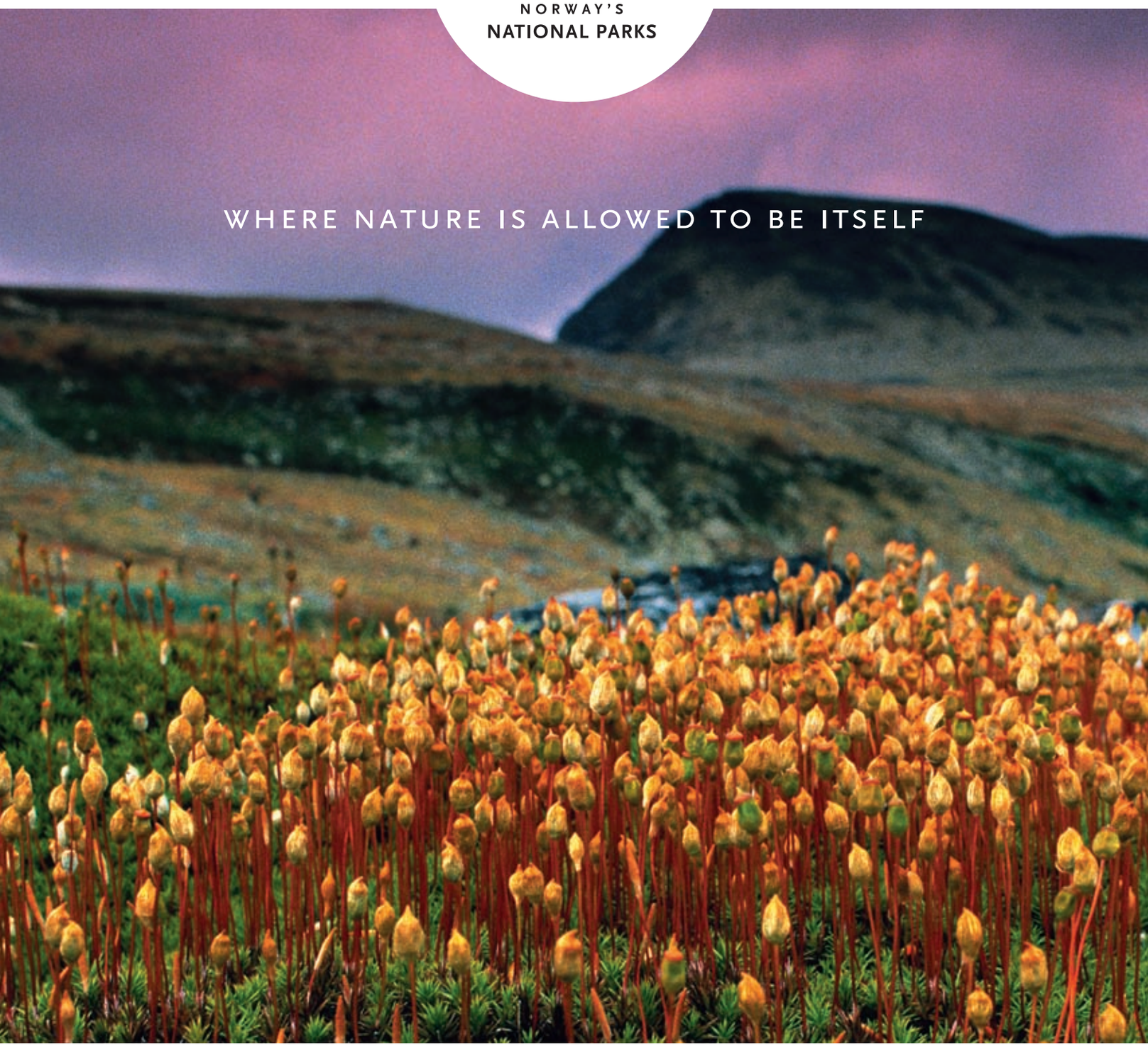
NORWAY'S
NATIONAL PARKS

WHERE NATURE IS ALLOWED TO BE ITSELF
















We protect the value and uniqueness of nature

Nature in Norway is splendid and varied. Areas can still be found where the laws of nature continue to control how plant and animal life develops. Many areas may lose their characteristic natural qualities if we fail to give them right protection. It is vital that a representative selection of habitats is secured for the future.

