

In The Footsteps of Rurik

A guide to the Viking History of Northwest Russia

By Dan Carlsson and Adrian Selin



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Financed by EU

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PROJECT IMPLEMENTED

by HTSPE and EuroTrends under contract
2011/260-699

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Preface

Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture

The Northern Dimension (ND) is a common policy of the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland, with Belarus also playing an increasingly important role in the cooperation. ND was first initiated in 1999, and it gained new momentum after the adoption of a revised ND Action Plan in 2006. ND is based on the principle of equal partnership among the partners.

The cooperation takes place in the form of meetings of senior representatives from the participating countries as well as in the four partnerships: The ND Environmental Partnership (NDEP), the ND Partnership for Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS), the ND Partnership for Transport and Logistics (NDPTL) and the ND Partnership for Culture (NDPC).

The NDPC is one of the newer partnerships. Its preparation started in 2008. In May 2010 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the participating countries and an NDPC Action Plan was submitted to the ND Ministerial Meeting in November 2010. The Partnership became operational in January 2011, and it has a small secretariat hosted by the Nordic Council of Ministers in Copenhagen. The NDPC also has a Steering Committee, which is composed of representatives of the participating countries and which meets regularly. For more information on the NDPC and its activities see www.ndpculture.org

The mission

The NDPC Steering Committee has identified Viking heritage as a topic of common interest for the participating countries. While the Viking Route is an important European cultural route, it has been largely dormant. The Route offers potential for the development of cultural tourism across the borders in the Northern Dimension area, and is therefore of interest for the NDPC.

The background to this initiative is that Viking heritage has long been of common interest in Western Europe, as well as in Canada, as a resource for cultural tourism, with places like The Viking Ship Museum in Oslo, The Hedeby museum in Germany and the ship museum in Roskilde, Denmark, as well-known examples. Many of the sites are on the world Heritage list, like L'Anse aux Meadows at Newfoundland, Canada, the Viking town Birka in Sweden, the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo, Norway, as well as the famous stave churches in Norway.

While many of the Viking settlements in Northern Europe already exist as heritage sites, less is known about the Viking Route heritage sites located in Russia and the information available on them is largely available in the Russian language. The NDPC Steering Committee therefore decided that a study on the Viking heritage sites in Russia was needed, to have a survey of the sites and information on their state and development needs. Eventually the heritage sites located in Russia could be connected with those located in other countries to complete the Viking Route.

Besides being well taken care of, many sites are direct focal points for tourism, and part of international visits, not at least the ship museums in Denmark and Norway, visited by huge number of tourists from all over the world. It has to be concluded that the tourist side of the Viking heritage is to a very high degree a Western European phenomenon. It can clearly be seen as a biased picture,

while the Eastern side of the Baltic Sea to a very high degree was a part of the Viking history, not at least the rivers leading down to Black Sea and Caspian Sea. This bias was noticed already while compiling the Council of Europe cultural route - Viking route, and it was foreseen that with better knowledge of sites in Russia and other areas in Eastern Europe, the selection of sites should be revised.

The main objectives of the assignment was to map and give an account of the Viking Route heritage sites located in Russia, to reveal the most important of them and to analyse their status today when it comes to maintenance, marketing and open up for tourism, as well as conclude what would be needed in order to develop the Viking Route's potential for international cultural tourism and to combine it into existing Viking Routes. It was also important to indicate the readiness of local stockholders to develop this sites as sites of Viking heritage.

The mission was concluded in November 2011, and the report delivered to NDCP is the base for this short guidebook into Viking history in Russia. The idea behind this guidebook is to open up to the public the deep interaction that were at hand between the Scandinavian countries and the states on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea in the Viking Age, and point out our common history.



Riitta Heinamaa
Chairmen of the NDCP Board

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Vikings and Russia - a short introduction

The Viking World

In the year AD 789, three strange ships arrived at Portland on the southern coast of England, and Beaduheard, the reeve of the King of Wessex, rode out to meet them. He took with him only a small band of men under the mistaken impression that the strangers were traders: "and they slew him..." records the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tersely. It adds, with over a century of grim hindsight, "those were the first ships [of Northmen] which came to the land of the English".

In June of the year 793, "the ravages of heathen men miserably destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne with plunder and slaughter". The Christian monastic sites of Jarrow and Iona, lying on Britain's exposed northern coasts, were looted in the years immediately afterwards. In 795 raiders were recorded near Dublin, and in 799 on the coast of south-west France. As far as we know this was all the work of Norwegian Vikings. The first raids by Danes in the West were on Frisia and, in 834, the thriving and populous trading centre of Dorestad on the Rhine estuary was attacked.

This was the beginning of a period of history known to us as the Viking Age, normally dated to around AD 800 - 1050, when Scandinavian peoples from the modern countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden influenced much of Northern and Eastern Europe and beyond. They travelled further than Europeans had ever gone before and established a network of communications over great distances. They exploited the riches of the East and explored the uncharted waters of North Atlantic. They settled as farmers in the barren Western lands of Greenland and discovered America five hundred years before Columbus. They were part of the development

Novgorod and Kiev, colonised lands in the North Atlantic and formed powerful states.

To be a Viking was strictly to be a pirate (from the Old Norse *Vikings*, a pirate or raider) but it is misleading to describe more than three centuries of Northern history as an age of raiders. Scandinavians were undoubtedly responsible for great changes during the Viking Age, many of which were beneficial. By colonising the North Atlantic Islands they extended the frontiers of Europe, while elsewhere they played a significant part in reshaping political structures. As traders they made a positive contribution, mainly by stimulating commerce and encouraging the growth of towns, as in Russia.

Whether as colonisers, traders or warriors, Scandinavians reached almost every part of the known world and discovered new lands. From the Nordic kingdoms, their ships penetrated the West European coasts, sailed through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea and, from there journeyed to Italy, Spain, Morocco and the Holy Land. From the Baltic Sea, they penetrated the Continent, travelling up Russian rivers and waterways to the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and all the way to Baghdad. In Asia, they met caravans from China and traded walrus ivory and furs for spices, silver and exotic goods.



Figure 2. In the end of the tenth century, some Viking ships were blown off course, and ended up along the North American coast. This was followed up around AD 1000 by Leif Erikson, travelling from Greenland.

The reason for this extraordinary outpouring of people from Scandinavia has been debated ever since the Viking Age. Duddo, a priest writing in Normandy in about 1020, blamed overpopulation in the Viking homelands; the writers of the thirteen-century Icelandic Sagas thought that the tyranny of those in power in the homelands had caused mass emigration. The most fertile and easily worked areas in Scandinavia had been settled since prehistoric times; as the population grew in the Viking Age, settlement spread and intensified wherever farming was viable.

This dependence on agriculture when the available land was limited in extent, as well as the search for wealth as goods or land and the growing imposition of royal power, were probably the main reasons for the Viking expansion.

What is clear is that Viking expansion was only made possible by the Vikings' legendary superiority in shipbuilding technology and their supreme navigational skills, which allowed them to travel further, faster and more surely than their contemporaries. "Never before has such a terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered from a pagan race, nor was it thought possible that such an inroad from the sea could be made". So commented the English scholar Alcuin in AD 793 when he heard of the Viking raid on Lindisfarne monastery.

The Eastern Connection

According to the Russian Primary Chronicle, the Varangians (Scandinavians) were forcing tribute from the tribes in the East around the middle of the ninth century. For how long a time that has been the case is still unclear, but it had obviously gone on for some time. Then, according to the Primary Chronicle, "the tributaries of



Figure 3. The map showing the many trade routes between Byzantium and the Caliphate, and the Scandinavian area.

the Varangian's drove them back beyond the sea and, refusing them further tribute, set out to govern themselves.



Figure 4. The towns of Rurik. Rurik and his brothers settled in the towns of Novgorod (some say Staraya Ladoga), Beloozero and Izborsk. After two years Rurik took over after his brothers, and handed out Rostov and Polotsk to his men. All according to the Primary Russian Chronicle.

There was no law among them, but tribe rose against tribe. Discord thus ensued among them, and they began to war one against another. They said to themselves, "Let us seek a prince who may rule over us, and judge us according to the law."

They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Rus: these particular Varangians were known as Rus, just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans, Angles, and Goths, for they were thus named. The Chuds, the Slavs, and the Krivichians then said to the people of Rus, "Our whole land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us." They thus selected three brothers, with their kinfolk, who took with them all the Rus, and migrated. The oldest, Rurik, located himself in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, in Beloozero; and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk. Because of these Varangians, the district of Novgorod became known

as Russian (Rus) land. The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race, but afore time they were Slavs. After two years, Sineus and his brother Truvor died, and Rurik assumed the sole authority. He assigned cities to his followers, Polotsk to one, Rostov to another, and to another Beloozero. In these cities there are thus Varangian colonists, but the first settlers were, in Novgorod, Slavs; in Polotsk, Krivichians; at Beloozero, Ves; in Rostov, Merians; and in Murom, Muromians. Rurik had dominion over all these districts". As it is said to be according to the Primary Russian Chronicle, compiled in the early twelfth century by a monk (Nestor) in Kiev.

Are we to believe the Primary Russian Chronicle, the foundation of the Novgorod-Kiev dominion, took place in the middle of the ninth century, as a result of the Scandinavian Vikings (Varangians/Varjager, sometimes called Rus), came to rule among the tribes in North Western Russia. The exact meaning of the name "Varangian" (Varjagi in Russian sources, Varangoi to the Byzantine Greeks) as used of the Eastern Vikings is not fully understood. It appears alongside "Rus" in the sources, but seems to have had a more warlike association than the latter term. Varangians appear as mercenaries and bodyguards to Russian rulers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In



Figur 5. Typical female brooches from mainland Scandinavia from ninth and tenth centuries, found at Staraya Ladoga. Top; a equal arm brooch, bottom an oval brooch, gilded and with silver inlays. Displayed at the museum in Staraya Ladoga. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Staraya Ladoga, a road name, dating from medieval times and still in use today meaning, "Varangian Street" may indicate that this was a Scandinavian quarter of the settlement. The same goes for Novgorod, where there also is a Varangian Street, and close by a Gotlandic Hof, pointing to the island of Gotland, Sweden.

There is ample evidence that Scandinavians were in the Russian area at the early time mentioned by the Chronicle, evidenced, mainly by the archaeological material found in places like Staraya Ladoga, Gorodische and Gnezdovo. Still, there are signs in the archaeological material that Scandinavians, specifically Gotlanders, where settled along the costal areas of the Baltic States as well as in Staraya Ladoga long before that time.

For instance, in Staraya Ladoga, there are found among other things three female brooches from the island of Gotland, dating to the seventh and eight centuries. These brooches are typically Gotlandic objects, and not in use in other parts of Scandinavia. Looking to Grobina in Latvia, there appears to be a Gotlandic, as well as a mainland Swedish settlement in the seventh century, also further south along the Baltic Sea Eastern coast, at Apoulo in Lithuania. In other words, contact between Scandinavia, Gotland and the Russian area goes well beyond the eight century.



Figur 6. Different brooches found in Staraya Ladoga, dated to the seventh and eight century and of Gotlandic origin. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 7. The spread of Arabic coins in Northwest Europe. There is a concentration around the Baltic Sea, not at least to the island of Gotland, but also in connection to towns along the trading routes. Even so, there is a wide distribution in a huge area outside the main trading routes. Western Europe, including Norway, has very few collections of Arabic coins. After Balint, Cs.: *Einige Fragen des Dirham-Verkehr in Europe. Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 33, 1981, complemented by the author.

There seems to be a change of contacts over time, meaning that the initial contacts are, to a high degree, concentrated around the coastal area of the Baltic Sea, with some extension into

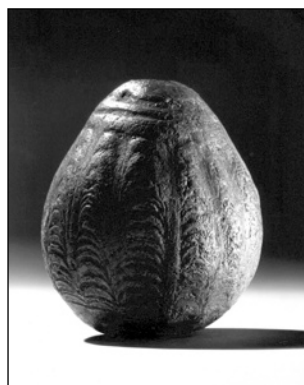


Figure 8. A resurrection egg, made of clay, found at Fröjel Viking Port of Trade, Gotland, Sweden. Probably originally coming from Kiev, Ukraine. Photo Roland Hejdström.

Ladoga Lake, like Staraya Ladoga, Grobina and Apoulo. During the following centuries, the contact net spread further inland into Russia along the main rivers, like to Gorodische, Gnezdovo and Timerevo.

Looking specifically to the north-west part of Russia, there are a huge number of artefacts found connected to Scandinavia, among them, many hoards of Arabic coins. The most numerous finds of undoubted Scandinavian origin are the oval brooches and other bronze jewellery characteristic of female dresses. These are often found in graves which are so similar to graves on the Scandinavian mainland that they must have belonged to Scandinavian immigrants. While there were so many immigrant females keeping to their own fashions, we must assume that whole families immigrated; men women and children.

This can also be seen by the fact that there are many objects found outside the main trading routes that only can point to a farming situation. For instance the site at Timerevo, being an undefended settlement on a slope in good agricultural land, away from the main River Volga.

The Russian and Arabic connection to Sweden is also evident from a large number of archaeological finds from the East found in Scandinavia, especially in Birka, Sigtuna and on the island of Gotland, where on Gotland some 70,000 Arabic coins have been found. These huge amount of silver have obviously travelled up Russian rivers, through towns like Staraya Ladoga, Novgorod, Gnezdovo and Polotsk, to mention just a few.

From the town of Birka, of importance in some graves, there are ample evidence of artefacts from the Orient and Russia, like clothes of silk, carnelian and rock crystal beads, and pottery.

Runic inscriptions

Also, a number of inscriptions on runic stones from Middle Sweden and Gotland tell the story of contacts between Sweden, Russia and the Caliphate. There are some 30 stones, mainly from Middle Sweden and Gotland, telling about travel to Russia.

One example is the runic inscription (U 209) that has been carved into a flat bedrock at Veda, Uppland, Sweden. It is dated to the middle of the eleventh century, and it was ordered by Þorsteinn, who got rich in Kievan Rus, in memory of his son. It has been suggested that Þorsteinn was the commander of a retinue of Yaroslav the Wise, and that his son Erinmundr may have died in Kievan Rus while serving under his father.

In old Norse, the text reads; *Þorstæinn gærði æftiR Ærinmund, sun sinn, ok kœpti þennsa by ok aflaði austr i Garðum*. Translated into English, one reads; "Þorsteinn made (the stone) in memory of



Figure 9. The map is showing runic inscriptions on stones mentioning Rus area. There is a clear concentration to the area around Lake Mälaren, and Gotland.



Figure 10. The runic inscription (U209) mentioning Þorsteinn getting rich in Russia. Photo Swedish National Heritage Board.

Erinmundr, his son, and bought this estate and earned (wealth) in the East in Garðar (Russia)."

Another example from Uppland, Sweden (U687), tells about *Spjallboði*, who died in St. Olof Church in Novgorod. This stone, signed by the rune master *Öpir*, is found at *Sjusta* near *Skokloster* in central Sweden. It is raised by a woman named *Rúna* in memory of her four sons who had died. She had it made together with her daughter-in-law *Sigríðr* who was the widow of *Spjallboði*. The text reads; *Runa let gæra mærki at Spjallbuða ok at Svæin ok at Andvett ok at Ragnar, syni sina ok Hælgæ/Ægla/Ængla, ok Sigríð at Spjallbuða, bonda sinn. Hann vaR dauðr i Holmgarði i Olafs kirkiu. ØpiR risti runaR.*



Figure 11. *Spjallboði* died in St. Olof church in Novgorod (U687). Photo Swedish National Heritage Board.

In English translation; "Rúna had the landmark made in memory of Spjallboði and in memory of Sveinn and in memory of Andvéttr and in memory of Ragnarr, sons of her and Helgi/Egli/Engli; and Sigríðr in memory of Spjallboði, her husbandman. He died in Holmgarðr in Ólafr's church. Cēpir carved the runes."

