

= Vildanden (airline) =

Vildanden AS (" The Wild Duck ") was a virtual , regional airline based at Skien Airport , Geiteryggen in Norway , where it was the only airline . With operations starting in 2005 , it flew to Bergen , Trondheim and Stavanger using a Jetstream 32 and an ATR 42 , which is wet leased from Danish Air Transport (DAT) and Helitrans . Previously , the airline has also served Stockholm and Molde , and has also operated Saab 340 aircraft , operated by Coast Air , Air Aurora and Avitrans . The airline had been in conflict with Coast Air about terminating the wet lease agreement . The company has had to be bailed out several times , including by the municipality , until it managed to make its first profit in 2009 . It ceased operations and filed for bankruptcy in January 2011 .

= = Operation = =

The airline was based at Skien Airport , Geiteryggen . It provides twenty weekly trips to Bergen and weekly trips to Stavanger . In 2009 , 50 @, @ 000 people traveled with Vildanden . The company has one ATR 42 , which seats 48 passengers and is operated by Danish Air Transport , and one Jetstream 32 , which seats 19 and is operated by Helitrans . The airline used Sandefjord Airport , Torp as its reserve airport in case of bad weather . The airline is named after the play The Wild Duck (Norwegian : Vildanden) written by Henrik Ibsen , who was born in Skien . The slogan " The shortest path between Ibsen and Grieg " is a pun on the Bergen composer Edvard Grieg 's and Ibsen 's names . The largest owner is Magne Forland , who owns 70 % .

= = Destinations = =

The following list shows all current and former destinations , including the city served , the country , the airport (with IATA airport codes and ICAO airport codes) , and the begin and end year of the service .

= = History = =

= = = Establishment = = =

Vildanden was founded on 23 November 2004 by 18 local investors who wanted to start commercial scheduled flights from Skien Airport , Geiteryggen . For a long period , there had been a public debate about closing the airport . Owned by the municipality , the airport was receiving annual subsidies of NOK 2 @. @ 5 million from the municipality , and NOK 3 @. @ 8 million from the state . It was decided to operate Vildanden as a virtual airline (one that owns none of its equipment , leasing everything from others) , and wet lease operations from other companies . Initial plans had been started in 2003 to cooperate with Dutch airline Denim Air , with a 50 @- @ seater aircraft , but these plans did not work out .

In October 2004 , a contract was signed with Haugesund @- @ based Coast Air , who would operate Jetstream 31 aircraft between Skien and Bergen . The owner of Coast Air , Kystfly , also bought 20 % of Vildanden . Coast Air had previously operated routes from Skien to Western Norway , but had withdrawn in 1999 . Following the announcement from Vildanden and Coast Air , the municipality decided to not close the airport , and cover the estimated NOK 300 @, @ 000 annual deficit , as well as upgrade the control tower for NOK 700 @, @ 000 . The airport had been closed since 2002 , following the increased domestic and international traffic from near @- @ by Sandefjord Airport , Torp .

Initial service would have 16 weekly departures to Bergen Airport , Flesland . The main market segment is the offshore petroleum industry , and the departure times were designed to mesh with helicopter routes to offshore installations . The company estimated that one @- @ quarter of travellers would be people commuting to the North Sea . Norsk Hydro , who have a lot of employees

in the Grenland area , stated that they could not start using Vildanden because they had an agreement with SAS Braathens ' services from Sandefjord . The first scheduled service flew on 24 January 2005 , carrying eight passengers . This first month , 972 passengers took the plane , and Vildanden announced that they would try to also start a route to Stavanger Airport , Sola , as well as potentially to Oslo Airport , Gardermoen .

= = = DAT in , Coast Air out = = =

On 19 April , a new Jetstream 32 aircraft was taken into service . This allowed capacity to increase from 12 to 19 passengers , and at the same time travel time was reduced from 47 to 39 minutes . By September , the most popular departures were being booked full , and Vildanden asked Coast Air for a larger aircraft , with about 30 seats . In addition to allowing more passengers , larger planes would give higher comfort , and allow a more flexible ticket pricing scheme . An agreement with Danish Air Transport (DAT) to operate an ATR 42 , with a capacity of 48 seats , was signed in mid @-@ October .

To be able to breach the agreement with Coast Air ? who still had a wet leasing contract , but were not able to put into operation a larger aircraft ? the company Skien Lufttransport AS was created , and it purchased all the revenue and passenger rights from Vildanden . At the same time , it became the legal counterpart for DAT . The new aircraft was put into service on 31 October , branded with the Vildanden logo . Coast Air chose to continue operating the route between Bergen and Skien in their own name , and used the same aircraft and slot times . At Skien Airport , the Vildanden passengers were given the choice between Coast Air and Vildanden , and all nineteen chose Vildanden . On the return flight , three passengers chose each airline . Both aircraft flew to Skien , but due to heavy rain , only the aircraft from DAT was able to land . The passengers who had taken the Coast Air aircraft , were forced to land at Sandefjord Airport instead .

The following day , Coast Air terminated their flights , but stated that they still had an agreement with Vildanden . Skien Lufttransport on their hand stated that Vildanden was now a sleeping company , and that the contract therefore was terminated . Both companies considered the incident a legal matter . In December , the two companies settled outside court .

