



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 and Odd has 100,000 spectators. 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: Telemarkskanalen FKF

A historical photograph of a city waterfront, likely from the 19th century. The scene features a large, multi-story industrial building with a tall, slender chimney on the right side. In the background, a church with two prominent spires is visible. The foreground shows a body of water with several small boats and a large pile of logs on the left. The image has a teal tint and a diagonal split, with the left side showing a different, lighter-toned view of the same scene. The text "ONCE UPON A TIME..." is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**ONCE UPON
A TIME...**



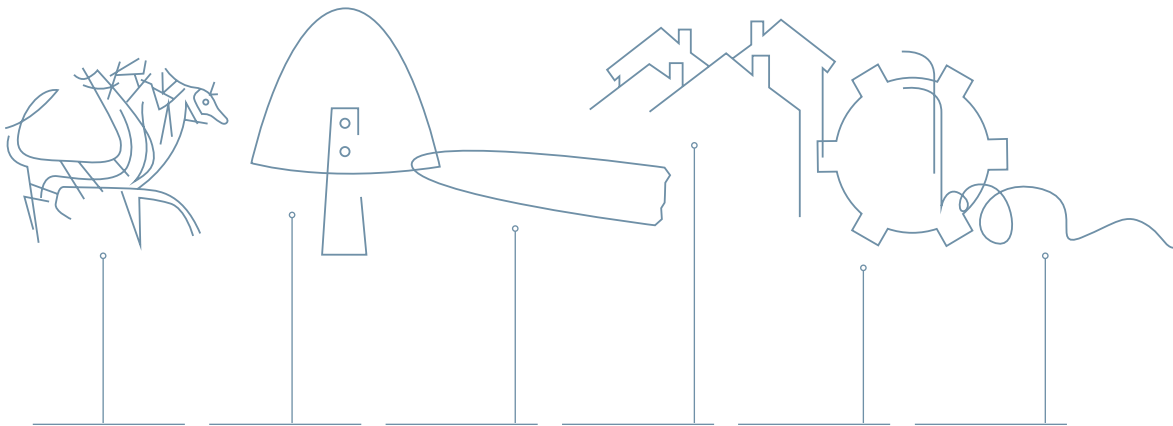


One of Norway's oldest cities

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

**Skienstyret
(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

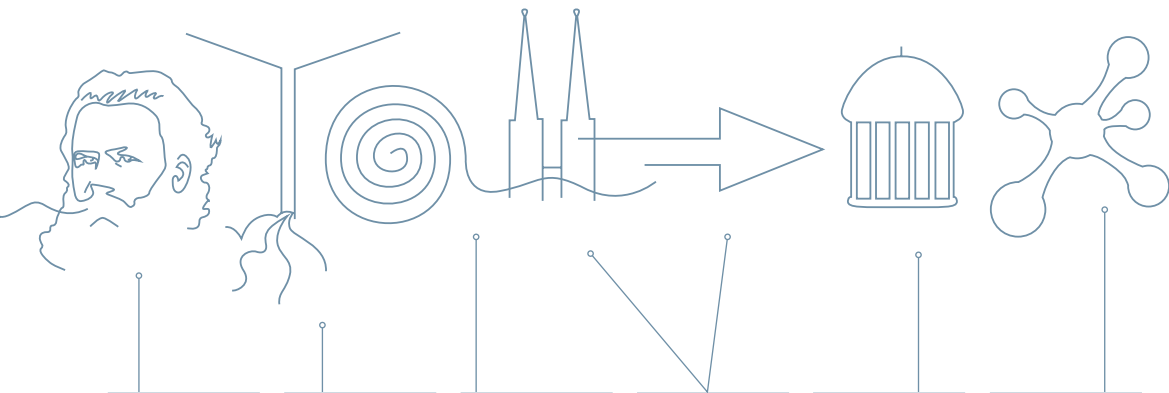
Iron ore

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 county capital of 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.

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. In 2019, Google purchased a 2000-acre plot of land in Skien, and in February 2024 they announced the start of the first phase of construction, which

is planned to be completed during 2026. 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





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.

The Ibsen town of Skien – The First Act Started here

Henrik Ibsen, one of the world's greatest playwrights, was born in Skien on the 20th of March 1828. His father, Knud Ibsen, was one of the wealthiest men in the town, engaged in extensive trade and importing goods from various parts of the world. The Ibsen family had a strong standing in the patrician class of Skien and was closely connected to the most prominent families in the area.

