

Gävleborg County has been inhabited since the Stone Age. There is Stone Age settlements that are 9000 years old. During the Bronze Age, large stone cairns were built along the coast. The Iron Age is prominent with a large amount of graves and settlements. The parishes were conformed during the Middle Ages. Gävleborg is the Swedish county most rich in forest. The forest, the Baltic Sea coast, farming and the iron have formed the history and is still visible in the cultural sites.

The route goes along the county coast from the south towards the north. It starts in Gävle city and ends in Gnarp parish. It contains sites both in the forest, in a coastal environment and in the rural landscape. There are sacred springs, ancient graves, runic stones and many other sites.



Information about the road conditions: most roads are kept in good condition. Some of the forest roads can be in bad condition during early spring and early winter.



Information about the length of the route and hours: appr. 350 km and 12 hours



1 THE GRAVE FIELD AT JÄRVSTA, RUNIC STONE, FERTILITY SWITCH BOARD

↑ Järvsta village, outside Gävle, close to the road to Furuvik

↙ N 6725764 E 619359

Grave field from Viking Age. The grave field contains 35 graves, a runic stone and a fertility switchboard. During the Viking Age the grave field was situated close to the sea in a sheltered bay. Some graves are excavated, and it shows influences from other sites in the Baltic Sea region. It also exhibits the conversion from paganism to Christianity. The people had great festivities in connection with the funerals. Runic stones were risen as a holy act to celebrate the forefathers and the Christening of the area. It could also symbolize the building of a bridge and other honorable acts. This runic stone mentions a journey to the East and speaks of the king Emund, who ruled in the middle of the 10th century.

To get pregnant easier, women were supposed to slide down the hillside of the grave field. You can still see the line in the stone. The hills with slides (switchboards) is often found in the vicinity of rock carvings and cup mark stones from the Bronze age. They were clearly a part of a holy fertility complex. They also, for some reason, often coincide with Iron Age grave fields.

2 LERVIK SPRING

↑ The road to Gävle harbor. A path leads to the east just before the road to Bönan.

↙ N 6731388 E 619851

In the end of the 18th century the noble man Per Ennes built a stair and a wall at the spring. To stay healthy people drink water from the spring at Trinity. This custom was common during Medieval times. You could also wash yourself in the water. It was important that the water runs to the north because that is where the evil lives. The belief of the evil in the north is documented in the Bible, Jeremiah 1:4. During the 18th century, drinking from springs became increasingly popular. At Trinity, there were festivities at the spring with music and dancing. The custom was popular until the beginning of the 20th century, when Swedish people started to believe more in medical science than in the old health springs.



3 TOTRA

↑ Between Bergby and Norrsundet in Hamrånge

↙ N 6755719 E 612643

From the beginning, Totra belonged to the neighbouring village Häckelsång. The name Häckelsång has a religious content. It was a cult place during the Viking Age. In a cult field in the village, objects of great value belonging to a Viking Age smith has been found. They were an iron oath ring, that the Vikings held when they swore their holy oath. There also was a blacksmiths hammer. The important place during the Iron Age developed into a farm on the hill with a tower during early Medieval times. The local chief lived here with his family and staff. Totra farm and tower controlled the coast and the land in this area during a long period of time. The family most likely traded with iron and/or fur.



4 JÄTTENDALARNA IN HILLE

↑ Just beside the old road E4 in Björke

↙ N 6737577 E 619229

Jättendalarna is a mound grave field from the Iron Age. Grave mounds are supposed to represent the farmers in the region. The stone settings are believed to represent the hunters and fishermen in the same area. You could probably find the remains of the farm in the vicinity. During the burial, there were rituals performed in order to send the deceased safely to the kingdom of death. After the ancestor was buried, the people of the family or from the farm could call upon him or her once a year or more, to ask for advice or just to keep up the connection to the forefathers.

5 THE BRUNN SPRING IN SÖDERALA

↑ Sydväst om Håkviken, Marmen

↙ N 6787382 E 608143

At Trinity people drank water from the spring to cure illness and keep healthy. This tradition may have its roots in the Iron Age. People took seven sips or washed themselves in the water. The spring was cleaned and decorated before the drinking begun. It was very important that the water ran to the north because that was where the evil lived. The week before Trinity, the spring was cleaned and decorated with pine branches. Over the spring, a crossshaped bow of small birches was risen. On the Saturday evening at sunset, the drinking began, and proceeded until midnight.



6 KLAPERIN IN NORRALA

↑ Next to the road between Norrala and Skårås

↙ N 6804907 E 610226

Mighty cairns from the Bronze Age. They were built to honour the dead family member, and also to send him/her safely to the kingdom of death and to keep him there. The cairns also worked as a territory marking for the local tribe. They were placed on strategic hills to control the communication routes at sea and on land. A whole set of rituals and cult based aspects were involved in the burial process. After the funeral, the forefathers could be called upon at special occasions, for advice and other purposes.



