[Template:Other uses](/wiki/Template:Other_uses" \o "Template:Other uses) [Template:Pp-semi](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Use British English](/wiki/Template:Use_British_English) [Template:Scandinavia](/wiki/Template:Scandinavia)

**Vikings** ([Norwegian](/wiki/Norwegian_language) and [Template:Lang-da](/wiki/Template:Lang-da); [Swedish](/wiki/Swedish_language) and [Template:Lang-nn](/wiki/Template:Lang-nn); [Template:Lang-is](/wiki/Template:Lang-is)), from [Old Norse](/wiki/Old_Norse) [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), were [Germanic](/wiki/Germanic_peoples) [Norse](/wiki/Norsemen) seafarers, speaking the [Old Norse language](/wiki/Old_Norse_language), who [raided](/wiki/Raid_(military)) and [traded](/wiki/Trade) from their [Scandinavian](/wiki/Scandinavia) homelands across wide areas of northern, central and eastern Europe, during the late 8th to late 11th centuries.[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[2]](#cite_note-2) The term is also commonly extended in modern English and other [vernaculars](/wiki/Vernacular) to the inhabitants of Viking home communities during what has become known as the [Viking Age](/wiki/Viking_Age). This period of Norse military, mercantile and demographic expansion constitutes an important element in the early medieval [history of Scandinavia](/wiki/History_of_Scandinavia), the [British Isles](/wiki/History_of_the_British_Isles), [Ireland](/wiki/Ireland), [France](/wiki/France_in_the_Middle_Ages), [Kievan Rus'](/wiki/Kievan_Rus') and [Sicily](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Sicily).[[3]](#cite_note-3) Facilitated by advanced seafaring skills, and characterised by the [longship](/wiki/Longship), Viking activities at times also extended into the [Mediterranean](/wiki/Mediterranean) littoral, [North Africa](/wiki/North_Africa), the [Middle East](/wiki/Middle_East) and [Central Asia](/wiki/Central_Asia). Following extended phases of (primarily sea- or river-borne) exploration, expansion and settlement, Viking (Norse) communities and polities were established in diverse areas of north-western Europe, European [Russia](/wiki/Russia), the North Atlantic islands and as far as the north-eastern coast of [North America](/wiki/North_America). This period of expansion witnessed the wider dissemination of Norse culture, while simultaneously introducing strong foreign cultural influences into Scandinavia itself, with profound developmental implications in both directions.

Popular, modern conceptions of the Vikings—the term frequently applied casually to their modern descendants and the inhabitants of modern Scandinavia—often strongly differ from the complex picture that emerges from [archaeology](/wiki/Archaeology) and historical sources. A romanticized picture of Vikings as [noble savages](/wiki/Noble_savage) began to emerge in the 18th century; this developed and became widely propagated during the 19th-century [Viking revival](/wiki/Viking_revival).[[4]](#cite_note-4)[[5]](#cite_note-5) Perceived views of the Vikings as alternatively violent, piratical heathens or as intrepid adventurers owe much to conflicting varieties of the modern Viking myth that had taken shape by the early 20th century. Current popular representations of the Vikings are typically based on cultural clichés and stereotypes, complicating modern appreciation of the Viking legacy.

## Contents

* 1 Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]
  + 1.1 Other names[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]
* 2 History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]
  + 2.1 Viking Age[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]
  + 2.2 Viking expansion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]
    - 2.2.1 Motives[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]
  + 2.3 End of the Viking Age[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]
* 3 Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]
  + 3.1 Literature and language[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]
    - 3.1.1 Runestones[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]
  + 3.2 Burial sites[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]
  + 3.3 Ships[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]
  + 3.4 Everyday life[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]
    - 3.4.1 Social structure[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]
    - 3.4.2 Appearances[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]
    - 3.4.3 Farming and cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]
    - 3.4.4 Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]
    - 3.4.5 Games and entertainment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]
    - 3.4.6 Experimental archaeology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]
* 4 Weapons and warfare[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]
* 5 Trade[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]
  + 5.1 Goods[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]
* 6 Legacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]
  + 6.1 Medieval perceptions of the Vikings[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]
  + 6.2 Post-medieval perceptions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]
    - 6.2.1 In 20th-century politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]
    - 6.2.2 In modern popular culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]
  + 6.3 Common misconceptions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]
    - 6.3.1 Horned helmets[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]
    - 6.3.2 Use of skulls as drinking vessels[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]
* 7 Genetic legacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]
* 8 See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]
* 9 Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]
* 10 References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]
* 11 Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]
* 12 External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

One etymology derives *víking* from the feminine *vík*, meaning "creek, inlet, small bay".[[6]](#cite_note-6) Various theories have been offered that the word *viking* may be derived from the name of the historical [Norwegian](/wiki/Norway) district of [Viken](/wiki/Viken,_Norway) (or Víkin in [Old Norse](/wiki/Old_Norse)), meaning "a person from *Viken*". According to this theory, the word simply described persons from this area, and it is only in the last few centuries that it has taken on the broader sense of early medieval Scandinavians in general. However, there are a few major problems with this theory. People from the Viken area were not called 'Viking' in Old Norse manuscripts, but are referred to as víkverir (Modern Norwegian: vikvær), 'Vík dwellers'. In addition, that explanation could only explain the masculine (Old Scandinavian víkingr) and ignore the feminine (Old Norse víking), which is a serious problem because the masculine is easily derived from the feminine but hardly vice versa.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[9]](#cite_note-9) The form also occurs as a personal name on some Swedish rune stones. There is little indication of any negative connotation in the term before the end of the Viking Age.

Another etymology (supported by, among others, the recognized etymologist Anatoly Liberman [[10]](#cite_note-10)) derives *viking* from the same root as ON *vika*, f. ‘sea mile’, originally ‘the distance between two shifts of rowers’, from the root \*weik or \*wîk, as in the Proto-Germanic verb \*wîkan, ‘to recede’. This is found in the Proto-Nordic verb \*wikan, ‘to turn’, similar to Old Icelandic víkja (ýkva, víkva) ‘to move, to turn’, with well-attested nautical usages.[[11]](#cite_note-11) Linguistically, this theory is better attested,[[11]](#cite_note-11) and the term most likely predates the use of the sail by the Germanic peoples of North-Western Europe, because the Old Frisian spelling shows that the word was pronounced with a palatal k and thus in all probability existed in North-Western Germanic before that palatalization happened, that is, in the 5th century or before (in the western branch).[[12]](#cite_note-12)[[13]](#cite_note-13) In that case, the idea behind it seems to be that the tired rower moves aside for the rested rower on the thwart when he relieves him. The Old Norse feminine víking (as in the phrase fara í víking) may originally have been a sea journey characterized by the shifting of rowers, i.e. a long-distance sea journey, because in the pre-sail era, the shifting of rowers would distinguish long-distance sea journeys. A víkingr (the masculine) would then originally have been a participant on a sea journey characterized by the shifting of rowers. In that case, the word Viking was not originally connected to Scandinavian seafarers but assumed this meaning when the Scandinavians begun to dominate the seas.[[14]](#cite_note-14) In [Old English](/wiki/Old_English), the word *wicing* appears first in the [Anglo-Saxon](/wiki/Anglo-Saxons) poem, [*Widsith*](/wiki/Widsith), which probably dates from the 9th century. In Old English, and in the history of the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen written by [Adam of Bremen](/wiki/Adam_of_Bremen) in about 1070, the term generally referred to Scandinavian pirates or raiders. As in the Old Norse usages, the term is not employed as a name for any people or culture in general. The word does not occur in any preserved [Middle English](/wiki/Middle_English) texts. The word *Viking* was introduced into Modern English during the 18th-century Viking revival, at which point it acquired romanticised heroic overtones of "[barbarian](/wiki/Barbarian) warrior" or noble savage. During the 20th century, the meaning of the term was expanded to refer not only to seaborne raiders from Scandinavia and other places settled by them (like Iceland and the Faroe Islands), but secondarily to any member of the culture that produced said raiders during the period from the late 8th to the mid-11th centuries, or more loosely from about 700 to as late as about 1100. As an adjective, the word is used to refer to ideas, phenomena, or artefacts connected with those people and their cultural life, producing expressions like *Viking age*, *Viking culture*, *Viking art*, *Viking religion*, *Viking ship*, and so on.[[15]](#cite_note-15)

### Other names[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

The Vikings were known as *Ascomanni* "ashmen" by the Germans for the [ash](/wiki/Fraxinus_excelsior) wood of their boats,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) *Lochlannach* (Lake Person) by the [Gaels](/wiki/Gaels),[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) and *Dene* by the Anglo-Saxons.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

The [Slavs](/wiki/Slavs), the [Arabs](/wiki/Arabs) and the [Byzantines](/wiki/Byzantine_Greeks) knew them as the [*Rus'*](/wiki/Rus'_people) or *Rhōs*,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) probably derived from various uses of *rōþs-*, "related to rowing", or derived from the area of [Roslagen](/wiki/Roslagen) in east-central Sweden, where most of the Vikings who visited the Slavic lands came from. Some archaeologists and historians of today believe that these Scandinavian settlements in the Slavic lands played a significant role in the formation of the [Kievan Rus'](/wiki/Kievan_Rus') federation, and hence the names and early states of [Russia](/wiki/Russia) and [Belarus](/wiki/Belarus).[[16]](#cite_note-16)<ref name=NatRus>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref><ref name=NatJourneys>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The modern day name for Sweden in several neighbouring countries is possibly derived from *rōþs-*, *Ruotsi* in Finnish and *Rootsi* in Estonian.

The Slavs and the Byzantines also called them [Varangians](/wiki/Varangians) ([Template:Lang-ru](/wiki/Template:Lang-ru), [Template:Etymology](/wiki/Template:Etymology), from *vàr*- "confidence, vow of fealty," related to Old English *wær* "agreement, treaty, promise," Old High German *wara* "faithfulness"[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)). Scandinavian bodyguards of the [Byzantine emperors](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) were known as the [Varangian Guard](/wiki/Varangian_Guard).

[Anglo-Scandinavian](/wiki/Anglo-Scandinavian) is an academic term referring to the people, and [archaeological](/wiki/Archaeological) and [historical](/wiki/Historical) periods during the 8th to 13th centuries in which there was migration to – and occupation of – the [British Isles](/wiki/British_Isles) by Scandinavian peoples generally known in English as Vikings. It is used in distinction from [Anglo-Saxon](/wiki/Anglo-Saxon). Similar terms exist for other areas, such as [Hiberno-Norse](/wiki/Hiberno-Norse) for [Ireland](/wiki/Ireland) and [Scotland](/wiki/Scotland).

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

### Viking Age[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Sea-faring](/wiki/File:Wikinger.jpg) [Danes](/wiki/Danes_(Germanic_tribe)) depicted invading England. Illuminated illustration from the 12th century *Miscellany on the Life of St. Edmund*. Pierpont Morgan Library.

