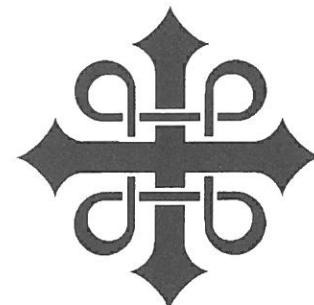


The route is marked by a pilgrim's symbol made up of the "Olof cross" combined with the symbol identifying a place of interest. This sign is used in Norway and Sweden along the many routes associated with St. Olof which lead to the Nidar Cathedral in Trondheim.

Together with Vadstena, St. Olof's grave in Trondheim was the most important Nordic pilgrimage destination during the Middle Ages. Our route on Gotland is connected by waterways to the St. Olof way through Ångermanland and Jämtland, two provinces in central Sweden, a stretch that St. Olof travelled on his way to Nidaros. Our northern pilgrim routes can also be seen as a part of a much larger scheme, namely part of all the thousands of pilgrims' ways and pilgrimage sites that all over the world tell about Christians who throughout the ages have searched for Christ by wandering in his footprints and in the path of all the men and women, disciples of Christ, who have been canonised.

Taking a step along the pilgrims' way also symbolises walking in these saints' footsteps, and thus also following Christ's example.



# Pilgrims' way on Gotland

- between S:t Olofsholm and Visby -

Welcome to walk as a pilgrim, individually or as a group, for shorter or longer stretches, along a route that, in some parts, is older than the Christian beliefs in the area. It leads via places with special Christian significance and churches that were important already during medieval times, a period that we often associate with pilgrimages.

To be a **pilgrim** is to be on the way to a holy goal. The image of a person's life as a pilgrimage is old but still provides food for thought. This can take the shape of an actual pilgrimage along a route. Walking between the different physical places then becomes equivalent to an inner voyage. Such an inner voyage entails gaining a deeper self-understanding and perception of one's relationship to God.

## This folder provides a guide to a pilgrimage and a map.

**Concerning the Pilgrims' way**, it can be said that it leads from coast to coast through cultural countryside with splendid scenery. St. Olofsholm (1) embodies the name of the route but is not necessarily the goal, but it can even be the starting point.

St. Olofsholm, earlier called Akergarn, is named as the point where King Olof landed when he christened the Gotlanders, according to earlier legends. About 200 years after his landing a chapel was built on the spot with an altar dedicated to him. Offerings that were collected in the chapel were shared between the Solberga cloister in Visby and the church in Hälvi, as St. Olofsholm lies within its parish boundaries. Every year Solberga cloister's share was transported to Visby. The exact route is not known but the position of the Pilgrims' way is possible based on knowledge of the transportation routes of the time.

The place that has the best support historically as a medieval pilgrims' site on Gotland is the parish church of Bro with its then well-known "holy cross". The cross itself was destroyed by fire during the latter part of the Middle Ages. Bro lies just over 10 km from Visby along the Way.

There are four medieval churches as well as the ruins of Solberga cloister and the chapel at St. Olofsholm along the route. The churches of Väskinde and Othem are slightly off the path but a visit to them is recommended.

## We wish you a blessed pilgrimage

*The Diocese of Visby and the congregation of the Cathedral in Visby, under the auspices of the Church of Sweden, jointly with Gotlands Försam (the County Museum of Gotland) and the Gotland County Council.*

## Pilgrimage

Solitude and fellowship, physical exertion, aesthetic experiences, spiritual discussions, silence and contemplation through reading good books and regular church services, all this can all help to make your trek a pilgrimage.

## Prayer and reflection

Begin with a moment of reflection and stillness: What is it you long for? Want would you like to change in your life? Who of those close to you is in need of your prayers? Let one or more of these thoughts follow you throughout the day, in prayers and conversation.

Begin your walk with a prayer, for example:

*Lord, you fill every place with your presence. I ask you to be with me during this walk; teach me to see you everywhere. Open my eyes to your beauty and my heart to your will. I lay my life and my prayers in your hands, my Lord and my God. Amen.*

Find places or times along the way where you can pause for prayer.

