

THE PILGRIM TRAIL  
Western Värmland  
A walk from Lurö to Norway

The West Värmland Pilgrim Trail, which comes from Västergötland, begins at Lurö, and continues across Värmlandsnäs through Säffle and Kila to Gillberga, and from there to Arvika Community at Stömne through Glava and Älgå. It reaches Eda Community through Järnskog and Skillingmark, and from there the trail reaches the border of Norway.

The trail is one of the many leading to Trondheim, called Nidaros during the Middle Ages. It is marked with the St. Olof symbol, which is used on both sides of the border between Sweden and Norway.

#### Medieval Trails/pathways

During the Middle Ages, Nidaros with St. Olof's (Olav Haraldsson) grave was one of Christianity's great goals for pilgrims to walk to besides Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela. To visit holy places and burial sites of saints was part of life. One of these trails went through the western part of Värmland. Names of local places and traditions still bear witness to the pilgrimage route.

#### Nidaros and Olof the Holy/St. Olof

How Nidaros became a destination for the pilgrims relates to the legends about Olav Haraldsson. He was born into royalty in AD 995. Beginning at age 12, Olof was trained by Hrane, the mentor of kings, through travels and exploits with the Vikings across Europe.

In France, Olof became a Christian and was baptized, according to legend, in Rouen. He returned home in AD 1015 to unite Norway and make it a Christian nation. His message was not well received. Instead, he ended up fleeing from his enemies in Norway to Gårdarike.

Olof gathered an army of loyal, baptized men and met his enemies at the battle of Stiklestad in AD 1030. Olof was killed there. Shortly thereafter, miracles were said to happen: the sick were healed, and other remarkable things were observed at the site where he fell. Olof was buried, but his remains were later exhumed and enshrined at the altar in Clemens church in Nidaros.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> AD 1031 Olof was declared a saint. Nidaros became a prominent place and the Nidaros dome began construction in AD 1070. St. Olof's remains were later moved to the Nidaros dome which was completed in AD 1300.

Olof's great popularity as a saint is witnessed through the many sculptures, paintings, wells and churches carrying his name across the Nordic countries and in England. He who christened Norway became a national symbol for Norway, the country's "eternal king".

#### Walking the Pilgrim Trail Today

Today, pilgrims are on the road again, but often with other intentions than those of the Middle Ages had. "The seven key words of the Pilgrim" say something about modern humanity's situation, lack of and longing for: Freedom, Simplicity, Silence, Carelessness, Slowness, Spirituality, and Sharing. (*In Swedish the key words' beginning letters make up the word 'Phedimus.' Hylotelephium telephium is one of the more well-known varieties. It grows on open and dry land and by the side of the road. It is very persistent and doesn't require much water. It flowers in late Fall and is also a popular plant in gardens. It is simple, robust, and beautiful to look at and has become a symbol for the Pilgrim movement.*)

To move freely by foot in God's nature gives an opportunity to slow down and experience the surroundings with all of one's senses; to have time to think and be alone or together with others. The churches and life in our beautiful landscapes give opportunities to discover local history as well as culture.

St. Bridget's prayer is the prayer of many pilgrims: "Lord, show me your path and make me willing to walk it!"

### Welcome as Pilgrim and Tourist

The Western Värmland Pilgrim Trail follows the old path as closely as possible. Many of the old tracks have, over time, become main roads and highways. We have tried to avoid them, and as much as possible, we follow gravel roads parallel to the main roads.

The trail is marked by posts with the St. Olof symbol.

### The Pilgrim's Passport

At the churches along the Pilgrim Trail and in some other places one can get the Pilgrim's passport stamped. If you have walked the last 100 km, (or biked the last 200 km) to Trondheim and the Nidaros dome, you can ask for an Olof letter at the Nidaros Pilegrimsgård as confirmation that you have completed the trail. Show your Pilgrim's passport and the stamps you have collected along the route as proof and documentation.

