

Welcome to the Fortress Trail at Oscarsborg Fortress!

We are pleased to welcome you to Oscarsborg, a cultural heritage site of outstanding natural beauty. On this map we have marked out places of interest. Follow the map and delve into the exhilarating history of Oscarsborg Fortress!

The fortress trail takes about 1,5 hrs. to complete at normal walking pace. We hope you will have a pleasant walk and a great experience.



Nordre Kaholmen

1 THE SHORE FORT

Construction of Oscarsborg Fortress started in 1845. The shore fort was the first of the permanent fortifications to be completed. From 1847 onwards, all visitors had to pass through the Shore Fort to make sure that all personnel at the fortress were accounted for.

2 EAST SHORE BATTERY

The East Shore emplacement was constructed in 1848 to control the eastern shipping lane. There is a defensive gallery to the rear of the guns. This formed the last line of defence before the main fort. The possibility for self-defence in the gallery and recesses leading up to the main fort was rather restricted. The passage is curved in order to impede enemy attacks. Still, the recesses only offered minimal protection, and the soldiers stationed here were probably acutely aware of their situation.

3 THE MAIN FORT

When Germany invaded Norway in the night of 9 April 1940, Colonel Eriksen's name was indelibly imprinted into the history of the nation. By engaging the German squadron in battle, the occupational forces were delayed, giving the Royal Family, the Parliament, and the Government the chance to flee. For hours, Oscarsborg endured German air-borne bombardment. The marks are still visible on the walls. The courtyard is the where the Oscarsborg Opera now stages its great operatic performances for an audience of 1500 people every August. Please visit the website for further information on the summer programme.

Oscarsborg Museum is located inside the fortress, and gives the background and history on the role the fortifications played in the defence of the capital from the mid-1800s, and until the fortress was decommissioned as an operative unit.

The events of 9 April 1940 are presented in detail. This is also where you will find the Coastal Artillery Museum, which traces the inception, growth and role of the Coastal artillery from 1899 to the present date. The Fortress Museum also conducts guided tours and organises tunnel safaris for young children.

In the gateway leading into the main fort there are several rooms that have been restored and made available for new activities. “Gallery Oscarsborg” featuring newspaper cartoonists is an excellent example of how the transfer from military to civilian activities has created new life on historic grounds.

Restaurant Officersmess (the Officers' Mess) is situated on the first floor of the main fort, and is run by Oscarsborg Hotel & SPA who invite their guests to culinary delights in their fabulous premises here. The walls are steeped in history, which creates a unique setting and atmosphere for great and small celebrations. The hotel's bar and lounge is on the same floor. The second floor is taken up by the banqueting hall which can seat up to 130 people for dinner.

4 WEST SHORE BATTERY

The West Shore emplacement was built in 1848 and equipped with 10 cannon to control the western shipping lane. At the completion of the jetty (see below) in 1878, the western strait was effectively closed off, and the shore emplacement rendered superfluous for purposes of defence. The covered part of the battery was subsequently turned into a power station for the so-called "inner lighting" of Oscarsborg Fortress, and for recharging the batteries for the fort's electrically powered ferryboat. The five southernmost casemates were turned into engine rooms, accumulator room, workshop and a water reservoir for the lighting system in the inner casemate. The defensive gallery was put to use as a boiler room and coal storage. Later on, a communications centre was established, and in the 1970s radio-active isotopes were stored in the northernmost part of the battery. Today the battery has been restored to give the public access once more to this interesting defence construction. In contrast to the eastern shore battery, which was restored to its original design, we wanted to show how this battery was used for different functions at different times. We have therefore only carried out repairs to the damaged parts, and left the traces of former functions in plain view of the visitors. In 2009 there are plans afoot for an art project here, sponsored by DNB NOR. Feel free to explore!

