



In love with Skien

Our multifaceted city has a lot to offer.
Here are some of our best tips!

skien.kommune.no



SKIEN KOMMUNE

Skien has been a hospitable meeting place for more than a thousand years. People have come from distant and near, since we have long been a centre for trade, agriculture and experiences, as well as a seat of governance and power.

Visitors have always meant a great deal to Skien, and still do. Do you know that Fritidsparken (Skien Sports and Activity Park) receives about one million visitors every year, while Ibsenhuset has 250,000 visitors, Odd has 100,000 spectators, and the food festival Mersmak in Skien draws around 50,000 food enthusiasts to the city each year? Not to mention the events of various sizes that take place throughout the year.

Over 55,000 residents live their best lives in one of Norway's oldest cities. Skien is a multifaceted city and can cater to virtually all types of interests and experiences. This booklet lists a few of the things we have to offer. Enjoy!



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Photo: Telemarkkanalen FKF

A historical black and white photograph of a river town, likely from the late 19th or early 20th century. The scene is dominated by a wide river in the foreground, with a large stack of logs on the left bank. In the middle ground, a tall, dark brick chimney stands prominently on the right, next to a large, multi-story industrial building. To the left, a church with two tall, pointed spires is visible. The background shows a range of hills under a clear sky. The entire image is overlaid with a teal-to-white gradient that is darkest on the left and fades to white on the right. The text "ONCE UPON A TIME..." is centered in the white area in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**ONCE UPON
A TIME...**



Foto: Dag Jønsen



One of Norway's oldest cities

Skien has been a “kaupang” or marketplace ever since the Viking Age, and is considered to be one of Norway's oldest cities. Archaeological excavations in the city centre have revealed indications of trade in Skien as early as the late 900s.

Whetstones from Eidsborg were especially important for trade in Skien. The convent in Gimsøy was founded in the 1100s and led to significant traffic of people and goods, also from abroad. A market on Klosterøya became so large that Skien residents asked the king to protect them from competition by the nuns. This occurred through city privileges, which were first granted in 1358 by Håkon VI Magnusson.

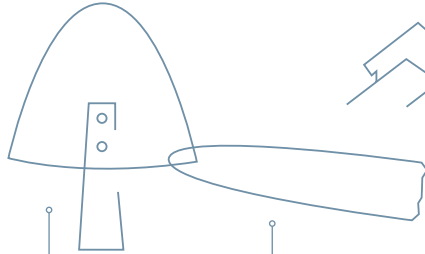
Numerous traces of ancient times are still present.



900

**Skien dyret
(the “Skien
Creature”)**

Part of a frieze found on a floor plank during the excavation of one of Skien's oldest houses, most likely from the 900s. The figure that was created for the 1000-year anniversary in 2000 used this icon.



1100

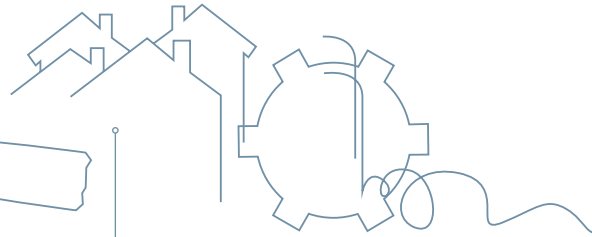
**Gullhjelm
(the Gold
Helmet)**

Bratsberg became a political seat of power in the 1100s, and Dag Eilivsson, a Norwegian chieftain, left an impression far beyond Skien's city limits. Visualised by a gold helmet.

1200

Whetstone

Skien was first named in Sverris Saga, one of the Kings' sagas, in 1184. The Eidsborg whetstones were Skien's most valuable export as early as the 900s.



1358

City status

Skien received status as a city with rights as a market town in 1358.

1550

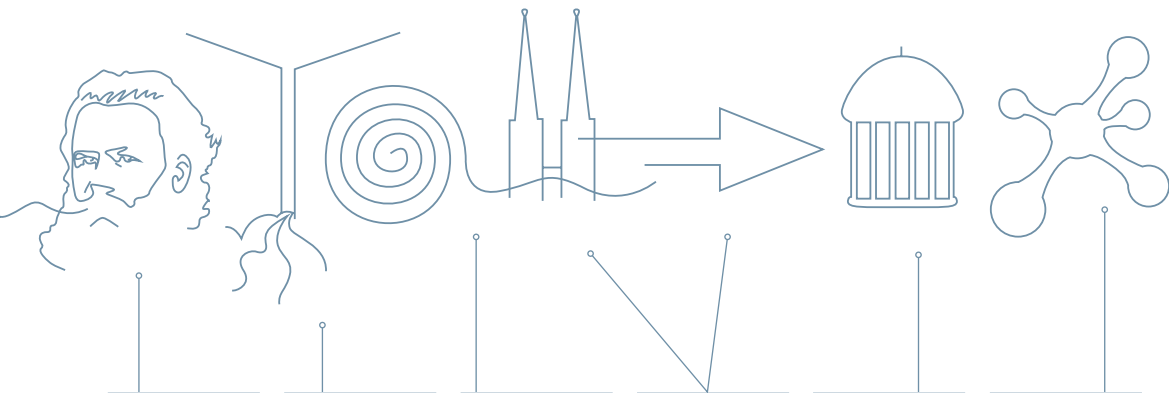
Iron ore

Iron ore was found in the Telemark mountains. Mining operations begin.