The period from the earliest recorded raids in the 790s until the [Norman conquest of England](/wiki/Norman_conquest_of_England) in 1066 is commonly known as the Viking Age of Scandinavian history.[[17]](#cite_note-17) Vikings used the [Norwegian Sea](/wiki/Norwegian_Sea) and [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea) for sea routes to the south. The [Normans](/wiki/Normans) were descended from Vikings who were given [feudal](/wiki/Feudal) overlordship of areas in northern France—the [Duchy of Normandy](/wiki/Duchy_of_Normandy)—in the 10th century. In that respect, descendants of the Vikings continued to have an influence in northern Europe. Likewise, King [Harold Godwinson](/wiki/Harold_Godwinson), the last Anglo-Saxon king of England, had Danish ancestors. Two Vikings even ascended to the throne of England, with [Sweyn Forkbeard](/wiki/Sweyn_Forkbeard) claiming the English throne from 1013-1014 and his son [Cnut the Great](/wiki/Cnut_the_Great) becoming king of England from 1016-1035.[[18]](#cite_note-18)[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20)[[21]](#cite_note-21)[[22]](#cite_note-22) Geographically, a Viking Age may be assigned not only to Scandinavian lands (modern Denmark, Norway and Sweden), but also to territories under [North Germanic](/wiki/Germanic_peoples) dominance, mainly the [Danelaw](/wiki/Danelaw), including [Scandinavian York](/wiki/Scandinavian_York), the administrative centre of the remains of the Kingdom of [Northumbria](/wiki/Northumbria),[[23]](#cite_note-23) parts of [Mercia](/wiki/Mercia), and [East Anglia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_East_Anglia).[[24]](#cite_note-24) Viking navigators opened the road to new lands to the north, west and east, resulting in the foundation of independent settlements in the [Shetland](/wiki/Shetland), [Orkney](/wiki/Orkney), and [Faroe Islands](/wiki/Faroe_Islands); [Iceland](/wiki/Iceland); [Greenland](/wiki/Greenland);[[25]](#cite_note-25) and [L'Anse aux Meadows](/wiki/L'Anse_aux_Meadows), a short-lived settlement in [Newfoundland](/wiki/Newfoundland), circa 1000.[[26]](#cite_note-26) They may have been deliberately sought out, perhaps on the basis of the accounts of sailors who had seen land in the distance. The Greenland settlement eventually died out, possibly due to [climate change](/wiki/Climate_change).[[27]](#cite_note-27) The Viking [Rurik dynasty](/wiki/Rurik_dynasty) took control of territories in [Slavic](/wiki/Slavs) and [Finno-Ugric](/wiki/Finno-Ugric)-dominated areas of Eastern Europe; they annexed [Kiev](/wiki/Kiev) in 882 to serve as the capital of the [Kievan Rus'](/wiki/Kievan_Rus').[[28]](#cite_note-28) As early as 839, when Swedish emissaries are first known to have visited Byzantium, Scandinavians served as mercenaries in the service of the Byzantine Empire.[[29]](#cite_note-29) In the late 10th century, a new unit of the imperial bodyguard formed. Traditionally containing large numbers of Scandinavians, it was known as the [Varangian](/wiki/Varangian) Guard. The word *Varangian* may have originated in Old Norse, but in Slavic and Greek it could refer either to Scandinavians or Franks. The most eminent Scandinavian to serve in the Varangian Guard was [Harald Hardrada](/wiki/Harald_Hardrada), who subsequently established himself as king of Norway (1047–66).

There is archaeological evidence that Vikings reached [Baghdad](/wiki/Baghdad), the centre of the [Islamic Empire](/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate).[[30]](#cite_note-30) The Norse regularly plied the [Volga](/wiki/Volga) with their trade goods: furs, tusks, seal fat for boat sealant, and [slaves](/wiki/Slaves). Important trading ports during the period include [Birka](/wiki/Birka), [Hedeby](/wiki/Hedeby), [Kaupang](/wiki/Kaupang), [Jorvik](/wiki/Jorvik), [Staraya Ladoga](/wiki/Staraya_Ladoga), [Novgorod](/wiki/Novgorod), and [Kiev](/wiki/Kiev).

Generally speaking, the Norwegians expanded to the north and west to places such as Ireland, Scotland, Iceland, and Greenland; the Danes to England and France, settling in the Danelaw (northern/eastern England) and [Normandy](/wiki/Normandy); and the Swedes to the east, founding Kievan Rus'. Among the Swedish runestones mentioning expeditions overseas, almost half tell of raids and travels to western Europe. According to the Icelandic sagas, many Norwegian Vikings also went to eastern Europe. In the Viking Age, the present day nations of Norway, Sweden and Denmark did not exist, but were largely homogeneous and similar in culture and language, although somewhat distinct geographically. The names of Scandinavian kings are reliably known only for the later part of the Viking Age. After the end of the Viking Age the separate kingdoms gradually acquired distinct identities as nations, which went hand-in-hand with their [Christianization](/wiki/Christianization). Thus the end of the Viking Age for the Scandinavians also marks the start of their relatively brief Middle Ages.

### Viking expansion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|300px|Travels of the Vikings](/wiki/File:WikingerKarte.jpg)

The Vikings explored the northern islands and coasts of the North Atlantic, ventured south to North Africa and east to Russia, Constantinople, and the Middle East.<ref name=NatRus/><ref name=NatJourneys/>[[31]](#cite_note-31) They raided and pillaged, but also engaged in trade, settled wide-ranging colonies, and acted as mercenaries.[[32]](#cite_note-32)Vikings under [Leif Ericson](/wiki/Leif_Ericson), heir to [Erik the Red](/wiki/Erik_the_Red), reached North America and set up short-lived settlements in present-day [L'Anse aux Meadows](/wiki/L'Anse_aux_Meadows), Newfoundland, and Labrador, Canada.

Viking expansion into continental Europe was limited. Their realm was bordered by powerful cultures to the south. Early on it was the [Saxons](/wiki/Saxons), who occupied [Old Saxony](/wiki/Old_Saxony), located in what is now Northern Germany. The Saxons were a fierce and powerful people and were often in conflict with the Vikings. To counter the Saxon aggression and solidify their own presence, the [Danes](/wiki/Danes_(Germanic_tribe)) constructed the huge defence fortification of [Danevirke](/wiki/Danevirke) in and around [Hedeby](/wiki/Hedeby).[[33]](#cite_note-33)The Vikings soon witnessed the violent subduing of the Saxons by [Charlemagne](/wiki/Charlemagne), in the thirty-year [Saxon Wars](/wiki/Saxon_Wars) in 772-804. The Saxon defeat resulted in their forced christening and the absorption of Old Saxony into the [Carolingian Empire](/wiki/Carolingian_Empire). Fear of the [Franks](/wiki/Franks) led the Vikings to further expand Danevirke, and the defence constructions remained in use throughout the Viking Age and even up until 1864.[[34]](#cite_note-34) The south coast of the Baltic Sea was ruled by the [Obotrites](/wiki/Obotrites), a federation of Slavic tribes loyal to the Carolingians and later the [Frankish empire](/wiki/Frankish_empire). The Vikings – led by [King Gudfred](/wiki/King_Gudfred) – destroyed the Obotrite city of [Reric](/wiki/Reric) on the southern Baltic coast in 808 AD and transferred the merchants and traders to Hedeby. This secured their supremacy in the Baltic Sea, which remained throughout the Viking Age.

#### Motives[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

The motives driving the Viking expansion are a topic of much debate in Nordic history. One common theory posits that [Charlemagne](/wiki/Charlemagne) "used force and terror to Christianise all pagans", leading to baptism, conversion or execution, and as a result, Vikings and other pagans resisted and wanted revenge.[[35]](#cite_note-35)[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[37]](#cite_note-37)[[38]](#cite_note-38)[[39]](#cite_note-39) Professor Rudolf Simek states that "it is not a coincidence if the early Viking activity occurred during the reign of Charlemagne".[[35]](#cite_note-35)[[40]](#cite_note-40) The penetration of Christianity into Scandinavia led to serious conflict dividing Norway for almost a century.[[41]](#cite_note-41) [thumb|300px|Viking settlements and voyages](/wiki/File:Vikings_exploration_and_territories-en.svg)

Another explanation is that the Vikings exploited a moment of weakness in the surrounding regions. England suffered from internal divisions and was relatively easy prey given the proximity of many towns to the sea or to navigable rivers. Lack of organised naval opposition throughout Western Europe allowed Viking ships to travel freely, raiding or trading as opportunity permitted. The decline in the profitability of old [trade routes](/wiki/Trade_route) could also have played a role. Trade between western Europe and the rest of Eurasia suffered a severe blow when the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire) fell in the 5th century.[[42]](#cite_note-42) The expansion of Islam in the 7th century had also affected trade with western Europe.[[43]](#cite_note-43) Raids in Europe, including raids and settlements from Scandinavia, were not unprecedented and had occurred long before the Vikings arrived. The [Jutes](/wiki/Jutes) invaded the British Isles three centuries earlier, pouring out from [Jutland](/wiki/Jutland) during the [Age of Migrations](/wiki/Age_of_Migrations), before the [Danes](/wiki/Danes_(Germanic_tribe)) settled there. The [Saxons](/wiki/Saxons) and the [Angles](/wiki/Angles) did the same, embarking from mainland Europe. The Viking raids were, however, the first to be documented in writing by eyewitnesses, and they were much larger in scale and frequency than in previous times.[[44]](#cite_note-44)

### End of the Viking Age[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

During the Viking Age, Scandinavian men and women travelled to many parts of Europe and beyond, in a cultural diaspora that left its traces from Newfoundland to [Byzantium](/wiki/Byzantium). This period of energetic activity also had a pronounced effect in the Scandinavian homelands, which were subject to a variety of new influences.[[45]](#cite_note-45) In the 300 years from the late 8th century, when contemporary chroniclers first commented on the appearance of Viking raiders, to the end of the 11th century, Scandinavia underwent profound cultural changes.

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Blair_A'Bhuailte_and_Loch_Leum_na_Luirginn.jpg)[Blar a' Bhuailte](/wiki/Kilmuir,_Skye), site of the Vikings' last stand in [Skye](/wiki/Skye)

By the late 11th century, royal dynasties legitimised by the [Catholic Church](/wiki/Catholic_Church) (which had had little influence in Scandinavia 300 years earlier) were asserting their power with increasing authority and ambition, and the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden had taken shape. Towns appeared that functioned as secular and ecclesiastical administrative centres and market sites, and monetary economies began to emerge based on English and German models.[[46]](#cite_note-46) By this time the influx of Islamic silver from the East had been absent for more than a century, and the flow of English silver had come to an end in the mid-11th century.[[47]](#cite_note-47) [Christianity had taken root](/wiki/Christianization_of_Scandinavia) in Denmark and Norway with the establishment of dioceses during the 11th century, and the new religion was beginning to organise and assert itself more effectively in Sweden. Foreign churchmen and native elites were energetic in furthering the interests of Christianity, which was now no longer operating only on a missionary footing, and old ideologies and lifestyles were transforming. By 1103, the first archbishopric was founded in Scandinavia, at [Lund](/wiki/Lund), Scania, then part of Denmark.

