

## GAMMELSTAD CHURCH TOWN

Gammelstad Church Town was put on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 7 December, 1996. The World Heritage Committee's reasoning was as follows:

"Gammelstad Church Town is a remarkable example of the traditional church town of northern Scandinavia. It admirably illustrates the adaptation of conventional urban design to the special geographical and climatic conditions of a hostile natural environment."

The World Heritage area includes the church itself, surrounded by the Church Town, the well-to-do areas, the public buildings and certain sections of the more recent permanent buildings. The church town tradition, i.e. the custom of spending the night in church cottages in connection with church weekends, was a decisive factor for conferring world heritage status.

## HISTORY

A thousand years ago Luleå district consisted of an archipelago where the sea level was ten metres higher than today. The church hill of present-day Gammelstad was a small island at the mouth of the Lule river. During the fourteenth century the area became a trading area and marketplace and the centre of a parish stretching from the coast to the Norwegian mountains along the Kalix, Lule and Råne rivers.

After the Treaty of Nysteborg in 1323, Sweden and Russia disagreed about their northern border. To secure the area the Swedish state entrusted the Lule river valley to burghers from Central Sweden. The church sent out priests and built simple wooden churches, and 1339 was the first year church services were mentioned as having been held in "Luleå". Church, taxation and Swedish legislation were used to incorporate what is today Norrbotten into the Swedish state.

The building of the stone church commenced during the fifteenth century. This is an impressive building, reflecting the economic prosperity of the area, presumably based on fur-trading in the interior and salmon fishing in the rivers. In the seventeenth century the rule was applied more strictly that all trade should be centred on the towns where it could be taxed, and in 1621 the town of Luleå was founded on the site of the old marketplace. It was noted as early as 1649 that the harbour had become too shallow owing to the land elevation. The burghers of Luleå were forced to move their town nearer the coast. This led to the establishment of Luleå New Town and Luleå Old Town, present-day Luleå and Gammelstad, respectively. To the north-east of Gammelstad church, a few blocks with courtyards laid out at right-angles still remain, which have their roots in the 17th century.



DEO GLORIA

## NEDERLULEÅ CHURCH

Nederluleå (Lower Luleå) church is the largest mediaeval church in Norrland. It was built during the fifteenth century and inaugurated by Archbishop Jacob Ulfsson in 1492.

The courtyard wall has two gates, the northern one having been preserved in its original state. The gates have walled-in arrow-slits and there is a lookout slit in the church's eastern gable. This indicates that the church was used as a fortification in times of unrest. The whitewashed belfry was built in 1851 and replaced an older, wooden bell tower, situated north-west of the churchyard on the hill.

Nederluleå church has a very rich interior and furnishings. The late-mediaeval frescos in the chancel were by the school of Albertus Pictor. They were painted over during the eighteenth century but were restored in 1909. There are mediaeval choir benches to the right of the altar and a reconstructed bishop's chair. The altar screen, with wooden figures recounting the story of the Passion, is one of the country's finest. It was built in Antwerp around 1520 and cost 900 silver marks, an enormous sum which the Luleå farmers were said to have paid in cash. The pulpit and commemorative plaques were by Nils Jacobsson Fluur and date from the early eighteenth century.

The church's mighty organ was inaugurated in 1971. It has 55 stops and 4,200 pipes varying in length from 5 mm to 6 metres. The organ was built by Grönlunds orgelbyggeri AB of Gammelstad. The church is open every day from June to August. For the rest of the year, only on weekdays and for church services. Group bookings are welcome throughout the year.

## THE CHURCH TOWN

Of Sweden's 71 original church towns, only 16 are left today. The majority of these have been reduced to a remnant. Gammelstad has the country's largest and best preserved church town with 408 cottages comprising 553 rooms.

The church town presumably arose from a combination of several factors: the long distances, merchants' needs for storage and accommodation at the marketplace, the church stables and last but not least the population's duty to attend church regularly.

The oldest mention of Gammelstad Church Town is in Johannes Bureus' depiction of his visit here at Christmas 1600: "All farmers have their cottages near the church at a place they call The Hill". Unfortunately Bureus does not mention the age of the church town, but the first cottages were presumably built in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.



The irregular placing of the cottages indicates that they were added successively and when needed. Initially, people from the same village had their cottages next to each other and near the roads leading from the different villages to the church. When all the roads had been lined with cottages, the land between the roads was also filled with buildings.

Gammelstad Church Town has never been struck by a major fire. Many of today's church cottages were in existence in 1817, when the first detailed map was drawn, and the majority of these may have been in existence 100 years earlier. More exact dating is difficult to provide.

From June to August Gammelstad Tourist Office will be organising daily viewings of the Church Town. Group bookings are welcome throughout the year.

## THE CHURCH TOWN TRADITION

The church town was the obvious place for parishioners to meet. People converged here to attend High Mass and hours of devotion, to attend markets, court sessions and parish meetings, but also to meet friends and acquaintances from other villages. Church weekends gradually came to be divided into youth weekends and weekends for older people. During the so-called "nocturnal courting sessions" at youth weekends, many acquaintances were made which later led to marriage.

The church town custom lives on in Gammelstad. Three to four times a year the parishioners are invited to a church weekend and during the traditional confirmation classes before the mid-summer celebration the young people stay in the church cottages.

