

The bicycle couldn't be more perfect, both for short rides around the city centre and for getting to destinations located in the outskirts of the city.

This has been the case for more than a century, and the boy and the girl in this somewhat posed picture from 1914 undoubtedly had some exciting rides in the countryside ahead of them.

Jump on your bike, use the guide and let the city's history unfold at your own pace. On a bicycle, you enjoy the experience right up close – both the modern city and the encounter with the Viking Age and medieval Odense.

Have a fun trip!





Early Odense

◀ *The oldest depiction of Odense is Braunius' Prospekt (Prospect) from 1593. It shows that early Odense was located within a well-defined area, surrounded by streams, wetlands and embankments. The main features such as the street layouts and the location of the city gates are probably reliable, whereas the depiction of individual buildings should probably not be regarded as authentic.*

The name Odense dates back to the Viking Age, when there was a pagan shrine, a “Vi”, in the area where people worshipped the Nordic gods. The city’s name probably came from the name of the shrine, “Odins Vi”, having evolved into the city’s current name over time.

“Odins Vi” must have been an important meeting place for many people in the Viking Age. The place of worship could easily have been the site where an early form of urbanisation began; some people would certainly have chosen to settle here and therefore built houses in the area near the River Odense Å, which resulted in a form of early roads.

In the 980s, King Harald Bluetooth had a Viking fortress, Nonnebakken, built on the south side of the river. This probably also made the area around the place of worship an attractive area for market activity. It is also possible that the king’s own estate was lo-

cated in an area near “Odins Vi”.

From 980 to 1100, Odense developed from a small place of worship into a Christian town with a monastery and monks, a royal estate, a royal saint and a resident population. The many pilgrims, who came to experience the miracles at his shrine after the canonisation of King Canute the Holy in 1100, would undoubtedly have had a significant impact on the city’s growth.

In ancient times, the River Odense Å formed the city’s southern border. To the east, the city was demarcated by Vor Frue Kirke (the Church of Our Lady) and through Pjentedamsgade, which, in the Middle Ages, was a stream and a mill pond. The northern part of the city was also defined by water, Byens Bæk (the city stream), which coursed through what is now Ramsherred and Hans Jensens Stræde. This stream was later known by the rather unflat-

tering name Lorteren den (Shit trench), before being renamed to the more pompous Rosenbækken (Rose brook). To the north, the city expanded to take in the Nørregade district, including St John's Church and Kongens Have (The King's Garden). At the time of the Reformation in 1536, the western boundary was Piledammen – an area of wetland that roughly extended along the current Pantheonsgade.

Watercourses and wetlands and their embankments were seemingly regarded as sufficient defences and demarcation of the city. The River Odense Å thus formed the city's southern border. The eastern border was also relatively fixed, while the expansions in Odense occurred to the west and north during the Middle Ages, for example, along Nørregade.



▲ A German document from 988 is officially considered Odense's birth certificate, and the city celebrated its 1,000th anniversary in 1988.

▼ The city gates are clearly marked on Braunius' prospect and show the approach roads to the city. The city gates played an important role because it was here that the incoming goods were taxed.



1

Møntergården
Møntestræde 1
5000 Odense C

Møntergården: Byens Liv (City life)

The "Byens liv" exhibition is a journey back to Odense's earliest history from around 900–1500 AD. The journey begins right at the end of the Viking Age, on the cusp of the Middle Ages, as this is when Odense is first mentioned in written sources – i.e. in a German document from 988 – in which Count Gerhard III of Holstein takes Odense under his protection and confirms the city's privileges. The document also refers to churches in Schleswig, Ribe, Aarhus and Odense.

2

Vor Frue Kirke

Frue Kirkestræde 10
5000 Odense C

Vor Frue Kirke

The parish of Vor Frue (Our Lady) covers the eastern part of the city. The current Church of Our Lady was probably built in the mid-13th century, but the parish is thought to have been parcelled out in the early 12th century. The numerous reused ashlar and profiled granite plinth stones in the masonry point both to a predecessor and a lengthy construction period.

