



DANEBU
19 KONGS 50
GAARD

An exciting story that is still
being written



DE HISTORISKE
hotel & spisesteder

You are not at an ordinary mountain hotel.

Since its opening in 1950, thousands of Danish and Norwegian guests have been here. New thousands will come in the future. Most have never experienced the years of war and occupation that form the background for Danebu's creation. Yet, Danebu Kongsgaard, an enchanting gem in the Norwegian mountains, still stands as a symbol of the eternal friendship between Danes and Norwegians.



A Cabin as a Symbol of Gratitude

During World War II, many Norwegians would have suffered had it not been for the food support that came from Denmark. When peace came in 1945, both Danes and Norwegians became heroes in each other's countries, and a warm fellowship emerged. Danes admired Norwegians for resisting and fighting against the occupying forces, while Norwegians looked up to Danes for sending several tons of food to Norway.

On the Danish National Day, June 5, 1945, a stream of Norwegians gathered at Frogner in Oslo and marched to the Danish consulate with flags from both nations fluttering in the wind. Led by the Ila boy's marching band, they expressed gratitude for the help while the crowd shouted, "thanks for the soup we've received, we'll say it tasted good." Later, a tribute procession marched through the capital, from Tullinløkka to the Grand Hotel, where Denmark's minister, Chamberlain Oscar Oxholm, resided. Sixth and seventh graders marched alongside previous Norwegian prisoners of German concentration camps, students, and anyone else who wished to, to thank Denmark for all the support during difficult years.

Driven by a desire to give back, the then-editor P. Chr. Andersen from "Aftenposten" in Oslo promoted the idea of a nationwide fundraising campaign in Norway to raise funds for a "DANSKEHYTTE" (Danish cabin) as a token of gratitude for help and solidarity. A sports cabin in the Norwegian winter landscape with skiing and joy – the best of Norway. The Ski Association embraced the idea at the initiative of the chairman, director Lauritz Schmidt, and on Denmark's Constitution Day, June 5, 1945, the fundraising began with the following appeal in the morning newspapers:

“Norwegian youth wish to give Denmark a tangible proof of the admiration we hold for the Danish people’s indomitable resistance and fight for freedom. Likewise, we wish to express our great thanks for the outstanding assistance Denmark has provided Norway – assistance from a country that has itself been under iron rule. Today – June 5 – on Denmark’s Constitution Day, we invite all Norwegian youth to join a fundraising effort to erect a first-class Norwegian ski lodge to be later built in good, Norwegian ski terrain. This shall be our gift to our freedom-loving brethren. In this ski lodge, Danish skiers shall benefit from Norwegian hospitality and Norwegian ski terrain. Together with Danish skiers, we shall strengthen the bonds that have held so faithfully throughout the years of war.”

Success came swiftly. Contributions poured in from individuals and the business community. After a few days, they had collected NOK 32 000. After a couple of weeks, NOK 100 000 had been raised. Alongside monetary donations, promises also came from all corners to provide free furnishings, fireplace equipment, lamps, stoves, wool blankets, wall coverings, and sauna equipment.

Even after the war was over, Denmark continued to send large supplies to Norway, which still suffered from food rationing. The Oslo City Hall became a collection point for Danish groceries, and youth marched through the city center with cries like “Hurrah for Denmark! Thanks for the food!” The City Hall served as a large grocery store where Danish packages were assembled under the auspices of the Red Cross, including flour, grains, sausage, bacon, and cheese.

Oversikt over de største varegrupper fordelt på årene 1942—46.

