

Watchful walking on the Gendarmstien (the Gendarme Path) – then and now



Walking along the Gendarmstien, it's easy imagining the gendarmes keeping eyes and ears open as they patrolled on foot, moving across the steep cliffs and deep forests and flat beaches. Their job was to catch dangerous smugglers illegally moving goods in and out of the country to avoid paying customs duty, which for centuries was one of Denmark's main sources of income.



The Border Gendarmerie was formed in 1839 to protect customs officials who worked for the duchies at the border along the Elbe. After the defeat of 1864, the Danish border was moved north to Kongeåen and in 1866 the regiment moved there. After reunification in 1920, the regiment moved south again and patrolled the current border, from the Wadden Sea to the west to Als' southern point to the east.

The police took over border control in 1958 and the regiment was disbanded after more than 100 years of service. But fragments of the historic Gendarmstien remained and the path was restored in the 1980s. So now you can walk along one of Denmark's most beautiful nature trails, keeping a lookout for rare plants and animals while exploring the many myths and stories associated with this part of Denmark.



At Busholm 1950



Skomagerhus border crossing, circa 1920



If you're planning a walk on the Gendarmstien and want details about overnight accommodation or the route or other information, contact any of the area's three tourist information centres. The centres' websites are always up to date with the latest events and venues and have a wealth of useful information about the options in the area.

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Explore the outdoors responsibly
Most people have a reasonable idea of how to behave responsibly when exploring the countryside – if you use marked paths, keep dogs on leads and do not litter the countryside, you won't go far wrong. But if you're unsure and want to learn more about using the countryside and coastal areas, visit www.skovognatur.dk

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Explore the local history, myths, legends, sights and beautiful countryside along the Gendarmstien.

The map's back page gives a taste of the many experiences and adventures waiting for you on the Gendarmstien. The small coloured icons divide the text into different subjects:

- History
- Nature and geology
- Nearby sights
- Sagas and legends
- Activities for all ages

Follow the signs with the blue gendarme

Gendarmstien stretches from the Danish-German border at Padborg, across Kollund, Rinkeby, Gråsten, Broagerland and Vemmingbund, past Dybbøl and on to Sønderborg and Høruphav on Als. Hugging the coast, the route passes through varied landscape with forests, moors and meadows. The 74 km route follows marked roads and paths.

Selected places and sights along Gendarmstien

The map is marked with a selection of sights, places, etc. Some of these are briefly described on the back of the map.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1a "Den Krumme Vej" / The border in Ronsdam | 7c Broager Church with two spires |
| 1b Traces of old castle in Nyhus | 7d Former ferry berth in Brunsnes |
| 1c Bov Museum/Oldemorstoft | 8a Water level marker at Røjhus |
| 1d Haraldsdal | 8b The pirates "Skråkæshøj" |
| 1e Kruså Vandmølle (watermill) | 8c Barrow in Skelde |
| 1f Memorial at jernbanebroen | 8d Reed forests in Skeldevig |
| 1g Froslevvejrens Museum | 9a Liebestunnel |
| 2a Skomagerhus border crossing | 9b Brudestenen |
| 2b Christian IV's copper mill | 9c Burial mound in Skeldekobbel Forest |
| 2c Abrahams Spring | 9d Cliff at Stensigmosø |
| 3a Ferry connection to Store Okseø | 9e Gratelund vantage point |
| 4a Brickworks ruins at Strandørd | 10a Historiecenteret 1864 |
| 4b Brickworks ruins at Brændstoft | 10b Dybbøl Mill |
| 4c Munkemølle and memorial to Queen Margrethe I | 10c Kongeskansen on Dybbøl Bank |
| 5a Former spa hotel in Gråsten | 11a Alsion |
| 5b Gråsten Castle | 11b Former navy station |
| 5c Paludan-Müller Memorial | 11c Sønderborg Castle |
| 6a Egersund Church | 11d Ringridermuseet |
| 7a Cathrinesminde Teglværksmuseum | 11e Sports academy |
| 7b Teglværkstien | 11f Skydestranden in Sønderborg |
| | 12a Trillen |

Map key

- Gendarmstien (Gendarme Path)
- Gendarmstien along the beach
- Alternative trail
- Hævejejn
- Marked bicycle route
- Not marked bicycle route
- Parking spaces
- Caravan site
- Primitive overnight accommodation
- Tourist office
- Vantage point
- Border crossing
- Border crossing for pedestrians and cyclists only
- WC
- Barbecue or campfire area
- Bus stop
- Train station
- Nature playground

1 km
Scale approx. 1:40,000

The Gendarme Path

74 km path along the Danish-German border

Queens
Dukes
War Peace
Castles
Black woodpeckers
Frog concerts
Pirates
Smugglers
Spirits
Brickworks
Ice Age
Fossils
Mussels
Sea kale
Camp fires
Border crossing
Twinkling fossils

Scale 1:40,000

South Jutland is a central gateway if you want to move to Europe via Denmark or to the other Nordic countries from Europe. For over 1,000 years, commoners with livestock, traders and dukes have funnelled across the border. The most popular route was Hærvejen, which Gendarmstien crosses just north of Padborg. Hærvejen stretches from Trondheim in the north to Rome in the south. It also links to the Camino de Santiago pilgrim route that ends at the Spanish town of Santiago de Compostela, near the Atlantic Ocean.