The assimilation of the nascent Scandinavian kingdoms into the cultural mainstream of European Christendom altered the aspirations of Scandinavian rulers and of Scandinavians able to travel overseas, and changed their relations with their neighbours. One of the primary sources of profit for the Vikings had been slave-taking. The medieval Church held that Christians should not own fellow Christians as slaves, so [chattel slavery](/wiki/Chattel_slavery) diminished as a practice throughout northern Europe. This took much of the economic incentive out of raiding, though sporadic slaving activity continued into the 11th century. Scandinavian predation in Christian lands around the North and Irish Seas diminished markedly.

The kings of Norway continued to assert power in parts of northern Britain and Ireland, and raids continued into the 12th century, but the military ambitions of Scandinavian rulers were now directed toward new paths. In 1107, [Sigurd I of Norway](/wiki/Sigurd_I_of_Norway) sailed for the eastern Mediterranean with Norwegian crusaders to fight for the newly established [Kingdom of Jerusalem](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Jerusalem), and Danes and Swedes participated energetically in the [Baltic Crusades](/wiki/Baltic_Crusades) of the 12th and 13th centuries.[[48]](#cite_note-48)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

A variety of sources illuminate the culture, activities, and beliefs of the Vikings. Although they were generally a non-literate culture that produced no literary legacy, they had an alphabet and described themselves and their world on [runestones](/wiki/Runestone). Most contemporary literary and written sources on the Vikings come from other cultures that were in contact with them.[[49]](#cite_note-49) Since the mid-20th century, archaeological findings have built a more complete and balanced picture of the lives of the Vikings.[[50]](#cite_note-50)[[51]](#cite_note-51) The archaeological record is particularly rich and varied, providing knowledge of their rural and urban settlement, crafts and production, ships and military equipment, trading networks, as well as their pagan and Christian religious artefacts and practices.

### Literature and language[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|One of the few surviving manuscript leaves from the](/wiki/File:Lbs_fragm_82,_0001v_-_1.jpg) [Heimskringla Sagas](/wiki/Heimskringla_Saga), written by [Snorri Sturluson](/wiki/Snorri_Sturluson) c. 1260. The leaf tells of [King Ólafur](/wiki/Olaf_II_of_Norway).

The most important [primary sources](/wiki/Primary_sources) on the Vikings are contemporary texts from Scandinavia and regions where the Vikings were active.[[52]](#cite_note-52) Writing in [Latin](/wiki/Latin) letters was introduced to Scandinavia with Christianity, so there are few native documentary sources from Scandinavia before the late 11th and early 12th centuries.[[53]](#cite_note-53) The Scandinavians did write inscriptions in [runes](/wiki/Runes), but these are usually very short and formulaic. Most contemporary documentary sources consist of texts written in Christian and Islamic communities outside Scandinavia, often by authors who had been negatively affected by Viking activity.

Later writings on the Vikings and the Viking Age can also be important for understanding them and their culture, although they need to be treated cautiously. After the consolidation of the church and the assimilation of Scandinavia and its colonies into the mainstream of medieval [Christian culture](/wiki/Christian_culture) in the 11th and 12th centuries, native written sources begin to appear, in Latin and Old Norse. In the Viking colony of Iceland, an extraordinary vernacular literature blossomed in the 12th through 14th centuries, and many traditions connected with the Viking Age were written down for the first time in the [Icelandic sagas](/wiki/Saga). A literal interpretation of these medieval prose narratives about the Vikings and the Scandinavian past is of course doubtful, but many specific elements remain worthy of consideration, such as the great quantity of skaldic poetry attributed to [court poets](/wiki/Poet_laureate) of the 10th and 11th centuries, the exposed family trees, the self images, the ethical values, all included in these literary writings.

Indirectly the Vikings have also left a window open to their language, culture and activities, through many Old Norse place names and words, found in their former sphere of influence. Some of these place names and words are still in direct use today, almost unchanged, and sheds light on where they settled and what specific places meant to them, as seen in place names like [Egilsay](/wiki/Egilsay) (from *Eigils Ø* meaning Eigil's Island), [Ormskirk](/wiki/Ormskirk) (from *Ormr kirkja* meaning Orms Church or Church of the Worm), [Meols](/wiki/Meols) (from *merl* meaning Sand Dunes), [Snaefell](/wiki/Snaefell) (Snow Fell), [Ravenscar](/wiki/Ravenscar,_North_Yorkshire) (Ravens Rock), [Vinland](/wiki/Vinland) (Land of Wine or Land of [Winberry](/wiki/Winberry)), [Kaupanger](/wiki/Kaupanger) (Market Harbour), [Tórshavn](/wiki/Tórshavn) (Thor's Harbour), and the religious centre of [Odense](/wiki/Odense), meaning a place where [Odin](/wiki/Odin) was worshipped. Viking influence is also evident in concepts like the present-day parliamentary body of the [Tynwald](/wiki/Tynwald) on the [Isle of Man](/wiki/Isle_of_Man). Common words in everyday English language, like some of the weekdays ([Thursday](/wiki/Thursday) means Thor's day), [axle](/wiki/Wikt:axle), [crook](/wiki/Wiktionary:crook), [raft](/wiki/Wiktionary:raft), [knife](/wiki/Wiktionary:knife), [plough](/wiki/Wiktionary:plough), [leather](/wiki/Wiktionary:leather), [bylaw](/wiki/Bylaw), [thorp](/wiki/Thorp), [skerry](/wiki/Skerry), [ombudsman](/wiki/Ombudsman), [husband](/wiki/Wiktionary:husband), [Template:Linktext](/wiki/Template:Linktext), [Hell](/wiki/Hel_(being)), [Norman](/wiki/Normans) and [ransack](/wiki/Wiktionary:ransack) stem from the Old Norse of the Vikings and give us an opportunity to understand their interactions with the people and cultures of the British Isles.[[54]](#cite_note-54) In the [Northern Isles](/wiki/Northern_Isles) of Shetland and Orkney, Old Norse completely replaced the local languages and over time evolved into the now extinct [Norn language](/wiki/Norn_language). Some modern words and names only emerge and contribute to our understanding after a more intense research of linguistic sources from medieval or later records, such as [York](/wiki/York) (Horse Bay), [Swansea](/wiki/Swansea) ([Sveinn's](/wiki/Sven) Isle) or some of the place names in Northern France like [Tocqueville](/wiki/Tocqueville_(disambiguation)) (Toki's farm).[[55]](#cite_note-55) [Linguistic](/wiki/Linguistic) and [etymological](/wiki/Etymology) studies continue to provide a vital source of information on the Viking culture, their social structure and history and how they interacted with the people and cultures they met, traded, attacked or lived with in overseas settlements.[[56]](#cite_note-56)[[57]](#cite_note-57) It has been speculated that several place names on the west coast of southern France might also stem from Viking activities.[[58]](#cite_note-58) Place names like [Taillebourg](/wiki/Taillebourg,_Charente-Maritime) (*Trelleborg*, meaning City of [Thralls](/wiki/Thralls) or Castle of Thralls) exist as far south as the [Charente River](/wiki/Charente_River).[[59]](#cite_note-59) [Gascony](/wiki/Gascony) and vicinity[[60]](#cite_note-60) is an active area of Viking archaeology at present.[[61]](#cite_note-61) A lot of Old Norse connections are evident in the modern-day languages of [Swedish](/wiki/Swedish_language), [Norwegian](/wiki/Norwegian_language), [Danish](/wiki/Danish_language), [Faroese](/wiki/Faroese_language) and [Icelandic](/wiki/Icelandic_language).[[62]](#cite_note-62) Old Norse did not exert any great influence on the [Slavic languages](/wiki/Slavic_languages) in the Viking settlements of Eastern Europe. It has been speculated that the reason was the great differences between the two languages, combined with the Rus' Vikings more peaceful businesses in these areas and the fact that they were outnumbered. The Norse named some of the [rapids](/wiki/Dnieper_Rapids) on the [Dnieper](/wiki/Dnieper_River), but this can hardly be seen from the modern names.[[63]](#cite_note-63)[[64]](#cite_note-64) A consequence of the available written sources, which may have coloured how we perceive the Viking Age as a historical period, is that we know a lot more of the Vikings' activities in western Europe than in the East. One reason is that the cultures of north-eastern Europe at the time were non-literate, and did not produce a legacy of literature. Another is that the vast majority of written sources on Scandinavia in the Viking Age come from Iceland, a nation originally settled by Norwegian colonists. As a result, there is much more material from the Viking Age concerning Norway than Sweden, which apart from many runic inscriptions, has almost no written sources from the early Middle Ages.

#### Runestones[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image) The Norse of the Viking Age could read and write and used a non-standardized alphabet, called *runor*, built upon sound values. While there are few remains of runic writing on paper from the Viking era, thousands of stones with runic inscriptions have been found where Vikings lived. They are usually in memory of the dead, though not necessarily placed at graves. The use of *runor* survived into the 15th century, used in parallel with the Latin alphabet.

The majority of runic inscriptions from the Viking period are found in Sweden and date from the 11th century. The oldest stone with runic inscriptions was found in Norway and dates to the 4th century, suggesting that runic inscriptions pre-date the Viking period. Many runestones in Scandinavia record the names of participants in Viking expeditions, such as the [Kjula runestone](/wiki/Kjula_Runestone#Sö_106) that tells of extensive warfare in Western Europe and the [Turinge Runestone](/wiki/Turinge_Runestone), which tells of a war band in Eastern Europe. Other runestones mention men who died on Viking expeditions. Among them are around 25 [Ingvar runestones](/wiki/Ingvar_runestones) in the [Mälardalen](/wiki/Mälardalen) district of Sweden, erected to commemorate members of a disastrous expedition into present-day Russia in the early 11th century. Runestones are important sources in the study of Norse society and early medieval Scandinavia, not only of the Viking segment of the population.[[65]](#cite_note-65) The [Jelling stones](/wiki/Jelling_stones) date from between 960 and 985. The older, smaller stone was raised by King [Gorm the Old](/wiki/Gorm_the_Old), the last pagan king of Denmark, as a memorial honouring [Queen Thyre](/wiki/Thyra).[[66]](#cite_note-66) The larger stone was raised by his son, [Harald Bluetooth](/wiki/Harald_Bluetooth), to celebrate the conquest of Denmark and Norway and the conversion of the Danes to Christianity. It has three sides: one with an animal image, one with an image of the crucified Jesus Christ, and a third bearing the following inscription:

[Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

Runestones attest to voyages to locations such as [Bath](/wiki/Bath,_Somerset),[[67]](#cite_note-67) Greece,[[68]](#cite_note-68) [Khwaresm](/wiki/Khwaresm),[[69]](#cite_note-69) [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem),[[70]](#cite_note-70) Italy (as Langobardland),[[71]](#cite_note-71) [Serkland](/wiki/Serkland) (i.e. the Muslim world),[[72]](#cite_note-72) England[[73]](#cite_note-73) (including London[[74]](#cite_note-74)), and various places in Eastern Europe. Viking Age inscriptions have also been discovered on the [Manx runestones](/wiki/Manx_runestones) on the Isle of Man.

