

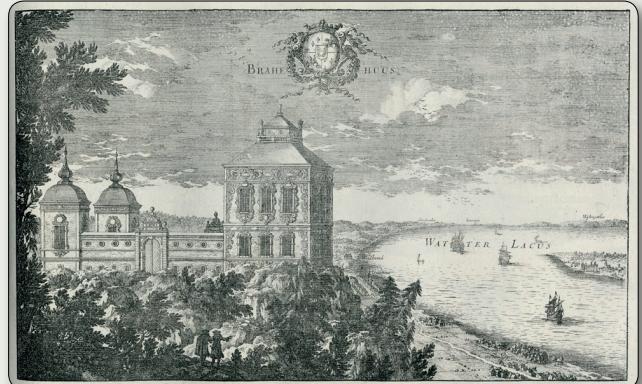
BRAHEHUS CASTLE RUINS

The ruins of count Per Brahe the Younger's luxury castle is situated along the motorway on the Vätterbranten slope and is one of the most visited ancient monuments in Sweden. Brahehus forms the eastern tip of a triangle comprising three castles; Västanå is the southern tip, and the Brahe family's main seat Visingsborg on Visingsö is the western tip.

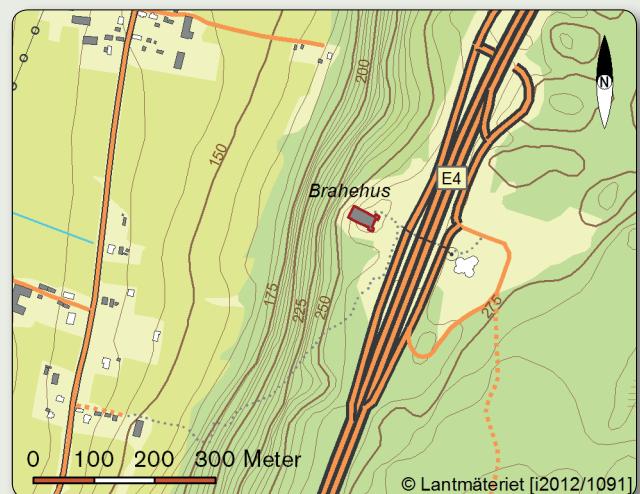
This triangle of castles around Gränna was like a scenography for the count. With memories from travels in his youth in German and Italian principalities he created his own princely landscape in the heart of the county of Visingsborg. Brahe was most likely inspired by the castles in the Rhine Valley when he decided to build Brahehus on a hilltop. When the difficult building commenced in 1638, it was intended as a future dower house for his wife. But she died just before it was finished in 1651. Brahehus was never inhabited, but served as a spectacular venue for entertaining guests. The VIPs of the time were served wine and food, while looking out on Visingsö island and the town Brahe-Gränna founded by the count. The architecture was inspired by Italian Renaissance with symmetrical constructions and roof lanterns (glass panelling cupolas). Facades were richly painted in bright colours by the count's own court painter Johan Werner, with scenes from Roman mythology.

The kitchen was on the ground floor, while rooms for entertaining and living quarters were on the first floor. Many paintings were displayed here, mostly portraits of forebears, as ancestry was important among the aristocracy during the Swedish Empire. In the advance fortification, the northern tower housed a small guard of twelve men. The same year that Per Brahe died, 1680, the county was recovered by the Crown. What the heirs couldn't save and take to other castles was sold at auction. The empty Brahehus was destroyed in a fire in 1708.

The ruined castle soon became an attraction for people travelling past, and there are many pictures showing its romantic decline. The first restoration took place in the 1910s, and the most recent renovations were completed in 2012.



Brahehus Castle depicted in Erik Dahlberg's propaganda publication *Suecia Antiqua*. The engraving is not far from the truth even if the dimensions are somewhat exaggerated.



HIDDEN GEM 61



HOW TO GET HERE

From Gränna: Drive north on the E4 motorway. Turn off at Brahehus rest and parking area. A footpath goes under the road to the castle ruins.

Coordinates:
N 6434712 / E 470778
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 58°
3' 10.603", E 14° 30' 17.587"
(WGS84)



Brahehus today. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.

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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.