

The Defences

Trelleborg is situated on a promontory flanked by the Tude and Vårby rivers; the fortress was almost impregnable.

The construction of the ramparts

The ramparts are the most impressive feature of the fortress. On both sides it had heavy oak palisades connected by horizontal beams. The front of the palisade was about 8 m in height and in-filled with turf, stone and clay – they have survived a millennium.

To reach the inner part of the fortress, it is necessary to pass the outer ward with a narrow moat in front. The only crossing point over the outer moat is located near its southern end. Inside the outer ward, 15 long houses are situated along the inner part of the outer rampart.

The bridge leading to the inner part of the fortress, which has a narrow ledge, is in the south-east. The inner moat is considerable deeper, steeper and wider than the outer moat – being 17 m wide and almost 4 m deep, it would have been difficult to take by storm. The impressive and large ring-fortress was 5 m high, 17 m wide and built of 25,000 square metres of soil, stones and timber.

The gates

The four gates were the weakest point in the defences. They were situated at the four points of the compass. Probably they have been covered tunnels which towards the outer side of the rampart have been closed off with two gates. In all four gateways, charred planks were found, suggesting that they were destroyed by fire.

The streets

The streets, of which two are at right angles to each other as connecting routes between the gates, were surfaced with crosswise planks. The careful construction of the streets suggests that they were well used and that Trelleborg was very busy!

The houses

The settlement consisted of 15 houses between the outer ward and the inner fortress, with four identical blocks each consisting of four long houses inside the fortress. Like the fortress, the Trelleborg houses were characterized by uniformity and symmetry.

The houses are ca. 30 m long, with two smaller gable rooms and a large room of 18 m in length in the middle. Doors led from each of the long walls

and from the gables, and there was a long hearth in the middle of the house. The curved walls were built of sturdy vertically-placed oak planks, and outside the walls there was a row of slanting support-posts which helped bear the weight of the heavy roof.

AD 980

In the winter of AD 980 – 981, the inner moat was reinforced by yet another obstruction, when smaller beams at intervals of 2-3 m were erected. These may have been up to 7 m in height, and perhaps their aim was to shade the rampart.