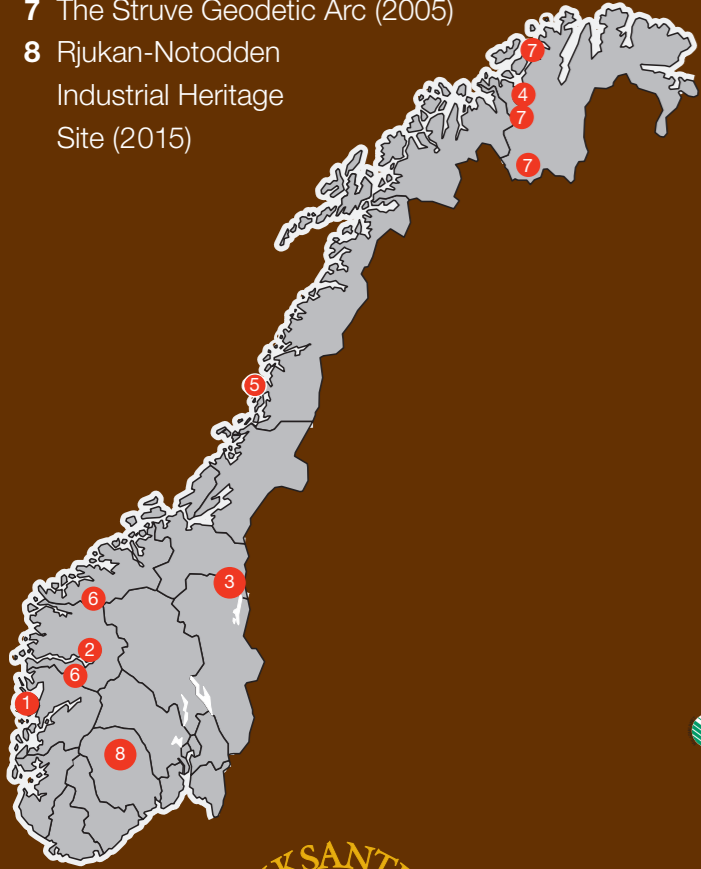


NORWEGIAN WORLD HERITAGE SITES

- 1 Bryggen in Bergen (1979)
- 2 Urnes stave church (1979)
- 3 Røros Mining Town (1980) and Circumference (2010)
- 4 The Rock Art at Alta (1985)
- 5 The Vega Archipelago (2004)
- 6 The West Norwegian Fjords (2005)
- 7 The Struve Geodetic Arc (2005)
- 8 Rjukan-Notodden Industrial Heritage Site (2015)



Directorate for Cultural Heritage

Dronningensg. 13

Postbox 8196 Dep. 0034 Oslo

Tel: 22 94 04 00 - Fax: 22 94 04 04

www.riksantikvaren.no

UNESCO: www.unesco.org

Design: Gimshel Grafiske, Lorenskog • Printet in: HBO AS 06/18



Photo: Jiri Havran, Directorate of Cultural Heritage

Medieval Norway was not an isolated area where trends in art and style were copied generations after they were out of style in the rest of Europe. The Norwegians were nearly contemporaneous with the rest of Europe in their craftsmanship. Urnes stave church is built in a pure Roman style, with arches and columns developed in Europe early in the 12th century. In Urnes church the style is well developed, but also adapted to the Norwegian craft traditions. Originally there was a balcony around the entire church. However it was so poorly preserved that it was removed in the 18th century. Only the western section, at the entrance, remains.

THE INTERIOR

Urnes church has been and still is in use, and the church equipment is also a part of the history. In the church there is a preserved lathe turned chair from the 12th century, most likely for the use of the bishop when he came for inspection.



Photo: Birger Lindsted, Directorate of Cultural Heritage

The crucifix flanked by Mary and the apostle John over the entrance to the choir, has possibly been moved here from another church. Two splendid candle holders from Limoges are put on display for special occasions. Following the Reformation pews were installed for the congregation, a pulpit in 1695 and a new altar in the choir in 1699.



Photo: Tore Holter, Directorate of Cultural Heritage

The new choir addition from the 17th century was decorated with hierarchical décor and standing apostles. Each apostle carries an inscription in Latin, with a sentence from the articles of faith, a tradition from the Medieval Ages.



Photo: Tore Holter, Directorate of Cultural Heritage

STAVE CHURCHES

Stave churches are Norway's most important contribution to world architecture, as well as Norway's oldest preserved wooden buildings. Originally there were almost 1000 stave churches, spread across most parts of the country. Today there are only 28 remaining. Most of these are in the interior areas of eastern Norway and in Sogn. Stave churches are considered among the best constructions in wood in our cultural tradition.

