



Fact file Kattegattleden

• **Distance:** 390km, approx 70-100km/day.

• **Route:** Helsingborg, Ängelholm, Båstad, Laholm, Halmstad, Falkenberg, Varberg, Kungsbacka, Gothenburg.

• **Conditions:** Fine sunny conditions with no rain, mainly tarmac cycle paths with some gravel sections.

• **Bike used:** Dawes Super Galaxy.

• **Maps/Guides:** I used the 1:50,000 Lantmäteriet series maps for Halland northwards. For the southerly section I used the map for the North Sea Cycle route, which follows the same route.

• **I'm glad I had:** A decent sleeping mat for wild camping. The ground is often not smooth and level.

• **Next time I would:** Do it all in one go. Wild camp more.

• **Further information:** There is an excellent website for the route in English at kattegattleden.se/en. It provides all kinds of information. You can download, print or buy a copy of the 1:100,000 map of the whole route there or pick it up at tourist offices along the way for 150 Swedish Krona (about £12).

“ This is the royal palace Shakespeare wrote about in Hamlet: Elsinore. You can see it from Sweden ”

more half-timbered buildings and church towers with stepped gables. Skåne's provincial flag even incorporates a yellow cross on a red background – similar to Denmark's national flag, a white cross on a red background. Even the Swedish accents in Skåne have a guttural inflection closer to Danish.

Helsingborg is a modern-looking city with a stylish waterfront that is just a few miles across the waters of Kattegatt to its sister city in Denmark, Helsingør. This is the famous palace Shakespeare wrote about in Hamlet: Elsinore. You can see the royal palace in Helsingør from Sweden. It is reached by a 20-minute ferry ride. When I was there I toyed with the idea of extending my journey into Denmark as it was so temptingly close. But I realised I didn't have my passport with me. To be honest, though, the border checking between the Scandinavian countries is so light touch you can cross from one to the other without even seeing a border guard.

As you progress further north you see more of the red-painted wooden houses that are much more characteristic of Swedish country landscapes. The view is also dotted with old windmills, usually on higher ground, together with many modern wind farms that take advantage of the prevailing winds blowing in across Kattegatt. You may also notice piles of round stones raised in ancient burial mounds. Sometimes they're visible on higher ridges of ground in copses of trees, and at other times closer to the coastline.

From the middle of Halland onwards the coast starts to get rockier, with granite cliffs and lots of rock outcrops in the water. More islands are dotted off the coast, sometimes with the odd house on the larger ones but more often with colonies of sea birds on the smaller ones. As you reach the area immediately south of Gothenburg, Kattegattleden



Clockwise from top left:
Kungsbacka Fjorden. Good
signage. Beach nr Halmstad



brings you to the area known as the Gothenburg Archipelago – a multitude of islands, large and small. It is a sailors' and canoeists' paradise, with shore-side clusters of cabins and little wooden houses. Boats are moored up everywhere. The Swedes like to use these places not just for boating but for bathing in the summer months.

TRACKING THE SHORE

The cycling along Kattegattleden is not difficult. There are few serious hills to contend with on this coastal journey. The main issue for cycling the west coast of Sweden is the wind. It can sometimes blow with force, not just from the sea in the west but from other points on the compass. While this can slow you down, it's rarely a big problem unless there is a storm blowing through, which is most common in the winter months.

The great bonus of this route is that so much of it is on tarmac cycle tracks, even through country areas. Like the Netherlands, Sweden has been laying down segregated cycle tracks in most of its cities and towns for a long time. You can ride carefree from the impact of other road traffic. There is more of an issue with sharing space with pedestrians, especially through urban areas. ▶