

Viking culture, people and history – before and after new ToV

Before:

<http://www.visitnorway.com/en/about-norway/history/the-vikings/>

Viking culture, people and history

The Vikings have earned their place in history as a seafaring warrior culture with a fine eye for design and a good ear for storytelling.

The Vikings have had a well-defined public image for centuries, and have even become a staple of comic book illustrations with colourful images of horned helmets, berserkers, longships, Valhalla, the one-eyed god Odin and men dying sword in hand or drinking out of skulls.

The Vikings were pirates who came to plunder and kill, and they spread terror along Europe's coasts. But their posthumous reputation is not entirely fair: They were not just ruthless warriors, but also skilled traders, administrators and craftsmen in metal and wood, producing beautiful jewellery and artefacts that survive to this day. They were also some of Europe's best storytellers and the Norse sagas continue to fascinate modern audiences.

Longships

In medieval Norway the basis for agriculture was poor. Vikings were experts in water transportation as their native fjords stretched for great distances into Norway's heartland. Their longships were narrow, light, wooden boats with a shallow-draft hull designed for speed and easy navigation in shallow waters. Light enough to be carried, the longship was also double-ended, allowing it to reverse direction without needing to turn around. This was a major advantage in a sea filled with concealed icebergs and sea ice. Longships had oars along almost the entire length of the boat, and later versions combined rowing power with sailing power. In good conditions, a longboat under sailing power could reach a speed of 15 knots.

This resulted in voyages of discovery, trade and opportunistic raiding of coastal cities, towns and settlements across Europe. The voyages began in the latter part of the eighth century and stretched from Greenland in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east. To begin with only a few made the voyages, but the fleets grew until there were hundreds of longships sailing to England, Scotland, France and Ireland.

Viking courage

How did such a small and scattered people conquer so much territory? Norwegian Vikings were courageous, cunning and had a fatalistic outlook which made them natural risk takers.

Viking raiding parties seem to have had an amazing ability to shrug off losses, whether in battle or in dangerous sea voyages. In 844 many Vikings were lost to King Ramiro in northern Spain. A few months later, another fleet took Córdoba, only to be chased off by Emir Abd al-Rahman II, with further heavy losses: 500 dead and 30 ships burned. They still came back a few years later to hit the Balearics and even northern Italy. According to the English Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, in 876 the Vikings lost as many as 4,000 men and 120 ships in a great storm off the south English coast. There

was also much infighting between Danish and Norwegian Viking bands, especially in Ireland, where losses were extremely high in relation to the Viking population. Despite this, their appetite for conquest and exploration remained high.

Viking courage is probably also linked to their dark sense of humour, as expressed in the writing of their sagas. Being able to laugh in the face of death and danger somehow explains their resilience in battle and in pioneering sea voyages to far off lands. One of the distinguishing features of Old Norse poetry, legend and saga is a grim gallows humour. It is usually a bad sign when someone cracks a joke in a Viking saga, and the stories contain more jokes than you might think.

Cities and colonies

The Vikings founded a number of cities and colonies, including Dublin and Normandy. Dublin was held as a major settlement for more than three centuries. Between the years 879 and 920 they colonised Iceland, which in turn became the springboard for the colonisation of Greenland. The Vikings even reached North America, and remains of a Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland have been carbon dated to around the year 1000.

By the 1100s the Vikings were weakened by domestic unrest. At the same time, many other European countries were becoming stronger and more difficult targets.

We date the end of the Viking Age from the fall of Harald Hardråde, when he unsuccessfully tried to conquer England in 1066.

Experience the Vikings

A lot is known about what Viking life was like a thousand years ago, and you can experience a little of Viking life today. At Lofotr Viking Museum a traditional Viking longhouse has been built, and the museum also hosts Viking festivals and events where you can get a taste of Viking life and living. On the Vefsnfjord in Northern Norway you can try sailing a Viking ship, and in Oslo you can see the genuine article.