Along with the archaeological material, there are the written records, combined with the Icelandic Sagas, that give many indications of Scandinavians travel from the Varangian Sea through Russia to Miklagård (Constantinople) and Serkland (the Muslim Caliphate).

One of the more fascinating stories about Swedish-Russian contacts in the eleventh century is the story of *Ingvar the Far-travelled*.

Here, we have information both from the Icelandic Sagas, and from runic inscriptions on stones in Middle Sweden. According to the Sagas, Ingvar set out from middle Sweden with some 500 men in 1035, heading for Russia and to the orient. He spent a year or two in Russia, probably both in Novgorod and Kiev.

From here, he went down to the Black Sea, and it looks like he tried to find another way to the Caspian Sea, by passing the mountain area between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. He obviously reached the

Caspian Sea, and probably travelled around in the area for some time. It might even be, that they tried to reach even further east, towards our day's Afghanistan.

On the way back, around 1041, some kind of disaster happened, that apparently killed most of the men. It had been discussed that it might have been a plague. Some obviously managed to get back to tell their story of what happened. The journey is commemorated in Middle Sweden by some 30 runic inscriptions on stones.

Among the stones are those raised for Ingvar and his brother by their mother. So, one can read on the stone at Gripsholm (SÖ 179); *Tola let ræisa stæin þennsa at sun sinn Harald, broður Ingvars. ÞæiR foru*



Figure 12. The map is showing the spatial distribution of stones mentioning the travel with Ingvar. There is a clear concentration to the central Eastern part of Sweden.

drængila fiarri at gulli ok austarla ærni gafu, dou sunnarla a Særklandi.

Translated into English; "Tóla had this stone raised in memory of her son Haraldr, Ingvar's brother. They travelled valiantly far for gold, and in the East gave (food) to the eagle. (They) died in the South in Serkland."

Trade routes

The history of Vikings in Russia, as well as of the local population, is to a large degree connected to rivers and water systems. In ancient times, and even today, there are huge areas of wet lands, making travel on land difficult. In many areas the wide rivers also gave protection from attacks while travelling through hostile areas.

Looking in a broader scale, there are three main routes from the Varangian Sea (Baltic Sea) to the Caliphate; the Volkhov- Lovat rivers, down to Dnieper, the Volga River passing Bulgar, down to the Caspian Sea, and Wistula/Dvina River through Latvia and



Figure 13. A runic inscription in memory of Haraldr, Ingvar the Far-travelled's brother, who died in Serkland. Photo Swedish National Heritage Board.



Figure 14. The most important river routes from Scandinavia through Russia to the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Along those rivers, many important towns were established during the Viking Age.

Belorussia, connecting to the Dnieper River around the area of Gnezdovo/Smolensk.

Along these rivers, trading places and towns grew up during the eighth century and onwards, at the same time as many other towns where established around the Baltic Sea, like Wolin, Hedeby, Grobina and Birka. In other words, the early towns in Russia were part of a general tendency of networks and towns growing up, as a result of an ever expanding trade and exchange connection.

For most of our knowledge about the actual river route taken by the Vikings to the Black Sea we must turn to the Byzantine sources, and in particular to a secret document of the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos outlining the empire's foreign policy strategies in the mid tenth century.

The hazardous journey taken by the Scandinavians down the Dnieper each June after the ice had melted comes vividly to life as we read of them carrying their ships around the series of seven fierce rapids in the river and fighting off the attacks of local bandits.

Even in the Greek source, the rapids all have recognizable, descriptive Scandinavian names. The name given to one of the rapids Aifur (Evernoisy) is found on a Swedish rune stone from Pilgårds, on Gotland, raised to the memory of a man named Hrafn by his four brothers who had accompanied him on an expedition east. He died along the rapids, by what reason is unknown. Sweden's

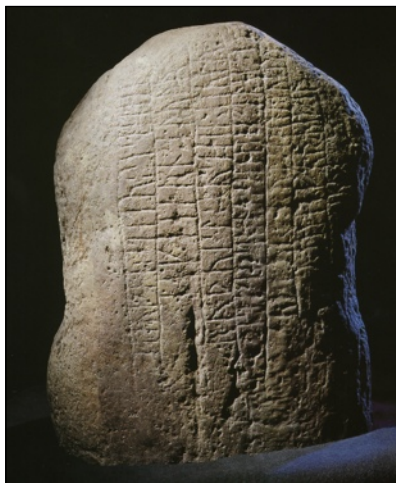


Figure 15. The stone raised as a memory of Hrafn, who died along the rapid Aifur in Dnieper River

runic inscriptions contain a number of references to the river road to Byzantium.

It is in tributes to people such as Spialbodi "who met his death in Novgorod", and Rognvald "leader of a troop of men in Greece" that the Viking push to the East has found some of its most lasting memorials.

While some Scandinavians made the journey south from Staraya Ladoga into Russia and down to the Black Sea, others followed an even more ambitious route directly east to the lands of the Volga-Bulgar tribes, the Khazar nomads and finally to the deserts of Arabia and the seat of the Abbasid caliphate Baghdad. After Lake Ladoga these voyagers joined the upper waters of the River Volga, passing through settlements at Beloozero, Jaroslav, Vladimir and Murom; Scandinavian artifacts have been found at all of these places.

The Volga makes a great bend at *Bulgar* (close to the site of the modern city of Kazan) as it turns south to the Caspian Sea. This marked the western end of the Silk Road, the overland trade route that ran through Samarkand and Tashkent to China, and here a great market place had developed controlled by the Bulgar tribes. We know that Scandinavian merchants must have met with the caravans that travelled the Silk Road because Chinese silks have been found in graves at Birka in central Sweden. These finds, together with the figure of Buddha that has been found at the pre Viking Site at Helgö, not far from Birka, may even allow us to speculate on the extraordinary possibility that Scandinavians themselves may have journeyed all the way to the Chinese court or the Indian subcontinent.

It was here, in Bulgar, that the Arabic Emissary Ibn Fadlan, met Scandinavians in the year 922. He was sent out by the head of the Caliphate at Bagdad on a mission to the king of Volga-Bulgar. Ibn Fadlan recount of the Vikings, he call them Rus, is famous, and the

description has also been the background for the novel by Michael Crichton; "Eaters of the Dead. The Manuscript of Ibn Fadlan, Relating his Experiences with the Northmen in A.D. 922", New York: Random House, 1988 (1976). Crichton's fantasy was filmed in 1999 as The Thirteenth Warrior by John McTiernan (Touchstone Pictures), with Antonio Banderas as the Muslim voyager.

"I saw the Rūsiyyah (Rus) when they had arrived on their trading expeditions and had disembarked at the River. I have never seen more perfect physiques than theirs – they are like palm trees, are fair and reddish, and do not wear the qurtaq or the caftan. The man wears a cloak with which he covers one half of his body, leaving one of his arms uncovered. Every one of them carries an axe, a sword and a dagger and all of that which we have mentioned never parts from him. Their swords are Frankish, with broad, ridged blades. Each man, from the tip of his toes to his neck, is covered in dark lines: trees, pictures and such like. Each woman has, on her breast, a small disc, tied <around her neck>, made of either iron, silver, copper or gold, in relation to her husband's financial and social worth" (English translation James E. Montgomery).

Ibn Fadlan is obviously impressed by the Vikings physic, but disgusted by their behaviour when it comes to cleanness. According to his words, "they cannot, of course, avoid washing their faces and their heads each day, which they do with the filthiest and most polluted water imaginable. I shall explain. Every day the *jāriyah* (slave-girl) arrives in the morning with a large basin containing water which she hands to her master. He washes his hands and his face and the hair on his head in the water, then he dips his comb in the water and brushes his hair, blows his nose and spits in the basin. There is no filthy impurity which he will not do in that water. When he no longer requires it, the slave-girl takes the basin to the man beside him and he goes through the same routine as his comrade. She continues to carry it from one man to the next until she has gone

round everyone in the house, with each of them blowing his nose and spitting, washing his face and hair in the basin.”

Towns in the Viking World

At around the same time, there were many towns and trading places that sprang up along the waterways in Northern and Southern Russia, for instance at Sarsky, the hill fort close to Rostov, Timerevo outside modern days Jaroslavl, Beloozero being the forerunner of Belozersk in Vologda oblast, Gnezdovo close to Smolensk and Izborsk near Pskov. It is evidently an expansive period of contacts across the Baltic Sea, and in all these places there is a mixture of people, Finnish, Slavish and Scandinavians, among others.

Besides all these important trading sites along the rivers, there appears to be, at this time, what we might call an immigration from Scandinavia of whole families settling along many small rivers, outside the main trading routes. It can be remembered that Rurik and his brothers came with all their folks and families. Looking at a map of the places concerning finds with a Scandinavian provenience, it is noticeable how many finds are outside the main trading routes, meaning Volkhov, Lovat, Volga, Dnieper and Dvina.

Over time, many of these small sites lose their importance, taken over by fewer but bigger places, like Novgorod (founded in the middle of the tenth century), and Kiev in the Ukraine.

Politics and assimilation

The political history of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh centuries contains many references to the aristocratic connections

between the Russian State and Scandinavia. It is rather clear from written sources, like the Russian Primary Chronicle, and even the Icelandic Sagas, that there were important alliances between Scandinavians and the ruling class in towns such as Novgorod and Kiev.

The Norwegian king Olaf the Holy (Olaf Haraldson, 995-1030) spent time at the court of Jaroslav the Wise in Novgorod during his exile and before his return and death at the battle of Stiklestad in Norway in 1030. In reality, these two kings were brothers-in-law, each married to a daughter of the Swedish king Olof Skötkonung. Jaroslav was married to Olof's legitimate daughter Ingegerd (in Russia called Irina and canonised), and Olaf was married to the illegitimate daughter Astrid.

Another Norwegian well known from written sources and with deep connection to the upper class in Russia, was Harald Haraldson, brother of Olaf by the same mother. Harald took part in the battle at Stiklestad 1030 where king Olaf fell, when he was fifteen years old. He was wounded and fled to Sweden and the following year, he went to Russia, and was well received by Jaroslav the Wise, who made Harald and Rangvald head of his defence force.

After several years in Russia, Harald travelled to Greece and Constantinople, and became head of the Varangian guard for the Emperor. During some 15 years, he was fighting all around the Mediterranean Sea, and gained a huge tribute, that he sent to Jaroslav to look after. After being put in jail, he escaped, and sailed back to Novgorod and Jaroslav, where he arrived in 1045. Here, he married Jaroslav's daughter Elisabeth (or Ellisif, as she is known to the Northmen), and returned to Norway to be king. He ended his days in 1066, when he tried to take England, in a battle at Stamford Bridge, just outside the town of York.



Figure 16. The life of the Norwegian Harald Haraldson (called Hardruler). Taking part in the battle at Stiklastad 1030, 15 years old, he fled to Sweden, and further to Russia. Later on, he became the head of the Varangian Guard at the court of the Emperor in Constantinople. After many years of fighting in most part around the Mediterranean Sea, he returned to Norway. On the way back, he married the daughter of Jaroslav the Wise in Novgorod. Trying to take England in 1066, he met his destiny at Stamford Bridge, when he was killed.

Through time, it is obvious that the Scandinavian influence in Russia diminished. There are fewer Scandinavian finds in Russia from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. By then the Nordic immigrants had probably been assimilated, and one can notice that

in the Primary Chronicle, names with a Scandinavian origin are over time becoming fewer and fewer.

Looking at the whole Viking period, the situation changed when it comes to Russian-Scandinavian contacts and exchange. The very first phases of contacts and exchange, then we are as far back as at least the seventh century, these took place along the coast or a short distance up some rivers. These contacts were more of a trading and exchange situation than of political ruling nature. That changed over time, as we experience from the Primary Chronicle, giving way to a tribute situation where Scandinavians had the people of Western Russia paying tribute.

The third step can be seen in the material from the middle of the ninth century, where there appears to be both a political situation, where high ranked persons from Scandinavia come to be a part of the ruling system and second, at the same time, we can probably talk about an immigration of families/farmers, settling up along many tributary rivers, clearly shown in the Icelandic Sagas, and other written sources.

But the contacts between Scandinavia and Russia, did not fade away with the end of the Viking Age, as can be clearly seen in all the material in the town of Sigtuna and on the island of Gotland, with Novgorod becoming the most prominent town in Russia connected to the Hanseatic league, and with close contacts with the town of Visby on the island of Gotland as well as with Sigtuna in middle Sweden.

In the footstep of Rurik—places to visit

A natural starting point for a travel in the footstep of Rurik, is the town St Petersburg, with air links to many cities in Europe. From here, all the sites can be reached by car on a day trip, or by train or buses to most of the places.



Figure 17. Sites to visit. The number correspond to the following presentation of each site. Drawing by Dan Carlsson.

The description of the different sites follow the same manner. Initially, there is a short description of the place and its surroundings, followed by a recount of the historical importance of the site in Viking age. Then there is some information about research, preservation and visibility. Then there is some information about tourism to the site, and how to get there.

Staraya Ladoga

Place and surroundings

Called *Aldeigjuborg* in Scandinavian sources, Ladoga was the first port-of-call in the long journey south throughout the history of Scandinavian contact with Russia, and served as the gateway to the heart of Russia and beyond.

Staraya Ladoga lies on the Western side of the Volkhov River, at its confluence with the smaller Ladozhka River. Today, the town hold some 3 200 inhabitants, is situated some 8 km from the town Volchov, further up the River Volkhov, and some 120 km to the east of St Petersburg.

Today the small town of Staraya Ladoga comprises old-fashioned wooden build-



Figure 18. The fortress at Staraya Ladoga is situated on the tip of a promontory between the main River Volkhov (to the left in the picture), and the tributary River Ladozhka, entering from the right. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 19. Along the River Volkhov, there are several huge burial mounds, so called Sopki, visible from far away, now, as in prehistoric times, dated to Iron Age. Photo Dan Carlsson.

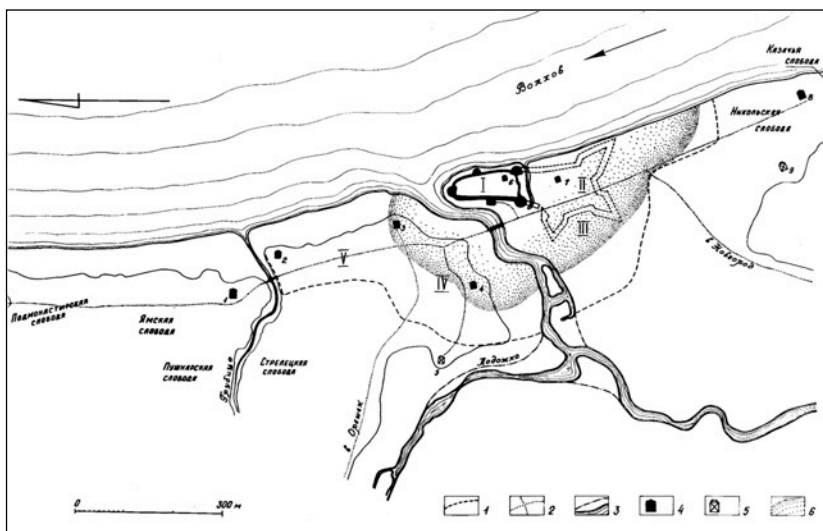


Figure 20. Plan of the Viking age settlement area (number 6), showing the extent of the settlement, not only covering the central hill fort area, but also an extensive area along the river bank, as well as around the tributary river. Today, most of the settlement area is covered with later houses.

dings and a number of Orthodox churches and monasteries, nestling around a medieval and later fortification on the headland between the rivers Volkhov and the tributary smaller *River Ladozhka*.

