

Viking Itinerary - Days 6-12

Stockholm

– Birka – Swedish Museum of History – Anundshog – Gamla Uppsala – Sigtuna – Copenhagen
– National Museum of Denmark – Roskilde Viking Ships Museum – Ale’s Stones – King’s Grave

Day
Six

We spend all day visiting Birka, the historic Viking trading centre, situated on the island of Björkö in Lake Malaren. To get there, we take a beautiful journey by water from Stockholm. As a trading town, Birka most likely offered slaves, furs, iron goods and craft products in exchange for glassware and textiles including Chinese silk and Byzantine embroidery amongst many other goods. One of the earliest suburban settlements in Scandinavia, Birka was the Baltic link to Russia and the Byzantine Empire for the Swedish Vikings.

Once there, you can stroll in the cultural landscape, visit the Museum, take a guided tour of the archaeological sites, visit the largest Viking Era graveyard in Sweden and also see the reconstructed Viking village.

Day Seven

In the morning we visit the Swedish Museum of History. Its Viking Age exhibition is wonderful and tells the story of the people’s everyday activities, family life and religious beliefs. Many of the exhibits were found at Birka where we visited on Day 6. You will see beautiful jewellery, tools and weapons, reconstructed burials and magical artefacts including impressive picture stones, the iron staff once owned by a volvor (seeress/witch) as well as amulets and pendants. There will be time to see other exhibitions including the Gold Room containing jewellery and objects made of gold and silver.

The afternoon and evening will be free. You could visit the Vasa Museum with its magnificent and intact 17th century ship, the Royal Palace, the ABBA museum or explore Gamla Stan, the oldest part of Stockholm where our hotel is located. You could take the Ocean bus for a unique tour of Stockholm by water and land in an amphibious vehicle. There are so many more choices.

Day Eight

Today we visit some very special sacred sites. We will first travel to Anundshog, the site of the largest tumulus in Sweden with its magnificently carved standing stone showing entwined male and female figures. During the Neolithic, people were already settling on the long ridge formed when the inland ice retreated. Trade routes and watercourses met around the ridge and eventually it became a cultural centre for the whole region. We shall walk along the ridge to visit the Bronze Age labyrinth very near to the great mound. Close to the mound are five ship settings, standing stones in the shape of a ship. Four have been restored, the largest one being 53 metres long. A truly powerful place.

We then make the journey to Gamla Uppsala with its imposing burial mounds, museum and Christian church which some believe to be the site of the old Uppsala pagan temple. The known history of this place stretches back some 2,000 years. Learn about the site's mythical Svea kings, Norse gods and human sacrifice at the Museum.

After leaving Gamla Uppsala, we drive to pretty Sigtuna, one of the oldest towns in Sweden. Its main street, Stora Gatan, is said to be Sweden's oldest dating back to the time of 10th century King Erik the Victorious. Today the town is full of beautiful traditional wooden houses and plenty of places to wander and eat. We will have dinner here before returning to Copenhagen.

Day Nine

Today we fly from Stockholm to Copenhagen where, after checking into our hotel, we will have the afternoon and evening free.

Copenhagen was founded in 1043 and is full of historic landmarks, significant buildings and museums. You may wish to visit the famous Tivoli Gardens, the Christiansborg Palace or have dinner in one of the many waterside restaurants in the picturesque Nyhavn located within walking distance of our hotel. Window shopping is wonderful and there are long walking streets that will allow you to indulge your shopping pleasures.

Day Ten

We will start the day by visiting the National Museum of Denmark, which has some of the most extraordinary and fascinating exhibits from pre-history through to the Viking Age. It is truly worth a couple of hours making one's way through the pre-history exhibition. Some of its famous archaeological treasures include the beautiful Trundholm Chariot of the Sun as well as, and not to be missed, the stunningly

amazing Gundestrup Cauldron.

The afternoon and evening is free.

Day Eleven

In the morning, we take the short drive from Copenhagen to Roskilde to visit the Vikings Ship Museum which focuses on the Vikings' maritime craftsmanship and their impressive ships. See the hulls of five original Viking ships in a purpose-built Museum, visit the boat yard where a Viking ship is being built using traditional methods and see moored great longships built in this way. We will also spend an hour sailing on one of these longships. There will also be time to visit World Heritage listed Roskilde Cathedral, the final resting place for Danish kings and queens from 986AD.

The evening will be free.

Day Twelve

We will drive to southern Sweden to visit one of the greatest archaeological and sacred sites in Scandinavia, the Ale's Stones. The megalithic monument in Scania on the Baltic Sea in southern Sweden is a stone ship oval with much larger stones at each end. Believed to have been erected 1,400 years ago and formed by 59 large sanding stones, the Ale's Stones are also known as The Sun Ship and regarded as one of the most beautiful megalithic monuments in northern Europe. On the Summer Solstice the sun sets precisely over the prow stone and on the Winter Solstice rises over the ship's stern. There is also an alignment to the Equinoxes.

On this day we will also visit the massive 3,500 year old King's Grave, a passage tomb that differs from most Bronze Age European burials in that, most importantly, the cist is adorned with petroglyphs. The extraordinary images carved into the stones include those depicting people, birds, ships, a chariot and more. It has been a place of the ancestors for 4,500 years when the first burials took place with the last to be buried here, a Viking more than 1,000 years ago. We will also visit some other sites where there are more beautifully carved stones.

After driving back over the great bridge to Denmark, we will have the evening free.

