



BREHEIMEN

FROM PERENNIAL ICE TO
LUSH VALLEYS WITH
TRANSUMANCE FARMS





Dulsete in Mørkridsdalen (TD)



Hestbrepiggen seen from Blåhø (TD)



On the summit of Vangsen (1757 m a.s.l.) in Jostedal, with Sekkebrean in the background (JAG)

GLACIERS, PEAKS, PLATEAUS AND VALLEYS

Breheimen has some of the wettest and the driest parts of the country. The park spans from almost sea level to well over 2000 m. The landscape has been shaped by glaciers, avalanches and other geological processes through hundreds of thousands of years. Today, you can see everything from lush valleys with transhumance dairy farms to barren mountains and glaciers. Breheimen is one of the most varied national parks in Norway.



Sprongdal cabin (TD)



Hiking in Lundadalen (OR)



ENJOY THE SCENERY

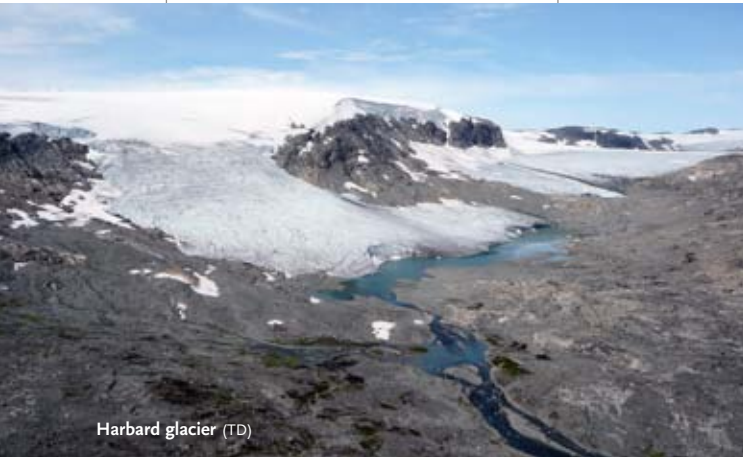
With its close on 300 km of marked paths, Breheimen has been tempting hikers into the mountains for many years. Yet many of the routes are among the most demanding in southern Norway, partly because the marked paths in the area are fewer and not so visible in the terrain as in more visited national parks, and the cabins are mostly self-service. When you are hiking in Breheimen, you experience the stillness of nature and magnificent valleys, plateaus and peaks. In summer, you can meet grazing livestock on the many transhumance farms.

The Hestbrepiggane are the loftiest peaks in Breheimen, and Nordre Hestbrepiggen reaches 2172 m a.s.l. Tverrådalsskyrkja (2088 m a.s.l.) is perhaps the best-known peak, towering over one of the paths from Sota to Nørdstedalseter. Wherever you begin, the ascent of Tverrådalsskyrkja takes a whole day. The most widely

used routes into the Breheimen National Park are via Sota, Lundadalen, Grotli, Høydalen, Sognefjellet, Nørdstedalen, Mørkridsdalen, Vigdalen, or along Vannadalen and Vivatjønni in the valley of Jostedal.

Remember that crevasses may make it **hazardous** to hike on a glacier. You must always use a rope and other safety equipment when you are on a glacier, and also know how to remain safe there. You can also hire a guide. Several companies and mountaineering huts offer guided walks in the park, both easy skiing and rambling trips and more demanding climbs on glaciers and peaks.

Several lakes and rivers in Breheimen have good trout fishing, particularly the larger lakes. Fish have been released to improve the stocks in many lakes. Remember to have a fishing licence.



Harbard glacier (TD)



Drivandefossen in Mørkridsdalen (TD)

LANDSCAPE AND GEOLOGY

Glaciers, peaks, upland plateaus and transhumance valleys

The western part of Breheimen is a rugged landscape of steep mountains and deep valleys, but the eastern part is more gently sloping. This is partly because the western part is dominated by hard Precambrian bedrock, whereas softer, more easily weathering schists predominate further east. Another reason is that during the ice ages it was mostly the glaciers west of the watershed that scoured out the terrain. In the east, distinct traces of the gentle pre-glacial terrain, called the palaeic surface, are still to be seen. Moraine soils left behind by the retreating glaciers offer a good basis for plant life.