From the outset, the church had an unusually long chancel and the southern transept as well as the sacristy. The vaults were not built until the late Middle Ages, when the tower was also built. The northern transept was built in around 1500.

The Church of Our Lady is un-



usually large for a parish church. This is partly because of the large number of parishioners it had to hold, as it seems Odense was expanded to the east in the early 13th century. But it is possible that the size actually relates to the church's status as a deanery.

► *This silver chalice belonging to the Church of Our Lady is one of the finest chalices from 14th-century Denmark. Not only due to the extremely high, artistic quality of its craftsmanship, but it has also been used by the people of Odense since the Middle Ages.*



▲ *Braunius' depiction of The Church of Our Lady from 1593.*



3

Skt. Jørgens Gård

Ridehusgade/Skt. Jørgens Gade
5000 Odense C

Skt. Jørgens Gård

Leprosy was a much-feared disease in the Middle Ages. There

was no known effective treatment and the disease was not selective in its choice of victim. To limit the risk of infection, the sick were relegated to specially designated colonies outside the city known as "Skt. Jørgensgårde" (St George's leper hospitals) because St George was the protector of the lepers. In the Middle Ages, there

was a leprosy hospital, Skt. Jørgens Gården, and the hospital's chapel and churchyard on the corner of Ridehusgade and Skt. Jørgens Gade.

Having been declared a leper and sent here, it was virtually the same thing as being declared "living dead". According to tradition, a "death mass" was held for the leper: A procession followed the leper to the church, as if following a coffin, and during the mass, the person affected stood in the place of the coffin, wearing a shroud over which the priest threw earth. The leper was now declared dead to other living beings and had to remain at Skt. Jørgens Gården forever. The ritual may have been less macabre and, in fact, an initiation of the leper into the church, but the fact remains that lepers were doomed to live at Skt. Jørgens Gården for the rest of their lives.

Skt. Jørgens Gården was closed down in 1542. In the Middle Ages,



leprosy was considered a punishment from God. The first known written mention of leprosy from Denmark is a mention of a couple of lepers who were miraculously healed by Canute the Holy's grave in Odense.

▲ *(excavation plan with graves). Archaeological excavations of the Skt. Jørgens complex in 1980-81 revealed more than 1,100 graves, but it is estimated that some 1,500 to 1,600 people were buried in the churchyard during the 300 years that the hospital functioned.*

4

Ejby Mølle

Ejby Møllevej 22
5000 Odense C

Ejby Mølle mill

Mills were an important part of the medieval landscape and townscape as grain was a basic food in the Middle Ages. The rights to grind grain at a mill therefore promised a secure income.

The five known mills from in and around Odense in the Middle Ages were all watermills. The first mill mentioned in written sources is Munke Mølle mill, which stood where Munkemølle Stræde opens into Klosterbakken. Munke Mølle was owned by the Benedictine monks of St Canute's Abbey (Skt. Knuds Kloster) further up the hill. It is first mentioned in the late 1100s, but it may have existed before then.

The monks also owned Ejby



Mølle, which was situated where the treatment plant is located today. It is not known exactly when this mill was built, but it was probably sometime before 1200.

Inside the eastern part of the city area stood Pjentemølle mill. Blackfriars Monastery (Sortebrødre-klosteret) probably also had a water mill, and the king had a mill at his castle at Næsbyhoved.

Back as early as the Viking Age, an important trading post was

situated in the area around Ejby Mølle – centrally located by the approach road to the city and the River Odense Å – where goods were forged, woven, cast and traded. It was here that locals and foreigners passing through met.

▼ *The gilded mask pictured here was found on the Viking Age site at Ejby Mølle mill. It is both a pendant and an optical illusion, which can also be seen as an upside-down face.hovedet.*



5

City peace stones

Skt. Jørgens Gade 186 Rødegårdsvej between Bredalsvej and Eckersbergsvej. The corner of Helsingborggade and Tolderlundsvej.

Odense's city peace stones

In Odense, three "city peace stones" (byfredssten) have been preserved in their original locations. The stones relate to the special legal status that prevailed in what is probably best described as "Greater Odense" of that day. The stones were thus placed on the roads where the city's fields stopped and the rural areas began.