Historical importance

The site grew from a small market place in the eight century to a large fortified site with a princely residence and a military presence in the tenth century. The foundation of Staraya Ladoga has been dated by dendrochronology to AD 753. Already by that early date, wooden houses and many Scandinavian Viking objects were present

in the town, among them a magnificent hoard of a smithies iron tools. Some objects of Scandinavian origin, mainly from Gotland, suggest that the market place was established already in the early seventh century, making it one of the oldest trading places around the Baltic Sea.

According to one version of the Primary Chronicle (*Hypatian Codex*), this was the place the Varangian leader Rurik arrived in 862, and made it his capital. There are several huge "Kurgans", or royal funeral barrows at the outskirts of Ladoga, also called Sopki. Staraya Ladoga was the most important trading centre in Eastern Europe from about 800 to 900, and it is estimated that between 90 to 95% of all Arabic Coins found in Sweden passed through Staraya Ladoga.

Ladoga is mentioned in chronicles 1019, when Ingegerd of Sweden married Jaroslav of Novgorod. According to terms in the marriage settlement, Jaroslav ceded Ladoga to his wife, who appointed her father's cousin, the Swedish Earl Ragnvald Ulfsson, to rule the town. At least two Swedish kings spent their youths in Ladoga, king Stenkil and Inge I, and possible also king Anund Gårdske.

Staraya Ladoga is without question,



Figure 21. Some objects of Scandinavian origin. Top, a brooch from early Viking Age, probably from Gotland. Below, a mould of stone for making a Thor's hammer; bottom an oval brooch from mainland Sweden. From Staraya Ladoga Museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 22. Excavation at the area of the Viking age settlement is an ongoing activity, where part of the area is research every year, under the leadership of Professor Kirpichnikov. Photo Dan Carlsson

one of the most important sites concerning exchange and contacts between Scandinavia and Russia during early Viking Age, and even before. The archaeological excavations have given clear evidence of these contacts, shown in a huge number of Scandinavian artefacts, like oval brooches, combs, beads, pendants, and runic inscriptions on objects.

The whole settlement is ringed by cemeteries of different kinds, some with cremations under mounds and others with flat inhumations, typical Viking Age burials are found at Plakun opposite the town. Along the peripheries of the town are a number of great conical mounds, known as *sopki*, which often contain Slavic objects buried in a manner that is probably Scandinavian in origin.

Research

The decade of the 1970:s was a productive one for Staraya Ladoga's archaeology. In addition to *Zemlianoie gorodishche*, excavations were conducted at the Varangian Street, the burial fields of Plakun and Pobedishche, and the Malyshev Hill.

The hill fort's waterlogged anaerobic soil had provided optimum conditions for the preservation of organic materials and the remains of wooden buildings. A detailed and ongoing study of the hill fort has revealed a complex settlement which emerged in the lower Volkhov River several decades before the beginning of the Viking Age on the periphery of the Scandinavian world.

During the 1981-1983 excavations, archaeologists discovered huge wooden structures in the Gorodishche's lowest layers, dendrochronology dated to 753-754. In 2003, a stone with the number "753" was erected in the town's centre, signifying the year when the oldest piece of wood found to date was cut.

Figure 24. The memory stone depicting the year 753, the dating of wooden structures from the excavation in Staraya Ladoga. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 23. A typical Viking Age comb, common in many parts of Sweden, inscribed with dots and circles. On display at Staraya Ladoga Museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Preservation and visibility

The area of Staraya Ladoga holds a number of historical places, from Iron age up the present days. The central point is the fortress, occupying approximately the original area of Staraya Ladoga, and



Figure 25. Some of the Carnelian and rock crystal beads found at Staraya Ladoga, of the same fashion as is found in for instance Birka, middle Sweden, and on the island of Gotland. Displayed at the archaeological museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.

built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Much effort has been put on restoring the fortress, and it is the main attraction in Staraya Ladoga.

Outside the fortress is the site for an ongoing excavation, inside the earthen rampart. The museum in Staraya Ladoga, situated close to the main road and to the fortress, have a very comprehensive exhibition detailing the region and the town. There are numerous objects on display, and among the more outstanding are two unusual runic inscriptions: one on a wooden stick about 40 centimetres long, inscribed in the ninth century with a skaldic verse written in short twig runes; and

another on a metal

amulet with a two-row inscription carved on both sides.

Besides these finds, there are numerous brooches, combs, beads, pins etc of a typical Scandinavian origin, including oval brooches,



Figure 26. Equal armed brooch of Scandinavian type. Displayed at the archaeological museum in Staraya Ladoga. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 27. On the right hand, in the red brick building, is the office and souvenir connected for the fortress, seen in the background. Close to the road is an information display by maps and texts about the history of Staraya Ladoga, though only in the Russian language. Photo Dan Carlsson.

equal arm brooches and Thor's hammer pendants.

At the museum, there is also a video running on a TV screen at certain intervals, giving a good summary of the history of Staraya Ladoga, though only in the Russian language.

On the outskirts of the town, along the river towards the Lake Ladoga, there are on the high banks of the river impressive, and visible from a considerable distance, burial mounds, so called Sopki, dated to tenth century. On the Eastern bank of the river, opposite the fortress and the rampart covering the Viking Age town, there has been an excavation of Scandinavian graves. At the site, there is nothing to see today.

Both in connection to the fortress, and along the main road close to the archaeological museum, there are informative information billboards on poles describing the history of the town, with maps showing the location of different monuments and sites.

Visitors and tourism

The Staraya Ladoga Museum was first established in 1984 (prior that established in 1971 there was a museum of local history), the primary function of which is the preservation of the town's historical monuments.

Staraya Ladoga is known for its 3 main attractions: Primarily, the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries Ladoga fortress (in restoration since 2008, but open to the visitors all around the year), the two stone 12th century churches (closed from October to April) and, third, its archaeological heritage. The majority of the tourists come for the architectural monuments, but the archaeological exhibition is included in all the guided tours.



Figure 28. A reconstructed Viking ship outside the hill fort, being a part of the Viking Festival taking place every year in the end of June. Photo Dan Carlsson

Every year, at the end of June, there is a Viking Festival, drawing some 3000-4000 visitors. The festival is held in a field on the outskirts of the town.

The archaeological exhibition is in the Museum of Archaeology (a part of Staraya Ladoga museum, situated in the central part of Ladoga, in a white nineteenth century stone house). There is a sign near the house (in the Russian language). The fortress in Staraya Ladoga is just along the main road, easy to reach by cars. Close to the entrance to the fortress, there is a shop, selling tickets to the fortress and souvenirs, and some literature.



Figure 29. A poster for the 2011 Viking Festival in Staraya Ladoga.

How to get there

Staraya Ladoga is situated some 120 km east of St Petersburg, and can be reached by bus or trains to Volchov, and from there with local buses to Staraya Ladoga. There is a good road from St. Petersburg, making a trip to Staraya Ladoga takes about 2 hours.

Most visitors to Staraya Ladoga come by way of St. Petersburg, mainly in groups, and by buses or trains. Lately, there also is a growing number coming from Novgorod from the South. The town have two very modest hotels, one for 20 persons, the other for 49 persons; one restaurant and 2 cafés. There is one ATM in the town.

The fortress is open all days from 10.00 to 19.00 (May-October) and Tuesday-Sunday, 9.00-16.00 (November-April). There is a souvenir shop at the fortress, and possibility to have guided tours.

The archaeological museum, situated in a separate house some hundred metres apart from the hill fort is open all days from 10.00 to 19.00 (May-October) and Tuesday-Sunday, 9.00-16.00 (November-April). There is also a souvenir shop.

The homepage (only in Russian language) of the museum: www.ladogamuseum.ru

Gorodische and Novgorod

Place and surroundings

Situated along the River Volchov, just north of Lake Ilmen and some 180 km south from St. Petersburg, *Novgorod* rest on both sides of the river, with the Kremlin on the left bank, and the old merchant quarter on the right bank. The town has today some 290 000 inhabitants, and is mainly an industrial town, but also has a growing tourism industry.

On a small peninsula some 2 kilometres upstream along the River Volchov from the great medieval town of *Novgorod*, in western Russia and sited on the Volchov River just north

of Lake Ilmen, lies a fort and settlement extending over several hectares, known as *Gorodische*, the forerunner to *Novgorod*.

According to the Chronicles the Church of Annunciation used to be a part of *Gorodische*. The estimated size of the site is more than 40 hectares, but the size of the Rurik's stronghold at the *Gorodische's* hill is about 10 to 12 hectares.



Figure 30. The spatial arrangement of old Novgorod and Gorodische, situated along the River Volchov.

Historical importance

In the question of Scandinavian contacts, few places, besides Kiev, Staraya Ladoga and Gnezdovo, are as clearly connected with Scandinavia and the Viking history, as Novgorod and its forerunner Gorodische. According to the Nestor Chronicle, it was to Novgorod the Scandinavian Rurik and his kinsmen were invited to become and rule over the population. The date of his arrival is set to 862, and if it was to this area he came it must have been to Gorodische, known to Scandinavian by the name Holmgård (settlement on the island).

When the Scandinavians first arrived here, there existed only a small settlement. Archaeological excavations carried out for many years have revealed a bustling defended market centre, occupied in the ninth and tenth centuries by a mixed Slavic and Scandinavian population. Its trading connections extended far to the West, whence

its craft goods were exported in return for imports.

When the settlement expanded to Novgorod in the mid tenth century (see below), Gorodische seems to have continued as a military and administrative centre as well as the residence of the princes who ruled Novgorod.

Pottery, jewellery, beads, combs and other objects of Scandinavian character confirm the presence of Scandinavians from at least the



Figure 31. Areal photo of Gorodische hill fort, surrounded by water. In the western part of the "island", there is the ruin of the church of Annunciation, now under reconstruction. Google Maps.



Figure 32. Gorodische seen from the river. On top the island is the ruin of Church of Annunciation, under reconstruction. Photo Dan Carlsson.

mid ninth century, and perhaps earlier. The most remarkable finds are two Scandinavian amulets with runic inscriptions: one from the ninth or early tenth century was inscribed on one side with a combination of older and younger runes, and on the other with younger but very complicated runes; the latter inscription was copied on the second amulet at the end of the tenth century. Another interesting material telling about trade and distant connection are the 3000 seals of lead.



Figure 33. Part of the rampart around the settlement Gorodische. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Scandinavians and Slavs moved to *Novgorod* from Gorodische in about AD 930. Here the Volchov River, flowing north to Lake Ladoga, divides Novgorod into two - the Sofia Bank on the west and

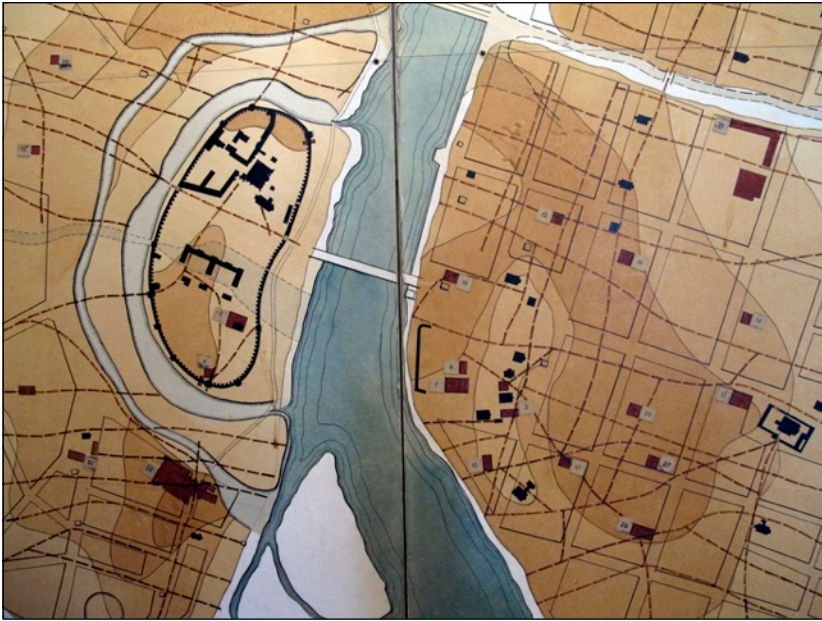


Figure 34. The historical central part of Novgorod, with the Kremlin on the left (western) side of the river, and the merchants quarter with many churches, on the right hand side of the river.

the Merchants' Bank on the east side of the river. At the heart of the settlement on the Sofia Bank is the citadel (or Kremlin), which was surrounded by a rampart in the tenth century and is still dominated by the eleventh-century cathedral of St Sofia. In 14th century new large rampart defenced both Sofia and Merchant's Bank and in early fourteenth century the stone walls of Kremlin had been erected

After the Viking Age, Novgorod played an important role in the Hanseatic league, and had extensive trade connection with for instance the town of Visby on the island of Gotland, Sweden. There was a Gotlandic "Hof" in Novgorod, and in Visby, at least one

Figure 35. Right. Well preserved wooden roads and buildings in Novgorod, excavated in 1980s. No other place from Viking Age has such a well preserved organic material as Novgorod.

Figure 36, below. The ongoing excavation at the Troitsky area, open to the public, gives a splendid view and understanding of the early history of Novgorod. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Russian church in early Middle Ages. Novgorod is since 1992 on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Research

The archaeological exploration of Novgorod began at the end of the nineteenth century on the initiative of a local regional historians N.G. Bogoslovsky, V.C. Peredolsky and others. In 1919, the excavations in the Rurikovo Gorodische and in the Kremlin were carried out by N.K. Rerikh, a famous painter, writer and philosopher. The more systematic study of the antiquities of Novgorod was launched in 1932 by A.V. Artsikhovsky. Since then, the ancient city of Novgorod has been continuously excavated by the Archaeological Expedition.

Since the early 1970s the excavations focused on the Troitsky area. The artefacts from archaeological excavations in Novgorod are unparalleled in their quantity and quality because of the excellent conditions for the preservation of wood, textiles, leather and other organic materials.

Among the most remarkable is a famous collection of more than 1000 letters written on birch bark mostly in the Cyrillic alphabet, which includes merchants' notes, receipts, business letters and even love letters. Together with a treasury of other finds, from children's toys to musical instruments to furniture, these give an unrivalled insight into late Viking Age urban life. Much of the material from the excavation of the town can be seen in the museum in Novgorod.

Preservation and visibility

At the site *Gorodische*, there is today an information sign, though only in the Russian language. It was placed at Gorodische in summer 2010 (when Vladimir Putin visited Novgorod) and disassembled for the winter. It was put back again in July 2011, when the walking path to Gorodische was made. On the site, there is also a modern cemetery located, approximately on top of the hill fort. There has now been a decision to stop using it as a cemetery, and a fence have been put up around it to separate it from the prehistoric hill fort.



Figure 37. The information board at Gorodische gives a good summary, and information of the history of the site, but only in Russian language. Photo Novgorod museum.



Figure 38. The information facilities at the Troitsky excavation. The information board has text in both Russian and English language. Inside the open information "hall", there is a well display explanation of the history of the town and the excavation taking place just outside. The open walls on the left side gives a direct view of the actual excavation area.

The area is overgrown, and the excavation area has not yet been restored since the last excavation. There is now a programme to open up the area and to restore the landscape, and the monuments on the island. The church on the island, founded in 1103 by Mstislav, is under reconstruction at the moment. Much of the material from the excavation in Novgorod and at Gorodische can be seen in the archaeological museum in Novgorod. An interesting way of displaying history is the ongoing excavation at Troitsky excavation site in Novgorod. This ongoing excavation is open for visitors in summer time to come and watch, and there is an informative exhibition along the side of the excavation area, giving many very good information about the history of Nov-

gorod.

