



L'Anse aux Meadows
National Historic Site

Welcome to L'Anse aux Meadows



On behalf of Parks Canada, **Welcome**
to L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site. Here is the only authenticated
Viking site in North America and the earliest evidence of Europeans in
North America.

A real-life saga

Cast your gaze over the water and imagine a summer day, around 1000 years ago, when a Norse expedition from Greenland landed on Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula. Following the coast around the North Atlantic, they had arrived at a strategic location, within sight of Labrador, near the entrance to the Strait of Belle Isle. Under Leif Eiriksson's leadership, the group of 60-90 people set up a sturdy encampment of turf-walled buildings that served as an over-wintering base for exploring to the south via the Gulf of St. Lawrence. For the next decade or two, successive expeditions travelled to this region they called Vinland, mainly in search of hardwood lumber. They reached at least as far south as the east coast of New Brunswick—a land where wild grapes grow.

The voyages across the North Atlantic also brought them into contact with North American Aboriginal peoples, ancestors of the Innu, Beothuk, and Mi'kmaq. From these encounters, the Vikings would learn not only that the new lands were inhabited but also that they, the Vikings, were vastly outnumbered throughout the region by the inhabitants.

At the time, the Greenland colony had a population of 500 people or fewer. Even with some Icelandic crew, the cost of operating the Vinland enterprise was just not sustainable for the returns. In a short time, the base at L'Anse aux Meadows was abandoned and the buildings burnt. The Vikings may have continued their journeys to North America for centuries, perhaps involving trade with peoples of the Arctic, until the Greenland colony was itself abandoned in the 15th century.

The tales of voyages west of Greenland lived on in oral tradition, passing from generation to generation, until the Vinland sagas were written down in the late 1200s. The legend inspired a quest to discover this Viking base in North America with speculations about the location ranging from Labrador to North Carolina. Finally, in 1960, it was Norwegian explorer and writer Helge Ingstad who came upon the site at L'Anse aux Meadows. Local fisherman George Decker led him to what locals called the "old Indian camp": the overgrown ruins of 11th-century Norse buildings which, combined with a few small items left behind by the Vikings, have proven the historic nature of the only recognized authentic Viking site to date in North America.

L'Anse aux Meadows was designated a National Historic Site in 1975 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978. As one of the world's major archaeological properties, the site is internationally significant for what it tells us of the worldwide movements of people.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture



L'Anse aux Meadows
National Historic Site
inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1978

Lieu historique national
de L'Anse aux Meadows
inscrit sur la Liste du
patrimoine mondial en 1978



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

Canada

What's in a name?

The earliest recorded name for L'Anse aux Meadows appears on an 1862 French chart as Anse à la Médée (Medee's Cove). The name is probably from Medea, the heroine of Greek tragedy, after whom many 17th- and 18th-century ships were named. Settlements and shore stations were often named after ships. After the English settled in the area the name was anglicized to its present form. The bay in front of the village is still called Medee Bay.

Parks Canada manages one of the largest parks systems in the world. These diverse national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas belong to all Canadians and provide opportunities to enjoy, discover and create personal moments while protecting these treasured places for future generations.

While in the area, watch for the beaver symbol on highway signs. These signs will lead you to Port au Choix and Red Bay National Historic Sites and Gros Morne National Park.

How to reach us:

L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site

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WEB: www.parksCanada.gc.ca/meadows



Our partner

The Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador is a volunteer non-profit association with a mandate to present the province's history and heritage. They are active throughout the province. At L'Anse aux Meadows, they operate the Heritage Shop in the Visitor Centre, develop souvenirs and publications, and support the living history program.

TEL: (709) 753-9262

WEB: www.historicsites.ca

Making the most of your visit

L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site comprises 80 square kilometers of forest, bog, coast, bay, and islands. Plan to spend one to three hours exploring the site. Our staff is available to answer your questions and to help you.

Starting your visit. We recommend you begin at the Visitor Centre.

- Trace the Norse journey across the North Atlantic with our maps.
- Immerse yourself in Old Norse literature as you listen to the translated Vinland sagas.
- Picture what the site looked like 1000 years ago by viewing a scale model meticulously created based on the archaeologists' research.
- See the authentic artefacts that proved the site's origin.
- Dig deeper into the story using our "ask the archaeologist" console.
- Explore other World Heritage Sites through an interactive touch screen.



S. KELLY

Follow the boardwalk trail to the archaeological site and reconstructed sod huts.

- Walk beneath the arch of the *Meeting of Two Worlds* sculpture, and listen to the vision of its artists.
- Rest awhile at the Aboriginal campsites and gaze out over the sea as countless people have before.

Stand on the actual site.

- The remains of three halls and five smaller buildings where the Vikings lived and worked have been carefully preserved as they were when discovered by the Ingstads.
- Guided tours of the site depart from the back door of the Visitor Centre regularly throughout the day. Or take a self-guided tour with this brochure.

Meet Viking re-enactors at the reconstructed sod huts.

- Visit with merchant-adventurer Bjorn, his wife Thora, the blacksmith Ragnar or other members of the crew and hear tales of trade, Norse society and how to turn bog iron into nail.
- Handle reproduction artifacts and experience for yourself life in the Viking camp!
- Dress up as a Viking and take a picture for posterity.

Explore a landscape that must have reminded the Norse of their homeland.

- Hike the Birchy Nuddick Trail along the shoreline and inland over bogs and barrens. Look for icebergs, sea birds, and wild flowers in a landscape little changed for over a thousand years.
- Enjoy a picnic beside the ocean at Muddy Cove.



Services

Washrooms and a pay phone are located in the Visitor Centre. There is also an accessible washroom at the bus pick-up area.