Within the area of the city – including its fields – criminal acts were punished more severely, so it made sense to visibly mark where the city ended. This particular law was repealed by Christian V in 1683, after which punishment for crimes such as theft,

murder and violence was the same, town or country. The survival of several of these stones following this royal action can probably be attributed to the fact that it was still practical in many contexts to know where the border between town and country lay.



The three preserved peace stones in Odense stand at

- 1) Skt. Jørgens Gade 186,
- 2) Rødegårdsvej between Bredalsvej and Eckersbergsvej and at
- 3) the corner of Helsingborggade and Tolderlundsvej. The location is known of four further stones, and these are marked with green signs – at
- 4) Sdr. Boulevard at Hedebækken,
- 5) Rømersvej,
- 6) Kertemindevej by the River Odense Å and at
- 7) Rugårdsvej in the dip at Snapind.

6

Villa Brandt

Hunderupvej 71
5230 Odense M

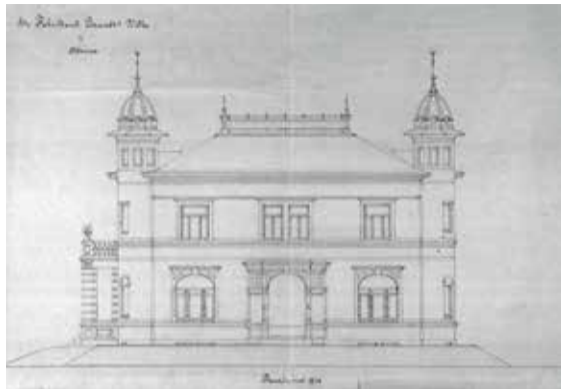
Villa Brandt

Søren Chr. Brandt, who was the man behind Brandts Klædefabrik (Brandt's Textile Mill), built one of the first villas in the fashionable neighbourhood on Hunderupvej in Odense. In 1895, he moved into the villa with his wife, Oluffa.

The story behind the sumptuous, castle-inspired style of the villa is that Brandt initially wanted to have his property built out on Næsbyhoved Slotsbanke (castle mound). His request was, however, rejected. Instead, he made an artificial mound on Hunderupvej, and with the help of Oluffa's cousin, the acclaimed architect Jens Vilhelm Dahlerup, the house was designed. Brandt was proba-



bly inspired by old engravings of Næsbyhoved Castle, and, with its square shape and four corner towers, the house was indeed more reminiscent of a castle than a villa. "Villa Brandt" was, by the standards of its day, very luxurious, and it was one of the first homes in Odense to have a water closet. Søren Chr. Brandt only managed to live in Villa Brandt for 10 years before he died in 1905. His widow, Oluffa Brandt, lived in the house until 1945, first with her children and then alone with her servants.



▲ *Façade drawing of Villa Brandt. For a period following its construction, the house was the city's biggest villa, designed by architect Vilhelm Dahlerup..*

► *Reconstruction of Næsbyhoved Slot as it might have looked.*



7

Nonnebakken

Nonnebakken 1
5000 Odense C

Nonnebakken – Odense's Viking fortress

Nonnebakken in Odense is one of the five known ring fortresses found in Denmark. It is highly likely that the fortresses were built by Harald Bluetooth – “the Harald who conquered all of Denmark and made the Danes Christian” – in around 980.

A common feature of all the fortresses is that they were built with symmetrical consistency. The



ramparts were shaped as precise circles, and the interior of the fortress, which was also constructed to set measurements, consisted of regular, identical long houses, which functioned as living quarters. The people who Harald Bluetooth reigned over must have been highly disciplined.

The exact purpose of the fortresses is not known, but at a guess, the mighty edifices were intended to symbolise and uphold the royal power, and perhaps function as training camps and as strongholds.