Many people say silence, peace and tranquillity are important reasons for seeking nature. Experiencing nature without noise caused by people is no longer a matter of course. The many large, protected areas in Norway help to secure such assets for the future.

In the national parks, we want to protect the rich diversity of Norway's natural heritage, for the sake of both nature and ourselves. Future generations have a right to enjoy unspoilt nature, and scientists must be able to study interactions in the natural environment in the future, too.

Protected areas in Norway

The Nature Conservation Act, and "The national plan for national parks and other large protected areas" give Norwegian authorities the opportunity to protect large natural areas. The main purpose in protecting an area is to secure a representative selection of Norwegian habitats and landscapes. The protection is also meant to help to safeguard areas that are particularly valuable for plants and animals.

The most common categories of protection are:

National Parks

- Large, relatively undisturbed areas of countryside.
- Intended to preserve natural assets and safeguard possibilities for outdoor recreation.

Protected Landscapes

- Distinctive or beautiful natural or cultural landscapes.

Nature Reserves

- Small, virtually undisturbed, areas comprising a particular type of habitat and having scientific or educational importance.

Svalbard

- Svalbard is part of Norway, but the Nature Conservation Act does not apply there. The protected areas in Svalbard have been established under the terms of the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act.

Norwegian national parks – part of our national heritage

Hunting, trapping and cultural landscape

Many traces of former land use can be found in the national parks. Ancient settlement sites and large trapping systems with pitfalls and funnel-shaped systems of fences, bear witness to hunting and trapping in bygone ages. From more recent times, there are the remains of shacks used by hunters and fishermen, old trackways and paths, remains from forestry, timber floating, charcoal and tar production, and traces left by haymaking and former transhumance dairy farming.

National mythology and history

Nature, especially the mountains, has great symbolic value for us. This can be seen in art, literature, popular beliefs and myths. In many national parks, you can walk on paths where historical or mythological figures have gone before you.

Sami culture

Practices associated with the Sami have left their mark in many national parks in Norway, and still do so. Pitfalls, turf huts and ancient settlement sites are found in many parks. Sami myths and popular beliefs are attached to places and mountains. Several parks are located in districts where Sami still herd their semi-domesticated reindeer.

The national parks represent important aspects of Norwegian nature

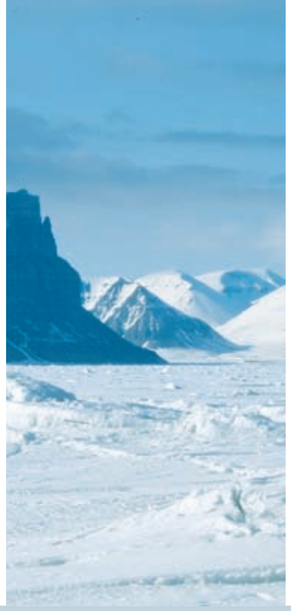
The various types of landscape found in the national parks form the basis of existence for many plants and animals. The national parks are, above all, made up of mountainous areas. Mires and fresh water are common, while areas of forest, fjord, coast and sea are less well represented.

Habitats for vulnerable species

The national parks are particularly important for species that need relatively large, undisturbed areas if they are to survive. Among them are wild reindeer, large predators and birds of prey such as rough-legged buzzards and golden eagles. Several of these species are especially vulnerable to human pressure. Some species, like the Arctic fox, are threatened by extinction. Hunting and the robbing of nests have reduced the populations of several birds of prey, while watercourse regulations, human habitations, roads and railways have restricted the areas where wild reindeer live and have cut their migration routes. Norway has an international responsibility to protect vulnerable species and their habitats.

