



Southern Jutland

There's a surprising grab bag of goodies for travellers in Southern Jutland. It's a low-key region of salty little offshore islands, understated royal palaces and character-filled historic towns, with unexpectedly modern treats in the form of edgy art and architecture and offbeat design museums. The region looks for inspiration from a few different sources – from the sea, naturally, but also beyond that. Southern Jutland is the only part of Denmark connected to mainland Europe (the current border dates only from 1920), and in places such as Tønder and Sønderborg you can feel the historic ties with Germany – and the present-day ones, too, particularly in camping grounds on Rømø or Als come high summer. Esbjerg has a touch of the 'wild frontier' about it – a new city (by Danish standards) that has grown big and affluent off the back of oil, fishing and trading. Its focus is to the west, to the oilfields of the North Sea, and its links to the UK mean it could well be your first introduction to Denmark.

But the jewel in Southern Jutland's crown, and an absolute must-see, is picturesque little Ribe, the country's oldest town. This is historic Denmark at its most photogenic, and once you get over the armies of tourists wielding ice-cream cones, you can't help but fall in love with the skewwhiff charm of the half-timbered houses, the sweetly meandering river and the imposing presence of the cathedral.

The islands of Als, Fanø and Rømø have clear-cut appeal for beach-going holidaymakers, but bird-watchers also love this region. The tidal rhythms of the west-coast Wadden Sea and surrounding marshland bring an abundance of feathered friends (and their fanciers) to the region. An eclectic mix of royal-watchers, castle-collectors and even chair-enthusiasts may also be ticking must-sees off their list.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Joining the night watchman on a memorable evening walk through beautiful **Ribe** (p243)
- Indulging princess fantasies in fairy-tale **Møgeltønder** (p249)
- Heading from modern, industrial Esbjerg to salty-dog **Fanø** (p236) in only 12 minutes
- Envyng **Kolding** (p230) its very cool mix of the old and the new
- Checking out the blokarts (go-karts with sails) at Sønderstrand on **Rømø** (p245)
- Wrapping your head around the mind-bending exhibits and experiments of **Danfoss Universe** (p252)



KOLDING

pop 55,000

Kolding is a vibrant, picturesque and eminently likeable mid-sized town with a crowd-pleasing mix of old and new, wonderfully summed up in one of its major drawcards, the hill-top castle of Koldinghus. After a stroll through the charming old quarters at the town's heart, you can head to Trapholt to admire the modern furniture design that Denmark is renowned for. It's a winning combination.

Information

Danske Bank (Jernbanegade 3)

Library (☎ 79 79 11 00; Slotssøvejen 4) Seriously sleek new library with free internet.

Post office (Banegårdspladsen 8) Next to the train station.

Surfers Paradise (☎ 75 50 18 19; 2nd fl, Jernbanegade 11; per hr 36kr; ☎ noon-3am) Internet café.

Tourist office (☎ 76 33 21 00; www.visitkolding.dk; Aksektorv 8; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat) Knowledgeable staff help with town info and sell the Kulturkort Kolding (100kr), which offers free entry to Koldinghus and Trapholt.

Sights

Koldinghus (☎ 76 33 81 00; www.koldinghus.dk; Adelgade 1; adult/child 65kr/free; ☎ 10am-5pm) is the town's extravagant showpiece, with the requisite turbulent history. A fortress occupied the land in 1268, while parts of the castle you see before you today can be traced to the mid-15th century. The year of its most recent mishap was 1808 – at that time the castle was hosting Spanish soldiers during the Napoleonic Wars. Missing the Mediterranean summer, the soldiers lit a fire to restore some inner heat. This heat soon turned into an inferno, sending the castle up in a blaze of glory that left nothing but soot-covered walls. The tower then spectacularly caught fire and collapsed through the Great Hall and onto the castle chapel. At the time, the Danish state was at war and bankrupt, and the common school of thought was that the castle would be left in ruins. If only they could see it now, shining like never before and supported internally by strikingly modern timber-and-steel structures. The interplay between old and new architectural styles is indeed a highlight, although there are good displays, too, including collections of historic paintings and silver-

