

From pauper to prince

A 3-islands rollercoaster trip

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Photography: Aart-Jan - Peter Sikking

In cooperation with Seatrout Fyn (seatrout.dk)



Privileges

Between 2011 and 2023, I visited the islands of Funen and Langeland in Denmark exactly forty times. Each visit, whether it was just a single week or six consecutive weeks, was an absolute privilege. But you know how it is with privileges; they have this habit of becoming normal. And the truth is that I became a little blasé. At one point, I even thought I had seen it all. Don't get me wrong, the fishing itself is great, but the whole 'accommodation thing' bored me. You probably know how that goes: same cottage, with about the same features in about the same location. Well, what can I say. I could say I was embarrassed. But that hardly covers it, really. Now, November 27 - 2023, I feel not only stupid, but motivated to make things right....



Christian Thomsen

After I wrote and published the article “dreams of Aero” (weareflyfishing magazine) last year, Christian Thomsen (marketeer for Havorred Fyn) and I kept in touch. Christian is a very passionate and energetic spin/fly angler with a plethora of (local) knowledge, but more importantly, with a clear vision of what the future of trout fishing in Denmark (Funen) should look like. While exchanging information, in an unguarded moment, I expressed my (as said blasé) feelings, to which Christian laughed heartily. A flood of e-mails was the result. It soon became clear that in the past 12 years I had not even hinted at the locations and accommodations on Funen, Taising and Langeland. About time to make amends and experience the possibilities on these three islands.





Day 1 of our rollercoaster trip: Svendborg

We decided to take an airplane instead of going by car. For these short trips (just 5 days were planned) I prefer flying to driving. For me, the Schiphol – Copenhagen route is the easiest, and usually the cheapest. We paid 230 euros pp for a return ticket with Norwegian Air, including 23 kilos of luggage. The rental car, a Toyota Avensis Wagon, cost us just under 200 euros (Avis/Budget) for a week. Including unlimited mileage and no deductible.

It is 01:15 when we arrive at the Best Western Plus Hotel in Svendborg. This is unavoidable because we arrived at Copenhagen airport rather late (8 p.m.), but wasn't helped by the fact that the only road to Svendborg (on southern Funen) is under reconstruction. Funnily it seems that half the village is watching the reconstructions, in the middle of the night, on a Monday! Islanders: they are a different breed :)

All in all, it took us a good hour to negotiate an alternative route. Eventually, we reached the hotel, and found our room spacious. Since I am not used to sleeping in a bed - I prefer to sleep close to (Japanese) or on the floor - in an otherwise fine bed, it took me more than an hour before I decided to make the bold move and pull the top layer off the mattress, and lie on the floor. Not much later, I fell asleep. And yes, I know, not only islanders are a stroke apart :)

Day 2 of our rollercoaster trip: Shelter on Langeland

You can't tell by looking at me, but I love food. Especially breakfast. And I have to say, the breakfast at the Best Western Plus Hotel in Svendborg (not sponsored) is one of the best I've ever had the pleasure of indulging in :) From the homemade cinnamon rolls to the granola, the thick yogurt from biological farms, smoked salmon, well-cooked (fresh) eggs.... Ah, life can be beautiful. If you happen to be in the area (many hotels serve breakfast without requiring that you book an overnight stay) it is an absolute must! Unfortunately, we don't have much time and as I reluctantly tear myself away from all the goodies and enter the elevator, I find myself next to a small Korean woman who has turned her breakfast buffet into a lunch basket, tucked away under her arm, for her entire family. Everything neatly wrapped in napkins. And I thought that was something that just us Dutch did...





Meeting thé Claus

Between nine and ten we have an appointment with Claus Eriksen. For sea trout fishermen, yes, thé Claus Eriksen! According to Claus, catching sea trout is becoming quite impossible at the moment. The water temperatures are far too high, after two incredibly warm weeks (around 30 degrees in the latter half of September). When I tell him that this time I am focusing less on catching seatrout and more on rediscovering the island, he looks at me almost pityingly. Later, back in the car, I couldn't help thinking that either Claus thinks I'm a bit of a jerk, or he's so used to people coming to him with catch-related questions that he didn't know how to deal with me. Some day I'll ask him, but I suspect the former :)

Tip from Claus

An indispensable website is FCOO (fmi.dk) Once there, go to: sejladsubsigt (first link on the top left), and in the menu that follows select Denmark. Here, you'll get the water temperatures for all of Denmark, as well as the forecast.