5 THE JETTY

Work on the 1500-metre long underwater wall began in 1874. The wall traverses from Hurum via Småskjær (small skerries) to Søndre Kaholmen, which effectively blocks off the western shipping lane. The filling material is generally made up of stone blocks with a weight of up to two tonnes, and covers about 315,000 square metres in total. The jetty took four years to build, in the period between 1874 and 1879. The stones were freighted in on barges from Røyken. 50 metres of the jetty has been removed again in later times, to allow pleasure crafts to sail past in the western sea lane.

6 WESTERN SHORE QUAY / CRANE WHARF

The quay was built in 1862 to enable ammunition to be brought onshore. The ammunition was then transported from the quay through a tunnel to the underground storage rooms of the main battery. This was also the mooring place for the fortress's electrical ferry which shuttled between the outlying islets. The quay is the only remaining deep water berth at Oscarsborg, and is used by larger vessels. This is also where the ferry from Sætre in Hurum and Oslo/Aker Brygge docks in the summer season. Please contact us for information about ferry schedules.

7 WORKSHOPS AND CRAFTSMEN

Oscarsborg Fortress was an active community with its own builders, blacksmiths, bricklayers and painters. The knowledge and tradition maintained by these trades were important for the upkeep of the fortress and for new additions. The buildings and installations bear testament to the old craftsmanship that is gradually being lost to the modern world. All the buildings and installations that belong to the Armed Forces are given a unique 10-digit identification number, which carries information as to the whereabouts and function of the object. The building itself is only marked with the two last digits. We have chosen to keep this numbering at Oscarsborg because it forms an essential part of the history of the fortress.

§ THE LATRINES

These were originally located at the back of the barracks. The building was moved to its present site in 1904.

9 THE SCHOOL BARRACKS

The school barracks were erected in 1892/93 and were originally used as living quarters for the soldiers. In a new defence organisation of 1887, the Artillery officer candidate school at Akershus was divided into one school for NCOs for the Field Artillery and one for the Fortress and Mountain Artillery. The latter was relocated to Oscarsborg, triggering a need for more accommodation and the consequent building of new barracks. These were placed under the shelter of the rock face to protect them from enemy fire. Today the old school barracks have conference rooms on the ground floor, while the first and second floors are undergoing renovation and will be turned into offices.

The square in front of the school barracks was the parade ground, used for drills and other gatherings. This was where the soldiers lined up, where the commandant issued his orders and the soldiers received their reprimands. The parade ground is currently used for concerts in the summer season, and is where our visitors can seek information on what's on as well as the ferry timetables from our summer hosts.

10 RESTAURANT FORPLEININGEN (THE OLD MESS ROOM)

«Førpleiningen» -which used to be the old mess room, is currently used as a restaurant. In the same rooms where the soldiers used to take their meals until 2002, the visitors to Oscarsborg may now enjoy a pleasant meal while taking in the idyllic fjord view. The hotel has an a la carte menu and also caters to private parties under the lofty ceilings of these spacious rooms. The hotel reception is also located in this building. The hotel spa is situated in the old students' billets. Here you will find four comfortable treatment rooms, relaxation rooms, saunas, changing rooms, a quiet room and an outdoor Jacuzzi. Our highly qualified spa therapists offer 30 different types of treatments. Water forms a vital part of most of our treatments, and there is a soothing fjord view in all directions.

11 THE FORT'S COURTYARD

The Fort Courtyard was in use for drills and other types of assembly. Today the courtyard is used for larger assemblies and concerts such as the Fireworks Concert. A memorial has been erected in honour of the coast artillerymen who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Norway in the 1940-45 war. There is also a statue commemorating Colonel Birger Eriksen who was the commandant of Oscarsborg from 1933 to 1940.

12 THE INVASION OF NORWAY- 9 APRIL 1940

At 04:21 hrs. the main battery opened fire on the German heavy cruiser Blücher, whereupon the batteries on the Drøbak side of the fjord also began firing. The fire was well-directed and highly effective. The second vessel, the cruiser Lützow, also received several hits from land. It may be seen as a twist of fate that the enemy was put to flight by German cannon bearing Jewish names such as Aron and Moses. Join a guided tour or visit the museum for the background story behind these names.

