



DARK SKY NEWS

| M Ø N | N Y O R D |

The Nordic region's first International Dark Sky Park and International Dark Sky Community

darkskeyparksmon.dk

The Nordic region's first Dark Sky Park IS LOCATED IN MØN

In 2017, the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) named Møn and Nyord the first International Dark Sky Park and International Dark Sky Community in the Nordic region. The IDA even gave it a Gold award.

Confirming that Møn and Nyord is one of the best places in the world for star-gazing and serving as recognition of the island's excellent local efforts to avoid disturbing light in favour of preserving the night sky.

A Dark Sky Park is an area of extraordinary starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specially protected for its scientific, natural, educational and cultural heritage, as well as being open to the public. Dark Sky Parks can be found in 200 locations around the world, with more than 40 found in Europe. Møn and Nyord is the first area in the world to be recognised as both a Dark Sky Community and a Dark Sky Park. The park is located in eastern Møn and parts of Nyord on state-owned land.



INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY COMMUNITIES (IDSC)

are towns, cities, municipalities or other similar political entity that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting policies, dark-sky education, and citizen support of the ideal of dark skies.

INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARKS

are a protected area dedicated to preserving dark night skies and minimizing light pollution. These areas are typically located in regions with minimal light pollution, far away from cities and towns, and have dark night skies that are ideal for stargazing and astronomy.



INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION



DARK SKY MØN

Fascination with THE DARK AND THE UNIVERSE

If you lie down on the grass at night on the island of Møn and let the darkness surround you, you'll find that the starry sky slowly becomes more and more diverse, with more and more stars and planets appearing. In Møn, the darkness is particularly dense. So dense, in fact, that it is one of the places in Denmark with the least light pollution. The unspoiled darkness is a much cherished feature of the island, and in 2017 Møn was awarded Dark Sky Park status and joined the community of places around the world that can boast the densest darkness and the richest starry skies. It's the first of its kind in Scandinavia.

Darkness is treasured wherever you go in Møn, and at Camp Møns Klint, for example, the darkness is maintained by shielding all skyward lighting and directing it towards the ground instead.

The clear light of the celestial bodies is of enormous prominence in the island's darkness. Most cloudless nights give a clear view of the Milky Way, and the Orion constellation also reveals a certain milky blob. This is the Andromeda galaxy, the galaxy closest to the Milky Way.

Light from the stars has travelled tens of thousands of years before reaching our planet and our eyes. The most distant stars in our solar system are 100,000 light years away, while the light from the Andromeda galaxy has travelled 2.5 million years before reaching us and Møn. This is an unimaginable amount of time to take in, and when you realise this fact, you feel both very small and very grateful. When we look at a starry sky, it's incredible that what we're seeing is the universe as it looked hundreds of thousands, even millions, of years ago. This is where to find answers to how the universe, the earth and life came to be. We just don't know how to ask the questions yet. It certainly makes you think.

We can perform the same investigation and scrutiny even when the stars are hidden by clouds. Just as the stars appear if you give yourself enough time to adjust to the dark, so our sensory perception changes when we spend time in the dark. Walking in pitch-black darkness is a great experience that heightens your senses of hearing and touch. When you're in complete darkness, you get to experience how the brain receives and processes impressions differently. Eventually, you'll find that you can actually see the darkness. And that's when you'll suddenly realise that darkness and light are not opposites. On the contrary, they are each other's prerequisite. Come to Møn and experience how the greatest mysteries lie in the unfathomable darkness.



FN's organisation for uddannelse, videnskab, kultur og kommunikation og information



MØN UNESCO BIOSFÆREOMRÅDE





Your guide to NIGHT SKIES

There are many ways to experience the darkness in Møn and Nyord, whether you're here for a single night or several. Here's a list of local guides, the types of accommodation available, and our special star-gazing spots.