### Burial sites[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image)

There are numerous burial sites associated with Vikings throughout Europe and their sphere of influence – in Scandinavia, the British Isles, Ireland, Greenland, Iceland, Faeroe Islands, Germany, The Baltic, Russia, etc.. The burial practices of the Vikings were quite varied, from dug graves in the ground, to [tumuli](/wiki/Tumuli), sometimes including so-called ship burials.

According to written sources, most of the funerals took place at sea. The funerals involved either burial or [cremation](/wiki/Cremation), depending on local customs. In the area that is now Sweden, cremations were predominant; in Denmark burial was more common; and in Norway both were common.<ref name=Jasmine>[Template:Citation](/wiki/Template:Citation)</ref> Viking barrows are one of the primary source of evidence for circumstances in the Viking Age.[[75]](#cite_note-75) The items buried with the dead give some indication as to what was considered important to possess in the afterlife.[[76]](#cite_note-76) We do not have any idea what mortuary services were given to dead children by the Vikings.[[77]](#cite_note-77) Some of the burial sites that are most important to our understanding of the Vikings include:

* Norway: [Oseberg](/wiki/Oseberg); [Gokstad](/wiki/Gokstad); [Borrehaugene](/wiki/Borre_mound_cemetery).
* Sweden: [Gettlinge](/wiki/Gettlinge) gravfält; the cemeteries of [Birka](/wiki/Birka), a World Heritage Site;[[78]](#cite_note-78) [Valsgärde](/wiki/Valsgärde); [Gamla Uppsala](/wiki/Gamla_Uppsala); Hulterstad gravfält, near [Alby](/wiki/Alby,_Öland); Hulterstad, [Öland](/wiki/Öland).
* Denmark: [Jelling](/wiki/Jelling), a [World Heritage Site](/wiki/World_Heritage_Site); [Lindholm Høje](/wiki/Lindholm_Høje); [Ladby ship](/wiki/Ladby_ship); [Mammen](/wiki/Mammen) chamber tomb and hoard.
* Scotland: [Port an Eilean Mhòir ship burial](/wiki/Port_an_Eilean_Mhòir_ship_burial); [Scar boat burial](/wiki/Scar_boat_burial), Orkney.
* Faroe Islands: [Hov](/wiki/Hov,_Faroe_Islands).
* Iceland: [Mosfellsbær](/wiki/Mosfellsbær) in [Capital Region](/wiki/Capital_Region_(Iceland));[[79]](#cite_note-79)[[80]](#cite_note-80) the boat burial in Vatnsdalur, [Austur-Húnavatnssýsla](/wiki/Austur-Húnavatnssýsla).<ref name=Jasmine/>[[81]](#cite_note-81)[[82]](#cite_note-82)\* Greenland: [Brattahlíð](/wiki/Brattahlíð).[[83]](#cite_note-83)\* Germany: [Hedeby](/wiki/Hedeby).
* Latvia: [Grobiņa](/wiki/Grobiņa).
* Ukraine: the [Black Grave](/wiki/Black_Grave).
* Russia: [Gnezdovo](/wiki/Gnezdovo).

### Ships[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) There have been several archaeological finds of Viking ships of all sizes, providing knowledge of the craftsmanship that went into building them. There were many types of Viking ships, built for various uses; the best-known type is probably the [longship](/wiki/Longship).[[84]](#cite_note-84) Longships were intended for warfare and exploration, designed for speed and agility, and were equipped with oars to complement the sail, making navigation possible independently of the wind. The longship had a long, narrow hull and shallow draught to facilitate landings and troop deployments in shallow water. Longships were used extensively by the [Leidang](/wiki/Leidang), the Scandinavian defence fleets. The longship allowed the Norse to *go Viking*, which might explain why this type of ship has become almost synonymous with the concept of Vikings.[[85]](#cite_note-85)[[86]](#cite_note-86) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image)

The Vikings built many unique types of watercraft, often used for more peaceful tasks. The [*knarr*](/wiki/Knarr) was a dedicated merchant vessel designed to carry cargo in bulk. It had a broader hull, deeper draught, and a small number of oars (used primarily to manoeuvre in harbours and similar situations). One Viking innovation was the '[beitass'](/wiki/Beitass), a spar mounted to the sail that allowed their ships to sail effectively against the wind.[[87]](#cite_note-87) It was common for seafaring Viking ships to tow or carry a smaller boat to transfer crews and cargo from the ship to shore.

Ships were an integral part of the Viking culture. They facilitated everyday transportation across seas and waterways, exploration of new lands, raids, conquests, and trade with neighbouring cultures. They also held a major religious importance. People with high status were sometimes buried in a ship along with animal sacrifices, weapons, provisions and other items, as evidenced by the buried vessels at [Gokstad](/wiki/Gokstad) and [Oseberg](/wiki/Oseberg) in Norway[[88]](#cite_note-88) and the excavated ship burial at [Ladby](/wiki/Ladby_ship) in Denmark. Ship burials were also practised by Vikings abroad, as evidenced by the excavations of the [Salme ships](/wiki/Salme_ships) on the Estonian island of [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa).[[89]](#cite_note-89) Well-preserved remains of five Viking ships were excavated from [Roskilde Fjord](/wiki/Roskilde_Fjord) in the late 1960s, representing both the longship and the knarr. The ships were scuttled there in the 11th century to block a navigation channel and thus protect [Roskilde](/wiki/Roskilde), then the Danish capital, from seaborne assault. The remains of these ships are on display at the [Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde](/wiki/Viking_Ship_Museum_in_Roskilde).

### Everyday life[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

#### Social structure[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[thumb|A reconstructed Viking house in Iceland.](/wiki/File:Reconstructed_Viking_House.jpg) [thumb|A reconstructed Viking Age](/wiki/File:Fyrkat_hus_stor.jpg) [long house](/wiki/Longhouse), at [Fyrkat](/wiki/Fyrkat), Denmark. [thumb|A large reconstructed chieftains longhouse at](/wiki/File:Chieftains_house_(reconstruction).jpg) [Lofotr Viking Museum](/wiki/Lofotr_Viking_Museum), Norway. [thumb|Reconstructed town houses from](/wiki/File:Busdorf_-_Haithabu_-_Wikinger-Häuser_05_ies.jpg) [Haithabu](/wiki/Haithabu) (now in Germany).

The Viking society was divided into the three socio-economic classes of Thralls, Karls and Jarls. This is described vividly in the [Eddic poem](/wiki/Eddic_poem) of [Rigsthula](/wiki/Rigsthula), which also explains that it was the [God Ríg](/wiki/Ríg_(Norse_god)) - father of mankind also known as [Heimdallr](/wiki/Heimdallr) - who created the three classes. Archaeology has confirmed this social structure.[[90]](#cite_note-90) [Thralls](/wiki/Thrall) were the lowest ranking class and were slaves. Slavery was of vital importance to Viking society, for everyday chores and large scale construction and also to trade and the economy. Thralls were used as servants and workers in the farms and larger households of the Karls and Jarls, and they were used for constructing fortresses, fortifications, ramps, canals, mounds, roads and similar hard work projects. According to the Rigsthula, Thralls were despised and looked down upon. New thralls were supplied by either the sons and daughters of thralls or they were captured abroad. The Vikings often deliberately captured many people on their raids in Europe, enslaved and made them into thralls. The new thralls were then brought back home to Scandinavia by boat, used on location or in newer settlements to build needed structures or sold, often to the Arabs in exchange for silver. Other names for thrall were 'træl' and 'ty'.

Karls were free peasants. They owned farms, land and cattle and engaged in daily chores like ploughing the fields, milking the cattle, building houses and wagons, but employed thralls to make ends meet. Other names for Karls were 'bonde' or simply free men.

The Jarls were the [aristocracy](/wiki/Aristocracy_(class)) of the Viking society. They were wealthy and owned large estates with huge longhouses, horses and many thralls. The thralls or servants took care of most of the daily chores, while the Jarls engaged in administration, politics, hunting, sports, paid visits to other Jarls or were abroad on expeditions. When a Jarl died and was buried, his household thralls were sometimes [sacrificially killed](/wiki/Human_sacrifice_in_Germanic_paganism) and buried next to him, as many excavations have revealed.[[91]](#cite_note-91) In daily life, there were many intermediate positions in the overall social structure and it is believed that there must have been some social mobility. These details are unclear, but titles and positions like *hauldr*, *thegn*, *landmand*, show mobility between the Karls and the Jarls.

Other social structures included the communities of *félag* in both the civil and the military spheres, to which its members (called *félagi*) were obliged. A félag could be centred around certain trades, a common ownership of a sea vessel or a military obligation under a specific leader. Members of the latter were referred to as *drenge*, one of the words for warrior. There were also official communities within towns and villages, the overall defence, religion, the legal system and the [Things](/wiki/Thing_(assembly)).

