

Meet the VIKINGS!

Who exactly were these legendary warriors that first invaded our shores in 793AD?

Originally from Scandinavia (now Denmark, Norway and Sweden), the mighty Vikings conquered, raided, explored and traded with almost *all* of Europe, and parts of Asia and North America, too! Join us as we travel to Denmark to find out more about them...

VIKING WARRIORS

This hairy hell-raiser is probably what you have in mind when you think of a Viking. **Skilled seafarers** and **fearsome fighters**, Viking warriors risked dangerous sea crossings to raid other countries, and sometimes fought to the death to conquer new lands. Some of these warriors **volunteered** to fight, excited by the idea of riches abroad. Others were **professional** fighters, paid by rulers to protect them. Some were **ordered** to fight by their village chief.

You'll notice there are **no horns on this helmet** – that's because they were added by storytellers many years later to make Vikings sound scarier!

Braided hair and beards stopped hair blowing in a warrior's face during fights!

The crazy guy below is a **berserker**, the most feared of all the fighters. He would battle **without any protective clothing**, shrieking loud cries of abuse as he fought – literally, going **berserk**!

Large **wooden shields** about 1m in diameter protected the warriors' bodies from knee to chin. Many were **painted** to make them look more intimidating. A **rim of metal** or animal skin made them stronger.

Viking warriors believed that they would go to **Valhalla** if they were killed heroically in battle. There, dead fighters would enjoy a great feast.

Warriors carried **swords, spears, bows and arrows, huge metre-long axes and knives**, too. Some of these swords were so loved by their owners that they were given names, such as **Skull-splitter**. Eek!

Wealthier fighters wore protective knee-length **chainmail shirts** made from thousands of interlocking iron rings. But many battled wearing just a helmet and leather shirt.

SUPER SOCIETIES

Not all Vikings were bearded pirates who spent their time battling around Europe! In fact, *most* Vikings lived in a **structured society** and were **peaceful farmers, hunters and fishermen**. Here's a handy 'who's who' guide...

JARLS

After royalty, **jarls** were the wealthiest, most powerful people – many were chiefs.

Better-off Vikings would wear bright reds and blues – the **more colourful** the garment, the more expensive it was.

Once married, Viking women covered their hair with a headscarf.

VIKING WOMEN

Viking women had **more freedom** and **power** than women in other societies at that time. They could own land, ask for a divorce, and be in charge of the farm or house when their husbands were away.

THRALLS

Wealthy Vikings had slaves known as **thralls** to work on their farms and could order them to fight. Some were born in captivity, while others were captured during battles. A thrall could be bought for 300g of silver – that's less than a sword, which went for 500g!

VIKING KINGS

Many small kingdoms made up Viking society, each ruled over by a king. Some kings controlled a few small villages but others – such as the famous **Harald Bluetooth** – ruled huge areas spanning several countries.



KARLS

The largest group of people in Viking society, **karls** were men and women who owned their own farms or rented land off the jarls. Most karls were farmers or fishermen, but many were merchants, craftsmen and traders.



LIVING IN THE PAST

NG KIDS is at **Land of Legends** – a huge open-air museum in **Lejre, Denmark** – to experience life, **Viking-style!**

First, we get kitted out like **karls** in historical garb – **woollen trousers, linen tunics** and leather belts for men and boys, and floor-length **linen** and **woollen** dresses for the women and girls.



Battle training is fun!



In the blacksmith's

The day of our arrival is a Thursday (aka **Thor's Day**), and so in honour of the hammer-wielding **god of thunder**, we venture into the **blacksmith's workshop** and get busy with billows and hammers, crafting axes, knives and coins!

Next up, we transform **fish skins** into purses for coins

and jewellery (yes really!), and have a go **winding yarn** before tucking in to a delicious Viking lunch. **Flatbread, eggs, fish, and pea and mushroom stew** are washed down with water slurped from **animal horns!**



Fish skin is washed and dried before it's used as a material

But we've got to gulp down our pudding (**yoghurt with honey and flowers!**) quickly – because after lunch we're going sailing on a **Viking longship...**



Cooking, Viking-style!



Slurping from a horn!

Turn the page to find out about **Viking ships**