Gateway to Europe

Bov Museum/Oldemorstoft *1c
The collection includes a copy of the 12th century Frøsløvskrinet, which was probably brought to Denmark from Southern Europe by Christian pilgrims. The Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Denmark were given a copy of Frøsløvskrinet as a wedding gift from South Jutlandic residents in 2004.

"Ground telephone" *1a
Speak into the "ground telephone" at the border crossing in Rønsdam and look out for the numbered border markers. The first 49 are found on the Gendarmstien.

The landscape
Between Padborg and Kruså, Gendarmstien passes through a distinctive tunnel valley, formed during the last Ice Age over 10,000 years ago. The area has steep cliffs and ravines and many springs, lakes and watercourses. Pay careful attention to the vertical cliffs and you may catch sight of the rare kingfisher which builds nests deep in the cliffs.

The area was covered by ice over 100,000 years ago and the ice disappeared 11,000 years ago. The Ice Age has shaped the landscape – with large hills, slopes and lakes. The Ice Age also meant brick production could thrive here for hundreds of years. Fine underground clays that are free of stone were able to form in the still waters of the glacial lakes. Along the route you can still see traces of the Ice Age in the landscape, and along the beach and elsewhere there are many relics from the brick industry's era, e.g. the abandoned brickworks in Stranderød and Brændstoft.

Life as a border gendarme
The route passes small houses that were built for the gendarmes. The life of a gendarme was peaceful but there were dangers too, especially during World War II. In 1944 during the occupation, every single Danish police officer was arrested and 291 border gendarmes were sent to Froslevlejren, a prisoner of war camp, from which 141 were deported to the Neuengamme concentration camp where 36 of them died. The head of the Border Gendarmerie, S.B. Paludan-Müller, was killed in his home in 1944. There is a memorial to him at Gråsten. *5c

Shaped by the Ice Age and humans

Adder Stone
You may find adder stones walking the Gendarmstien. Find enough and you can join them on a string and protect your house against evil charms. Called "Hühnergott" in German, they were once believed to have magical powers and could protect people and animals from disease.

Ships were once the easiest form of transport because roads were almost impassable and you couldn't move a lot of goods over stony ground. Coal-laden ships could sail near to the brickworks and once loaded, they transported bricks and tiles all over the world.

The first steamship came to Flensborg Fjord in 1866. Ten years later, there were 25 of them. There were 32 jetties and 50 departures each day. The ships transported a million passengers each year. The steamships operated until World War I.

Cathrinesminde Teglværksmuseum (museum) *7a
There were once eight brickworks on Iller Beach. Only Cathrinesminde brickworks (1752-1968) remains, now a museum where you can explore the history and lives of the workers.

Plain sailing

Cathrinesminde with a view of Holnis on the German side of the fjord.

Teglværkstien *7b
Part of Gendarmstien is followed by the Teglværkstien path. There are information points where you can see traces of the old brickworks.

Broager Church *7c
Broager Church is well known because it has two spires. The church was built in the 12th century. The Gothic spires were built around 1400. Legend has it that the two spires are memorials to two sisters from a nearby castle.

Hidden works of art
Three large works of art are hidden in the area around Cathrinesminde Teglværksmuseum. Try to find them.

Siege of Dybbøl
This part of Gendarmstien offers a constant view of Dybbøl Bank, site of the Siege of Dybbøl, which took place in April 1864. Part of the Second Schleswig War that ended in disastrous defeat for Denmark, which lost 40% of its land area and a population that went from 2.6 million to 1.6 million citizens.

18 April 1864
From 2–18 April, grenades rained down upon the entrenchment, and the Danes were unable to counterattack because their cannons were too old. The enemy assault began at 10:00 on 18 April, and one by one the Danish positions fell. By 14:00, the Danes had lost and retreated to Als.

Historiecenteret 1864 *10a is a museum on the top of Dybbøl Bank where you can learn about the war. Next to **Dybbøl Mill *10b**.

The destroyed Dybbøl Mill in 1864

War in 1864

The Danish army were entrenched at Dybbøl while the Prussian troops were positioned at Gammelmark on Broagerland.

Frog concert
You can enjoy the "frog concerts" along Gendarmstien in April, May and June. Natterjacks' 'sing' at Gammelmark. At Dybbøl you can hear natterjacks, edible frogs and European tree frogs, which are also found in Sønderskovene.