At the same time , the municipal council was considering the future of the airport . The city engineer estimated it would need a subsidy of NOK 2 million in 2006 , and the politicians , who wanted the airport to run without subsidies , demanded that Vildanden guarantee for the deficit . This was rejected by Vildanden ? on the contrary , the company was in dire need for more capital , and issued a private placement for NOK 4 million in December 2005 . The company had since the start been losing money , and needed extra capital to get through the rough until it could make an operating profit . After the placement , 15 % of the company was owned by DAT , while Coast Air sold their shares . In 2005 , Vildanden had a revenue of NOK 15 million .

= = = More operators = = =

During 2006 , the ridership increased , and Vildanden started becoming more aggressive against Widerøe , which was flying to Bergen from Sandefjord Airport . Vildanden stated that they aimed to outperform Widerøe on price to Bergen . The ATR @-@ 42 turned out to be too large ; from 1 July , operations was taken over by the Czech company Air Aurora , with a smaller 30 @-@ seater Saab 340 . This reduced the monthly leasing costs from NOK 700 @,@ 000 to NOK 550 @,@ 000 . DAT remained responsible for the booking system .

In October , an agreement was signed with the Avitrans of Sweden to take over operations . This also included a second aircraft , so the airline could start operations to Stavanger and Molde in 2007 . From 18 March , Vildanden also started three weekly departures from Skien to Stockholm @-@ Skavsta Airport . The route was necessary to transport personnel from Avitrans ' hub at Bromma to Skien .

= = = Troubled times = = =

By October 2007 , Vildanden was in severe financial distress . An agreement was made with the municipal council , where the latter gave a credit loan to the airline . The route to Molde had given large deficits , and the company was forced to close it down . NOK 2 @. @ 3 million , equal to the airlines debt to the airport , was granted to the municipal @- @ owned airport operator , and the company allowed to make an agreement where half the debt was deleted , and the other half made interest and principal @- @ free for two years . At the same time , the management of Vildanden had to raise new capital equal to at least half the companies accounts payable , which was NOK 8 million . The case raised local debate about whether it was the municipality 's job to subsidize the airport and the airline . The Federation of Norwegian Aviation Industries announced that they would consider reporting the subsidies to the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) for violation of the European Community competition law .

The fiscal year 2007 gave a revenue of NOK 61 million , and a deficit of NOK 13 million . During the airport strike in May 2008 ? which closed Bergen Airport ? Vildanden had full planes since they could land them on the short runway at near @- @ by Stord Airport , Sørstokken . In 2008 , 50 @, @ 000 people used Skien Airport , most of whom flew with Vildanden .

On 19 June 2008 , the municipal council voted to not give further subsidies to the airport . Upgrades for NOK 8 million were needed to meet safety standard . The airport operator had debt of NOK 12 million , and no realizable assets . Vildanden was under certain conditions willing to pay some of the capital needed to perform the upgrades . The municipal council changed their opinion and voted ? with a single decisive vote ? to keep the airport running in July . The financial risk would be taken over by the municipal @- @ owned Kontorbygg , who operate a range of offices and commercial buildings in Skien . The proposal was supported by the right @- @ winged parties , and opposed by the socialist parties , as well as the chair of Kontorbygg . As a response , the Federation of Norwegian Aviation Industries reported the municipality to ESA , and demanded that NOK 20 million in illegal subsidies be repaid by Vildanden and the airport operator .

The company had a loss of NOK 3 @. @ 4 million in 2008 . In April 2009 , Vildanden terminated its agreement with Aviatrans with the intention of using larger aircraft . In July , an agreement was made with DAT to operate an ATR @- @ 42 on the Bergen route . From 1 August , the Stockholm route was terminated . The company stated that they had been considering having a stop @- @ over at Moss Airport , Rygge on the Stockholm flights , but instead decided to terminate the route .

During the winter of 2008 ? 09 , Vildanden was forced to land at Sandefjord Airport 50 times due to weather closing Geiteryggen . In March , Widerøe started a marketing campaign to attract people from Grenland to use their routes at Torp . Local Liberal Party politician Gustav Søvde stated that he was opposed to Widerøe advertising in the Telemark press for their services . At the same time , Asbjørn Anthonisen , previous chief of operations in Malmö Aviation , was hired as new CEO .

Magne Forland increased his ownership in the company to 70 % in August , after he had previously given NOK 10 @. @ 5 million in interest @- @ free loans to the company . On 11 November 2009 , the German pilots on a flight from Skien to Bergen announced that only 28 of the passengers , without baggage , could take the ride . The reason was bad weather , which was described as " normal Norwegian rain " by the airline afterwards . This caused several commuters to miss their connecting flights on helicopters to offshore installations . The airline later stated that it was caused by the pilots not being aware of the safety equipment installed at Geiteryggen .

In December 2009 , Vildanden announced it plans to operate routes to Trondheim Airport , Værnes , but lacks financial maneuverability to commence operations . By October 2009 , Vildanden owed Kontorbygg , the operator of Geiteryggen , NOK 1 @. @ 5 million in airport fees . Kontorbygg stated that if Vildanden did not pay , the airport would have to file for bankruptcy . Innovation Norway rejected to give Vildanden a loan for NOK 3 @. @ 5 million in December 2009 . Kontorbygg stated that the operation of Geiteryggen had cost the municipality NOK 50 million in the course of the five years Vildanden had been operating from it . In February 2010 , the Municipality of Skien announced that it required Vildanden to pay back the NOK 3 @. @ 1 million , plus NOK 200 @, @ 000 in interest , that they borrowed in 2007 . The loan was renewed in March , after Vildanden paid NOK 385 @, @ 000 . From 16 August , Helitrans took over as the operator , using an ATR 42 . From

6 September , the company started with flights to Trondheim . The company ceased operations after its last flight on 14 January 2011 .