

VISINGSÖ GRAVE FIELDS

There are around 800 known prehistoric graves scattered across Visingsö. Even the oldest records, from 1689, of the ancient monuments on the island describe the barrows as being “many and more numerous than elsewhere”. The most prominent of the preserved graves on Visingsö are those grouped in the burial grounds: the northern, middle and southern grave fields. They are all located on the ridge that runs lengthwise on the island and comprise around 760 visible graves. They include stone settings, mounds, standing stones, tridents, long barrows, ship settings and stone circles.

The northern grave field is the smallest and is partly located in the grounds of the folk high school. Several graves were investigated in the early 1900s, and based on the findings, e.g. an ornamented brooch, they were dated to the Vendel Period, approx. 550–800 A.D.

A couple of graves in the middle grave field were investigated, of which one was found to be from around 700 A.D. Recent storms exposed graves that have then been subject to damage investigations. This has given a wider dating of the graves. The oldest is a flat grave without any visible marking above ground from the Pre-Roman Iron Age, around 500 B.C.–1 A.D. The youngest grave has been dated to the Viking Age, around 800–1050 A.D. The middle grave field has thus been used for burials for 1 500 years.

Tumuli dominate the southern grave field. Several mounds were investigated in the 1960s and were found to be from the Early Iron Age. Beneath one of the mounds were twenty sunken graves, so called fire pits and urn burial pits. A shield buckle and a shield handle were among the objects found here. In the 19th century, when a root cellar was being built in one of the mounds, a stone cist and bones were found as well as “pieces of skulls, not burned”. It is likely that this tumulus is from the Bronze Age (1800–500 B.C.).



Iron Age beads found in the northern grave field. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 19



HOW TO GET HERE

From the harbour, follow Hamnvägen past Brahe Church towards the main north-south road of the island. The grave fields are located along this road.

Coordinates:

(Middle grave field):
N 6433495 / E 460739
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 58°
2' 28.48", E 14° 20' 6.04"
(WGS84)



The middle grave field. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.

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HIDDEN GEMS

There are so many things to discover in the countryside! Here, Jönköping County Museum presents some of the cultural environment and heritage attractions in the county.

They include well-known cultural monuments such as Habo Church and the Smålandsstenar Stone Circles, but also lesser known gems such as log-driving remains in the river Valån and Stengårdshult Church. Around the county you can find evidence of how people lived and worked in the past, everything from castles and manors to abandoned embankments and clearance cairns in forest areas.

The idea with Hidden Gems is to tempt you to make excursions in the cultural landscape – here you find our history, revealed in different ways in the physical environment. This heritage is worth experiencing and protecting. Bit by bit, we will be adding more sights under the heading Hidden Gems, both for people living in the county and visitors from further away. The more people who discover these gems, the better chance that they will be preserved for the future.

FACTS

In Jönköping County there are more than 4 000 registered ancient remains, 87 cultural environments of national interest, close to 130 listed buildings, around 150 churches, some 100 rural community centres with old settlements, a large number of industrial heritage sites, and two cultural reserves. There are also a large number of cultural environments with buildings worthy of conservation. More information about the sites can be found on the websites of the County Administrative Board, the municipalities and the local heritage societies.

GOOD TO KNOW

Access to the Hidden Gems varies. Some sites are well signposted, with easy access and proper parking facilities, etc. Others are more challenging to reach. Visitors may have to walk some distance, sometimes through scrubby forest, only to be met by a broken sign (if there ever was one) when they reach the site. All the sites, however, have an exciting and interesting history.

Please note that many of the cultural heritage buildings are privately owned and can only be viewed from the outside. Also, please respect private land. Many churches are open in the summer. During other times of the year, the churchwarden may be able to open the church for you.