Novgorod State United Museum, Veliky Novgorod Archaeological Research Centre, LLC Gostiny Dvor and non-profit partnership “Tourist Office of Veliky Novgorod” are collaborating the “Troitsky Excavation”. The opening of the excavation project was held on May 20, 2008, in the Art Museum conference hall in Novgorod.

Today the Troitsky Excavation is one of the most promising tourist sites in Novgorod, according to the museum. The opening of the “Theatre of Time”, as they call it, for public display was held on June 28, 2008. It’s the only place where people have got a chance to set forth on a trip back to the past, to go back in time from the twenty-first century to the time of the Scandinavian interactions, to see the past of the city that has been concealed in the cultural layer and watch the “performance” of Theatre of Time.

There are still names dealing with the old history of *Varangians* (Scandinavians) in Novgorod, like the Varangian Street, and the Gotland Hof, still visible in the town plan. Both places are unmarked and in bad conditions. No excavations have yet taking place at the Gotland Hof area.



*Figure 39. Varangian street in Novgorod.
Photo Dan Carlsson.*



Figure 40. The Kremlin in Novgorod - a World Heritage Site. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Visitors and tourism

There is a newly open tourist office in Novgorod (Red IZBA), with a working staff of 8-9 persons, to promote the Novgorod area (www.visitnovgorod.com). According to the head of the office, there are about 175 000 tourists to Novgorod, mainly from Russia, but also some 50 000 from abroad, mainly from the Baltic States, but also from France, Germany and other central European countries, but very few from Scandinavia.

The tourist bureau itself, have some 80 000 visitors a year. The main attractions in Novgorod, marketed by the tourist office, is the medieval history of the town, and all the still visible monuments from twelfth century and onwards. Novgorod is part of the organisation Hanseatic League, and a World Heritage Site.

The State Museum of Novgorod, has several branches in Novgorod, Valday, Staraya Russia and other tourist destinations in the Novgorod region. All together, there are 8 branch offices of the Museum that got more than 800 000 tourists annually, Novgorod



Figure 41. Churches of Novgorod. Photo Dan Carlsson.

museums (more than 20 various exhibitions located all over the city, including the Wooded Architecture Museum) were visited by 547 756 people in 2010.

Gorodische is only mentioned during city tours, but is very rarely visited by individual tourists or groups. Some 240 people visited Gorodische with boat tours in 2011 and about 100 individual tours organised by Red Izba, the City Tourism office.

Novgorod museum (<http://www.novgorodmuseum.ru/postex/108--l-xvii-r>), located in Novgorod Kremlin, exhibits the findings from the archaeological excavations carried out for many years in the town, as well as at Gorodische. Many of the interesting objects found in the excavations are on display, like birch bark scrolls, coins, well preserved wooden objects, ceramics, etc.

All information in the exhibition is only in Russian language. Tourist groups coming to the Museum, visiting the permanent



Figure 42. Rurik's stronghold (Gorodische) development plan. From Novgorod State Museum.

exhibition, also usually visit the medieval market place, the Juév monastery and Vitoslavicy.

There have previously been some river cruising from St Petersburg to Novgorod, but the problem to go up to Lake Ilmen is that it needs to be a boat of a certain size. Today, there is no regular cruising between St Petersburg and Novgorod, and only sporadic visits to Gorodische by small boats from Novgorod.

At the tourist office in town, there is some material in English, like a town map and a City guide giving information about events in Novgorod. There is also a brochure in English about the town, printed in 2009, carrying the slogan, "Birth Place of Russia", and a newly produced DVD in English about Novgorod (2011).

At different places in town, like at the excavation site, there are maps or information about special buildings, generally only in Russian language.

Plans for future development

There are extensive plans to develop Gorodische into an attractive site for tourists from all over the world that will tell the story of Russian State and nation formation in early periods of Russian history.

The project includes conservation of the ruins of the Annunciation in Gorodische Church which is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the World Bank. The church reconstruction will start in 2012. The architectural monument should be open for visits in 2014 as a part of the Novgorod State Museum.

A construction of a wooden bridge and a road connecting Gorodische and the Church of the Savior-on-Nereditza will start in 2012 as a regional co-financing for the Church reconstruction project.

The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation has also supported the project of multifunctional museum complex construction near Gorodische (about 700 m to the northeast from the ruined Church of Annunciation) in 2012.

Regional Government is also planning to open a new memorial sign (actually, it will be a 3-meter stone with a sign from the Ancient Chronicles) 70 meters to the south from the ruined Church. The unveiling and dedication of the sign is planned for the September 2012, when there will be a celebration of the 1150th Anniversary of the Russian State formation.

There is also a plan to restore the places of former archeological excavations in 2012. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation is allocating financing for that.

How to get there

Novgorod is easily reached from St Petersburg by car in less than two hours, and by train from St Petersburg as well as from Moscow (night train). There is a domestic airport in Novgorod with flights to Moscow, but for the time being the airport is closed down (2011).

To reach *Gorodische* today is more difficult. There is no possibility of directly reaching the actual site, but one can go to the Church of the Savior-on-Nereditza, on the eastern bank of the river, and have a view of the site from a distance. There is a bus going twice a day from Novgorod, takes about 15-20 minutes. Sometimes there are special tours by small boat from Novgorod directly to the site.

The site can, though, be reached by car for a few months during the year. Since the middle of July up to the end of September the water level in Volchov River is so low that the *Gorodische* peninsula, or hill, gets connected to the mainland by a wading path. The southern part of the hill was demolished due to the building of a canal. The canal that cut *Gorodische* in two parts, was initiated by the Novgorod Governor Sivers, that explains the name of the canal-Siversov. The Lake Ilmen has always been very dangerous and shallow, and the canal provided a safe waterway from Volchov to Msta. It is a part of Vyshne-Volotskaya water system, that connect Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The archaeological museum is open from 10.00 to 18.00 except Tuesday and last Thursday of a month. Homepage to the museum (in English and Russian): <http://www.novgorodmuseum.ru/>

Izborsk and Pskov

Place and surroundings

The town *Pskov* is situated in northwest Russia, not far from the boarder to Estonia, and some 250 km southwest of St Petersburg. The town has some 206 000 inhabitants. The name of the city, originally spelled "Pleskov", may be loosely translated as "[the town] of purling waters".

Its earliest mention is from AD 903, which records that Igor of Kiev married a local woman, St. Olga. Pskovians sometimes take this year as the city's foundation date, and in 2003 a great jubilee took place to celebrate Pskov's eleven hundred anniversary.

Izborsk is a rural village some thirty kilometres to the west of Pskov and just to the east of the Estonian boarder. It is named also Staryj (Old) Izborsk to distinguish it from Novyj (New) Izborsk located some kilometres to the north, which was founded in the nineteenth century as a station of a railway.

The village Izborsk lies on a plain and it consists of mainly older one storey wooden houses as well as those of recent stone

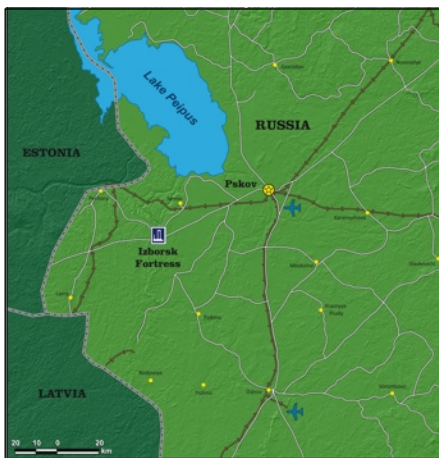


Figure 43. The spatial situation of Pskov and Izborsk



Figure 44. Some of the old wooden buildings in Izborsk. Photo Dan Carlsson.

construction, but among them there are also more ancient log huts with framework of huge logs, with archaic systems of roofing, partially constructed of stone and fencing with arched gates attached to them. Many of these buildings have been restored, and maintained very nicely. The village contains one of the most

ancient and impressive fortresses of Western Russia.

North-west of old Izborsk, there is the magnificent view over Izborskaja hollow with the Gorodischenskoje Lake visible. This lake is connected to the river of Skhodnitsa and the Malskoje Lake, which is located further to the northwest. Here, near the border of the



Figure 45. The view from Truvor's hill fort over the valley Izborskaja. Photo Dan Carlsson.

hollow among the picturesque landscape, rests the famous town of *Truvorovo* and the fortress. Many years of archaeological excavations have unearthed a huge amount of material dating back to ninth century, with ample evidence of Scandinavian influences in the Viking Age.

According to the Primary Chronicle, the town was the seat of Rurik's brother Truvor from 862 to 864. Close to one of the entrances to the hill fort, there are the so called Truvorov Cross - in reality a huge cross at the local cemetery that mark large graves probably for numerous persons, approximately from fourteenth century. The local legendary tradition connects this cross to the legendary Truvor, a legend from the nineteenth century.

Historical importance

Izborsk is mentioned in the Russian Primary Chronicle as the place to where the Varangian Truvor came to rule in 862, sent there by his elder brother Rurik. It is, together with Beloozersk, Gorodische, and Staraya Ladoga, the main point of Scandinavian Russian contacts in the time of Rurik.

Extensive archaeological excavations, mainly by professor Valentin Sedov, have given a large quantity of finds from the

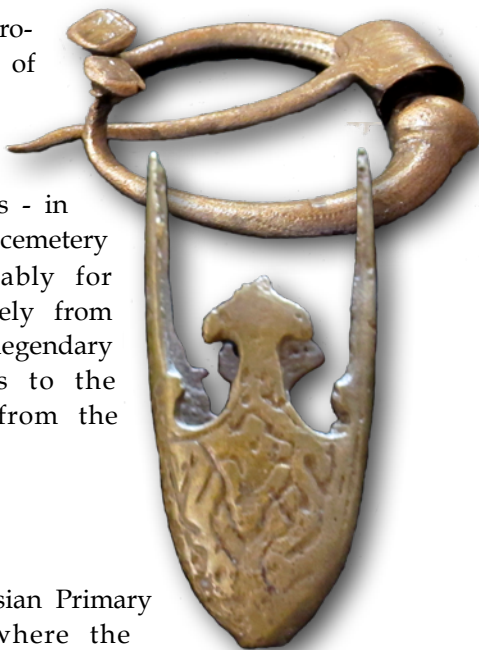


Figure 46. Viking age scabbard, and a penannular brooch, use by men, found at Truvor's hill fort. From Izborsk museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 47. A drawing showing how the Scandinavian women chamber grave might have been looking. From exhibition at Pskov Archaeological Center. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Viking Age, and clear evidence of a mixed population at the site, consisting of Finnish-Ugric, Slavish and Scandinavians. At the local museum in Izborsk, there is a well displayed exhibition with numerous artefacts, many of clearly Scandinavian origins, like oval brooches, pennanular brooches, combs, etc.

Also in *Pskov*, there are ample evidence today

of Scandinavian influence and contact, not least from the excavation of the famous chamber grave of a Scandinavian woman ("Viking Princess"), found during excavations in connection to the building of the hotel "Dvor Pozdnoeva" in 2004. The objects from this grave have been on display in Historical Museum in Stockholm, and in England and France. The grave is dendro-chronology dated to 957 AD.

In some of the chamber graves, the material was extremely well preserved, with fantastic linen clothing, in other there were approximately nothing left, depending on the preservation conditions consisting of wet areas.

Besides the chamber graves, originally placed on a small hill, there is another rather huge cemetery outside the old centre of the town, where some 10% of the graves contains Scandinavian artefacts.

There seems to have been a scattering of Scandinavian settlement along the road from the central part of the town at the interception of two rivers, and towards the outer cemetery.

The connection between Pskov and Izborsk resemble in many ways other constellations between an early site and a later site, like Gorodische-Novgorod, Gnezdovo-Smolensk, Birka-Sigtuna in middle Sweden, and Hedeby-Schleswig in Germany.



Figure 48. Plan showing the settlement and burial mounds around Pskov in Viking age. From exhibition at Pskov Archaeological Centre. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Research

Izborsk hill fort began as a small settlement, but a more permanent wooden fortress was built in the mid-tenth century. This was later replaced by a stone fortress occupying the hill's entire summit at the end of the eleventh century. In the early fourteenth century, Izborsk fortress was moved to neighbouring Zheravya (Crane) hill some 700 metres to the south from the first place, where it still stands today.

The hill fort has been archaeologically investigated, and there are also settlement and graves found outside the hill fort. One of the gates to the hill fort has been reconstructed. The surrounding rampart is still clearly seen, as well as the base of the stone wall on the side of the fortress towards the valley. At the nearby churchyard,



Figure 49. The reconstructed opening of the hill fort at Izborsk. Photo Dan Carlsson

still used today, there are some stone coffins, connected to a huge stone cross from medieval time. Inside the rampart, there is a small church.

Preservation and visibility

Izborsk can be said to be consisting of two different parts, situated some 700 meter apart. In the north, there is the *Izborsk Viking Age hill fort*, situated on a promontory, overlooking a huge part of the landscape. This is the supposed place where Truvor lived.



Figure 50. The signboard at the entrance to the hill fort. In the background the church inside the hill fort can be seen. Photo Dan Carlsson.

The *hill fort* is rather well preserved, and parts of the wall around is still visible. The landscape is open, and the grass covering the monument is cut short, obviously several times a year. One of the entrances to the hill fort has been reconstructed.

Close to one of the entrances, there is a signboard showing a map of the hill fort, but only in the Russian language. The site is also used for Viking Re-enactment, and every year, the twelfth of June, there is a Viking Festival taking place at the site with some 300 actors, and some 5-6000 spectators.

Historically, the hill fort was a fortified area on top of the promontory, surrounded by a wooden palisade, a rampart and a ditch. Probably there were some stone towers, and one can easily see



Figure 51. Viking age handicraft at the Izborsk hill fort. Photo Dan Carlsson.

some stone foundations along the edge of the promontory.

In 1233 knights of Livonia Order captured Izborsk. In 1240 Germans captured Izborsk again. Again the united Izborsk and Pskov troops tried to free the fortress but failed. In 1242 the Germans was beaten at last on the ice of Chudskoe Lake by Prince Alexander

Nevsky and were driven out of the territory of the Pskov Republic.

In 1302 the fortress was moved to a more convenient place, one half kilometre from the old site. Over time the fortress has been rebuilt, and the current layout of it today is from the end of the fourteenth century. This other part of Izborsk is the main part when it comes to tourism and attraction, as well as maintenance, being a part of the village *Old Izborsk*.

Close to the entrance of the *fortress*, there is a kind of a tourist market, with souvenirs, coffee shop, small restaurant and a museum. The museum is dedicated to the history of Izborsk, from prehistoric time up to historical time. There is an excellent artefact display from the archaeological excavations of



Figure 52. The souvenir shop close to the fortress. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 53. The fortress from the outside. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Truvor's hill fort, and many objects have a clearly Scandinavian character. The exhibition gives a good base for understanding the history of the site, even though the information is only in the Russian language. There are some folders and books in English in the museum, but the majority are in the Russian language.

In Pskov, the archaeological institution, has a small one room exhibition about the early history of Pskov, dealing with Stone Age and forward. Among other things, the Viking Age chamber graves are on display here as artefacts, photos and drawings. The exhibition is normally not open to the public, but there is a special excursion program to the institute in Russian presented by the Pskov tourist centre (<http://centrpskov.ru/?spec=7>).



Figure 54. The exhibition of early Izborsk and Pskov in the Pskov museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.

The *Historical Museum* in Pskov has a small exhibition about the prehistoric time. There is not much displayed about the contacts between Scandinavia and Russia in Viking Age. The information is only in the Russian language, and there is very little information

available in the museum shop about the town's early history.

At the site of the chamber graves, there has now been built a new hotel (Dvor Pozdnoeva), where much of the history of the archaeological excavation is on display today (as copies of the real objects). In a conference room in the basement, there is a display of the history of the site, with good plans, images and interpretations of the cemetery and the graves. Some of the finds found at the excavation are also used as symbols in brochures, etc., from the hotel, like a Viking Age key as part of the logo of the hotel.