Accessibility Services

The Visitor Centre, the sod huts, and the archaeological site are all wheelchair-accessible.

Closed captioning of the film in the Visitor Centre is available upon request.

There is wheelchair accessible parking and an accessible boardwalk close to the sod huts and archaeological site. Please see map on reverse.

Service animals are permitted throughout the site.

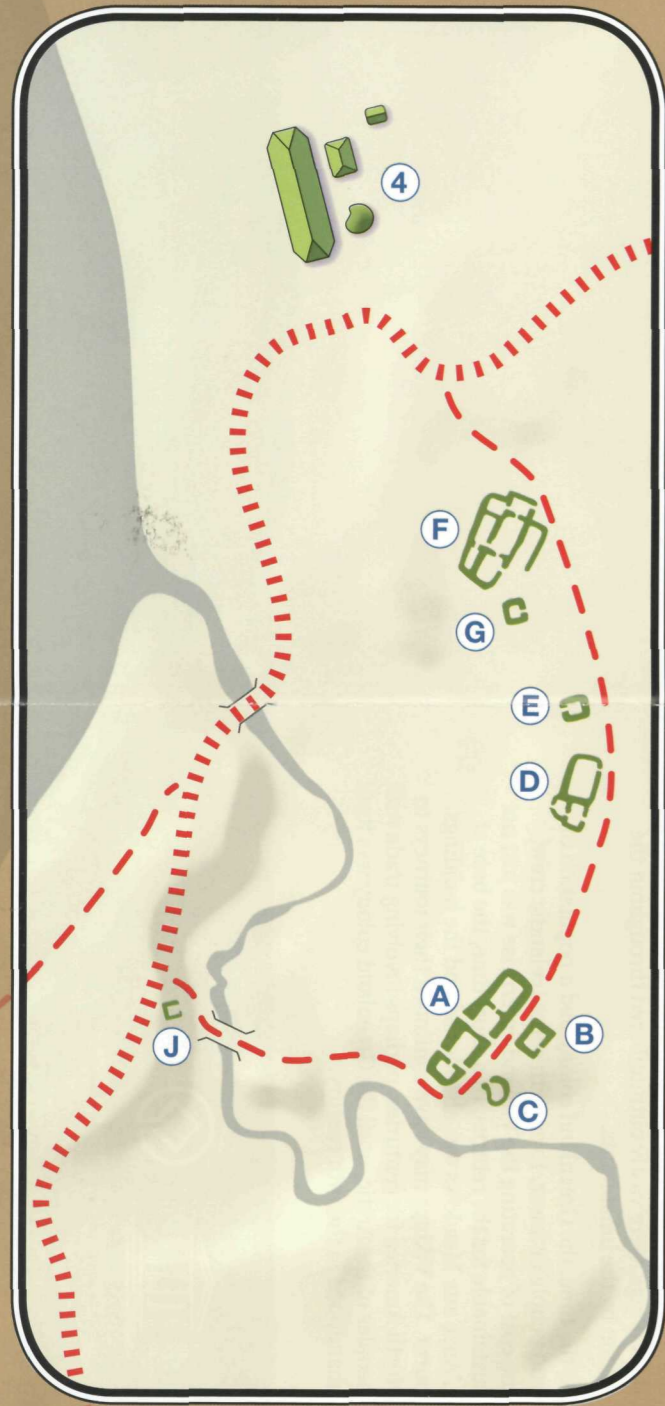
Special programs

- *Sagas and Shadows* evening program - check with staff for days and times

Reminders

- Site is smoke free.
- Pets on leashes are permitted on the grounds; pets are not allowed in buildings.

INSET



REMAINS OF NORSE BUILDINGS (INSET)

- A** This **large hall** was built for someone of high social status. It contains a small private room and communal living and working quarters for the rest of the crew. One of the rooms was littered with slag, and may have been used for iron working. Jasper chips from fire-starters show that the crew came from Iceland.
- B** **House** - lower-status living quarters and a place for roasting bog ore before smelting.
- C** **Hut** - lowest-status housing at this site, serving perhaps as quarters for several slaves.
- D** The smallest of the three **halls**, probably built for a crew of labourers. Judging by the jasper chips around the fire, they were from Iceland. This hall contains a large storeroom, possibly for furs and

perishable items. Another room was littered with woodworking debris, both inside and out.

E **Hut** - probably used by women as a workshop, and perhaps as living quarters. Stone weights inside may have been part of a loom.

F **Leader's hall** - This is the largest building, twice the size of Eirik the Red's home in Greenland, and equivalent in size to a chieftain's hall in Iceland. The leader of the expedition probably lived in this hall with his crew. Jasper chips show that its inhabitants came from Greenland. It contained a private room for the leader, a large central room that could serve as a banquet hall, two large storage rooms, and a lean-to shed for boat repair.

G **Hut** - workshop and living space for lower-status crew.

J **Smelting hut** - this small isolated building contained a furnace for producing iron from bog ore. A simple smelter stood in the middle of the floor. A charcoal kiln was nearby. The amount and type of slag found suggests that a single smelt took place. Very little iron was manufactured, only enough for making about 100 to 200 nails.

INTERPRETIVE AREAS

- 1** • UNESCO World Heritage plaque
 - Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque
 - Ingstad bust
- 2** *Meeting of Two Worlds* sculpture
- 3** Aboriginal campsites
- 4** Reconstructed buildings

LEGEND

- P** Parking
- P** Wheelchair-accessible parking
- ♿** Washrooms
- 🚐** Motorcoach pick-up area
- 🍴** Picnic area
- 📖** Exhibit
- ♿** Rest area
- ⋯** Boardwalk
- - -** Hiking trail (2.4 kilometres)
- Road
- Footpath