

Viking Loans Box



Thor's Hammer

Thor is the Viking **god of storms and strength**. He made **thunder** by flying across the sky in his chariot and is the most powerful Viking god. Thor is the protector of the other gods and uses his **hammer**, called **Mjollnir**, to protect them. Mjollnir was widely used in Viking art and found on many necklaces.

These **hammers** were often made of silver and used to protect the person wearing it. **Thursday** is named after Thor and was originally known as 'Thorsdaeg' meaning '**Thor's day**'.

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Statue of Thor

Thor was a popular god whose name was honoured in new Viking settlements in Iceland (e.g. Thorsness), personal names (e.g. Thorstein) and also called on for help. The poet Egil called on Thor to drive **Eirik Bloodaxe** out of Norway—it might have worked because he ended up in York.

One of the Thor legends, of him going fishing and catching the world-serpent on his line can be seen on a cross in Gosforth (Cumbria). The Gosforth cross shows the transition from paganism to Christianity with its mix of pagan carvings on a Christian cross.

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Beads

A wealthy Viking woman would have worn a **necklace** and probably a ring or two too. Amber and glass were more common. Glass beads were produced in **Scandinavia, Rhineland (German) and other places in Western Europe.**

Bead making was a **craft** carried out in many Viking towns and small trading centres. Scrap glass was imported and composite coloured beads of remarkable complexity were made.

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Viking coins

Silver was the prize most wanted by the Vikings. For **safekeeping** the Vikings buried their wealth in **hoards**, many of which they never returned to retrieve, like the Furness Hoard (on display at the Dock Museum). Viking coins were struck in England in different mints and you can see a variety of motifs on these coins: the raven, sword, cross (imitating Anglo-Saxon coins) and also a portrait.

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Trading scales

These scales are sensitive enough to weigh out **spices** to the weight of a Viking silver penny. Scales such as these would have been used by Viking **traders** for spices, silver, amber and other goods.

The Vikings were great traders and **navigators** and travelled into the **Middle East, Russia and North America**. Scales like these were ingeniously designed to fold up and fit into a small box (perfect for a travelling lifestyle). See the trading map in loans box for more information.

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Whetstones

Whetstones were used to sharpen knives and tools, an important bit of kit for home life but also for raiding. Whetstones like this can still be seen in houses today.

The Vikings were the greatest slave traders in their day, exchanging slaves for silver and other goods.

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Drinking horn

Beer and **mead** were drunk from the horns of **cattle**, some of which were elaborately ornamented. It can be difficult not to spill the liquid and of course you can't put a horn down. Mead is made from **honey**.

The Vikings ate **mutton, lamb, beef, pig, goat** and **horse** as well as hunting **deer, wild boar** and **bear**. They would also have kept **chickens** and **geese**. **Fish** were caught in the seas and rivers. They also ate **bread** and consumed **butter** and **cheese**. Not vastly different from today's diet.

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Brooches

The Vikings didn't have zips but used brooches to **fasten clothes**. Two brooches would be used to hold up clothes, like at the Dock Museum. This brooch is in the **Borre** style, one of the six main art styles used by Vikings. Ring chain, interlacing and gripping beasts are all typically found ornamenting Viking objects.

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Coppergate cap

At **York** the Vikings were able to settle into an already thriving **Anglo-Saxon town** with established trade routes. By the year 1000, York is said to have been "filled with the treasure of merchants, chiefly of the Danish race." The Vikings fought amongst themselves and with the Anglo-Saxons for control of this important town. In archaeological excavations in the **Coppergate** in York, the remains of a **silk cap** from **Byzantine** (modern-day Turkey) was found, which would have been worn by a rich woman.

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Tablet braid

Tablet or card weaving is one of the earliest known weaving techniques. Braid would have been used on both men's and women's clothing, as shown in the Dock Museum. **Intricate patterns** could be produced and the braid would be used to edge **cloaks** and **tunics** or tie back hair.

General spinning and weaving were the year-round tasks of Viking women to produce **cloth** for clothes and **sails** for ships and boats. Vikings used **linen** and **wool** in their clothing.

The Vikings were fond of colour and were skilled in extracting the finest and strongest colours from leaves, bark, root and lichens to make dyes.

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Comb

Viking **warriors** cared about how they looked, especially their hair! **Saturday** was bath day. In England, it was observed that Danes combed their hair, bathed and changed so often that they were very successful with the ladies.

This comb is made out of an antler from a **red deer**. The antler would have been collected after the deer had shed them naturally. Comb-making using deer antlers was widely practised throughout the Viking world.

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Key and dress

A Viking woman would have proudly worn her keys on a belt on her dress, showing her status as the head of the household. They were often decorated like jewellery.

Viking women would have worn a dress in **linen** or **wool**. Over the dress a type of apron might have been worn, held up by brooches like the ones in this loans box.

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Puttees

Puttees made from wool with a herringbone pattern that would have been weaved in the Viking home. Puttees were sometimes worn by Viking men to help protect trousers against the wet and dirt. They would have been wrapped round the legs from the ankle to just under the knee. Puttees have been worn as recently as the First World War (1914-1918) in the wet and muddy trenches in northern France.