

Viking Trivia

- The word 'Viking' is a job description, not a race. A Vikingr was essentially a pirate. There is also an abstract noun *viking*, meaning 'the act of going raiding overseas', hence the phrase 'going a-viking'.
- Only one complete Viking helmet has ever been found. The so-called Gjermundbu helmet was discovered in a grave in south Norway. It did not have horns.
- Russia was essentially founded as a by-product of slave raids by Vikings traveling between Scandinavia and the Byzantine Empire in the ninth century. These Vikings of predominantly Swedish origins were known as the Rus, a word perhaps derived from an Old Norse term for 'the men who row'.
- *Ball, happy, knife, law, run, skill, slaughter, sky, and trust* are all examples of English words of Old Norse origin.
- The average speed of a Viking ship lay in the range of 5–10 knots (5.7-11.5mph) and the maximum speed of a longship under favourable conditions was around 15 knots (about 17mph)
- Vikings were used as bodyguards and in private armies by some Byzantine emperors. They were called Varangians but earned the nickname the 'Emperor's wineskins' because of their heavy drinking.
- Viking ships were made of Ash, Elm, Pine, Larch and several other woods. However, the greatest warships were always made from Oak, not only because of the great strength of the timber, but also because the tree was sacred to their chief God Odin.

- Vikings founded a settlement in North America almost 500 years before Columbus "discovered" the New World. It is believed they did not get along with the natives (whom they called 'Skrælings'), which is why the settlement did not last.
- The first recorded Viking raid on the British Isles was in 793, when, according to the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, 'the harrying of the heathen miserably destroyed God's church in Lindisfarne by rapine and slaughter.'
- Bluetooth technology is named after a tenth-century king of Denmark and Norway, Harald Bluetooth. Harald was known for uniting warring tribes in Denmark and Norway. The implication is that Bluetooth does the same with various technologies.
- In 9th century England, Viking expansion/settlement was so widespread that the 'Danelaw' came to dominate roughly the area to the north of an imaginary line drawn between London and Chester.
- Vikings used ravens or crows to navigate. For example, they could release them one at a time as they sailed westward and if the bird flew back along the course from which they had come, the ships continued due west. If the raven flew a different way, the ship could change course, following its flight path in search of land.
- Some Viking ships were up to thirty-six meters in length and could have carried more than one hundred warriors. However, most warships were more likely to be around seventeen meters long and carry a crew of around thirty. They had evocative names such as *Long Serpent*, *Great Dragon*, and *Fjord-Elk*.
- Dublin was founded by Viking raiders in the ninth century.

- The replica Viking ship *Sea Stallion* was based on a ship which was built in 1042 and sank in the Roskilde fjord at the end of the 11th Century. The replica was constructed from about 300 oak trees and using 7,000 iron nails and rivets.

- Viking PR! Exiled from Iceland for murder, Erik the Red founded a colony on a large snow-and ice-covered island he discovered in 982 A.D. To attract his fellow Norsemen to the place he gave it the pleasant-sounding name of Greenland. Some Twenty-five ships filled with eager settlers sailed for the island.

- Established in 930AD by ruling chiefs, The Alþingi (Althing) in Iceland is often referred to as the world's oldest existing parliament. Viking chiefs and their people convened at Þingvellir each summer to amend laws, settle disputes and appoint juries to judge lawsuits.

- Four of our days of the week derive from Old Norse language and culture. Tuesday comes from "Tyr's day," Tyr being the Norse god of heroic glory. Wednesday is "Wodin's Day," an Anglo spelling of Odin's day. Thursday is "Thor's day," and Friday is "Freyja's day," Freyja (meaning The Lady) being the goddess of love, fertility and magic.