

Ærø's origins

Ærø is a beautiful, varied island (88 m²) that forms a natural boundary between the South Funen Archipelago and the Little Belt and the Baltic Sea. The entire island was created by a glacier moving from south-east to north-west approximately 18,000 years ago, leaving behind one long ridge that today rises above the sea. The shore facing the archipelago is flat and irregular while the straight shoreline along the Baltic features high, landslide cliffs. The history of Ærø dates back many years. Remains of ten-thousand-year-old settlements have been found on the island. Today, you can explore old prehistoric monuments such as burial mounds, long barrows and the passage grave at Kragnæs.

Wends raided the shores of Ærø during the 11th and 12th centuries, which prompted the king of Denmark to take an active part in defending the island. As a result, a large part of Ærø is believed to have become the private property of the king, who subsequently donated parts or all of the island to friends and family. This led to an unsettled existence for the island's inhabitants. From the 14th century until the Dano-Prussian War in 1864, Ærø was part of the Duchy of Schleswig. This relationship has left its mark on the island's present culture and is reflected in things like the architecture of houses and churches.

Ærø's location beyond the tariff barriers of the Danish kingdom also created the basis for a thriving smuggling trade from which many of Ærø's inhabitants earned their living.



It is hardly surprising that Ærø has its own flag, made by Christian, Duke of Schleswig, around 1630, when his dukedom still included Ærø. The upper yellow and bottom red colours were the duke's own colours, while the green stripe in the middle symbolises the green island of Ærø.



Ærøskøbing from Dejrø island

Hiking and stopping along the trail

The Archipelago Trail is made for hikers and ramblers and is waymarked by posts along the entire trail. On your hike, we kindly ask you to be considerate and observe the following:



- The entire trail is open from 6 a.m. until sunset (November–February: sunrise to sunset however).
- Dogs must be kept on a lead.
- You are walking on private property, so please show consideration to the owners and do not discard refuse.
- Tenting overnight is only permitted at campsites or campgrounds or in areas where this is specifically permitted by the property owner.
- Sections of the trail may be closed during the hunting season, but you will be informed of an alternative route on site.

Transportation

There are four ferry routes that lead to Ærø, three provided by Ærøfærgerne from the ports of Faaborg, Svendborg and Rudkøbing, and the fourth from Mommark on the island of Als (near Jutland). Further details are available by contacting Ærøfærgerne, on tel. +45 6252 4000, or Søby-Mommark Ruten, on tel. +45 6258 1717. You can travel around Ærø on FynBus, whose service connects all the major towns on the island. Further details and timetables (for lines 790 and 791) are available from FynBus, on www.fynbus.dk or tel. +45 6311 2233.

Accommodation

For further details about accommodation, contact Ærø Tourist Office, on tel. +45 6252 1300. Information is also available at the websites www.arre.dk and www.detsydfynskeohav.dk.

Would you like more information?

If you would like to know more about the history of Ærø, you are welcome to contact Ærø Museum in Ærøskøbing or Søfartsmuseet (Maritime Museum) in Marstal. Further details about the museums are available at www.oehavsmuseerne.dk.

Colophon

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Øhavsstien
Det
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Øhav



