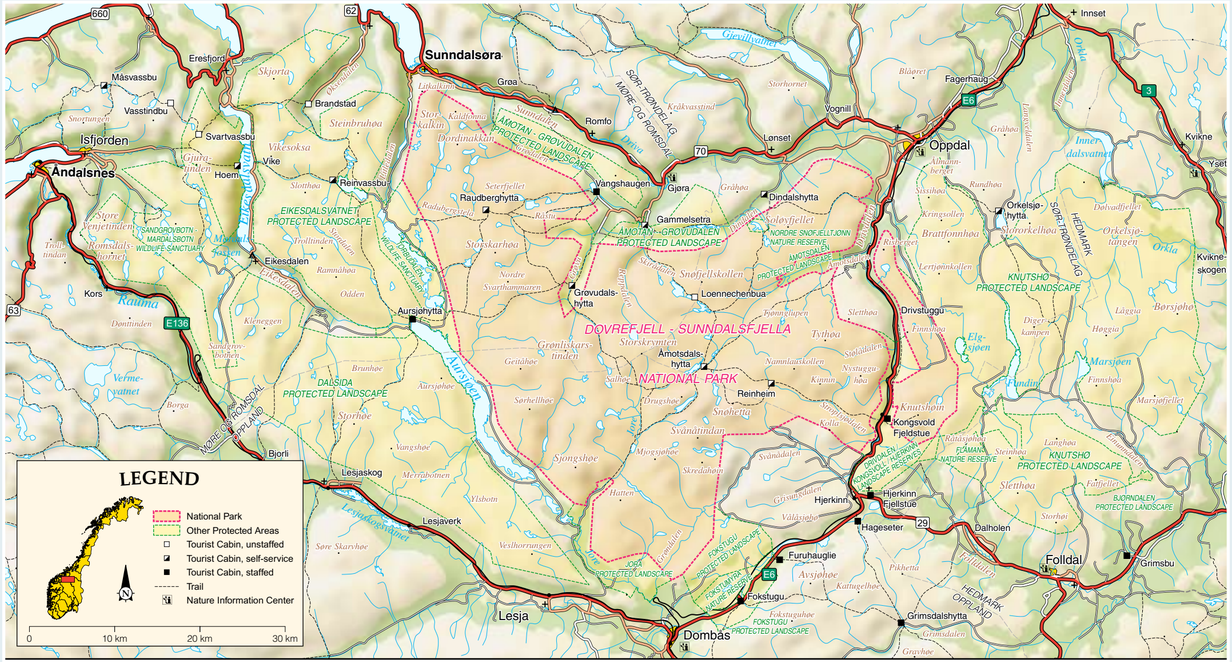
By looking back, we can find many valuable elements that can help us build the future. The challenge today is to understand how to use our "national mountains" in a sustainable way.



From lake Leirsjøen looking towards Storskrymten and Veslskrymten. Photo: Per Jordhøy

DOVREFJELL-SUNNDALSFJELLA NATIONAL PARK

Established 1974 Expanded 2002 Area: 1693 km², incl. neighbouring conservation areas of 4367 km²



Useful information

The countryside in the Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella National Park is protected by law, including sites of cultural interest, plants and wildlife. Preserving this mountain landscape is our joint responsibility

YOU ARE ALLOWED TO

- move about freely and camp in the National Park
- hunt and fish in compliance with the legislation (hunting and fishing licences are required)
- pick berries, mushrooms and common plants for own consumption

DO NOT

- damage plants or disturb animals unnecessarily
- use motorised vehicles
- pollute or drop litter

MAPS

There are nine maps in the series "Norway 1: 50 000" that cover Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella National Park: Storskrymten 1419-1, Dombås 1419-2, Aursjøen 1419-4, Romfo 1420-2, Sunndalsøra 1420-3, Einunna 1519-1, Hjerkinn 1519-3, Snøhetta 1519-4, Oppdal 1520-3

INFORMATION

Advisory council for Dovrefjella-Sunndalsfjella national park (Dovrefjellrådet), N-2500 Tynset, tel: (+47) 62 48 51 95
The Norwegian Nature Inspectorate (SNO), N-7340 Oppdal, tel: (+47) 72 42 49 45
The National Park Center: iNasjonalparker, N-2631 Ringebu
www.inardo.no

6 VISITOR CENTERS:

Dombås, tel: (+47) 61 24 14 44
Folldal, tel: (+47) 62 49 05 05
Sunndal, tel: (+47) 71 69 46 30
Kvikne, tel: (+47) 62 48 63 30
Oppdal
Otta, tel: (+47) 61 23 10 00

Cover: Snøhetta and the river Svåni. Photo: Øystein Søbye / Samfoto
Back: Svånåtindan. Photo: Jon Arne Sæter / Samfoto

Norway's national parks – part of our natural heritage

Part of the countryside in Norway is vast, majestic and highly varied, with intact ecosystems. However, many of these areas risk losing their unique natural qualities if we do not protect them sufficiently. It is important that a representative sample of all types of natural environment are preserved for posterity.

In 1962, Norway designated its first national park. The goal is to establish national parks and other conservation areas in all types of natural environment – from marine to alpine areas .

In the national parks, we wish to preserve Norway's natural heritage, both for ecological and recreational reasons. Future generations have the right to be able to experience untouched nature, and future researchers must be able to study the interactions in nature in undisturbed environments. Several of the national parks are important recreational areas and receive many visitors each year from other parts of Norway and abroad

Norway's national parks contain some of our most valuable treasures – let's look after them together!

Directorate for Nature Management

www.dirnat.no

Text: Per Jordhøy, Illustrations: Dagny Tande Lid and Rune Rosækvam, Cartography: FH Oppland and ø*kip, Trondheim, Technical production and printing: Skipnes AS

2nd edition. 1st printing. Published by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management 2003. ISBN 82-7072-550-I. TE 1070

DOVREFJELL-SUNNDALSFJELLA

NATIONAL PARK

