



A farmstead from the Iron Age

In front you see the remains of house 22 m in length – welcome in through the door opening. Directly on the left there may have been small stalls for calves. If you walk to the right you will come to the dwelling which consisted of a single large room. This is how a lot of farmers on Öland lived about 1,500 years ago, in the Iron Age.

“GIANTS’ GRAVES” AND WALLS OF STONE

In the past the people of Öland called remains like these “giants’ graves”. They imagined that giants had been buried there, but we now know that these are houses from the 4th-8th centuries AD. Such houses could be much smaller than the one you see here, but also more than twice as long. People and animals often lived under the same roof, but in separate parts of the house. Here, there was probably room for two families with children and the elderly.

In front of the door opening you see a curved stone wall. The wall may have been part of some kind of porch. There was certainly also a separate food cellar, storage and sheep shelter, which can no longer be seen. If you continue to the far end of the house you can see an approximately 15 m long stone wall built against the house. Perhaps the wall is the remains of an enclosure around a small field or a vegetable patch.

LARGE GRAZING LANDS AND SMALL FIELDS

The farmers on Öland seem to have specialised in sheep and beef cattle. For calves and cows they built special pastures with stone walls which remain to this day. The cattle gave meat and milk but also sheep’s wool and skins with which the farmers could trade. In the farmyards, the pigs with their piglets rooted in the soil, the hens foraged and the horse grazed in the enclosure. Dogs guarded the farmyard, where the cats did their best to keep away mice and rats.

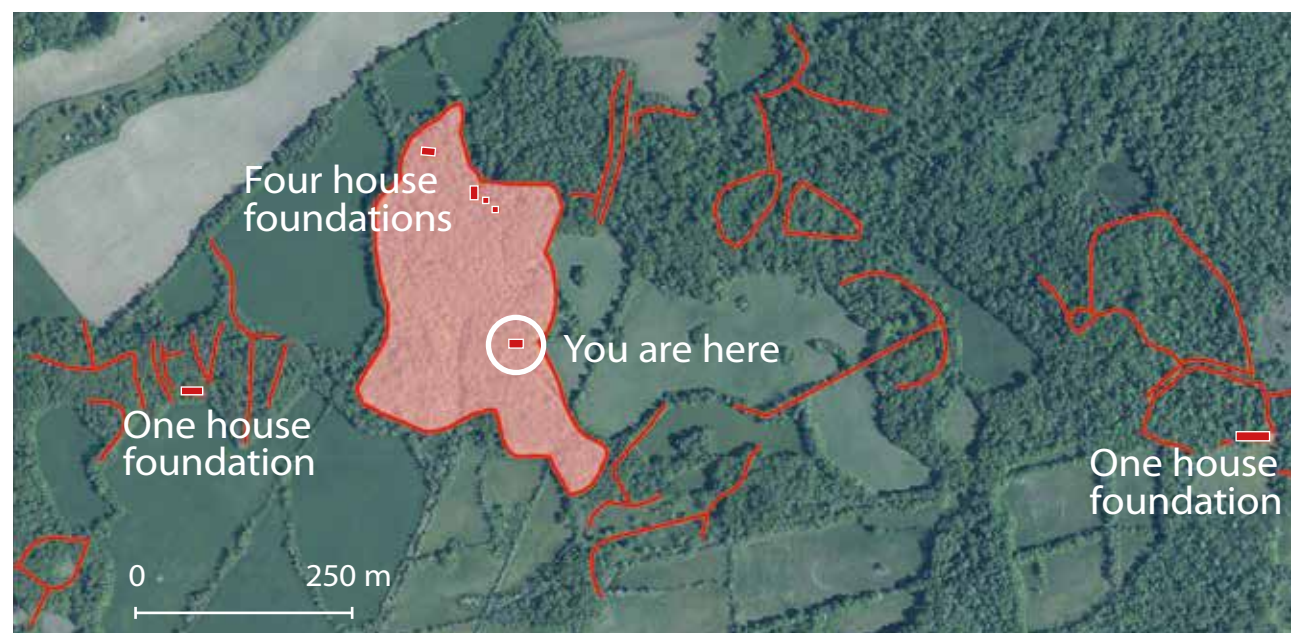
In the Iron Age, practically all the land on Öland was utilised. Most villages had 10–15 farms, like here in Karum including Karås. The farms were spread out, every farm used roughly 10–20 hectares of land. Most was grazing land – only 1–2 hectares comprised fields. 1 hectare equals about 2 football pitches. The farmers worked the fields with ards, an implement that scratched furrows in the soil (also known as a scratch plough). The ard seems to have worked well on Öland – here the ard remained in use until the end of the 19th century.



Photo: Skäftekärr Archaeological Museum.

This is what the house in front of you may have looked like. The dwelling section was heated by a fireplace and the smoke made its way out through a hole in the ceiling. Through it, some daylight came into the house, which lacked windows.