The Archipelago Trail

Marstal - Ærøskøbing - Søby

36 km



Map 7



- Days clothed in blue and green



ÆRØ KOMMUNE



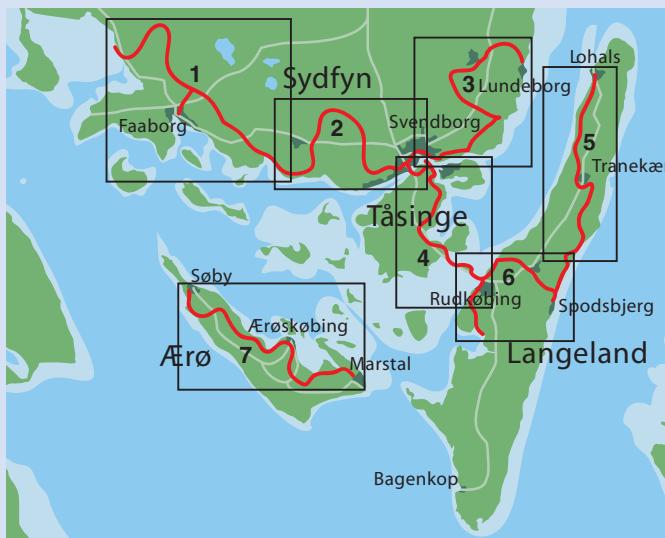
On the way to Kragnæs passage grave

The Archipelago Trail: from Marstal through Ærøskøbing to Søby, approx. 36 km

The trail leads past the Port of Marstal, following the coast into open countryside, crossing the dike at Gråsten Nor, and leading over hill and dale and winding roads to Ærøskøbing. From here the trail follows the coast past Borgnæs and the scenic Ærø Nature Reserve. The trail continues across Ærø past the historical complex at Søbygaard to Vitsø Nor before ending in Søby. The section of trail described in this pamphlet starts in Marstal and includes some of the memorable sights in the area.

The Archipelago Trail: a hiker's paradise

The Archipelago Trail is 200 kilometres long and circumvents the South Funen Archipelago. The trail extends from Falster in South-west Funen to Lundeborg in East Funen. Another section of the trail also starts in North Langeland at the village of Lohals and leads south to Rudkøbing. From here, there is ferry service to Marstal on the island of Ærø where the trail continues to Søby.



A route overview of the Archipelago Trail with specification of the 7 maps, which are published in connection with the trail

1 Mariners' Marstal

Marstal's unique maritime atmosphere dates from the 18th century when the then fishing hamlet developed into a thriving seaport and commercial centre. Most of Marstal's existing houses are from the 19th century when almost 200 schooners and cutters would moor for the winter behind the port's kilometre-long fieldstone jetty. The jetty was built during the winters of 1824 to 1842 by local mariners.

2 Single ticket to Kragnæs

The village of Kragnæs has both a "Færgevej" (Ferry Street) and "Færgegård" (Ferryman's House). There was ferry service from Kragnæs across Gråsten Nor from the late 1700s to 1856, because back then Gråsten Nor was a cove that almost intersected the island.

3 Kragnæs passage grave

This monument from the Neolithic period is the last of sixteen similar graves near Kragnæs. In 1974, it was archaeologically studied and then restored. The dark burial chamber now appears as it did in ancient times, although without the bones or skeletal remains of our ancestors. It was in use for 800 years – until 2,400 years ago. The two- by seven-metre chamber is open to the public.



Kragnæs passage grave

4 The cove and the islet: Nor and Nørreholm

The island of Nørreholm is situated beyond the dike built in 1856. The low vegetation attracts seagulls, terns and waders during the breeding season. From the dike there is a view across the flat reclaimed cove, closed off to the south by the natural isthmus connecting east and west Ærø.

In winter you can see many ducks on the sea, and throughout the spring ruffs, reeves, curlews and sandpipers frequent the area. The cove has one of Denmark's best populations of the beautiful Western Marsh orchid as more than 30,000 flowering specimens are found here.

5 Lille Rise

After passing the flat cove, the trail continues uphill to the village of Lille Rise whose fields originally extended down to the cove when it was open sea. From here, Rise's peasants used to fish and to ferry across the cove on their way to Marstal to buy goods. A small wood in the village was planted by the State, as part of Ærø's reforestation, since Ærø was almost treeless for many years – like many other islands.



Marstal Harbour

6 Vorbjerg, a place of execution

The trail follows ancient roads between Lille Rise and Stokkeby. On the right is a grisly, fabled place of execution, known as Vorbjerg Galgebakke. No less than seven ancient burial mounds were situated on the crest of the hill, but are now difficult to spot because Marstal's industrious mariners removed the fieldstones from the mounds to build the long jetty in Marstal harbour.

