

## Störtebeker & company – pirates of the Hanse period?

Special exhibition on piracy at the European Hansemuseum

**“Störtebeker & Company – pirates of the Hanse period?”, opened in September 2019, is a unique exhibition by the European Hansemuseum that takes a look at piracy at German, Danish and Swedish seas at the Hanse time and at African shores today. Together with this it brings the tale of this legendary figure, the “Robin Hood of the Seas”, back to its roots.**

**Lübeck, October 2019** – A bearded face with an eye-patch glares out at the streets of Lübeck. It’s the logo of the exhibition “Störtebeker & Company – pirates of the Hanse period?” at the European Hansemuseum: a stylised buccaneer. Clichés, myths and legends abound in the popular conception of piracy. Thanks to Johnny Depp our first thoughts are of rum and the Caribbean. But when today a ship is plundered off the coast of Nigeria, the press talks about murderous criminals. The bilingual exhibition that opens today in the Castle Friary at the European Hansemuseum gets to the bottom of the myths surrounding piracy. Who were Störtebeker, the Danish privateer Claus Kniphof, Swedish heiress Margarete Dume or privateer Bartholomäus Voet? Who was good, who was bad? And who used the term “piracy” in the Middle Ages?

### “Störtebeker & Company”

Drawing on the stories of individual seafarers of the time the exhibition creates a picture of piracy in late Middle Ages. Biographies and cases of “piracy” of Low German, Danish, Swedish and British actors in the North and Baltic Seas are the recurrent theme. Exhibits include model ships and the original equipment of “pirates” and their antagonists: sword, chain-mail shirt, dagger and cannon – although in fact they were not often used for the plundering itself, but means of intimidation.

### Hanse period and modern piracy

It’s the first time an exhibition compares and contrasts practice of piracy in the North Sea and Baltic regions from the 14th to 16th centuries with current forms of piracy off the coasts of Nigeria or Somalia where for example the German MV Hansa Stavanger or Danish MV Rozen were hijacked. It highlights the parallels between *violent entrepreneurs* at the time of the Hanse and today. Applicable to both cases is a quote by the US journalist Michael Scott Moore, who had been kidnapped and held for nearly three years: “Piracy is a form of capitalism: there are the financiers, the powerful men in the background. And the guards, for whom it’s a job.” (Zeit Magazin). Moore will be giving a reading at the European Hansemuseum on 20 February 2020.

### **A myth returns**

The image of piracy is a result of much poetic licence. But who were the Victual Brothers and their leaders really? For example, many versions of the “Robin Hood of the Seas”, Störtebeker could be traced back to historical sources. The most important evidence is a chronicle written around 1416 by the Lübeck friar Hermann Korner, right in the Castle Friary which now forms part of the European Hansemuseum. Some 500 years later the current exhibition brings the legend back to its roots.

### **Biggest-ever pirate exhibition in Lübeck**

The exhibition “Störtebeker & Company – pirates of the Hanse period?” currently on display in the European Hansemuseum makes use of a contemporary, maritime design. It has also been organised with families in mind: small entertaining games guide children through the exhibition. They can also snuggle up the hold of a medieval ship and listen to pirate stories. The exhibition has been curated by the historian Franziska Evers with additional scientific consulting by Gregor Rohmann. Underlining the exhibition’s academic background the European Hansemuseum published a bilingual catalogue on violence at sea with articles by an international research team. The exhibition is backed by the Possehl Foundation, the Friedrich Bluhme & Else Jacobsen Foundation, Volksbank Lübeck and Norddeutsche Kistenfabrik K. Pannecke GmbH.

### **Background programme**

Accompanying activities allow a deeper look at the topic with lectures on the violent entrepreneurs and other privateers. This will for example be a screening of Tobias Lindholm’s movie “Hijacking” (2012) about the abduction on the Danish MV Rozen or a lecture by German-American journalist Michael Scott Moore. Special guided tours have been developed for the exhibition, catering specifically to different groups, families to school classes, with one tour including a beer tasting sponsored by the Störtebeker Brewery.

### **The Museum**

The European Hansemuseum, opened in May 2015, is the largest museum dedicated to the history of Hanse. It illustrates the development from a group of merchants to a major northern European power with a network of more than 200 affiliated towns and cities. The museum’s permanent exhibition is in four languages.

## Press information

More photos of the exhibition and information on the European Hansemuseum can be found under “press” at the website [www.hansemuseum.eu](http://www.hansemuseum.eu). We will be happy to arrange background briefings and interviews on request. For information about these and other topics please call us on +49 451 80 90 99 18 or send an email to [presse@hansemuseum.eu](mailto:presse@hansemuseum.eu).

## Social media

*#störtebekerundko*

*#hansemuseum*

Facebook: @hansemuseum

Instagram: @hansemuseum.eu

Twitter: @hansemuseum\_eu

## Accompanying programme (selection)

Thursday | 20.02.2020 | 7 pm

**Michael Scott Moore: “The Desert and the Sea: 977 Days Captive on the Somali Pirate Coast.”**

Reading and discussion with the German-American journalist Michael Scott Moore.

Location: Conference room La Rochelle

Price: €15, €10 concessions Tickets on [luebeck-ticket.de](http://luebeck-ticket.de), the museum ticket desk and at the door.

Reservations cannot be made for this event.

Friday | 6.3.2020 | 7 pm

**“Hijacking”:** film screening

Danish thriller by Tobias Lindholm, 2012.

Location: Conference room “La Rochelle”

Price: €5 Tickets on [luebeck-ticket.de](http://luebeck-ticket.de), the museum ticket desk and at the door