Visitors and tourism

The area of Pskov and Izborsk is visited by some 700 000 tourist a year, mainly from Russia, but also a growing number from abroad (<http://centrpskov.ru/>). At Izborsk, the number of tourist are said to be around 120 000 last year (2010), a rather huge figure for this small village.

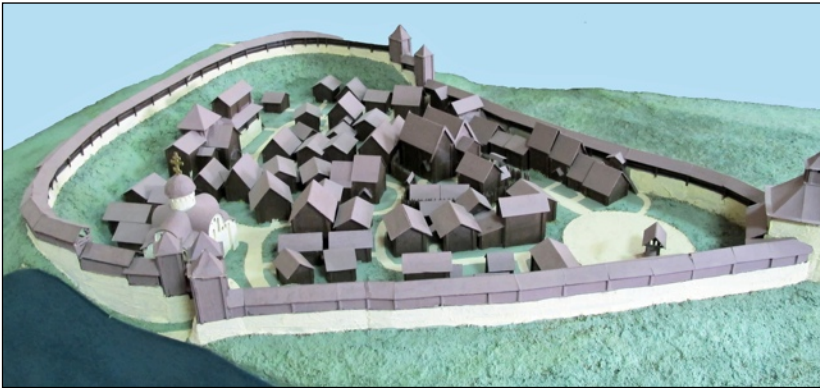


Figure 55. A model of Truvor's settlement, depicting Early Middle Ages. On display at the local museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.

The main *Viking Age* site in Pskov and Izborsk today, is the Truvor hill fort in Izborsk. Due to the last year's excavation in Pskov, having brought an interesting and new image of the importance of Pskov in the Viking Age, and about contacts with Scandinavia, the town is well worth a visit. Most of the tourist tours starts from Pskov, normally with groups going to Izborsk in buses. It is, as it seems, rather common to engage a guide and interpreter from Pskov for a visit to Izborsk.

The main place to visit in Izborsk is the *medieval fortress* in the village of Izborsk, while the Viking hill fort, some 500 metres further away, is not normally included in the guided tour. The fortress in Old Izborsk is an impressive construction, and the main object to visit is the fortress, and the building inside, like the little church.

There is a newly opened hotel in the village, having 28 rooms with 78 beds, and having bicycles for rent (<http://izborskhotel.ru/>). There is a rather intensive building program in the village, as a result

of the tourism, but also as a part of the reconstruction of the old village and the fortress.

Besides the Viking Festival, mentioned above, there is also a yearly *Medieval Festival* in Izborsk, with around a thousand participants, and visited by some 8,000 people. The museum in Izborsk cooperates with tourist organizations in Pskov, and have contact with 23 tourist organizations in Russia. The museum has a home page giving information in the Russian language (<http://museum-izborsk.ru/>) of the area and the places to visit.

Outside the entrance to the fortress, there are several local people selling traditional objects, as well as items of local production.

How to get there

To visit Izborsk, one has to go to the Pskov first. There are some buses from St. Petersburg to Pskov and two electric trains. Pskov is a well known tourist place in Russia and there are no problems to find hotels and other places to stay (but it will be wise to make a reservation before the trip).

Old Izborsk are on the Pskov-Riga highway 30 km distance from Pskov town. From the bus-station near the railway station, there is a bus going to Izborsk (at every hour) or a micro bus (on weekends) to Old Izborsk City. From the village Izborsk, one has to walk some 500 metres to the Viking Age hill fort.

The archaeological museum is open since 9 to 17.00 all days. The medieval fortress is open day and night all days but You must buy tickets since 9 to 17.00. Homepage (only in Russian language) to the museum in Izborsk: <http://museum-izborsk.ru/> Homepage to the museum in Pskov (English, French, German and Russian): <http://museum.pskov.ru/>

Gnezdovo and Smolensk

Place and surroundings

The town of *Smolensk* is situated some 700 km south of St Petersburg, and 400 km from Moscow, along the Dnieper River, and close to the Belorussia border. The distance from Vitebsk is 130 km.

Gnezdovo is about 13 km west of Smolensk, easily reached from Smolensk and close to the main road from Minsk to Moscow. About 400 km from both towns. It is rather close to Polotsk and Vitebsk in Belorussia.

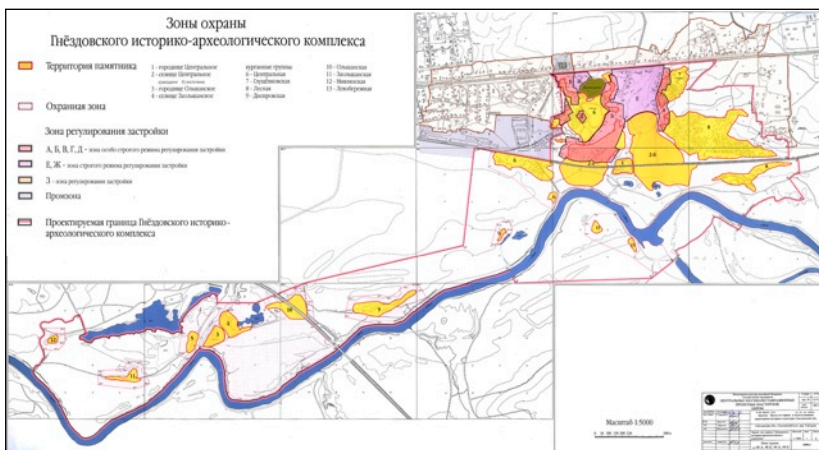


Figure 56. The Gnezdovo complex, stretching several kilometres along the Northern bank of Dnieper River. Number 1, being the central hill fort, number 2-5 settlements, and 6-9 cemeteries. The central point is the hill fort, situated on both side of the rail road. Just north of the heritage site is the main road between Vitebsk and Smolensk. Map by Smolensk State Reserve Museum.

Historical importance

Gnezdovo is one of the most important places associated with the Varangians in Russia, situated halfway between Novgorod and Kiev - where the Vikings travelled from the River Lovat to the Dvina, and from Dvina to Dnieper. *Gnezdovo* thus controlled a crucial section of the Eastern Route from the Varangians to the Greeks. It is dated to ninth to eleventh century, with it's peak period in the tenth century.

The connection to Scandinavia is very clear, and archaeologist have discovered more Scandi-navian finds here than from any other single site, some of them of great value and quality, though Slav finds predominate. Among the objects are oval brooches, parts of swords, scabbards, combs, coins and pennanular brooches.

Reaching zenith during the tenth century, *Gnezdovo* grew as en early urban centre, inhabited by a multiethnic population of craftworkers, farmers, merchants and warriors. In the eleventh century *Gnezdovo* gave its role to the developing Smolensk. Gradually it lost its importance as a trading and handicraft centre and became a small estate.

The area is very complex, and contains a central "hill fort", and a ring of ancient rural settlement, and more then 4 000 grave mounds, all covering an area of about 17,5 ha. This makes the site one of the largest surviving sites of the Viking Age in Europe; only Hedeby in Germany covered a larger area.



Figure 57. Finds from Gnezdovo, a horse comb and a Arabic coin. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 58. Excavation of the hill fort in 2011. Photo Dan Carlsson.

The fortified centre of the town was small but it was surrounded by a settlement of some 16 hectares, and several concentrations of burial mounds. Some large mounds, more than two meters high, contained cremation burials, sometimes in boats, of warriors buried with their weapons.

It is clear from the excavations at Gnezdovo and the other cemeteries, and from documentary evidence, that the Scandinavians, who had lived in ancient Russia for a long time, gradually assimilated other



Figure 59. A sword probably made on Gotland, Sweden. Mid tenth century. Photo Natasha Eniosova.



Figure 60. Excavation of a settlement area along the ancient river bed of River Dnieper in 2011. Photo Dan Carlsson

cultural influences and developed burial rites which varied from those practised in the Scandinavian homelands.

An impressive collection of artefacts found during the excavations consists of objects of different origin.

A remarkable quantity of oriental silver concentrated in the eleven hoards and in the cultural layers of Gnezdovo settlements. There are numerous finds of belts and belt fittings coming from Khazaria, Hungary and Middle Dnieper area but mostly from Volga Bulgaria. Gnezdovo is notable for the largest quantity of truly Scandinavian objects outside the Northern countries. Many modest group of artefacts indicates to distant Slavic connections with finds from the Middle Dnieper left bank and Central Europe. The rare exotic objects are of Anglo-Saxon and Iranian origin.



Figure 61. A wheel shaped brooch found at the hill fort in 2011 excavation. About 4 cm in diameter. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Research

The name 'Gnezdovo' drew the attention of historians and archeologists in 1867 during the railroad construction after discovering the famous hoard with the luxurious silver ornaments dated to the second half of the tenth century. It consists almost entirely of jewellery, mostly of Scandinavian or Slav character but some objects are of Oriental/Steppe-Nomad type.



Figure 62. Some of the burial mounds in the so called Forest cemetery, consisting of sand. Photo Dan Carlsson.

The most interesting Scandinavian objects are the circular brooches with animals figures, and the many cast pendants with close parallels in the Swedish Vårby hoard. There are also typical Scandinavian oval brooches among the objects.

The long-lasting excavations reveal the earliest settled area in the southwest part of the central hill-fort, at the open settlement west of Svinets River and at the flood-plain terrain. From the very beginning

Gnezdovo was settled by Scandinavians, Slavs and a local population belonging to the Long-barrow culture.

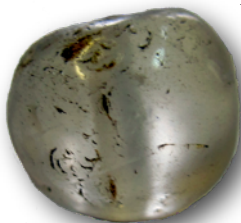


Figure 63. A rock crystal bead from Gnezdovo. Photo Dan Carlsson.

About 7000 square meters of the central settlements has been explored by annual excavations since 1967. The second hill fort, of uncertain age, and the slight open settlement remains are situated at the mouth of the River Ol'sha.

Central and *Forest* cemeteries which numbered some time ago 769 and 1340 burial mounds respectively are the largest groups surrounding the central hill fort and open settlements on the banks of Svinets River. Five small cemeteries with c.100-150 mounds were located in the different parts of the complex. The most distant cemeteries are about 4 km west of the central settlements (*Zaol'shanskaya group*) and on the left bank of the Dnieper (*Left-bank group*). Up to the present day, more than 1200 graves in total from the eight cemeteries have been excavated; c.1500 burial-mounds remains unexcavated. The total area of Gnezdovo complex is about 200 hectares.

Today, there are two different groups actively excavating in Gnezdovo. One group, from the Moscow State University lead by professor Tamara Pushkina, mainly digging at the hill fort, and along the river valley, with the aim to do a total excavation of the site.

Then, there is the State Historical Museum (Moscow), headed by Veronika Murashova, mainly carrying out excavations of the surroundings, like settlement (2011) and grave mounds. They also carry out extensive studies of the geomorphology of the surroundings, most of all to get a picture of how the River Dnieper has changed its course since the tenth century.

The finds from the excavations of the settlements and graves show that Gnezdovo population was to play an important role in a network of trade and communication routes between the Baltic and the East by the Oka and Volga River systems and between the Baltic and Black seas controlling the portages from the Dnieper to the Western Dvina

and the Lovat'-Volchov. Many researchers look upon Gnezdovo as the 'service station' for travellers between the Northern river ways and the Dnieper. It is often argued that population of Gnezdovo was unstable with 'influx or return flow' of travellers dependent on the change of seasons. However, detailed analysis reveal a stable demographic structure of Gnezdovo population based on calculated proportion of male, female and children burials. The combined permanent population of settlements averaged around 800-1100.



Figure 64. Part of the excavation 2011 by the State Historical Museum on the plain. Notice the thick layers of sand on top of the dark cultural layer. Photo Dan Carlsson

Preservation and visibility

The site Gnezdovo consists of a huge number of graves, spread out in an area along the river bank of about 2 km, mainly on the north side, but also on the southern bank. The groups of barrows in the



Figure 65. Some of the graves close to the railroad, overgrown by trees. Photo Dan Carlsson.

western part are clearly visible in the landscape, a landscape only a little disturbed by settlement.

The huge grave field close to the settlement consists of some 2 000 burial mounds of sand, rather visible in the landscape. A huge number of the burials have been excavated. The cemetery is

overgrown by pine trees and grass, still though very visible in the landscape.

Along the main road passing to the north of the site towards Smolensk there is a monument of a symbolic grave mound, and a place for information about the cemetery, created in the 1980s



Figure 66. The information site at Gnezdovo symbolising a grave mound. At the site, there is still no information about the cemetery. Photo Dan Carlsson

accompanying the ongoing excavations, but still today no information at all, except a huge and well displayed sign along the road pointing to the information site. There is no place to park except along the road, and no information at the site.

To reach the excavation area, and the hill fort, one has to cross an unmarked railroad. No roads lead to the site, and there is no information at all about the settlement (as well as the graves). The huge cemetery east of the hill fort, and on the north side of the railroad (meaning it is not necessary to cross the railroad) is easily reached by a small road. The graves are rather visible in the landscape, especially the part of the cemetery close to the little road, even if they are covered with a rather dense forest and high grass.

The State Historical Museum (Moscow) has a homepage about the excavations at Gnezdovo; www.gnezdovo.com, at the moment only in the Russian language, with just some headlines in English.

Visitors and tourism

Smolensk, being the natural entrance to the region, and a town of some 330 000 inhabitants, has some 50 000 visitors every year. The main attractions are connected to the town itself with its Kremlin, old churches, and museums. From the home page of tourism in Smolensk, there are a number of places to visit, but Gnezdovo is not mentioned on that list (http://admin.smolensk.ru/tour_sp/eng/smol.htm).

In town, at the Smolensk State Museum-Reservation, there is a well displayed exhibition about the prehistory of the region, with very good pictures, reconstruction drawing and artefacts on display. The part dealing with Gnezdovo is though at present rather limited. The display is only in the Russian language, and there is no written information in English.

For the time being, there are no guided tours to Gnezdovo from Smolensk. There is a very good package of cards of different objects found at Gnezdovo, with an explaining text in English and Russian, to be bought at the museum.

How to get there

Gnezdovo is easily reached by road from Smolensk towards Polotsk and Vitebsk in Belorussia. There is a huge sign along the road about the Gnezdovo site and the archaeological excavations, but only in Russian language.

Along the road, not far from the site, are some restaurants and café.

The excavation is normally carried out between June, 15 and August, 15. The museum in Smolensk (ul. Lenina 8) is open from 9.30 to 17.30 all days. Homepage (in English and Russian) to the excavation of the State Museum of Moscow: www.gnezdovo.com.

Homepage to Smolensk Museum (only in Russian language): <http://www.smolensk-museum.ru/>

Homepage to a guide of Smolensk area in English and Russian at: http://admin.smolensk.ru/tour_sp/eng/smol.htm



Figure 67. The Smolensk State reserve museum have made a package of some 20 postcard like photos of objects found at Gnezdovo in Russian and English languages. Inside the package, there is also an informative text about the history of Gnezdovo and its importance as a centre in the Viking age along the route to the Black Sea. From Smolensk State Reserve Museum.

Sarskoye Gorodische and Rostov

Place and surroundings

The town *Rostov* is located on the northern shore of the Lake Nero, some 60 kilometres south of Yaroslavl, and 190 km north of Moscow. It is part of Yaroslavl region. There are 37,000 inhabitants in Rostov. The main industry is electronics, but also tourism. Rostov is visited by some 200,000 tourists annually.

The main tourist attraction is the well preserved Kremlin (built during the second half of the seventeenth century) with its many buildings inside. Around the Kremlin there is a star shaped rampart, also from the seventeenth century.

