

# Stord og Fitjar

Leirvik-Øvre Økland-Klovfjellet-Sæterbø



The North Sea Trail

Walks in the cultural landscape



Sea Pink

## Stord and Fitjar municipalities

Today, Leirvik on the island of Stord is a community with many of the amenities we expect to find in a town.

Stord municipality was granted town status in 1997. The area's main economic base is its modern shipbuilding industry and the production of platforms for the North Sea. Stord municipality, which covers 144 km<sup>2</sup> of the southern end of the island of Stord, is home to a population of approx. 17,000.

The village of Fitjar north-west on the island of Stord is the administrative centre for the municipality of the same name. The municipality, which has a population of 2,900 and covers a total area of 145 km<sup>2</sup>, comprises the northern end of the island of Stord and some smaller islands to the north-west. High-tech shipbuilding is an important source of employment.

A mountain range runs the length of Stord island. The highest summit is Stovegolvet at 703 metres.

At the foot of the mountains, a line of farms run around the entire island. The largest flat areas are found on the south-eastern and north-western shores of Stord, which have traditionally provided the best farmland.

## Stord church in an ancient cultural landscape

The cultural landscape here is rich and ancient. Stord church lies on Nedre Ådland farm, which has been the site of a church for approx. 700 years. Stord church was first mentioned in the 1350s. At the time, it was referred to as Ådland church, from the name of the farm on which it stood. The old church, steeped as it was in tradition, was demolished in 1855, and a replacement built on the same site.

The present Stord church is a typical three-nave basilica, grand in design and monumental in structure.

## Fitjar – ancient royal estate and religious centre

Fitjar, situated by the sea in an ancient agricultural landscape, commands beautiful views of the fjord and mountains. There are many indications that there have been settlements at Fitjar since the Bronze Age. In the Viking Age, Fjell was a royal estate.

On the site of the current church, there has probably been a place of worship for around 900 years.

Next to the church, a statue of King Håkon the Good serves as a memorial to the Battle of Fitjar in 961.

Today, Fitjar is a modern village with all associated amenities.



Just north of the church lies Hystad and Hystadmarka, an area with many burial mounds probably dating back to the Bronze Age. Today, the Hystadmarka area is a nature reserve.

## Prestastegen (Pastor's Walk) and the farms of Årbø, Liarbø and Sæterbø

On the west-facing slopes above the southern end of Storavatnet lake lie the farms of Årbø, Liarbø and Sæterbø. This is a sunny location commanding panoramic views. The farms here have good mountain pastures and forest resources. In the Middle Ages, these farms were owned by the priest at Fitjar and were meant to provide his keep. After the Reformation, Fitjar became part of Stord parish and the pastor lived on the south end of Stord. The farms were under the ownership of Stord parish until they were bought by their respective tenant farmers in the period 1837 – 1876. Fitjar remained part of Stord parish until 1862.

We know that when the pastor travelled to Fitjar to hold a service, he was usually taken by boat through Langenuen from the south end of Stord, but he probably also sometimes took the path across the mountain, via the church farms.

The journey continued by rowing boat across Storavatnet lake.

This demonstrates that the path across the mountain, and sections of the trail, have been in use throughout the ages.

## Place names

The name *Stord*, or *Storen*, generally refers to something which stands tall. This probably refers to the island's mountain formation.

*Fitjar* means fertile or lush grassy fields.

*Sæterbø* is a combination of the word *sæter* and *bø*. A *sæter* is a summer pasture farm where people would stay during the summer months to look after livestock. *Bo* is the oldest Norwegian word for farm, but also refers to the fields of a farm. *Sæterbø* may indicate that the site was first used as summer pasture, but we know that there was a farm here in the latter part of the 16th century.

*Vatna* derives from *vatten* (Eng. water, lake).

*Ådland* is a combination of *Au* (Eng. river) and *land*. The farm lies by a river and lake.



View to the west from Klovfjellet mountain



## Walking trails Leirvik – Øvre Økland – Klovfjellet – Sæterbø – Rydland (approx. 16 km)

In order to get to Øvre Økland from Leirvik, walk via Landåsen and Kannelønning and then along the western side of Ådlandsvatnet lake. Alternatively, you can walk on the opposite side of the lake from Leirvik.

Vatna and Øvre Økland farms were probably established more than 2,000 years ago, and they had their summer pastures up the Vatnadalen valley.

From Øvre Økland, a gravel road runs north along the river towards the dam in Vatnadalen. Vatna Power Station was established in 1912-13, and was originally privately owned. At the time, the plant could produce 105 kW, most of which was used in the Leirvik area. The municipal power company bought the plant in 1918 and expanded it, building a new dam, among other things. In 1961, Ravatnet lake became a reservoir for Stord power plant. At the crossroads by the dam, head further up the valley. Mid-way between the dam and Ravatnet lake the trail turns off from the gravel road and heads west by the signpost marked Prestastegen (Pastor's Walk).