The house on the picture is a reconstruction and stands at Skäftekärr Archaeological Open-Air Museum in the north of Öland. There too lies Rosendal Iron Age village – be sure to pay a visit, stroll among all the remains and learn more about the Iron Age.

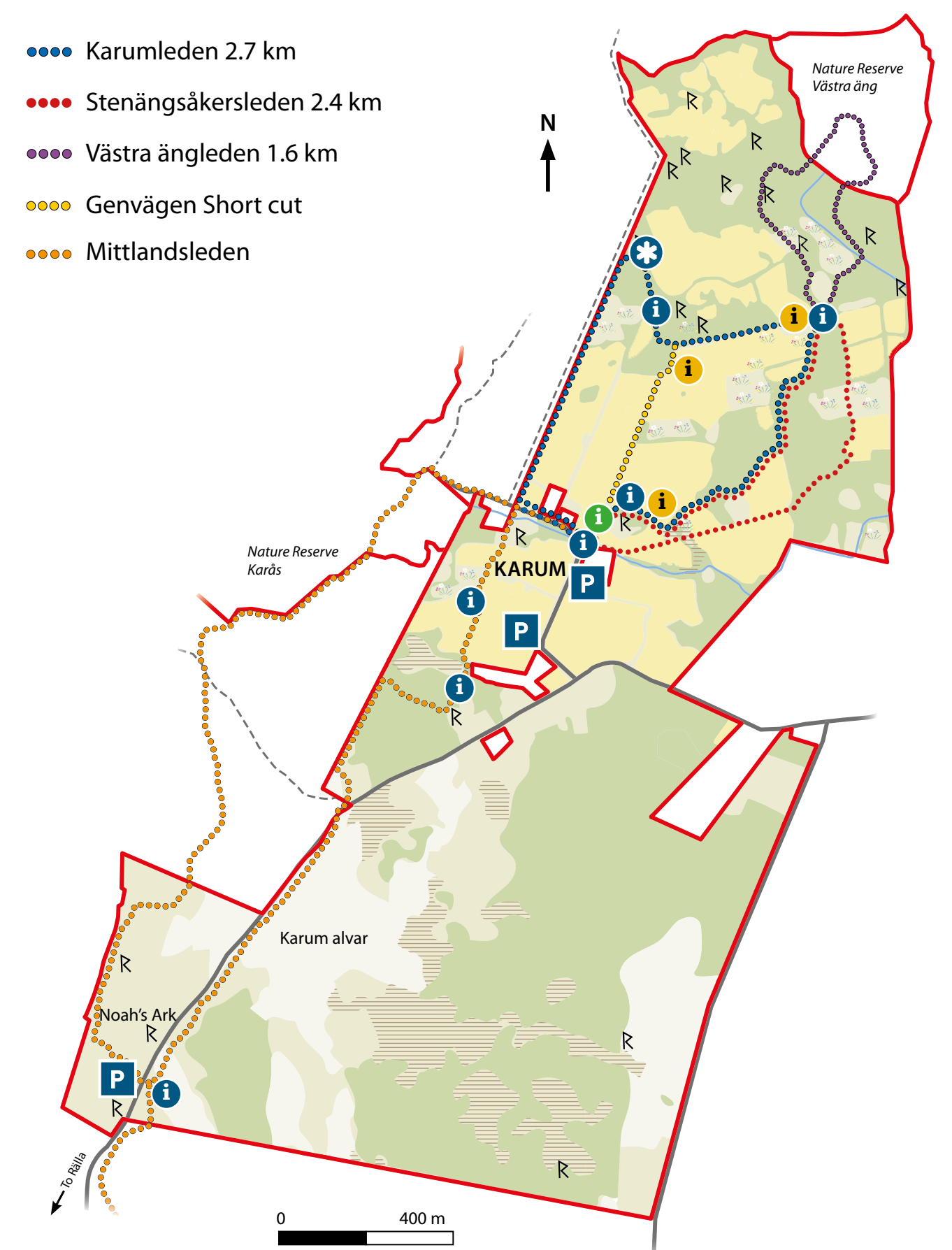


Map permission: County Administrative Board in Kalmar County © Lantmäteriet (Swedish Land Survey).

Öland is the place in Sweden where the most ancient remains from the Iron Age have been preserved. On the above aerial photo you can see remains close to where we are now. But there are a lot more which have not yet been assessed.

On the photo you can see house foundations as small red squares. The crooked red lines are stone walls that were once different types of enclosures. They may have surrounded fields and meadows, pastures for cows and calves, or they may have formed a cattle path, where the animals walked between the farmyard and the pasture. In the red-coloured area there are several different ancient remains, including the house foundations where you are standing, and cairns made from stones from the fields.

- You are here
- Kvarnkullen Information centre
- Information board
- Field info-board
- Car park
- Alvar land
- Open land
- Hay meadow
- Wetland/wet meadow
- Farmed land
- Forest/brushland
- Reserve boundary
- Road
- Watercourse
- Ancient remains



Länsstyrelsen
Kalmar län