Stave churches are named after their load bearing staves in the wall construction. The staves are placed in the corners and are important connecting points.

In the Medieval Ages there were religious buildings built with staves and related techniques over most of north-

western Europe. However, with the exception of Hedared church in Sweden and the Greensted church in England, this type of church architecture is preserved only in Norway.

UNIQUE

The 28 stave churches which are still kept, are by no means identical. They belong to different styles, due to differences in time of construction, different groups of craft traditions and differences in the level of ambition. Some churches have many columns in the interior, others fewer. Some are very simple, with only one room and no columns. Some are richly decorated, with carved doorways and column decorations. Others have much simpler design.

The Norwegian stave churches are unique in Europe. Stave churches are one of Norway's foremost contributions to international building history. As such, the protection of these buildings is very important.

In 2001 the Directorate for Cultural Heritages began a systematic project to restore the stave churches. According to the plan, this project will be finished in 2011.

There are few wooden churches on UNESCO's World Heritage List. In contrast, the European cathedrals, the Latin American colonial churches and monasteries are well represented.

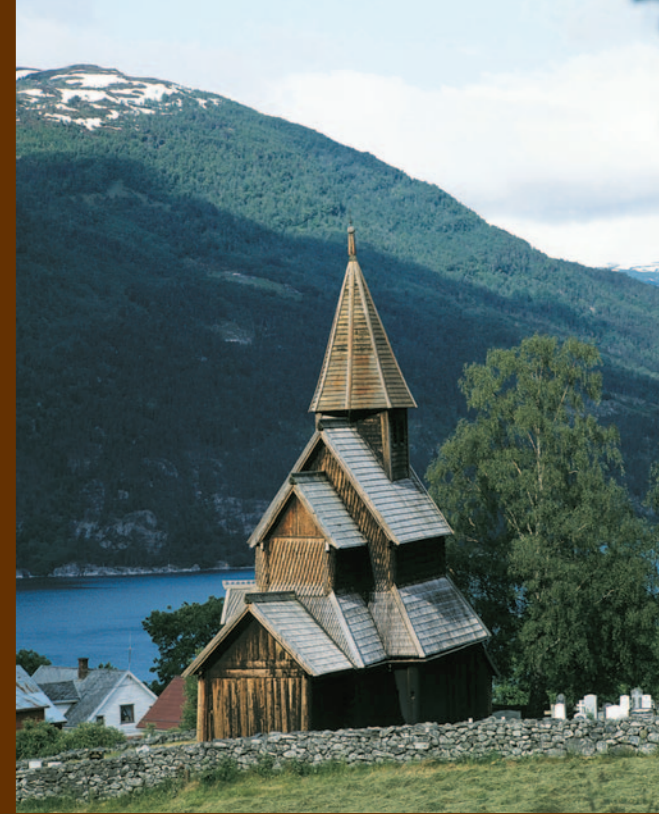


Ill.: Directorate of Cultural Heritage

The Urnes stave church is owned by the The Society for the Preservation of Norwegian Ancient Monuments.

URNES

Stave Church



Ave Kjerstheim, Directorate of Cultural Heritage



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organisation



World Heritage
in Norway
Urnes Stave church

UNESCO

UNESCO is the abbreviation for the "United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization". UNESCO's goal is to contribute to peace and safety through international cooperation within these areas. The organization was established in 1945, and Norway became a member in 1946.

❖ The UNESCO convention for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage

The convention for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage was approved in 1972, after cultural heritage and natural areas were increasingly exposed to threats from war, natural disasters, pollution, tourism or, more simply, neglect.

The convention encourages all countries to promote the protection of cultural and natural heritage of both local and national significance. The most important goal of the convention is to identify cultural and natural heritage of universal value. The need for a coordinated effort, both human and economic, was demonstrated by the international rescue of cultural heritage monuments in Egypt and Nubia, when the Aswan dam was built in the 1960's. Sixty countries, including Norway, participated.

Cultural and natural heritage can include monuments, single buildings or groups of buildings, cultural landscapes or natural areas. These can be created by nature, or by people in cooperation with nature. They can be buildings representing important historic developments, or natural phenomena of exceptional esthetic or scientific value.

Norway ratified the convention on May 12, 1977. The World Heritage Committee has so far approved eight Norwegian nominations to the World Heritage List. Being nominated as a World Heritage Site does not include any new form of legal protection, rather it offers additional recognition and status.

Norway on the World Heritage Committee

The World Heritage Committee consists at any time of the representatives of 21 nations. The Committee's primary mandate is to implement the World Heritage Convention.