From Go-Fishing (Odense) we drive again towards Svendborg, and from there via my favorite island Tåsinge, to Langeland. A fifteen-minute drive from Rudkøbing (on the west coast of Langeland) lies our second accommodation for the week.

Here there are two wooden shelters 10 meters from the sea. For the paltry sum of about 4 euros per person per night, they can be rented from about 3 in the afternoon until 11 the next morning. We check the website bookenshelter.dk and it turns out that there is a multitude of similar shelters scattered around the various islands. All built with a nautical theme in mind. Ours were built as crab traps. Some shelters you can reserve in advance; others are rented out on a first come, first served basis. Which is not a problem, as there are plenty of them scattered throughout the islands.

Needless to say, we loved the location. You can spot seatrout from your hideout, so to speak. There is one caveat: sleeping in a shelter is not for everyone. Well-built, with very cleverly devised panels for fresh air and round 'portholes' from which you can look out to sea, but still a shelter.



Not for everybody :)





A perfect location

Photo: Christian Thomsen

Fishing with Christian


After a year of almost no fishing, it feels great to be back on the Danish coast. The water in this small bay in Langeland may be far too warm, but the remaining conditions are perfect. 17 degrees, partly cloudy and with a light breeze (about 3 Bft) from the north it offers, to my mind, the perfect ambiance. As proof, it doesn't take long before I catch my first sea trout. Due to the warm water, I try to play the fish as quickly as possible, but she puts up an amazing fight for a fish of only 40 centimeters. Unfortunately, it will be the only one. Apart, that is, from a small sea trout, that Christian caught on a *spinning rod by the end of the afternoon.

*catching seatrout on a spinning rod...what can I say... Nevertheless, I would like to accommodate Christian a bit. Christian is lefthanded, and with a strengthening wind from the north, one can really get a bit tired of backcasting. But, as said, no excuse :)





Photo: Christian Thomsen

A wide-angle landscape photograph of a coastal scene. In the foreground, a rocky shoreline is covered with dark seaweed and scattered stones of various sizes. The water is a deep blue, with gentle ripples. In the middle ground, a prominent, light-colored sandstone cliff rises from the water's edge, topped with sparse green vegetation. To the right, a dense line of trees with autumn-colored foliage borders the cliff. The background shows a vast expanse of water leading to distant, low-lying hills under a sky filled with soft, white clouds. The lighting suggests late afternoon or early morning, with a warm, golden glow on the cliff and rocks.

That evening we sit around the campfire and eat some leftover chicken and drink a cup of 'riverbank' coffee. After dinner I go for a swim, but on the way back to the shelter the weather turns for the worse within minutes. A storm is coming our way. We decide to put out the fire and seek shelter for the night.

