



FOLGEFONNA

FJORD TO ICE CAP





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 km². It probably reaches a maximum thickness of 300-400 m. If we take 150 m as an average, Folgefonna has about 30 km³ 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 natural environment surrounding Folgefonna is dominated 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 glacial meltwater. The park includes the next largest area lacking major infrastructure in the county of Hordaland.



Bondhus glacier (ML)



Crevasse (AF)



ENJOY THE SCENERY

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 days. They can also take advantage of four self-service mountain huts inside the park, Fonnabu, Breidablikk, Holmaskjer and Sauabreytta, which are open for everyone throughout the year.

Folgefonna is most easily accessible from the Nordfonna glacier, where you can even ski on a beautiful day in summer. The Buer and Bondhus glaciers are less easily accessible, but these beautiful, famous glaciers can also be reached. 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 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 Sundal to Odda, which is suitable for inexperienced walkers, is particularly well known, and there are guided trips 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. Yet some still 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.



Fascinating patterns on the ice cap above Furebergdalen (JR)



LANDSCAPE AND GEOLOGY

A great variety of rock types

The national park has areas that are particularly interesting for studying the bedrock and Quaternary geology (superficial deposits). 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, right back to 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 an exception, as their flat summits were shaped much earlier and remained insignificantly modified through the last Ice Age.



Trekking on the Buer glacier (ST)

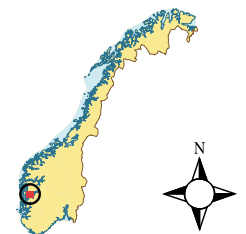
Glaciers dominated the landscape around Folgefonna during the last Ice Age, but it is probably wrong to believe that those we see today are remains surviving from that cold period. Evidence suggests that Folgefonna melted completely during the Stone Age, 8000 to about 5200 years ago, and has returned since as a consequence of climate change.

The Folgefonna National Park Centre occupies a central position in Rosendal and offers an insight into the numerous geological processes that have taken place in the area. Rosendal also has a geological park where you can study many rocks, polished to clearly visualise the fantastic structures they contain.



LEGEND

- National Park
- Protected Landscape Area
- Nature Reserve
- Overnight accommodation
- National Park Centre
- Camp site
- Self-service hut
- Unstaffed hut





PLANT LIFE

Great contrasts

Most of this mountainous area has comparatively few species of plants, because acid rocks dominate and the growing season is short. Hardy species like three-leaved rush, dwarf willow and stiff sedge thrive despite the poor soils. Mossy mountain heather, rufine sedge and arctic cottongrass are specialists at tackling 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 calcareous bedrock and are therefore 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 plants are so well adapted to the steep cliff faces close to Folgefonna.

Precipitation is high on the west side of Folgefonna and down in the valleys, and you can find many plants there that thrive best 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.



Rambling in the National Park (AF)



Mountain queen (BM)



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 this is precisely where we find many hardy ptarmigans. The 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 small rodents are plentiful, 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 anywhere else in the country. Black grouse are common near the tree line, and you may come across capercaillie a little lower down in the pinewoods. The natural woodlands in western Norway are one of the last refuges of the white-backed woodpecker in Western Europe. Avalanches have left numerous dead trees on the Folgefonn peninsula and such sites are particularly favoured by woodpeckers.



Golden eagle (BB)



Ptarmigans in flight (SR)



HISTORY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE RELICS

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 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 Sundal to Tokheim in Odda. A century ago, many cruise ships sailed into 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 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.



Climbing on the glacier (AF)

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 rubbish home.
- You may light a fire, but remember the general ban on fires in woodland between 15 April and 15 September. Show consideration 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.
- Hunting and fishing are allowed, as everywhere else. Remember to buy hunting and fishing 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. Some municipalities have their own by-laws regarding this.



Folgefonna National Park in brief

Where:

Kvinnherad, Etne, Odda, Jondal and Ullensvang municipalities, in the county of Hordaland.

How to reach the Folgefonna National Park:

You can get to the Folgefonna 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, Sundal, Rosendal, Blådalen in Matre, Sjørdalen 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.

Information on overnight accommodation and other services:

Jondal Tourist Office, phone +47 53 66 85 31, www.visitjondal.no

Kvinnherad Tourist Information Office, phone +47 53 48 42 80, www.kvinnherad.kommune.no

Ullensvang Tourist Information Office, phone +47 53 66 31 12, www.visitullensvang.no

Odda Tourist Information Office, phone +47 53 65 40 05, www.oddakommune.no

Etne Tourist Information Office, phone +47 53 75 80 00, www.etne.kommune.no

Huts:

There are 4 self-service mountain huts inside the park; Fonnabu, Breidablikk, Holmaskjer and Sauabrehytta, which are open for everyone throughout the year.

Tips:

The area has many marked tracks and paths, and four self-service huts. You can book glacier trekking with a qualified guide. Skiing on the ice cap is popular in spring.

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 Area

Ænesdalen Protected Landscape Area

Hattebergsdalen Protected Landscape Area

Buer Protected Landscape Area

National Park Centre:

Folgefonna National Park Centre, Rosendal, phone +47 53 48 42 80, www.folgefonna.info

National park village:

Jondal, www.folgefonna.no, www.jondal.kommune.no

Management and supervision:

Folgefonna National Park Board, phone fmhpostmottak@fylkesmannen.no, phone + 47 55 57 23 40, www.nasjonalparkstyre.no
Norwegian Nature Inspectorate, Rosendal, phone +47 97 02 30 13

Additional information:

www.norgesnasjonalparker.no

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Cover photo: Harebells and roseroot near the Buer glacier (ST)



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Norwegian National Parks are our common natural heritage

We set up National Parks to safeguard large areas of countryside – from the seashore to the mountaintops. For Nature's own sake, ourselves and future generations. National Parks boast magnificent scenery with varied animal and plant life, waterfalls, glaciers, lofty mountains, endless plateaus, deep forests and lush woodlands, and beautiful fjords and coasts. You will also find cultural heritage remains showing how the areas were used in the past. The National Parks offer a multitude of opportunities for thrilling encounters with natural history.

Make use of our magnificent nature – on its own terms.

Welcome to Norwegian National Parks.