Norway has been a member of the World Heritage Committee on two previous occasions, from 1983 to 1989 and from 2003 to 2007. Norway has also now been elected to the Committee for the period 2017-2021.

As a member of the Committee, Norway will prioritise improving the protection of existing World Heritage sites and also contributing to a more representative World Heritage List. After more than 40 years, the developing countries in particular continue to be under-represented on the List.

It is also important to raise awareness through the involvement of local communities and to highlight best practices in the management of sites on the List through the World Heritage Leadership programme. Norway will also stress the importance of List nominations being made on the basis of professional assessments rather than political interests. A further goal will be a more holistic approach to and management of the global natural and cultural heritage.

The Directorate for Cultural Heritage and the Norwegian Environment Agency represent Norway on the World Heritage Committee.



Bryggen in Bergen

Photo: Arve Kjørshelm, Directorate for Cultural Heritage



Urnes Stave Church

Photo: Arve Kjørshelm, Directorate for Cultural Heritage



Roros Mining Town

Photo: Asgeir Spangne Brekke, Directorate for Cultural Heritage



The Rock Art at Alta

Photo: Eva Waldenhuug, Directorate for Cultural Heritage



The Vega Archipelago

Photo: Cyril Russo



The West Norwegian Fjords

Photo: Arne Aasheim



The Struve Geodetic Arc

Photo: Bjørn Gairr-Hansson, The Norwegian Mapping Authority



Rjukan-Notodden Industrial Heritage Site

Photo: Trond Traugbøl, Directorate for Cultural Heritage

URNES STAVE CHURCH



Photo: Arve Kjørshelm, Directorate for Cultural Heritage

Urnes stave church was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1979.

Urnes stave church was built in the 1130's. The church has a unique position in architectural and building history, and is a central piece of Norwegian art and history. It is among the oldest of the preserved stave churches, an example of excellent craftsmanship and well executed woodwork. The church has an unusually rich interior decoration. Urnes stave church is in Luster Township in Sogn County, in a magnificent natural setting: the ideal of the 1880's natural-romantic Norwegian landscape. It was most likely built as a private church for the rich and powerful Urnes family, which played a leading role on the side of Baglerne during the civil wars. Following the peace with Håkon Håkonson in 1217, they were the King's trusted men. The builders of the church were well acquainted with international trends in architecture, and transferred these from stone to wood. Both the exceptional quality and wealth displayed in the décor at Urnes demonstrates the wealth and the power of the builders.

TRACES OF EARLIER CHURCHES

The style of ornamentation of the church is interesting, and is dated to the period between 1050 and 1100. This indicates that much of the ornamentation came from an earlier church. It is assumed that the earlier church was demolished around the middle of the 12th century and the material was re-used in the present church. The ground under the church indicates that there must have been a building

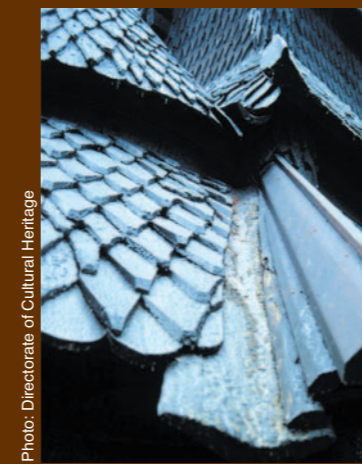


Photo: Directorate of Cultural Heritage

earlier, most likely built during the time when Christianity was introduced to Norway. The ceiling and walls are covered with wood shavings in a magnificent brown colour. From the time of its construction and up to our times the church was treated with pine tar. This simple form

of protection has preserved the woodwork for more than 800 years. In addition, the main supports for this church, in contrast to the earlier church, were not dug directly in the ground, but were set onto a framework which rests upon stones. This, combined with good maintenance, explains why this church is still standing.

THE URNES STYLE

The unique Urnes style has its name from the Urnes stave church. Its characteristic elements are the excellent carvings of very high quality, stylized animals in battle, with intertwined bodies. Typical elements of the Urnes style are the use of enclosures in the compositions, contrasts between broad and narrow lines and flowing outlines in the motives. It is a descendant of styles from the Viking Age, as we know them from rune stones in Sweden and at the British Isles.



Photo: Arve Kjørshelm, Directorate of Cultural Heritage

An artist of high calibre decorated the church which was built in the middle of the 11th century, and much of this woodwork is re-used in the present church. On the north wall there are two re-used, well decorated wall planks and an elaborately carved gateway.

The gateway is the most famous part of the 11th century décor at Urnes. In the field on the lower left there is an animal with a characteristic mane, a lion. Over and around the lion there is a network of snakes and ring shaped animals partially attacking the lion, partially each other.