

The Viking Age

The Viking Age is a period of Scandinavian history which holds a very special place in our minds. It was a time when the people of Scandinavia challenged the powers of Europe. Great changes took place: the first real cities were founded and the Scandinavian kingdoms took shape, testifying to the creation of an efficient and strong central power.

The time

The Viking Age covers approximately three centuries from the end of the 8th century to the end of the 11th century AD. The first written account of a Viking raid is from AD 793, when the monk Alcuin described the brutal plunder of the monastery of Lindisfarne on the northeastern coast of England. The Battle of Hastings which took place in southern England in 1066 marks the ending of the Viking Age.

The period is one of transition from prehistoric times to the Middle Ages. It was witness to a massive development of technology and of social and governmental structure, as well as to religious changes in Scandinavia. Society had developed from one based mainly on farming and fishing to one based on a more mixed economy.

The towns were centres of specialised crafts and trade, with well developed distribution systems and a well organised administration. From being an area consisting of several petty kingdoms, the state of Denmark evolved during the Viking Age into a firmly established Christian country, closely related to the rest of Europe.