From the North side of the Lake Nero, close to Rostov, the River Kotorosl' connects to the River Volga in Yaroslavl, some 60 km away. The river is wide enough to allow ships coming up in ancient times to the lake, and then further up through another small River Sara to the *Sarskoye hill* fort, located in a bend of the river. The settlement at Sarskoye hill fort cover an area of about 2,7 ha, surrounded by a rampart.



Figure 68. Sarskoye hill fort is situated along the River Sara, just south of Lake Nero and the town Rostov

Historical importance

Sarskoye Gorodische or Sarsky fort (Russian: Сарское городище, literally "Citadel on the Sara") was a medieval fortified settlement in the Yaroslavl Oblast. It was situated on the bank of the Sara River, a short distance from Lake Nero, to the south of modern Rostov, of which it appears to have been the early medieval predecessor in the same way as Gnezdovo to Smolensk.

Major Varangian finds at Sarskoye date from ca. 800 onward, indicating that it was a major (perhaps the most important) trade station on the Volga trade route between Scandinavia and Baghdad. Traces of a bath, an iron foundry, a potter's workshop and



Figure 69. The hill fort is situated on a sandy hill surrounded on three sides by the River Sara.



Figure 70. The River Sara, and the settlement bank along the river. Photo Dan Carlsson.

a jeweller's shop were found during excavations. There are two hoards of early ninth century dirhams found (Arabic coins). Another deposit was detected nearby: it contained dirhams inscribed with Runic signs, interpreted as a thanksgiving to the god Thor.



Figure 71. Part of the rampart in the southern part of the hill fort area. Dan Carlsson.

Side by side with this evidence of a Scandinavian presence, the native Merya population element is strong. For instance, there are found numerous beaver symbols made of clay at the site: the beaver was a sacred animal for the Finns. Although cremations were found, inhumation is predominant. Like the Slavs and Varangians at Gnezdovo, the Merya and the Norsemen seem to have peacefully coexisted in the ninth and tenth centuries at the site.

The hill fort was demarcated by 3 different ramparts, and there was a cemetery in the southern part of the peninsular. Even outside the hill fort, along the banks of the river, there are signs of settlements. Today, most of the hill fort area, as well as the cemetery, have been to a high degree destroyed, due to extensive sand mining in the 1940s. The site can be dated to the ninth to the tenth centuries.



Figure 72. Typical Swedish equal arm brooch found at Sarskoye hill fort. On display at Rostov archaeological Museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Research

The site first attracted the attention of Russian archaeologists in the mid-nineteenth century because of the imposing dimensions of the ramparts, which have no parallels in the region. Excavations begun by Count Aleksey Uvarov in 1854, and revealed a number of superb Varangian objects comparable to the sites in Scandinavia, notably a Carolingian sword with the inscription "Lun fecit". Excavations have been undertaken intermittently since that period by many persons, including Nicholas Roerich in 1903. In his diary, Roerich complained that the site had been reduced drastically by road builders.

As a result of the excavations of the ramparts, a well preserved sword of Frankish origin, and with a pommel of Scandinavian character was found under the rampart, dated to the ninth century. It probably comes from a grave, covered by the rampart, in the same way as the town wall of Birka, Middle Sweden, is covering older graves.



Figure 73. Excavation of the rather impressive rampart at Sarskoye Gorodische in the early twentieth century. Rostov Museum.



Figure 74. The Viking sword found under one of the ramparts during excavations, probably coming from a grave. From Rostov Museum.

Another important object from this early excavation is an equal arm brooch of a typical Swedish origin. The exact location for the find is not known, but it comes from inside the hill fort area.

After the demolishing of the hill fort, excavations were carried out

by Andrej Leontjev in the 1970s and 1980s, this time of the settlement along the river outside the former, and by that time, to a high degree destroyed, hill fort. An area of about 250 m² was investigated. Several artefacts show a clear Scandinavian context, like well preserved combs, pennanular brooches, arrow heads, beads and rivets.

There are only minor articles published of the different excavations carried out, and nothing in English.



Figure 75. Some of the beads from Sarskoye hill fort, mainly carnelian beads. From Rostov Museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Sarskoye versus Rostov

The earliest street pavement of Rostov is dated by dendrochronology to 963. These pieces of wood were uncovered in post-1949 digs, throwing much light on the earliest years of the city. At about the same period, the decline of Sarskoye Gorodishche started. Whether the town was simply transferred to a new place remains debatable. It is also not clear if the original Slavic name of Sarskoye Gorodishche was Rostov or something different.



Figure 76. Pieces of a ship, supposed to be a Viking ship, found in the bottom layer of Rostov. Displayed at the archaeological museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.

The original name of the settlement might have been Arsa (the capital of mysterious Arsania, according to Ibn Hawqal), but is an interpretation questioned by many.

Historians have experienced difficulties in explaining why the superior location of Sarskoye was abandoned in favour of a boggy site where Rostov now stands. According to one theory, the town was transferred primarily for religious considerations, to have the water frontage facing a rocky island which was a major sanctuary of Veles.

Whatever the reasons for the decline of Sarskoye, the similar sites at Timeryovo near Yaroslavl and, Gnezdovo near Smolensk relinquished their administrative and economic primacy roughly in the same period.

Preservation and visibility

At the site *Sarskoye Gorodishche*, there is today a forest, covering the former sand extraction mine. Of the hill fort, there are still some remains in the Southern end, but the central part is destroyed due to extensive gravel mining. The river and the banks of the river, having extensive areas of settlement connected to the hill fort, which are still well preserved. To reach the site, one has to walk through high vegetation, and along the River Sara.

The archaeological exhibition at the Rostov State Historical Museum-Preservation (in Kremlin) *Kremlin museum* in Rostov, is in one room in one of the buildings at the Kremlin. The exhibition is traditionally presented, starting with the stone age, and follow the history up to medieval time, mainly concentrating on the display of artefacts. Few images or reconstruction are made to give the visitor an image of the use of the objects. A special section is dedicated to the hill fort at Sarskoye, showing examples of objects found at the site, featuring the well preserved sword, and the equal arm brooch.

A special object is two the wooden ribs from a ship, found in Rostov itself. It has been interpreted as a Viking ship, some 18 metres long, 4, meters wide, and 1,6 meters high. It has not been ¹⁴C dated, and it is questionable if it is a Viking ship.

All texts in the museum are in Russian, often very short. At the entrance of the Kremlin, there is a small shop, having some books and brochures in English, giving a summary of the history of the town and most of all the Kremlin, but giving very little information about the early history of the region, and very little about Sarskoye hill fort. There is a small leaflet (for free) depicting the Viking sword found at Sarskoye hill fort, but gives no indication of its significance for the understanding of early Scandinavian-Russian contacts.

Visitors and tourism

Rostov, with its well restored Kremlin, mainly from the seventeenth century, is a part of the so called Golden Ring. The 'Golden Ring' is one of the oldest Russian routes. It goes to the north-east of Moscow and forms a circle. There are several interesting ancient Russian cities and towns along the way, full of history and unique Russian architecture of the twelfth–seventeenth centuries.

The 'classical' route (counter clockwise) starts from Moscow, goes through Vladimir, Suzdal, Kostroma, Yaroslavl, Rostov Velikiy, Pereslavl-Zalesskiy, and Sergiev Posad. All cities and towns are located relatively close to each other, the 'Golden Ring' forms a ring, so from one place one can continue to another and make a circle until one arrives back at the starting point.



Figure 77. Kremlin in Rostov, the central point for tourism to Rostov. The archaeological museum is in one of the buildings inside the Kremlin. Photo Dan Carlsson.

There are, according to those responsible for tourism at the Kremlin museum, some 200,000 visitors a year in Rostov, which is a huge figure in comparison to other sites, and the size of the town. Most of the visitors are coming from the Moscow region, but also from other parts of Russia. Some 15% of the visitors are said to be from outside, besides from Belorussia and the Baltic states, they are mainly coming from France, Germany and Italy.

It is very clear that the attractions in Rostov are mainly the Kremlin area with all its buildings mostly from seventeenth century. Most of the visitors are coming as groups, lead by a guide through the different buildings, and the archaeological exhibition is normally not included in that tour.

Besides stray visitors to the archaeological exhibition, school children in Rostov visit it and read about the early history of the region and the town.

How to get there

Rostov is situated some 190 km northeast of Moscow, reached by good roads and railway, along the way to Jaroslav. The town have several good hotels as well as restaurants, mainly due to the number of tourists coming to Rostov.

The archaeological exhibition is easily reached through the Kremlin. There is a sign in the garden (in the Russian language as well as in English) showing the way to the exhibition.

To reach the hill fort along the River Sara, one has to park the car along the main road, and then walk about 1 km further on a forest track. There are no signboards showing the way, one need to know where to go. The Museum, and the Kremlin is open: all days between 10.00 and 17.00. The homepage (only in Russian language) to the museum: www.rostmuseum.ru

Timerevo and Petrovskoe, Jaroslavl

Place and surroundings

The town Jaroslavl today is situated along the Volga River. Preceded by Viking sites such as Timerevo from the eighth or ninth centuries, the city is said to have been founded in AD 1010 by Jaroslav the Wise, as an outpost of the Principality of Rostov Veliky, and was first mentioned in 1071, though there are some archaeological traces of a settlement at the site from the 10th century.



Figure 78. Jaroslavl town. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Capital of an independent Principality of Jaroslavl from 1218, it was incorporated into Muscovy in 1463. In the seventeenth century it was Russia's second largest city, and for a time (during the Polish occupation of Moscow in 1612), the country's de facto capital. The old part of the town is a World Heritage Site.

Today, Jaroslavl, with a population of some 600 000 inhabitants, is an important industrial centre (petrochemical plant, tire manufacturing plant, diesel engines plant and many others). In the surroundings of Yaroslavl are several sites of settlement and cemeteries with clear evidence of Scandinavian contacts, some of

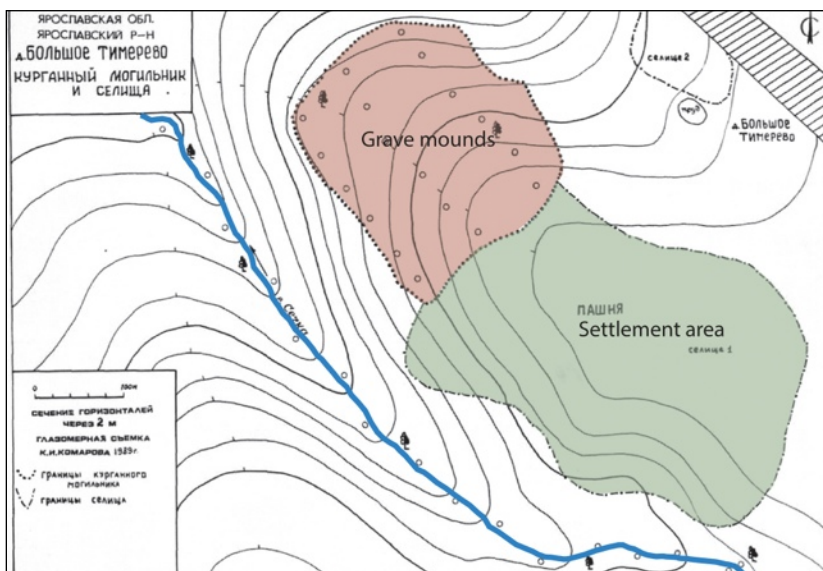


Figure 79. Plan of the settlement area and grave field at Timerevo. From St Petersburg University with complement by Dan Carlsson.

them have been excavated to a huge extent.

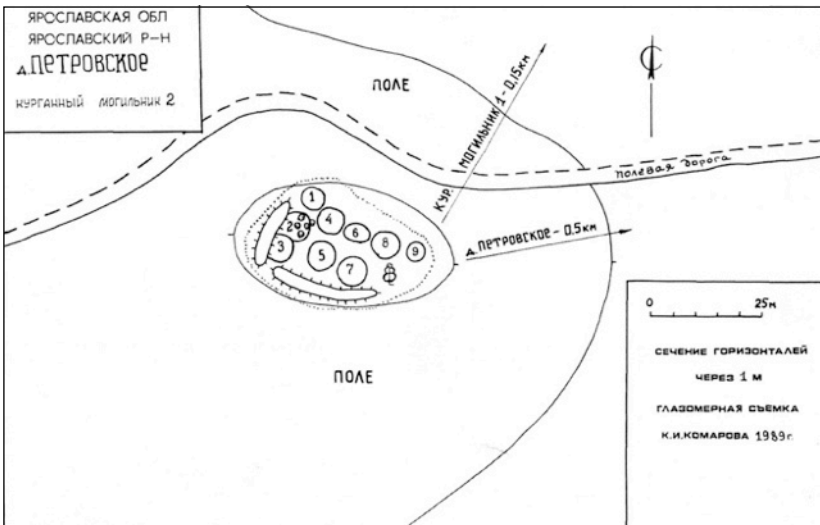
The most important site is situated near the modern village of *Timerevo*, about 7 kilometres south of Jaroslav, close to the River Kotorosl (the same river leading to Rostov, and on to Sarskoye hill fort). Timerevo is a settlement site of about 5 hectares in extent, together with large complex of burial mounds, which makes this site one of the most important along the Volga River connected to the long distance trade in the Viking Age.

Besides Timerevo, there are other important sites with graves and settlements around Jaroslav with signs of Scandinavian influence, like at *Petrovskoe* and *Mikhailovskoe*. Some of the sites are gone today

due to the expanding city of Jaroslav, while others are still possible to visit and to experience in the countryside.

Historical importance

Timerevo is an archaeological site near the village of Bolshoe Timerevo, southwest of Jaroslav, which yielded one of the largest deposits of early Arabic coins in Northern Europe. The archaeological complex of Timerevo consists of a settlement and cemetery of some 485 graves, many of them excavated. They were of a population of mixed ethnic origin - Finns, Scandinavians and Slavs - in which the Finno-Ugrian element was dominant. Some graves belonged to members of a chieftain's guard.



Figur 80. One of the areas with grave mounds at Petrovskoe, outside Jaroslav.

The site was first settled by a mixture of Norse merchants and local population in the ninth century. This dating is based on three major hoards of dirhams (Arabic coins) that have been detected at Timerevo since the 1960s. The first hoard, numbering about 2,100 coins, was dispersed before scholars learnt about its existence.

Only seventeen coins are known from this deposit, the earliest datable to 867. Another hoard also numbering more than 2,000 dirhams (entire and in pieces), was the largest deposit of such coins ever found from Early Medieval Europe then (today, the largest hoard found is from Gotland, Sweden, found in 1991, containing some 14,200 coins). The earliest coin in Timerevo was issued by Idris II (who reigned in the 810s and 820s). Many dirhams have Runic graffiti carved on them.

Research

The site covers an area of five hectares and has no fortifications. It seems to have been operated by the Varangians from their principal base at Sarskoye Gorodishche, near Rostov. Like Sarskoye, it is situated at a distance from a major waterway — the Volga River, close to a tributary small river called Kotorosl. Nevertheless, substantial amounts of Arabic coins indicate its position as the most important Scandinavian trade outpost in the proximity of the Volga trade route.

The site was abandoned towards the end of the ninth century, only to be revived half a century later. At least 400 graves were constructed there in that period, most of them excavated. The burial rites normally featured cremation graves. Excavations revealed an unusual amount of Scandinavian pottery and a surprising number of crosses, indicating that a large portion of the Norse population was

Christianised. Among other finds were amber artefacts from the Baltic, a unique roaster, a spatula labelled by a certain Ulfbert from the Rhine, and a chess piece with an enigmatic Runic inscription.

The site was definitively abandoned in the early eleventh century, simultaneously with the decline of Sarskoye Gorodishche and the foundation of Jaroslavl. The latest coin found at Timerevo was issued by Bruno II of Friesland (dating it to between 1038 and 1057).

The excavations have only been published in minor articles, and only in the Russian language. The artefacts from the excavations are in St Petersburg, but not on display anywhere.