	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	Total
	Antall kg	Antall kg	Antall kg	Antall kg	Antall kg	Antall kg
Mel og gryn	64.200	799.275	2.969.414	4.548.000	—	8.380.889
Sukker, kunsthonning og marmelade	2.100	28.200	208.720	7.757.285	—	7.976.305
Smør, ost, flesk og spekk	3.542	54.180	486.523	4.745.738	—	5.289.878
Grønnsaker, poteter .	3.600	194.481	822.700	1.028.745	1.000	2.050.526
Kjøttvarer	1.250	18.500	151.129	422.410	900	594.189
Tørmelk, melkepulver	3.600	75.815	269.950	220.264	—	569.629
Erter og bønner . . .	—	10.000	162.600	121.150	—	293.750
Buljongterninger, Ovo- maltine etc.	861	15.416	51.590	52.490	—	120.387

On June 20, 1945, the Oslo Football Association organized a football match at Bislett Stadium to raise funds for the gift, which ended with NOK 31,797.70 raised. Under bright sunshine, the match between a city team from the Oslo Football Association and a press team was played in front of 17,382 paying spectators, with King Haakon in admiral's uniform and Crown Prince Olav in general's uniform leading the way.

The fundraising campaign continued, and thousands of small and large contributions poured in. By July 2, NOK 150 000 had been collected, and by July 14, the amount had increased to NOK 400 000. The big day came in Copenhagen in August 1945, where Lauritz Schmidt was able to hand over over half a million NOK to office manager Aksel Lundquist of the Danish Sports Association for the construction of the "Danskehytta" (Danish cabin).

Where should the Danish Cabin be located?

Municipalities competed for the honor of hosting this significant gift.

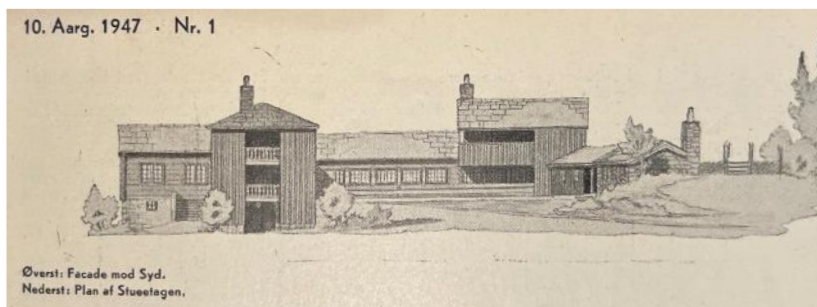
The cabin couldn't be placed just anywhere with free land available, so together with the Danes, represented by the Danish Sports Association, they had to find the location that best suited the purpose. There were many thorough inspections, as the cabin required a site that was not only magnificent but also conveniently accessible. Telemark was carefully considered, and plots at Lifjell and Blefjell were also evaluated. Perhaps it should be located in Gudbrandsdalen or Valdres?

The idea of the perfect location took a new turn in the summer of 1946 when merchant Otto Diserud from Aurdal presented a plot at Aurdal Østås in Valdres that captured everyone's hearts: "The landscape is neither too heavy nor too wild but still offers the best opportunities for both the young Dane who wants to engage in sports and for those seeking recreation." Colonel R. Bloch-Hansen and architect H. Astrup went on an inspection and experienced the magnificently situated grounds themselves.

It was the perfect place for such a significant gift: at an elevation of 1000 meters by a small forest pond just below the tree line, amidst rocky terrain with dwarf birch and spruce trees. There was a wide and beautiful view of distant mountains to the north and northwest, with a view down into the valley to the west. Here, the "Danskehytta" would be located.



As their contribution to the “Danskehytta” project, the Norwegian Association of Architects organized a free architecture competition. They received 27 entries, surprisingly many considering that Norwegian architects were busy with the post-war reconstruction. The competition among the best was tough, but the jury, consisting of architect H. Astrup, architect Arneberg, and Colonel Block-Hansen, ultimately rallied around the submission by Espen Poulsson, son of city hall architect Magnus Poulsson, in May 1947. Espen Poulsson was thus entrusted with the task of executing the architectural plans.



The cabin was to be built in a horseshoe shape with an opening facing a pond, in line with the motto of creating a proper Norwegian courtyard. There would be a large fireplace room accommodating all guests, where relationships and friendships could be built.

The construction of Danebu, as the cabin was named, was an unparalleled collaborative effort. Everything from fiberboard to fireplace equipment, lamps, furniture, and other furnishings were donated from all corners of the country, evidence of a shared desire to honor Danish-Norwegian friendship.

