

The Hans Christian Andersen Trail.

Developing a Literary Tourist App: Considerations, Choices and Possibilities

**Ane Grum-Schwensen and
Johs. Nørregaard Frandsen**
University of Southern Denmark,
The Hans Christian Andersen Centre

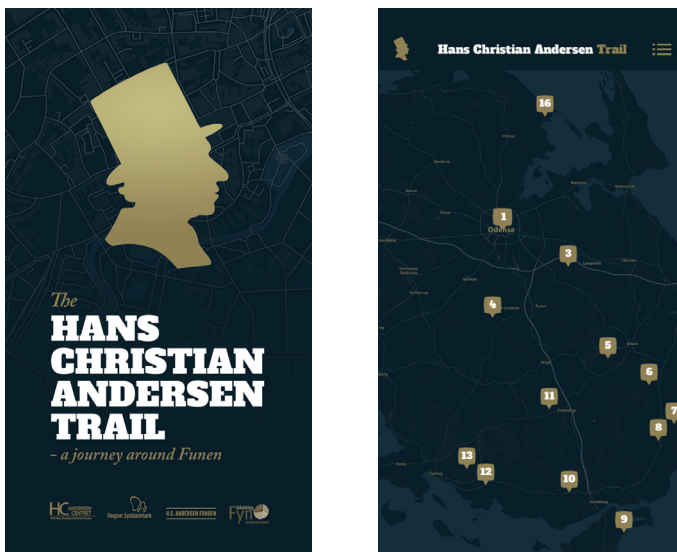


Figure 1: Screenshots of the landing and entrance page of the English version of the application ‘The Hans Christian Andersen Trail’ – available in App Store and Google. Credit: University of Southern Denmark, The Hans Christian Andersen Centre.

It is a well-known fact that Hans Christian Andersen was a keen traveler who was nearly always on the move. His many journeys abroad, through most of Europe, Asia Minor and even Morocco resulted in a string of travelogues that are surprisingly accurate and vivid, even when measured by today's standards: *Skyggebilleder af en Reise til Harzen, det sachsiske Schweitz etc. etc., i Sommeren 1831*, 1831 (*Pictures of Travel. In Sweden, Among the Hartz Mountains, and in Switzerland, with a Visit at Charles Dickens's House, Etc.*, 1871); *En Digters Bazar*, 1842 (*A Poet's Bazaar*, 1871); *I Sverrig*, 1851 (*In Sweden*, 1852); *I Spanien*, 1863 (*In Spain*, 1864); *Et Besøg i Portugal* 1866, 1868 (*A Visit to Portugal* 1866, 1972); and several more.

In an international context it is perhaps slightly less well known – or at least less appreciated – that the author was also constantly travelling around Denmark and especially around his native island, Funen, with which he felt a deep connection and where he found much inspiration. Over a period of forty years, from 1829 to 1869, he visited no fewer than twenty-two castles and manor houses on Funen, as well as several bourgeois homes, and different excursion spots and vantage points around the island, in addition to paying visits to his mother in Odense, Funen's main town. Some of the manor houses such as Glorup and Lykkesholm almost became second homes of his – writer's retreats – that he revisited again and again, often staying for long periods of time.

Footsteps and Wheel Tracks

There is, then, great potential for tourism and literary studies in finding new ways to explore and convey the not-so-well-known story of Andersen's travels on Funen, as well as the author's own poetic descriptions of locations and landscapes in fairytales, poems and novels such as *O.T.*, 1836 (*O.T.*, 1845), and *Kun en Spillemand*, 1837 (*Only a Fiddler*, 1845). In order to harness this potential, The Hans Christian Andersen Foundation in Odense and The Hans Christian Andersen Centre at the University of Southern Denmark have collaborated on the development of a new media platform.

In 2005 Odense City Museums had launched a route highlighting

thirteen locations in Odense relating to Andersen's life, and in 2014 the route was marked using imprints of Andersen's foot steps on pavements around the city centre supplemented with an application for smartphones (andersens odense.dk). This project was one inspiration for our own, as was the fact that overseas visitors to Odense are increasing in number, especially from Asia. These visitors are even finding their way to more remote locations on Funen. From this dual starting point, a project designed to encompass both printed and digital information was formulated by The Hans Christian Andersen Centre at SDU. We applied for, and were very grateful to receive, public funding from The Region of Southern Denmark and The Hans Christian Andersen Foundation.