Other sites around Jaroslavl

A growing number of other early medieval sites have been excavated near Yaroslavl, each important in its own way. The site of *Mikhailovskoe* immediately north of the city was explored from the nineteenth century to 1961. Of 400 barrows excavated there, only four percent yielded Scandinavian finds.

Most burials featured inhumation graves of ordinary Slavs and Merians. The site of Medvezhy Ugol (literally, "Bear's Nook") in downtown Yaroslavl, proved to be a humble, primarily Merian settlement.

More recently, twenty-six burial mounds were found at *Petrovskoe* to the south of the city; these are still largely unexcavated. There is also a well preserved cultural layer, and another cemetery, today consisting of about 10 graves. Very few of them have been excavated, but they are of the same type as the one at Timerevo. All these sites dates to mid tenth century.

Even if there are just a few percentage of the objects that can be said to be of Scandinavian origin, and nothing firmly indicating a

complete Norman complex has yet been found, scholars suggest that within the fundamentally Slavic settlement of the area was a Norman colony, which constituted a staging point midway on the route from Scandinavia to the East. Archaeologist Igor Dubov, who excavated the settlement in the 1970s, views it as a centre (perhaps the capital) of the mysterious Arsania mentioned by Ibn Hawqal.

In all, there are several places around Jaroslavl, showing clear evidence of extensive contacts between Scandinavians, Finns and Slaves during much of the Viking Age in the area around Jaroslavl, pointing to the importance of these sites in connection to Scandinavian, Finnish and Slavic connections.



Figure 81. The burial mounds at Petrovskoe are in the forest area, and a bit difficult to experience. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Preservation and visibility

The different sites in the landscape around Jaroslavl have been highly disturbed, both by agricultural activities and building exploitation. The site to the north of the town, *Mikhailovskoe*, is more or less destroyed by building activities. At *Timerevo*, the settlement area is either high grass or newly ploughed land. The cemetery at *Timerevo* is in a very dense forest, and the grave mounds are not restored since the excavations in the 1970s.

The cemeteries (two cemeteries, one containing about 11 graves, the other more than 100) at *Petrovskoe* are also in dense forest, some of them excavated and not restored, like at



Figure 82. The grave mounds at Petrovskoe are totally overgrown by dense vegetation, and the excavated one's are not restored. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Timerevo, and one of them plundered a year or two ago.

There are no signposts or any other information at any of the places, and they are hard to find without a local guide.

To this can be added that there is no archaeological museum in Jaroslavl at all, no museum depicting the early history of the region. At the Kremlin, there is a historical museum with a rather new exhibition, but dealing mainly with the history of Jaroslavl town; from 12th century and onwards, depicting the history of Kremlin in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Visitors and tourism

Jaroslavl, with its well restored and displayed Kremlin, mainly from the seventeenth century, is a part of the so called Golden Ring. The Golden Ring is one of the oldest Russian routes. It goes to the northeast of Moscow and forms a circle. There are several interesting ancient Russian cities and towns along the way, full of history and unique Russian architecture of the twelfth to seventeenth centuries.

In all, there are known to be about 900 000 visitors a year to Jaroslavl, and of them less than 30% are from abroad. The main attraction is the Kremlin, being a World Heritage Site. There seems to



Figure 83. A tourist group at the Kremlin in Jaroslavl, the main attraction in town. Photo Dan Carlsson.

be no information or discussion of the prehistory of the region for tourists visiting Jaroslavl. Most tourists are coming in groups by bus, and have a local guide.

A year ago, there was some discussions of creating an archaeological museum in connection to a church, but no real attempt have been made to fulfil these plans until today (2011).

How to get there

To get to Jaroslavl, it takes less then 4 hours by train from Moscow, and about 10 hours from St Petersburg. There are no regular local transport close to the different archaeological sites, one needs to hire a car to go there. All places could be reached by secondary roads and cars today, but there are no facilities to park, etc.

The Historical Museum at the Kremlin is open from 10.00 to 17.30 (October-April) and from 10.00 to 18.00 (May-September), and the Kremlin itself is open from 9.00 to 18.00 (October-April) and from 8.00 to 20.00 (May-September). Homepage (only in Russian language) of the museum: <http://www.yarmp.yar.ru>

Beloozero, Kirillov and Sugorie

Place and surroundings

Belozersk is a small town in the Vologda oblast with a population of about 10,000, situated 214 km from Vologda, the capital of the region. The town is situated along the southern shore of White Lake, close to the River Sheksna. It has a well preserved Kremlin from the seventeenth century (originally founded at this site in the fourteenth century) with an impressive rampart.

“Beloozero”, as the town is mentioned in the Primary Chronicle, is considered to be the oldest recorded settlements among the eastern Slavs, mentioned under the year 862

as one of the five towns granted to the Varangian (or Viking) brothers Rurik, Sineus and Truvor, who, according to the Chronicle, were invited to rule over the eastern Slavs in what was then called Rus.

Whatever the details of its history, it is clear from the name that the town was always closely connected with White Lake (Beloe

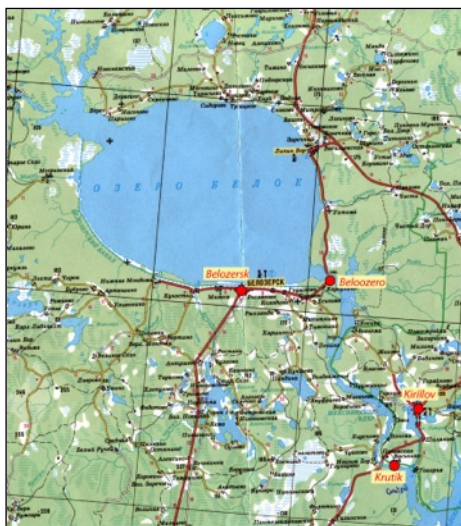


Figure 84. White Lake, with the different places connected to the history of Belozersk. Along the River Sheksna is the place Krutik, where the reconstructed Old Russian settlement is situated.

Ozero), a large body of fresh water in Northwestern Russia. Although smaller than Lakes Ladoga and Onega, White Lake is a pivotal link between those two lakes and the Russian heartland.

On the southeast end, White Lake drains into the Sheksna River, a tributary of the Volga. Today the lake is a link in the cruising tourism between St Petersburg and Moscow, but few stops are made at Belozersk.

The earliest phase of the history of the town, from eight to eight centuries, is on the northern shore of White Lake, roughly, at a place called *Kisema*. This must have been the place where Sineus arrived in 862. In the tenth century, the city moved to a new location at the source of the River *Sheksna*. During this time, the tenth century, two major settlements grew on the River *Sheksna*, *Beloozero* in the upper reaches and *Krutik*, 30 kilometres to the South. Both were centres of crafts and trade, as well as locations for controlling and serving the trade routes.

In the first quarter of the eleventh century, the ancient city of *Beloozero* burned down. A new city, built on its ruins from the twelfth to the thirteen century, was inhabited by the ancient Rus, and its inhabitants were called *Belo-sertsy*, inhabitants of Lake *Beloye*. At

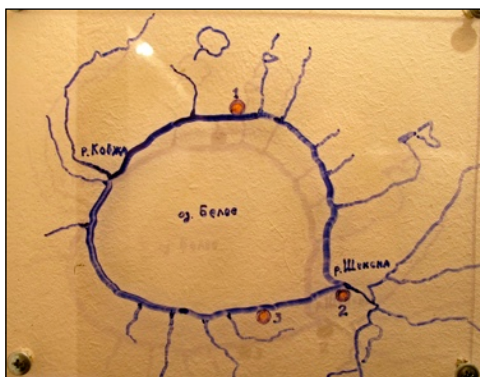


Figure 85. White Lake, and the different settlement around it. 1), *Kisema*, the probably place for Rurik's brother Sineus (8th-9th century), 2), *Beloozero*, 10th-14th century, and 3), *Belozersk*, fourteenth century until today. Map from the exhibition at the local museum. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 86. The map shows the old settlement area along the River Sheksna. Due to the rising of the water level in the White Lake, some part of the settlement is under water today, most of it excavated. There are still areas preserved on dry land today. From the archaeological exhibition at Kirillov, complemented by colour showing the extension of the settlement area today. Photo Dan Carlsson.

the end of the fourteenth century, after a plague, the city's surviving populace moved to a new location on Lake Beloye where the present Belozersk rose, situated some 15 km from the site at the Sheksna River.

The best general view of historic Belozersk is provided by the ramparts of the Kremlin. This citadel is perhaps the best preserved example of a type of earthen fortress once widespread among the eastern Slavs. Roughly quadrilateral in shape, the fortress was protected on two sides by a moat. In the late seventeenth century, the ramparts were still surmounted with a long wall containing eight



Figure 87. Today's Belozersk, with the impressive rampart preserved all around the central area of the town. On the rampart, there is the text telling about 1149 years (in 2011) after Sineus arrived here, brother of Rurik. Photo Dan Carlsson.

towers and two gates, although these were all removed in the eighteenth century. Apart from the historical significance of the fortress, its high ramparts offer breathtaking views of the town and of White Lake.

Historical importance

First mentioned in the Primary Russian Chronicle in 862, Beloozero was one of five original Russian towns (the other being Staraya Ladoga, Novgorod (with its predecessor Gorodische), Polotsk, and Rostov.

During this period Beloozero is one of the most important trade and craft centres of ancient Russia, an outpost of the Slavic colonisation of its northern suburbs, and a hub in the important trade routes along the River Volga.

Beloozero was later the capital of a small principedom between 1238 and 1370. Its medieval monuments include the Assumption church (1552) and the Saviour cathedral (1668). The wooden shrine of St. Elijah was built in 1690. The neighbourhood is rich in old cloisters, such as Kirillov-Belozersky Monastery and Ferapontov Convent (a World Heritage Site).

The town of Belozersk today has a very impressive rampart, constructed probably sometime in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, very well preserved all around, and it stands to a hight of almost 20 metres. For modern visitors there is a walking tour along the top of the entire wall, with steps for access.

Research

Extensive archaeological excavations have been carried out, both at *Kisema* on the northern shore of White Lake, and at the place for *Belozeero*, and *Krutik* further down the River Sheksna. Most of excavations were during the 1980s and 1990s. The excavations at *Belozeero* were connected to the raising of the water level in the White Lake (some 3-4 metres).

At the oldest cultural stratum of *Beloozero*, foundations of log buildings and the remains of wood-covered streets and the diagonal pile work lining them have been discovered. These piles represent the earliest occurrences of the traditional Finno-Ugric type of fence. The findings include traces of



Figure 88. Some of the combs found in the region of Belozersk. On display at the Archaeological exhibition in Kirillov. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 89. Finds from a Viking age cremation grave, exhibited at Kirillov archaeological exhibition. Photo Dan Carlsson.

processing iron, precious metals, bone and timber and of pottery making.

There are numerous imported artefacts: glass beads, many of Scandinavian origin, Western silver coins, Scandinavian and Baltic-Finnish types of buckles, locks, steels with ornate bronze handles from the Kama, Frisian combs, Byzantine glass bracelets, Bulgarian ceramics and

amphorae from the Black Sea, amber from the Baltic Sea and walnuts.

Krutik had been an ancient centre of crafts and trade which expired early in the first third of the tenth century when the Slavs had not yet arrived in the area. There were no finds related to agriculture at the site, yet many furnaces and crucibles for manufacturing and processing metals, the tools and products of smiths and jewellers, antler and bone artefacts and semi finished goods have been discovered at the habitation site.

Findings related to trade include glass and stone beads, Scandinavian, Baltic-Finnish and Eastern jewellery, Bulgarian ceramics, Arabian coins, pans and weights. The great importance of hunting is indicated by javelin and arrow tips, birdcalls and amulets: beaver figures made of horn, pierced teeth of bear and marten.

Of the bone artefacts, two-thirds are from wild animals, mostly beaver bones.



Figure 90. Viking Age belt decoration of silver, very common in eastern Baltic region, including Gotland. Found around White Lake, displayed at Kirillov archaeological exhibition. Photo Dan Carlsson

Arabian sources describe beaver pelts being imported to Bulgaria from the "land of Visu".

Preservation and visibility

The town of Belozersk nowadays has a well preserved rampart which surrounds the Kremlin on all sides and it stands to a height of some 20 meters. Inside the rampart, there is a church, and some buildings. There is only one entrance today, although in the past there were two.

There is a walking path way on top of the wall all around, with steps to get one up to the top. From the wall, one has a good view over the town, as well as the White Lake, and the cruising boats that are passing the town without stopping.



Figure 91. The settlement area of Beloozero, today totally over grown by high grass and bushes. Photo Dan Carlsson.

On the eastern side of the wall, there are, in big letters, the name of the town together with the number 1149, meaning today's year after AD 862, the year that Rurik's brother took charge over Beloozero, according to the Primary Russian Chronicle. The wall is very well preserved, grass cut, and the rampart still intact.

At the site for the Viking Age town and at the ferry station, there is nothing to see about the settlement. There are no signboard giving information of the history of the site, but close to the ferry station there is a signboard telling about the area being an archaeological site, and that its forbidden to do any changes to the landscape, and a telephone number to the police.

Today the area is covered in high grass, many modern iron debris, including a huge electricity tower, not in use any more. Even if some part of the settlement was destroyed by the water, there are still huge areas of the former settlement on the river bank preserved under the grass. Scores of pottery sherds at todays waterfront as well as further inland, are clear evidence of the settlement.

Most of the material from the excavations of Belozeero, Krutik, and the area in general are on display at Kirillov (Archaeology of Belozersk), but there are also many objects from the excavation at the local museum in Cherepovets some 100 km to the South, on the Sheksna river. They are currently working on a new exhibition at the museum in Cherepovets.

Visitors and tourism

In modern day Belozersk, there is a local museum (Belozersk Local History Museum) in the centre of the town with a rather good exhibition about the history of the town and the closest region. The main points in the exhibitions are 1), the monasteries and churches in the region, 2) the stone age (a rather good collections of artefacts



Figure 92. The exhibition at Belozersk Local History Museum, displaying mainly the history of the town Belozersk from the fourteenth century until today, with some information about the earlier history. Photo Dan Carlsson.

found around the White Lake gives a clear evidence of the intense settlements that are from this period).

The third main point of the exhibition is about the town. The older part of the history of the town is depicted in two showcases with a few artefacts, giving the information of the first place for the town along the northern side of the lake, at Kisema (eight to ninth centuries), and in the second period (late ninth to tenth centuries) at the source of the former River Sheksna, and from the fourteenth century at today's location.

The showcase of the oldest part of the town mentions the



Figure 93. Memory stone remembering the date of Sineus arriving in Beloozero the year 862. In the background a replica of a Viking ship. Photo Dan Carlsson.

year 862, and Sineus, the brother of Rurik. There are, not counting school children, around 10,000 visitors a year to the museum.

Archaeological exhibition at Kirillov-Belozersky Historical and art museum

The best information about the early history of Beloozero and Krutil, one gets at the archaeological exhibition in the Kirillov-Belozersky



Figure 94. Kirillov-Belozersky monastery. The archaeological exhibition is on display in building 4.



Figure 95. The archaeological exhibition at Kirillov-Belozersk monastery. Photo Dan Carlsson.

monastery ("Antiquities of Belozersk", <http://www.kirmuseum.ru/en/>). The exhibition is in the buildings of the Church of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple with the refectory. The exhibition is displayed in four rooms, and covers the history from Stone Age up to Middle Ages. It was opened in 2007.

The basis for the extensive archaeological collection in the exhibition is formed of the materials received by the museum as a result of the archaeological expeditions carried out in 1980-1990. The main part of the exhibited materials dating back to the Middle Ages represents all types of archaeological sites: rural settlements, fortified settlements, cemeteries. The most interesting finds come from the

often mentioned in the chronicles town Beloozero, multilayer sites of the archaeological complex Minino, Nephedyevo cemeteries and Kemsky necropolis.