Women had a relatively free status in the Nordic countries of Sweden, Denmark and Norway, illustrated in the Icelandic [Grágás](/wiki/Grágás) and the Norwegian [Frostating](/wiki/Frostating) laws and [Gulating](/wiki/Gulating) laws.[[92]](#cite_note-92)The paternal aunt, paternal niece and paternal granddaughter, referred to as *odalkvinna*, all had the right to inherit property from a deceased man.[[92]](#cite_note-92)In the absence of male relatives, an unmarried woman with no son could inherit not only property but also the position as head of the family from a deceased father or brother. Such a woman was referred to as [*Baugrygr*](/wiki/Baugrygr), and she exercised all the rights afforded to the head of a family clan, such as the right to demand and receive fines for the slaughter of a family member, until she married, by which her rights were transferred to her husband.[[92]](#cite_note-92) After the age of 20, an unmarried woman, referred to as *maer* and *mey*, reached legal majority and had the right to decide of her place of residence and was regarded as her own person before the law.[[92]](#cite_note-92) An exception to her independence was the right to choose a marriage partner, as marriages were normally arranged by the clan.[[93]](#cite_note-93) Widows enjoyed the same independent status as unmarried women. A married woman could divorce her husband and remarry.[[94]](#cite_note-94) It was also socially acceptable for a free woman to cohabit with a man and have children with him without marrying him, even if that man was married; a woman in such a position was called *frilla*.[[94]](#cite_note-94) There was no distinction made between children born inside or outside of marriage: both had the right to inherit property after their parents, and there was no "legitimate" or "illegitimate" children.[[94]](#cite_note-94) Women had religious authority and were active as priestesses (*gydja*) and oracles (*sejdkvinna*).[[95]](#cite_note-95) They were active within art as poets (*skalder*)[[95]](#cite_note-95) and [rune masters](/wiki/Rune_master), and as merchants and medicine women.[[95]](#cite_note-95) These liberties gradually disappeared after the introduction of Christianity, and from the late 13th-century, they are no longer mentioned.[[92]](#cite_note-92)

#### Appearances[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[thumb|Typical jewellery worn by women of the Karls and Jarls. Ornamented silver brooches, coloured glass-beads and amulets.](/wiki/File:Eiríksstaðir_-_Wikingerschmuck.jpg)

The three classes were easily recognisable by their appearances. Men and women of the Jarls were well groomed with neat hairstyles and expressed their wealth and status by wearing expensive clothes (often silk) and well crafted jewellery like [brooches](/wiki/Brooch), belt buckles, necklaces and arm rings. Almost all of the jewellery was crafted in specific designs unique to the Norse (see [Viking art](/wiki/Viking_art)). Finger rings were seldom used and earrings were not used at all, as they were seen as a [Slavic](/wiki/Slavic_people) phenomenon. Most Karls expressed similar tastes and hygiene, but in a more relaxed and inexpensive way.[[90]](#cite_note-90)[[96]](#cite_note-96)

#### Farming and cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

The Sagas tell us about the diet and cuisine of the Vikings,[[97]](#cite_note-97) but first hand evidence, like [cesspits](/wiki/Cesspit), [kitchen middens](/wiki/Kitchen_middens) and garbage dumps have proved to be of great value and importance. Undigested remains of plants from cesspits at Coppergate in York have provided a lot of information in this respect. Overall, archaeo-botanical investigations have been undertaken increasingly in recent decades, as a collaboration between archaeologists and palaeoethno-botanists. This new approach sheds new light on the agricultural and [horticultural](/wiki/Horticulture) practices of the Vikings and therefore also on their cuisine.[[98]](#cite_note-98) When the information from various sources are put together, a picture of a diverse cuisine emerges, with lots of different ingredients. Meat products of all kinds, such as [cured](/wiki/Cured_meat), [smoked](/wiki/Smoked_meat) and [whey](/wiki/Whey)-preserved meat,[[99]](#cite_note-99) sausages, and boiled or fried fresh meat cuts, were prepared and consumed.[[100]](#cite_note-100) There were plenty of seafood, bread, porridges, dairy products, vegetables, fruits, berries and nuts. Alcoholic drinks like [beer](/wiki/Beer), [mead](/wiki/Mead), [bjórr](/wiki/Bjórr) (a strong fruit wine) and, for the rich, imported [wine](/wiki/Wine), were served.[[101]](#cite_note-101)[[102]](#cite_note-102) [thumb|left|Everyday life in the Viking Age](/wiki/File:Faroe_stamps_515-517_everyday_life_in_the_viking_age.jpg)

Certain livestock were typical and unique to the Vikings, including the [Icelandic horse](/wiki/Icelandic_horse), [Icelandic cattle](/wiki/Icelandic_cattle), a plethora of sheep breeds,[[103]](#cite_note-103) the [Danish hen](/wiki/Danish_hen) and the [Danish goose](/wiki/Danish_goose).[[104]](#cite_note-104)[[105]](#cite_note-105) The Vikings in [York](/wiki/York) mostly ate beef, [mutton](/wiki/Mutton), and pork with small amounts of horse meat. Most of the beef and horse leg bones were found split lengthways, to get out the marrow. The mutton and swine were cut into leg and shoulder joints and chops. The frequent remains of pig skull and foot bones found on house floors indicate that [brawn](/wiki/Brawn) and [trotters](/wiki/Pig's_trotters) were also popular. Hens were kept for both their meat and eggs, and the bones of game birds such as the [black grouse](/wiki/Black_grouse), [golden plover](/wiki/Golden_plover), wild ducks, and geese have also been found.[[106]](#cite_note-106) Seafood was an important part of the diet, in some places even more so than meat. [Whales](/wiki/Whale) and [walrus](/wiki/Walrus) were hunted for food in Norway and the north-western parts of the [North Atlantic](/wiki/North_Atlantic) region, and [seals](/wiki/Pinniped) were hunted nearly everywhere. [Oysters](/wiki/Oyster), [mussels](/wiki/Mussel) and [shrimps](/wiki/Shrimp) were eaten in large quantities and [cod](/wiki/Cod) and [salmon](/wiki/Salmon) were popular fish. In the southern regions, [herring](/wiki/Herring) was also important.[[107]](#cite_note-107)[[108]](#cite_note-108)[[109]](#cite_note-109) Milk and [buttermilk](/wiki/Buttermilk) were popular, both as cooking ingredients and drinks, but were not always available, even at farms.[[110]](#cite_note-110) The milk came from cows, goats and sheep, with priorities varying from location to location,[[111]](#cite_note-111) and fermented milk products like [skyr](/wiki/Skyr) or [surmjölk](/wiki/Filmjölk) were produced as well as butter and cheese.[[112]](#cite_note-112) Food was often salted and enhanced with spices, some of which were imported like [black pepper](/wiki/Black_pepper), while others were cultivated in herb gardens or harvested in the wild. Home grown spices that were used included [caraway](/wiki/Caraway), [mustard](/wiki/Mustard_seed) and [horseradish](/wiki/Horseradish) as evidenced from the Oseberg ship burial[[101]](#cite_note-101) or [dill](/wiki/Dill), [coriander](/wiki/Coriander), and [wild celery](/wiki/Angelica_archangelica), as found during the archaeological examinations of [cesspits](/wiki/Cesspit) at Coppergate in York. [Thyme](/wiki/Thyme), [juniper berry](/wiki/Juniper_berry), [sweet gale](/wiki/Sweet_gale), [yarrow](/wiki/Yarrow), [rue](/wiki/Rue) and [peppercress](/wiki/Peppercress) were also used and cultivated in herb gardens.[[98]](#cite_note-98)[[113]](#cite_note-113) Vikings collected and ate fruits, berries and nuts. Apple (wild [crab apples](/wiki/Crab_apple)), plums and cherries were part of the diet,[[114]](#cite_note-114) as were [rose hips](/wiki/Rose_hips) and [raspberry](/wiki/Raspberry), [wild strawberry](/wiki/Fragaria), [blackberry](/wiki/Blackberry), [elderberry](/wiki/Elderberry), [rowan](/wiki/Rowan), [hawthorn](/wiki/Common_hawthorn) and various wild berries, specific to the locations.[[113]](#cite_note-113) [Hazelnuts](/wiki/Hazelnut) were an important part of the diet in general and large amounts of [walnut](/wiki/Juglans_regia) shells have been found in cities like Hedeby. The shells were used for dyeing and it is assumed the nuts were enjoyed as well.[[98]](#cite_note-98)[[110]](#cite_note-110) The invention and introduction of the [mouldboard plough](/wiki/Mouldboard_plough) revolutionized agriculture in Scandinavia in the early Viking Age and made it possible to farm even the poor soils. In [Ribe](/wiki/Ribe), grains of [rye](/wiki/Rye), [barley](/wiki/Barley), [oat](/wiki/Oat) and [wheat](/wiki/Wheat) dated to the 8th century have been found and examined, and these are believed to have been cultivated locally.[[115]](#cite_note-115) Grains and flour were used for making porridges, some cooked with milk, some cooked with fruit and sweetened with honey, and also various forms of bread. Remains of bread from primarily Birka in Sweden were made of barley and wheat. It is unclear if the Norse leavened their breads, but their ovens and baking utensils suggest that they did.[[116]](#cite_note-116) [Flax](/wiki/Flax) was a very important crop for the Vikings. For oil extraction, food consumption and most importantly the production of [linen](/wiki/Linen). More than 40% of all known textile recoveries from the Viking Age can be traced as linen. This suggests a much higher actual percentage, as linen is poorly preserved compared to wool for example.[[117]](#cite_note-117) The quality of food for common people was not always particularly high. The research at Coppergate shows that the Vikings in York made bread from whole meal flour — probably both wheat and [rye](/wiki/Rye) - but with the seeds of cornfield weeds included. Corncockle ([Agrostemma](/wiki/Agrostemma)), would have made the bread dark-coloured, but the seeds are poisonous, and people who ate the bread might have become ill. Seeds of carrots, [parsnip](/wiki/Parsnip), and [brassicas](/wiki/Brassicas) were also discovered, but they were poor specimens and tend to come from white carrots and bitter tasting cabbages.[[114]](#cite_note-114) The [rotary querns](/wiki/Rotary_quern) often used in the Viking Age inevitably left tiny stone fragments (often from [basalt](/wiki/Basalt) rock) in the flour and when eaten later on, these small stones wore down the teeth. The effects of this can be seen on skeletal remains of that period.[[116]](#cite_note-116)

#### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

Sports were widely practised and encouraged by the Vikings.<ref name=KWolf>Kirsten Wolf: [Daily Life of the Vikings](https://books.google.com/books?id=lLHBckH-ga4C&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false) Greenwood Press *"Daily life through history"* series, 2004, ISBN 0-313-32269-4, Ch. 7</ref><ref name=SportsGames>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Sports that involved weapons training and developing combat skills were popular. This included spear and stone throwing, building and testing physical strength through [wrestling](/wiki/Wrestling), [fist fighting](/wiki/Fist_fighting), and stone lifting. In areas with mountains, [mountain climbing](/wiki/Mountain_climbing) was practised as a sport. Agility and balance were built and tested by running and jumping for sport, and there is mention of a sport that involved jumping from oar to oar on the outside of a ship's railing as it was being rowed. [Swimming](/wiki/Swimming_(sport)) was a popular sport and [Snorri Sturluson](/wiki/Snorri_Sturluson) describes three types: diving, long-distance swimming and a contest in which two swimmers try to duck one another. Children often participated in some of the sport disciplines and women have also been mentioned as swimmers, although it is unclear if they took part in competition. King [Olaf Tryggvason](/wiki/Olaf_Tryggvason) was hailed as a master of both mountain climbing and oar-jumping, and was said to have excelled in the art of [knife juggling](/wiki/Knife_juggling) as well.