After:

<http://beta.visitnorway.com/things-to-do/art-culture/vikings/?guid=9347e447-d299-4d78-8ac1-590d1045174e>

Viking culture, people and history

The Vikings were fierce warriors and skilled poets

Think of the Vikings and it's not poetry, woodcarving and storytelling that spring to mind, but colourful images of horned helmets, berserkers, longships, Valhalla, the one-eyed god Odin and men dying sword in hand or drinking out of skulls.

And it's true, the Vikings were pirates who came to plunder and kill, and they spread terror along Europe's coasts. But their reputation is not entirely fair: They were not just ruthless warriors, but also skilled traders, administrators and craftsmen in metal and wood, producing beautiful jewellery and artefacts that survive to this day. They were also some of Europe's best storytellers and the

Norse sagas continue to fascinate modern audiences. And, by the way, they did not have horned helmets: No self-respecting Viking would want to look like a cow.

Live the Viking life

We know a lot about what Viking life was like a thousand years ago, and you can experience a little of Viking life today. At Lofotr Viking Museum a traditional Viking longhouse has been built, and the museum also hosts Viking festivals and events where you can get a taste of Viking life and living. And in Oslo you can see real Viking ships and many other items from the Viking Age.

It was important to show courage in battle

How did such a small and scattered people conquer so much territory? Norwegian Vikings were courageous, cunning and had a fatalistic outlook which made them natural risk takers.

Viking raiding parties seem to have had an amazing ability to shrug off losses, whether in battle or in dangerous sea voyages.

Many men were lost in battles in continental Europe, and in 876 the Vikings lost as many as 4,000 men and 120 ships in a great storm off the south English coast. There was also much infighting between Danish and Norwegian Viking bands, especially in Ireland, where losses were extremely high in relation to the Viking population. Despite all of this this, their appetite for conquest and exploration remained high.

Viking courage is probably also linked to their dark sense of humour, as expressed in the writing of their sagas. Being able to laugh in the face of death and danger somehow explains their resilience in battle and in pioneering sea voyages to far off lands. One of the distinguishing features of Old Norse poetry, legend and saga is a grim gallows humour. It is usually a bad sign when someone cracks a joke in a Viking saga, and the stories contain more jokes than you might think.

Stories for Life: Viking life in Norway
[video]

Top 5 Viking experiences in Norway

Curator of the Lofotr Viking Museum, Marion Fjelde Larsen, picks five places in Norway well worth a visit to get that Viking feeling.

[selected products]

The Vikings sailed far and wide in their Longships

The Viking longship was the state of the art

The Viking longships were instantly recognizable with their narrow and light wooden hulls with a shallow-draft, designed for speed and easy navigation in shallow waters.

Light enough to be carried, the longship was also double-ended, allowing it to reverse direction without needing to turn around. This was a major advantage in a sea filled with concealed icebergs and sea ice, not to mention when attacking other ships.

Longships had oars along almost the entire length of the boat, and later versions combined rowing power with sailing power. In good conditions, a longboat under sailing power could reach a speed of 15 knots, thanks to their special keel.

The Vikings' expertise in shipbuilding and navigation made them natural explorers, traders and opportunistic raiders of coastal cities, towns and settlements across Europe. The voyages began in the latter part of the eighth century and stretched from Greenland in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east. To begin with only a few brave Vikings made the voyages, but the fleets grew until there were hundreds of longships sailing to England, Scotland, France and Ireland - Not just to raid and pillage, but to settle.

You might have a Viking ancestor

Today, there are Viking descendants in many parts of the world. Wherever the Vikings settled, they were often assimilated into the general population over time. The Vikings founded many cities and colonies, including Dublin, which was held as a major settlement for more than three centuries. Between the years 879 and 920 the Vikings colonised Iceland, which in turn became the springboard for the colonisation of Greenland. The Vikings even reached North America, and remains of a Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland have been carbon dated to around the year 1000.

By the 1100s the Vikings were weakened by domestic unrest. At the same time, many other European countries were becoming stronger and more difficult targets.

The Viking Age ended with the fall of Harald Hardråde, who unsuccessfully tried to conquer England in 1066, and was defeated and killed at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

[Possibly various products]

Come and see for yourself

[Possibly various products]