



Special places have special colours. In Jutland, the radiant mustard yellow of the buildings turns towns into splashes

of fallen sunshine, while summer dusks bring the ‘blue hour’, when sea and sky merge into beautiful unity. Majestic dunes that would be the envy of the Sahara rise in silky ripples of platinum sand.

On my first day, I jinked through tussocky little dunes lent an eerie edge by German World War II bunkers, then along a vast straw-coloured beach to the slender sandbar that marks Denmark’s northern tip at Grenen, where two differently hued seas collide – the Kattegat jostling the Skagerrak in an impasto of choppy wavelets.

Think of Jutland as the Scandinavian riposte to Cornwall, a slender 110km-long peninsula reaching up from the cosmopolitan gateway city of Aalborg into the nook where Norway meets Sweden. For centuries it was a rugged backwater of lonely fishing hamlets, where the moated Renaissance jewel Voergaard Slot ([voergaardslot.dk](http://voergaardslot.dk)) stands out as a wonderful historical quirk. The castle has one of Denmark’s most ravishing interiors, priceless art and an infamous dungeon.

AN ARTY VIBE

Jutland stayed off radar until artists came in the late 1800s to forge a Danish Impressionism, whose depictions of hardy fisherfolk and elegant bourgeoisie fill the **Museum** ([skagenskunstmuseer.dk](http://skagenskunstmuseer.dk)) in the chic seaside town of Skagen (‘Skay-en’). I tuned deeper into the artist vibe at the nearby bohemian museum **Anchers Hus** (4 Markvej), home of 19th-century painters Michael and Anna Anchers.

The things that drew artists to Jutland remain. Magical light bounces off surging sea and wave-swept strands, while ocean sunsets usher in night skies thickly speckled with stars. Dreamy →



# Denmark’s seaside escape

The magical Jutland peninsula is a place of shifting sands, wide blue skies – and some of the best cuisine the country has to offer. Norman Miller heads to its northern shores for stellar seaside feasts with a side order of history



JUTLAND – IT’S A SHORE THING, CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PICTURE Grenen, at the meeting of the seas; there’s plenty more fish and surfing, too; daily bread at Keramikafé; on the harbour, Skagen Fiskerestaurant combines fish and the arts – as seen in this vintage poster





towns embrace fishing harbours lined with seafood spots. Walking among picket-fenced houses, I indulged in Scandi seaside fantasies of moving here to take up painting.

But Jutland also has one of Europe’s most restless shores, a hymn to erosion’s double act with eternity. Vast dunes shift in ceaseless movement, devouring ancient churches such as the 14th-century **Sand-Covered Church**. Only the tower remains, pointing heavenward in wooded dunes 3km from Skagen.

### MICHELIN STARS TO ‘MAMA COOKING’

On the plus side, nature gives Jutland a fabulous larder. Take **Skagen Fiskerestaurant** (skagenfiskerestaurant.dk), beside Denmark’s largest fishing harbour. The floor is covered in scuffable sand beneath artful vintage posters, while chef Jesper Winter’s menu showcases just-landed flounder and plaice with Nordic accompaniments such as lingonberry, as well as succulent Norwegian lobster tails, their legendary homemade fishcakes (fiskedeller) and dill-dusted Skagen prawns.

I ended lunch with a snifter (okay, two) of lip-smacking local



hooch called bjesk, flavoured by Jesper with foraged finds such as sea wormwood, crowberry and sea buckthorn. “I love going out in nature to pick herbs for the bjesk,” said Winter, before praising local foodie possibilities. “For such a small town, Skagen is unique for its choice of food, from Michelin stars to ‘mama cooking’.”

It’s not just restaurants. Harbourside fishmonger **Aavangs Fiskehus** (aavangsfiskehus.dk) is a perfect picnic pitstop: herring in multiple ways, freshly cooked prawns, filled seafood baps. Just inland, **Slagter Munch** (munch-skagen.dk) is a famed family deli whose organic hams are a favourite of Denmark’s Queen Margrethe. As I nibbled 24-month Skagen skinke (cured ham) and rullepølse (pork belly streaked with seams of herbs and spices like a piggy swiss roll), I thought: she’s on to something.

Skagen’s most venerable gourmet spot is **Brøndums Hotel** (broendums-hotel.dk), where I headed for dinner as the evening sun dappled its pretty 1860s facade. The 19th-century painters were fed and watered here too, placing art in the wood-panelled lounge and dining room that later formed the nucleus of the nearby gallery. Now

it’s a foodie beacon, where I followed the famed fish soup (see box, opposite) with turbot paired with bright purple beetroot sauce, earthy fennel and leafy spinach beet.

But Skagen does classic Danish simplicity too – such as the smørrebrød (open sandwiches) served at the laidback **Iscafeen Skagen** (Oddevej 2A) beside a landmark red-brick water tower. “If you can see the bread it isn’t proper smørrebrød,” explained owner Maria.

Skippping classic coverings like herring/pickles/eggs and Skagen shrimp, I plumped for ‘dyrlægans natmad’ after finding out it translates as ‘veterinarian’s night snack’. This old farmhouse offering turned out to be liver pâté and salted veal with salad, plus wobbly dollops of meaty aspic. Maria told me the Danes call this ‘sky’ and “the Swedes have a version called ‘buttered goose,’” she laughed, as if letting me in on a droll Nordic foodie joke.

### SURFSIDE SNACKING

Leaving Skagen, I headed for the west coast artists’ village of Lønstrup, pausing en route to scale Denmark’s biggest dune at Rabjerg Mile, a sea of sand that doubled as the Sahara in vintage Danish films.

Lønstrup’s little studio-lined streets are a delight and I paused along the way to chat to artists such as potter Vibe Valkenberg, as she worked and spun clay on her wheel in the middle of the cosy gallery café at **Keramoda** (keramoda.dk).

In the afternoon I saw an icon of Jutland’s tussle between land and sea up close: the abandoned lighthouse overwhelmed by the Rubjerg Knude dunes. Local guide Jakob Kofoed talked about plans to move the structure inland, acting as if moving lighthouses is an everyday Jutland thing, while pointing to where his former office lay buried by sand.

A late-afternoon winding back road drive led me through little woods and past farms to Hirtshals, another busy little port with more come-to-me quayside diners, such as the upscale **Abstrakt** (restaurantabstrakt.dk) or the simpler **Fiskehus** (hirtshalsfiskehus.dk). I went for the latter to try the classic Jutland dish stjernes kud (shooting star). Named for Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin after he visited in the 1960s, it turned out to be a vast assemblage of fried and boiled fish, smoked salmon, caviar and salad – with, of course, a Russian dressing. Fish soup was cosmic too, full of mussels

bobbing in rich red bisque.

My last night was at Løkken, a Nordic surf mecca that locals have nicknamed Cold Hawaii.

**North Shore Surf** (northshoresurf.dk) is where to learn to hang ten, complemented by beach yoga and wood barrel beach saunas. And while the **Havs** diner (husethavs.dk) provides hip après-surf snacks, wave riders and others also love its summer pop-up seafood stall (see box, right).

### HITTING THE FOOD TRAIL

The gateway city Aalborg offers a cultural Jutland amuse-bouche. On its Limfjord waterfront, the boxy Musikkens Hus concert hall and the curvy roofed Utzon Centre are steel beauties, the latter celebrating the local architect who designed Sydney Opera House. And don't miss the inspiring Kunsten contemporary gallery designed by Alvar Aalto, and historic jewels like the 14th-century Budolfi Church with its stunning painted wood interior.

Aalborg is also a hotspot on Jutland’s **Gastro North** (gastronorth.dk) food trail, a clutch of restaurants sure to get Instagram-loving gourmands in a happy snappy tizz. At Morten Nielsen’s **Mortens Kro** (mortenskro.dk; see recipe p122),



### 5 MUSTN’T-MISS JUTLAND EXPERIENCES

#### 1 FISH SOUP AT BRØNDUMS HOTEL, SKAGEN

Each new chef puts their spin on Madam Brøndum’s classic 19th-century recipe. Dennis Boe Carlsen offers a pretty pink, slightly tart variation using rich, fried turbot bone stock.

[broendums-hotel.dk](http://broendums-hotel.dk)

#### 2 THE VIEW AT VILLA VEST, LØNSTRUP

A palely serene beachside dining room frames views waiters wryly acknowledge can distract from the excellent changing seasonal dishes.

[villavest.dk](http://villavest.dk)

#### 3 SØGAARDS BREWHOUSE, AALBORG

Perfect for a laid-back lunch or sundowner on a historic cobbled square, enjoying cool Danish pub grub such as pork crackling with blackcurrant powder, alongside 40-plus ales and local aquavits.

[soegaardsbryghus.dk](http://soegaardsbryghus.dk)

#### 4 POP-UP SEAFOOD STALL, LØKKEN

By beached boats and wood barrel saunas, North Shore Surf’s beach pop-up hawks local beer-battered fish and chips, fab fiskedeller and renowned ‘surfer’s toast’ made with Jutland ham and cheese.

[northshoresurf.dk](http://northshoresurf.dk)

#### 5 KERAMIKCAFÉ MØLLEHUSET, NEAR LØNSTRUP

Wonderfully atmospheric pottery café at an old Dutch-style windmill near Lønstrup – its homemade cakes are a Jutland legend.

[mollehuset.com](http://mollehuset.com)

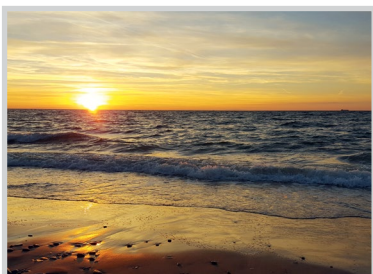


PHOTOGRAPHS: NORMAN MILLER, TURISTHUS NORD SKAGEN, METTE JONSEN, VISITDENMARK, ERIK CHRISTOPHERSEN



harbour, it's an old factory transformed into a vast zany street-food hub offering cuisines from around the world – American, Balkan, Mexican.

"You don't need to be a chef – you just need passion to cook the food you want," manager Isabel Enevoldsen told me. As we watched boats bobbing on the sea, I wrestled a pile of pulled duck and salty duck-fat fries while supping deeply on a glass of delicious dark Kissmeyer beer. The sun was shining, the mood was relaxed and everything was just dandy. Welcome to Jutland.



## WHERE TO STAY

### • **Ruths Hotel, Skagen**

Set amid dunes in Skagen's old west coast fishing quarter, Ruths offers unstuffy historic luxury: fine Danish art and design, a spa, plus excellent Gastro North restaurant. Doubles from £250 b&b (offers available). [ruths-hotel.dk](http://ruths-hotel.dk)

### • **Løkken Strand Hotel**

In a former 1920s school, this distinctive hotel offers 16 airy rooms with balconies, plus breakfast served in the atmospheric old school gym. Doubles from £130 b&b. [hotelloekkenstrand.dk](http://hotelloekkenstrand.dk)

## HOW TO GET THERE

Ryanair flies direct from London Stansted to Aalborg. Norwegian offers UK flights via Copenhagen.

## CAR HIRE

You'll need a car to get around. Hire one at Aalborg airport with Avis ([avis.com/en/locations/dk/aalborg](http://avis.com/en/locations/dk/aalborg)) from £97 for a week.

## Morten Nielsen's jomfruen smørrebrød

SERVES 2. HANDS-ON TIME 20 MIN, OVEN TIME  
15-20 MIN, PLUS COOLING AND 2 HOURS PICKLING



Buy raw langoustines from your fishmonger or frozen in large Sainsbury's and online at [thefishsociety.co.uk](http://thefishsociety.co.uk) – defrost to cook. For a guide on how to prepare langoustines, search [deliciousmagazine.co.uk](http://deliciousmagazine.co.uk). Keep leftover pickled fennel in the pickling liquid in a sterilised jar for up to 2 weeks.

- 1 fennel bulb, fronds reserved to garnish
- 50g good quality mayonnaise
- Finely grated zest and juice ½ lemon
- 3 dark rye bread slices, thinly cut
- Knob of butter for frying
- 8-10 sustainable raw langoustines, shelled (see tips)
- 1 ripe avocado, sliced and tossed with juice ½ lemon

### FOR THE ELDERFLOWER PICKLE

- 100ml elderflower cordial
- 100ml apple cider vinegar
- 1 star anise
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 1 tsp coriander seeds

### YOU'LL ALSO NEED

- Food processor

**1** Thinly slice the fennel, using a mandoline if you have one, then put in a bowl and sprinkle with salt. Set aside for 1 hour.

**2** In a small bowl, mix the mayonnaise with the lemon zest and juice to taste, then cover and chill until ready to serve.

**3** Heat the oven to 140°C/120°C fan/gas 1. Put 1 rye bread slice in a food processor and whizz to make fine crumbs. Spread out on a baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes until crisp. Set aside to cool, then whizz again. Season to taste with salt.

**4** Mix all the elderflower pickle ingredients with 200ml water in a small pan, then heat gently until just steaming. Rinse the fennel, put in a glass or ceramic bowl (or large sterilised jar if you plan to keep it for while) and cover with the hot pickling liquid. Cool, then chill for at least 1 hour.

**5** Heat a generous knob of butter in a frying pan, add the langoustines and fry for a few minutes until cooked through.

**6** Lightly toast the remaining rye bread slices, then halve. Top with avocado, fennel, langoustines, lemony mayo, a sprinkle of rye breadcrumbs and fennel fronds.

**PER SERVING** 616kcal, 37.7g fat (6.2g saturated), 28.4g protein, 36.2g carbs (5.8g sugars), 1.7g salt, 9.3g fibre

**WINE EDITOR'S CHOICE** A crisp, dry white such as a Loire sauvignon blanc or muscadet – or a bone-dry cider. **d**  
Morten is chef at Mortens Kro, Aalborg

TRY  
THIS AT  
HOME