Under the skilled leadership of master builder Amund Bratrud from Valdres, Danebu emerged from the ground like a royal estate (Kongsgaard) from the fairytales.



December 16, 1950, was a milestone – Danebu opened its doors for the first time with a celebration that signified more than just the completion of a building. When Lauritz Schmidt handed over the deed to the Danish Sports Association, represented by lawyer Leo Fredriksen, it was a gesture that sealed a promise of friendship and gratitude to endure for generations.

The Opening Day: The Grand Celebration of Unity

December 16, 1950 marked the opening of Danebu, a day that would be etched into history as a living memory. As guests arrived at Aurdal station, they were greeted by smiling school-children from the village, waving Danish and Norwegian flags. Belted vehicles transported them up to Danebu, where the festivities awaited.



Foto: Teigen, Karl / Nasjonalmuseet (Opphavsrett)

The dining hall was a sight to behold, adorned for the occasion and filled to the brim. The staff, proudly dressed in bunad (traditional Norwegian attire), conveyed a deep sense of national pride. The welcoming speech was delivered by Supreme Court lawyer Ole Bøhn, with Sigurd Lund as a charismatic toastmaster. Lund's prologue captured the essence of the friendship between Norway and Denmark, a tribute that would endure through time.

*"Yes, this tribute shall stand as a symbol
beneath Norwegian mountains and soothing sun
to the friendship of Danes and Norwegians
lasting until the end of time."*

The most solemn moment came when the bells in Danebu's bell tower rang for the first time. The guests sat quietly, listening to the sound that filled the air, a symbol of the beginning of a new chapter. And as they rang, Lauritz Schmidt rose to deliver the presentation speech.

*"Hands you extended,
blood that flowed
sacrifice you brought
together bound us."*

With these words, he began his speech. He spoke of how the idea of "Danebu" arose and how it now stands as a symbol of Norway's gratitude and a hope to forge even stronger bonds in the future. He emphasized that the most important aspect of the gift is "to share our magnificent mountain nature with our friends so that they, too, can experience what we value most."

Lauritz Schmidt concluded by presenting the deed.

A moved Leo Fredriksen accepted the deed on behalf of the Danish Sports Association and emphasized that he received the gift in the spirit it was given, not just for Danish sports youth but for the entire Danish people. He announced that there would always be reserved space for at least 10 Norwegian guests and that Danish youth had never received a greater proof of friendship and love than this gift.

