

Varangerhalvøya National Park



Photo: Knut-Sverre Horn



**Varangerhalvøya
National Park**

Map and information
Welcome to Norway's
National Parks

Welcome to Varangerhalvøya

The plateaus stretch as far as the eye can see. This is a land of blockfields, bogs and lush valleys. Varangerhalvøya National Park is partly situated in a low Arctic climate zone in a landscape that was formed before the last Ice Age.

Varangerhalvøya offers many exciting hiking options. The Arctic landscape is suitable for both hiking and skiing. We have many excellent fishing rivers. It is important to be aware that the paths in the park are not marked, so you'll need to be able to use a map and compass.

While out hiking, you may encounter large herds of domesticated reindeer. Please be careful not to disturb these reindeer, which are particularly vulnerable during the calving season and in the early summer. Try using binoculars to get a closer look.

Varangerhalvøya is one of the few areas in Scandinavia that we can describe as ancient. This is because the mountains were preserved by the heavy inland ice, which froze solid to the ground beneath during the last glacial period. The ice left behind moraine rings, seldom encountered anywhere else in the world.

The geological formations in the Persfjord and Syltefjord landscape

protection area contrast sharply with the open plateaus of the national park. Waves from the ocean and frost weathering have shaped the rocks over millions of years, which today look like pointed trolls alongside the Norwegian Scenic Route Varanger.

In Sandfjordneset Nature Reserve, you will find an area of sand dunes exposed to the Arctic Ocean. Ytre Syltevika Nature Reserve is home to nature characterised by the Arctic and is also an excellent place to see evidence of glacial uplift since the last Ice Age in the form of raised beaches and marine erosion in layered rocks.

Just like a map, place names can tell you a lot about the area you are in. Place names containing the word 'čearru' suggest a landscape of high mountains, watersheds and extensive surfaces covered with stone blocks, while the word 'ávze' indicates a steep valley. Handy to know when planning a hike.



Photo: Knut-Sverre Horn

Water from melting glaciers created steep-sided valleys leading towards the coast. Pictured here is Nattfjelldalen.



Photo: Knut-Sverre Horn

Along the Norwegian Scenic Route in the Persfjord, Syltefjord landscape protection area, you can see rocks which resemble pointed trolls.

Experiences

With its Arctic landscape and a rich diversity of plants and animals, Varangerhalvøya offers a wide variety of natural experiences.

Exciting days await you here, whether you enjoy short day hikes or longer trips in both summer and winter alike.

Skiing trips

Strap on your skis and head off across the Varanger plateau. Or start your trip from Vestre Jakobselv or Vadsø ski stadion. In March and April, trails are prepared from these starting points up to the shelter at 'Trefemogførr' (345) on the border of the national park. You might prefer to take a longer trip to Skipskjølen, the highest point in the national park at 636 metres above sea level by following the trail between Linjehyttene, or 'power line cabins', which were constructed along the route of a former power line which passed through the area.

The 'power line cabins'

Several of the power line cabins were built before the Second World War to provide shelter for the construction workers and their horses, and also served as hiding places during the partisan struggle against the occupation of Finnmark. Four cabins remain open today between Komagdalen and Ordo. Helheim power line cabin is most easily accessed from Ordo during the summer months. A fifth cabin known as Telegrafhytta is located to the northeast in Sandfjorddalen.

Nattfjelldalen

During the summer, you can visit the waterfall deep in the valley of Nattfjelldalen. Start the hike at the river Sjøbuselva in Vadsø. The trip is an 18-kilometre return hike and takes about 6-7 hours.

Fishing

You can catch trout, char, salmon, sea trout and arctic char in the rivers and mountain lakes. Remember to buy a fishing permit.

Bird trail and the suspension bridge

In the summer, you can walk the bird trail which leads into the valley of Komagdalen, where you will find information about the bird species that live in the area. Take a trip up to the suspension bridge (7 km).

Sami museum

Learn about the history of the coastal Sami in the museum in Varangerbotn. The museum has a shelter with a map and information about the national park. The bird hide below the museum is a must if you want to find out more about the bird life in the area.

Duodji

The Sami handicraft tradition of duodji still lives on in Varangerhalvøya. The people who practise duodji produce objects made from reindeer skin or raw materials such as birch bark and antlers from uncultivated land areas.



Photo: Bjørn Riesto

The tundra of the Varanger plateau can be explored on skis.



Photo: Randulf Valle

The Varangerhalvøya peninsula offers relatively easy hiking and can be explored on foot.








Photo: Randulf Valle

Bjørnskardhytta, one of five cabins that are open in the national park.

Facts and information

Varangerhalvøya National Park was established in 2006 and covers an area of 1,804 km².

