



VARANGERHALVØYA

AN ANCIENT,
ARCTIC LANDSCAPE





Kysttavla from Syltefjordstauran (SSo)



Sandfjorddalen (SSo)

The upland plateau, dismal-looking with its litter of grey rocks interspersed by some brown belts and occasional snow patches, slopes almost imperceptibly down to its rim where just a single, steep cliff drops into the sea. The immenseness, the strange melancholy in this scene, is impossible to describe in words. This sacred solitude, which in the New World still resides in the virgin forests, is hinted at here on the lofty Nordic mountains or these distant, sea-washed shores.

B.M. Keilhau 1831 (abbreviated)



Camping beside the upper part of Skallelva (SSe)



An angler in the park (SSo)



ENJOY THE SCENERY

Use of the area

The national park is ideal for skiing, hiking and cycling, and the terrain is friendly over large areas, particularly south of Skipskjølen. Distances are nevertheless great and rivers may be difficult to cross. There are no marked paths, but thematic maps and GPS files suggest some routes. Several unlocked huts can be found, mostly far inside the park, and they offer convenient accommodation on trips lasting several days. Even though the highest peak on Skipskjølen is only 633 m a.s.l., the weather may shift rapidly on this high ground, even in midsummer.

Hunting and fishing

The park offers good small-game hunting, and licences may be purchased at inatur.no.

Salmon, sea char and sea trout can be fished in several rivers. The best-known ones are Vestre Jakobselva, Skallelva, Bergebyelva and Komagelva. Local associations of hunters and anglers sell fishing licences. Remember to disinfect your fishing equipment.

As many anglers congregate near the pools at times, for convenience and so that everyone can enjoy themselves, tents should be placed in such a way that fishing spots are not regarded as being occupied. Everyone must take care to limit wear and tear on the vegetation along the rivers. Use existing picnic sites and hearths, and do not leave any litter.

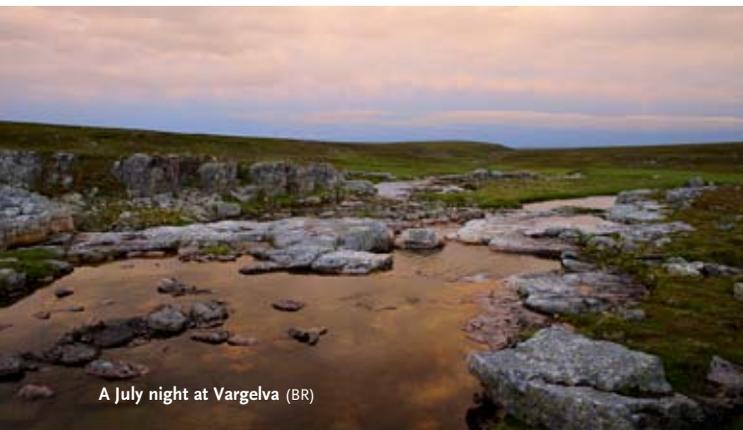


Varangerfjord viewed over Raudfjellet (ØW)



LANDSCAPE AND GEOLOGY

Varangerhalvøya is the largest peninsula in Norway. The landscape here is old and was mostly shaped before the last Ice Age. During the Ice Age, the ice lay stationary over much of the peninsula and therefore had little effect on the landscape. The peninsula mostly consists of upland plateaus, and large parts of the higher ones are dominated by block fields that completely lack vegetation. They are thought to be pre-glacial. The ice cap laid down about three thousand rim or circular moraines, which are known from just a few other places in the world, and then in only small numbers.



A July night at Vargelva (BR)

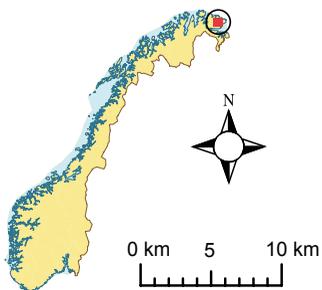


View across Skogåsdalen (JSU)

A west-east trending ridge, more or less in the middle of the park, forms a watershed separating the northern and southern parts of the peninsula. Because it resembles an upturned boat, this ridge is called Skipskjølen (Ship's keel) in Norwegian. From a distance, it may also resemble a prostrate human ear, the peaks being the nobs of cartilage around the canal. This explains the Sámi name for the ridge, Bealje (The ear).