### Lurö

For a long time, there have been stories about the monastery on Lurö. Excavations have shown a Romanesque church with a half circular apse. Coins of Norwegian origin from the time between AD 1177-1202 have been found. Documents are also telling about Cistercian monks who came here in mid-12<sup>th</sup> century. On the island are also names with assumed connections to pilgrims: Klosterön (Monastery Island), Stora and Lilla Korsön (Large and Small Cross Island), Munkstackarna (Poor Monks), Munkkällan (the Monks' Well). Today people pilgrimage here to walk, to experience the calmness, its history, and the spectacular nature.

### Värmlandsnäs

This area has a lot of interesting ancient remains, farms, place names and an agricultural landscape with a long continuity/heritage. Värmlandsnäs is one of the densest areas when it comes to ancient remains in Värmland.

### Ekenäs

At the southern end of Ladholmen there are wind shelters and grilling areas with a spectacular view over the great Lake Vänern, Lurö archipelago, the national park Djurö to the East and Kinnekulle in the south. Åkershus swimming area is shallow with a soft sandy lake bottom.

### Eskilsäter's Church

In Eskilsäter you will find the only church in Värmland with a tower from the Middle Ages. The oldest part was built before AD 1350. Below the church's chancel area there are traces from an older church with a Romanesque apse from about AD 1050.

### Millesvik's Church

The oldest part of Millesvik's church is the long house on the western side of the building. Some mortar on the wall of the medieval church is preserved. A short distance from the church is a burial ground from the Iron Age.

### Ölserud's Church

The church in Ölserud is first mentioned in manuscripts from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but the church likely has a much older history. At a site nearby once stood an older church. Like many other churches on Värmlandsnäs it was built in an area with grave sites from the Iron Age. The current church was built between 1663-68.

### Botilsäter's Church

This church dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, based on preserved parts of the walls and coins found there. A preserved tympanic stone, i.e., an ornate stone, is also dated 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was probably placed over the portal on the southern side of the long house. It can now be seen at the Värmland museum

in Karlstad. The baptismal font is interesting from a style perspective. It comes from the west gothic school Skälunda with roots in England and is dated 12<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Huggenäs' Church

It is said that an older church from the 13<sup>th</sup> century was located at UGGLEBERG. In 1842 it joined Huggenäs South Ny parish and the first church was abandoned. In South Ny Church there is a Medieval crucifix left from Huggenäs. South Ny Church is East of the current trail.

#### By Church

The first time By church is mentioned is in a parchment letter written February 24, 1353. A crucifix from the 13<sup>th</sup> century tells us that there probably has been a church on site since the early Middle Ages. The current church was built during the 1760's.

#### Säfte Church

In 1882 a decision was made to build a church in Säfte. It wasn't built until 1965. The window in the chancel area as well as the window by the baptismal font are both in glass mosaic and made by Sven "X-et" Erixson. Close to the church is the grave site of Olof Trätälja, who according to legend, was one of the Viking kings who cultivated the grounds in the Säfte village Ad. 600.

#### Kila Church

Kila Church is a stone-built church from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The baptismal font is dated to 1250. The drainage hole in the bottom indicates this.

The larger church bell is from about AD 1350 and is the only one in Svealand (center part of Sweden) with runic writings: "Petrus kuratus," "Peter senior minister (vicar)."

On the way to Kila church, you will pass by Drössviken, a beautiful place for rest with benches, wind shelter and a place for swimming.

#### The homestead of von Echstedt

The trail continues from Kila church west around Lake Summeln. North of the lake is the homestead of von Echstedt, a well-preserved facility from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. On the outside, it is a strictly Carolinian mansion, but on the inside graceful Rococo. Here is also an apple orchard and an herbal garden.

#### Nysäter

In this community there are a lot of interesting buildings and other places to see. By the market sheds trade has been conducted since 1756 and is still going on, at the end of August every year.

Nearby Kungshögen (the King's hill) dates to sometime between AD 800-1050. Here is also a forge, utility and hometown museum, a local craft shop with a café. By the shore of Byälven is Värmland's Viking Center.