The Vikings disappeared at the

end of 1100, and the Viking fortress remained where it was until the arrival of the sisters of the Benedictine Order in the mid-12th century, who built their convent in the remains of the ring fortress – hence the name Nonnebakken (or Nun Hill in English). However, the nuns did not stay at Nonnebakken for long, as in 1200 they moved to Dalum, where they remained until the Reformation. The graves of nuns still remain in the area.

The remains of the fortress and the convent were the only settlement south of the river until up into the 19th century. In 1909,



◀ *Today, Denmark has five known ring fortresses, which were obviously built by the same developer, namely Harald Bluetooth. Vallø Borgring at Køge, Nonnebakken, Aggersborg at Løgstør, Fyrkat (pictured) at Hobro and Trelleborg at Slagelse.*

most of the area was excavated by a contractor, and the road Filosofgangen is now where parts of the old ramparts lay, but some archaeological traces remain preserved. In the gap between TietgenSkolen and Giersing Realskole, the curve of the old fortress can still be made out.

► *Apart from the discovery of some Viking jewellery, the “Nonnebakken” Viking fortress has unfortunately almost all but disappeared. In 1909, the last significant visible traces were excavated in order to obtain material for the construction of Filosofgangen.*

Vesterport

5000 Odense C

The city gates

From sometime in the Middle Ages up to 1851, all traffic to and from Odense passed through seven city gates. The four main gates were Vesterport, Pjenteport, Møglebroport and Nørreport. There was also a gate on Vindegade, roughly where no. 9 stands today, and one at the end of Munkemøllestræde on the north side of the river. The seventh gate was built at the same time as the construction of Kongensgade in 1847.

The early city gates were mostly built of wood. The constructions varied, but the simplest consisted of two posts, a lintel, two gate leaves and a length of fencing attaching the gate to the buildings on the street.



In 1580, Frederik II was to hold a commendation ceremony in Odense, which resulted in the rebuilding of Vesterport in stone. It was located where Pantheonsgade now runs into Vestergade, which, back then, was 1–2 m lower than the current street level. We know, however, that there was an older Vesterport in the current pedestrian street by Vestergade 43. On a rainy day, you can still make out a dip in the ground where the moat was located. Several of the city gates were moved over time as the city expanded, and urban renewal took place.

As far as the other three main gates are concerned, Pjenteport was situated roughly where



Overgade and Skt. Jørgens Gade meet each other today; Møglebroport was at the end of Nedergade by Møglebroen bridge where Frederiksbro bridge is located today; and Nørreport stood roughly where Nørregade and Østre Stationsvej meet.

So the distance between Odense's "corners" was pretty short. From Pjenteport in the east to Vestergade in the west, it was a walk of around one kilometre. At 6–700m, the corresponding walk from Møglebroport in the south to Nørreport in the north was even shorter. So Odense was no larger than a modern-day Danish village, and yet the capital of Funen was the largest Danish town after Co-

◀ Today there are numerous roads leading in and out of Odense. In the Middle Ages, traffic to and from the city was controlled by the city gates. Pictured here is a drawing of Vesterport as it looked in 1851.

penhagen until 1880.

Naturally, the city gates marked the actual city limits. The four main gates, Pjenteport, Nørreport, Møglebroport and Vesterport, served as a kind of fortress in the Middle Ages, while the other gates were mainly built for financial purposes. Incoming goods to the city were checked at the gates, and it was here that consumption tax or excises were imposed. This was a form of levy, introduced by the absolute monarchy on goods such as grain, meat and drinks from 1660. A wide range of other products, services and trades were also subject to this consumption tax, which generally went to the king.



Skt. Knuds Kirke

Klosterbakken 2
5000 Odense C

The Cathedral

The Abbey (Skt. Knud) was not only the first monastery founded in Odense, but the first monastery founded in what is now Denmark. It was established at the

behest of King Erik Ejegod (1095–1103), who recruited Benedictine monks from England to start the monastery.

The primary task of the monks was to live an exemplary Christian life. Through their prayers, they performed an important piece of religious work from a medieval person's point of view, and they were therefore endowed with lavish gifts. During the Middle Ages, they were therefore given nu-

merous goods and awarded many rights. It was, among other things, the revenue from these gifts that made the construction of the present cathedral possible. The church was originally an abbey for the monks and formed the northern section of their monastery. Very little is left of the complex, but some walls can still be seen in the building that now houses the city archives (Stadsarkivet).