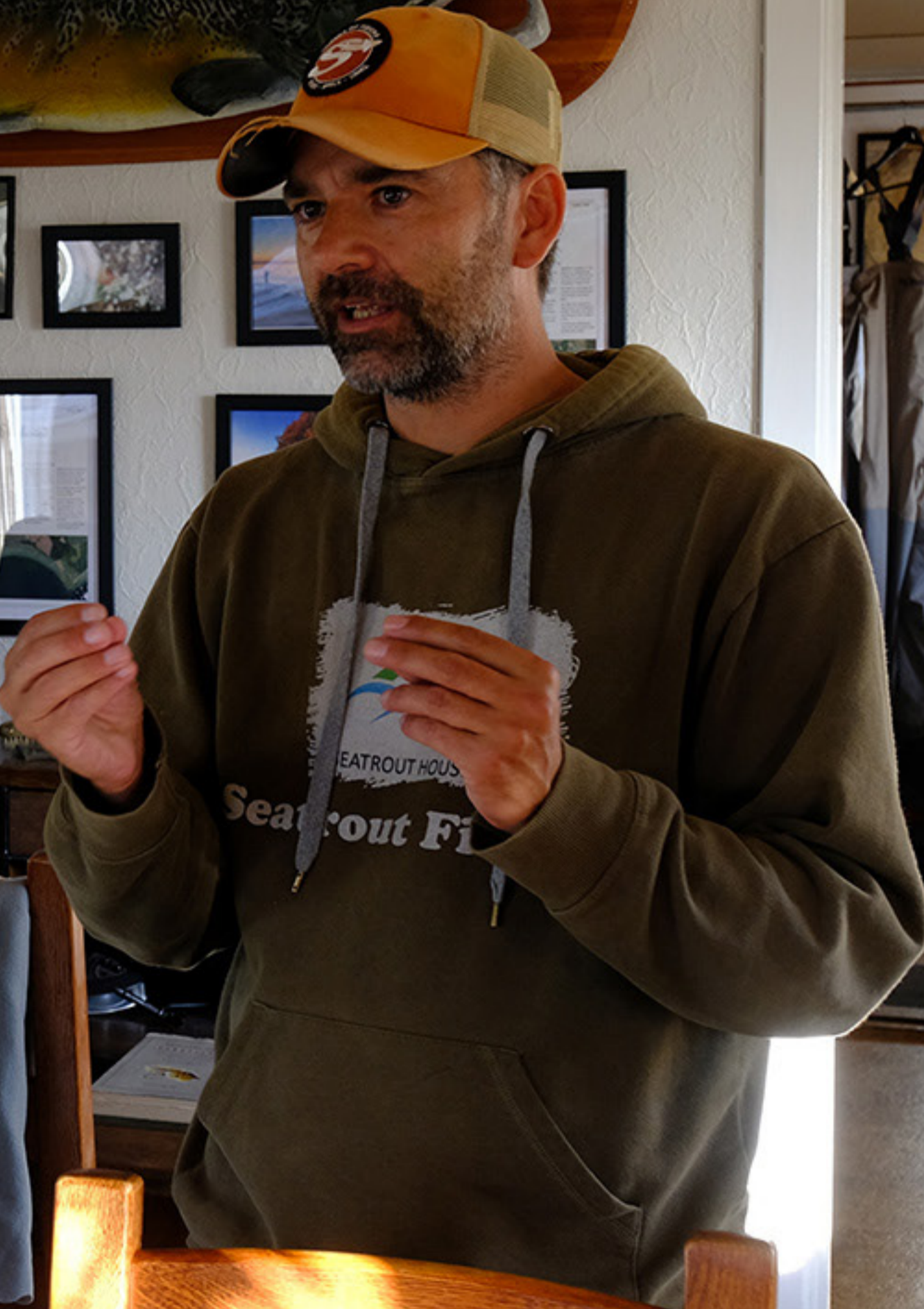
Day 3: Seatrout house

Anyone who has ever been on a do-it-yourself trip in unfamiliar territory, or often stays outdoors (in a tent), knows the power of sound in the dark. A cricket scurrying around your tent at night just sounds like an approaching grizzly. If I am not mistaken, I had both a deer and a mink visit me that night. But it could just as easily have been the wind moving leaves.

We start the following morning with a rehydrated breakfast, pack the camping gear and leave the shelters before the clock strikes nine. Today we are going to buy Aart-Jan (our photographer) his first fishing rod ever. A spinning rod, but it's a start. Then on to the Seatrout house, our lodgings for day 3.



Seatrout House






The Seatrout house is an experience in itself. Nickolas Jansen (the owner) has spared no expense to create a lodge-like atmosphere and has more than succeeded. Walking around the house, I get surprise after surprise.

Every time I turn my head, something different catches my eye. From framed photos of clients, to an old writing desk that doubles as a tying table (including vices and tying materials that guests get to use for free), to the walls in the living room decorated with a plethora of sea trout lures – actual lures –, to the plates you eat from... And how about a real massage chair. We had to try that, of course. Nothing like a good massage after a day of wading over uneven, slippery rocks.

Outside you can sit sheltered and dry your gear, or you can use the drying room inside the house. The various bedrooms are named after hotspots from the east side of Funen. These, and many other (secret) spots hang on every door, neatly numbered and placarded, including one on the toilet :) Everything in the Seatrout house breathes sea trout and is there to help anglers make the most of their stay.



In the evening we briefly try hotspots no. 31, 32, 33 (*also see 117 fine seatrout spots). Unfortunately, even here the water has the temperature of a well-heated swimming pool. A little further north, where the water is slightly deeper, I catch, in the dark, a small sea trout on my favorite fall shrimp. Then the wind drops, and although it is a beautiful evening, this is a bit too much for fishing (water too warm, tide low, and no wind). We decide to drive back carefully (to avoid the ample wildlife). Tired, but satisfied, we retreat straight to our rooms. Tomorrow morning the alarm will wake us early again.