	Where is Varangerhalvøya National Park?	In the municipalities of Vardø, Vadsø, Båtsfjord and Unjárgga gielda/Nesseby, far north and east in the county of Troms and Finnmark
	How do I get there?	Bus: Check snelandia.no Car: National highway Rv 890/891 to Båtsfjord. The road to the valley of Syltefjorddalen is open during the summer. From the E6 via Varangerbotn and the national tourist route along the E75 to Vardø via county road Fv341 from Smelror to Hamningberg (open during the summer) Hurtigruten: To Vardø, Vadsø and Båtsfjord Air: To Vardø, Vadsø or Båtsfjord Airport
	Norwegian Scenic Route	Norwegian Scenic Route Varanger E75 from Varangerbotn via Vadsø, Vardø and Hamningberg
	Information point	Shelter at Varanger Sami Museum, Komagdalen (Stuorrajohka) Kiberg (Bierge) indoor exhibition, open June – September
	Starting point	Summer: Nattfjelldalen (Idjaavže) Komagdalen (Stuorrajohka) Ordo (Oarddajávre) Winter: Vadsø skistadion Polarsletta stadion in Vestre Jakobselv
	Tourist information	Vardø Municipality - www.visitvardo.no Vadsø Municipality - www.vadsoe.com Visit Varanger - www.varanger.com
	Protected areas nearby	Makkaurhalvøya Nature Reserve, Barvikmyra and Blodskytodden Nature Reserve, Oksevatnet Komagværstranda Nature Reserve, Hornøya Nature Reserve, Ekkerøy Nature Reserve, Nesseby Nature Reserve, Varangerbotn Nature Reserve, Tanamunningen Nature Reserve, Persfjorden-Syltefjorden Protected
	Management and supervision	Norwegian Nature Inspectorate (Statens naturopsyn): Send an SMS message to tel.: (+47) 950 01 881
	More information	www.norgesnasjonalparker.no www.visitvardo.no www.varanger.com



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Fauna and flora

At Varangerhalvøya, species from the Arctic, Siberia in east and more southerly regions meet. Few species can survive in this climate, but those that are able to are specialists.

Arctic fox

The arctic fox is a specialist which lives in the Arctic mountain climate. Varanger is home to a small population of what is one of Norway's most endangered mammals, and efforts are being made on the Varangerhalvøya peninsula to save the few animals that remain. In contrast to the populations further south in the country, arctic foxes in Varanger have a closer relationship with the coast. The arctic fox's diet includes marine species, although the species is dependent on a good lemming year in order to breed successfully.

Bird life

Varangerhalvøya is an important area for numerous bird species, such as the red-necked phalarope, long-tailed jaeger, horned lark and the little stint. The long-tailed jaeger is a characteristic species of the national park. Norway's largest population of bean geese live in the bogs. This migratory bird, which has a wingspan of 174 cm, is on the Norwegian Red List. The bog areas also provide valuable habitats for other bird species, such as the critically endangered lesser white-fronted goose, which can be observed sporadically in the area.

Reindeer herding

The national park provides ideal summer grazing for reindeer. Reindeer herds are driven here in the spring to calve and to feed on grass and herbs during the summer. The calves are born in May/June and spend their first six months here before they are moved to winter grazing. Domesticated reindeer herding is the most important industry in the protected area.

Flora

Amid the scree and on the gravel of the riverbanks grows the rare Arctic poppy. Together, purple saxifrage and the Arctic poppy are the two northernmost flowers in the world. *Crepis multicaulis* is one of Norway's rarest plants. Asia is the core area of the plant, while Varanger lies at the very edge of the plant's range. Experts believed until recently that the species was extinct in Norway. Experience the flora along the boundary of the Arctic forest in Syltefjorddalen Nature Reserve in one of the world's most northerly deciduous forests.



Photo: Bjarne Riesto

Long-tailed jaeger at the foot of Skipskjølen – Bealjáidčearru.



Photo: Bjarne Riesto

Arctic poppy.



Photo: Alfred Ørjebu

Arctic fox in winter fur.



Photo: Skjalg Helmer Vian

Norway's largest population of bean geese can be found in the area.

History and culture

Wild reindeer, rivers rich in fish and fjords with access to marine mammals meant that hunters were the first people to live on the Varangerhalvøya peninsula. The area now has elements of Sami, Norwegian and Kven culture. Reindeer have always been important here – from the time of the former hunting communities to the present-day Northern Sami reindeer husbandry.

Ancient hunting culture

The oldest relics on the Varangerhalvøya peninsula date from the Palaeolithic. Evidence of dwellings can be found both on the coast and in the mountains. Hunters of the time built animal graves, shooting positions and fences to herd and direct the wild reindeer grazing in the area in order to catch them. Hunting was probably an important reason why wild reindeer disappeared in the 1600s and was gradually replaced by domesticated reindeer.