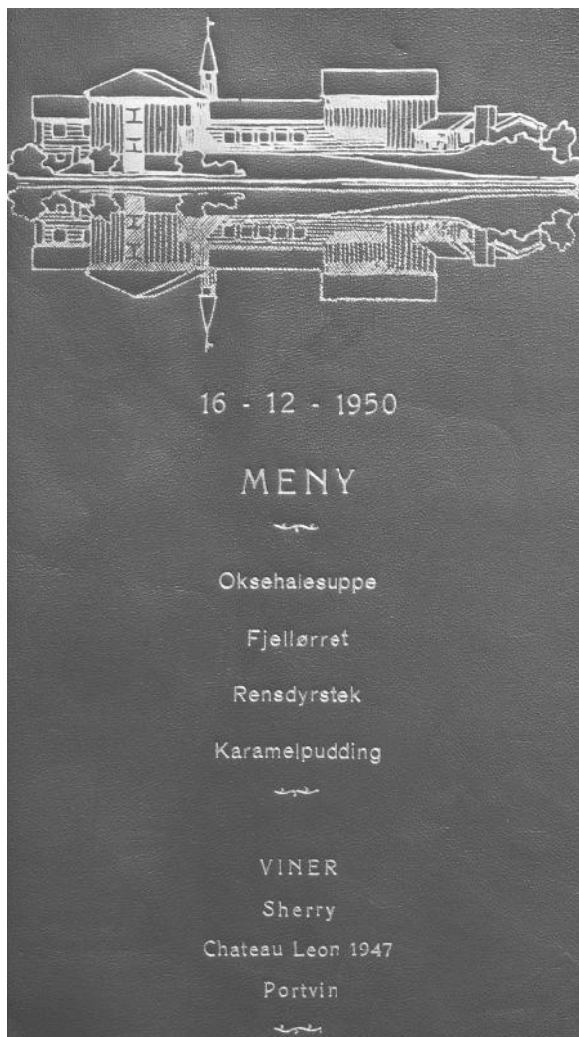


Foto: Neste, Nils / Valdres Folkemuseum

The Danish ambassador in Oslo, M.A. Wassard, spoke on behalf of His Majesty King Frederick IX of Denmark. He honored the three Norwegians who stood at the forefront during the construction of Danebu: initiator P. Chr. Andersen, Ski Association chairman L. Schmidt who carried the idea forward, and Colonel R. Bloch-Hansen, presenting them with the Insignia of the Order of Dannebrog. In addition, Leo Fredriksen presented gold medals to architect E. Poulsson, Supreme Court lawyer O. Bøhn, and architect H. Astrup. Commemorative gifts were also distributed to architects H. Astrup and E. Poulsson, master builder A. Bratrud, foreman Granheim in the village council in Aurdal, and merchant O. Diserud.

Telegram greetings also arrived from, among others, King Haakon and Crown Prince Olav. King Haakon's message read: "On the occasion of Danebu's inauguration, I send my warmest congratulations. I hope the place will bring joy to all who visit, and that it will always be one of the bonds that unite Denmark and Norway."

It was a long and beautiful evening filled with laughter and joy. The director of the Danish Sports Association wrote in 1951 that by the end of this day, he had concluded for himself that much good can also come from the greatest evils. Because “Danebu” is ultimately a result of five years of hardship.



The Next Years of Danebu

Over the years, Danebu has naturally hosted Danish holiday guests, but it has also served as a training ground for many famous sports stars.

Danebubakken evolved into a highly popular 50-meter ski jump in the 1960s and 1970s. Thanks to its height and location, this was one of the earliest hills to be covered with snow. The hill was also very popular due to its profile. Several famous ski jumpers like Tomtun, Jensen, Wirkola, and Grini trained and competed on this hill while staying at Danebu.



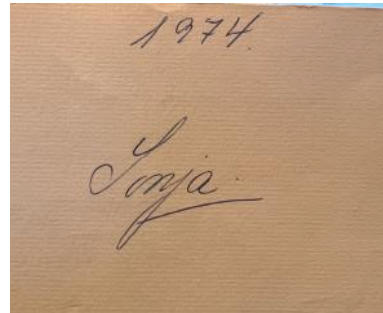
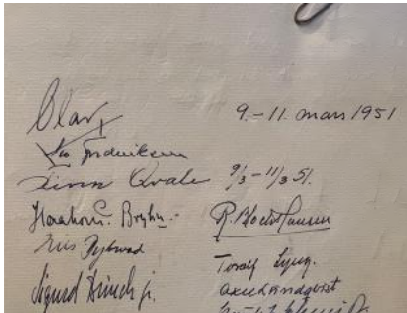
Foto: Røstad, Paul Andreas / DEXTRA Photo



Danebu was also a popular venue for ice skating and hosted the so-called “Big 5.” In 1986, Valdres Alpine Center opened, a popular ski resort over the years, catering to both alpine skiing and snowboarding. People of all ages trained and competed in these fantastic slopes.



Danebu has also had royal visits. In March 1951, Crown Prince Olav was a guest at Danebu, and in January 1974, Crown Princess Sonja visited. In Danebu's old guest books, you can find their signatures, along with several other pleasant greetings and drawings from both Danish and Norwegian guests.



The area was very popular, and Danebu was filled with guests. Several private cabins popped up, with Danebu as a natural gathering point. Danebu also became a popular venue for weddings and other significant events.



“Dansk Folkeferie”

Over the course of 25 years after Danebu became a gift from Norway to Denmark, the Danish Sports Association faced significant financial challenges. With increasing maintenance backlog and a lack of operating funds, Danebu gradually deteriorated and operated at a deficit. Although the lodge was fully booked during the winter months, there was a great need to attract more guests during the summer to operate profitably.

A new era began when “Dansk FolkeFerie,” owned by the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), took over the baton in 1975, purchasing Danebu for a symbolic NOK 1. With a long history of filling the lodge with Danish holiday guests, Dansk FolkeFerie embarked on ambitious plans to revitalize Danebu. They carried out significant investments to breathe new life into the meaningful place.



Danebu, Valdres - 990 m.o.h.

Foto Næste, Fageres.

In the fall of 1982, Stephan Koppel designed a new wing with rooms, and five years later, 15 new cabins were established. Dansk FolkeFerie also established Valdres Alpine Center in 1986 and invested in Fagernes Airport (Leirin), which opened in 1987. This led to an increase in the number of guests, especially in the winter season, thanks to charter flights to Fagernes Airport, with Danebu as a popular destination. Unfortunately, Fagernes Airport (Leirin) closed in 2018.

Although the summer months still posed a challenge, Dansk FolkeFerie began to extend opening hours to accommodate more guests. From 1993, they initiated renovations, including the installation of private bathrooms in the oldest rooms. As Danebu approached its 50th anniversary in 2000, NOK 70 million had been invested.

Despite significant investments and persistent challenges outside the winter season, there was growing optimism of Danebu's future. With major investments in the area and the hotel, and an ever-expanding offering, there was hope that Danebu would finally be profitable and continue to be a beloved gathering place for both Danish and Norwegian guests.



From Challenges to a New Beginning

The life of Danebu Kongsgaard has been a rollercoaster of ups and downs, reflected in both its successes and challenges. Over the years, Danebu had received significant grants from the Labor Market Holiday Fund in Denmark, which had been vital for its operation. But in 2002, Danebu faced a critical turning point. Danebu was affected by EU rules on competition distortion, which would prevent such grants in the future. The result of the grant being stopped was dramatic; Dansk FolkeFerie faced the necessity of selling parts of the property to ensure the continued operation of the hotel itself. 16 rental cabins and important cabin sites were put up for sale. In 2003, Valdres Alpine Center was sold, and the challenges continued to pile up. The financial crisis in 2008 was a crushing blow for Danebu, which eventually ended in bankruptcy towards the end of the year. However, hope was not lost. A group of committed cabin owners in the area intervened to preserve this historic place, an action that testified to deep affection and commitment to Danebu's future. They took over the property and continued to operate the hotel.

However, the commitment was not enough. The hotel appeared for many years to be relatively run-down and in great need of upgrading to continue operating. It was even considered to convert the hotel into apartments. This process ended with one of the owners, the Sandvik family, choosing to take over the entire hotel in 2018 to further develop this gem of a place with a unique and important history. From 2014, the Sandvik family also part-owned Valdres Alpine Center. With the Sandvik family's takeover, a new chapter for Danebu began. Together with Sverre M. Sejersted joining the ownership, they laid the foundation for an ambitious project that would transform and renew the hotel.

To enable comprehensive development of the hotel, the Danebu Panorama project was initiated. Danebu Panorama involves the development and sale of high-quality apartments/ cabins on the property, connected to Danebu Kongsgaard as a service center. This project aims to ensure that Danebu can continue to be a gathering place for both locals and visitors. It is a journey towards reviving the place's soul, making it financially viable, and preserving its important role in Norwegian-Danish cultural heritage through a larger revitalization. By combining the unique history with modern conveniences and services, the aim is to create a future where Danebu once again can shine as a true gem in Valdres, a place where stories are shared, friendships flourish, and memories are created.



The New Era

With the dawn of a new day over the magnificent mountain landscape of Valdres, Danebu Kongsgaard has entered an exciting new era. Thanks to the Danebu Panorama project, the hotel has undergone a total revitalization since 2020 and is now proudly positioned as a charming boutique hotel. This designation often characterizes smaller, modern hotels with a personal touch and a unique style and atmosphere. Such hotels focus on offering their guests a truly special experience, with extra attention to interior design, service, and cuisine.