The size of The Cathedral was only surpassed when construction of the cathedral in Lund commenced. The ambitious travertine building suggests that the church and the monarchy joined forces to manifest their position in society by erecting a monumental burial church, worthy of a martyr king and future saint. The remains of King Knud were buried in the crypt in 1095, and on 10 July 1100, they were placed in an ornate shrine on the high altar in the chancel.

The church is believed to have been damaged, along with the



rest of the city, during King Abel's (1250–52) ravages in 1247, which led to the building of a new, brick church in the Gothic style. The present church was built in three phases. Its somewhat complicated building history is probably because a central tower was planned in the two bays between the chancel and the nave, but finances ruled out the original plan.



▼ *Knud the Holy's relics – and his brother Benedict's earthly remains – can be seen in the crypt of Odense's present cathedral, Skt. Knud's Cathedral.*

▲ *The Cathedral would have had a more ordinary appearance in the Middle Ages, before construction of its characteristic tower in 1558 to house the storm bell and other bells.*

10

Albani Kirke

Skt. Knuds Plads
5000 Odense C.

Albani Kirke

The construction of St Alban's Church in c. 1000 should probably be seen as a royal initiative to serve the residents of the king's palace.

In 1086, King Knud IV was murdered in St Alban's Church. Legend has it that the king was pierced by a lance while kneeling in prayer in front of the church's high altar. The rebellion against King Knud had long been underway. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the king's attempt to impose tithes (taxes), raise taxes and suspend general rights. However, the straw that broke the camel's back was the king's bid to introduce "leding", an early form of military service, and



an impending raid on England. People were upset about having to leave their farms. To make matters worse, the king himself arrived late, so late in fact that many

people had gone home again, believing that he would not show up. This prompted the king to impose fines to punish the absent soldiers.

This was too much for the men, and it ended in a rebellion against the king, who had to escape through Jutland and across Funen to his royal palace in Odense, where he initially sought refuge. The king then sought to save himself by taking refuge in St Alban's Church. But the persecutors did not respect the king's attempt to take refuge in the church, and Knud, his brother Benedict and 17 courtiers were murdered. As early as 1100, the pope gave his final consent for the canonisation of Knud.



▲ The stone cross in front of the entrance to Realkredit Denmark marks the spot where King Canute is said to have been killed at the altar in St Alban's Church.



▲ In September 2015, archaeologists from Odense City Museums discovered a stone sarcophagus containing the remains of a religious person – undoubtedly a bishop – buried where the old St Alban's Church once stood. The sarcophagus was buried not far from the stone cross which symbolises the altar where Canute was murdered.



▲ Buried with him, the bishop had a small symbolic communion set consisting of a cup – a chalice – and a bread plate.

11

Odense Adelige Jomfrukloster

Albani Torv 6
5000 Odense C

Odense Secular Convent for Noblewomen (Odense Adelige Jomfrukloster)

The late medieval bishop's palace is now better known as Odense Secular Convent for Noblewomen. In its present form, the construction is basically late medieval, though later alterations include the addition of a storey. The building formed the north wing of a three-winged facility built in the early 16th century at the behest of Bishop Jens Andersen Beldenak, Bishop of the Diocese of Funen.

The unassuming half-timbered wing, which joins the main building to the east, replaces a brick-built wing of the same type as the main building. There was originally also a wing facing the street to



the west with a gatehouse. Down towards the river, the building was walled in.

The side wings were probably demolished in connection with Frederik II's conversion work in around 1560 or later in 1575, when the king gave orders for the materials from the bishop's palace to be used for the conversion of Skt. Hans Kloster (St John's Abbey) into the royal residence.