7 THE PAGAN HILL "HEDNINGAHÄLLAN"

↑ Go along the road between Enånger and Långvind. Look out for a small road to the west

↙ N 6819276 E 607010

During the late Stone Age (2 500 BC) this cliff was an island in the sea. Now, it is situated in the forest. People from different areas around the Baltic Sea gathered up on the cliff. We know that because the archaeologists has found ceramics from the present Finland and other areas. It is the oldest cult place in the route! The people who came here performed ritual celebrations in which a lot of stone axes, ceramics and other objects were crushed. They were probably crushed as a kind of sacrifice. Also, they most likely arranged cult festivities on this flat island in the Baltic Sea.



8 THE HJORTSTA SPRING IN HÖG

↑ From Åsak in Hög a small road leads to the south.

You have to go across a field to the west

↙ N 6849409 E 604945

At Trinity people in Hjortsta and in Hög parish drank the water from this spring to cure illness and keep healthy. The spring is named after the village Hjortsta. The water is clear and very tasty. At the bottom of the spring there are always four small bubbles. To get full effect from the water, you had to drink seven sips and wash yourself in the water. It was important that the water runs to the north because that was the home of the evil. The earliest written tradition about this spring is from 1810. It tells how women in the area regularly brought home fresh water from the spring.



9 THE ANCIENT CULT PLACE CENTRE IN HÖG

↑ Around the church in Hög parish, east of Hudiksvall

↙ N 6849841 E 607641

The area around the church in Hög has been a cult place from early Iron Age to the Middle Ages when the church was built. In the area lived a rich and noble family. Their wealth descended from skin and furs. During the late Iron Age and early Middle Ages there was a pagan cult place, a large stone circle, close to the large grave mound "Kings mound". This was the centre of the cult and of legal matters during the Iron Age. Only the cult leader was allowed inside the circle. The church was built in 1191-1192. Within the project Cult Identity, The County museum of Gävleborg region have performed archaeological excavations in the area. The pagan cult place and houses dated to 200 AD was investigated. It became clear that the family who lived here had controlled the stream Hornån, and had contacts in the Roman Empire. They abandoned their farm when it was not possible to sail up the stream any longer. Where they went we do not know, but their large mounds still lies there, in harmony with the landscape. The mounds in the area were built to honor and worship the ancestors, but also to mark the tribes territory. The runic stones were risen as a honorable and ritual act, and to remind people of the forefathers and of the new religion. During Medieval Times, the church and the Kings estate were built here because of the greatness and status of the history of this place.



10 THE LABYRINTH AT KUGGÖRARNA

↑ The northeast part of the island Kuggören

↙ N 6843903 E 633034

Labyrinths were built by sailors and fishermen to catch the storm. They all have different layouts. The entrance is facing different directions, probably towards the eye of the storm. The labyrinths could also be constructed to affect the fishing luck. Often there is a special elaborated feature in the middle. Around the Baltic Sea, some of them are Medieval, but they can also have been made later. The oldest labyrinths lies around the Mediterranean Sea and are dated to the Bronze Age.



11 BRONZE AGE STONE CAIRNS VÄLMYRKNALLEN

↑ Just north of Mellanfjärden in Jättendal

↙ N 6872898 E 624355

Large cairns from the Bronze Age. The cairns were built to honour the death and to prevent them from coming back. You also created a place for regular conversations with your ancestors. The cairns also worked as a territory marking for the people who lived here. They lived on farms near the coast. The people worshipped the sun and the bronze metal. They went on long journeys to bring home the metal and had contacts with people far away.

OTHER SACRED PLACES IN THE REGION TO VISIT



12 SKINNLIPPSSTENEN

↑ In the area of Tallåsen, North of Ljusdal. On the Southwest side of lake Lettsjön

↙ N 6862835 E 550840

A large stone where Stone Age inhabitants has painted warrior paintings.

13 THE HAMRE GRAVE FIELD

↑ On a headland in Färnebofjärden. More than one hundred Iron Ages graves

↙ N 6679144 E 599142

The biggest grave field from early Iron Age in the county.



14 ONBACKEN IN BOLLNÄS

↑ A hill in the middle of Bollnäs. Stroll area between the railway and Ljusnan

↙ N 6802700 E 574742

Grave and settlement area from the Early Iron Age.

15 S:T OLOFS SPRING IN JÄRVSÖ

↑ Along the road Kalvstigen, between Järvsö and Delsbo, and then a small road to the Southeast

↙ N 6841487 E 565304

According to tradition the spring has magical power, and King Olov baptized a lot of locals here on his way to Norway.



16 SMEDJENÄSET, VIKEN, IN ALFTA

↑ The road between Alfta and Ovanåker. In the village Viken, take the small road to the south

↙ N 6801347 E 552583

Grave field from Early Iron Age, partly excavated.

17 STEN-KARLEN IN ÅRSUNDA

↑ From Hedkarlby to Åkeslund, and the old church path to the southwest

↙ N 6708415 E 593416

A man was killed at the site long ago. By passer throws stone on the spot in protection of the dead.

18 THE TRINITY SPRING IN HAGALUND

↑ The road between Storvik and Hosjön. At Hagalund to the south across a field

↙ N 6719896 E 581526

On trinity people throw coins in the water and make a wish. If you keep quiet twenty-four hours the wish came true.

TOURISM INFORMATION

Tourist agency Gävle

Drottninggatan 22, Gävle
+4626177117
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www.gavle.se

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Köpmangatan 11, 826 30 Söderhamn
+4627075353
turism@soderhamn.se
www.soderhamn.se

Tourist agency Hudiksvall

Storgatan 33, 824 30 Hudiksvall
+4665019100
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www.hudiksvall.se

Tourist agency Nordanstig (Jättendal)

Landsvägen 1, 820 76 Jättendal
+4665216175
info@bokningscentralen.com
www.bokningscentralen.com

ABOUT OTHER SIGHTSEEING OBJECTS / OPTIONS WITHIN THE ROUTE

www.raa.se/fornsok

Ancient sites. A site with a database and map with every known ancient site and historic site in the country.

www.raa.se

Cultural history and environment in Sweden. The Swedish National Heritage Boards own website.

www.gastrikland.com

Tourism in Gästrikland. A site that presents all information about Gästrikland

www.jarnriket.com

Iron history and tourism in Gästrikland. A site about the iron land of Gästrikland and a lot of places to visit.

www.hembygdsforbund.x.se

Cultural history and environment. A site about all the history clubs in the county and how to visit their old beautiful history parks.

www.aventyrarna.se

Adventure and fishing. A site about adventure and fishing tours in Gästrikland.

www.furuvik.se

Entertainment and adventure. A site with everything about the large zoo and theme park Furuvik outside Gävle.

www.lansmuseetgavleborg.se

Art, cultural history, ancient sites and cultural environment. The county museums own website about things to see at the museum in Gävle and in the county.

www.halsinglandsmuseum.se

Cultural and coherent history in Hälsingland. The Hälsinglands museums website about what to see at the museum in Hudiksvall and in Hälsingland.

www.halsingland.se

Tourism in Hälsingland. Tourism website with booking facilities etc.

www.halsingegardar.se

Tourism and cultural environment in Hälsingland. Website of the Hälsingland world heritage farms.

www.lansstyrelsegavleborg.se

Culture and nature in Gävleborg county. County administrative board's site about fishing, cultural environment, culture reservations and nature reservations in the county.

www.gavle.se

Practical info about the Gävle area. Information site about the Gävle area; tourism, facilities etc.

www.soderhamn.se

Practical info about the Söderhamn area. Information site about the Söderhamn area; tourism, facilities etc.

www.hudiksvall.se

Practical info about the Hudiksvall area. Information site about the Hudiksvall area; tourism, facilities etc.

www.nordanstig.se

Practical info about the Nordanstig area. Information site about the Nordanstig area; tourism, facilities etc.

www.naturvardsverket.se

Nature in Gävleborg county. Site about nature in Sweden. Advice about how to behave in a nature reservation



Ancient natural sacred sites

**GÄVLEBORG REGION,
SWEDEN**
TOURISM MAP



The ancient cult place route in Gävleborg, Sweden, has something for everyone to enjoy. It offers exciting stories, beautiful places, thrilling archeological sites and magnificent sceneries. We invite everyone, locals as well as visitors, to experience our route and our beautiful region.

Similar travel guides about regions in Latvia as well as counties in Estonia are available. Mentioned guides will help not only discover new values of nature and culture, but also gain knowledge about the ancient traditions of nations around Baltic Sea.

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TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS/CELEBRATIONS IN THE REGION

MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL
Swedish Midsummer Eve
Pole rising, traditional dancing, singing and traditional costumes. Every local heritage farm/outdoor museum in every parish has festivities on Midsummer Eve. Usually announced in the papers.

VALBORG FESTIVAL
(spring celebration festival)
April 30th
Bonfire, singing, celebrating spring. There are many different places for bonfires, and they are usually announced in the papers.

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www.lansmuseetgavleborg.se

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