With the support of Innovation Norway, Danebu Kongsgaard unveiled a brand new visual identity in 2020, marking the beginning of a comprehensive revitalization. New concepts, design profiles, and values have ushered the hotel into a new phase of its history.

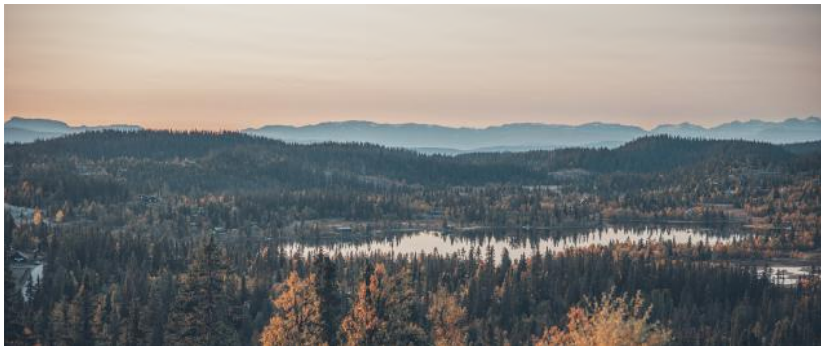


The hotel has undergone three extensive upgrading phases – from a modern extension with a state-of-the-art kitchen and a new entrance with an inviting reception area, to a complete renewal of bedrooms, lounges, and corridors. The talented interior designer, Christine Fikseanet, has crafted an inviting atmosphere, balancing modern aesthetics with the preservation of the place's history and “soul.”

Quality and sustainability have been key focuses in material selection and solutions, including reuse wherever possible. This transformation has garnered recognition both in Norway and internationally.

Yet, it's not just the interior that has been upgraded. Guest experience has been a top priority – from culinary experiences based on local ingredients to activities, experience design, collaborations and partnerships, all have been refined to ensure a holistic and memorable stay. Looking towards the future, sustainability has also been thoroughly prioritized, resulting in an eco-certification in 2022, achieved in record time. In 2024, Danebu Kongsgaard also became part of “Historic Hotels and Restaurants in Norway,” an exclusive network representing the best of Norwegian hospitality and cultural heritage.





Over the past years, Danebu Kongsgaard has welcomed several exciting Norwegian guests. In 2020, comedian Truls Svendsen and chef Eyvind Hellstrøm visited during the shooting of an episode of “Truls á la Hellstrøm.” In August 2023, the hotel’s garden hosted a memorable concert with the band STAUT, attracting almost a thousand spectators. In February 2024, Ingvild Tennfjord hosted an exclusive wine tasting, followed by a winemakers’ dinner with chef and sommelier Ole Martin Alfsen in May the same year. This is just the beginning of a series of exciting events. Keep an eye out for more memorable moments with prominent personalities visiting the hotel in the future.





Upon Pascal Gross and Malene Tuv Sandvik's arrival in early 2020, the foundation was laid for this new era. With a vision to develop Danebu into more than just a hotel, they, along with their dedicated team, have contributed to shaping the hotel's future. Here, the work environment is central, with each team member being an important part of the host team.

Mette Pedersen and Gøran Bring, respectively hotel manager and head chef, have been essential in leading daily operations and ensuring excellent guest experiences. Together with the rest of the team, they have ensured that each guest receives a memorable experience beyond expectations, and that the hotel feels like a home away from home, but with full service. Danebu Kongsgaard is a place where one can relax and recharge in a warm, inviting, and private atmosphere, where guests feel inclined to invite friends, family, or colleagues for celebrations, conversations, work, or simply to be together. While Team Danebu has achieved much in recent years, there is still more to be done, and Pascal and Malene continuously work towards realizing the larger visions for Danebu's future.



Are we on the threshold of a new era of
greatness for Danebu Kongsgaard?

Absolutely.

The journey continues, and with many plans
on the horizon, the next chapter in Danebu
Kongsgaard's history is ready to be written.
Feel free to join us on this exciting journey
ahead!

