



Visby, Gotland



Gotland

# Highlights of Gotland and Öland

The islands of Gotland and Öland, with their sandy beaches, unspoiled countryside, nature reserves and historical sites are renowned summer playgrounds. With a relaxed pace of life, even the shortest stay will leave visitors feeling relaxed and rejuvenated.

## Gotland:

### History:

The medieval walled city of **Visby**, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the primary attraction on Gotland. Surrounded by a 13th century wall, a walking tour of the historic centre is like stepping back in time: cobbled lanes, well-preserved medieval trading houses, 17th and 18th century wooden buildings and an atmosphere of a bygone era awaits. The history of the island, and its Viking ancestry, is told at the **Gotland Historical Museum** in the city. Other sites of interest in Visby include: the fortifications of the medieval cathedral; the lively main square **Stora Torget**; and the botanical garden of **Trädgården**.

Throughout July and culminating in Medieval week (second week of August), Visby is transported back in time to 1361. **Medieval Week** unfolds with music in the streets, medieval food on sale in restaurants, re-enactments and processions, and locals and visitors alike dressed in medieval costume.

### Fårö and Gotska Sandön:

A notable day's excursion from Visby is to the neighbouring island of **Fårö**, accessed by a 10-minute ferry from Farösund. Fårö boasts tranquil fishing villages; beautiful beaches – albeit windswept; large sea-stacks (**raukar**) and the **Skalasand** nature reserve. It is on Fårö that Ingmar Bergman sought inspiration and peace.

North of Fårö, **Gotska Sandön** is the remotest island in the Baltic. Miles of sandy beaches and a peace that is rare nowadays make this a unique spot. The island is accessible by boat from Fårösund between May and September.

### Flora:

Gotland is known among botanists for its unique and rich flora which is the result of the islands lime stone base and a mild climate. A total of 37 species of orchid grow on the island, a wondrous sight when in bloom (May-Aug).

### Activities:

Why not hire a bicycle and discover a different side of Gotland? Cycle along narrow country lanes to small fishing villages, mix with the local residents and discover gems such as **Gnisvärd** and the coastal road from **Djupvik**. Local buses can transport bicycles to and from points of interest for a small charge.

Gotland is also a wonderful island for walking, horse riding, wild swimming and even golf.

### Bird watching:

To the southwest of Visby is the island of **Stora Karlsö**, the second oldest nature reserve in the world. Renowned for its abundance of flora and birdlife, in particular colonies of guillemots and razorbills, this is a magical island to visit; none more so than in late May and early June when thousands of orchids are in bloom.

Gotland has a dense population of eagles: 50 pairs of Golden Eagles, 30 pairs of White Tailed Eagles plus juveniles. **Guided bird watching tours are available.**



Öland



Ölands Slätt

## Öland:

### Nature:

Throughout the year, the landscape of Öland is bursting with life and colour. It starts with the wood anemones in **Halltorps Hage** nature reserve and continues in early summer on the limestone plains of **Stora Alvaret**; before culminating in a yellow autumnal glow when the whole island takes on a new appearance.

For nature lovers, Spring and early Summer are considered to be the best time to visit the island, especially the UNESCO World Heritage Site of **Stora Alvaret** – Hundreds of floral species (including the 32 species of orchids) are in bloom, and in the wetlands birds gather in their thousands, enjoying the warmth and the rich insect life. One of the most well-known bird species here is the Crane, which flies all the way from Africa every Spring.



Glassworks, Gotland

### Annual harvest festival:

In October, the island celebrates harvest at the annual **Skördefesten festival**. Farmers markets, exhibitions and open-days on local estates take place.

### Historical sites:

Öland has over 20 ancient sites and countless rune stones and ancient monuments. Worthy of a visit are the ruins of **Borgholm Castle**; the **Ismantorp fortress**; the Iron Age ring forts of **Gråborg** and **Eketorp**; and the ancient grave sites of **Mysinge** and **Gettlinge**.

### Activities:

The landscape of Öland perfectly lends itself to gentle walking and cycling excursions, in fact the local tourist office has designed a number of routes for visitors to follow. In the north the **Sveaskog's Ecopark** boasts a 40km cycling route, and in the south the **Mörbylangaleden walking trail** passes by the **Stora Alvaret** and the primary cultural and historical sites of the area.

During the summer months, the beaches of Öland attract Swedes and international visitors to their shores. The northern coastline has many sandy beaches of which **Böda Sand** is the most prominent and most popular. Whether basking in sunshine or windswept, during the spring and autumn months, the 500km coastline of Öland is a delight to visit.

### Day excursions:

From Öland it is possible to tour the region of Småland, which is linked to Öland by a 6km bridge, and visit the famed Kingdom of Crystal in Kalmar.

**Notes:** The months of July and August are the height of the tourist season in Sweden. Please note that outside of these months, many attractions are closed or are open for reduced hours. If you have a specific site/museum that you would like to visit, please contact us to check that it will be open during your visit.



Gotska Sandön



Borgholm, Öland