The show cottage, Number 253 Främlänningvägen, is shown to visitors weekends during the summer months.



## For further information

### Gammelstad Tourist Office

Tel: +46 920-45 70 10 • Fax: +46 920-45 51 12  
E-mail: [worldheritage.gammelstad@lulea.se](mailto:worldheritage.gammelstad@lulea.se)

### Hägnan Open-air Museum

Tel: + 46 920-45 48 66

### Nederluleå Parish

Tel: +46 920-27 70 00 • Fax: +46 920-27 70 01

**[www.lulea.se/gammelstad](http://www.lulea.se/gammelstad)**



LULEÅ KOMMUN



# The Swedish World Heritage

## 1. The Royal Domain of Drottningholm, Ekerö

Tel: +46 8-402 62 80

[www.royalcourt.se](http://www.royalcourt.se)

## 2. Skogskyrkogården, Stockholm

Tel: +46 8-508 301 00

[www.kyf.stockholm.se](http://www.kyf.stockholm.se)

## 3. The Engelsberg Ironworks, Fagersta

Tel: +46 223-131 00

[www.fagersta.se](http://www.fagersta.se)

## 4. Birka and Hovgården

- the Viking Heritage Site

Tel: +46 8-560 514 45

[www.raa.se/birka](http://www.raa.se/birka)

## 5. The Rock Carvings in Tanum

Tel: +46 525-209 50

[www.vitlyckemuseum.se](http://www.vitlyckemuseum.se)

## 6. The Hanseatic Town of Visby

Tel: +46 498-26 90 00

[www.gotland.se](http://www.gotland.se)

## 7. Laponia - Lapland's World Heritage area

Tel: +46 971-170 80

[www.laponia.nu](http://www.laponia.nu)

## 8. The Naval City of Karlskrona

Tel: +46 455-30 30 00

[www.navalcity.org](http://www.navalcity.org)

## 9. Gammelstad Church Town, Luleå

Tel: +46 920-45 70 10

[www.lulea.se](http://www.lulea.se)

## 10. The High Coast

Tel: +46 611-34 90 00

[www.highcoast.net](http://www.highcoast.net)

## 11. The Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland

Tel: +46 485-471 50

[www.sodraaland.com](http://www.sodraaland.com)

## 12. Falun

Tel: +46 23-830 50

[www.visitfalun.se](http://www.visitfalun.se)

## 13. Grimeton Radio Station

Tel: +46 340-67 41 90

[www.grimetonradio.se](http://www.grimetonradio.se)

## 14. Struve Geodetic Arc

Tel: +46 8-51 91 80 00

[www.raa.se](http://www.raa.se)



## OTHER BUILDINGS

Gammelstad is a unique mixture of a church town for weekends and a church village for all-year-round dwellers.

**The old Guest House, the Mayor's House** and the **Captain's House** are located in the town district to the east of the church. It is impossible to date them exactly, but they have their origin in the residences of the 17<sup>th</sup> century burghers.

**Margaretas Wärdshus** (Inn) was built in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building was the heart of a large trading station for most of its existence and is today a restaurant.

**The Parish Storehouse** immediately south of the church was built in 1790. The taxes to pay amongst other things the priest's stipend were collected and stored here. From 1839 the building was also a storehouse for seed corn.

**The Parish Hall**, built in 1754, has been used as a court house, a gaol, a council office and an assembly hall. Today it houses a café run by the parish.

**The Separatists' Cottage** was used as a prayer house by the separatists. This movement arose in the early 19th century as a protest against new church books. They eventually split off from the church and organised their own assemblies.

**The Bethel Chapel**, on the north side of the Square, was an inn from 1806 to 1908, when it was bought by the Baptists and converted to a chapel. Today it houses a Visitor Centre, the tourist office and a café.

## HÄGNAN

The church cottage was the first recreational building for ordinary people. The church town provided company, entertainment and devotion, and people were not required to work there. In their village they had a home, livelihood and their everyday chores - but seldom a free moment. To gain a clear picture of the church town, one needs to know something of the life in the villages. This one can learn at Hägnan, an open-air museum north-east of the world heritage.

Hägnan is located between the church town and the Gammelstadviken Nature Reserve, on land which has belonged to the vicarage since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Hägnan has four farming museums, two from the 18th century, where the farm people do most of the work themselves, one from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, right at the change-over time between selfsubsistence farming and a cash-based economy, and finally a country shop from the 1930s, where the public can make purchases. Don't be surprised if the farm people are sitting eating when you enter or if you encounter goats in the farmyard. People and animals both like visitors.

The museum buildings and Café Fägnan are open daily from June 6 to the first weekend in September. At other times, the grounds are open to the public and you can also arrange a visit or a meal. The shop is open weekdays all the year round.



# GAMMELSTAD



1. Nederluleå church
2. Visitor Centre/Tourist Office
3. Information
4. Separatists' Cottage
5. The Church Hill
6. The Church Stables
7. The Old River Bank
8. The Oldest Harbour

# CHURCH TOWN



- 9. Hägnan Museum
- 10. The old Guest
- 11. The Mayor's House
- 12. The Captain's House
- 13. Margareta's Inn
- 14. The Parish Hall
- 15. The Parish Storehouse
- 16. Church Cottage



WORLD HERITAGE  
GÅMMELSTAD  
CHURCH TOWN