The first half of the 19th century was a time of change in Norway, and many families experienced deep financial problems. The Ibsen family was not an exception: In 1833, Knud Ibsen bought Venstøp farm as a summer residence for the family, but only two years later, he had to sell his houses and his businesses in town, and the family moved to Venstøp. Henrik lived there from the age of seven until he left Skien in 1843. His childhood home Venstøp is now the Henrik Ibsen Museum. His earliest years in Skien provided a rich source of inspiration for his writing.

See ibsenbyen.no/en/henrik-ibsen/

Celebrating Henrik Ibsen

Each year, Skien celebrates Henrik Ibsen's birthday on March the 20th. The theatre, the concert hall, the museum, the library of Skien and others provides a variety of events in the month of March. Among these is the annual National Ibsen Award, which is given to the author of a dramatic text that has been premiered in a professional Norwegian theatre during the previous year.

In 2028 Skien and the rest of the world will celebrate the bicentennial of Henrik Ibsen's birth.

Read more and follow our preparation at ibsenbyen.no

Ibsen
byenSkien



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 environment from Ibsen's time is found in the Snipetorp area.

This is where the Ibsen family moved in 1843 when things got even worse, and they had to sell Venstøp. This happened just after Henrik Ibsen left for Grimstad, so he never lived here, but visited his family on several occasions until 1850.

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.

Download the brochure at
ibsenbyen.no

Ibsen
byen Skien





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





LEISURE AND ACTIVITIES





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)





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





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.

- Dock for canoe and kayak slipway which has universally designed access down to the dock.
- Playground where emphasis is placed on that everyone should be able to use the play equipment (universally designed).
- Universally designed bathing bucket.
- Long bench - which is also a balance element for small children.
- Morellund with barbeques and benches.
- Activity sculpture "Vingen".
- HC parking.
- Drop-off pocket for canoe and kayak.
- Year-round toilets.
- Summer BUA where you can borrow various types of equipment in the summer.
- Grass areas that can be used for relaxation, picnics and play.
- Twelve information elements that tell about the biodiversity in the area.

We plan to put this in place in the area:

- New changing hut and expansion of the beach.
- Water play "Telemark Canal".

At Bakkestranda you also find the sculpture "Rottejomfruen" (the "Rat -Wife") from Henrik Ibsen's play, "Little Eyolf". The sculpture was created by Marit Benthe 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: Peter Erikse



Photo: Arve Kern

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

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

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.



Photo: Arve Kern



Photo: 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.

Høyt under taket in Skien

In "Høyt under taket Skien" on Klosterøya, 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

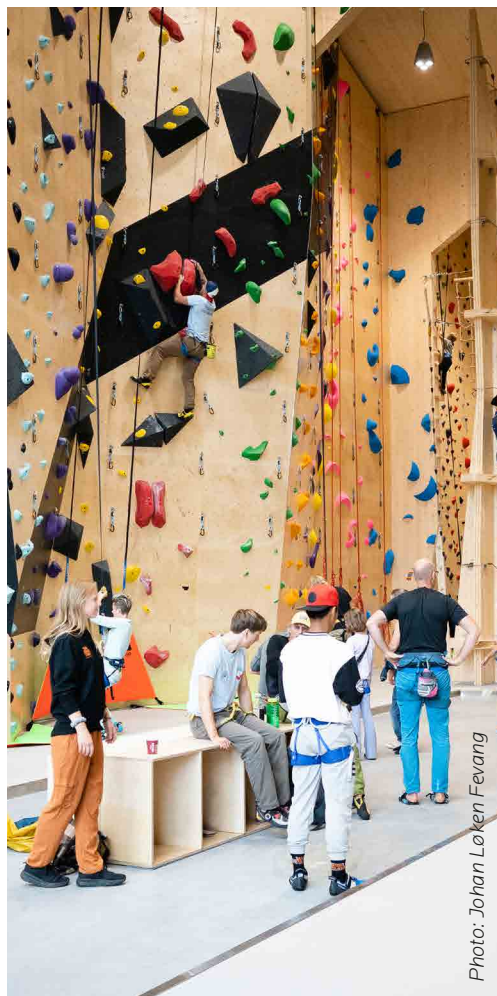


Photo: Johan Loken Fevang

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 folkracing and rallycross. The centre is located at Ekornerød in Flittig. Here you can participate in folkracing, 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 folkracing, 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





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









Go, Odd!

How about cheering on our boys on the Odd football team at a home game at the Skagerak Arena?

The team from Skien provides excitement and 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.