**in cooperation with Havorred Fyn (Sea trout Fyn), we can give away 5 'sea trout bibles'! Besides a wealth of general information, the book contains 117 top spots on Funen, Tåsinge and Langeland. A must for the beginner as well as the experienced Denmark sea trout angler.*

Day 4: A day at the castle

Today we are guests at Broholm Slot. And without a 'writer's note': you have to do this at least once in your life. A tip: if you do, try to grab a weekday, because weekends can be busy with weddings and all sorts of other activities. On this Thursday, however, Aart-Jan and I have the entire north wing to ourselves! It doesn't happen very often that you have an entire castle wing as your accommodation! Aart sleeps in the Captain's Suite, while I am staying in the Birgitte Suite for the next 20 hours. By the looks of it, Birgitte had no lack of sleeping comfort.

you have to do this at least once in your life





The rest of the castle, both inside and out, is simply breathtaking. We stroll, as walking would be inappropriate, under the supervision of centuries-old nobility, looking sternly down at us from their portrayed selves, through the deserted castle corridors. Over drinks, we compare the always comfortable Chesterfields with the antique, but very beautiful, 'road bag armchairs', whose name I have since forgotten, and fantasize what it would have been like to experience all this as your every day normal.

We stroll, as walking would be inappropriate...



As we muse, time passes quickly, and since we are expected at the dinner table at 6:30 PM, we have just enough time to take a quick walk around the castle pond. This one seems to be teeming with fish. I heard whispers that fly fishing for pike is occasionally allowed...



We enjoy an excellent meal in the castle restaurant that, for me, is complimented by a fine red wine that goes perfectly with it. Aart-Jan is more a beer man, and selects a local specialty brew - Denmark has 200 micro-breweries, on a total of less than 6 million inhabitants. We end the day with a foam bath filled to the brim - take the middle vial, there is something spicy in it, undefinable, but very tasty - and then repair to our suites for a night of royal dreams.

Appetizer

Main course:

Tender roasted beef

Served with sauce Choron, fresh summer tomatoes and onions.

Desert:

Strawberries in variation

Strawberry tiramisu, sorbet, crisp tuille and basil.



Day 5: More than a Bed & Breakfast

On time we leave the castle, wanting to see a little more of the area and spend a few hours fishing at a not-so-familiar spot. Where, as fully expected, the water is warmer than last night's bath water. When the wind dies down again, we call it a day and head to where we started the first night, Svendborg



