



Why Vikings Sailed to Britain and Where They Settled

KS2 HISTORY

VIKING AGE

Ages 9-14 ⌚ 3 min read

Who Were the Vikings?

The **Vikings** were seafaring warriors from **Scandinavia** (modern-day Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) who lived between roughly **AD 793 and 1066**. They built incredible ships and became famous for their raids, trade, and exploration across Europe and beyond.

Why Did Vikings Sail to Britain?

Vikings had several powerful reasons to sail west towards **Britain**. First, **Scandinavia had limited farmland**, so many Vikings sought new territories where they could settle and grow crops. Second, word spread about the wealth of monasteries and towns in Britain—these places held treasures like gold, silver, and precious items that were relatively undefended.

The Vikings were also skilled boat-builders who created long, narrow ships called **longships**. These vessels were perfect for sailing both oceans and rivers, allowing them to reach deep inland and escape quickly if needed.

Think of it like discovering a neighbour's house is full of valuables and has an unlocked door, while your own garden is too small to grow enough food for your family.

Where Did Vikings Settle?

Vikings didn't just raid Britain—many decided to stay and build new homes. They established settlements across the country, particularly in the **north and east**. The main Viking settlement area became known as the **Danelaw**, a region where Danish Vikings lived and governed according to their own laws.

Key Viking settlements included areas around **Yorkshire, East Anglia**, and **Lincolnshire**. Cities like **York** (called **Jorvik** by the Vikings) became thriving trading centres where Vikings bought and sold goods with merchants from across Europe.

Viking Life in Britain

Rather than simply raiding, many Vikings became farmers, traders, and craftspeople. They married local people, adopted some British customs, and gradually blended with the existing population. Archaeological evidence shows Vikings built houses, workshops, and markets that transformed British towns.

Think of it like a group of exchange students who arrive to study but end up liking the place so much they decide to stay permanently and help build the community.

By the **11th century**, Viking culture had deeply influenced Britain, leaving behind place names, words in the English language, and architectural styles that we can still see today.