Archaeology of Denmark and Sweden

23 – 30 September 2019

from £2295.00

The neighbouring Nordic nations of Sweden and Denmark offer a host of archaeological and historical sites, from Neolithic megaliths to Viking forts, from fairytale castles to a magnificent royal warship.

We begin in Uppsala in Sweden, with visits to the archaeological sites at Gamla Uppsala and Anundshög and the baroque Skokloster Castle. In Stockholm we tour the excellent Historical Museum and visit the Vasa Museum, which houses the heavily armed and richly decorated royal warship which sank on its maiden voyage in 1628.

A relaxing high-speed rail journey follows as we travel from Stockholm to Malmö in the south of Sweden. Here we tour the Osterlen region, with visits to the megalithic monuments known as Ales Stenar before crossing the Öresund Bridge to Copenhagen. We have a day touring the Danish capital, including the renaissance castle of Rosenborg Slot, then transfer to Aarhus in mainland Denmark. From here we visit the Moesgård Viking Museum and the Viking Castle at Fyrkat, learning much about the real story behind those notorious Norsemen. We also come face to face with some former inhabitants of the region as we visit Silkeborg Museum, home to the ‘bog bodies’, the amazingly well-preserved remains of a man and woman who died here around 350BC.
**Itinerary**

**Monday 23 September 2019**
We depart this morning on a direct flight from Manchester to Stockholm Arlanda in **Sweden** *(provisional times with SAS: 0945/1345).* On arrival we transfer by coach to Uppsala and a visit to the archaeological site at **Gamla Uppsala**. People have been buried in Gamla Uppsala for 2,000 years, since the area rose above water. Originally there were between 2,000 and 3,000 mounds or barrows in the area but most have become farmland, gardens and quarries. Today only 250 remain, the most noteworthy of these being the three **Royal Mounds**. According to ancient mythology and folklore, it was the three gods Thor, Odin and Freyr who lay here but in the 19th and 20th centuries they were thought to hold the remains of three kings of the legendary House of Ynglings. They are dated to the 5th and 6th centuries and are Sweden's oldest national symbols, often depicted in drawings and paintings. Excavations have thrown up important finds including fragments of decorated bronze panels which probably adorned a helmet of a similar type to the one found in Sutton Hoo in England, along gold ornamentation, several glass beakers, a board game, a comb and a honing stone.

We continue to our hotel in Uppsala, where a welcome drink and dinner are served in the evening.

**Tuesday 24 September 2019**
After breakfast we depart by coach for a visit to the archaeological site at **Anundshög** near Västerås. 9 metres high with a diameter of 64 metres, Anundshög is Sweden's largest burial mound and dates from the 10th century AD. The mound is built on a foundation of clay on which the dead were cremated. The remains were then covered with a mound of stones, which was covered by turf and earth. The prehistoric remains around Anundshög show clearly that the area was the hub of a power centre during the Iron Age, from around 500 BC to around 1050 AD. The visible remains include ship settings (stones laid out in the shape of a ship), a unique rune stone and many standing stones which mark graves.

We continue to **Skokloster Castle** near Sigtuna, considered to be one of the great castles of Baroque Europe. Built between 1654 and 1676, Skokloster is a monument to the Swedish Age of Greatness – a period in the middle of the seventeenth century when Sweden expanded to become one of the major powers in Europe. After the owner of Skokloster Castle, General Carl Gustaf Wrangel, died in 1676 the castle was never really completed and the banqueting hall remains in the exact same condition, tools included, as the builders left it the day Wrangel died. The rest of the castle has also remained amazingly untouched for more than 300 years, giving this building a unique authenticity. The rooms are filled with items that Wrangel and subsequent owners collected such as armoury, books, silver and textiles, as well as some artefacts from South America.

We return to our hotel in Uppsala, where dinner is served in the evening.