1600

Lumber

Dozens of head saws from Eidet to Klosterøya have made Skien Norway's largest Lumber city. The difference in levels between Hjellevannet Lake and Bryggevannet Lake made it possible to build saws that blast out water gutters down the mountain-sides.



1828
Henrik Ibsen

Ibsen was born in the Stockmann building in Skien city centre on 20 March.

1861
Locks

The Norsjø-Skien canal was completed in 1861 and became the waterway entrance to Telemark. Skien locks mark the start of the Telemark canal.

1873
Industry in Skien

Benjamin Sewell established Union Co. Skotfos bruk, which in the late 1800s was the largest paper mill in Northern Europe.

1894
Skien Church

with its characteristic two towers was completed in 1894 and is an important part of Skien's skyline.

Idrettsforeningen Odd (Odd Sports Club)

is one of Norway's oldest. Founded in 1894.

1909
Paviljongen (Pavilion)

Søndre Brekke became the county museum in 1909.

2019
Future

From old industry to new technology

Overflowing with ideas?

Welcome to Skien - the regional capital of Vestfold and Telemark. Skien has a multifaceted business sector, where most activities are centred around health, commerce, services and industry. Many public enterprises are also located here. Skien is also an agricultural municipality and the food festival Mersmak in Skien assists in displaying the quality and broad range of local products.

Commerce is strong in Skien and is distributed across three areas. Skien city centre with its niche shops and the Arkaden and Lietorvet shopping centres, the Herkules shopping centre just outside the city centre, and Kjørbekk and Rødmyr, which is an area for large-scale retail and light industry. Skien has industrial areas along the coast of Voldsfjorden. Skien Port Terminal is located there. The municipality is continuously working to meet the demands for new business locations. Skien is also in a position

to attract major global actors in the field of data storage. At Gromstul, in the northern part of Skien, there is a regulated 4000 decares business location with broad access to environmentally friendly hydropower.

Skien is a part of Grenland - a residential and labour market region with about 124,000 residents. Skien næringsfond AS is owned by Skien municipality and offers financial risk reduction in the form of a development loan and smaller grants for innovative companies.

Skien municipality receives substantial positive feedback from businesses for its facilitation, quick response, a responsive political and administrative leadership, investments in new business locations and its efficient infrastructure. Let Skien be the site for your business!

skienby.no · krio.no · proventia.no
grenlandnf.no · poweredbytelemark.no



Photo: Per-Age Eriksen



1500 million years of geological history in Skien

Skien is unique for its great geological diversity. A walk through Skien and along the Gjerpensdalen valley is a walk through 1500 million years of geological history.

West and northwest of the city centre is the old bedrock, the oldest part of Southern Norway's geology. Here are the remains of the old mountain range that once towered over the landscape. These rocks contain iron that provided the foundation for the Fossum Ironworks.

Further west are the limestone ridges, an ancient seabed of a tropical ocean, more than 400 million years old. This sea was once teeming with life, and the limestone comes from the accumulation of shells of animals who once lived here.

At Kapittelberget, there is a crypt church built from the remains of a coral reef in this former sea. Eastward toward Siljan are entirely different types of rock.

These are a testimony to the volcanic activity occurring nearly 300 million years ago, as the continent began crack at this precise spot. The geology alternates between fertile basalt and more barren syenite, and in the Svanstul area there is rock that resembles larvikite.

Across Skien, there are traces of the most recent geology, traces of the last million years of the Ice Age. The combination of limestone, basalt and much younger clay and sand has given us the rich soil found in our municipality. Read more about Skien's natural history at the Geopark website.

geanor.no.

Experience the Geopark on your own or join a guided tour. Gea Norvegica Geopark is Scandinavia's first geopark and approved as a UNESCO Global Geopark.

Henrik Ibsen

Henrik Ibsen is one of the world's greatest playwrights. His early years in Skien provided a rich source of inspiration for his writing. Henrik Ibsen was born in Skien on March 20th 1828. His father, Knud Ibsen, was a merchant and distillery owner. For many years he was one of Skien's biggest taxpayers.

In 1883, Knud Ibsen bought Venstøp farm as a summer home for the family. Just two years later, he lost both his fortune and his livelihood, and the family moved from the city to Venstøp on a full-time basis. Henrik lived there from the age of seven until after he was confirmed. Venstøp is now a museum. At the age of 15, Henrik left Skien for Grimstad, where he became an apprentice in a pharmacy.

Each year, Skien celebrates Henrik Ibsen's birthday with various events in the days around March 20th. Among other things, children from the city's kindergartens join together for a special birthday party.