For example at dinner time (if there are several of you, you can read responsively):

Psalm 121

*I I will lift up my eyes to the hills—*

*From whence comes my help?*

*II My help comes from the LORD,  
Who made heaven and earth.*

*I He will not allow your foot to be moved;*

*He who keeps you will not slumber.*

*II Behold, He who keeps Israel  
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

*I The LORD is your keeper;*

*The LORD is your shade at your right hand.*

*II The sun shall not strike you by day;*

*Nor the moon by night.*

*I The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;*

*He shall preserve your soul.*

*II The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in*

*From this time forth, and even forevermore.*

*I + II Glory be to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and*

*always and for ever and ever. Amen.*

*Loving Father, you give us work and rest. Bless us so that we can receive  
what you give us with an open mind; today and always. Amen*

At every road-crossing:

*God have mercy on us, we who are often doubtful about choosing the right way. Be with us in our choice and lead us on the right paths; for your Son, Jesus Christ's sake.*

In church:

*According to the Book of Prayer, for example pg. 187-206.*

Constantly:  
*God, show me your way, and make me willing to follow it.*

## What you see and encounter along the way

*Information about the churches is available in each church*

### S:t Olofshölm - Othem

At the beginning of the 13th century, the chapel (1) that was first called Akergarn's Chapel and later St. Olof's chapel was erected here. According to the ancient Gutasagan, a prayer house was built at the same place in connection with Olof Haraldsson's visit to the island in 1029. The western wall of that chapel is incorporated into the building that is still standing on the site. St. Olof's chapel was bigger than many parish churches; the foundations were 13x30 meters and the walls 17-18 meters high.

In the bay at Hiddeviken (2) lies the Hide limestone quarry as a witness of the limestone industry that has been important ever since the 1600s. The route goes through a thicket of lilac bushes that are the only remaining reminder of the stone workers that once lived here. Vägume (3) with the nearby bay bear proof of their name that this was an important junction. In ancient times there was a sound important for water transport that ran between Vägume and Kappelshamn to the north. At Hammars (4) one of the best-preserved historic meadows on Gotland can be found. Othem church (5) has frescoes of interest and the vicarage is built partly of medieval stonewalls.

### Othem - Hejnum

At Klims (6), a farm with lands that have been occupied since ancient times, Hejnum hällar (7) begins; a large area of bedrock of great natural and cultural value, not least due to its wealth of orchids. Bjärs Höggård (8) is the name of a lush leafy meadow under the cliff with a view towards Hejnum valley. There is more information about Kyrkebys in Hejnum (10) under the section entitled Mementos of St. Olof. An image of St. Olof can be seen among the sculptures to the right of the chancel entrance in the chancel of Hejnum church (9).

### Hejnum - Lokrume

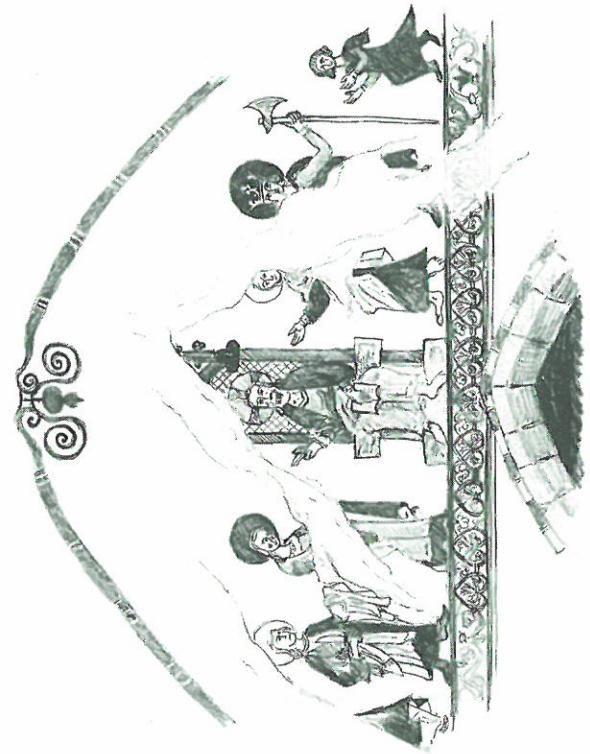
The road (11) between Hejnum and Lokrume has ancient monuments indicating prehistoric origins. At one spot there is an "offertory heap" on which passing travellers in olden times would throw a stone or a branch to ensure continued good fortune on their travels. Lokrume church (12) has a baptismal font from the late 12th century.