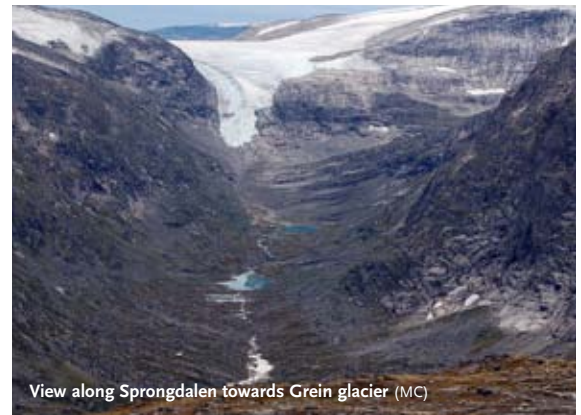
The valley of Dummdalen has the largest limestone caves in southern Norway. They were formed by water slowly dissolving the limestone over thousands of years and are therefore very vulnerable to damage.



Hestdalshøgdi from Lendfjell (PD)

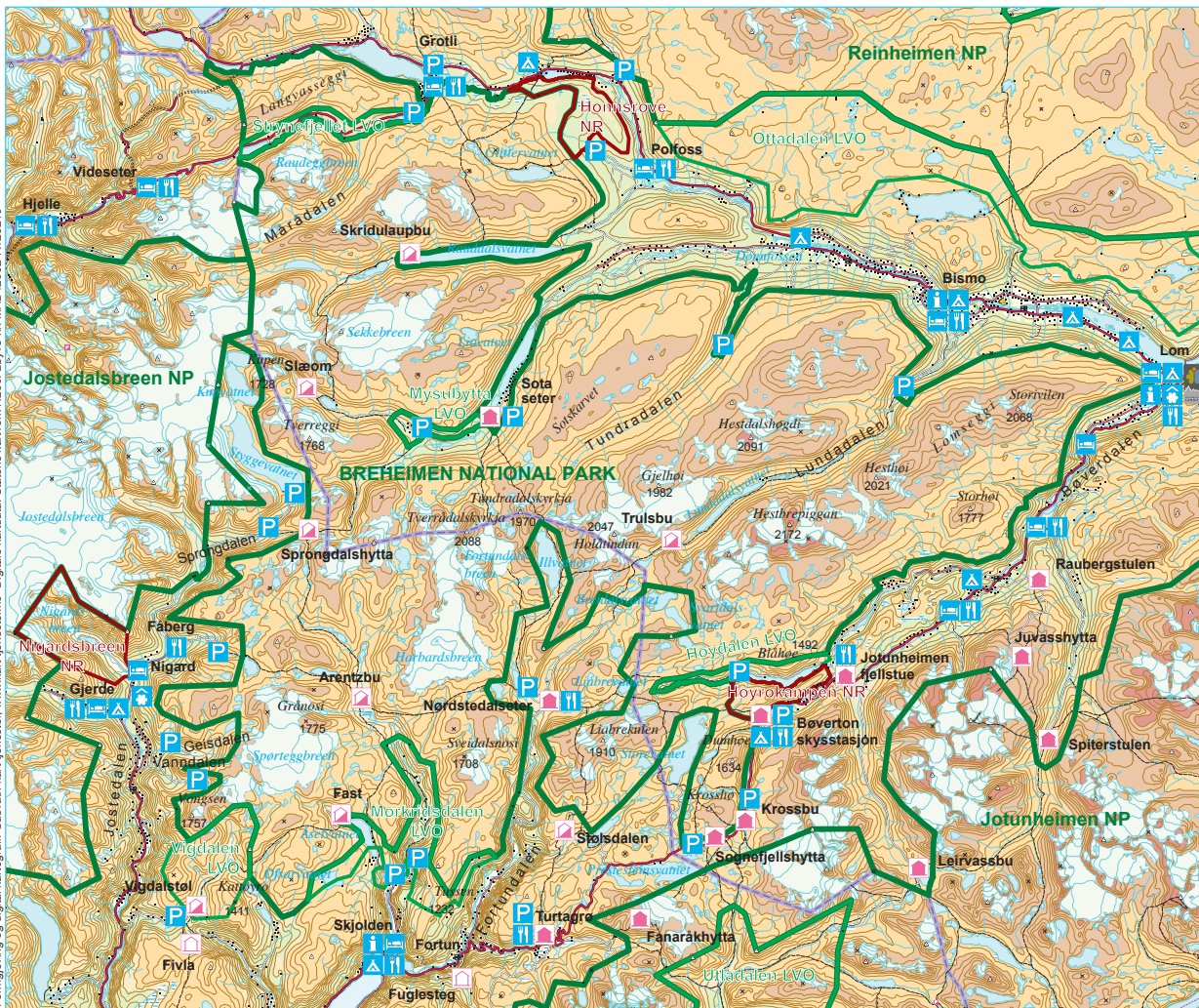
Lakes and rivers

Breheimen has numerous rivers and a wealth of waterfalls that tumble down the mountainsides. Several of the rivers flowing mostly or entirely within the park have been protected for many years from being developed to generate hydroelectricity. They include the Mørkrid, Stryne, Måræ, Glitra, Blankæ, Ostre (and Tundra), Skjøle and Bøvre. The rivers, which originate in the many glaciers, help to ensure very varied plant and animal life. Drivandefossen, in the valley of Mørkridsdalen, is the best-known waterfall.







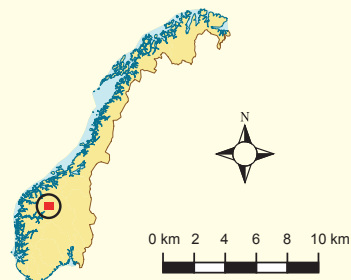
View along Sprongdalen towards Grein glacier (MC)

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Legend

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
|  County boundary |  National Park Centre |  Staffed lodge |
|  National Park |  Information |  Self-service cabin |
|  Protected Landscape Area |  Car park |  No-service cabin |
|  Nature Reserve |  Camp site | |
|  National Park Village |  Overnight accommodation | |
| |  Café/restaurant | |





Lithuanian manna-grass (TD)



Lady's-slipper orchid (OR)



Wild reindeer (MK)



PLANT LIFE

The plant life in the Breheimen National Park shows particularly broad diversity attached to alpine terrain, avalanche scars, ancient pinewoods, calcareous birch woodland, rich and old broad-leaved deciduous woodland, waterfall spray zones and fluvio-glacial deltas. The plants include strongly westerly species (straw sprongwort, a liverwort), distinctly easterly species (Lithuanian manna-grass), southerly species (*Dicranum viride*, a fork-moss) and northerly species (*Braya linearis*, a northern-rock-cress). There are also alpine species (*Draba cacuminum*, a whitlow-grass), continental species like glacier buttercup, species which mainly occur in central Norway (common sea-buckthorn) and species with a disrupted international distribution (water rock-bristle, a moss).