13 THE KING

The watchtower up on the “King” served as both lookout post and flag post for Oscarsborg Fortress. The first watchtower probably consisted of a primitive wooden tower with a platform. Soldiers would keep an eye on ships plying the Oslo Fjord and fly the Norwegian flag from the highest peak of the island. The present watchtower was built in 1932. The Norwegian flag flew here also on 9 April 1940. Although the watchtower represented a prestigious target, it stood its ground and proudly kept the Norwegian flag flying. This is still the best lookout post to take in the view and to get an understanding of the strategic location of the fortress.

14 KING'S GROVE

Oscarsborg Fortress practically complete in 1855. The fortress was named ”Oscarsborg” on the occasion of the visit by King Oscar I on 23 August 1855. In King's Grove we find the autographs of other kings who have visited the fortress; King Oscar II, King Haakon VII, King Olav V and King Harald V.

15 CAFÉ OSCAR

This was originally the old gym. The lower floor was used for storing clothing and later as a machine shop for the NCO school. The gym had an important place in the daily life of Oscarsborg. Today the building is rented out to Café Oscar, which is the place to have a light lunch, coffee and cakes. The café also has its own ice-cream parlour. In the former workshop there are activities such as candle-painting, painting on glass, wooden figurines and T-shirts. The gift shop carries high-quality hand-made candles, scented candles, jackets and sweatshirts. There is a variety of giftware – to suit all tastes!

16 THE COMMANDANT'S RESIDENCE

By virtue of their social background, education and position, the commandants belonged to the well-bred section of society. They were well rounded in the arts of drawing, painting, dancing and music, and were prominent figures in polite society. The officers introduced new manners and ideals into the local communities where they were posted. The Commandant's residence is situated on a hillside, overlooking the Fortress. The ornamental garden played host to many a party, and formed a private sphere for the commandant and his family. The venerable old building has today been turned into offices for the Commandant of Oscarsborg and the National Fortification Heritage, who are the current administrators of the islands.

17 OSCARSBORG GUEST HARBOUR

Perhaps the most charming guest harbour in the entire Oslo fjord. Its unique location, on a fabulous national heritage site, sets the stage for maritime enjoyment and lots of fun and games for all age groups. Oscarsborg Havnekro (Harbour Inn) is open for lunch and light dinners, refreshments, ice cream and snacks. Please feel free to contact us for further information on menus and special offers.

18 OSCARSBORG FOR CHILDREN

On Nordre Kaholmen there is an activity trail for children of all ages; from six to sixty! Only material from the island itself has been used to make the various stations. Follow the trail up the hillside and discover fun and challenging places round and about the island. Keep in mind that the terrain on Oscarsborg is fairly rugged, with some steep hillsides and cliffs. Children should be kept under adult supervision at all times.

19 SIMULATOR HALL B

This is the base for Naturlig Lederskap AS (*Natural Leadership Ltd.*) which organises exciting and informative activities for the conference market. Their wide range of activities covers everything from a one-hour break, to adrenaline kicks and process-based action learning over many days. The company covers event management, team and leadership development. They also have thrilling activities for active families with older children.

20 THE COMMANDANT'S BATHING HUT

The Commandant's bathing hut was built in 1948. Its forerunner was a building in the same spot, which was built in 1907 and called “the Ladies' bathing hut”. The bathing hut was built in a suitably discreet location, at a time when a glimpse of bare female skin was considered highly inappropriate for young soldiers. You are welcome to try out the bathing hut if you like, but be aware that at times there are strong currents, so keep a close eye on the children.

21 «THE WET GRAVE»

The Ask islets (the low group of islands to the east of Håøya) now make up the wet grave of Blücher. Reminders of the once proud ship occasionally emerge to the surface in the form of oil spills. Many of the crew members swam ashore on Askholmene and the mainland this April morning of 1940, but as many as 500 to 1000 German officers and soldiers perished in the cold water, which actually caught fire after a while. The Germans erected a memorial to their fallen soldiers on Askholmene, but this was destroyed by an American major in the spring of 1945.