Skien municipality presents the annual Norwegian Ibsen Award to a playwright whose adaptation of an Ibsen play has been staged in the last year. An international Ibsen Conference is also organised each year and international Ibsen Scholarships are awarded.

ibsen.com

skien.kommune.no/henrikibsen





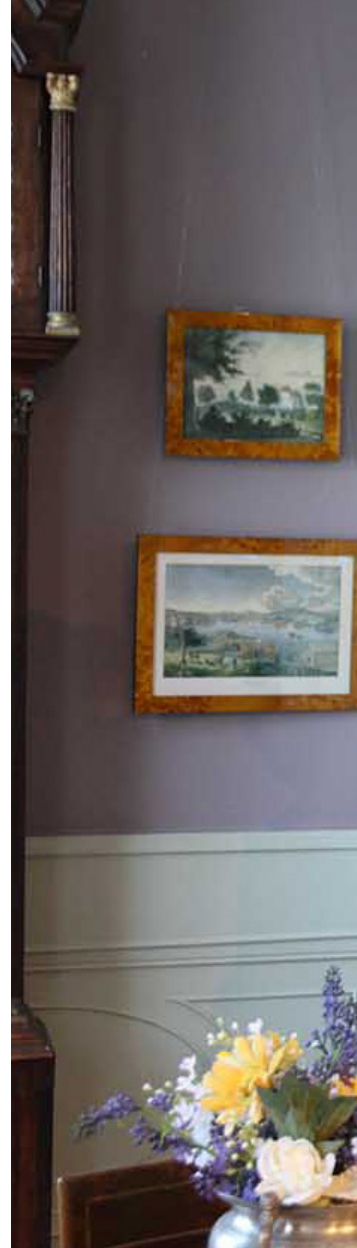
Photo: Kristine Mølleross

In Ibsen's footsteps

When Henrik Ibsen was a child, Skien was a lively trading centre with a population of around 3000. Both Ibsen's parents came from patrician families belonging to Skien's mercantile elite.

A big fire in 1886 left the town centre in ruins, and the Skien that had made such an impression on Henrik as a child was lost. The only surviving authentic built environment from Ibsen's time is found in the Snipetorp area. This is where he lived in the period just before leaving the city. Nevertheless, traces of Henrik Ibsen can be found across the city, from the centre to Venstøp. Skien municipality has produced the brochure Ibsen in Skien, which you can download or obtain free of charge from the Skien service centre/tourist information.

skien.kommune.no/henrikibsen





In Bryggeparken there is an activity area with play equipment for children.



A vibrant outdoor public space, likely a park or plaza, featuring a large, yellow, geometric climbing structure made of interconnected beams and spheres. The structure is the central focus, with many people, including children and adults, interacting with it. The ground is paved with blue and green tiles. In the background, there are brick buildings and a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall atmosphere is bright and lively.

LEISURE AND ACTIVITIES



Photo: Per-Åge Eriksen



Skien city centre – shopping and experiences

Shopping in the city centre is a lovely urban experience. If you're not too busy - look up! Most of the buildings erected after the city fire of 1886 have a distinctive Classicist and French-inspired architecture. This type of architecture is rare in Norway. The style is known as Beaux-Arts ("fine arts") named after the French art and architecture school, L'École des Beaux-Arts.

In the heart of Skien, you can find a selection of impressive clothing shops, fragrant flower shops and a broad range of speciality shops. If you need a break, there are numerous cafés and restaurants in cosy surroundings. During the summer months, there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy a cup of coffee outdoors in the sun.

The oldest part of the city centre is beautifully situated between two lakes, Bryggevannet and Hjellevannet.

Several events also take place in the city centre throughout the year. Skien has stages of all sizes in or near the centre.

Choose parking in Bygarasjen, at Lietorvet senter or in the city centre. General opening hours can be found at [skienby.no](https://www.skienby.no)



Foto: Fjuz



Herkules

Herkules is a modern shopping centre with 110 stores. The centre is popular among both residents and visitors from out of town. The centre is located one kilometre south of Skien centre and has 1550 parking spots.

herkulescenter.no

Kjørbekk and Rødmyr

Kjørbekk and Rødmyr is an area for large-scale retail stores in the region. Here you can find stores with office equipment, hardware, building materials, electronics, furniture, glassware, car and automotive sales, tools and more.

krio.no





Foto: Charlotte Døvlé



A trip to the beach

Just outside the city centre is Bakkestranda, a beautiful and expansive park with a small sandy beach and activity area with:

- Wharf for canoe and kayak launch with universally designed access to the wharf.
- Playground with toy carousel, small trampoline and hammocks where great emphasis is placed on everyone being able to use the play equipment (uniformly designed).
- Universally designed bathing bin.
- Long bench which also is a balance element for small children.
- Barbeques and benches.



At Bakkestranda you also find the sculpture "Rottejomfruen" (the "Rat -Wife") from Henrik Ibsen's play, "Little Eyolf". The sculpture was created by Marit Bente Norheim and 2318 students from Skien schools. This is a cement sculpture, adorned with porcelain eyes created by the students. Inside the sculpture is a slide, which is very popular among the youngest children.

City walks

Why not combine a tour of the city with one of our city walks?

A late-afternoon 'Morild' walk in winter can be beautiful. During the summer, you can follow the 'From Bakkestranda to Bryggevannet lake' route to explore the urban space. This lakeside walk covers a distance of 1.8 km along Hjellevannet and Bryggevannet in the centre of Skien. The height difference between the river Skienselva and the lake Hjellevannet is the reason why Skien came to be established, as the watershed was an important venue for trade and, in time, industry. Skien locks are the gateway to the Telemark Canal. The path starts at Bakkestranda, which is also one of Skien's green treasures and boasts many restored wooden buildings.

There are two sauna boats on Hjellevannet where you can enjoy a refreshing dip and a warming sauna all year round.

saunaboates.no

Salmon fishing in the heart of the city

Imagine standing on the edge of the jetty in Skien and being able to land a salmon for dinner! If you're interested in rod fishing for salmon in the Skienselva river, contact Grenland Sportsfiskere, Skienselva Elveeierlag or Skien service centre. The fishing season runs from June 1st to August 31th.

