

ROUND-TRIP GALDANE - SELTUNÅSEN



Facts

Duration
3,5-4,5 hours

Distance
8,6 km.

Difficulty
● Medium

Suitable for
Everyone

Available periods
May - November

Description

The round-trip Galdane – Seltunåsen features two different roads: Kongevegen from the 1790s, and its replacement, Bergenske Hovedvej, from the 1840s.

Along the way you will also see magnificent waterfalls, old crofts, places wrapped in legend, German fortifications, and – last but not least – the renowned Lærdalselvi river.

Furthermore, it is a trip suitable for children!

Start by Koren in the west, and walk Bergenske Hovedvej up to Sjurhaugen. From there, walk the Kongevegen section Galdane to Seltun, and then follow the footpath along the E16 back to Koren.

Alternatively, start by Sjurhaugen in the east and walk the Kongevegen section Galdane to Seltun. Then follow the footpath along the E16 to Koren, and Bergenske Hovedvej back to Sjurhaugen.

Both starting points offer parking, seating, waste disposal, and toilet facilities. By Koren, there are also tables.

Remember that Bergenske Hovedvej is not way-marked as a Kongevegen route. However, it is signposted and has been cleared, and the route is easy to follow.

NEW ROAD

This route description starts by Koren and initially follows Bergenske Hovedvej: Bergenske Hovedvej across Seltunåsen was completed around 1845, and replaced Kongevegen via Galdane on the other side of the river. As opposed to Kongevegen, which had been built by soldiers and farmers, this new road was built by professional road construction workers.

Bergenske Hovedvej across Seltunåsen is easier to walk as it features high foundation walls to level out ravines and depressions, whereas Kongevegen in Galdane is based on the original road-building principle and follows the terrain up and down.

Bergenske Hovedvej was built by Captain Henrik Christian Finne (1797-1870). Some 300 men worked on the project, and the terrain still carries traces of their presence. There are a number of stone walls and shelters where the workers lived, and if you walk up to Steineåsen you will see the spot where they camped.

The medieval route, which became a postal route in the 1600s, also ran across Seltunåsen.

HIGH WALL

A particularly impressive feature of the Seltunåsen main route is the foundation wall across Gravidalen. It is 15 metres high. Do you dare look over the edge?

By Gravidalen, you will also find the ruins of the croft that belonged to Torborg who catered for travellers as they passed through her yard.

According to legend, she buried a silver treasure in scree the above her croft before she died.

As you return down from Seltunåsen, you are back on the old E16 (today a heritage route). Here you will find the remains of large Steine bridge, which formed part of Bergenske Hovedvej. It collapsed in the flood of 1860. Hence, this was the original river crossing for Bergenske Hovedvej.

As the bridge is no longer there, you have to continue on tarmac to Sjurhaugen (500-600 metres east along the heritage route / old E16). By the parking at Sjurhaugen, walk across the bridge and continue west on Kongevegen.



You are then on the original Kongevegen, and the Galdane section. The first point of interest that you encounter is Olavsklemma.

According to legend, king Olav the Sacred rode through Lærdal in 1023 to force the people of Valdres to convert to Christianity, and the pass was too narrow for the king and his army. He then pressed his horse's rear end against the mountain, and with this widened the road. The marks can still be seen in the mountain side...

In reality, Olavsklemma is an old gorge created by river Lærdalselvi over thousands of years.

GERMAN FORTIFICATIONS

You will also see the remains of German fortifications from the Second World War in the area. Like people before them, the German occupation forces understood the importance of taking control of the road across Filefjell through Lærdal.

Galdane and Seltunåsen are packed with German batteries, observation points, and bunkers. In fact, the German defences stretched all the way from Lærdalsfjorden and up.

Lærdal was thus part of «Festung Norwegen», the fortifications along the coast designed to stop an Allied invasion.

