

VINDHELLAVEGEN



Facts

Duration

1 hour

Distance

1,7 km.

Difficulty

● Medium

Suitable for

All

Available periods

May - November



Description

This was, in reality, an unsuccessful road project. However, the steep, narrow bends on high foundation walls have made Vindhellavegen famous.

The section follows the original Kongevegen in full. If you walk west towards Lærdalsøyri, the stretch starts 300 m east of Borgund Stave Church. Alternatively, start by the stave church and walk behind the new, red church and up the hills (follow the signs).

This section ends at Rimskjold where there are parking and toilet facilities (behind the corner of the youth club).

Rimskjold and the church area are both starting points for the round-trip Vindhella - Sverrestigen.



STEEP ROADS

The narrow Vindhella-pass above Borgund Stave Church, has always been used by travellers between east and west.

First as a bridle and packhorse track across extremely dangerous stretches (often narrow, steep mountain ledges), and then later as a postal route. It was not until Kongevegen opened in the 1790s that the road was of the standard we can see today.

But Kongevegen was steep. The gradient was 1:4, and the descent could be a challenge with horse and cart - particularly in winter.

In the 1840s, the road authorities decided that something had to be done. They built a new horse-and-cart road on high foundation walls through the pass, and added a new bend in an attempt to reduce the gradient.

The road was built based on new techniques that at the time had not been properly tested in Norway. It was built high up in the terrain, and had four 180 degree bends supported by high foundation walls.

However, the gradient did not improve much, and was only reduced to 1:5. Therefore, the roads through Vindhellaskaret were, in reality, two unsuccessful projects - if we look at the gradient only.

The overall picture, however, is of course not that simple. Both Kongevegen from the 1790s, and its replacement, Bergenske Hovedvej, from the 1840s, were engineering masterpieces. They were of spectacular road design featuring high foundation walls, and are today perhaps Norway's most beautiful road-related cultural heritage.

Kongevegen has received Vakre Vegars Pris, and also EU's prestigious [Europa Nostra Cultural Heritage Award](#). Vindhellavegen played an important role in this.



TWO ROADS

Today, you pass through Vindhella on the 1843 road. The old Kongevegen from the 1790s is visible between the bends and on the outside of the road.

Due to its gradient, which was still steep, Vindhellavegen was given a time limit of 30 years. In 1872, it was replaced by a new road along the river and through Nesbergi.



Dynamite was used to blast room for a road at the bottom of the valley, where there previously only had been a river. This served as the E16 route until Borgundtunnelen opened in 2004.

FORTIFICATION AND NORSE KING

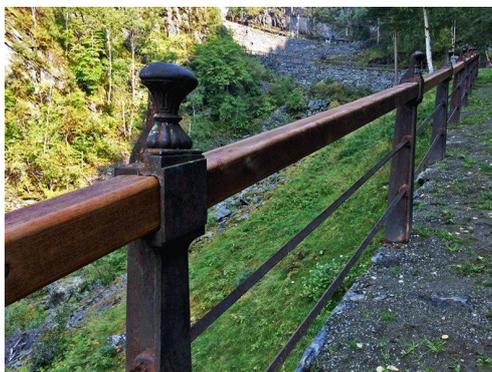
If you would like a round-trip, we recommend walking Vindhellavegen one way, and then [Sverrestigen](#) back. On the map, Vindhellavegen is the shortest route between Husum and Borgund, whereas Sverrestigen bends like a horseshoe towards south.

It is said that King Sverre, in October 1177, used Sverrestigen to avoid farmers who were waiting and ready with stones and logs to throw on the Birkebeiners who were expected to pass. King Sverre attacked the farmers from behind, and sent them fleeing.

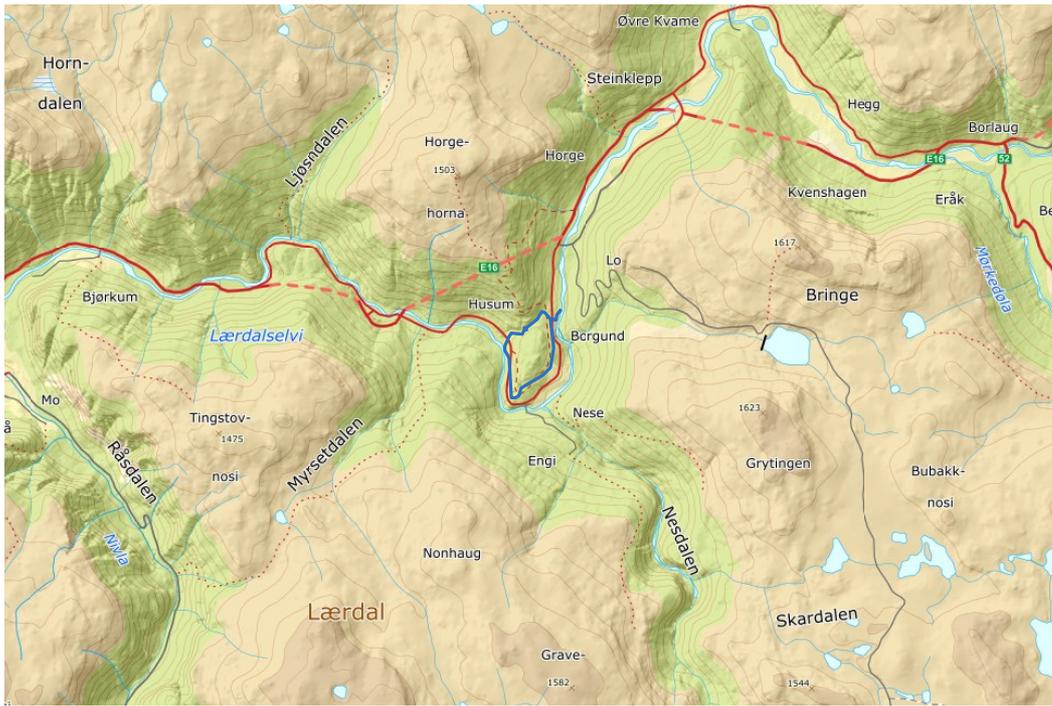
The trip leads around the mountain peak «Klanten», which is likely to have served as an old fortification.

It is from this fortification, Borgund's name derives. «Borg» means fortification and «und» refers to under, i.e. «under the fortification».

Remember to write your name in the visitor book by Smihedleren at the top of Vindhella.







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