There's a salmon ladder by Skien Mill right at the far end of Bryggevannet lake, and 600 salmon leap up the ladder every year.

skienselva.no



Photo: Per Age Erikse



Water park

Skien Fritidspark (Skien Sports and Activity Park) has a huge, wonderful water park with thousands of square metres to splash in, six different pools, a 106-metre water slide, a diving tower and climbing wall with water as a landing spot. It also includes a spa with saunas, hot tubs and thermal showers. The water park is open every day and offers early morning swimming and a wide variety of swimming classes and water fitness training.

[skienfritidspark.no](https://www.skienfritidspark.no)

Climbing park

Welcome to our climbing park, which opened in 2019, with a double zipline across a stretch of 220 metres. Zoom across the track, side by side. We promise an thrilling experience, with the wind through your hair and a tingling in your stomach. Remember to book your climb in advance to save money. An annual pass will give you half price.

[skienfritidspark.no](https://www.skienfritidspark.no)

Outdoor activities

In Fritidsparken you will find beach courts, mini golf, paddle tennis, frisbee golf, hiking trails and mountain bike trails. In winter, we have Telemark's largest ice rink and ski slopes.



Foto: Arve Kern



Indoor activities

The leisure park has an ice rink, ice stadium and terrain park for skiing and snowboarding. During the season, there is busy skating activity both indoors and outdoors.

Sports halls, climbing wall, bouldering room, ice hockey rink, curling rink and fitness centre. And in the middle of the park you will find a hotel that is well-equipped for people with disabilities.

Funplays Skien

The kids are in charge at Funplays Skien, one of the country's largest indoor playgrounds. Here they can jump, play, climb, make noise, be messy and thoroughly enjoy themselves. Funplays Skien is located on Klosterøya and is aimed at children ages 1-13. The youngest, ages 1-3, have their own separate area.

funplays.com/no/skien

Høyt under taket in Skien

In September 2022, the climbing center "Høyt under taket Skien" opened in beautiful premises on Klosterøya. Here, beginners and experienced climbers of all ages can experience mastery in safe and exciting surroundings. The climbing center is open seven days a week.

hoytundertaket.no/skien



Foto: Johan Løken Fevang

Motor sports

Skien offers excellent opportunities for most types of motor sports. Norsk Motor Klubb (NMK) Grenland and KNA Telemark operate Grenland Motorsport Senter, one of Norway's largest motor sport centres with new lines for folk racing and rallycross. The centre is located at Ekornrød in Flittig. Here you can participate in folk racing, rallycross and motocross, drive monster trucks and ride off-road bikes and vehicles.

There are also facilities for ATV driving and 1250-metre lanes for folk racing, rallycross and crosscars. The lanes are composed of 60% asphalt and 40% gravel. There is also a 550-metre asphalt lane. You can try a street racing car under safe and controlled conditions. On the off-road lanes, you can drive your four-wheel drive SUV with expert supervision from experienced off-road drivers.

There are go-cart lanes at Geiteryggen. Kids must be at least 7 to drive. The go-cart lane is 620 metres long and 8 metres wide. You must be at least 14 to use the speedway lane at Geiteryggen. Grenland has a long tradition of speedway driving. We have several Norwegian Champions and have arranged a World Championship qualification race, as well as several Norwegian Championships. An annual Norwegian Championship in Rallycross is held each year in Grenland with several weekend races throughout the season.

NMK Grenland: nmkgrenland-gokart.com

KNA Telemark: kna-motorsport.no

Norges Bilsportforbund: bilsport.no





Photo: Grenland motorsportssenter

Klosterskogen Race Track

Klosterskogen Travbane is a race track that holds weekly races. The Easter race is the highlight of the year. This event attracts thousands of eager equestrian enthusiasts.

klosterskogen.no

Grenland Flight Club

Want to experience a true feeling of freedom? Do you dream of getting your pilot's license? Or are you simply fascinated by planes? Skien has one of the most experienced flying clubs in the country. Grenland Flyklubb has its base at Skien Airport, at Geiteryggen. The club owns and operates several planes, including two ordinary motorised aircrafts and two light-sport aircrafts. Each year, the club trains pilots for both categories.

If you want to get up into the air, book an appointment for yourself or give one as a gift. You can steer the levers of a light aircraft with supervision from an experienced instructor. If you get hooked and are at least 15 years old, you can start training to get your own private pilot or sports pilot license. Grenland Flyklubb was established in 1946. The club has its own clubhouse and hangar at the airport next to the terminal building. Take a trip - you are more than welcome!

grenlandflyklubb.no

Grenland fallskjermklubb

Do you dream of jumping out of a plane? Or do you want to give away a special gift? Grenland Parachute Club offers skydiving on weekends during the summer. You will be securely strapped to an experienced tandem instructor and jump out of the plane over Geiteryggen with a fantastic view of Norsjø and the coast.

frittfall.no





Photo: Grenland Flyklubb / Ivar Moland





Go, Odd!

How about cheering on our boys on the Odd football team at a home game at the Skagerak Arena? The Skien team has been in premier league for the past few years, which has brought excitement to the city and given people something to talk about week after week..

