

Geoturisme Nordland

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The county of Nordland wishes to start a project based on geological phenomena and environment seen in relation to culture and/or the travel industry. A pilot report has been released. The present article contains the chapter on caves and caving in the pilot report, as well as the comments on this chapter submitted by the Norwegian Speleological Society (NGF).

Norway has a couple of thousand large and small caves, most of them in the Salten and Rana districts and in other places in Nordland, Nord-Trøndelag and Troms. Popular caves in Nordland are Grønligrotta and Sætergrotta in Rana and the caves in Gråtådal in Beiarn. Tysfjord has Norway's deepest cave, Råggejavreraige, 580 m. At Fauske Svarthammerhola has a subterranean glacier. In Sørfold is Tjoarvekrajgge, the longest cave in Norway. In caves in southern latitudes stalactites of tens of meters are an attraction, whereas the beautiful marble formations are special in Norway.

NGF does not involve itself in commercial cave guiding, but some members have worked as guides. NGF are confident that such guiding has taken place in full accordance with the ethical rules of NGF, namely to protect the caves from visitors who may harm the environment and to reduce or even exclude trips to vulnerable caves. The pilot report emphasizes that caves with stalactites are to be excluded as tourism products. NGF, in addition, points out that there are other objects in need of protection. Caves are probably the only place in Norway where sediments and skeleton parts from before the ice age can be found. It is important to take necessary action to prevent the unique scientific value of the caves from being destroyed by too much traffic.

The pilot report suggests the possibility of making caving a main tourist attraction - not something to be only part of a more general tourism product. NGF, however, expresses doubts as to the economic viability of projects with caving as the only attraction.

The famous hole in Torghatten is a cave which should be suitable for economic exploitation. It hardly contains geological objects that can be destroyed by too much traffic.