7 An island once inhabited

A magnificent view across the sea and islets appears north of Lille Stokkeby. Lilleø island resembles a green comma in the blue sea near the coast of Ærø. Niels Jensen and Ane Hansdatter bought this island from the king of Denmark for 1400 Rix dollars in 1863. The island was inhabited until 1898.

8 Ærøskøbing: Ærø's borough town

In 1522, the town was granted market town privileges and thus the sole right to all trade on Ærø. Old well-preserved houses, 300 to 400 years old, many with bays facing the street – a style of architecture prevalent in Schleswig and South Jutland – and narrow cobbled streets, old street lamps and flowering roses add to the charming atmosphere. Ærøskøbing was founded in the early Middle Ages with excellent conditions for fine natural harbour with deep water close to shore and sheltered from westerly winds. Mariners and fishermen lived near the waterfront, whereas the merchants lived further up in the town. The 200-year-old Kogehus (Cooking House) on the waterfront was built because of the fire hazard of cooking on board ships moored close together in the harbour.



Ærøskøbing

9 Bathing huts and Urehoved

The bathing huts at Vesterstrand were erected from the 1920s onwards. The town's inhabitants go to the beach on fine summer days for picnics. Today the building of huts like these is prohibited by law, but over the years they have become culture-historical treasures, tiny beach cottages of sorts. From Vesterstrand there is a view of Urehoved spit to the north-west, originally an island but now part of the mainland, but over the centuries the sea has eroded sections of the coast, depositing it between the former island and Ærø.

10 Castle mound and a dike

In 1856, four farmers and a lawyer took the initiative to turn sea into land at Stokkeby Nor and reclaimed more than one square kilometre of the bay for use as farmland. At the start of the dike – 100 metres to the south – is a small hill with the remains of “Borret” or “Kongens bakke”, a medieval castle mound that was an island before the dike was built. Castle mounds were typically used as a place of refuge and fortress against enemies.

11 Bricks and a pier

Where a small road follows the coast, stones were found in the sea that are the remains of a quay from where bricks were exported and where coal was landed for the firing process at the brickworks. Ærøskøbing hospital is one of the buildings made of “Borgnæs bricks”. A little further ahead, where the road turns inland, lies an old 18th century watermill. The history of the mill dates back to the 16th century, i.e. when Ærø was owned by Hans, the Duke of Schleswig. The millstream is named Odderens bæk (Otter brook) indicating that this animal may have lived here. Otters are no longer found in the Funen region.

12 Common Buckthorn

The need for firewood and timber in former times heavily depleted the wooded areas, with Ærø almost treeless for many years. At Borgnæs, you pass by the remains of what used to be known as “Borgnæs krat” (Borgnæs Thicket) believed to a remnant of Ærø's original forests. Today, some of the original tree species continue to grow in two preserved hedges, the most exceptional species being the Common Buckthorn.

13 Ærø Nature Reserve

In 2005, the landowners of this scenic rolling countryside established “Ærø Nature Reserve”. They generously gave up farming the area, opened the area to the public and allowed the fields to revert back to nature. As part of the conservation efforts, the area is grazed by cows, sheep and horses. The trail leads across the nature reserve, where the scenery and views are unrivalled. On warm evenings in May and June, you can also hear the croaking of the rare fire-bellied toad in the nature reserve's ponds.

14 Hov-vejen to Søbygård Manor

Peasants, farmhands and maids had to walk down long paths to

16 Lost settlements

When Vitsø Nor was a fjord, Søbygaard towered above the coast. Several small settlements, which no longer exist, were located in the shadow of the castle, and a landing was located on the shore. Efforts to reclaim the cove began as early as 1788, but various events, such as the storm surge of 1872, prevented Vitsø Nor from being reclaimed until 1964.