The former Odd player, Jone Samuelsen, set a world record for the longest headed goal, 58.13 metres, during the match against Tromsø on September 25th 2011. The world record was approved by the Guinness World Records as "the longest headed goal in football".

Odd was founded in 1894 and is one of Norway's oldest football clubs.

odd.no

Roll the film

Watch a good film at the Odeon Cinema, perhaps with a tub of fresh popcorn. The city cinema is just a short walk from the city centre on Blekebakkveien 5. For more information, see odeonkino.no.



Foto: Kateryna Lukina



Mersmak - The food festival in Skien

The Mersmak Food Festival (“taste for more”) takes place during the final weekend of August. Around 50,000 food enthusiasts visit this festival each year.

During the festival the city centre is teeming with life. There are numerous stalls to tempt visitors with tantalising new tastes, exciting products, experiences and inspiration. The aim of Mersmak is to promote the joy of food and present the diversity of foods produced in Skien, Telemark and the rest of the world.

You can sample goodies from more than 100 stalls. Here you will find Norwegian “lefse”, bread, apple juice, grilled skewers, rice dishes, vegetables, ice cream, exotic dishes, local sausages, cheeses and much, much more. Skien has organic farms, local food production and a deeply international food culture that will be presented to you during the festival.

mersmakiskien.no



Foto: Katerina Lukina



Spritzen Art Hall

The old distillery on Klosterøya has become an exhibition and production site for art as part of Kunstnerbyen Skien (Skien Art City). Spritzen kunsthall presents regular exhibitions, concerts and other cultural events throughout the year.

Spritzen also houses a studio community, where professional artists rent studios and workshops. All 12 studios are leased to artists as part of the investment in Kunstnerbyen Skien. The street address is Tømmerkaia 19.

skien.kommune.no

skien.kommune.no/kunstnerbyen



SPRITEN KUNSTHALL

SPRITEN ATELIER

Galleries

Telemark Art Centre presents contemporary art through production and exhibitions, and is a competency centre for professional visual arts and applied arts in Telemark. The Art Centre is located in the former Norges Bank building on Liegata.

For more information, see:

telemarkkunstcenter.no

Skiens Kunstforening (Skiens Art Association) is a nonprofit organisation founded in 1910, and is one of the country's oldest art associations. The association promotes the interest in visual arts and supports Norwegian art through exhibitions, classes, lectures and tours. Skiens Kunstforening has regular exhibitions at Ibsenhuset. For more information, see:

skienskunstforening.no

Galleri HI10 is located in the backyard of Henrik Ibsensgate 10, and is an artist-run gallery based on the pop-up method. This means that the artists themselves run the gallery and the opening hours will vary according to the projects displayed there.





Photo: Telemark Kunstsenter



Foto: Ketil Hardy

A large crowd of people is seated on a grassy area, facing a stage area. The scene is outdoors, with a building and trees in the background. The lighting suggests it is late afternoon or early evening. The text "STAGES GREAT AND SMALL" is overlaid in the center of the image.

STAGES GREAT AND SMALL



Photo: Ibsenhuset



The Ibsen House

Ibsenhuset is Skien's Culture Centre, located in the city centre. It hosts a wide variety of concerts, performances, lectures and exhibitions. Ibsenhuset has entertained audiences for years, with international, national and local celebrities. For more information, see ibsenhuset.no

Parkbiografen

The old and venerable cinema has been given new life as a venue for concert and shows. You can also rent halls for parties and celebrations. For more information, see parkbiografen.no

The Literature House in Skien

Litteraturhuset in Skien invites the public to meet authors, and to participate in book discussions and readings. Litteraturhuset aims to remain current and relevant, and encourages debates on current affairs. In cooperation with Skien municipality, it hosts Appelsinia, an annual literature festival for children and youth. The intent of the Litteraturhuset is to keep the literary legacy of Henrik Ibsen alive. For more information, see litteraturhusetiskien.no

Community centres at Menstad, Gråtenmoen and Lie

These community centres offer a varied cultural programme with a broad range of concerts, lectures and activities. Follow them on Facebook, check out the community centre's brochure for the season, or visit:

skien.kommune.no/bydelshus



Lundetangen Pub

Free concerts from the lively pub stage on Saturdays during the fall and winter seasons. For more information, see:

lundetangenpub.no

Theatre Ibsen

Teater Ibsen is a regional theatre for Telemark and Vestfold county, located in Union's old factory building on Klosterøya. The theatre performs new plays of various formats and tours throughout the county.

teateribsen.no

Skien Jazz

Skien has had a vibrant jazz scene for many decades, and many of Norway's leading

professional jazz players have a strong connection with the city. Parkjazz takes place in idyllic Brekkeparken, bringing together hundreds of members of the public every Thursday in the school summer holidays. parkjazz.no · skiensjazzdraget.no

Skien Live


The festival Skien live was established in 2013, and has for a number of years, presented local and national artists to a wide audience.

In addition to the festival in the summer, Skien live is a year-round organizer of backyard concerts, events, flea markets etc. skienlive.no





Foto: Charlotte Døvlø.

A scenic view of a city waterfront, likely in Norway, featuring a prominent church with two tall, dark spires. The church is reflected in the calm water in the foreground. A white boat is docked on the left side of the frame. The background shows a mix of urban buildings and distant hills under a clear sky. The text "TOURIST ATTRACTIONS" is overlaid in large, white, bold letters across the center of the image.