Rosenhøj

Trine & Patrick

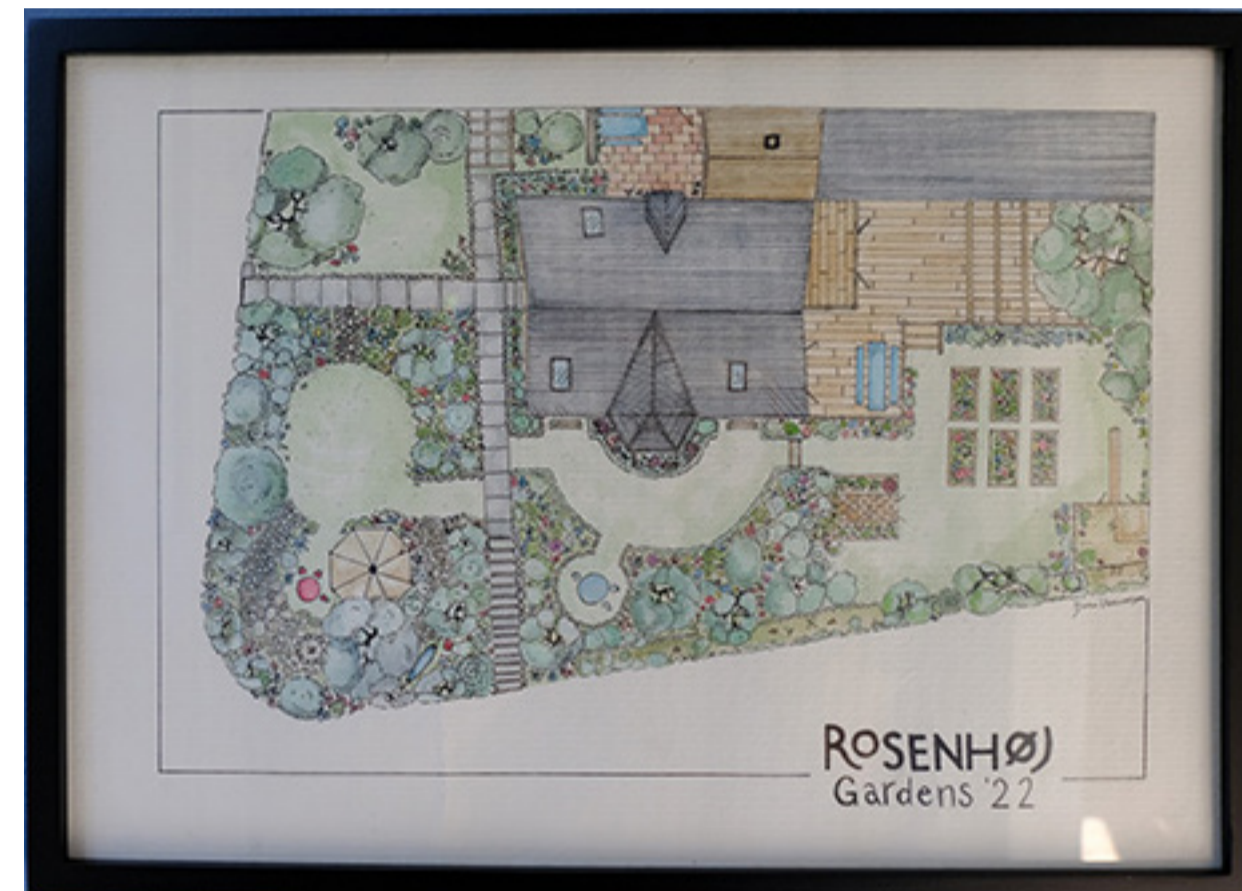
Svenborg is very happening, according to Svenborgers. It feels somewhat akin to other often forgotten seaside resorts that are successively being rediscovered.... True or not, Svenborg is definitely worth a visit. And while you're in the area, you should book a few days of B&B with Trine & Patrick. Trine was a chef in her previous life and Patrick was a police officer (bobby) in London for 30 years. Things can get weird in life. Together they now run Rosenhøj, and they've certainly hit it off. Rarely have I tasted such a relaxed atmosphere as here at Rosenhøj.

Trine was a chef in her previous life and Patrick was a police officer (bobby) in London for 30 years



The decor alone makes you happy, but the various terraces around the house, along with the huge backyard, the views and the huge open kitchen, all of that you simply should see. The guest (sleeping) area is also tiptop, where for me the separate relaxation area (including a really beautiful designer sofa) was the icing on the cake. It is a house you will not leave easily, and you really take a piece of it home with you. At least I know I did (I'm now also thinking of having separate relaxation area :-).

It is a house you will not leave easily,







Of course you expect something from a former chef, and the Indian curry is pure bliss. While you're there, ask Patrick about the homemade brownies, they're super delicious. You won't understand how you went so long without them.



Svendborg is the hometown of Soren Skarby (writer, photographer and fly-fishing guide). If you're in the area send him a message.





After a very short night, we meet Patrick in the kitchen at 6:30 AM, where he already prepared our packed breakfast. We thank him for his hospitality and leave a Svendborg still shrouded by sleep, and head for Copenhagen.

No pauper

Feeling like a prince

As we cross the Storebelt Bridge, this time during the day, it slowly dawns on us that our roller coaster is slowly coming to a halt.

In five days, we visited 3 islands. We slept in a different location each night, with each location completely different from the last. From a shelter of 4 euros pp, to a castle suite of around 200 euros.

If I had to pick my favorite, I really wouldn't know. They all have their own character and charm. What I do know is that I can't go back to a week in the same accommodation in the same place anymore. Funen, Tåsinge and Langeland have far too much to offer and life is too short for constant repetition :)

Addresses et cetera

Svendborg Best Western Plus Hotel

Centrumpladsen 1 | DK-5700 | Svendborg +45
62 21 17 00

Shelter

Bookenshelter.dk

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Bed and breakfast

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