[Skiing](/wiki/Skiing) and [ice skating](/wiki/Ice_skating) were the primary winter sports of the Vikings, although skiing was also used as everyday means of transport in winter time and in the colder regions of the north.

Horse fighting was practised for sport, although the rules are unclear. It appears to have involved two stallions pitted against each other, within smell and sight of fenced-off mares. Whatever the rules were, the fights often resulted in the death of one of the stallions.

Icelandic sources refer to the sport of [*knattleik*](/wiki/Knattleikr). A ball game akin to [hockey](/wiki/Hockey), knattleik involved a bat and a small hard ball and was usually played on a smooth field of ice. The rules are unclear, but it was popular with both adults and children, even though it often led to injuries. Knattleik appears to have been played only in Iceland, where it attracted many spectators, as did horse fighting.

Hunting, as a sport, was limited to Denmark, where it was not regarded as an important occupation. Birds, [deer](/wiki/Deer), [hares](/wiki/Hare) and [foxes](/wiki/Fox) were hunted with bow and spear, and later with crossbows. The techniques were stalking, snare and traps and [*par force*](/wiki/Par_force) hunting with dog packs.

#### Games and entertainment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[thumb|right|upright|Rook,](/wiki/File:Beserker,_Lewis_Chessmen,_British_Museum.jpg) [Lewis chessmen](/wiki/Lewis_chessmen), at the British Museum in London Both archaeological finds and written sources testify to the fact that the Vikings set aside time for social and festive gatherings.<ref name=KWolf/><ref name=SportsGames/><ref name=NatMus>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Board games and dice games were played as a popular pastime at all levels of society. Preserved gaming pieces and boards show game boards made of easily available materials like wood, with game pieces manufactured from stone, wood or bone, while other finds include elaborately carved boards and game pieces of glass, [amber](/wiki/Amber), [antler](/wiki/Antler) or [walrus](/wiki/Walrus) tusk, together with materials of foreign origin, such as [ivory](/wiki/Ivory). The Vikings played several types of *tafl* games; [*hnefatafl*](/wiki/Hnefatafl), *nitavl* ([Nine Men's Morris](/wiki/Nine_Men's_Morris)) and the less common [*kvatrutafl*](/wiki/Tafl_games). [Chess](/wiki/Chess) also appeared at the end of the Viking Age. Hnefatafl is a war game, in which the object is to capture the king piece – a large hostile army threatens and the king's men have to protect the king. It was played on a board with squares using black and white pieces, with moves made according to dice rolls. The [Ockelbo Runestone](/wiki/Ockelbo_Runestone) shows two men engaged in Hnefatafl, and the sagas suggest that money or valuables could have been involved in some dice games.<ref name=KWolf/><ref name=NatMus/>

On festive occasions [storytelling](/wiki/Storytelling), [skaldic poetry](/wiki/Skaldic_poetry), music and alcoholic drinks, like beer and [mead](/wiki/Mead), contributed to the atmosphere.<ref name=NatMus/> Music was considered an art form and music proficiency as fitting for a cultivated man. The Vikings are known to have played instruments including [harps](/wiki/Harp), [fiddles](/wiki/Fiddle), [lyres](/wiki/Lyre) and [lutes](/wiki/Lute).<ref name=KWolf/>

#### Experimental archaeology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Experimental archaeology](/wiki/Experimental_archaeology) of the Viking Age is a flourishing branch and several places have been dedicated to this technique, such as [Jorvik Viking Centre](/wiki/Jorvik_Viking_Centre) in United Kingdom, [Sagnlandet Lejre](/wiki/Sagnlandet_Lejre) and [Ribe Viking Center](/wiki/Ribe_Viking_Center) in Denmark, Foteviken Museum[[118]](#cite_note-118) in Sweden or [Lofotr Viking Museum](/wiki/Lofotr_Viking_Museum) in Norway. Viking-age [reenactors](/wiki/Reenactment) have undertaken experimental activities such as iron smelting and forging using Norse techniques at [Norstead](/wiki/Norstead_(Newfoundland)) in Newfoundland for example.[[119]](#cite_note-119) On 1 July 2007, the reconstructed Viking ship *Skuldelev 2*, renamed [*Sea Stallion*](/wiki/Havhingsten_fra_Glendalough),[[120]](#cite_note-120) began a journey from Roskilde to Dublin. The remains of that ship and four others were discovered during a 1962 excavation in the Roskilde Fjord. Tree-ring analysis has shown the ship was built of oak in the vicinity of Dublin in about 1042. Seventy multi-national crew members sailed the ship back to its home, and *Sea Stallion* arrived outside Dublin's Custom House on 14 August 2007. The purpose of the voyage was to test and document the seaworthiness, speed, and manoeuvrability of the ship on the rough open sea and in coastal waters with treacherous currents. The crew tested how the long, narrow, flexible hull withstood the tough ocean waves. The expedition also provided valuable new information on Viking longships and society. The ship was built using Viking tools, materials, and much the same methods as the original ship.

Other vessels, often replicas of the [Gokstad ship](/wiki/Gokstad_ship) (full- or half-scale) or [Skuldelev I](/wiki/Skuldelev_ships) have been built and tested as well. The *Snorri* (a [Skuldelev I](/wiki/Skuldelev_ships) [Knarr](/wiki/Knarr)), was sailed from Greenland to Newfoundland in 1998.[[121]](#cite_note-121)

## Weapons and warfare[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Viking_swords.jpg)[Template:Center](/wiki/Template:Center)

Our knowledge about the arms and armour of the Viking age is based on archaeological finds, pictorial representation, and to some extent on the accounts in the [Norse sagas](/wiki/Norse_sagas) and [Norse laws](/wiki/Norse_law) recorded in the 13th century. According to custom, all free Norse men were required to own weapons and were permitted to carry them all the time. These arms were indicative of a Viking's social status: a wealthy Viking had a complete ensemble of a [helmet](/wiki/Helmet), [shield](/wiki/Shield), [mail](/wiki/Mail_(armour)) shirt, and sword. A typical *bóndi* (freeman) was more likely to fight with a [spear](/wiki/Spear) and shield, and most also carried a [seax](/wiki/Seax) as a utility knife and side-arm. Bows were used in the opening stages of land battles and at sea, but they tended to be considered less "honourable" than a melee weapon. Vikings were relatively unusual for the time in their use of axes as a main battle weapon. The [Húscarls](/wiki/Housecarls), the elite guard of King [Cnut](/wiki/Cnut) (and later of [King Harold II](/wiki/Harold_Godwinson)) were armed with two-handed axes that could split shields or metal helmets with ease.

The warfare and violence of the Vikings were often motivated and fuelled by their beliefs in [Norse religion](/wiki/Norse_religion), focusing on [Thor](/wiki/Thor) and [Odin](/wiki/Odin), the gods of war and death.[[122]](#cite_note-122)[[123]](#cite_note-123) In combat, it is believed that the Vikings sometimes engaged in a disordered style of frenetic, furious fighting known as *berserkergang*, leading them to be termed [*berserkers*](/wiki/Berserker). Such tactics may have been deployed intentionally by [shock troops](/wiki/Shock_troops), and the berserk-state may have been induced through ingestion of materials with [psychoactive](/wiki/Psychoactive) properties, such as the [hallucinogenic](/wiki/Hallucinogenic) mushrooms, [*Amanita muscaria*](/wiki/Amanita_muscaria),[[124]](#cite_note-124) or large amounts of alcohol.[[125]](#cite_note-125)

## Trade[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|The scales and weights of a Viking trader. Used for measuring silver and sometimes gold. From the](/wiki/File:Box_and_scales.jpg) [Sigtuna box](/wiki/Sigtuna_box).

The Vikings established and engaged in extensive trading networks throughout the known world and had a profound influence on the economic development of Europe and Scandinavia not the least.<ref name = BBCMoney>Gareth Williams: [Viking Money](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/money_01.shtml) BBC History</ref>[[126]](#cite_note-126) Except for the major trading centres of [Ribe](/wiki/Ribe), [Hedeby](/wiki/Hedeby) and the like, the Viking world was unfamiliar with the use of [coinage](/wiki/Coin) and was based on so called [bullion](/wiki/Bullion) economy. [Silver](/wiki/Silver) was the most common metal in the economy, although [gold](/wiki/Gold) was also used to some extent. Silver circulated in the form of bars, or [ingots](/wiki/Ingots), as well as in the form of jewellery and ornaments. Traders carried small scales, enabling them to measure weight very accurately, so it was possible to have a very precise system of trade and exchange, even without a regular coinage.<ref name = BBCMoney/>

### Goods[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

Organized trade covered everything from ordinary items in bulk to exotic luxury products. The Viking ship designs, like that of the knarr, were an important factor in their success as merchants.[[127]](#cite_note-127) Imported goods from other cultures included:<ref name=Teachers>[Vikings as traders](http://www.rmg.co.uk/sites/default/files/media/pdf/Teachers_notes5.pdf), Teachers' notes 5. Royal Museums Greenwich</ref>

* [Spices](/wiki/Spice) were obtained from Chinese and Persian traders, who met with the Viking traders in Russia. Vikings used homegrown spices and herbs like [caraway](/wiki/Caraway), [thyme](/wiki/Thyme), [horseradish](/wiki/Horseradish) and [mustard](/wiki/Mustard_seed),[[128]](#cite_note-128) but imported [cinnamon](/wiki/Cinnamon).
* [Glass](/wiki/Glass) was much prized by the Norse. The imported glass was often made into beads for decoration and these have been found in their thousands. [Åhus](/wiki/Åhus) in Scania and the old market town of Ribe had major production of glass beads.[[129]](#cite_note-129)[[130]](#cite_note-130)[[131]](#cite_note-131)\* [Silk](/wiki/Silk) was a very important commodity obtained from [Byzantium](/wiki/Byzantium) (modern day [Istanbul](/wiki/Istanbul)) and China. It was valued by many European cultures of the time, and the Vikings used it to illustrate status such as wealth and nobility. Many of the archaeological finds in Scandinavia include silk.[[132]](#cite_note-132)[[133]](#cite_note-133)[[134]](#cite_note-134)\* [Wine](/wiki/Wine) was imported from France and Germany as a drink of the wealthy, to vary the regular mead and [beer](/wiki/Beer).

