

Press release
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The “Alcatraz of Europe” unveils 18-metre-long escape tunnel dug with a spoon

One of the most spectacular prison escapes in Denmark has now been reconstructed at the Horsens Prison Museum, known as the “Alcatraz of Europe”.

On Christmas Eve 1949, master burglar Carl August Lorentzen escaped to freedom through an 18-metre-long tunnel dug with a tablespoon. The legendary tunnel has been reconstructed with the support of the European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 and it offers the dramatic story of nine months efforts to escape.

Visitors at the Horsens Prison Museum can follow the same route as Carl August Lorentzen, but they will not be expected to reconstruct the series of acrobatic manoeuvres that Lorentzen had to perform on the night of his escape. Instead, they can walk upright through a spacious tunnel while following how the Lorentzen's silhouette works its way to the prison inspector's potato cellar. And so out to freedom.

"We're not trying to glorify an escaped criminal", says Anne Bjerrekaer, curator at Horsens Museum, who is looking forward to giving visitors a whole new kind of museum experience. "We're telling the story of a man who, like many other prisoners, even in today's prisons, dreamed of escaping. Sometimes the dream or the sense of desperation is so strong that people are willing to risk their lives. Like Lorentzen".

Carl August Lorentzen was a hard-boiled criminal with a penchant for breaking into wealthy people's homes and stealing expensive valuables. Behind the small closet in his cell, he broke a hole in the wall and dug a tunnel that led down under the prison yard and over to the prison inspector's potato cellar, from which he could walk straight out to freedom. He left a handwritten message for the prison staff: *"Where there's a will, there's a way!"*.

In the wake of the flight

It took Lorentzen nearly a year to plan and dig the tunnel from his cell to the prison cellar. After only seven days outside, he was recaptured at a farm, just south of Horsens and was returned to the state prison, where he was sentenced to two months in the punishment cell to atone for his escape.

About the Horsens Prison Museum

Horsens Prison Museum Collection contains more than 15,000 objects, spanning the whole 153-year period the prison was in use. These objects form a unique collection of international interest.

Photo: Self portrait of Carl August Lorentzen, whose escape tunnel now is reconstructed in Horsens, Denmark.

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