**Wednesday 25 September 2019**
After breakfast we check out of our hotel and depart for the Swedish capital **Stockholm**, where we visit the **Vasa Museum**. The Swedish warship **Vasa** was built 1626-1628 and no expense was spared in decorating and equipping the ship, which was also one of the largest and most heavily armed warships of its time. Unfortunately she was also built top-heavy with insufficient ballast and foundered and sank after sailing only 1,300 metres into her maiden voyage on 10 August 1628. She fell into obscurity after most of her valuable bronze cannons were salvaged in the 17th century. After she was located again in the late 1950s in a busy shipping lane just outside Stockholm harbour, she was salvaged with a largely intact hull in 1961. During the recovery, thousands of artefacts and the remains of at least 15 people were found in and around the hull. Among the many items found were clothing, weapons, cannons, tools, coins, cutlery, food, drink and six of the ten sails. The artefacts and the ship herself have provided historians with invaluable insight into details of naval warfare, shipbuilding techniques and everyday life in early 17th-century Sweden. An impressive 1:10 scale model shows how the ship would have looked at the time.
Wednesday 25 September 2019 (continued)
Next we visit the **Swedish History Museum**, whose collections comprise archaeological artefacts and ecclesiastical art. The artefacts come from the whole country and all periods of history, from ancient prehistory to the Viking period and the Middle Ages. Unique prehistoric finds are on display, including Sweden’s oldest preserved garment, a cloak over 2000 years old, woven in a shepherd’s check pattern. The Vikings exhibition displays four thousand original objects from the Viking period. It describes daily life a thousand years ago, travel near and far, and tells the stories of men and women, aristocrats, farmers and thralls. A large model of one of Sweden’s first towns, Birka, is also on display. The exhibition also addresses the role the Vikings play in the modern period: how nationalism and Nazism made use of the Viking period in propaganda. The Museum also houses one of the finest collections of medieval ecclesiastical art in Northern Europe in the form of impressive triptychs, baptismal fonts, and gold and silver treasures, all in the atmospheric setting of a rural church dating from the 12th century.

Following our visit we transfer to the railway station for a late afternoon train to Malmö in Skåne, the southernmost province of Sweden. A light meal is served on board in the course of our relaxing journey of around four and a half hours. On arrival in Malmö, we transfer by coach to our hotel.

Evening is at leisure.

Thursday 26 September 2019
After breakfast we depart by coach for a tour of Österlen, the south-eastern part of Skåne. Here we will visit the megaliths known as **Ales Stenar** (Ale’s Stones), which are laid out in a ship setting similar to those at Anundshög. The site has been dated to about 1400 years ago. The two large stones that mark the stem and stern of the ship, and the so-called altar and rudder stones, are pieces of quartzite, thought to have been quarried from a site about 30 km away near Brantevik. The remaining stones are thought to be glacial erratic boulders from the surrounding area. According to Scanian folklore, a legendary king called King Ale lies buried there.

Until its transfer to Sweden in 1658, Skåne belonged to **Denmark**, which is our ultimate destination this afternoon. We cross the strait between the two countries via the **Öresund Bridge**, a combined road and rail link consisting of an 8km bridge, an artificial island and a 5km tunnel, and continue to our hotel in Copenhagen.

Dinner is served in the evening.

Friday 27 September 2019
Following breakfast this morning we tour Copenhagen, beginning with a visit to **Rosenborg Slot**. The castle was originally built as a country summerhouse in 1606 and is an example of King Christian IV’s many architectural projects. It was built in the Dutch Renaissance style, typical of Danish buildings during this period, and has been expanded several times, finally evolving into its present condition by 1624. The castle was used by Danish regents as a royal residence until around 1710. After the reign of Frederik IV, Rosenborg was used as a royal residence only twice, and both these times were during emergencies. The first time was after Christiansborg Palace burned down in 1794, and the second time was during the British attack on Copenhagen in 1801. Today the castle houses a museum exhibiting the Royal Collections, artefacts spanning a breadth of royal Danish culture, from the late 16th century of Christian IV to the 19th century.

We continue to the **National Museum of Denmark** which chronicles 14,000 years of Danish history, from the reindeer-hunters of the Ice Age to the Vikings and works of art created in praise of God in the Middle Ages, when the church played a huge role in Danish life. Danish coins from Viking times to the present and coins from ancient Rome and Greece, as well as examples of the coinage and currencies of other cultures are exhibited. Additionally, the museum sponsors SILA - The Greenland Research Centre at the National Museum of Denmark to further archaeological and anthropological research in Greenland.
Friday 27 September 2019 (continued)
Finally today we visit the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, an art museum built around the personal collection of Carl Jacobsen (1842–1914), the son of the founder of the Carlsberg Breweries. Primarily a sculpture museum as indicated by the name, the focal point of the museum is antique sculpture from the ancient cultures around the Mediterranean including Egypt, Rome and Greece, as well as more modern sculptures such as a collection of Rodin works which is considered the most important outside France. However, the museum is equally noted for its collection of painting that includes an extensive collection of French impressionists and Post-impressionists as well as Danish Golden Age paintings.

We return to our hotel. Dinner is served in a local restaurant this evening.

Saturday 28 September 2019
After breakfast we depart for a visit to Frederiksborg Slot, Hillerød. This Renaissance palace, the largest in Scandinavia, was built as a royal residence for King Christian IV and is now a museum of national history. The current edifice replaced a previous castle erected by Frederik II and is located on three small islands in the middle of Palace Lake (Slotsøen), adjoined by a large formal garden in the Baroque style.