#### Hösås Nature preserve

Hösås is a small nature preserve with one of few clusters of ash tree groves in Värmland. From the climb you can see miles away; to the West from Nysäter along the trail on the East side of the road. Shortly before Gillberga church, a short distance from the trail, is Njordstorps permaculture farm.

#### Gillberga Church

Gillberga church is next to a heathen burial ground and is extremely archaic for the area. There is no room for any burial sites/graves on the northern side of the church.

On the other side of the northern church wall is a field with graves from the Iron Age.

Forming part of the current church is an older Romanesque stone church, a so-called apse church, built around the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. The smaller of the church's two bells could be from that time as well.

Gillberga is a special monument to the Reformation in Värmland. In May of 1540, came the “church minister” of King Gustav Vasa, Georg Norman, and his entourage on a visit. He came in the name of the Reformation to confiscate anything valuable in the church. Only the chalice and the paten were left behind. Everything else was packed up in bags and sent to the King’s silver chamber.

Gillberga was then the wealthiest parish in all Värmland. The Reformation put an end to this and the 500 years of pilgrimage, which had been sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church, was suspended. Behind the Gillberga church, on the lake, is a bird sanctuary.

#### Högsäter’s Tumulus

Close to the trail is one of four so-called Kings piles. The tumulus has a dominating location by the Byälven (the “village river”) just above the last remaining ferry boat in Värmland. The tumulus ends a plateau where once one or more longhouses stood. Archaeological examination has dated the buildings to the Viking Age. The trail goes through Häljebol. From Hällsbäck in Gillberga is the old route to Rasterud and on to Stömne.

#### Stömne

In Stömne is the Hammar climb, a highly situated ancient castle from the Iron Age, with a gorgeous view. In Stömne there is also a nature preserve of oak trees.

#### Stavnäs church

This church is a stone church, built in 1699-1705. The church is not along the trail but can be seen from the trail on the other side of Glafs fjorden.

#### Sölje

A large fortress/ancient castle is at West Rud. Sölje is an old junction and has a history of glass manufacturing.

#### Gladisvall

The Glava old church site by Fors is a special point on the Pilgrim trail from Västergötland through Western Värmland. The church was probably dedicated to St. Mary and the Glava Madonna, which now stands in the current church, and dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

On this site are also remnants from what once thought to have been a shelter for the pilgrims.

At Gladisvall meet several trails from Värmlandsnäs, Edsleskog and Järnskog. From here in Glava they continue to Älgå.

There was not enough room by the medieval church for more graves, hence a new burial ground was established east of the main road.

#### Glava homestead

The homestead farm is from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is located on a hill next to Gladisvall. On the homestead's grounds is an herbal garden with medicinal herbs and spices. Here is also a slate museum with Glava slates.

#### Lövåsudden

On the cape is “Jätterösa”, the biggest Bronze Age cairn in Värmland. In this cairn are remnants of stone coffins.

#### Glava church

The current church was built between 1735-1738. The small bell in the tower was cast and molded in 1724 and has probably been used at the church in Gladisvall.

The altar piece is probably also from the church in Gladisvall, as well as the Madonna figure. The baptismal font dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Take note of the richly painted ceiling in the church.

Across from the church is Glava parish store where you can buy locally made crafts and a cup of coffee and waffles.

#### Källars Homestead in Hult

This house, built in 1789, belonged once to a wealthy farmer. The last person to live here died in 1950. Her children donated the house to Glava Homestead Association. All inventories from the early 1900's are still in place where the woman left them.

#### Älgå church

The church was built between 1724-1726. It is one of Värmland's most well-known and well-preserved baroque churches. Earlier, on the premises, stood a wooden church, mentioned in 1692. The baptismal font, made of soapstone, dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Other old objects from Älgå church can be seen at Sägudden Museum in Arvika: a Madonna sculpture from the 14<sup>th</sup> century made of hardwood, a triumph crucifix from the same time, an altar piece from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and a lily stone.