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

Telemark Canal

Skien is Norway's only canal city and one of only four cities in Scandinavia with locks in the city centre.

We are proud of our beautiful canal, which was carved into the cliffs about 150 years ago! The first stretch between Norsjø and Skien was opened for regular operations in 1861. The canal in its current form, extending all the way up to Dalen, was completed in 1892. In Europe, the canal was referred to as the "Eighth Wonder".

The Telemark Canal is one of the world's most beautiful canals, and has maintained its appearance from the 1800s. The first lock chamber is located in Skien city centre. The next one is at Løveid locks at Skotfoss. From Hjellebrygga in Skien, the boats MS Victoria and MS Henrik Ibsen pass between the locks from Skien to Dalen. If you have never been on a trip through the locks, take the opportunity to do so this summer!

In addition to the regular routes, visitors are regularly invited for evening cruises and lock cruises on the canal boats. Skien has three canal boats that regularly dock at Hjellebrygga in Skien. MS Victoria, MS Henrik Ibsen and MS Skarsfos.

Numerous pleasure crafts also use the canal. The Telemark Canal is the perfect starting point for kayaking, canoeing, hiking and cycling. There are several hiking and walking trails along the Telemark Canal, of which the most popular is the Hjellevannet loop trail.

For more information, contact Skien service centre, or visit:

telemarkskanalen.no
visittelemark.no



HENRIK IBSEN

HENRIK IBSEN

HENRIK IBSEN

HENRIK IBSEN



Foto: Arve Kern



Henrik Ibsen Museum

The Henrik Ibsen Museum is located in rural and idyllic surroundings at Venstøp estate. This is where the world-renowned playwright Henrik Ibsen lived from 1835. When he was seven years old, the family was forced to sell all their belongings and move to their summer home in Venstøp. Henrik Ibsen lived here until he was 15 years old, before moving to Grimstad to become a pharmacy apprentice. Venstøp is the only preserved childhood home of the playwright, and now houses the Henrik Ibsen Museum. Visitors to the museum, which is located about five kilometres from Skien city centre, may join guided tours of the playwright's childhood home. Here you can hear about the boy who made puppets for his puppet theatre, which he performed for the neighbour children - a boy who also did magic tricks for his parents' parties.

The Ibsen family continued its upper class life after moving to Venstøp, and Henrik was a privileged child. In addition to Ibsen's childhood home, there are displays depicting the playwright's life and work. Not least you can experience the Per Gynt Escape Room, where anyone over the age of 12 can solve codes and puzzles to get from room to room. The Telemark museum is now carrying out a major restoration project of Venstøp. When the poet's 200th anniversary is celebrated in 2028, you can see the house exactly as it looked when Henrik Ibsen was a child. You can also try outdoor bowling on the reconstructed court created by the Ibsen family. The place also has a museum shop with souvenirs and fine books by and about Henrik Ibsen.

For more information, see telemarkmuseum.no

Brekkeparken open air museum

At the top of a hill above Skien centre is Brekkeparken. This open air museum was created in the gardens and area around the Søndre Brekke manor, which housed many fine families. The history of the Aall family is explained in the introduction to the museum. Niels Aall played a significant role in the formation of the Norwegian Constitution in 1814. Aall was the Minister of Trade, and he signed the Convention of Moss peace agreement. During the hubbub surrounding the 1814 Constitution, a story arose about a house ghost, known as the Grey Lady. This story is repeated upon request and during the autumn event called "Skrekkeparken" ("Horror Park").

Major events take place in Brekkeparken, but also smaller events such as walks and activities for children. Several farm buildings from Telemark on the property are open to visitors. The oldest is an "årestue", a cottage with an open fire pit from the 1300s. Each building creates an atmosphere with an open fireplace and stories, including the "Christmas Market in Brekkeparken" on the first Sunday of Advent. In Brekkeparken there are two cafes with a view of the city and the waterways. Skien loves the parkjazz concerts on Thursdays in the summer. Brekkeparken has a new museum building - VEV. Here there are exhibitions for children and adults.

For more information, see
telemarkmuseum.no





Skien Church

Skien Church, which celebrated its 125-year anniversary in 2019, is a landmark in Skien, situated on a hill in the middle of the city.

The church has two spires, which is uncommon for churches in Norway. Skien Church was built after the last town fire and completed in 1894. The church was designed in a neo-Gothic style by architect Martin Schytte-Berg, who also designed our city hall.

The Skien Church organ is one of the largest in Norway, with its 5200 pipes and 70 voices. In the spring of 2019, the organ underwent a full restoration, ready for many more years of use.

skienkirke.no



Rock carvings

Old carvings provide unique glimpses of a long-lost culture. There are several fantastic sites with rock carvings at Gjerpen in Skien. The rock carvings at the Fossum site were among the first to be discovered in Norway, and comprise ships, footprints and sun symbols. They are assumed to date from the early Bronze Age, so are approx. 2800 years old. The Fossum site is located in a small wood by the tree-lined approach to Fossum Manor. The Bergheim, Løberg and Fossum sites are open to visitors in the period from May to October.