At the research centre we initially had two main ambitions with the project: 1) To present literary heritage travelers with the opportunity to gain knowledge about Hans Christian Andersen's Funen travels and inspirations in an easy way, and to motivate them to extend their travel from Odense to the rest of Funen. 2) To let the traveler gain a sense of authenticity in the encounter with the many locations and landscapes that broadly look the same as they did when Andersen visited them and wrote his literary descriptions. In other words, we wanted to combine facts and literary representations – biographical and literary authenticity.

Considerations and Choices

From the beginning (October 2014) the project faced limitations and considerations that in many ways functioned as a kind of 'scaffolding'.¹ On the one hand these limitations put a restraint on our academic ambitions, but on the other hand they helped us quickly to gain a clear focus. The limitations and considerations were mainly temporal, geographical, economical and ethical.

As regards the temporal issue, we had committed ourselves to delivering a product that would be available to tourists already by the peak season of 2015 (coordinated with a campaign advertising Odense as the city of Hans Christian Andersen), with the proviso that the product would have to be revised and further developed on an ongoing

basis thereafter. We were, in other words, in a hurry, and had to find a non-static medium through which we could impart the knowledge about Andersen and Funen that we were about to gather. Therefore we chose to develop an app for smartphones and to launch a version 1.0 by the summer of 2015, supplemented with a printed brochure.

Geographically, we were faced with the challenge of an area considerably larger than a city centre. Getting around from one Andersen-related location to another requires means of transportation such as a bus, car or bicycle, and the distances alone made it problematic to create a fixed route. This factor, along with the temporal, economic and practical limitations, meant it was unrealistic to create a complete interconnected physical signage around the island. Another consideration had to do with the choice of locations: for pragmatic reasons, we chose to focus on the relevant castles and manor houses for version 1.0, since landscapes are harder to geo-tag than buildings.

Economically, the budget was of course limited, and earmarked for the development of a digital platform, a brochure and not least translation of the material. This was a priority, and required a large part of the budget. The material had to be available in English, German and Chinese as well as Danish in order to have an international impact.

The ethical dimension was perhaps, however, what demanded most consideration. Whereas some of the locations were already receiving tourists and guests on a large scale and were eager to expand activities, other were understandably reluctant to allow tourists to invade what in many cases still function as their private homes. We tackled this issue by involving representatives from the relevant locations from the beginning and continually during the process, creating a dialogue by inviting them to meetings and keeping them updated with newsletters, emails and visits. An important part of the dialogue consisted of listening carefully to specific wishes and demands, and ensuring that restrictions were respected and conveyed in the app. We were pleasantly surprised to find that a common denominator for all the representatives was an eagerness to have access to a thoroughly researched, substantiated and authentic story about the connection between Andersen and 'their' locations, which many of them only knew in part or as myths.

Last, but not least, the design of the textual content for the app had to meet some essential requirements. The app had to encompass both information about Andersen and specific places for literature-oriented users as well as facts about accessibility and activities. It was therefore decided to divide the texts across two tabs per location: one entitled 'Andersen' and one entitled 'Tourist' – the latter written by the tourist organization Destination Fyn and the former by The Hans Christian Andersen Centre. Furthermore, the extensive material that we at the Centre found by researching the author's personal papers, diaries and letters as well as his literary works had to be boiled down to short texts suitable for the app medium, leaving us with a lot of untold stories, which we hope to publish in other ways. In the distillation process we aimed to focus on the tourist's experience of the authentic Andersenian locations, drawing attention to, for example, objects and romantic gardens described by Andersen that are still accessible today.

The Trail: Version 1.0 and Future Possibilities

On 15 June 2015 *The Hans Christian Andersen Trail* version 1.0 launched officially. Sixteen locations radiating from Odense and The Hans Christian Andersen Museum are included in this first version of the app. It presents the user with an interface that is easy to use whether you are at home (or in your hotel room) planning a trip, on the road, or already at the location. Presently it is recommended that you download the app while you are Wi-Fi connected, however; this is because the app is rather large (115 MB in the iOS-version) due to the detailed map function.

