



After the Anglo-Saxons came the vicious Vikings! Learn about the Scandinavian sea-warriors in our ten fierce facts about the Vikings...

- 1.** The Vikings were famous for sailing huge distances from their home in Scandinavia between AD 800 and 1066 to raid and plunder, but they also traded with people from other countries.
- 2.** The name 'Viking' means 'a pirate raid' in the Old Norse language.
- 3.** Around 500 years before Christopher Columbus 'discovered' the American continent, Vikings had visited its shores, landing in what is now Canada in around AD 1000.
- 4.** Among the many gods Vikings believed in were Thor, the god of thunder, and Loki, a cheeky mischief-maker who could shape-shift to become all different kinds of animals. What a beast!
- 5.** The Vikings were expert boat builders and sailors. Keels - central spines along boats' bottoms - made their 16 to 37m 'longboats' easy to steer, and because these were designed to float high in the water, landing on beaches was easy.
- 6.** The Vikings were eco-pioneers - sort of! The 'long houses' where families lived would have turf roofs to help keep in the heat.
- 7.** Fenrir Grayback, the werewolf in the Harry Potter books, was named after a ferocious giant wolf from ancient Viking mythology.
- 8.** When important Vikings died, they would be placed with all their clothes, jewellery, even their animals, in a burial ship. This would either be covered with a huge mound of earth or set alight and pushed out to sea.
- 9.** Bitter Scandinavian winters and frozen fjords didn't stop the Vikings from tucking into their favourite food - fish! During warmer months they would hang up and dry fish to eat later.
- 10.** Ever wondered where the word 'berserk' comes from? 'Berserkers' was the name of some terrifying Viking warriors who wore bear or wolf skins and howled in battle like wild animals!