

Synopsis

Viking marauders in their longships burst through the defences of ninth-century Europe, striking terror into the hearts of peasants and rulers alike for two centuries. But the Vikings were more than just marine warriors and this atlas shows their development as traders and craftsmen, explorers, settlers and mercenaries. With over sixty full colour maps, it follows the tracks of the Viking merchants who travelled deep into Russia, of Viking mercenaries who served in the emperor's bodyguard at Constantinople, and Viking mariners who sailed beyond the edge of the known world to North America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I love this book. The only book I had found worth reading on the subject was Jones' definitive *A History of the Vikings*, but it's somewhat dry and has the feel of a weighty textbook. This, however, is the perfect compliment to it: a brightly illustrated book, with a detailed timeline and vivid maps that really bring the past to life. Where other books have just thrown out some speculation and a few pictures of stolen coins, this book really draws you in and gives you a very realistic feel for who and what the Vikings were. This book belongs in EVERY Scandinaviophile's library.

The maps in this book are clear and readable. It can be used as a stand alone, informative text, or as a supplement for historical reference. The timeline at the beginning of the book offers a comparison of activities in different parts of the world from AD 1 to 1024. This is very helpful and

puts a number of events into perspective! Not only does this book help if reading Scottish, Irish and English history, but it ties in nicely while reading the new translation of Beowulf by Seamus Heaney! (Although, I would have liked a bit more information on this period) However, as a book with an overview with great maps, this book is a elemental reference text for any history buff!

The maps and illustrations are fantastic. Each pair of facing pages concentrates on one subject. I liked the maps that conveyed additional info. There is one showing the last great expedition to reopen the trade routes with the Arabs, an expedition which ends in disaster for the Swedish adventurers. The Khazars from Jewish history (a south Russian tribe that may have converted to Judaism) even make an appearance. It seems the Khazars gave the Vikings permission to loot their neighbors in exchange for half of the proceeds. But the Vikings were so brutal that the Khazars reneged on the deal and massacred the Norsemen on the way back from pillaging. The Vikings eventually got even though, and their revenge led to the demise of the Khazar empire. Reading this book is like leafing through a series of magazine articles on the general theme of the Vikings. By changing topics so often the book holds the interest of the casual reader who finds the Vikings strange and mysterious.

Vikings, which stands for "raiders", were strong shipbuilders and sailors, and their fame became soon known to their victims around Europe. Their brutality was recorded in chronicles from their victims (literate clergymen), and in part their ill fame is probably the result of bad press of that time. History needs maps. An historical atlas is very useful if a reader wants to keep track of all Viking raids and pillages around the coasts of northern Europe, but also as far today Russia and Central Asia. Vikings gave the name to Russia, being Rus the name Finns gave to Swedish Vikings in that area, which means "oarsmen". So this historical atlas provides plenty of information through maps and entertaining captions that help to understand how far-reaching Viking influence was. However, this atlas, as a previous reviewer has noted, is too centered on Viking presence in British islands and Ireland. At the beginning of the X century, Charles III of France gave Normandy (the land of Norse) to the Vikings, who in turn offered their allegiance. These settled Vikings became known as Normans, who took part to new adventures: William, the Duke of Normandy, led the conquest of England, Robert the Guiscard seized Sicily from Muslims in the Mediterranean, and took part in the Crusades. This by-product of the Viking saga is almost completely left out. All in all, this atlas provides a visual history of Vikings, that is appropriate and easy to read for students and the general reader. Recommended to all who share an interest in Medieval history of Northern Europe.

This colorful little book tells us plenty about the Vikings. It starts by briefly describing Scandinavia and even telling a little about the Norse Goddesses and Gods. Then we see a history of the notorious Viking raids, which began near the end of the eighth century AD. There's plenty of material about the Viking adventures in England. But we also get to read about Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and other Viking destinations, including North America and Russia. And there's a mention of the famous Icelandic Sagas, the best known Viking literature. I enjoyed this book, and I recommend it.

As an amateur researcher and a keen fan of Viking history, I consider this book to be one of the best summaries of the Viking era. The text is well edited, to-the-point, yet manages to contain all important historical details. The illustrations and maps complement the text's material with further graphic information very well, causing the book to be one of the most interesting reads on Vikings I have ever come across. The writing not only deals with major military events of the Viking era, but discloses details on everyday life, rural and urban settlements, trade activities and much more of medieval Scandinavia. To readers who are interested in overall Viking history but simply cannot decide which book to start with, this work is an ideal choice.

Although I agree with the other reviewers that the maps and the two-page spreads are handy and informative, in my opinion the book lacks information on some of the most important recent findings on viking life and culture in their homelands. It also bothered me that the author chose to use the derogatory term "Lapp" rather than "Saami" to refer to the other group living in Scandinavia at the time. I felt that for an American audience, the book assumes too much prior knowledge of British geography and history. The text makes many references that are not illustrated in the maps. The book is great for someone focusing on viking battles, influences and history in Great Britain (and to a lesser extent on the Continent), but I feel it lacks important information about viking life in Scandinavia. There were also some bloopers, like calling "Aud The Deep-Minded" (from Laxdoela Saga) "And The Deep-Minded" on p. 44.

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