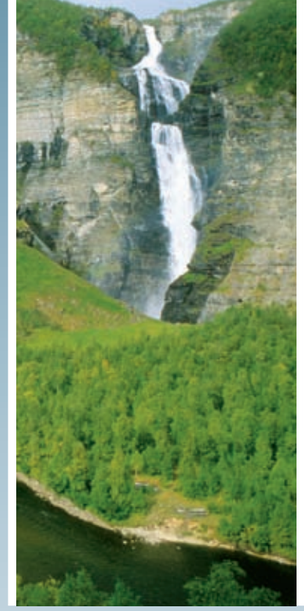
Unique northern flora

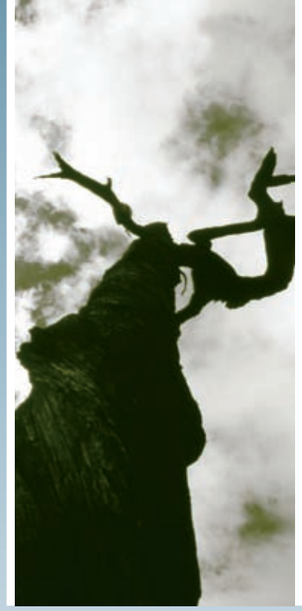
Many rare alpine plants can be found in the national parks. Some, like high alpine harebell and Norwegian mugwort, grow in very few places, and botanists have debated whether they survived the last Ice Age on mountain peaks that stood above the ice. The diversity of species is greatest in parks where calcareous bedrock occurs. Such characteristic species as mountain avens, glacier buttercups and Lapland rhododendrons are among these. Many northerly species have their southern limit in Norway and many southerly species their northern limit. Moreover, there are some species that are otherwise only found in Siberia, like Siberian lettuce and Arctic bramble.



The many different landscapes of Norway







Arctic conditions

Furthest north, the light characterises the seasons. The period of darkness and twilight from October to February shifts to midnight sun, which lasts from April to August. The climate is harsh and cold, with frost in the ground the whole year round. The unique polar scenery is dominated by ice, snow and barren areas. Icebergs, drift ice and the Northern Lights are natural phenomena you can experience in Svalbard.

Weather-beaten coast

See beautiful, sun-drenched mountains plunge straight into the sea. Be lashed by rough weather. Follow narrow fjords twisting their way to snow-clad mountains and glaciers. The contrasts along the Norwegian coast are enormous.

Glaciers

Many kinds of landscape were shaped by the ice; glacial rivers, U-shaped valleys, screes, moraines, block fields and kettle holes. Norway has several of the largest glaciers in Northern Europe. Glacier trekking and ice climbing are some of the thrills they can offer.

Majestic mountains

Norwegian national parks are first and foremost characterised by mountains. This is where we find the parts of Norway least affected by human activity. The mountain landscape ranges from gently rolling, endless plateaus to pointed peaks, canyons and glaciers. Here you can hike, ski, climb and pothole.

Endless plateaus

The upland plateaus are flat, open tracts dominated by meagre vegetation composed mainly of lichens, ericaceous plants, dwarf birch and willow scrub. Here you will find wild reindeer, semi-domesticated reindeer, recent and ancient cultural heritage relics, and opportunities for walking, and fishing in many lakes and rivers.

Mires and wetland

Precipitation must exceed evaporation if mire is to form. Hence, mires as a habitat are confined to cool, wet parts of the world. Norway has an unusually wide diversity of types of mire and thus has special responsibility to protect this kind of habitat. Mires are valuable bird haunts. Some have a rich diversity of flora, including many rare species, like the orchids Lapland marsh-orchid and lady's slipper.