To counter these valuable imports, the Vikings exported a large variety of goods. These goods included:<ref name=Teachers/>

* [Amber](/wiki/Amber) - the fossilized resin of the pine tree - was frequently found on the [North Sea](/wiki/North_Sea) and [Baltic](/wiki/Baltic_Sea) coastline. It was worked into beads and ornamental objects, before being traded. (See also the [Amber Road](/wiki/Amber_Road)).
* Fur was also exported as it provided warmth. This included the furs of [pine martens](/wiki/Pine_marten), [foxes](/wiki/Fox), [bears](/wiki/Bear), [otters](/wiki/Otter) and [beavers](/wiki/Beaver).
* Cloth and [wool](/wiki/Wool). The Vikings were skilled spinners and weavers and exported woollen cloth of a high quality.
* [Down](/wiki/Down_feather) was collected and exported. The Norwegian west coast supplied eiderdowns and sometimes feathers were bought from the [Samis](/wiki/Samis). Down was used for bedding and quilted clothing. [Fowling](/wiki/Fowling) on the steep slopes and cliffs was dangerous work and was often lethal.<ref name=Lise>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>
* [Slaves](/wiki/Slaves), known as [thralls](/wiki/Thralls) in Old Norse. On their raids, the Vikings captured many people, among them monks and clergymen. They were sometimes sold as slaves to Arab merchants in exchange for silver.

Other exports included weapons, [walrus ivory](/wiki/Walrus_ivory), [wax](/wiki/Wax), [salt](/wiki/Salt) and [cod](/wiki/Cod). As one of the more exotic exports, [hunting birds](/wiki/Falconry) were sometimes provided from Norway to the European aristocracy, from the 10th century.<ref name=Lise/>

Many of these goods were also traded within the Viking world itself, as well as goods such as [soapstone](/wiki/Soapstone) and [whetstone](/wiki/Sharpening_stone). Soapstone was traded with the Norse on [Iceland](/wiki/Iceland) and in [Jutland](/wiki/Jutland), who used it for pottery. Whetstones were traded and used for sharpening weapons, tools and knives.<ref name=Teachers/> There are indications from Ribe and surrounding areas, that the extensive medieval trade with oxen and cattle from Jutland (see [Ox Road](/wiki/Ox_Road)), reach as far back as c. 720 AD. This trade satisfied the Vikings' need for leather and meat to some extent, and perhaps hides for [parchment](/wiki/Parchment) production on the European mainland. Wool was also very important as a domestic product for the Vikings, to produce warm clothing for the cold Scandinavian and Nordic climate, and for sails. Sails for Viking ships required large amounts of wool, as evidenced by experimental archaeology. There are archaeological signs of organized textile productions in Scandinavia, reaching as far back as the early [Iron Ages](/wiki/Nordic_Iron_Age). Artisans and craftsmen in the larger towns were supplied with [antlers](/wiki/Antlers) from organized hunting with large-scale reindeer traps in the far north. They were used as raw material for making everyday utensils like combs.<ref name=Lise/>

## Legacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

### Medieval perceptions of the Vikings[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

In England the Viking Age began dramatically on 8 June 793 when Norsemen destroyed the [abbey](/wiki/Abbey) on the island of [Lindisfarne](/wiki/Lindisfarne). The devastation of [Northumbria's](/wiki/Northumbria) Holy Island shocked and alerted the royal courts of Europe to the Viking presence. "Never before has such an atrocity been seen," declared the Northumbrian scholar [Alcuin of York](/wiki/Alcuin_of_York).[[135]](#cite_note-135) Medieval Christians in Europe were totally unprepared for the Viking incursions and could find no explanation for their arrival and the accompanying suffering they experienced at their hands save the "Wrath of God".[[136]](#cite_note-136) More than any other single event, the attack on Lindisfarne demonised perception of the Vikings for the next twelve centuries. Not until the 1890s did scholars outside Scandinavia begin to seriously reassess the achievements of the Vikings, recognizing their artistry, technological skills, and seamanship.[[137]](#cite_note-137) [Norse Mythology](/wiki/Norse_Mythology), sagas, and [literature](/wiki/Old_Norse_literature) tell of Scandinavian culture and religion through tales of heroic and mythological heroes. Early transmission of this information was primarily oral, and later texts were reliant upon the writings and transcriptions of Christian scholars, including the [Icelanders](/wiki/Icelanders) Snorri Sturluson and [Sæmundur fróði](/wiki/Sæmundur_fróði). Many of these sagas were written in Iceland, and most of them, even if they had no Icelandic provenance, were preserved there after the Middle Ages due to the continued interest of Icelanders in Norse literature and law codes.

The 200-year Viking influence on [European history](/wiki/History_of_Europe) is filled with tales of plunder and colonization, and the majority of these chronicles came from western witnesses and their descendants. Less common, though equally relevant, are the Viking chronicles that originated in the east, including the [Nestor](/wiki/Nestor_the_Chronicler) chronicles, [Novgorod](/wiki/Novgorod) chronicles, [Ibn Fadlan](/wiki/Ibn_Fadlan) chronicles, [Ibn Rusta](/wiki/Ibn_Rusta) chronicles, and brief mentions by [Photius](/wiki/Photius), patriarch of Constantinople, regarding their first attack on the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire). Other chroniclers of Viking history include [Adam of Bremen](/wiki/Adam_of_Bremen), who wrote, in the fourth volume of his *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, "[t]here is much gold here (in [Zealand](/wiki/Zealand_(Denmark))), accumulated by piracy. These pirates, which are called *wichingi* by their own people, and *Ascomanni* by our own people, pay tribute to the Danish king." In 991, the [Battle of Maldon](/wiki/Battle_of_Maldon) between Viking raiders and the inhabitants of [Maldon](/wiki/Maldon,_Essex) in Essex was commemorated with a poem of the same name.

### Post-medieval perceptions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[right|thumb|A](/wiki/File:Vikings_fight.JPG) [modern reenactment](/wiki/Combat_reenactment) of a Viking battle Early modern publications, dealing with what we now call Viking culture, appeared in the 16th century, e.g. *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (Olaus Magnus, 1555), and the first edition of the 13th-century *Gesta Danorum* of [Saxo Grammaticus](/wiki/Saxo_Grammaticus) in 1514. The pace of publication increased during the 17th century with Latin translations of the [Edda](/wiki/Edda) (notably Peder Resen's *Edda Islandorum* of 1665).

In Scandinavia, the 17th-century Danish scholars [Thomas Bartholin](/wiki/Thomas_Bartholin) and [Ole Worm](/wiki/Ole_Worm) and the Swede [Olaus Rudbeck](/wiki/Olaus_Rudbeck) used runic inscriptions and Icelandic sagas as historical sources. An important early British contributor to the study of the Vikings was George Hicke, who published his *Linguarum vett. septentrionalium thesaurus* in 1703–05. During the 18th century, British interest and enthusiasm for Iceland and early Scandinavian culture grew dramatically, expressed in English translations of Old Norse texts and in original poems that extolled the supposed Viking virtues.

The word "viking" was first popularised at the beginning of the 19th century by [Erik Gustaf Geijer](/wiki/Erik_Gustaf_Geijer) in his poem, *The Viking*. Geijer's poem did much to propagate the new romanticised ideal of the Viking, which had little basis in historical fact. The renewed interest of [Romanticism](/wiki/Romanticism) in the Old North had contemporary political implications. The [Geatish Society](/wiki/Geatish_Society), of which Geijer was a member, popularised this myth to a great extent. Another Swedish author who had great influence on the perception of the Vikings was [Esaias Tegnér](/wiki/Esaias_Tegnér), member of the Geatish Society, who wrote a modern version of [*Friðþjófs saga hins frœkna*](/wiki/Friðþjófs_saga_hins_frœkna), which became widely popular in the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

Fascination with the Vikings reached a peak during the so-called [Viking revival](/wiki/Viking_revival) in the late 18th and 19th centuries as a branch of [Romantic nationalism](/wiki/Romantic_nationalism). In Britain this was called Septentrionalism, in Germany "[Wagnerian](/wiki/Wagnerian)" pathos, and in the Scandinavian countries [Scandinavism](/wiki/Scandinavism). Pioneering 19th-century scholarly editions of the Viking Age began to reach a small readership in Britain, archaeologists began to dig up Britain's Viking past, and linguistic enthusiasts started to identify the Viking-Age origins of rural idioms and proverbs. The new dictionaries of the Old Norse language enabled the [Victorians](/wiki/Victorians) to grapple with the primary Icelandic sagas.[[138]](#cite_note-138) Until recently, the history of the Viking Age was largely based on Icelandic sagas, the history of the Danes written by Saxo Grammaticus, the Russian [*Primary Chronicle*](/wiki/Primary_Chronicle), and [*Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*](/wiki/Cogad_Gáedel_re_Gallaib). Few scholars still accept these texts as reliable sources, as historians now rely more on archaeology and [numismatics](/wiki/Numismatics), disciplines that have made valuable contributions toward understanding the period.[[139]](#cite_note-139)

#### In 20th-century politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

The romanticised idea of the Vikings constructed in scholarly and popular circles in northwestern Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries was a potent one, and the figure of the Viking became a familiar and malleable symbol in different contexts in the politics and political ideologies of 20th-century Europe.[[140]](#cite_note-140) In Normandy, which had been settled by Vikings, the Viking ship became an uncontroversial regional symbol. In Germany, awareness of Viking history in the 19th century had been stimulated by the border dispute with Denmark over Schleswig-Holstein and the use of Scandinavian mythology by [Richard Wagner](/wiki/Richard_Wagner). The idealised view of the Vikings appealed to Germanic supremacists who transformed the figure of the Viking in accordance with the ideology of the Germanic master race.[[141]](#cite_note-141) Building on the linguistic and cultural connections between Norse-speaking Scandinavians and other Germanic groups in the distant past, Scandinavian Vikings were portrayed in [Nazi Germany](/wiki/Nazi_Germany) as a pure Germanic type. The cultural phenomenon of Viking expansion was re-interpreted for use as propaganda to support the extreme militant nationalism of the Third Reich, and ideologically informed interpretations of Viking paganism and the Scandinavian use of runes were employed in the construction of [Nazi mysticism](/wiki/Nazi_mysticism). Other political organizations of the same ilk, such as the former Norwegian fascist party [Nasjonal Samling](/wiki/Nasjonal_Samling), similarly appropriated elements of the modern Viking cultural myth in their symbolism and propaganda. In communist Russia, the ideology of Slavic racial purity led to the complete denial that Scandinavians had played a part in the emergence of the principalities of the Rus', which were supposed to have been founded by Slavs. Evidence to the contrary was suppressed until the 1990s. Novgorod now enthusiastically acknowledges its Viking history and has included a Viking ship in its logo.[[142]](#cite_note-142)

#### In modern popular culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[thumb|Viking reenactment training (Jomsvikings group)](/wiki/File:Jomvikings_Winkinger_Kampftraining.webm)

Led by the operas of German composer [Richard Wagner](/wiki/Richard_Wagner), such as [*Der Ring des Nibelungen*](/wiki/Der_Ring_des_Nibelungen), Vikings and the Romanticist Viking Revival have inspired many creative works. These have included novels directly based on historical events, such as [Frans Gunnar Bengtsson's](/wiki/Frans_Gunnar_Bengtsson) [*The Long Ships*](/wiki/The_Long_Ships) (which was also released as a [1963 film](/wiki/The_Long_Ships_(1963_film))), and historical fantasies such as the film [*The Vikings*](/wiki/The_Vikings_(1958_film)), [Michael Crichton's](/wiki/Michael_Crichton) [*Eaters of the Dead*](/wiki/Eaters_of_the_Dead) (movie version called [*The 13th Warrior*](/wiki/The_13th_Warrior)), and the comedy film [*Erik the Viking*](/wiki/Erik_the_Viking). The vampire [Eric Northman](/wiki/Eric_Northman), in the HBO TV series [*True Blood*](/wiki/True_Blood), was a Viking prince before being turned into a vampire. Vikings appear in several books by the [Danish American](/wiki/Danish_American) writer [Poul Anderson](/wiki/Poul_Anderson), while British explorer, historian, and writer [Tim Severin](/wiki/Tim_Severin) authored a trilogy of novels in 2005 about a young Viking adventurer Thorgils Leifsson, who travels around the world.