The homepage presents you with a map of Funen and an overview of the locations. Tapping the list-symbol in the upper right corner produces a listed overview. Whether you tap the location using the map or the list you are led to the entrance page of the chosen location. Here you find the two tabs, as previously mentioned, and as shown in Figure 2. The 'Andersen'-tab will lead you to the distilled story about Andersen and the chosen location, illustrated with images that you can flick through by swiping the image in the top of each tab. Some of the images, such as copper engravings of the castles and manor houses

or early photos, will give you an idea of what the location looked like when Andersen visited it. Others are contemporary photos of indoor and outdoor objects, described by Andersen in his time. The 'Tourist'-tab provides general information about admission and – depending on the facilities that are accessible at the location in question – presents you with shortcuts in the form of symbols at the bottom of the screen (see Figure 2) that makes it possible to instantly call the main number of the location, order tickets, visit the webpage of the location or give you directions to the location in Google Maps. The 'Tourist'-tab will also advise you about other excursion spots in the vicinity of the chosen location.

There are many possibilities for enhancing the experience of *The Hans Christian Andersen Trail* in future. The app in itself can easily be updated with more locations and other types of locations, a larger geographical area, more languages to choose from, audioguide-like features such as recitations of Andersen's descriptions or explanations activated by transmitters installed at specific objects or points at the locations. The recent decision of the European Union to abolish mobile phone roaming charges will no doubt make a string of different features and updates for the app a lot more realistic to apply.

Another way to make the trail easier to find and follow in the future will demand a lot of coordination, funding and legwork. Physical signage along the roads of Funen like the (in Denmark) well known and loved scenic *Marguerite Route* or the *Alsace Wine Route* in France would surely mean a lot for the recognisability and thereby the impact of *The Hans Christian Andersen Trail*.

An obvious possibility for the locations that have a lot of Andersenian stories to offer and an interest in communicating these is to do so 'on location', possibly using the extended material that is not presently included in the app. We could either connect the additional material to the app via the above mentioned transmitters or develop other means of presentation.

Roots and Routes

With version 1.0 of the trail the first sod has been cut in a process that we hope will contribute to the understanding of the great importance that Hans Christian Andersen's native island had for his literary production. In Funen he found writer's retreats and poetic material – in fact, his very last poem 'Fyn og Schweiz' (1875, 'Funen and Switzerland') was a tribute to the island.

When Andersen was travelling abroad he sought out places and regions of cultural and literary importance – he was indeed himself what we would call a literary heritage tourist. *The Hans Christian Andersen Trail* aim to be of use for the cultural traveler of today who, like Andersen himself, seeks out literary routes and roots.

Endnotes

¹ The term 'scaffolding' is commonly used within learning-theory. Here we refer to the use of term within theories of creativity, where limitations and restrictions (such as those of the 'Dogme95' movies) are seen as a way of promoting – scaffolding – creativity. See Philipsen, Heidi: "Scaffolding Creativity": How to Create Flow and Positive Stress in Film Making Processes' in seminar.net: *Media, technology and lifelong learning* 5 (1), 2009.

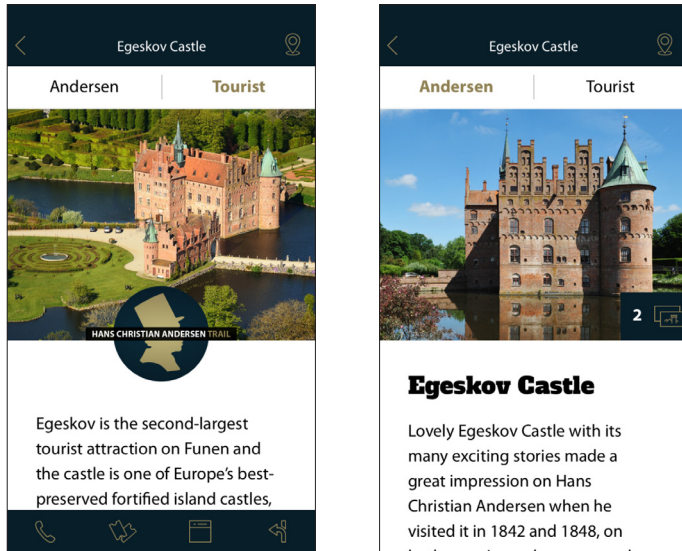


Figure 2: One of the locations in 'The Hans Christian Andersen Trail', Egeskov Castle. To the left with the 'Tourist'-tab activated and the accessible functions shown underneath. To the right with the 'Andersen'-tab activated and the number of supplementary images indicated. Credit: University of Southern Denmark, The Hans Christian Andersen Centre.