17 Søby

Søby is a port and fishing town of a more recent date and thus does not have the same architectural gems on offer as in Ærøskøbing or Marstal. But the town is dynamic and the home of Søby Shipyard, Ærø's largest workplace. From Søby there is ferry service to both Faaborg (Funen) and Mommark (on Als, near Jutland).



Ærø Nature Reserve

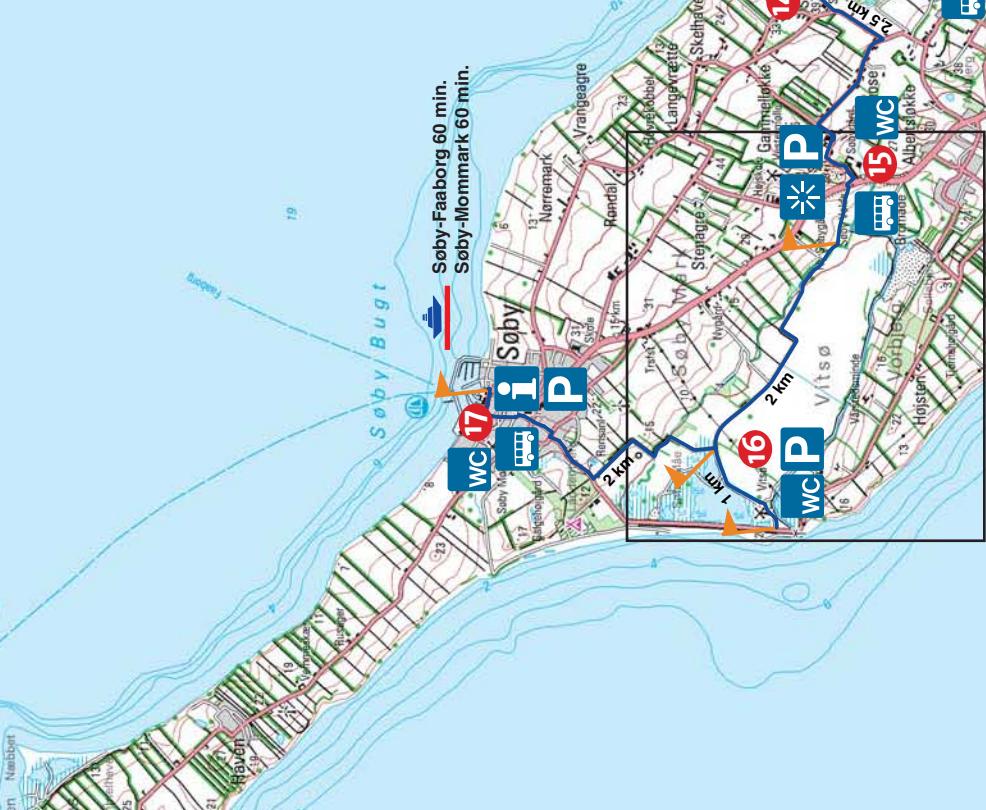


reach Søbygård Manor. They had to work for the lord of the manor – performing “villeinage”. They came from the Skovby area and walked back and forth to the manor along the trail.



15 Søbygaard

Søby Volde and the manorial home farm make up a Renaissance manor house from 1580 with impressive fieldstone formations. The view from here is magnificent and was the site of a large castle built of wood and red brick in the 1100s. It provided protection against the marauding Wends, who raided from the sea. After the Wends were defeated by Valdemar I the Great, the castle lost its importance and fell into disrepair, and the land was parcelled out to four farms. The present fortification was built by Hans the Younger, Duke of Schleswig. The cellar vaulting dates from this era, but the white building is from the late 1700s. You are welcome to visit Søbygaard, where various events and exhibitions are now held.



The Archipelago Trail
Sailing route
Range marks
2 km
1-17
Vantage point
Sights
Tourist Information
Parking
Toilet
Museum
Bus stop
Nature playground
Separately brochure available