LOCAL DARK SKY GUIDES

- Naturguidemoen.dk
- Darkskymoens.dk
- Stillevandring.dk
- Oplev.darkskynyord.dk

WHERE TO STAY

Camping

Accommodation in the Dark Sky Parks

- Dark Sky Camp, darkskymoens.dk/da/darkskycamp
- Camp Møns Klint, campmoensklint.dk

Shelters

Accommodation in the Dark Sky Parks

- Mandemarke Gardens, Shelters 1 and 2 are available to book
- Møns Klint Shelters 1, 2, 3 and 4 are available to book
- Hyldevang Campsite, Nyord, Shelters 1, 2, 3 and 4 are available to book

naturstyrelsen.dk/natureoplevelser/overnatning/

Accommodation across Møn

udinaturen.dk/shelter/

B&B & hotels

With a Dark Sky focus

- Strågården in Nyord, nyordbed.dk
- Tiendegaarden, tiendegaarden.dk
- Camønogården, camoenogaarden.dk
- Villa Huno, villahuno.com

See more at sydkystdanmark.dk/moen

DARK SKY STAR SPOTS

- Hyldevang Nature Centre
- Nyord Bird Tower
- Liselund Slotspark
- Jydelejet
- Aborrebjerg
- Hunosøen
- Kongsbjerg
- Damsholte Observatory

LINKS and APPS

Links

- darkskeyparks.dk
The official Dark Sky website for more information

- darksky.org
IDA – International Dark Sky Association

Other relevant websites

- grib-stjernerne.dk
- oplev.darkskynyord.dk
- darkskymoens.dk

Apps

- Starwalk 2
- Discover Møn

FIVE TIPS for a ★★★★★ experience of the night

- 1 Wear thermal clothing.** It's no fun experiencing the night if you're cold. So wrap yourself up as though it's 10 degrees colder than it actually is.
- 2 Give your eyes time.** Once you've been standing in the darkness for a few minutes, your eyes will adjust and you'll be able to orientate yourself better. After about 20-30 minutes, your night vision will be even better. So give your eyes time.
- 3 Relax.** The starry night is best enjoyed if you're feeling relaxed. So lie down in a deckchair or on a sleeping mat and avoid strained postures and neck pain.
- 4 Use red light.** Red light doesn't ruin your night vision. For example, use a rear light from your bike when you need to find your way around.
- 5 Enjoy the thrill with confidence.** At night, there are many strange and eerie noises. But don't worry, we don't have any dangerous animals here in Møn, so enjoy the thrill of it!





When Møn put a spotlight on DARKNESS

Møn gets extraordinarily dark. Not many people realised this until one day the locals got together with the local municipality to shed some light on the darkness.

It's always been there. Darkness. The starry sky sparkling and shimmering above Møn and Nyord. Perhaps that's why darkness wasn't something the people of Møn ever talked about. It was just there. That complete, pitch-black darkness that settles over the landscape as you leave Stege and continue eastwards along the country road on a cold winter's night. And if it hadn't been for a local amateur astronomer, a group of enthusiasts and an active local municipality, the night sky would probably never have been given a gold star by either the International Dark Sky Association or the local islanders.

The 'Dark Sky' phenomenon

By now, most people have probably heard of 'Dark Sky'. It's a seal of quality that reflects a solid effort to preserve and protect the night sky on the islands of Møn and Nyord.

"We behave as if Earth is the be-all-and-end all. But what if we all went outside and looked up? What if we realised that we're living on what amounts to a speck of dust, a tiny ball of dust in a vast cosmos? Perhaps then we might look after it a bit better than we're doing now," says

Tom Axelsen, amateur astronomer. He was the one who first spotted the term 'Dark Sky' in an American magazine for amateur astronomers.

"I read that an English island had become the first International Dark Sky Island, and I thought: We can do the same here in Møn!"

A joint effort

Tom Axelsen teamed up with a group of local enthusiasts and knocked on Vordingborg Municipality's door. Their plan was to turn the islanders' relationship with light upside down and at the same time put a spotlight on the darkness of Møn at night.

"It's not just about switching off the lights, but about getting the right light in the area and preserving the night sky, because it's become a very rare phenomenon here in Denmark," explains Tom.

Together with Vordingborg Municipality, they formed the Dark Sky Møn coordination group, and in the years that followed a number of initiatives were launched. The initiatives were partly about getting local residents and businesses to replace their outdoor lights with lighting that wouldn't disturb the night sky, and partly about raising awareness of the darkness.

"It was a fantastic collaboration. It's a real textbook example of how people with completely different skillsets can pool their skills together and, with respect for one another, develop

something great," says Susanne Nøhr, who runs the Tiendegaarden B&B and is a member of the coordination group.

