

NÄS CASTLE RUINS

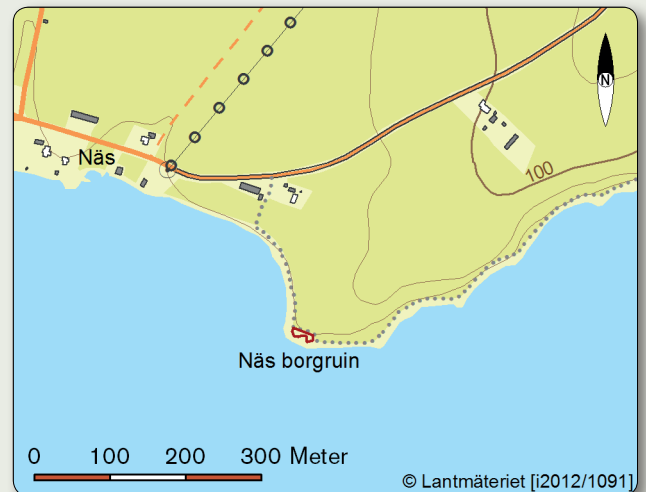
On Visingsö's south-eastern promontory stand the ruins of one of the oldest non-church stone buildings in Sweden. Näs Castle dates back to the first half of the 12th century, and the building was probably initiated by king Sverker I the Elder or his son Karl Sverkersson. They belonged to the House of Sverker, who owned a lot of land on Visingsö. This may be why the castle was built on the island. But the location was also strategic as it enabled monitoring of shipping activities in this part of Lake Vättern. Furthermore, building a castle was a way of manifesting your status and power.

At the time of the castle construction, a struggle for royal power raged in Sweden. The fighting parties were the House of Sverker from Östergötland and the House of Eric from Västergötland. During the 12th and 13th centuries, they 'took turns' at holding the position of power and used the castle as residence on special occasions. Many Swedish kings died on Visingsö: Karl Sverkersson in 1167, Erik Knutsson in 1216, and Sverker II the Younger in 1222. Magnus III Ladulås also died here, and he was the last king at the castle. After his death in 1290, a feud developed between his sons, and civil war broke out. It was during the fighting in 1318 that the castle was attacked and destroyed.

In the early 1900s, the remains of Näs Castle were investigated and restored. This includes a round tower and a square tower used for habitation. Between the towers is the wall of a hall building. The ground floor of the residential tower has vaulted ceilings and was probably used as a storehouse. The first floor was the private quarters of the castle lord and contained a privy. The latrine chute is still visible on the outside wall. It is not known what the rest of the castle looked like since most of it has eroded into the lake. Dives and limited archaeological investigations have shown that there were jetties to the west of the castle and some buildings in front of it. However, there is no evidence of palisades or moats.



A weight in the shape of a bronze horse was found by divers close to the castle. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 60



HOW TO GET HERE

From the harbour on Visingsö: Follow Hamnvägen past the Brahe Church to the north-south main road. Follow the signs southwards for "Näs", approx. 5 km, and park by the cowshed. Follow the path towards the castle, approx. 250 m.

Coordinates:
N 6428717 / E 458096
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°
59' 53.10", E 14° 17' 27.95"
(WGS84)



View from the lake of the castle ruins at Näs. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.

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

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

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.