The steep path ascends through woodland towards Klovfjellet mountain. This wooded hill commands beautiful views of the Halsnøyfjord and the farmland to the south-east.

At approx. 400 metres above sea level you reach the treeline, and there is nothing but bare mountain ahead of you.

You will see the mighty mountain formations of Stovegolvet and Skorafjellet towering to the north-east. The summit offers views to the west as well, towards Bømlø, the Fitjar islands and the ocean. Klovfjellet summit is 518 metres above sea level. The path leads down in a north-westerly direction through areas of bare mountain. Further down, ahead of you, lie extensive pastures interspersed

with pine woods. You can take a detour up to Prestavarden (422 metres). Once you have reached the pastures, walking is easy. First head towards Sæterbølio and then continue through the fields. Prestastegen (Pastor's Walk) joins the road to Sæterbø immediately beyond the infields. From Sæterbø, you can choose whether to continue on the road or walk through the woods to Rydland.

## Wood and forestry

The rocky ground provides excellent growing conditions for trees on Stord. Wood has been important to the area's economy. The farms have had access to timber for their own use and even had some to spare for sale. The timber provided tax revenues for the local authority and represented a sound foundation for the boat and shipbuilding industry until after World War II.



Above Vatnadalen valley



Tern

Before the introduction of water-powered sawmills, hand saws and axes were important tools for cleaving and cutting timber. The first water-powered sawmills came to Stord in the 16th century.

**Sagvåg sawmill:** Believed to have been established before 1530.

**Vatna sawmill:** Mentioned in 1625, but probably older.

**Ådland sawmill:** Established at Sagneset before 1570; in operation only when the river was in spate.

**Frugardselva river:** 2 sawmills were described in 1590. One belonged to a nobleman, the other belonged to the parsonage.

All of these sawmills are now long gone, but the rivers that powered them are still there, providing enjoyment for walkers.

## Getting there

**Bus:** Bergen Bus Station – Halhjem, approx. 1 hour.

**Ferry:** Halhjem – Sandvikvåg, approx. 35 min. There are ferries every ½ hour throughout the day.

**Bus:** Sandvikvåg - Leirvik, approx. ½ hour.

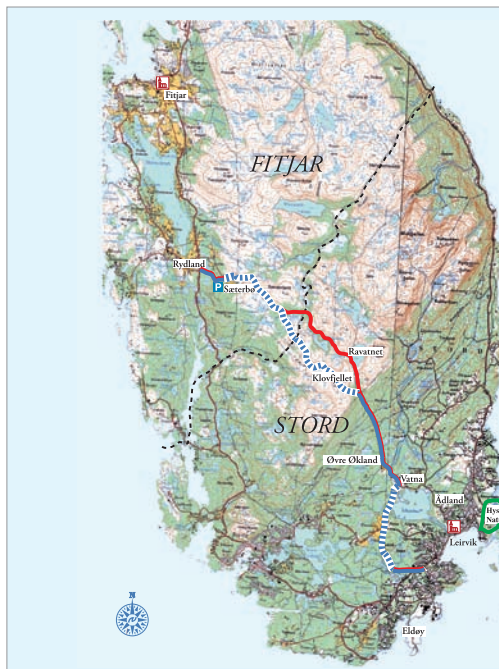
**Bus:** Sandvikvåg - Fitjar, approx. 10 min.






Stord



Fitjar



 = The North Sea Trail, path  
 = Footpath  
 = The North Sea Trail, road



The North Sea Trail/NAVE Nortrail project is partly funded by the EU through the Interreg IIB North Sea Programme

- \* Show respect and consideration for our natural and cultural heritage
- \* Always respect plants, animals and birds
- \* Dogs must be kept on a leash
- \* Always close all gates behind you
- \* Make sure to wear good shoes. The trails will be wet in places.

## Public rights of way apply on all outlying land. It is permitted to:

- Walk or ski
- Picnic, or camp overnight
- Ride or cycle on paths and roads
- Swim, canoe/kayak, use rowing boats and sailing boats
- Pick berries, mushrooms and flowers
- Fish for saltwater fish free of charge

**Text and editing:** Hordaland County Council, Centre for Cultural Landscapes, and Stord and Fitjar municipalities.

**Sources:** - Fitjar Bygdebok. Vol. I and II, 1986.

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- Stord bygdebok. Ola Høyland. Vol. I 1972, and Vol. III 1973.

- Norske Gardnavn, O. Rygh, Kristiania 1898. New edition 1962. Vol. 11.

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