Hear the difference
The edible frog is the smallest frog in Denmark. At dusk it makes little short croaks. The natterjack toad is grey or brownish with a distinctive yellow stripe. Its croak sounds like a cicada or like someone blowing through a comb. Edible frogs can grow to 10 cm long. Their short croaks can come in volleys, like a machine gun.

Danish or German?
On this part of the Gendarmstien you are walking on a very special border because it was decided by popular vote. At the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I in 1919, it was decided that the border between Germany and Denmark should be decided by a referendum. The referendum was carried out in 1920. The current border was decided by that vote. However, minority groups of Danes and Germans ended up on the 'wrong' side of the border. Both countries offer a lot of support to these minority communities with schools, kindergartens, newspapers and associations helping them to retain their respective languages and cultures.

From Kruså to Kollund, the Gendarmstien passes mainly through hilly coastal woods. Formed during the Ice Age, the area has hills, steep slopes, deep gorges and abundant wildlife. And with a little luck, you can get very close to the forest-dwelling animals.

The democratic border

Border crossing at Skomagerhus

Black Woodpecker holes
The Black Woodpecker is very rare in Denmark. This large, impressive bird can use its strong bill to strike the trunk of a tree up to 20 times in just two seconds. So, keep a sharp lookout when you see a tree with Black Woodpecker holes.

***2b Kobbermølle (copper mill)**
Founded by Christian IV of Denmark around 1600. The mill used water power to make copper and brass plate for ships and roofs. The yellow mill worker houses are similar to houses in Nyboder in Copenhagen. Kobbermølle sits on German soil.

The forgotten artists' colony
This part of the route is next to water, where 100 years ago there were numerous brickworks and countless jetties. The area was also popular for recreational and inspirational pursuits. Until reunification in 1920, people and artists from Germany flocked to the area to stay at health resorts or the artists' colony in Egersund. The artists' colony is almost forgotten in Denmark but still well known in Germany, as famous there as the Skagen Painters are in Denmark. Museumsberg Flensburg has a permanent collection that includes about 50 paintings by Egersund artists. The picture shown here is by Jacob Nöbbe, from 1890.

Gravenstein apple from Gråsten
Denmark's national fruit has been cultivated in the castle garden for hundreds of years. Originally from France, the apple was introduced into Denmark by count Frederik Ahlefeldt the Younger in 1669. The Gravenstein's popularity extends well beyond Denmark. Cuttings from the tree have been sold all around the world, and in distant California they hold the annual "Gravenstein Apple Fair".

Recreation and inspiration

***5b Gråsten Castle A Royal retreat**
Gråsten was built by Count Ahlefeldt in the 17th century. The castle belonged to one of Denmark's most influential families until the government purchased the castle for DKK 5 million in 1921. The Royal Family has used Gråsten Castle since 1935 and they spend part of their summer holidays there each year. The beautiful castle garden with its numerous roses is open to the public when the Royal Family are away and it boasts an ancient Gravenstein apple tree.

The Pirates are coming
There is nothing more idyllic than walking on the Gendarmstien on a summer's day next to the calm waters of the fjord. But the area has known dangers too – storms, floods and pirates! During times of war in the Middle Ages, the King might grant pirates the right to plunder enemy ships.

***8b Skrækkeshøj** was home to a pirates' lair and the pirate "Den Røde Ons" (The Red Ons).

***8a** On Højvandsstenen in Røjhus you can see how high the water reached during a storm in 1872.

People have lived next to Gendarmstien for more than 4,500 years. Fertile soils meant abundant food and the forests were rich in prey.

The cliff at Stensigmosø *9d
There was plenty of life before people arrived. The ice has deposited mussels and snails in sandy layers in the cliff at Stensigmosø. Black bands show where the vegetation turned to peat during the ice Age 75,000 years ago.

The Danish elephant
Sensationally, an elephant's molar teeth and tusk were found in the cliff in 1906. The straight-tusked elephant could grow to 4 m in height and lived in Denmark 130,000 years ago during a warm period between ice ages.

Vætter (evil little creatures)
Along Gendarmstien you may encounter "vættelys", fossilised examples of an extinct species of octopus from the Cretaceous Period more than 65 million years ago. The name is related to the Danish word for evil little creatures (vætter) that twinkled in the moors and meadows at night.

Eating out

There are many edible plants in the woods and on the beach. Hedges are laden with blackberries and nuts in autumn, and there are more exotic delicacies: tart forest floor wood sorrel in early spring. Delightful sea buckthorn; the orange berries plucked after the first frost and crunchy sea kale that grows on the beach at Kragesand and elsewhere.

Healing rose hips
Rose hips are well-known as the orange fruit filled with 'itching powder'. But they're also full of vitamins, fibre and nutrients. Rose hips are the tasty fruits of many different kinds of wild roses. They can be eaten raw (avoid the hairs) or used to make jam, jelly or syrup.