For more information, see skien.kommune.no



Århus Iron Age Farm

This farm has a copy of a typical house from the Iron Age, based on the old construction method with slightly curved outer walls plugged with wooden nails. The farm also has half a Viking ship. Århus was chosen as a site for the Iron Age house as the area is rich in history. There are ancient rock carvings, "helleristninger", from the Bronze Age, burial mounds from the Roman Empire era and the Migration period, as well as an ancient track. A heritage trail passes the place where Fossum Ironworks operated for nearly 330 years, and also passes the Henrik Ibsen Museum, where Henrik Ibsen grew up. Århus Farm is open to visitors and is owned by the Telemark Agricultural Society.

Kapitelberget

At Kapitelberget you can see the ruins of an old crypt church dating from the Middle Ages. This is the foremost relic of the mighty Dag dynasty that once held sway in Grenland. The church was originally a private chapel, built by Dag Eilivsson in the 12th century. The ruins were discovered in 1783, but the church was not restored until the end of the 20th century.

The church is one of only two examples in Norway of a church with a crypt. It is likely that Dag had seen this kind of church in Ireland, on his voyage with King Magnus. The crypt beneath the church floor was probably to hold masses for the dead and to store holy relics. Dag probably took part in Sigurd Jorsalfar's journey to the Holy Land, and is likely to have brought back a relic.

Hakastein kulturminnepark

The cultural monument park, which opened in May 2015, is part of the 'Around Hjellevannet lake' walk. A series of finds from archaeological excavations close to Telemark Hospital revealed this as the site of Norway's earliest church building, at Faret.

The building itself was a post church and was probably erected in the first half of the 11th century. Traces of Viking-era cremation graves, Christian burial places, cooking pits and the outlines of a large farm have also been found.



Foto: Charlotte Devle





NATURE AND TRAILS



Heritage trails

Skien has several heritage trails in areas of significance for the city's history. There are brochures describing these trails. Pick up the brochures at the Skien service centre, or download them at:

skien.kommune.no

Skotfosstien

Skotfosstien is a 3.7 km long trail that starts at the Løveid locks. It winds through the woods and areas of natural beauty and along the Telemark canal. An information board presents the history of the area and there are plenty of opportunities for picnicking along the route. Parts of the trail offer universal accessibility.

Århus heritage trail

Here you can wander along a 4.5 km long path or road through an agricultural area and cultural landscape. See the description of the Århus Iron Age Farm on page 62.

Hjellevannet loop

The Hjellevannet loop is 5.6 km long. It winds along Hjellevannet, through an industrial area with retail shops and across bridges. Picnicking opportunities with tables and benches in beautiful natural surroundings can be found at Bakkestranda.

Åfosstiene

Åfosstiene is a network of trails that wind through varied terrain. The total length is 5 km. There are two natural starting points for the hike: Ramberget or by Åfoss School. Parking is available at both sites. There are information boards along the trails.

Svanstul

Svanstul is one of the most popular destinations for excursions in untouched nature, both in summer and winter. Its location, 800 metres in height, ensures both snowy winters and a sense of walking along a mountain plateau. When there is snow, skiers are ensured 50 kilometres of prepared ski trails, in addition to a 4-kilometre illuminated trail. During the rest of the year there are unlimited opportunities for hiking through the terrain. During summer, nature experiences abound, including bathing and swimming, berry and mushroom picking, fishing, hunting, hiking and biking. Or perhaps you'd like to paddle in one of the nearby lakes? On the first Sunday of September, there is a "Come Outdoors" day in Svanstul. This is an event for families, with activities and nature experiences.

Luksefjell

About 20 kilometres north of Skien is the beautiful Luksefjell region. This is a natural paradise with woods, mountains, lakes, rivers, marshes and hills. There are marked trails for use in both summer and winter.

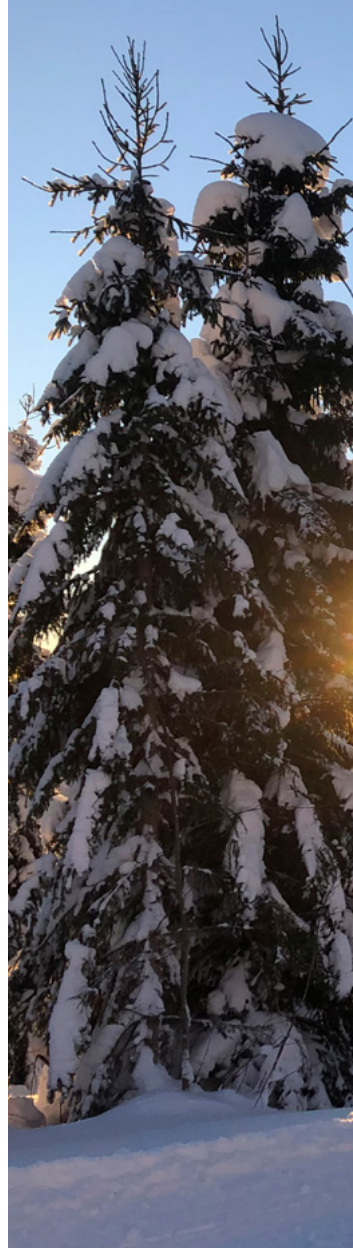




Foto: Lene Kaas Hysing

Vealøs

Vealøs is a 500-metre high peak in a mountainous landscape in Skien's eastern region. The area has numerous trails. The most common starting points for hikes to Vealøs are Skifjell, Steinsrød/Skyer, Lensmannsseter, Odd-bakken and Veimyra by Kikut, in addition to Solvika, near Heivannet Lake. We recommend a lovely moonlight hike for a fantastic view of Skien!