Certificate for the starry sky

In March 2017, it finally happened! Møn was named a Dark Sky Community, while particularly dark parts of East Møn and Nyord were the first places in the Nordic region to be certified as Dark Sky Parks. The area joined an exclusive league that includes the world-famous Grand Canyon National Park in the USA.

"We achieved something that has been challenging right from the start. Danish tourism didn't have the imagination to realise that darkness could serve as something positive. But suddenly everyone realised that darkness is such a big part of our lives that it needs to be preserved," says another member of the coordination group, Camp Møns Klint manager Ole Eskling.

Dark Sky – part of the biosphere

Today, efforts to protect the night sky have largely merged with efforts to look after the area's unique nature and wildlife in the Møn UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

"Dark Sky strongly supports the natural processes of humans and animals and, in doing so, it also protects biodiversity. And that's the essence of what we work with in the

biosphere," says Katrine Ohm Dietrich, Biosphere coordinator at Vordingborg Municipality.

Along the island's public roads, 95% of public street lighting has been replaced with Dark Sky-appropriate lighting, and new local plans for the Dark Sky areas include considerations for preserving and protecting the night sky. Furthermore, the municipality is responsible for monitoring the quality of the darkness in the Dark Sky parks through continuous darkness readings, and for guiding citizens and businesses on how to reduce light pollution.

Darkness as a counter-experience

Dark Sky has opened up a whole new chapter in Møn's history as a tourist destination, and exciting new initiatives such as Dark Sky Concerts, Dark Sky Festivals and Dark Sky Walks have appeared in the tourism landscape.

"Instead of only growing tourism in the summer, we can now look at what we can do in the winter months," says Ole Eskling, pointing out that the general focus on slowing down and getting back to nature has been a real boost for darkness.

"And the potential is even greater! The steps we have taken in Møn with Dark Sky and Biosphere have created the perfect conditions for us to intensify our focus on developing sustainable quality tourism in Møn in the future."

MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE DARKNESS

It's time to let go of your fear of the dark if you want to be good to yourself

Day and night. Light and dark. It's like the story of Yin and Yang. You can't have one without the other, and you need both to thrive. Yet we humans associate light with quality

of life. And every year most of us are overcome with joy when the first rays of spring sunshine warm our faces. Darkness, on the other hand, can make us feel unsafe. But the fact is that darkness is essential to our well-being.

Say hello to the dark's hormone boost

When you switch off the lights and lay your head on the pillow in pitch darkness, it triggers your brain. You start producing a number of

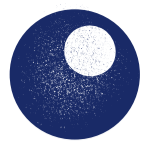
hormones that help keep your body healthy.

For example, the satiety hormone leptin increases. It's the hormone that keeps you from getting hungry during the night and raiding the fridge. Melatonin – also known as the body's natural sleep aid – helps control circadian rhythms so we get the sleep we need. This hormone is produced when it gets dark. Sunlight and light from screens like TVs and smartphones, on the other hand, keep us awake and active, and research shows

that sleeping in bright light doesn't produce the same amount of melatonin. We also produce a growth hormone when we doze off. A hormone that helps rebuild muscles and bones.

Without enough sleep, the body misses out on the natural healthy substances we need, increasing the risk of obesity, diabetes and other lifestyle diseases developing. So it's actually quite simple: Take care of yourself, switch off the lights and consider the darkness your friend.





What does THE DARKNESS mean?



OLE ESKLING
Manager, Camp Møns Klint

"There is more to the picture than meets the eyes of a man and his horse"

Darkness and starry skies have always been my friend

Growing up and living out here on the edge of Møns Klint has been, and still is, a privilege of experiences filled with grandeur, peace and drama, both day and night. The sky over Møns Klint sparks a longing for distant horizons, and, like a legend from Abildgaards Fald, makes you think of magic gardens where the apple trees blossom in winter and the dazzling Milky Way with its millions of stars shines from above.

That's why Møns Klint, the stars and the darkness have always been my door to dreams, new horizons and the existential part of life. The vault of the sky is like a cathedral, a spiritual space with room for contemplation in the search for the meaning of life. The darkness, the moon – that friend to our thoughts – and the twinkling stars are all waiting to set you free into the night, if you dare to follow them. The first times I let myself be embraced by the darkness, on the sea under the Milky Way surrounded by the luminescent glow of a milky sea, and on my horse at full gallop across a field in the middle of the night, I experienced a moment of happiness filled with awe and calm. It felt like the sixth sense was calling to me from the infinite space of the universe.