We then head for Aarhus in Jutland (mainland Denmark) travelling by way of the Great Belt Bridge, one of the longest suspension bridges in the world, which connects the islands of Zealand and Funen.

On arrival in Aarhus we continue to our hotel, where dinner is served in the evening.

Sunday 29 September 2019
This morning, after breakfast, we visit the Viking Museum, part of the Moesgård Museum, located on the spot where the Vikings founded Aarhus some 1200 years ago. Since it opened around 40 years ago, the museum has seen the addition of a number of new artefacts, including a well-preserved framed well of the type used in the Viking Age, and a long list of magnificent Viking Age finds uncovered during excavations on the museum site and in other parts of Aarhus. The exhibition also displays a copy of the ‘Hørningstenen’ runic stone which was found in 1849 along the old road between Jelling and Aarhus, which may well have been where it was erected originally.

In the afternoon, we depart for a visit to Fyrkat, thought to be the oldest of Denmark's Viking ring castles, which have been dated to the reign of King Harald Bluetooth, who died in 986. It is built on a narrow piece of land with a river on one side and swampy area on the other and could therefore have controlled the traffic on the main land route between Alborg and Aarhus. It is designed as an exact circle with four gates opposite each other and connected by two wooden roads that cross in a right angle in the exact middle of the fort. A circle road gave access to the wall. In each of the four quarters stood four Longhouses of the same design arranged in a square with a smaller house in the middle. A modern reconstruction outside the fort of one of these longhouses gives a good impression of the original buildings.
Sunday 29 September 2019 (continued)
We continue to the Silkeborg Museum, whose principal exhibits are the remarkable ‘bog bodies’, known as Tollund Man and Elling Woman. The body of the man was discovered in the Bjældskovdal bog some 10 km west of Silkeborg in 1950 by the brothers Emil and Viggo Højgård and was so well-preserved that their immediate reaction was to call the police and report a murder. Expert examination subsequently determined that this was in fact the body of a man who died around 350 BC, i.e. early Iron Age. His age is estimated to be 40 years; his body height of 161 cm makes him a somewhat small man, even in his time. He is clean-shaven and his hair was cut short. When we see stubble on his face today, it is due to the fact that he did not shave on the last day of his life, and his skin shrank a bit in the bog and during the preservation process. The reddish colour of his hair and beard is caused by the bog water. Elling Woman is a bog body dating to around the same time as Tollund Man. She was found in 1938 50 m from the spot where Tollund Man appeared 12 years later. Both people had been hanged but the subsequent dignified and respectful burials suggest that they may have been sacrificed to a god or gods. We return to our hotel in Aarhus, where dinner is served in the evening.

Monday 30 September 2019
After breakfast we depart for visit to the archaeological site at Jelling, which is inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as an outstanding example of the Pagan Nordic culture. Jelling was a royal monument during the reigns of Gorm, and his son Harald Bluetooth, in the 10th century, and may possibly pre-date this era. The complex consists of two flat topped mounds, 70 metres in diameter and up to 11 metres high, which are almost identical in shape and size and construction, being built of turf, carefully stacked in even layers, with the grass side facing downwards. After introducing Christianity into Denmark, and integrating Norway with the country, Harald Bluetooth proclaimed his achievements by erecting an inscribed stone between the two mounds and building the first wooden church at Jelling. On the south-west face is the earliest depiction of Christ in Scandinavia, with an inscription relating to the conversion of the Danes to Christianity between 953 and 965. A small simple church of whitewashed stone is on the site of at least three earlier wooden churches, all of which were destroyed by fire. Excavations in 2006 have revealed evidence of a magnificent palisade surrounding the monument, and parts of a ship setting of unknown dimension.

Following this, our final visit, we continue to Copenhagen airport in time to check in for our evening flight back to Manchester (provisional times with SAS: 1720/1815).

Included in the price
- Seven nights’ accommodation on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis: two nights Uppsala, one night Malmö, two nights Copenhagen and two nights Aarhus
- Return flights from Manchester to Stockholm and Copenhagen to Manchester
- Return coach transfers from York to Manchester Airport and comfortable coaching in Sweden and Denmark
- Standard class rail journey from Stockholm to Malmö
- Visits to the archaeological sites at Gamla Uppsala and Anundshög; Skokloster Castle; the Vasa Museum and the Swedish History Museum, Stockholm; Ales Stenar megaliths; Rosenborg Slot, the National Museum and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen; Frederiksborg Slot, Roskilde; Moesgård Viking Museum, the Silkeborg Museum ‘bog bodies’, the archaeological sites at Jelling and Fyrkat (Viking castle)
- Services of Clive Warsop as tour manager
- Porterage and trips

Not included (per person)
- Single room supplement £455.00
- Insurance TBA