In 1962, American comic book writer [Stan Lee](/wiki/Stan_Lee) and his brother [Larry Lieber](/wiki/Larry_Lieber), together with [Jack Kirby](/wiki/Jack_Kirby), created the [Marvel Comics](/wiki/Marvel_Comics) [superhero](/wiki/Superhero) [Thor](/wiki/Thor_(Marvel_Comics)), which they based on the Norse god of the same name. The character is featured in the 2011 [Marvel Studios](/wiki/Marvel_Studios) film [*Thor*](/wiki/Thor_(film)) and its sequel [*Thor: The Dark World*](/wiki/Thor:_The_Dark_World) and also appears in the 2012 film [*The Avengers*](/wiki/The_Avengers_(2012_film)) and its associated [animated series](/wiki/Marvel's_Avengers_Assemble_(TV_series)).

Since the 1960s, there has been rising enthusiasm for [historical reenactment](/wiki/Historical_reenactment). While the earliest groups had little claim for historical accuracy, the seriousness and accuracy of reenactors has increased. The largest such groups include [The Vikings](/wiki/The_Vikings_(reenactment)) and [Regia Anglorum](/wiki/Regia_Anglorum), though many smaller groups exist in Europe, North America, New Zealand, and Australia. Many reenactor groups participate in live-steel combat, and a few have Viking-style ships or boats.

The [Minnesota Vikings](/wiki/Minnesota_Vikings) of the [National Football League](/wiki/National_Football_League) are so-named owing to the large Scandinavian population in the US state of [Minnesota](/wiki/Minnesota).

Modern reconstructions of [Viking mythology](/wiki/Viking_mythology) have shown a persistent influence in late 20th- and early 21st-century popular culture in some countries, inspiring comics, role-playing games, computer games, and music, including [Viking metal](/wiki/Viking_metal), a subgenre of [heavy metal music](/wiki/Heavy_metal_music).

### Common misconceptions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

#### Horned helmets[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Magnus Barelegs Viking Festival](/wiki/File:Viking_Festival,_Delamont_County_Park,_June_2012_(17).JPG)

Apart from two or three representations of (ritual) helmets – with protrusions that may be either stylised ravens, snakes, or horns – no depiction of the helmets of Viking warriors, and no preserved helmet, has horns. The formal, close-quarters style of Viking combat (either in shield walls or aboard "ship islands") would have made horned helmets cumbersome and hazardous to the warrior's own side.

Historians therefore believe that Viking warriors did not wear horned helmets; whether such helmets were used in Scandinavian culture for other, ritual purposes, remains unproven. The general misconception that Viking warriors wore horned helmets was partly promulgated by the 19th-century enthusiasts of [*Götiska Förbundet*](/wiki/Geatish_Society), founded in 1811 in Stockholm.[[143]](#cite_note-143) They promoted the use of Norse mythology as the subject of high art and other ethnological and moral aims.

The Vikings were often depicted with winged helmets and in other clothing taken from [Classical antiquity](/wiki/Classical_antiquity), especially in depictions of Norse gods. This was done to legitimize the Vikings and their mythology by associating it with the Classical world, which had long been idealized in European culture.

The latter-day *mythos* created by [national romantic ideas](/wiki/National_Romanticism) blended the Viking Age with aspects of the [Nordic Bronze Age](/wiki/Nordic_Bronze_Age) some 2,000 years earlier. Horned helmets from the Bronze Age were shown in [petroglyphs](/wiki/Petroglyph) and appeared in archaeological finds (see [Bohuslän](/wiki/Bohuslän) and [Vikso](/wiki/Vikso) helmets). They were probably used for ceremonial purposes.[[144]](#cite_note-144) Cartoons like [*Hägar the Horrible*](/wiki/Hägar_the_Horrible) and [*Vicky the Viking*](/wiki/Vicky_the_Viking), and sports kits such as those of the [Minnesota Vikings](/wiki/Minnesota_Vikings) and [Canberra Raiders](/wiki/Canberra_Raiders) have perpetuated the myth of the horned helmet.[[145]](#cite_note-145) Viking helmets were conical, made from hard leather with wood and metallic reinforcement for regular troops. The iron helmet with mask and mail was for the chieftains, based on the previous [Vendel](/wiki/Vendel)-age helmets from central Sweden. The only true Viking helmet found is from *Gjermundbu* in Norway. This helmet is made of iron and has been dated to the 10th century.[[146]](#cite_note-146)

#### Use of skulls as drinking vessels[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

There is no evidence that Vikings drank out of the skulls of vanquished enemies. This was a misconception based on a passage in the [skaldic](/wiki/Skald) poem [Krákumál](/wiki/Krákumál) speaking of heroes drinking from *ór bjúgviðum hausa* (branches of skulls). This was a reference to [drinking horns](/wiki/Drinking_horn), but was mistranslated in the 17th century[[147]](#cite_note-147) as referring to the skulls of the slain.[[148]](#cite_note-148)

## Genetic legacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

Studies of [genetic diversity](/wiki/Genetic_diversity) provide some indication of the origin and expansion of the Viking population. [Haplogroup I-M253](/wiki/Haplogroup_I-M253) (defined by specific [genetic markers](/wiki/Genetic_marker) on the Y-chromosome) mutation occurs with the greatest frequency among Scandinavian males: 35 percent in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, and peaking at 40 percent within western Finland.[[149]](#cite_note-149) It is also common near the southern Baltic and [North Sea](/wiki/North_Sea) coasts, and then successively decreasing further to the south geographically.

Genetic studies in the [British Isles](/wiki/British_Isles) of the [Y-DNA](/wiki/Y-DNA) [haplogroup R-M420](/wiki/Haplogroup_R-M420), seen also across Scandinavia, have demonstrated that the Vikings settled in Britain and Ireland as well as raiding there. Both male and female descent studies show evidence of Norse descent in areas closest to Scandinavia, such as the Shetland and [Orkney](/wiki/Orkney_Islands) islands.[[150]](#cite_note-150) Inhabitants of lands farther away show most Norse descent in the male [Y-chromosome](/wiki/Y_chromosome) lines.[[151]](#cite_note-151) A specialised genetic and surname study in [Liverpool](/wiki/Liverpool) demonstrated marked Norse heritage: up to 50 percent of males who belonged to original families, those who lived there before the years of industrialization and population expansion.[[152]](#cite_note-152) High percentages of Norse inheritance – tracked through R-M420 haplotype signatures – were also found among males in the [Wirral](/wiki/Wirral_Peninsula) and [West Lancashire](/wiki/West_Lancashire).[[153]](#cite_note-153) This was similar to the percentage of Norse inheritance found among males in the Orkney Islands.[[154]](#cite_note-154) Recent research suggests that the Scottish warrior [Somerled](/wiki/Somerled), who drove the Vikings out of Scotland and was the progenitor of [Clan Donald](/wiki/Clan_Donald), may have been of [Viking descent](/wiki/List_of_haplogroups_of_historical_and_famous_figures), a member of haplogroup R-M420.[[155]](#cite_note-155)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Div col](/wiki/Template:Div_col)

* [Faroese people](/wiki/Faroese_people)
* [Geats](/wiki/Geats)
* [Gotlander](/wiki/Gotlander)
* [Gutasaga](/wiki/Gutasaga)
* [Proto-Norse language](/wiki/Proto-Norse_language)
* [Scandinavian prehistory](/wiki/Scandinavian_prehistory)
* [Sea peoples](/wiki/Sea_peoples)
* [Swedes (Germanic tribe)](/wiki/Swedes_(Germanic_tribe))
* [Viking raid warfare and tactics](/wiki/Viking_raid_warfare_and_tactics)

[Template:Div col end](/wiki/Template:Div_col_end) [Template:Portalbar](/wiki/Template:Portalbar)

## Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Refbegin](/wiki/Template:Refbegin)

* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)

[Template:Refend](/wiki/Template:Refend)

## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Refbegin](/wiki/Template:Refbegin)

* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* Downham, Clare (2011). "Viking Ethnicities. A Historiographic Overview", *History Compass* 10.1 (2012), pp. 1–12. [PDF Academic.edu - registration required](https://www.academia.edu/1499804/Viking_Ethnicities_A_historiographic_overview)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)

[Template:Refend](/wiki/Template:Refend)

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Wiktionary](/wiki/Template:Wiktionary) [Template:Commons category](/wiki/Template:Commons_category) [Template:Wikivoyage](/wiki/Template:Wikivoyage) [Template:Wikisource](/wiki/Template:Wikisource)

* [Vikings](http://web.archive.org/web/20110722065628/http://www.history.com/topics/vikings)—View videos at The History Channel
* [Copenhagen-Portal – The Danish Vikings](http://www.copenhagenet.dk/CPH-Vikings.htm)
* [BBC: History of Vikings](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/)
* [Encyclopædia Britannica: Viking, or Norseman, or Northman, or Varangian (people)](http://web.archive.org/web/20080106081611/http://www.britannica.com:80/eb/topic-628781/Viking)
* [Borg Viking museum, Norway](http://www.lofotr.no/index.asp)
* [Ibn Fadlan and the Rusiyyah, by James E. Montgomery, with full translation of Ibn Fadlan](http://web.archive.org/web/20061109083859/http://www.uib.no/jais/v003/montgo1.pdf)
* [Reassessing what we collect website – Viking and Danish London](http://web.archive.org/web/20150711093138/http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/RWWC/themes/1295/1288) History of Viking and Danish London with objects and images
* Wawm, Andrew, [The Viking Revival](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/revival_01.shtml) - BBC Online, Ancient History in Depth (updated 17 February 2011)

[Template:Pirates](/wiki/Template:Pirates)

[Template:Authority control](/wiki/Template:Authority_control)

[Category:Vikings](/wiki/Category:Vikings) [Category:Articles containing video clips](/wiki/Category:Articles_containing_video_clips)