Lakes and rivers

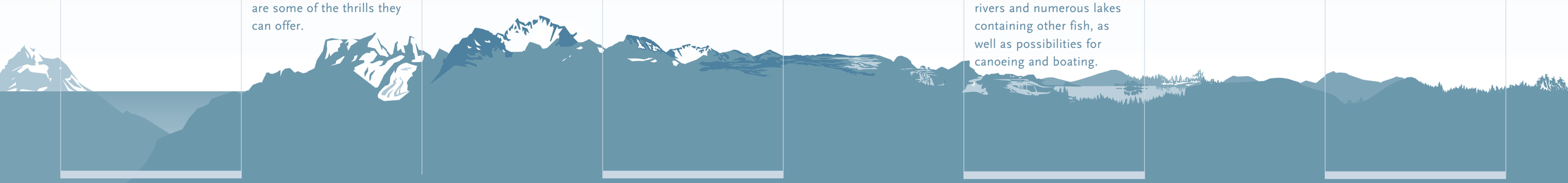
The best water you can drink comes straight from the stream, fresh, good and natural. Mountain lakes, tarns, big lakes, rivers and streams don't just provide a basis for the existence of birds, they form variations in the scenery and offer various kinds of enjoyment. Lakes and rivers are an important element in most national parks, and vary from lively mountain creeks, majestic waterfalls, canyons and rapids, to slowly-flowing rivers, tarns and big lakes. They often embrace valuable natural and cultural assets. The national parks have good salmon rivers and numerous lakes containing other fish, as well as possibilities for canoeing and boating.

Friendly valleys

Moulded by the ice and given life by the rivers. The upland valleys are typically the home of transhumance summer dairy farming in Norway. In many places, this practice and the culture associated with it go back hundreds of years. You can experience this, related crafts and traditional kinds of food in the vicinity of several national parks.

Mystical forests

Woodlands and forests in the national parks vary from lush, broad-leaved deciduous woodlands with a rich and varied plant and animal life, to barren pine heaths carpeted with lichens. Some virgin forest – virtually unaffected by people – can also be found. The forest is the source of many myths in Norwegian folklore.











You have right of access to the countryside

An important part of Norwegian cultural heritage is the chance to be out in the country. For many centuries, Norwegians have had the right to go wherever they wish in woodlands, forests, fields, along rivers, on lakes, among coastal islands and in the mountains, irrespective of who owns the area. This public right of access was confirmed in the Outdoor Recreation Act of 1957. All such activity must take place with due consideration so that wildlife is not damaged or disturbed.

Several national parks are important areas for outdoor recreation and many also have facilities to support this, such as a network of marked paths and the chance to spend the night in a staffed or unstaffed cabin. You can choose to organise the trip yourself, or take part on hikes or trips organised by local mountaineering or rambling associations. In some national parks it's desirable to limit the number of visitors to protect vulnerable wildlife or landscapes. Here there are few or no facilities in the form of paths or cabins.

You are a guest of nature in a national park

- Since regulations may vary from one park to another, check them before visiting a park.
- Separate regulations apply for parks in Svalbard.
- 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 March to 20 August.

Management and administration of the national parks

Ministry of the Environment (MD)

www.miljo.no

- The overall authority on matters concerning environmental management.
- Prepares proposals for the Government concerning protection.
- Overall authority for managing areas protected under the terms of the Nature Conservation Act.

Directorate for Nature Management (DN)

www.dirnat.no

- The highest professional body for nature conservation matters.
- Gives MD expert advice on the establishment of new national parks.
- Has the principal professional responsibility for administering protected areas under the terms of the Nature Conservation Act and the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act.

The County Governor

www.fylkesmannen.no

- Responsible for administering protected areas in a particular county.
- Prepares proposals for protection and advises DN.

Municipalities

- Management by municipal authorities is tested for some of the national parks.

Norwegian Nature Inspectorate (SNO)

- Overall responsibility for the inspection and surveillance of national parks on the Norwegian mainland.
- Local representatives throughout Norway.
- In some areas, the inspection is organised by local mountain authorities.

Governor of Svalbard

www.sysselmannen.no

- Administrative responsibility for the national parks in Svalbard.
- Prepares proposals for protection and advises DN.
- Carries out inspection in protected areas in Svalbard.

Read more about Norwegian national parks at:
www.norgesnasjonalparker.no

NORWAY'S
NATIONAL PARKS



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.

Read more at:

www.norgesnasjonalparker.no

Directorate for
Nature Management

www.dirnat.no

BENNETT. Photo: Pål Hermansen/Kjell-Erik Mosvold/Bjørn Rørslett/Tom Schandy/Tore Wuttudal – Samfoto. Torbjørn Moen/Norsk Bildebyrå. Arild Juul. Gunnar Rofstad. Laurits Sønstebø. Morten Ekker. Lars Lafådli. Erik Stabell. Jan Jensen/Femund Naturfoto