Sunset at Øvre Flintelv (BR)



KEY

- National Park
- Protected Landscape Area
- Nature Reserve
- Airport
- Accommodation
- Cafe or cafeteria
- Information
- Camp site
- Cabin



Field fleawort (SSo)

*Papaver dahlianum* ssp. *dahlianum* (SSo)

PLANT LIFE

Since species from the Arctic, eastern Siberia and more southerly areas all occur together on the Varanger Peninsula, the plant life is distinctive. The small deciduous woodlands in the area are among the northernmost in the world.

Lime-rich bedrock and soil in the north supports rich pockets containing rare species like *Papaver dahlianum* ssp. *dahlianum* (a poppy), field fleawort, Svalbard snow cinquefoil and *Arenaria pseudofrigida* (a sandwort).



Large pink (SSo)



Long-tailed skua (PH)



Red-necked phalarope (PH)



ANIMAL LIFE

Large parts of the central uplands have a sparse fauna, particularly, the bogs near Nesseby, offer valuable sites for birds. Nowhere else in Norway have more bean geese been observed at one time, except on migration. Varangerhalvøya used to be a core area for lesser white-fronted geese, but now they only visit sporadically while migrating. It is also important for several other migrating northern and eastern bird species. The peninsula also seems to be one of the most important areas in Norway for the most endangered Norwegian mammal, the arctic fox. Breeding arctic foxes have not been seen so close to the sea anywhere else in Norway (except Svalbard). The association to the arctic fox in Svalbard, which obtains its food in the coastal seabird colonies, is therefore obvious.



Bean goose (JG)



Arctic fox (AØ)



Herding reindeer (ØR)

Reindeer husbandry

The natural conditions make Varangerhalvøya an ideal summer grazing area for reindeer. There are good grass and herb pastures, while snow patches, naked rock, block fields and windy shores offer the reindeer refuge from heat and troublesome insects. Wild reindeer used the area for thousands of years, and semi-domesticated reindeer have continued to use it since the 17-18th century. They are herded into the park in April-May and out again in early winter. The herders are allowed to use motorised transport to look after and gather together their reindeer, irrespective of whether the ground is snow-covered or not, and they can also use helicopters to some extent in autumn.



HISTORY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE RELICS

Varangerhalvøya has many Early Stone Age (Mesolithic) sites. Traces of permanent and temporary settlements, devices for trapping wild reindeer, and sacrificial and other sacred sites related to the Sámi are scattered widely, but most are near the coast. The early Sámi hunters and trappers had their winter settlements on the coast, while their spring and autumn settlements were beside inland rivers and lakes. The Sámi did not completely give up their seasonal nomadic way of life before the early 20th century, when most of them began using their winter settlements all the year round, chiefly in what is now Nesseby municipality.

The numerous pitfalls are believed to be the oldest trapping devices in the park, and some may derive from the Stone Age. Most are located near the coast and the settlements. More than 3000 pitfalls have been found from Tana eastwards. They were in use until nearly 1600, when the wild reindeer strain became domesticated.

The interior of the peninsula has large trapping systems with fences extending for several kilometres to guide the reindeer to a slaughtering site. They were probably constructed around the 16th century when the reindeer changed their migration pattern and remained further inland for longer periods. The largest systems may have been able to trap 200-300 animals at one time. Wild reindeer trapping ceased in the 17th century, and by around 1690 none of the systems were in use. This coincided with the introduction of cattle farming and an increase in sheep rearing.



Sacrificial ring near Syltevikvatnet (SSo)



Reindeer in Austerelvålen (SSo)

In a national park, you are one of Nature's guests

- Go wherever you want, on foot or on skis. Anything with an engine is basically banned.
- Stop wherever you want, and camp for the night if you wish, but tidy up afterwards and take your litter home.
- You may light a fire, but remember the general ban on fires in woodland between 15 April and 15 September. Take care when you gather firewood.
- You may pick berries, mushrooms and common plants for your own use. Show consideration for cultural heritage sites, vegetation and animal life. Take extra care in the breeding season.
- You may hunt and fish, but remember to buy the licences. Do not use live fish as bait. You must not take live fish from one river or lake to another.
- You may have a dog with you, but remember to keep it on a leash from 1 April to 20 August.