#### Älgå Nail Forge

The forge was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and was at the time replacing an older forge that had been destroyed in a fire. It is one of few preserved nail forges in the Nordic countries. It is open to the public during the Summer.

#### Älgå Homestead and Älgå countryside/rural Museum

In Älgå port warehouse one can see rural objects from the time when self-catering was the norm. A few items not listed as cultural objects from the early church are also available here.

#### Sulvik

In the Middle Ages, Sulvik was a junction and a marketplace where the hiking trail and the water trail met. Near Sulvik there is an old tumulus from the Iron Age.

#### Torgeir's Well

The well is in Ränkesed, shortly northwest of Sulvik. It has also been called St. Olof's well. Torgeir or Torger, who is mentioned in Håkon Håkonson's fairy tale, is said to have baptized heathens during the 12th century.

#### Boda war cemetery

On a hill in Boda, 3 km north of Koppom, was about a hundred soldiers from the Dala regiment buried. They had died from field sickness during 1808-1809. The inscription on the stone monument, which is enclosed with iron chains and cannons, states:

It was here their last sighs were sent.

It was here their lives were spent.

The people who our burden carried,  
now are here buried.

long before our time.

#### The Mumin Valley

The Nature preserve Mumin Valley in Koppom is about +17 acres. Here one can see, among other things, gut sheep and other endangered species of Swedish sheep, which are all helping out to keep the landscape open and inviting. Koppom Rosary is also located here.

### Järnskog's church

Järnskog's church is south of Koppom. It was inaugurated in 1699, but it wasn't until 1729 that the tower was finished. The sacristy was added on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The large chandelier is made with a soap knife by Olof in Kyrkebyn. Of the three bells in the tower, the smallest one is the oldest, molded in 1557.

### Järnskog homestead and the Museum "Beredskapsåra" (the year of preparedness)

From the trail, it is not far to Järnskog homestead and the Museum Beredskapsåra. The homestead is from the early 1800's. The Museum shows the environment from the 1940's together with a photo exhibit from the time when people prepared for war. Here is also an old country trade called "Hiombua". Guided tours can be negotiated here.

### Stommen's old church place

Järnskog's old church place is farther west, near Stommen and Beted. Stone posts with chains in between enclose the location, and sparsely spread stones mark the church's foundation. A memorial stone is also there but does not reveal anything about when the first church was built. However, a note in the register over the clock tax from 1531 indicates it comes from the same time as Skillingmark's church, i.e., mid-14<sup>th</sup> century.

### Skillingmark's Homestead

This house is also called "the Ghost farm." It carries a dark and tragic story. Since the 1950's the farm has been a holding place for ghost hunters who have experienced everything from knockings to creaking steps on the floor to crying babies and other unexplainable sounds.

### Skillingmark's church

Skillingmark's church is a wooden church built in 1689. The baptismal font is made of soapstone in one piece and is dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the church one can find Karl XII's Bibles (i.e., translations from that time), a medieval tin bowl, a chandelier of wood from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and a church bump from 1803.

### Klevene old church place

From the time 1350 to 1689 stood Skillingmark's church at Klevene old church place, at cape Klevene in Sundshagen.

### Fågelåsen (Birds ridge) and the Bryelse cave

The highest point in Skillingmark is 323 m (about 1059.71 ft) above sea level. On the way up the hill, one passes the Bryelse cave. It is formed by the water coming down the hill that freezes into ice. The best time to see this is in March-April.

### Riksröse # 56

The National cairn #56. This is the border between Sweden and Norway. The trail now continues on the Norwegian side. It is approx. 6 km to Vestmarka church which dates from the 1880's.

Practical things within Säffle/Arvika/Eda community

More information can be found on our websites:

www.

Or use the QR-code:

Boat trips

Lodging

Eating places/Food

Grocery stores

Swimming areas

Toilets

The Pilgrim passport is available at the following places: