

Road and land-based transport

Increased need for transport Due to the increase in trade and the more complex structure of society, the demand for land transport grew stronger during the Viking Age. Transport by horse and in wagons over land was much slower and more troublesome than sailing. During harsh winters, land-based transport could include skiing, skating or sleighing. This increased the need for bridges and roads.

The Jutland highway

The Jutland highway, which was later named Hærvejen (“the Army Road”) or Oksevejen (“Cattle Road”), cut its way along the Jutland Ridge, making it possible to avoid most streams and rivers. From the Hærvejen, smaller roads connected to the cities of Jutland, which were not then internally connected.

Harold’s bridges

The most important testimony to the infrastructure of the Vikings is found in the construction of bridges and dams, which made land-based transportation easier and helped tie the nation together. Most impressive was the bridge across the valley of the Vejle Stream in Ravning Enge near Jelling. It was well over 700 metres long, 5.5 metres wide, and used colossal amounts of oak timber. It has been dendrochronologically-dated to around AD 980 like Trelleborg.

The bridge was probably built by King Harold Bluetooth and must have been part of the same general military rearmament and display of Royal power as Trelleborg. Like Trelleborg, the bridge was only in use for a limited time.