

793 – 1066

Viking Age Timeline

The Viking Age was a period of Norse exploration, trade, and raiding that transformed medieval Europe – sending Scandinavian warriors and settlers as far as North America in the west and Central Asia in the east.

793

Raid on Lindisfarne

Norse warriors attack the monastery of Lindisfarne off the northeast coast of England — looting its treasures, killing monks, and disappearing by sea — in the first recorded Viking raid in history.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Lindisfarne raid shocked Christian Europe and announced that a new force had arrived — the speed, ruthlessness, and seamanship of the Norse raiders gave them an advantage that no coastal monastery or settlement could easily defend against.*

800s

Vikings Expand in All Directions

Over the 9th century, Norse raiders and traders spread across Europe simultaneously — raiding the coasts of France, Ireland, and Spain; establishing trade routes deep into Russia; settling the Faroe Islands; and appearing as far south as the Mediterranean.

> **Why it mattered:** *The speed and reach of Viking expansion transformed the political map of Europe — every coastal kingdom from Ireland to the Byzantine Empire had to respond to the Norse presence, through tribute, alliances, or military reorganization.*

840s–860s

Dublin and Kievan Rus Founded

Norse settlers establish a permanent base at Dublin (841), which grows into one of medieval Europe's most important trading ports; Varangian (eastern Viking) traders establish control over river trade routes through what is now Russia, helping found the city of Kyiv.

> **Why it mattered:** *Dublin and Kievan Rus show the Vikings as builders, not just raiders — Dublin became the center of Irish commerce for centuries, and the Varangian trade network connecting Scandinavia to Constantinople and Baghdad moved enormous quantities of silver, furs, and slaves.*

Viking Age Timeline *continued*

874 — **Settlement of Iceland**

Large-scale Norse settlement of Iceland begins; by 930 CE, settlers establish the Althing — a national assembly of chieftains held every summer — one of the world's oldest parliaments.

> **Why it mattered:** *Iceland's Althing is remarkable evidence of Norse political sophistication — a society of settlers with no king established one of history's earliest representative assemblies, creating a legal and political order through agreement rather than conquest.*

911 — **Rollo Founds Normandy**

The Viking leader Rollo negotiates a treaty with the King of France, receiving the territory around Rouen in exchange for defending it from further Norse raids; he becomes the first Duke of Normandy.

> **Why it mattered:** *Normandy's founding shows how Viking settlements transformed from raids into permanent political entities — within a few generations, the descendants of Norse raiders had become French-speaking Christian knights, and their leader William would conquer England in 1066.*

c. 1000 — **Leif Erikson Reaches North America**

Norse explorer Leif Erikson sails from Greenland and establishes a settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, Canada — the first confirmed European presence in the Americas, roughly 500 years before Columbus.

> **Why it mattered:** *L'Anse aux Meadows (confirmed by archaeology in 1960) proved that Europeans reached the Americas in the Viking Age — though the Norse settlements did not last, the discovery reframes the 'discovery of America' as part of a much longer and more complex story.*

1013–16 — **Vikings Conquer England**

Danish King Sweyn Forkbeard conquers England in 1013; his son Cnut becomes King of England in 1016, then also rules Denmark and Norway — assembling a North Sea empire that unites Scandinavia and England under one ruler.

> **Why it mattered:** *Cnut's North Sea Empire was the Viking Age's political high point — a Scandinavian king ruling England, Denmark, and Norway simultaneously, demonstrating that Norse power had evolved from seaborne raiding into dynastic statecraft.*

1066 — **Norman Conquest Ends the Viking Age**

At the Battle of Hastings on October 14, 1066, William the Conqueror — Duke of Normandy and a direct descendant of the Viking Rollo — defeats King Harold of England and seizes the throne, transforming English language, law, and culture.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Norman Conquest is simultaneously the end of the Viking Age and its greatest legacy — the conqueror of England was a Viking descendant, and the French-Norse hybrid culture his army brought transformed the English language and political system for centuries.*