

GETAWAY

Magical Ribe a glorious viking town that's not stuck in the past

Dominic Picksley and family explore the quaint cobbled streets and swanky shops of Danish gem which dates back to the ninth century

With its cobbled streets, 13th-century cathedral, timber-framed buildings and picturesque ancient harbour, Ribe is a quaint, magical place situated away from the bustling crowds of the southern-west edge of Denmark.

And not only that, it also holds the distinction of being the oldest town, not only in the country, but in the whole of Scandinavia after being established by the vikings in the ninth century AD.

But rather than feeling like a place stuck in the past, Ribe actually exudes a chilled-out, European vibe, with cafes and swanky shops lining the edge of the paved area of the green-roofed, part Rhenish tuff stone, part brick, Romanesque-inspired Church of Our Lady, which keeps watch over the back streets as well as the surrounding lowlands.

The now five-aisled cathedral, which has the 52-metre Commoners' Tower as its focal point, has endured a turbulent past, since being first built between the years 1150 and 1250, including being ravaged by fire, and an old tower collapsing, among other things, meaning it has had many alterations and additions over the years,



Ribe's very own Night Watchman.

giving it a rather odd look, but still retaining its beauty and dominance.

The continental feel of the town was enhanced during our stay as it coincided with the Ribe Wine Festival. Upon arrival, the place was near-empty and we could walk around freely, but by the next day, wine lovers and connoisseurs converged on the plethora

of stalls that lined both sides of the Overdammen.

We stayed at the distinctly modern holiday centre of Ribe Byferie, located just outside the 'old town'. Our accommodation was a two-bedroom apartment, on the upper floor of a two-storey building, with all rooms on the same level apart from the children's bedroom, which was in effect in the loft and reached by a very steep ladder, making my children Benjamin and Amelia feel like they had their own little hideaway.

Peering out their small window, they looked down on a tree-lined canal that flowed past the resort, giving the impression you could have been in Amsterdam... and bizarrely if you glanced out the Ikea-inspired living room window at the other side of the building, you could have sworn you were in Coronation Street's Weatherfield.

But this is a far more upmarket venue than anything in Corrie, with tasteful accommodation, as well as a games room for the youngsters and play park, with the obligatory viking ship, and a barbecue area should you feel

While staying onsite, you're entitled to a 'bakery breakfast' every morning

the urge. While staying onsite, you're entitled to a 'bakery breakfast' every morning. Inside a large grey box, were proper Danish goodies like crusty rolls, rye bread, cheese and yogurts... along with some sort of fish spread.

Toast is 'banned' in Denmark, the receptionist told me, adding the children over there are encouraged to eat rye bread instead. I'm not sure it would really catch on here.

One of the highlights of the trip

was a visit to the fascinating Ribe Viking Center, a wonderfully authentic reconstruction of a viking settlement, based on the actual town itself from the period of 710-980AD, and just a mile or so down the road from where we were staying.

With a market place, village centre, harbour, church, manor farm, and a kids playground, you were transported back 1300 years and came face-to-face with men and women in period costume, all getting on with their 'daily lives' as they acted out various roles, although it was a far more peaceful and friendly existence than perhaps

we expected from a bunch of weather-worn ancient Danish warriors and their kindred. A 'lady viking' showed us around the authentic attraction and she encouraged Benjamin and Amelia to embroil themselves in the viking way of life by making flatbread over an open fire, minting their own coins and even wielding replica shields and swords, while they were even given the honour of sitting on the chief's throne in the Great Hall.

Less than half an hour down the road and much more modern is Wadden Sea Centre, an attraction that marvels at the wonders of the ocean

and all the wildlife and nature associated with it. You get to see how the seas 'work', what lurks beneath the surface and how human waste continues to have a devastating effect on nature.

After these informative lessons, you can bounce on several trampolines to burn off some energy. They love their trampolines in Denmark. They are everywhere. The centre will also be opening their new Marsh Tower in June, a spiralling wooden structure - designed by the same people that were behind the iconic LEGO House, in Billund - it rises 25 metres above the ground, making it possi-



The family at Ribe Viking Center.



Ribe Cathedral.



Benjamin with shield.

TRAVEL WEEK

TRAVEL FACTS

Ribe Byferie offers holiday apartments (sleeps 2-4 people) from around £100. Live like the Vikings in the Viking Centre in Ribe - adult ticket £16, child ticket £8 (3-13) Wadden Sea Centre: adult ticket £14, child ticket £6 (4-13 years)

COVID STATUS

Restaurants, cafes and bars reopened on April 21, 2021. However, they must be closed between 11pm and 5am, and no alcohol can be served after 10pm. If you are sitting inside a restaurant, you must have a table reservation and present a 'corona passport' - meaning you have been tested within 72 hours, had a negative test within the past 12-180 days or that you are fully vaccinated.

At the moment the UK is orange, which means the following:

- Covid test is required before boarding a plane
- Worthy purpose required to enter Denmark
- Covid-19 test required before arriving in Denmark
- Covid-19 test required after arrival
- Self-isolation period required after arrival

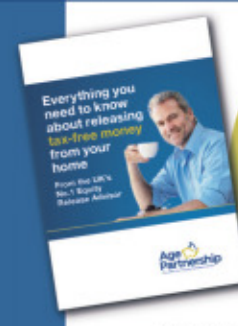


Ribe Byferie.

ble to see the small island of Romo. Back in Ribe for our last night, after a hearty pizza and pasta-laden meal at Pinocchio, with chocolate waffles for dessert sat by the lovely harbour afterwards, which would have been a major stop off point on the various trade routes in years gone by, we then joined Ribe's very own Night Watchman and a few others on his walk around the town.

He regaled us with stories and incidents from the past - in three different languages - and gave us more intriguing insights into a glorious town in a glorious country.

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