Spriten Art Hall

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

Spriten 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



SPRITTEN KUNSTHALL

SPRITTEN 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



Photo: Ketil Hardy

A large crowd of people is gathered outdoors at dusk, sitting on the ground and facing a stage area. The scene is framed by large, leafy trees, and the sky is a mix of blue and orange from the setting sun. The text "STAGES GREAT AND SMALL" is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

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 and Gråtenmoen

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: bydelshusene.no



Photo: Anne Spanem

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

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

Many cultural events

There are a number of cultural organizers who invite to festivals, concerts and markets throughout the year. Follow Visit Telemark's event calendar visittelemark.no/hva-skjer

Skien Jazz

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







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



Photo: Charlotte Davie





We are developing the Henrik Ibsen Museum

Ibsen's childhood home at Venstøp is now transforming into a new and modern museum. The barn will be converted into a year-round museum, and the main house will be restored back to the time when Henrik Ibsen and his family lived there. In 2028 we will celebrate Ibsen's 200th birthday and on this occasion, we will reopen the museum with brand new exhibitions, authentic childhood home and a variety of events throughout the year.

Until then we offer you a variety of Ibsen-walks and exhibitions where you can learn more about his life and literature, at our museum in Brekkeparken, in the city center. Henrik Ibsen's birth town. The world-renowned playwright Henrik Ibsen was born in Skien on March 20th, 1828. The family lived in Stockmanngården, where his father, Knud Ibsen, ran a shop. When Henrik was two years old the family took over his grandfather's trading house, just a few blocks away.

Henrik's grandfather had made a fortune through grain import and production of liquor. Knud Ibsen expanded the distillery production and was one of Skien's wealthiest men in the early 1830s. He acquired the estate Venstøp and made large investments in the distillery. However, these investments turned into losses when the government increased alcohol taxes. In December 1834, creditors with liens on the Ibsen family's businesses began to demand forced sales of their properties. In 1835, Henrik Ibsen's childhood home in the city center was sold, and the family moved to the Venstøp estate.

For more information:

henrikibsenmuseum.no

Brekkeparken open air museum

At the top of a hill above Skien city centre is Brekkeparken. Brekkeparken is known for its floral beauty, old log houses, the historical manor; Søndre Brekke, the new museum building with exhibitions and activities. Enjoy a good lunch at the Aall inn café or dinner and concerts at the cozy summer café in the park.

Telemark Museum

The Historical manor once housed Norway's first minister of trade, Niels Aall. The Aall family lived in the manor from 1810 to 1830, and the house's exterior and interior reflects this important period of time in Norway.

You can get guided tours at all the locations in the park. While the Henrik Ibsen Museum is undergoing restorations you can also get guided tours about the famous playwright Henrik Ibsen's childhood, life and works in the park. The Henrik Ibsen Museum will reopen in 2028.

In addition to the museum, you will find a popular playground and places to have picnics.

The Grey Lady

The historical manor also offers the story of the Gray Lady - a ghost that has generated great interest among the public, and which many claim to have seen over the years. There is some disagreement about who the Grey Lady was, but what we can all agree on is that it started at a ball, when the crown prince Christian Fredrik of Danmark-Norway visited in 1813.

Tulip park

Brekkeparken is inspired by English landscape gardens. The floral beauty in Brekkeparken is widely known, and in May 27,000 tulips blossom.