Many rare Red Listed species, including lady's-slipper orchid and bristly bellflower, are found near Høyrokampen and in Mørkridsdalen, and Norway has international responsibility to protect such species.



Rhododendron lapponicum (OR)



ANIMAL LIFE

Breheimen is the home of wild reindeer. The third largest strain in Norway is found in Ottadalen, and the Breheimen National Park makes up the southern part of this area. Norway has international responsibility to protect the wild reindeer habitat.

Apart from wild reindeer, animal life in the high mountains is comparatively sparse. However, several big predators (especially wolverines), raptors (golden eagles, gyrfalcons and rough-legged buzzards) and other Red Listed birds are found there. There are also common birds like snow buntings and wheatears. Several rare birds, like white-backed woodpeckers and twites, live in the lush valleys.

The valleys also have good stocks of red deer, and elk are common in the eastern valleys.



Wolverine track (JK)



Høydalen (OC)

Neighbouring protected areas

Mørkriddalen Protected Landscape Area (34.7 km²). There are many well-kept transhumance dairy farms here, and livestock still graze the old cultural landscape. The outstanding River Mørkridd supports a particularly large variety of plants.

Vigdalen Protected Landscape Area (29.2 km²). Vigdalen shows evidence of an unusual event at the end of the last Ice Age. A glacier arm from the Jostedal ice cap went part way up the valley of Vigdalen and met another arm that came down the valley. The collision formed moraine ridges that are important for understanding the climatic history of the area. This area, around the transhumance farms of Vigdalstøl and Breisetestølen, is now an extremely valuable cultural landscape.

Mysubytta Protected Landscape Area (5.58 km²) was designated to safeguard valuable cultural landscape with transhumance farms and cultural heritage relics, as well as the scenery along the river and the varied animal and plant life.

