

Access rights

Innholdsfortegnelse

Access rights

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Norway has very generous statutory access rights. Outside built-up areas, you generally have free access to any land that is not cultivated. Access rights are a valued part of Norway's cultural heritage and identity – a common good, and free of charge. They open up a variety of opportunities for walking, skiing, camping and other activities and for harvesting nature's resources.



An active outdoor life makes people happier and healthier. Norway has a small population and plenty of space. There are also very generous access rights to the countryside, and Norwegians make the most of the opportunities they offer. You can walk and ski, put up a tent for the night and swim and canoe in lakes and rivers all over Norway – and in all kinds of weather! Photo: Kim Abel, Naturarkivet.no



Autumn leaves on the bilberries (*Vaccinium myrtillus*). You are allowed to pick most berries, mushrooms and flowers, but some rare species are protected, and there are special rules for cloudberries in the three northernmost counties. Photo: Kim Abel, Naturarkivet.no



Fishing in Skjåk in Oppland county. Photo: Kim Abel, naturarkivet.no



Dogs must be kept on a leash between 1 April and 20 August, and there may be stricter rules locally, for example in nature reserves. Photo: Bård Bredeesen, Naturarkivet.no



Enjoy a campfire, but remember that open fires are not permitted in or near forest in the period 15 April–15 September. Only use dead wood for fires, and make sure your fire is completely out before leaving. Photo: Kim Abel, naturarkivet.no



Offroad motor traffic is generally prohibited in Norway, with exceptions for essential services and for activities such as farming and forestry. Snowmobiles, like other motor traffic, cause noise and disturbance, and Norway restricts their use so that people do not lose the opportunity to enjoy the peace and quiet of unspoiled nature. Photo: Sigve Reiso, Naturarkivet.no

STATE

How do access rights function in practice?

Everyone is entitled to free access to and passage across all uncultivated land throughout the year. You are also allowed to cross fields and farmland on foot when the ground is frozen or snow-covered - from October 15th to April 29th. Offroad use of motor vehicles is generally forbidden, and motor boats are only permitted on certain lakes and rivers.

The 150-metre rule

You are allowed to put up a tent for the night – or sleep under the stars, if you like – but you must keep at least 150 metres away from the nearest occupied house or cabin. If you want to stay for more than two nights in the same place, you must ask the landowner's permission, except in the mountains or very remote areas. The Ministry of Climate and Environment may grant exemptions from the 150 metre-rule in coastal areas through precept.

Can I cross cultivated land?

Fields and farmland are open to walkers and skiers when the ground is frozen or snow-covered. You are also allowed to use roads and paths to cross cultivated areas at any time of year if you are on foot, on skis, on a bicycle or on horseback and are heading for uncultivated land. This does not apply to organised commercial activities (for instance riding school excursions).

Behave considerately and responsibly

Access rights also entail responsibilities. Wherever you go, act responsibly, respect the countryside and behave considerately so that you do not disturb other people. Never trample in crops or disturb livestock or wildlife unnecessarily. Take care not to cause any damage or inconvenience to other people. Both the Outdoor Recreation Act and the Nature Diversity Act stress that everyone has a personal responsibility to avoid damage to the natural environment.

- Tidy up after yourself and take everything with you, including your litter. As the saying goes, "take only pictures, leave only footprints".
- Be careful with camp fires. Open fires are not permitted in or near forested areas in the period 15 April to 15 September, and we ask you to respect this.
- You may pick most berries, mushrooms and flowers, but some rare species are protected.
- There are special rules for cloudberries in the three northernmost counties, but picking a few berries to eat there and then once is always allowed.
- Tread cautiously in recently planted forestry areas. These are defined as uncultivated land, but avoid damage to the trees.

PRESSURE

Access rights under pressure

Access rights are under constant pressure from commercial developments and privatisation, especially along popular stretches of the coastline. Some landowners put up illegal fences and other barriers to discourage visitors. Piecemeal developments have gradually reduced public access to the shoreline, particularly around the Oslofjord and further south.

Growing pressure along the coastline

For many years, building has been generally prohibited in the 100-metre belt along the shoreline, but local authorities have made liberal use of exemptions from this rule, and have allowed permanent housing and holiday cabins to be built in once-popular outdoor recreation areas.

There is also a tendency for the shoreline itself to be privatised. This may be legal in some cases, but in many others it is not. Some landowners try to keep visitors away from areas near their property even though they have no right to do so.

Conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest can arise between user groups or between outdoor recreation and other interests. For example, an area that is protected to safeguard threatened species may also be popular for activities such as surfing or kite skiing, and these may disturb the same species.

Close to towns, conflicts can arise between landowners and people who enjoy canoeing, hunting or fishing. In recent years, there have been several attempts to introduce payment for access to groomed ski trails, even though access to the countryside in Norway should in principle be free.

RESPONSE

Safeguarding access rights

The Government is investing considerable resources in safeguarding access rights, especially to the coast and beaches. This includes setting aside areas for outdoor recreation (there are more than 2 300 designated areas so far).

An action plan has been drawn up for designated outdoor recreation areas established with financial assistance from the state. This provides an overview of existing areas, strategies for increasing the number of outdoor recreation areas and identifies what arrangements are needed for management in existing areas.

The Outdoor Recreation Act was amended in 2012 to make it easier for local authorities to waymark trails and routes, build bridges and footbridges, and take steps to improve public access.

Local authorities have powers to stop construction activities that are illegal under the Outdoor Recreation Act. If necessary, buildings, structures and barriers that have been put up illegally can be removed at the expense of the person responsible for them.