After the Reformation, the property became the property of the

the west with a gatehouse. Down towards the river, the building was walled in. The side wings were probably demolished in connection with Frederik II's conversion work in around 1560 or later in 1575, when the king gave orders for the materials from the bishop's palace to be used for the conversion of Skt. Hans Kloster (St John's Abbey) into the royal residence. After the Reformation, the property became the property of the crown, and was later sold to the wealthy Odense merchant Oluf Bager in 1579. In 1630, the property was taken over by Jørgen Brahe, Privy Councillor to the king and one of the ecclesiastical and noble magnates of the time. In 1716, his descendant Karen Brahe converted the property into a secular home for unmarried noblewomen. The convent closed in the 1970s and has since served various purposes.



◀ Bishop Beldenak was responsible for the construction of the medieval building, today known as Odense Secular Convent for Noblewomen, in the early 16th century.



◀ In the early 18th century, noblewoman Karen Brahe established a convent in the former bishop's palace.

12

Skjolden

The corner of
Overgade/Nedergade
5000 Odense C

Skjolden – a medieval market place

The area known by many Odensians as Skjolden housed a marketplace in the Middle Ages. Despite its modern appearance, Skjolden nonetheless offers a unique opportunity to see what a medieval marketplace looked like in terms of its size and layout.

The medieval market place was directly located on Odense's main street. This main street stretched from Overgade in the east, through Fisketorvet, to Vestergade in the west, and was part of the main road from Middelfart to Nyborg. So even back in the early Middle Ages, there would have been a considerable amount



▼ *Skjolden, pictured here in a photo from 1890, is located where Nedergade and Påskestræde open into Overgade. It is the only square in Odense which gives an impression of what a medieval square looked like.*



of traffic on Overgade and Nedergade, which were direct approach roads to Odense, not least for

market trading at Skjolden.

Over time, the market trading, and the functions that the market

otherwise had, moved to Flakhaven and Albani Torv, which were laid out in the late 16th century. Meanwhile, Skjolden and the two streets became an attractive place for the city's wealthiest men to settle.

The streets around the former marketplace, Skjolden, soon became "the place" for prominent people to settle; from the late Middle Ages, the two streets were inhabited by a number of the city's magnates, senior military officials as well as professors and artists. Among them was one of the most sought after artists of that era, the German Claus Berg. It was he who, under the supervision of Queen Christine, made the altarpiece of the royal family's mausoleum at Gråbrødre Kirke (Greyfriars church). The altarpiece is now in the cathedral. It was probably also Queen Christine who arranged his accommodation and workshop in Overgade, which shows just how exclusive the area was.

13

Ruinen

I. Vilhelm Werners Plads
5000 Odense C

"The Ruin"

"The Ruin", as it is popularly known, is the remains of a medieval two-storey Gothic stone house with a preserved basement. The house was built as a merchant's house at Overgade 3 in 1420 following a fire. The basement served as storage space and is thus one of the oldest rooms intended for trading activity in Denmark. It was therefore considered important to preserve the Ruin, with its cross-vaulted basement, despite it standing in the way of the construction of Thomas B. Thriges Gade in the late 1970s.

The basement was actually listed in 1919, but due to the new street, the Odense Magistrate applied to have the preservation or-



der lifted. The request was initially granted, but as fate would have it, further medieval masonry was discovered during the demolition, and the demolition work was brought to a halt.

Subsequent negotiations regarding the preservation of the basement ended in 1971 with a somewhat unorthodox solution. The Ruin would be moved to a whole new location. On 8 June 1971, following lengthy prepara-



▲ *The basement of the Ruin is very well preserved.*

tions, the Ruin – complete with intact basement – was rolled on wheels and tracks to its new home, preserving a piece of medieval cultural history in Odense city centre.

14

Gråbrødre Torv
Gråbrødre Plads 1
5000 Odense C

Greyfriars Abbey (Gråbrødre Kloster)

Greyfriars Abbey in Odense was founded on the initiative of the Danish king, Erik Klipping, when, in 1279, he gave the Franciscan Order part of his property located in the north-western corner of the city. Over the next many decades, the monks built Greyfriars Abbey and abbey church here. The complex was not completed until 1343, when the church was consecrated.