Strynefjellet Protected Landscape Area (11.8 km²) has great scenic qualities, including an outstanding U-shaped valley, cultural heritage relics linked with the old mountain road crossing Strynefjell and a beautiful river. The area is also important for the wild reindeer.

Høydalen Protected Landscape Area (11.1 km²). Lake Høydal and the river are important elements in the landscape, in addition to cultural heritage relics, transhumance farms and outstanding biodiversity.

Høyrokampen Nature Reserve (9.91 km²) is a superb area containing many rare vascular plants, lichens, mosses and fungi. It is thus especially valuable for research and teaching. It has a great variety of habitats, including natural grassland, avalanche grassland, calcareous woodland and rocks.

Honnsvøve Nature Reserve (16.4 km²) has virtually pristine woodland with indigenous plants and animals. The area is little disturbed by infrastructure and has one of the largest known occurrences of the rare wolf lichen.

HISTORY

Old and new use of the mountains

Down the years, the people living around the park have been strongly involved with the mountains, hunting, fishing, transhumance farming and journeying between south-eastern and western Norway.

The wild reindeer are important for understanding the cultural heritage history of Breheimen. People who lived by hunting reindeer could probably inhabit parts of Breheimen around 7000 BC, after the ice had retreated. There are many cultural heritage sites and relics linked with wild reindeer hunting, both stray finds like arrowheads and permanent hunting and trapping systems. Pitfalls are particularly notable. Wild reindeer are still hunted today, thus maintaining a 9000 year-long tradition. The remains of three 'sælehus', which offered simple, overnight shelter to medieval travellers crossing the Breheimen mountains, can still be seen.

Many transhumance dairy farms in the valleys have old buildings that are still in use, in Mørkriddalen, Mysubytta, Høydalen and Vigdalen, for instance. Sheep, goats and cattle graze here in summer.



An old bowman's hide (JK)



Mysubytsetra (JK)



A signpost (JK)

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, do not fell old trees since they are important for insects and birds.
- 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 elsewhere. 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 (the boroughs have slightly different by-laws regarding this).

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Cover photo: Tverrådalskyrkja with reindeer on Sjellflye (PSL)



Print: GRØSET™



Breheimen National Park in brief

Where: The boroughs of Skjåk and Lom in the county of Oppland and Luster in Sogn & Fjordane

How to reach the Breheimen National Park:

Rv 55 between Luster and Lom over Sognefjellet and Rv 15 between Lom and Stryn over Strynefjellet are the principal roads leading to the Breheimen National Park. The most frequently used gateways are Sota, Lundadalen, Grotli, Høydalen, Sognefjellet, Skjolden/Mørkridsdalen, Vigdalen and Jostedal. There are also good car parks there.

Information on overnight accommodation and other services:

Luster Tourist Information Office, phone +47 976 00 443, www.sognefjord.no
Skjåk Tourist Information Office, phone +47 468 29 564 (open in summer)
Lom Tourist Information Office, phone +47 61 21 29 90, www.visitlom.com
See also www.visitjotunheimen.com.

Cabins: You can use many cabins and lodges close to and within the park. They are owned by a variety of organisations, including the Norwegian Trekking Association (DNT, seven self-service cabins) and Skjåk Almenning. Check the standard beforehand, who owns the cabin and whether it is unlocked. Sota Sæter (DNT), Krossbu (private), Sognefjellshytta (private) and Nørdstedalseter (DNT) are four staffed lodges situated just outside the park boundary.

Maps: Several maps in the Norge 1: 50 000 set

Breheimen 1: 50 000

Breheimen 1: 100 000

Hiking map Skjåk 1:75 000

Hiking map Lom-Vågå 1:50 000

Designated: 2009

Area: 1691 km²

Adjacent protected areas: Strynefjellet Protected Landscape Area

Mysubytta Protected Landscape Area

Høydalen Protected Landscape Area

Mørkridsdalen Protected Landscape Area

Vigdalen Protected Landscape Area

Hønnsrøve Nature Reserve

Høyrokampen Nature Reserve

National Park Centres:

Breheim Centre, Jostedal, phone +47 57 68 32 50, www.jostedal.com

Norwegian Mountain Museum in Lom, phone +47 61 21 16 00,

www.fjell.museum.no

Management and supervision:

Local Board for Breheimen National Park

Norwegian Nature Inspectorate, phone +47 73 58 05 00

More information: www.norgesnasjonalparker.no



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!



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