



Selected places and sights

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

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Follow the signs with the blue gendarme

Gendarmstien stretches from the Danish-German border at Padborg, across Kollund, Rinkenæs, Gråsten, Broagerland and Vemmingbund, past Dybbøl and on to Sønderborg and Skovby on Als. Hugging the coast, the route passes through varied landscape with forests, moors and meadows. The 84 km route follows marked roads and paths.

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.naturstyrelsen.dk



Map key

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

1 km
Scale approx. 1:45.000
1 cm = 450 m

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 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 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

The Gendarme Path

84 kilometer path along the Danish-German border

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

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Gendarmstien - Denmark's only "European Quality Trail"

As the first - and so far the only - trail in Denmark, Gendarmstien is included in the coveted list of "Leading Quality Trails - Best of Europe".

The Gendarmstien is the only trail in Denmark that is certified as being a "Leading Quality Trail (LQT) - Best of Europe". All of the attractive LQT-certified routes are recognised for their high quality, ensuring that walkers enjoy a unique experience of wildlife and countryside. The paths are also governed by a number of regulations that require natural footways, maintenance and path signs.

Other acknowledged LQT-trails can be found in Portugal, Greece, Austria, Germany and elsewhere. You can find more information at www.era-eww-ferp.com



KRUSÅ TO KOLLUND approx. 5 km

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.

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 therefore remember your passport or legitimation.

SANDAGER TO EGERNSUND ca. 6.5 km

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 Flensborg has a permanent collection that includes about 50 paintings by Egersund artists. The picture shown here is by Jacob Nøbbe, 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 courtier 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

*15 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.

BRUNSNÆS TO KRAGESAND approx. 10 km

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 Flensborg 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.

*22 Skråkæshøj was home to a pirates' lair and the pirate "Den Redt Ons" (The Red Ons). *25 On Højvandsstenen in Røhøj you can see how high the water reached during a storm in 1872.

Pirate Alf

At the end of the 13th century, a pirate called Alf caused mayhem around Flensborg Fjord and out to the Baltic Sea. Legend has it that he would hide around Gråsten. Several place names can be traced to him. Alf was captured and hanged in 1298. His treasure was never found.

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 crunchily sea kale that grows on the beach at Kragesand and elsewhere.

Delightful sea buckthorn

The new Nordic cuisine has led many people to rediscover sea buckthorn. The orange berry with the sour, nearly passion fruit-like taste can be found in a wealth of new dishes. The high vitamin C content has also put sea buckthorn on the list of health-promoting plants. It is, however, not easy to pick the lovely berries. Buckthorn bushes can grow up to six metres high and have thorns as sharp as needles.

SØNDERBORG TOWN approx. 3 km

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 Alsion. 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 *37

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).

Forwards and backwards in time

Enjoy tilting at the ring in Sønderborg in July

During 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 *36 during the summer.



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

KOLLUND TO SØNDERHAV approx. 4 km

Strong German-Danish bonds

All along the beach you can literally see the close relationship between Germany and Denmark. Once it was all Danish. Once it was all German. 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.

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.

The fabled Okseø islands

The tomb of Margaret I in Roskilde Cathedral



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.

EGERSUND TO RENDBJERG approx. 2 km

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.

*17 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.



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 waybide (imangel), the broad-leaved helleborine and the sword-leaved helleborine. Enjoy discovering them on your journey, but remember that all orchids are protected!

KRAGESAND TO GAMMELMARK approx. 9 km

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

The cliff at Stensigsmose *29

There was plenty of life before people arrived. The ice has deposited mussels and snails in sandy layers in the cliff at Stensigsmose. 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 150,000 years ago during a warm period between ice ages.

Vætter (evil little creatures)

Along Gendarmstien you may encounter "vætters", 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.



Ancient burial mounds *28

There are well-preserved burial mounds in Skelde Kobbelskov forest. Most are barrow mounds, and inside the chambers people have found skeletal remains, flint axes, amber jewellery and earthen vessels.

Brudesten *27

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.

Liebested *26

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

SØNDERBORG TO HØRUPHAV approx. 5.5 km

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.