Connected to the exhibition is a very richly illustrated guidebook. The information, both in the exhibition and in the book, is sad to say printed only in the Russian language.

The Kirillov-Belozersky monastery is a world heritage site, and is situated on Volga-Baltic touristic route, connecting Baltic Sea and Volga river. Many Russian Late Medieval churches and monasteries are on this way. The Kirillov-Belozersky monastery is visited by some 800,000 visitors every year, a huge figure when one realise that the town has less then 8,000 inhabitants.

The tourists normally come in guided groups by bus from Vologda or from Cherepovets. The main places to visit are the different buildings inside the Kremlin, and the guided tours are concentrated on the architecture of buildings and the history behind them. Very few tourists visit the archaeological exhibition, dealing with the earlier periods.

Much of the material from the archaeological excavations are on display at the



Figure 96. Kirillov monastery is a focal point of tourism around Vologda. Photo Dan Carlsson

museum in the monastery Kirillov, in a new exhibition opened in 2007 (see above). Some objects and information are on display at the local museum in Belozersk, and artefacts from Krutik are also on display at the archaeological museum in Cherepovets.

The historical-Ethnographic complex the Old Russian Settlement "Sugorie".

In many parts of the world, there is a strong, and growing re-enactment society, and in the northwest part of Russia, there are several groups, and many festivals on a yearly bases. Around Belozersk, there is a re-enactment group who has developed the idea a bit further, by creating a complex of buildings, it is connecting to a portage site for river boats visiting the World Heritage site of Kirillov-Belozersky monastery, at a place called *Kuzino*. The place is



Figure 97. The Gridnitsa at Sugorie settlement. Used for festivals and historical events highlighting the Viking-Russian history. Photo Dan Carlsson.



Figure 98. The harbour site at "Sugorie" (Kuzino). Cruising ships anchor regularly at the site. From here tourist groups go by bus to Kirillov monastery. Photo Dan Carlsson.

situated along the River Sheksna, approximately half way between Belozersk and Kirillov, and some 18 km to the town of Kirillov.

The project *"The Old Russian Settlement Sugorie"* is about the re-creation of a special cultural-historical zone as an old Russian settlement on the left bank of the River Sheksna, on the territory of a passenger mooring.

The central point is the harbour, transformed into a mooring place for river cruises, and in connection to this an area with reconstructions of



Figure 99. A drawing showing the plan, for development of Sugorie.

old houses. At present there is, "The Knjazhy Dvor (The Prince's Court) and the next step will be reconstruction of a "Long House of the Vikings" - a dwelling of the Scandinavians and craft workshops.

There is also, "the Gridnitsa" - a special gala hall for receptions, being the central point for different historical activities taking place here. The activities are directly devoted to tourists, who can take part in different historical events mediating Russian and Viking history. For instance, in the "Long House of the Vikings" as well

as in "The Gridnitsa", tourists become participants in the activities themselves, for example, during a feast of the Vikings tourists can play a part of the leader-"Yarl", his wife and bodyguards. The programme usually takes about 30-40 minutes.

An important part of the activities is to make the period clothing as well as equipment and jewellery etc based on scientifically knowledge, as accurately as possible. Visitors are mainly coming from Russia (about 62%), but some 27% are English speaking visitors, then some smaller portions of visitors are from Ukraine, Uzbekistan and the Baltic States. Tourists are mainly coming by cruise ships, but also tourist buses, and in a few cases in private cars.



Figure 100. The organisation behind Sugorie also have activities at Belozersk. Inside the Kremlin, there is a "Viking longhouse", used for activities for groups. Photo Dan Carlsson

How to get there

The township of Belozersk is situated in a somewhat remote location. To get there from Vologda, one has to take a ferry crossing the River Sheksna, this being the shortest way. The roads are in parts in somewhat bad shape, and there are few hotels in the town. There are buses from St Petersburg and Moscow and an ATM open 24 hours.

Although Belozersk is distantly visible from the summer cruise boats, very few of them dock there. The best way to explore the town is by car from Vologda. The archaeological exhibition of Belozersk region in the Kirillov monastery is reached by car or buses from Vologda or Cherepovets.

The earlier site for the town, at the source of the River Sheksna some 15 kilometres from nowadays Belozersk, is easily reached by road, from the ferry station at the river.

The museum in Belozersk is open all days from 10.00 to 17.00 (May-October) and Monday-Saturday (November-April)

The Kremlin in Kirillov, with the archaeological exhibition, is open from 9.00 to 17.30 all days. Homepage of the museum in Belozersk (only in Russian) : <http://www.museum.ru/M3148>

The homepage of Kirillov museum (in English, German, French and Russian: <http://www.kirmuseum.ru/>

To find out more about archaeology of Cherepovets (only in Russian): <http://chermuseum.ucoz.ru/index/0-18>

Kurkijoki

Place and surroundings

Kurkijoki, and the surrounding area, is situated close to the Finnish border, along the northern coast of Lake Ladoga, the biggest fresh water lake in Europe. The area was in 1617-1944 a part of Finland, and in pre-historic times populated by Finnish tribes.

The distance to St Petersburg is about 150 km. The landscape is forest and mountains, and with an archipelago in the Lake Ladoga. It is a remote area, and the population is diminishing. It is reached from St Petersburg along a road on the western side of the lake. The road is in its northern part in rather bad condition.

Kurkijoki is a village with some 1000 inhabitants, mentioned in written sources from the early Middle Ages. The village is close to Lake Ladoga, and situated where two small rivers converge. The area is rather hilly, and covered mainly in forest. In the village, there is a hill, called *Linnavuori*, with a hill fort on top, partly excavated and giving material from Viking Age and Middle Ages.

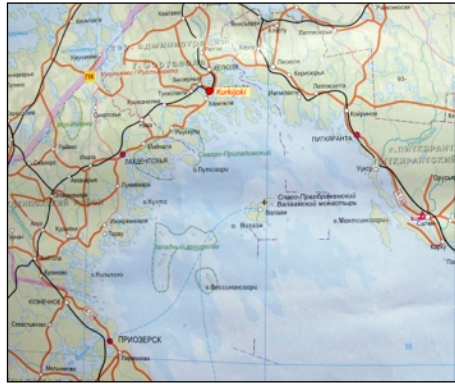


Figure 101. Kurkijoki is situated along the northern shore of Lake Ladoga, close to the Finnish boarder.

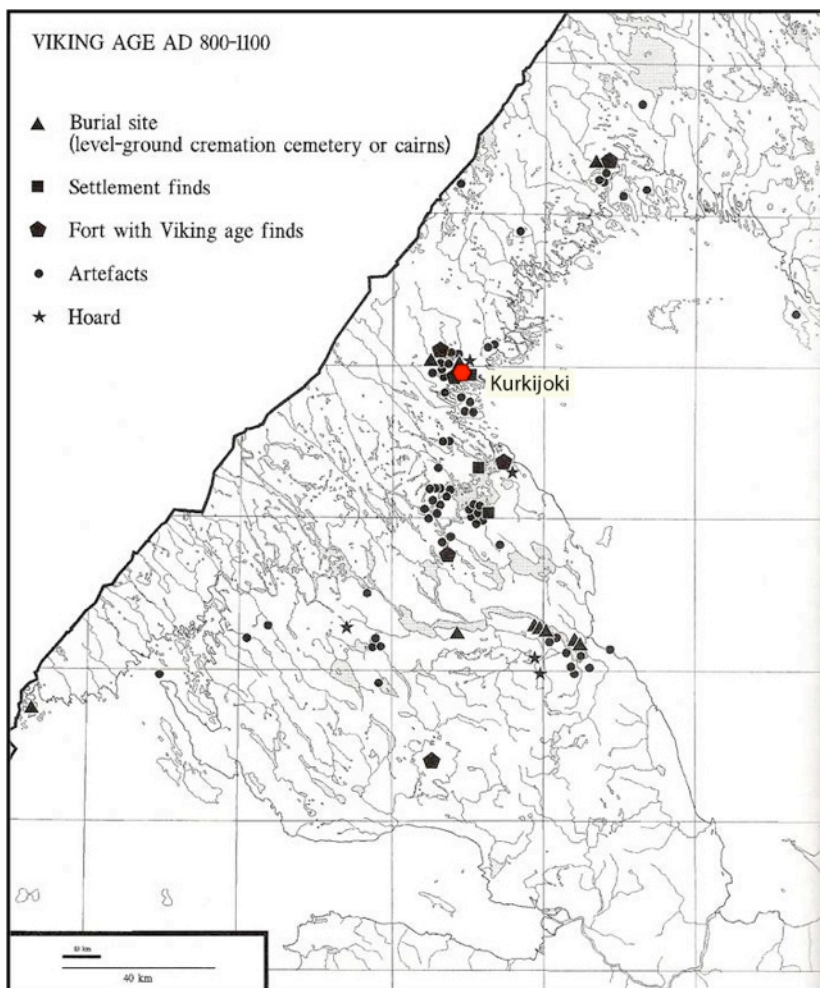


Figure 102. Viking Age sites and artefacts found in the area of Karelia. Map from Pirjo Uino 1988 by permission by the author.

In the region there are several other hill forts, some of them on small islands in the Lake Ladoga, giving artefacts mainly from the Middle Ages. In the district of "Lahdenpohja" as a whole and the area northwest of Lake Ladoga, there have been found many Scandinavian artefacts, both from graves and as stray finds.

Historical importance

In the Middle Ages, Lake Ladoga formed a vital part of the trade route from Varangians to the Greeks. The area of Karelia is mentioned in some of the Icelandic Sagas, as in Snorri Sturluson, "Circle of the Earth", as a place visited by the Vikings.

The area, long being a Finnish area, has had some close contacts with Scandinavia, mostly seen in the Viking Age jewellery, that often resembles the Scandinavian objects. Oval brooches, combs, beads, spearheads etc are often found, with a close connection to Scandinavian forms of artefacts.

The importance of the area in Viking Age trade and contacts can also be seen in the fact that the Karelian area was a destination for trades of furs from the northern Finland, and Russia; one of the most

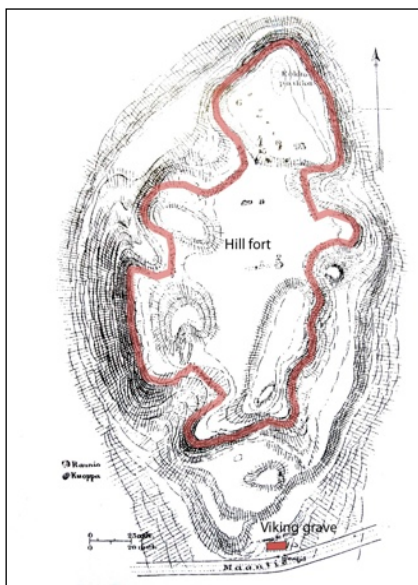


Figure 103. Close to the museum in Kurkijoki, and along the main road, there is a hill fort, partly excavated. At the southern foot of the hill fort, a Viking grave has been investigated. From Kurkijoki Museum.

important commodities in exchange for luxury goods from the Caliphate.

Research

There have been no extensive excavations in the area, but some minor giving some rather interesting material. There are many finds from the area around Kurkijoki, and along some river routes leading into Finland and further north. The Viking Age finds in Karelia are rather concentrated in certain areas showing important water ways along rivers and some lakes.



Figure 104. Oval brooch of Scandinavian type, from a cremation grave at Lopotti cemetery in Kurkijoki. Photo Markku Haverinen, Museiverket 2001.

Just outside the local museum in Kurkijoki, a Viking grave was excavated some years ago, along the road through the village and close to the museum. It contained a female grave with some well preserved oval brooches. The grave was found when they were widening the road.

On the hill just north of the grave, there is the hill fort from the Iron age, and below the mountain top, in the valley, and on a small peninsula between the two joining small rivers, is the ancient place for Kurkijoki.

In the surrounding landscape, there have been found some artefacts that point to a Scandinavian origin, like a well preserved sword pommel of obvious Scandinavian origin.



Figure 105. The northern shore of Lake Ladoga, there is an archipelago, and the area is visited by many tourists for the sake of the nature landscape and for fishing. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Preservation and visibility

The hill fort can be visited by foot from the local museum, but there is no sign pointing out the site. It is on top of a small hill, and the visible traces are part of a stone wall surrounding the hill top. Besides that, there is no information at the site.

Concerning the many other hill forts in the region, as well as the Viking grave excavated close to the museum, there is no information or signboards, and without a local history guide from the area, one can hardly find the way to these ancient monuments.

It could be mentioned that the museum have contacts with schools all the way to Sweden, and last year (2010) they had a common theme about Vikings, where the school children made drawings about Viking history.



Figure 106. View over Lake Ladoga from one of the many hill forts in the surroundings of Kurkijoki. Photo Dan Carlsson.

Visitors and tourism

The main form of tourism in the region is for fishing and hunting, or for nature tourism, being a mountain and forest area. The local museum have some 3 500 visitor a year, and mainly from the region, but also some from Finland. The museum has a home page (<http://www.kirjazh.spb.ru/>), with some links to articles, and photos concerning the history of Karelian, giving information about the Viking Heritage. The information is though only in the Russian language. The museum have some 10 staff working there.

Every year on the 5th of May, the museum has a special day of history, with a different theme every year. The year 2011 was about fish, but it could be for instance handicraft, agriculture or other historical skills. The day of Ladoga used to be visited by some 1500 visitors.

Most visitors to Kurkijoki comes from Finland, with the aim to visit old Finnish sites, but there is also an emphasis on Nature tourism in the region, being a scenic area along the northern shore of

Lake Ladoga. The museum is situated just along the main road through the village, coming in to the village from the west. The main part of the museum is dedicated to later history, and they have a rather good exhibition of local crafts, and farming, fishing etc from late historical times.

There is also a small exhibition of the Viking and Medieval history of the region, mainly as illustrations from publications. No genuine objects from Viking Age are on display.

There is a re-enactment group coming to Kurkijoki now and then, and doing a performance. It is from Petrozavodsk, and called Petrasiska re-enactment group.

How to get there

Kurkijoki can be reached by car from St Petersburg in 2 hours. You can get there by bus St.Petersburg-Sortavala (every days two time a day) or St.Petersburg-Petrozavodsk (2 times, Friday–Sunday).

The village, and the hill fort at Linnavuori are reached by a gravel road on the west side of the Lake Ladoga. There is no sign to the hill fort, but the museum is just along the road, and clearly marked. To



Figure 107. There are plans to rebuild an old barn into a culture House for Kurkijoki. From the Museum of Kurkijoki, completed by Dan Carlsson

visit some of the other sites in the area, one needs to have a local guide, that probably could be arranged by the museum.

There are few places to stay, no restaurant and no ATM. Closest town is Priozersk, some 10 km to the east, and a bus connect the town with St Petersburg.

The museum is open all days between 12.00 and 19.00 (in summer time). In winter time, one has to contact the staff for visits.

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The Northern Dimension partnership for Culture's (NDCP) Steering Committee has identified Viking heritage as a topic of common interest for the participating countries. While the Viking Route is an important European cultural route, it has been largely dormant. The Route offers potential for the development of cultural tourism across the borders in the Northern Dimension area, and is therefore of interest for the NDPC .

The main objectives of the assignment was to map and give an account of the Viking Route heritage sites located in Russia, to reveal the most important of them and to analyse their status today when it comes to maintenance, marketing and open up for tourism. This book is edited within the Framework Contract: Study on the Viking Route Heritage Sites in Russia (Ref. 2011/260699) financed by the European Commission and implemented by HTSPE and EuroTrends. The idea behind this book is to highlight to the public the deep interaction that were at hand between the Scandinavian countries and the states on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea in the Viking Age, and point out our common history.