In the early decades of the 16th century, Greyfriars Abbey church was lavishly furnished. The church's famous altarpiece made by one of the finest artists of that time, German Claus Berg, who was brought to Odense by Queen Christine in 1504, still remains.



Work on the altarpiece started in 1513, in connection with the death of King Hans and his burial in the church, and it replaced the altarpiece put up by Erik Klipping and Agnes in connection with the burial of their daughters in the church. Queen Christine thus ensured that she and her family were buried under extremely unique decorative conditions.

The royal bodies, including Erik Klipping's daughters, were moved to the crypt of St Canute's Cathedral in 1806, when demolition work started on Greyfriars Abbey church.

With the Reformation in 1536, the Greyfriars, like other Catholic denominations, were banished



and their goods seized by the crown. However, Greyfriars Abbey was not treated as harshly as other Catholic institutions in the city. The church became a parish church, and a general hospital, caring mainly for the sick and elderly, was established in the abbey buildings: Gråbrødre hospital/Odense Hospital. The city's other Catholic institutions, such as Sortebrødre kloster (Blackfriars monastery) and Skt. Jørgens Gård were integrated.

▲ *Claus Berg's famous altarpiece, which was started in 1513, was originally commissioned by Queen Christine for Greyfriars Abbey church. The altarpiece shows the torments of Christ, and also depicts the royal family and the founder of the Franciscan Order – "The Greyfriars" – the monk Francis of Assisi. Claus Berg's altarpiece was initially sold to the Church of Our Lady in 1806, but 80 years later, it was transferred to St Canute's Cathedral, where it can now be admired.*



▲ *It was an impressive abbey that the Greyfriars established during the late Middle Ages, at least in local terms – with two abbey buildings and the church in the south. Greyfriars Abbey church was not inaugurated until 1343 – 64 years after it was founded – and it was probably the first building in Odense to be completed in brick. In a state of decay in the early 1800s, it was demolished in 1821.*

Skt. Hans Kirke

Sankt Hans Plads 1
5000 Odense C

**St John's Church
(Skt. Hans Kirke)**

The parish of St Michael/St John covered the northern part of the city around Nørregade. Archaeological evidence suggests that an older church from the 1100s stood on the site of the present church. The parish church also came to serve as an abbey church for the monks of the Order of St John, who lived in the nearby abbey. The church is also named after the order, though it was originally dedicated to the Archangel Michael.

The many side chapels and gravestones of local nobility testify both to the fact that the neighbourhood was the preferred residential area of the nobility in the Middle Ages, and the close con-



nection the Order of St John had with the social elite. The church's unusually long chancel and the strange, slanted gable end on Nørregade are the result of the Order of St John's expansions and renovations during the 15th century.

St John's Church is unique in that it has an external walled pulpit in one of the buttresses in the western corner of the southern side chancel. It was possible to preach to the congregation in the graveyard, whether lepers or other people who were not allowed to come into the church. Outdoor sermons were also practical when large crowds gathered



◀ *Unusually, St John's Church has an exterior pulpit in the south-west buttress.*

in the square in connection with processions and displays of relics. There were only three par-

ishes in medieval Odense – St Alban, Our Lady and St Michael, later St John. It is not known when the parish boundaries were established, but they certainly existed in the mid-12th century. The parish of St Alban covers the south-western part of the city. The oldest parish church was probably St Alban's Church, which was located in a north-easterly direction in relation to St Canute's Cathedral.

Odins Bro

Odins Bro
5000 Odense C

Odins Bro bridge

Odins Bro, the bridge over the Odense Canal, connects north-west Odense and north-east Odense, and, despite being quite new, its name harks back to early Odense and the place of worship for Odin, from which the city gets its name. The bridge was inaugurated and opened to the public in June 2014.

Odins Bro bridge, which is a good 28 m wide and 200 m long, is a double swing bridge – Europe's largest – which means that the two bridge sections can be turned to the side when ships are sailing through the canal. The construction is such that the full width of the canal can be sailed when the bridge is open. Each span is almost 100 m long



and weighs 2,000 tonnes. Odins Bro bridge can be crossed by car, by bicycle and on foot.