Trilien and De Syv Søstre (the seven sisters) *40

Trilien, 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. Trilien has some fine Austrian pine trees that are over 100 years old. Named "the seven sisters", though there are only six left.



Goosander

The goosander is a very rare breeding bird in Denmark. Usually sighted in winter, it rarely breeds in Denmark. With the municipal merger in 2007, Sønderborg Municipality became responsible for protecting the goosander. As part of this process, nest boxes have been installed in the area, including Trilien.

Wonderful nature

Goosander

PADBORG TO KRUSÅ approx. 5 km

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/Oldemorstof *5

The collection includes a copy of the 12th century Frolevskrinet, 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 Frolevskrinet as a wedding gift from South Jutlandic residents in 2004.

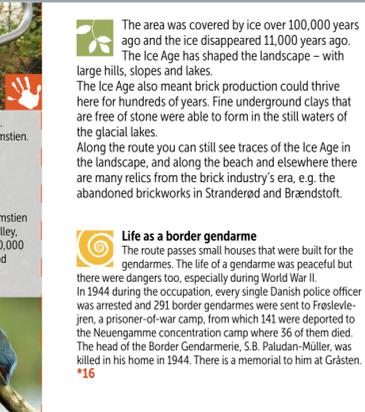


"Ground telephone" *6

Speak into the "ground telephone" at the border crossing in Rensdam 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.



SØNDERHAV TO SANDAGER approx. 5.5 km

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 Frøslevlejren, 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. *16

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.

RENDBJERG TO BRUNSNÆS approx. 5.5 km

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 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 23 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) *20

There were once eight brickworks on Iller Beach. Only Cathrinesminde brickworks (1732-1968) remains, now a museum where you can explore the history and lives of the workers.



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

Plain sailing

Teglværkstien *19

This part of Gendarmstien is followed by the Teglværkstien path. There are information points where you can see traces of the old brickworks.

Broager Church *18

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.

GAMMELMARK TO SØNDERBORG approx. 10 km

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 *33

is a museum on the top of Dybbøl Bank where you can learn about the war. Next to Dybbøl Mill *32.

The destroyed Dybbøl Mill in 1864



War in 1864

Frog concerts

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 Sønderboskov.

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.

HØRUPHAV TO SKOVBY approx. 10 km

Vibæk Water Mill *42

Vibæk Water Mill was built in 1756, and in 1832 a "helper" water mill was built due to lack of water in the creek. Vibæk Water Mill is the only one of the originally ten Als-style water mills that is left. Both the water mill and the mill farm have been beautifully restored and give a good impression of what a mill system looked like at the end of the 1700s. At that time, there was a covenant that Vibæk Water Mill, which was the King's property, was to be inherited by the miller's family if all the mortgage payments were paid and conditions were complied with.

The secretive experimental station *41

Today there are only bunkers left from the former German facilities at Hørup Klint. In 1944, German occupation troops took over the old torpedo station from 1906. The Germans converted the facilities into an experimental station. There were many rumours during the war about the mystical experiments carried out in the station. Many people thought that V-weapons (Vergeltungswaffe) were tested there. In reality, the Germans developed systems that could disrupt the Allies' bomber's radar navigation systems or prevent radio direction finding of German submarines.



Lillehav's many seabirds

At Lillehav between Sydåen and Kegnæs, you can see an abundance of different seabirds, such as long-tailed ducks, eiders, mergansers, cormorants, oystercatchers and lapwings. In the spring, the area is visited by huge flocks of migrating birds. It is possible to see shovellers and widgeons with their handsome feathers, as well as geese, such as greater white-fronted geese and barnacle geese, which are winter visitors from Russia.

Be on the lookout for porpoises along the coast

Especially on still days, you may be lucky enough to see the porpoises' triangular dorsal fins moving through the water. Porpoises are one of the smallest toothed whales and the only whale species that breeds in Denmark. A reef has been re-created in Sønderborg Bugt, which will make it easier for porpoises to find food. The waters around Als have been declared to be a marine habitat area.