Further down Galdane you will follow the 1840s road until you reach Bruknappen where the route leads down to the collapsed Steine bridge. Continue west, and you will enter the original Kongevegen from the 1790s. It has been hiding underneath the current road all the way from Sjurhaugen.

By Bruknappen, you will therefore notice a difference in the road standard.

Further along Kongevegen, you will reach Laukebergbakken – the spot immortalised by Johannes Flintoe's painting (today on display at the National Gallery) of the merchant trying to hold his horse back down the steep hill whilst on his way to the market at Lærdalsøyri.

CROFTS

There are a number of old crofts along the way. Galdane is the best preserved, and is the one that has given name to this section of the road. The croft dates back to the 1600s, and today's buildings are from the mid-1800s. Galdane was abandoned in 1947.

Visit the farmyard (some 100 metres), and take a break. Galdane has been restored, and is kept in good repair by a modern-day crofter. Enjoy the spectacular views of Lærdalselvi and Bergenske Hovedvej in Seltunåsen on the other side. Information displays are available on all the farmhouses.

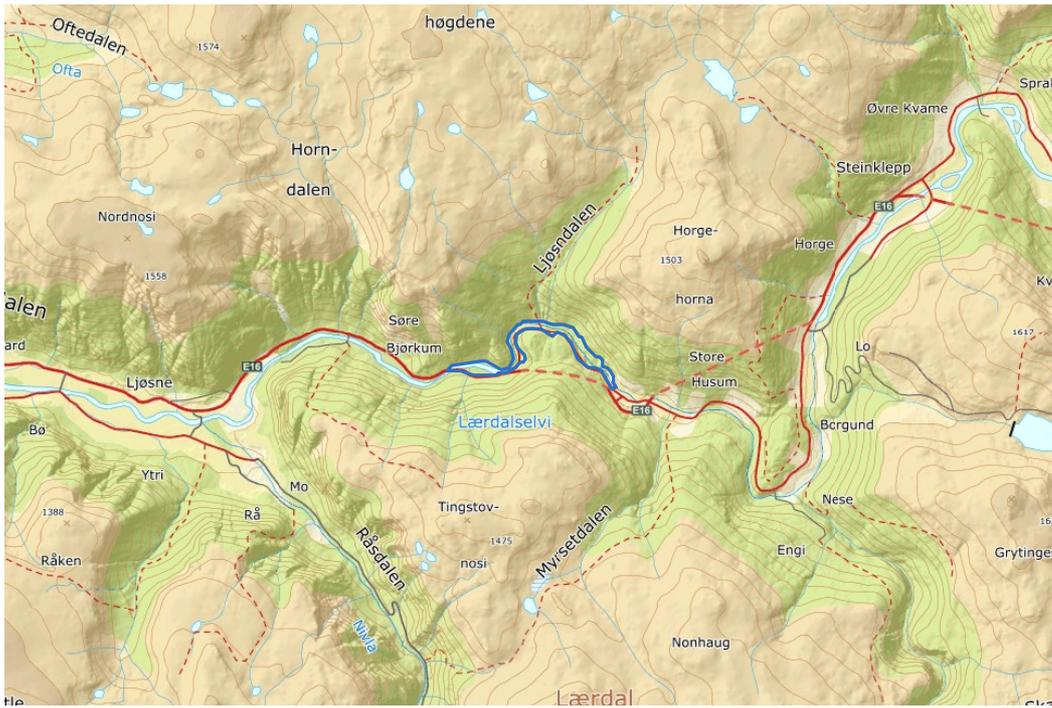
In Galdane, there is also an east-west climate divide. It is home to several endangered plants. To protect these you will notice that Kongevegen's vegetation is only cleared in the middle. It is only from August that the full width of the road is cleared.

Kongevegen continues west along Lærdalselvi and down to the 1950s farm Seltøyne, and then on to the E16 by Seltun bridge.

This is the end of the Galdane section of Kongevegen, and the final part of the round-trip is on tarmac back to the starting point, Koren (1.3 km).







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