Dwellings

The Sami hunters were seasonally nomadic. In the summer, they lived by the rivers and watercourses inland and set up their winter camps along the coast. In the 1900s, it became

increasingly common to live in one place throughout the year, and many people chose to settle in the municipality of Unjárga/Nesseby.

The Kven people of Varanger

The 1700s and 1800s saw the immigration of Finnish speakers from northern Finland and northeastern Sweden to Varanger. There was good access to natural resources such as game, fishing and berries here. Gathering cloudberries was an important resource for the people of Varanger. The Kvens were good farmers. Most of the bogs were cut to provide a supply of animal fodder, and peat was used as fuel.



Photo: Sara Smuk

Welcome, please take care of our nature

Welcome to the national park! There's plenty of room for all of us, provided we show consideration to the people and animals around us. The national parks represent the best of Norwegian nature. The protection they are afforded helps to take good care of the landscape and the diverse fauna and flora. This ensures that the landscape will still be there for us to enjoy in the future.

Right to roam. You are free to walk and ski wherever you like. There are no marked trails in the national park. Use a map and remember to bring a compass. You can pitch your tent wherever you like. You can also pick berries, fungi and ordinary plants for your own use on the Varangerhalvøya peninsula. Be considerate of vegetation and animal life, particularly during the breeding and nesting season.

Cultural artefacts. The traces of wild reindeer hunting are rich in history. It is therefore important that you do not disturb cultural artefacts, such as fences for directing deer, animal graves and shooting positions, and that you do not build new cairns.

Rubbish. Remember to tidy up after yourself and take your rubbish home.

You are permitted to light campfires between 15 September and 15 April and at other times of the year provided there is no risk of starting a wildfire.

Hunting and fishing are permitted in the national park, with a hunting/fishing permit. Note that hunting is not permitted between 5 May and 9

September in "sone A" of the national park. It is not permitted to use live fish as bait. You may not take live fish or wet fishing equipment from one watercourse to another.

Dogs in the national park. You are welcome to bring your dog when hiking. Dogs must be kept on a lead during the period 1 April – 20 August, and also during the period 20 August – 9 September in "sone A" of the national park. Be mindful of game, grazing animals and other people.

Motorised transport is generally prohibited in the national park. You are permitted to use a snowmobile on certain trails when they are open.

Clothing and equipment. The weather can change quickly. You must assess the weather, your fitness and level of skill and prepare yourself with suitable clothing and equipment. Getting around in the mountains can be challenging. Ask someone with local knowledge for extra safety and useful tips.

Good planning makes for enjoyable hiking!



Varangerhalvøya
National Park

Map information for Varangerhalvøya National Park

Welcome to nature

This map has been produced based on knowledge of how the protected area is used and the areas that are vulnerable to visitors, and this forms the basis for visitor management.

This map is not a tour map, but is intended to provide you with an overview of what is available both in the protected area itself and in the surrounding area.



Information point

Varanger Sami Museum (Vájjrat Sámi Musea)

You can find useful information about the national park in the shelter outside the Varanger Sami Museum in Varangerbotn. Take a look at the earth-covered structures known as *jordgamma* in the museum grounds and the bird hides on the shore or visit the unique exhibitions at the museum. You can also light the barbecue and heat up your food in the shelter.



Starting point

Komagdalen (Stuorrajohka)

A seven-kilometre drive along a gravel road brings you to the starting point at Komagdalen. The quality of the road is variable and a vehicle with good ground clearance is recommended. There is a shelter with dedicated campfire areas several hundred metres from the car park. Here, you can decide whether you wish to start the hike following the route of the power line cabins or follow the bird trail.



Starting point

Ordo (Oarddajávre)

Parking, information about the national park and a shelter with dedicated campfire area are available at the cabins in Ordo. You will need to cross the Syltefjord river to visit the national park; be prepared to wade across if necessary. You can explore the westernmost areas of the national park from here.



Starting point

Nattfjelldalen (Idjaavže)

You can park here to hike into the valley Nattfjelldalen. The open landscape and narrow valley created by meltwater from the glacier offer a wonderful experience.



Information point

Kiberg (Bierge Kiiperi)

You will find an indoor exhibition and information about the national park in Kiberg. This includes information on the landscape of the Varangerhalvøya peninsula. The area has toilet and seating facilities and there is a shelter with sea view beside the beach where you can enjoy your packed lunch.



Parking



Boat connection



Attraction



Café/restaurant



Accommodation



Unmanned tourist cabin



Camping facilities



Birdwatching tower/hide



Winter trails



Summer trails



Snowmobile trail