Varangerhalvøya National Park in brief

Where:

The municipalities of Båtsfjord, Unjárgga/Nesseby, Vardø and Vadsø in the county of Finnmark

How to reach Varangerhalvøya National Park:

By air to Vadsø, Vardø or Båtsfjord. By car or bus along E 75, the coastal road from Varangerbotn to Vardø. Fv 341 from Smelror to Hamningberg (only open in summer). Rv 890/891 from Tana to Båtsfjord. In summer, you can also drive from Båtsfjord to Syltefjord. There are many places to park to enter the park on foot.

Information on accommodation and other services:

Nesseby Tourist Information Centre, phone +47 78 95 99 20
Vardø Tourist Information Centre, phone +47 78 98 69 07
Vadsø Tourist Information Centre, phone +47 78 94 04 44
Båtsfjord Tourist Information Centre, phone +47 78 98 34 00
Destinasjon Varanger, www.varanger.com

Huts:

The park has several unlocked huts with a variety of owners, including the Vardø and Båtsfjord Red Cross and the Vardø Association of Hunters and Anglers. Enquire beforehand regarding the standard of the hut, who owns it and whether it is unlocked.

Tips:

Park at the national park boundary and walk up the valley of Komagdalen (an easy route), or take a longer trek across the Varanger Peninsula from Syltefjord to Vadsø.

Maps: Several 1:50 000 map sheets

Designated: 2006

Area: 1804 km²

Neighbouring protected areas:

Persfjorden-Syltefjorden Protected Landscape Area
Syltefjorddalen Nature Reserve
Ytre Syltevika Nature Reserve
Sandfjordneset Nature Reserve

Management:

Varangerhalvøya National Park Board/Varnjárgga Álbmotmeahccestivra
County Governor of Finnmark, phone +47 78 95 03 00,
www.fylkesmannen.no/finnmark

Supervision:

Norwegian Nature Inspectorate, Vadsø office, phone +47 90 55 17 43

More information:

www.norgesnasjonalparker.no

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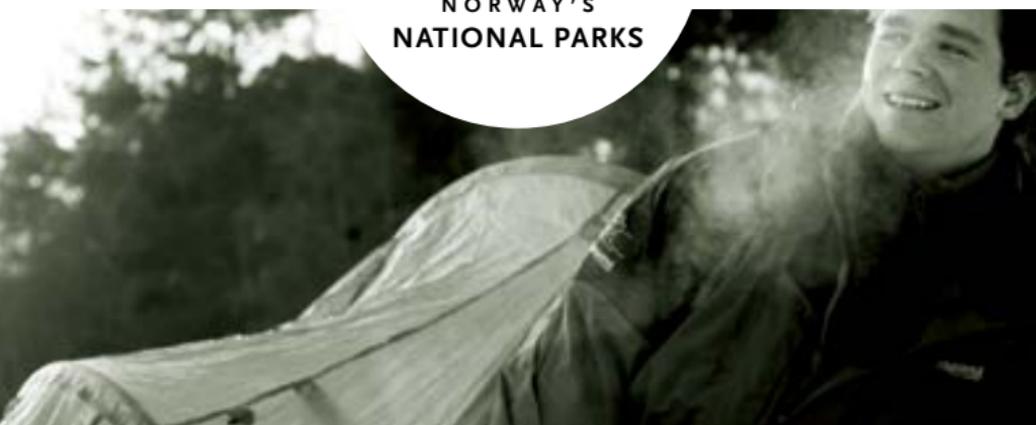
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NORWAY'S
NATIONAL PARKS



Norwegian national parks – our common natural heritage

National parks are designated to protect large areas of unspoilt countryside – from the sea to the mountaintops – for the sake of Nature herself, we ourselves and future generations.

The parks contain a wealth of splendid scenery and varied animal and plant life, waterfalls, glaciers, towering peaks, never-ending plateaus, deep forests, and beautiful fjords and coasts. Cultural heritage sites also show how the areas were used in bygone days.

The parks offer a vast range of thrilling and exciting natural history. Make use of the fantastic Norwegian countryside – on Nature's own terms.

Welcome to Norwegian national parks!



**NORWEGIAN DIRECTORATE
FOR NATURE MANAGEMENT**

www.dirnat.no/english