For more information:
telemarkmuseum.no



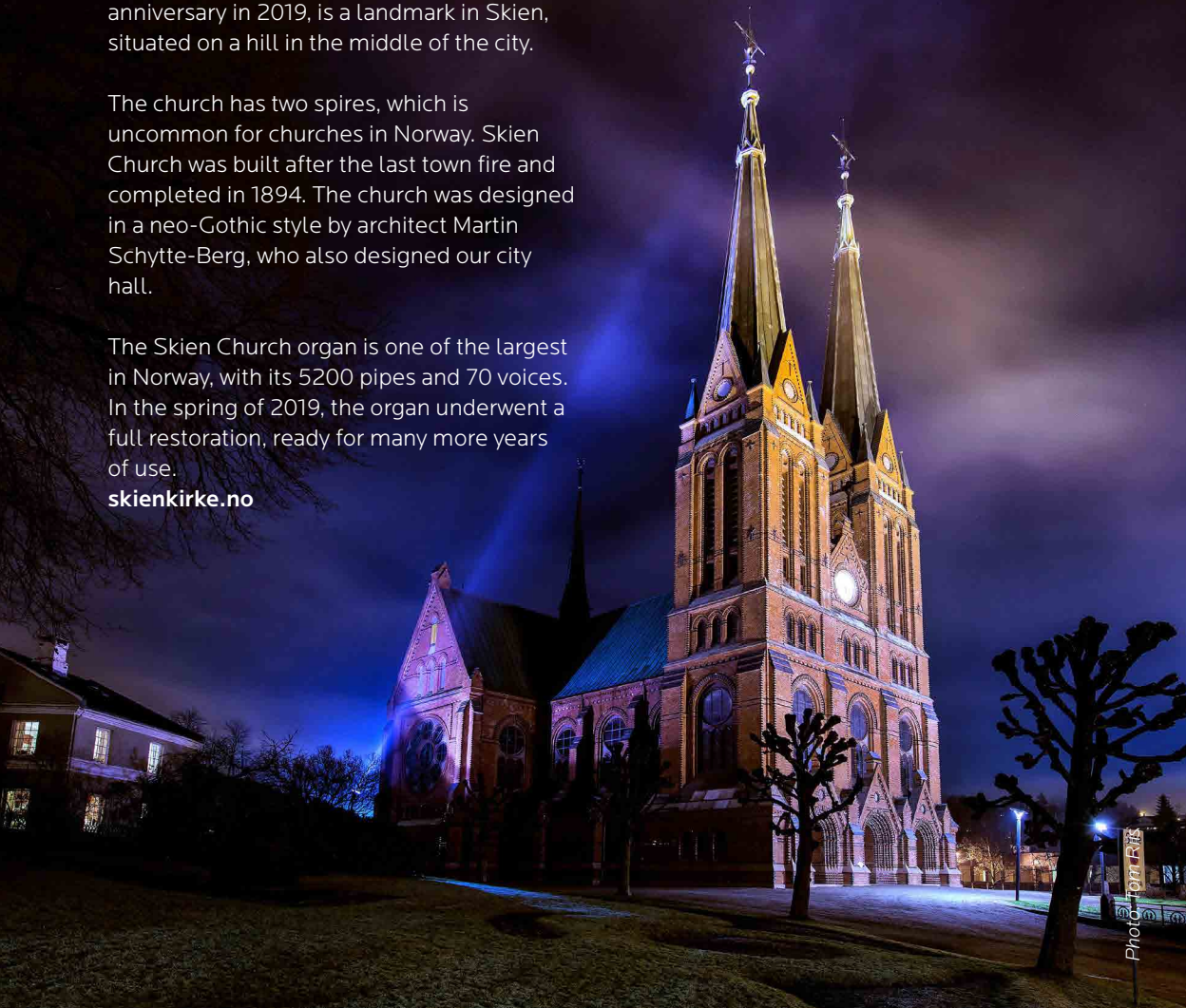
Skien Church

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 Løberg and Fossum sites are open to visitors in the summer.

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.







NATURE AND TRAILS



Photo: Charlotte Davie

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.

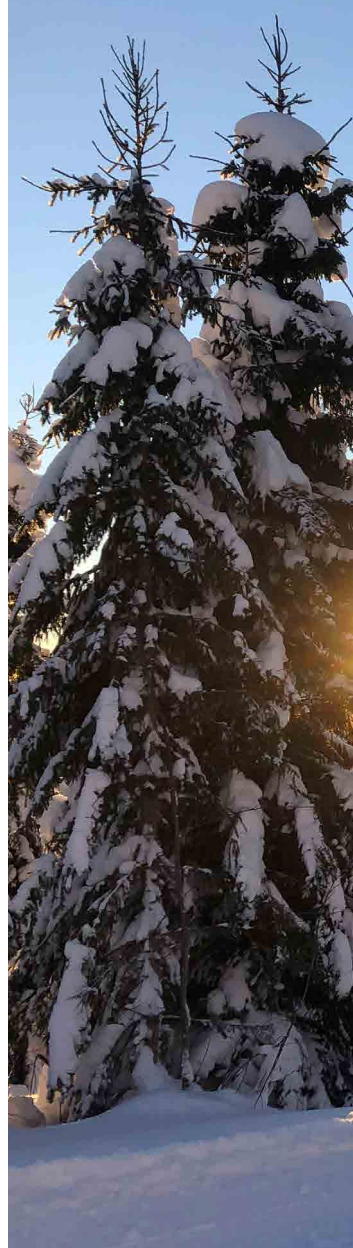




Photo: Lene Kaasli Hysing

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-Skrehelle, 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







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

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.





Photo: Kjetil Kalis

www.skien.kommune.no



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