

Title:

Fano: A Dream of a Holiday Destination

Word Count:

844

Summary:

You stand on the beach on Fano Island with your back to the sand-dunes looking out towards the North Sea and you wonder if what you're seeing is real. The beach is so wide you cannot guess how far it is to the sea. You can see little black figures on the shoreline; sometimes they resemble the figure eight and sometimes they break in half, just for a fleeting moment, so that you see two ovals, one above the other. Everything about this island is dream-like.

Keywords:

Denmark, fano, fano island, holiday, summer house, Danish beach, holiday homes, Danish village, Danish ferry

Article Body:

You stand on the beach on Fano Island with your back to the sand-dunes looking out towards the North Sea and you wonder if what you're seeing is real. The beach is so wide you cannot guess how far it is to the sea. You can see little black figures on the shoreline; sometimes they resemble the figure eight and sometimes they break in half, just for a fleeting moment, so that you see two ovals, one above the other. Everything about this island is dream-like and when you leave you wonder to yourself if you were really ever there.

But real this island is. Fano (pronounced fay-nooh) is the northern most of the North Sea islands that span from Holland in the south, to Denmark in the north. It is small, only about 8 km wide and 20 km in length and lies 3 km off the Danish city of Esbjerg, onetime 3rd largest fishing port in Europe and, undeniably, Denmark's ugliest city, though a good deal better than many other cities to be found in Europe.

The only way to reach Fano is by a small car and passenger ferry that departs from Esbjerg every 20 minutes. There has been talk of building a bridge to the island, but it is to be hoped that this will never happen. After a 15 minute crossing you arrive at the main town of Nordby (pronounced nor-booh). It is called a town but it is really only a village. The island has two settlements Nordby and Sonderho (pronounced sunner-hooh) and both are exquisite.

When departing the ferry, spend some time walking the length of the main street.

The street has barely changed in over 200 hundred years. Both sides are hemmed in by single storey thatched cottages - the ridge of the thatched cottages is finished with sods of grassy-earth, unlike England where the ridge is also made of thatch. And the road narrows in places so that a car can only just squeeze through. The street contains many little shops, selling everything from flowers, knit wear and crafts. There is an ancient potter (complete with a shaggy beard) who makes and paints beautifully simple pots, vases, plates and cups. You can also pop-in to the amber shop. If you talk to the owner, he will tell you how he collects the amber off the beach after the spring storms and polishes and grades the amber. He will even show you his more unusual pieces that contain insects that lived and died millions of years ago.

You can travel south to the island's other settlement, Sonderho. Both villages are on the east side of the island, gaining protection from the North Sea on its westward side. Sonderho, especially, seems to 'hunker down' in the sand dunes. The visitor will leave Nordby knowing that the town is truly exquisite, he will arrive in Sonderho and know he has found something sublime.

Sonderho, is beautifully positioned on the south of the island amongst the sand dunes and reed beds. There are few shops but there is the Sonderho Kro (inn). It was founded in the early 18th century and has been in the same family for nine generations. The visitor really should dine there. The cuisine is superb and the inn is one of the most romantic spots on earth. You should try the smoked fish and meats, and afterwards walk in the small garden of the inn and inspect the smoke-houses. There is also a windmill on the outskirts of the village and a church, and both are well worth seeing.

The islands crowning glory is its beach. It runs the entire length of the island and is very, very wide. There are acres of room, even at the height of summer. You can be far away from everyone else despite the cars and camper vans that drive up and down it; the island bus that connects Sonderho to Nordby; the kite buggies and kite boarders that throng to the island; dog walkers; and the few nude tourists you'll often see strolling along the beach! There is an annual kite festival held every year on the beach, in May, and thousands of kites are flown; it's a fantastic site.

The island has, what seems like, hundreds of summer-houses. Most are holiday homes for Danish families. If you're going to spend some time on the island, you should consider renting one and spend time amongst the dunes or in the woods, sitting on the porch, sipping wine in the a amber-glow of the long, Nordic summer evenings. The intoxicating, dream-like quality of the island will take hold of you and wash your weariness away; it's a promise.

And when you come away, you'll have dream-like memories of the shimmering images

you saw on the beach and doubt if you were really there. Maybe the island is just a dream, maybe it isn't. Perhaps, the island is the 'Lorna Doon' of the North Sea. A place, a lucky few, has had the good fortune to visit.