Denmark's maritime heritage [1]

It’s easy to get out onto the water and experience real Danish maritime history for yourself. A number of harbour towns around Denmark have important maritime attractions, festivals and vintage sailing ships to board. Here are some great places to discover Denmark’s history on the high seas.

Row in a Viking longboat

At the Viking Ship Museum [2] in Roskilde, you can play the part of oarsman on a reconstructed Viking ship. At the museum’s heritage boatyard, you can watch and chat to skilled craftspeople and marine archaeologists as they go about their work.

The world’s oldest riverboat

Chug across lakes near Silkeborg in the world’s oldest operating paddle steamer, Hjejlen [3]. On board, you’ll see over 150 years of working history, as you sail past rolling hills, woodlands and the AQUA freshwater park [4].

The Frigate Jutland

The Maritime Heritage Centre [5] in Ebeltoft features the world’s longest vintage frigate, Jutland. Get up close to its fully-armoured cannons on board and visit the centre’s heritage boatyard to join daily sailing trips on vintage schooners along the coast of the Mols Bjerge National Park [6].

Tall Ships Race 2013

Europe’s largest and most magnificent classic regatta takes place every year and features classic ships and large vintage vessels. Catch the start of the 2013 race in the city of Aarhus [7] between 4 and 7 July.

The Danish Maritime Museum

The current Danish Maritime Museum [8] is found at the UNESCO World Heritage Site [9] of Kronborg Castle [10], Elsinore (Helsingør). Visit it here until 2013, when it is set to move into an impressive new dockland site, designed by award-winning Danish architect Bjarke Ingels [11].

The Royal Danish Naval Museum

An exceptional collection of old ship models are on display at the Royal Danish Naval Museum [12], many of them 300 years old. Visit the museum at an old seaman’s hospital in Copenhagen’s old town.

The Funen Archipelago

Jump onboard the MS Helge, a vintage ferry that takes you on a round-trip of the Funen Archipelago [13], including Troense, one of Denmark’s most picturesque villages with thatched cottages, and the 17th century Valdemars Castle [14].

The Funen Vintage Regatta

Fancy joining a regatta of 40 vintage schooners? The annual Round Funen (Fyn Rundt) Regatta [15] is open to paying passengers. You can sail for one or more days and take in historical ports of

call such as Kerteminde and Faaborg [16].

Maritime Centre of Denmark

Visit Denmark's national Maritime Centre [17] (Maritimt Center) in Svendborg and enjoy sailing trips on vintage schooners to local islands such as Skarø [18], as well as a heritage harbour with stunning views. The famous Fyn Rundt Regatta departs from here.

Fejø fruit boats

Each September, you can see the arrival of the Fejø fruit boats to the Nyhavn [19] canal in Copenhagen. These boats have brought apples and pears to the capital from the island of Fejø since the 1930s and all proceeds go to children's charities on the island.

Vintage dinghy sailing

For something small and unique, head to the southern archipelago island of Strynø [20] and hire a smakke to go seal-watching. A smakke is an old wooden dinghy common to these parts and you can hire them from the island's heritage boatyard [21].

Tordenskiold Days

Tordenskiold [22] was a Danish-Norwegian sea hero, celebrated each year at the costumed festival in the town of Frederikshavn [23]. Witness reconstructions of historic events that took place during the Great Northern War (1709-20).

Ertholmene sea fortress

The small Ertholmene island cluster, near Bornholm, is actually a 300-year-old naval fortress straddling rocky outcrops in the Baltic Sea. The islands are home to less than 100 people and you can visit by boat from Bornholm [24].

West coast fishing boats

While wandering the wide, sandy beaches of Løkken in Northern Jutland [23], you will see a very rare sight. This is one of the last places in Europe where large classic wooden fishing vessels are pulled up onto the shore each evening.

Further reading

Read more about The History of Denmark [25].