## Lokrume - Bro

The Kvie farm (13) a beautiful restored 18th century farmstead, lies near a clearly visible ancient fortress (14) on flat land in a grazed pasture. Bro church (15) was the most important pilgrimage church on the island during the Middle Ages.

### Bro - Visby

South of the church (16) there lies a sacrificial spring. Between Väskinde and Bro (17) there are traces of ancient cultivation, Bronze-age stone cairns, standing stones, two ancient fortresses as well as graves. Väskinde church (18) is worth a detour. On the road between Väskinde and Visby (marked as a cultural route) lies a historically designated poorhouse (19). The medieval manor at Hästnäs farmstead (20) is well preserved. The signs for the Pilgrims' Way end at the edge of town so, in true pilgrim fashion, you have to inquire how to get to the ruins of the Solberga convent (21). At the ruins there is an information signboard. Visby Cathedral (22) has interesting modern stained glass windows in addition to its medieval attributes.



### Mementos of S:t Olof

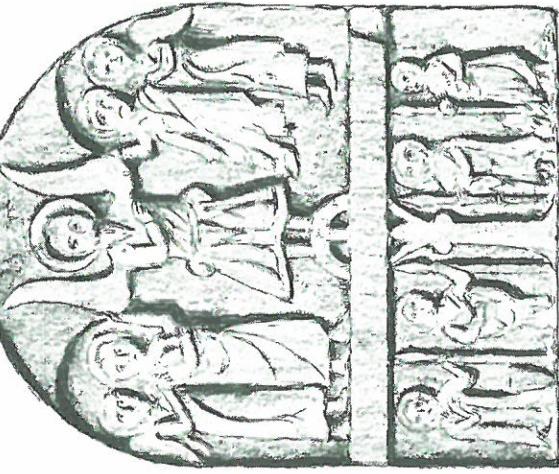
During the 13th century the cult of St. Olof became widespread throughout large parts of Northern Europe. According to medieval sources, the prominent position, in both religious life as well as in popular folk consciousness, that the sainted Norwegian king, Olav (Olof) Haraldsson, attained on the island was most likely due to the fact that the king himself stayed on Gotland: he is said to have over-wintered on the island while on a Viking trip to the East in the year 1007, and he is thought to have landed on the island in conjunction with a visit to Novgorod during 1029-1030.

Mementos of St. Olof are especially evident at three places along the way: in Visby, in Hejnum, and in Hellvi.

In Visby, three new parishes were established in connection with the town's rapid expansion during the years 1225 - 1250. One of these, situated in the present Botanical Gardens, was called St. Olof. Nowadays part of the tower is all that is left standing of its gigantic church, a 3-aisled basilica that once stood there. On the other hand there are numerous sculptures of Olof and other Olof-mementos from all over the island on display at the County Museum of Gotland.

In Hejnum lived Ormika, who together with other powerful men met with King Olof in Åkerbyn (1) in Hellvi. Ormika is said to have allowed himself be baptised and to have built a house of prayer on the site; perhaps he had one or more vessels lying in the harbour, about 30 km from his home parish. According to tradition, Ormika came from Kyrkebys (10) in Hejnum, which Olof is said to have visited. Earlier on, people on the farm have been able to show the place where the king stayed, his bed, chair, axe, and silver bowl as well as his washbasin in the wall. The latter, a piece of limestone, is still preserved on the site. The king's keys are said to have hung on the fence surrounding Stubbarne meadow. Probably this is a case of relics, which would support the information about Kyrkebys's role in the supposed Christianisation of Gotland. The role of the keys can also have been to ensure a good crop. In the forest between Hejnum and Bogesund there is a place called "Saint Ole's harbour", where, according to folklore, the king sailed (1) from Slite.

In Hellvi only the remains of a harbour chapel bearing St. Olof's name are left (see St Olofsholm – Othem above). About 70 metres southwest of the chapel (1) there is a hollow in the cliff called "St. Olof's washbasin", where, according to folklore, the king is said to have washed himself, or according to another later tradition, have baptised the first Gotlanders.



Images by Erik Olson: wooden sculpture (13th c.) of St. Olof from Guldrupe church (on front leaf), stone relief (about 1200) from Hejnum church's southern portal and fresco, "Christ, Ruler of the World" - (about 1300) from Bro church.