22 THE SCRAP FIELD

Scrap fields are open, dry hillsides with a lot of sand, gravel and dirt. These fields have been created by burning rubbish and other waste. This use has created a special biological diversity, containing some vulnerable species. Such areas are becoming ever more rare, as we go about beautifying our surroundings. It is a paradox of our times that we actually destroy the habitat of many plants by turning industrial sites into parkland. We recommend that you take the path on the northern side of the scrap field.

23 THE TORPEDO BATTERY

This is where Norwegian soldiers fired the torpedoes that sank the Blücher in 1940. Today, the battery is part of Oscarsborg Museum, and has been through many stages of rebuilding. It was operative until 1993. Together with the torpedo workshop next to the entrance, a visit to the torpedo battery makes for an interesting introduction to the most secret parts of Oscarsborg. For safety reasons, the torpedo battery is only open to pre-booked visits.

A listed fortress

Oscarsborg is part of our cultural heritage. Having been the site of dramatic events during wartime, it has now been transformed into an arena for arts and culture, small businesses and great experiences. The fortress receives around 100,000 visitors each year, from Norway and abroad. Because Oscarsborg is a national heritage site that we want to preserve for coming generations, it is important that all our guests treat our buildings and outdoor areas with care and respect. We ask you kindly to be considerate when you move around the island, and to observe the rules of conduct below. This way you can contribute to ensuring that all our guests have a great experience when they visit Oscarsborg.

Oscarsborg Fortress today

Oscarsborg was officially opened as a military cultural monument in 2004. It is a popular tourist attraction for everyone who is interested in natural beauty, culture and history. There is a museum to visit, and guided tours are conducted. Oscarsborg is a popular venue for courses and conferences, which also offers spa treatments. The fortress offers its guest excellent refreshments, from a plain cup of tea to an exquisite meal.

A special obstacle course for children between 6 and 60 is located on Nordre Kaholmen (see information above). Visitors arriving by boat are welcome to use the guest harbour.

The fortress grounds are also used for concerts and operas.

Oscarsborg inception in brief

- 1643: Christian IV had a blockhouse erected on Kaholmene.
- 1830 discussions begun on what eventually came to be Oscarsborg Fortress.
- 1848 construction phase I started on 20 November
- 1852 the rest of the cannon were installed up at the main fort.
- 1853 the fortress was completed as we know it today.

To find out about more about the history of the fortress, we recommend a visit to the museum!

Rules of conduct

The Fortress is located in an area of outstanding natural beauty, with an extensive biological diversity, including some rare species. The enjoyment of visiting such a unique place can easily be spoilt through littering and unintentional vandalism. We therefore enforce a year-round ban on barbeques and open fires. This includes disposable BBQs.

The currents in the sea can be pretty strong in certain periods, so young children must be kept under adult supervision when playing in or near the sea.

As a preventative measure to counteract visitors to the island from being hurt by potentially hazardous objects underground, we do not permit digging or searching for objects with metal detectors. In the guest harbour, please be considerate of your neighbours, and do not forget; the safety and wellbeing of the children is the responsibility of the adults.

Dogs must be kept on a leash all year at Oscarsborg.

We wish you a pleasant stay at Oscarsborg and look forward to seeing you again soon!



The Norwegian Defence Estates Agency

The Norwegian Defence Estates Agency has been entrusted with the management of fourteen fortresses which have been classified as national fortifications. The fortresses will be preserved as national heritage sites, and adapted to new and existing uses and activities. The Norwegian Defence Estates Agency will bring the fortresses into a new era, and preserve their character and history by developing the fortifications into attractive arenas for culture, business and events, in cooperation with other interested parties.

For further information, please visit www.nasjonalefestningsverk.no