Ancient traces

Ancient burial mounds *9c
There are well-preserved barrows in Skelde Kobbelsskov forest. Most are burial mounds, and inside the chambers people have found skeletal remains, flint axes, amber jewellery and earthen vessels.

Brudesten *9b
On the coast there is a truly gigantic stone called Brudesten. Legend has it that a man left his wife on top of the stone on the way home to Flensborg after their wedding in Sønderborg.

Liebetsunnel *9a
The trees on the slope form a tunnel just east of Kragesand. "Liebetsunnel" means tunnel of love.

Arriving in Sønderborg, you cross a bridge linking the mainland to Als – offering a fantastic view – to the north lies Alsion, where there are businesses, a concert hall and the University of Southern Denmark with the largest population of foreign students in Denmark. Opposite is the barracks building (Kasernebygningen) over Alsund. It was built by the German navy in 1907. To the south at the harbour mouth lies Sønderborg Castle, built in the Middle Ages to protect the realm.

Sønderborg Castle *11c
Built around 1200, it was developed in the Middle Ages and became the country's strongest castle. It was used as a hospital during the Schleswig Wars in the 19th century. After the defeat at Dybbøl and the loss of South Jutland, it was used as a Prussian barracks. The Danish state has owned it since 1920. It is now a museum of South Jutlandic history (16th century onwards).

World War Legacy
The route through Sønderborg passes many old military buildings and war memorials. Skydestranden was closed to the public during World War II. The occupying forces used it as a shooting range. Immediately after the war ended in May 1945, the bodies of five Danish resistance fighters were discovered buried there.

Trillen and De Syv Søstre (the seven sisters)
Just before Høruphav the route goes through Trillen, a nature reserve. The wetlands have abundant bird life. At high tide the lakes fill with salt water. The lakes become very saline because of evaporation, and only salt-tolerant vegetation grows here. Trillen has some fine Austrian pine trees that are over 100 years old. Named "the seven sisters", though there are only six left.

Art Nouveau buildings
There are examples of art nouveau buildings with beautifully decorated facades throughout Sønderborg. This kind of architecture is almost exclusive to South Jutland in Denmark because the area was under German control.

Enjoy tilting at the ring in Sønderborg in July
Jousting and tilting at the ring were popular entertainments for medieval kings and princes. Many towns in South Jutland have summer tilting at the ring competitions.

You can learn about the jousting traditions at **Sønderborg Ringridermuseum *11d** during the summer.

Strong German-Danish bonds
All along the beach you can literally see the close relationship between Germany and Denmark. Today it represents peaceful cross-border coexistence and mutual cooperation. Glücksborg Castle lies on the other side of the fjord and has a rich Danish royal history – Frederik VII died there and Christian IX came from there. An excellent example of the South Jutlandic people's community spirit, despite the politics of the past, quarrels and war, is the creation of holiday camps for children in need. Since the 20th century, children from South and North Schleswig have been able to stay here. In Kollund the Gendarmstien passes Julemærkehjemmet Fjordmark, established in 1938.

The fabled Okseø islands

The tomb of Margaret I in Roskilde Cathedral

Visitors can sail from Sønderhav to Store Okseø in the summer season

***3a Two beautiful green islands** rising out of the blue waters of the fjord. According to legend, Margaret I died here or close by as she returned from peace negotiations in Flensborg in 1412. Visitors can sail from Sønderhav to Store Okseø in the summer season.

Alpine Newt
Gendarmstien passes through the only area in Denmark where the alpine newt lives. It has a distinctive yellow and reddish orange abdomen and throat.

When you cross the bridge you are in the heart of the brick industry – an industry that stretched from Denmark to the whole of Northern Europe and from the Middle Ages to today. For over 1,000 years people collected clay from below the soil surface and used it to build homes, churches and castles. Until the middle of the 20th century, tiles and bricks were still mainly made by hand. Both women and children helped, and frequently whole families worked at the brickworks.

***6a Egersund church** is made from local stone. The foreign names on many of the gravestones show how many different nationalities worked in the brickworks.

Find bricks
The beach is full of bricks of all different shapes and colours. They came from the 76 brickworks that once operated in the area. Sometimes you can even see which factory the brick came from because the name is imprinted in the brick.

Bricks, bricks everywhere!

From branch to branch
The route passes the Egersund-broen bridge. According to legend, the sound was once so narrow that the oak tree branches on either side stretched across it, so that you could see the squirrels cross the sound - hence its name meaning "Squirrel Sound".

Orchids along Gendarmstien
You may be lucky enough to find orchids along the route, like the common twayblade (image), the broad-leaved helleborine and the sword-leaved helleborine. Enjoy discovering them on your journey, but remember that all orchids are protected!

