

79°51.3'N 011°35.9'E

Ytre Norskøya

Nordvest-Spitsbergen National Park
Ytre Norskøya means "Outer Norwegian island".

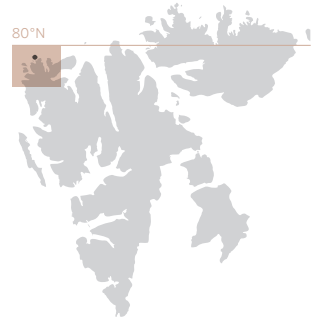


Photo: Jørn Henriksen

Old whalers' paths

For the whalers, catching sight of the whales as early as possible was of utmost importance. The important "spotters" were positioned in lookouts with good views of the ocean. While waiting they enjoyed their clay pipes and wine. When the first whalers arrived in 1611, the waters were "boiling" with whales. About 200 years later the big whales in the north were almost exterminated. Today visitors can walk on the old whalers' paths to enjoy the sight from this last point of land before the North Pole.

VEGETATION

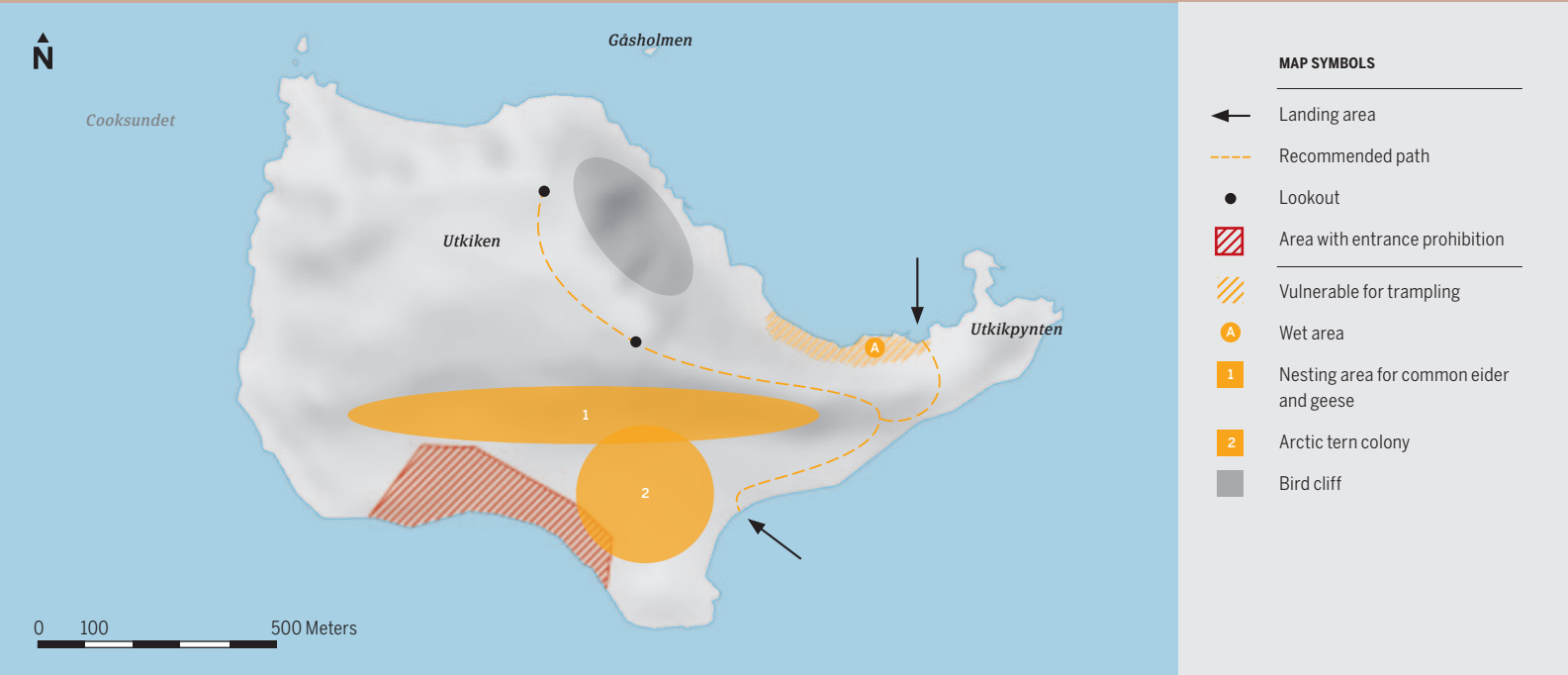
At first sight Ytre Norskøya looks barren and shale-covered. But as you pass the shoreline fantastic carpets of colorful moss cover, called golden moss tundra, appear. Further up in the landscape is solid rock and stone, and the vegetation cover is sparse and dominated by grey moss and lichens. Some flowering plants are present, like wood rushes, Svalbard poppies, and large populations of pygmy buttercups.

FAUNA

The bird cliff on the island is occupied by many thousand seabirds. The little auk is most common, but other breeding birds include Brünnich's guillemot, Atlantic puffin, black guillemot and glaucous gull. Several pairs of Arctic tern, Arctic skua and sometimes great skua breed on the lower part of the island. Other breeding birds here are barnacle goose, common eider and purple sandpiper.

CULTURAL REMAINS

The burial ground at Ytre Norskøya, with 165 graves, is one of the largest in Svalbard. Fifty of the graves were excavated by Dutch archaeologists in 1980. Clothes and textiles from the graves are part of the "Smeerenburg-collection", on exhibit at the Svalbard Museum in Longyearbyen. The whaling station is also one of Svalbard's largest.



Guidelines

- Observe the entrance prohibition at the cultural heritage site. All traffic is forbidden but the remains can be observed from the Utkiken mountain or from the ridge on the western side.
- Especially in late June and in July, approach the island carefully to allow family groups of geese and eiders to make a controlled retreat.
- Retreat if terns and skuas attack while watching where you step to avoid trampling on eggs and chicks.
- Walk around the wettest part of the moss tundra as it has small tolerance for trampling. Pay special attention at the borderline between the shoreline and the moss tundra.



Photo: Linda Drake

The barnacle goose is found in three different populations in the Arctic; Svalbard, northeast Greenland and northwest Russia.

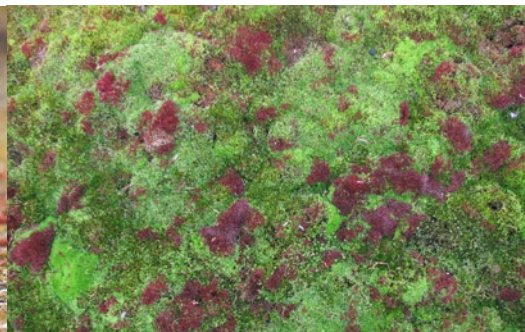


Photo: Dagmar Hagen

The golden moss is like a colorful treasure in the grey landscape at Ytre Norskøya.



Photo: Ole Magnus Rapp

The Svalbard puppy holds its ground.

Tip

The Atlantic puffin, nicknamed the sea parrot, nests in the bird cliff on the northern side of the island. From the top area of the mountain it is possible to get good views of the puffins, as well as guillemots, barnacle geese and glaucous gulls.

It is possible to land in different places around the island and also possible to walk over the mountain along the old whalers' paths.