Lensmannsseter

There are many fine trails in the western hills toward Gjerpensdalen. One of the most common starting points for hikes in these areas is the parking place at Lensmannsseter above Sneltevedt. A group of stones from the remains of an old village fort were found at Rustankollen.

Skrehelle

This area slopes down toward the northernmost part of Gjerpensdalen. There is parking in Fjelldalen, north of Børsesjø. From there, a half-hour hike will take you to the top of Lille-Skrehlle, 485 metres above sea level. Hike another 500 metres to reach the peak of Skrehelle, Skrehelletoppen. The peak is 552 metres above sea level. There are marked trails toward Venstøptjern Lake, Havretjern Lake and the Middagskollane hills. You can also follow the trails to Blåfjell. A hiking map can be purchased at the Skien service centre, or from the Den norske turistforening Telemark (Telemark Norwegian Trekking Association). For more information, see

telemark.dnt.no

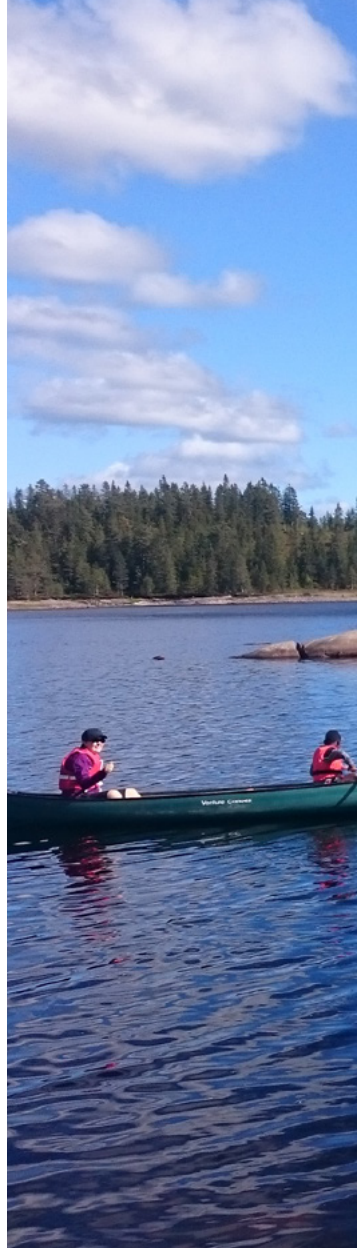






Photo: Per-Åge Eriksson

Cycling in Skien

Skien is full of bike-friendly paths of all sizes and for all ages and levels of fitness. A free cycling map for Skien and Porsgrunn can be downloaded from the municipality's website. For more information, see [skien.kommune.no](https://www.skien.kommune.no)

Børsesjø

Børsesjø is a lush oasis with abundant bird life near Skien city centre, in the northern part of Gjerpensdalen. The area has been adapted for bird watching, with a bird amphitheatre and information posters, as well as a nature trail through the area. More than 230 bird species have been observed in the area.

Børsesjø is a protected nature reserve for the intent of preserving a valuable wetland habitat with its unique animal life, bird life and vegetation. The lake has an average depth of 2.1 metres.

Børsesjø has great value as nesting grounds and a feeding area for birds common to wetlands. Since this is a nature reserve, there are some restrictions on the use of the area. Hunting is not permitted. Fishing is not permitted for a period between spring and summer

The Børsesjø bird amphitheatre is located along the water's edge at the north end of Børsesjø nature reserve. The bird amphitheatre is accessible for both wheelchairs and prams. Access from Gamle Siljanveg. School groups and others who might enjoy a guided tour through the area, can direct a request to the Norwegian Ornithological Association, Telemark and Grenland. They are located across the bird amphitheatre.

For more information, see birdlife.no/organisasjonen/fylkesavdelinger/telemark

Mikaelshula

Mikaelshula, or St. Mikael's Church, is a cave in the steep rock face on the east side of Norsjø Lake. It is situated in the middle of a cliff, about 30 metres above Norsjø Lake, and is clearly visible from the water. Long ago, the cave was said to have been equipped with a vestibule, nave, choir and altar. During the Catholic period, it was said to have been consecrated to the Archangel Michael. Mass was also held here after the Catholic period. The cave was an important pilgrimage site.

The cave opening is semicircular, 4-5 metres wide and approximately just as high. Inside, the room opens up to a greater height, and is about 20 metres deep. The cave was created by nature, but worked by humans.

Over the ages, the cave has received a fair amount of attention. One source in Latin from 1643 refers to it as *Templum Mirabile*, the "Wondrous Temple". The cave was

supposedly a consecrated church during the Catholic period until 1537. With the introduction of Protestantism, and up to 1843, the church became the last refuge for followers of Catholicism. It is said that there is a cemetery at the top of the mountain.

The cave can be reached both by boat and on foot, although access can be challenging. If you arrive by boat, you can dock just below Mikaelshula. There is a steep path from the water's edge and up to the cave. This includes a few steps with a chain to hold on to along the side. For access from land, follow the signs to Pollen from Skotfoss town centre. There is parking at Omdalsvegen, with a blue-marked trail up to the cave. The last few metres are up a very steep cliff wall.



Foto: Charlotte Dovle

