

# NYDALA ABBEY

**N**ydala Abbey is one of seventeen Cistercian monasteries founded in Sweden between the 1140s and the end of the 1200s. The order was established in France by Benedictine monks who wanted to return to the original strict rules of poverty, hard work and chastity, which had become relaxed over the past 600 years. The new monasteries should preferably be located in isolated areas and would receive their income mainly from agriculture and donations.

Nydala was founded in 1143, and the church took more than 100 years to build. As one of the few monasteries that really were placed in a desolate area, Nydala experienced real difficulties in financing the building. As late as 1258, the inhabitants on Gotland and Öland were urged to support the monastery with gifts, since the poverty and barrenness of the area stopped the church building from being completed. After the inauguration of the magnificent abbey in 1266, donations increased, and the monastery became wealthier. Just before the reformation in the early 16th century, Nydala was the Cistercian monastery that paid most tax to the Crown.

At the time of the reformation, when Sweden became a Protestant country, all the properties of the monastery were appropriated by the Crown. The monastery was burnt down in 1568, in connection with the Nordic seven-year war. The ranges were demolished, and the church nave became a ruin. At the end of the 17th century, the eastern part of the church was rebuilt, now as a parish church for Nydala.

The abbey with its four ranges can now only be imagined when looking at the square elevation in the park, south of the present churchyard. Next to the church is the so called Peasant Church from the early Middle Ages, whose function is uncertain.

It is not known what the place was called before the abbey was built. The name Nydala can be derived from the mother monastery Clairvaux, or Clara vallis in Latin, which means the Light Valley. The monks called their new home Nova vallis or the New Valley.



The chancel in Nydala Abbey with a window arrangement that is typical for Cistercian monasteries. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



## HIDDEN GEM 46



### HOW TO GET HERE

Take Road 127 between Vrigstad and Värnamo. Sign-posted from the road, approx. 24 km from Värnamo or 11 km from Vrigstad.

Coordinates:  
6353509 / 460283 (SWE-REF  
99 TM) // N 57° 19'  
21.99", E 14° 20' 25.73"  
(WGS84)



Nydala Abbey and Nydala Manor seen from the south-west. Photo: Leif Gustavsson/L.G.foto.

JÖNKÖPINGS LÄNS  
MUSEUM

036-30 18 00 ▪ www.jkpglm.se





## 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

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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

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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.