Odense previously had "Odinstårnet" (Odin's Tower), which stood on top of Bolbro hill. It was blown up by the Germans during the war on 14 May 1944. So "Odins Bro" was a natural choice when naming Odense's impressive new landmark.



▲ *Odins Bro bridge can be used by vehicles and pedestrians alike.*

Næsbyhoved Slotsbanke

Kanalvej 52
5000 Odense C

Næsbyhoved Slotsbanke (castle mound)

Næsbyhoved Castle can be traced back to 1337 with some certainty. The castle was situated on a headland in Næsbyhoved Lake, north of Odense. The castle was one of the royal fortresses built around Denmark at that time as part of the defence of the realm.

No one knows what Næsbyhoved Castle looked like. The castle mound is 16 metres high and 60 metres on each side, so the castle was probably large, but not as big as Nyborg Castle. It was surrounded by a deep moat, with a bridge from the north-east across it.

Under Erik of Pomerania, a "herredag" – a meeting of the king



and the Council of the Realm – was held at the castle on several occasions. The king's vassals took turns to live at the castle, and accounts kept by the vassals show that, in the early 1500s, there were 260 farms on the Næsbyhoved estate. Successive kings

occasionally stayed at the castle, which was transferred to Queen Christine upon her marriage to King Hans in 1478.

From 1504, Odense became a royal seat when King Hans' Queen Christine took up permanent residence at Næsbyhoved Castle. Just



prior to that, she had experienced – and survived – an 8-month or so siege at Stockholm Castle, followed by 18 months as a hostage of the Swedes.

The queen was a very devout and independent woman with ideas and initiative. In 1519, she founded her own Poor Clares Convent – the Franciscans' female counterpart – at her property in the

present Klaregade. However, the convent was probably not ready for occupation until after the queen's death in 1521. St Clare's Priory enjoyed a short life, as the Catholic institutions were closed and their property confiscated by the throne in connection with the Reformation in 1536. The former St Clare's Priory has since served as bishop's residence.

◀ Today, only the castle mound remains, and there are no measurements or drawings of the original castle. The reconstruction depicted – a copperplate engraving – is from the early 1800s. This is probably where the inspiration came from for textile manufacturer Søren Brandt's villa – Villa Brandt, built in 1895 – at Hunderupvej 71.

Queen Christine was extremely shrewd when it came to money. This is evident from the extensive royal household accounts she kept. They also reveal her love of art and culture, to which she made several contributions. In several cases, the accounts help provide a picture of life and the way of living in Odense in this period.

Queen Christine wanted to gather her family in their final resting place. With this in mind, she embarked on the extensive restoration and decoration of the chancel of Greyfriars Abbey church as a mausoleum for the royal family.

Odinstårnet

Juelsmindevej
5000 Odense C

**Odin's Tower
(Odinstårnet)**

In 1933, politician Jørgen Christensen and a handful of engineers and building contractors established a limited company with the aim of building northern Europe's highest tower. The tower would primarily be built from surplus materials from the old Little Belt Bridge.

The initial plan was for the tower to be built by the Little Belt, but after much deliberation, the decision was made to build the tower on Bolbro Bakke hill, west of Odense – and naming it after the city. The tower was inaugurated by Crown Prince Frederik in May 1935 and attracted more than 200,000 visitors in the first year.



When complete, Odin's Tower was 175 metres high, and visitors could enjoy refreshments and food in no fewer than three restaurants – at the very top was "Konkyliebaren" (the conch bar), which offered magnificent views. The tower's kitchen had the capacity to cool 1,500 beers!

However, the life of Odin's Tower was short lived. In 1944, pro-German saboteurs blew it up in revenge for the many acts of sabotage by the Danish resistance movement in Odense.

► *Odin's Tower before and after it was blown up in 1944. The idea of building a new tower is still very much alive – thanks to "Foreningen Odinstårnet" (The Odin's Tower Association). Until this happens – if it does – you will have to settle for the 10-metre-high replica located on the site of the original tower.*

**Colophon**

Early Odense – on two wheels
2016

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