CARL SOPHUS SCAVENIUS
10 years old, born and raised in Møns Klint

The darkness has its own sounds. Deer and owls. I recognise them. I'm not afraid of the dark, not at all. I don't believe in werewolves! I was born an Aries, and in my first year of school I memorised the order of the planets, as we had talked about them in school. I can't do that anymore. But I can find the Big Dipper and Little Dipper. I once saw seven shooting stars one night when my mum had put us outside to fall asleep. I just lay there looking up at the sky at all the stars. And made wishes. But I didn't have enough wishes for all of them.



PER RASMUSSEN
Photographer; reportage, portraits and nature photography

When Dark Sky rolled in over Møn, the darkness really became my friend. I've had the most incredible experiences at night. Nights under the stars of the Milky Way, nights of shooting stars, nights of thunder and lightning – and nights under the full moon.

As a photographer, I've translated my own experiences into photography (published in the book *Dark Sky Møn & Nyord*). When taking photos, it's the light in the dark that sets the scene. It's the stars and planets, it's the moon in all its phases, it's the last light you can wring out of the end of the day – and the very first light of dawn.

You can see some of Per Rasmussen's 'Dark Sky' photographs in this newspaper.



ELISABETH KNOX-SEITH
Pilgrimage and tourist pastor, Møn

The light and the dark:

"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?"

(Book of Psalms, ch. 8.)

The Bible is full of references to the overwhelming universe of which we are a part – and when you look up at the starry sky and the cosmic vault that shines above us, well, it can really make you feel small. Having the trembling experience expressed by the psalmist here changes something fundamental about our perception of ourselves as human beings.

To see the vault of heaven that shines above us, we have to be able to walk in the dark. Darkness is, paradoxically, the backdrop against which we can see light and grandeur. Darkness is the primordial depths in which we were created.

When we were foetuses, we lay in the dark – and were looked after. So there is something strangely safe about the darkness. It shields us and protects us – like a seed about to germinate and grow.



BENTE SCAVENIUS
Art historian, art critic and author

The starry sky – a sea of light

It wasn't until I'd moved to central Copenhagen that I realised I missed the night sky with all its stars. I had never given it much thought until then that having a clear starry sky above you was something truly special. Because when you've grown up in the far eastern part of Denmark, with your day filled with light and a night sky filled with bright stars, it's hard to be content with city lights. I quite simply missed the lights of nature, especially the bright starry sky on clear nights.

As a city dweller, I've come to appreciate the night sky even more, especially when standing in my garden in the evening and staring out into the universe. In the month of August, the dark night sky with all its luminous constellations is particularly impressive. Even the moonlight can be so bright that you don't need a torch. However, stars can fade in the light of a full moon. But the star-dense Milky Way is always easy to spot.



ELIZA JARL ESTRUP
Scientific writer and editor; UNESCO application – Møns Klint as a World Heritage Site

When I first moved to Møn, I lived on the very edge of Klinteskoven. Even though I came straight from the bright lights of the big city, I thought I knew the darkness from growing up in the provinces.

But the darkness in Møn quickly proved to be all-consuming, in a way I don't think most modern people have ever experienced. One evening, I took advantage of the full moon to visit Svantestenen deep in the woods.

It was truly exotic to experience how other senses had to take over when a cloud passed in front of the moon and the path and the entire visible world completely disappeared!



OLE KNUDSEN
Author, editor, Gyldendal

As a child, I was scared. It's called fear of the dark, but that doesn't do my condition justice. I was scared out of my wits. I grew up in a house with a big black cellar at the bottom of a steep staircase, just like you see in American TV series and Stephen King film adaptations. When I was sent downstairs in the evening to get a bag of peas from the freezer, it took so much effort and so many attempts that my mum often gave up and went down to get them herself.

But I have taught myself in my house in Østmøn to go out and study the completely and utterly unfathomable starry sky without any fear whatsoever. Even though I sometimes get scared of my own shadow.

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- to everyone who has contributed, however much or little, over the past 7 years.

