

The “Hyssna Trail” and other sites of interests in Hyssna

www.hyssna.se

Welcome to Hyssna and the Hyssna Trail and its surrounding countryside.

Hyssna is situated in the southern part of the county Västra Götaland in the Marks Commune. By car it is about 45 minutes from Gothenburg, Sweden's second largest city, one hour from Varberg, a picturesque seaside town, and 40 minutes from Borås, which was once the centre of the region's textile industry.

Hyssna is known for its natural beauty and varied countryside. In the southern parts you can ramble through an open agricultural landscape, which in places has remained unchanged since Viking times. The River Surtan's fertile valley, once a giant fjord, is now a mixture of lush meadows and stone walled pastures intertwined with deciduous woods and coppices rich with wildlife. The beech woods are exhilarating in the autumn as are the cool glistening lakes in summer. To the north the scenery becomes harsher and more remote; coniferous forests give way to moorlands and wetlands scattered with dwarfed birches, bogs, islets, mires and tarns.

The Hyssna trail is a well marked 40 km circular walk, which takes you through all these different and wonderful environments. There are lots of historical information boards (some in English) along the way and plenty of benches where you can take a well-earned rest and admire the fabulous views.

This wonderful Swedish countryside is open and free for everyone to enjoy. Listen to the bird song and the sound of rushing water, or simply experience the stillness of the deep forests and the scents of wild meadow flowers. The enchanting views are unforgettable, as is the experience of swimming in the numerous lakes. Hopefully your memories will continue long after you have left this beautiful place, so please follow the countryside code and respect the people, animals and countryside that you pass through. In this way visitors for years to come, can experience this wonderful habitat in the same way that you have.

The main rules of the Swedish countryside code are:

1. Respect the environment: Do not disturb or destroy natural habitats.
2. Do not drop litter.
3. Close gates after you.
4. Never light a fire on bare rocks or where there is a risk of it spreading.
5. Do not break off branches or twigs from living trees or bushes.

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1. The old church at Hyssna

The old church and stone vault bridge over the River Surtan, create a focal point in a beautiful, historical and cultural landscape. The 12th century church is one of the oldest well-preserved churches in western Sweden. There are several interesting medieval artefacts to be seen in the church which include a censer, a clock, fine sculptures and a baptismal font.

The church is open to the public during the afternoons from mid-June to mid-August. During this period an English-speaking guide is present most days and evening prayers are held on Thursdays at 19.00 hours. The church is still used for marriages, christenings and other ceremonial occasions during the year. Visits can be made outside the above visiting times by ringing the vicarage on 0320-39009.

1. The local history museum

The building was moved from Getakulla and rebuilt in 1948 on a small island in the River Surtan near to the old church. Inside the museum you can see the local preservation society's collection of more than one thousand artefacts dating from the Stone Age to the present day. Visits can be made by ringing 0320-39009.

2. The old watermill at Lockö (Lock island)

The oldest part of the watermill dates back to the 18th century. The last miller was still in business until 1969 when the grinding stones finally came to rest. The local preservation society took over the watermill and adjoining blacksmiths in 1990. Since then the site has been restored by voluntary workers.

During the summer the mill houses photography exhibitions containing local pictures from the past and present. You are free to walk around the grounds. If you wish to enter the mill, phone 076-8009088.

Road directions: From the old church turn left and drive towards the new church. Take the first right (Lockövägen) and drive through the housing estate, turning right at the sign for Lockö Kvarn (kvarn = mill).

3. The beech woods at Stomsås (Ås = glacial deposit called an esker)

These are Marks' largest beech woods and form part of Sweden's most northerly beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) wood belt. The area has also been classified by the European Union as a Natura 2000 site, thus protecting the habitat. There are several well-marked walks within the woods. A map displaying these can be found at the car parks at Ängslyckan (äng = meadow lycka = open area in the forest) and Qvinte's torpruin (the ruin of Qvinte's crofters cottage). As you pass by the viewpoint at Torberg (berg = hill, mountain) you can look out over the agricultural landscape along the Stream Surtan valley. The Trail continues on to Slätthult (flat, wooded high ground) passing by charcoal pits and a well-preserved earth cellar at Ljungslätt (ljung = heather; slätt = flat ground). The viewpoint at Nordbacka (nord = north; backa = hill) is also well worth seeing.

Road directions: Drive towards Seglora, turning right 200 m after the new church. Follow the road until you reach the car park at Ängslyckan.

4. Slätthults cultural landscape

There are many crofters' cottages situated at Slätthult, which are surrounded by lush meadows and enclosed, wooded pastures. Here there are hollow beeches and whitebeams (*Sorbus intermedia*) and if you are lucky you might see wild orchids (*Dactylorhiza maculate*), violets (*Viola spp.*) and catsfoot (*Antennaria dioica*). The viewpoints at Jälltorp and Älmhult overlook a

wooded landscape interspersed with small crofters' holdings and farms. Pastoral farming for centuries has retained an open landscape with a rich and diverse flora. Unfortunately, any changes in this age old pattern of farming could spell disaster for many species.

Road directions: see number 3

5. Sjögarås (sjö = lake)

The viewpoint at the top of the hill at Sjögarås gives you a magnificent view of Lilla Hålsjön (Lake little hole) and Hyssnaslätten (the lowlands of Hyssna).

Road directions: Park at Lilla Hålsjön's public bathing area. Walk eastwards 300 m and follow the sign for Sjögarås.

6. Torkel's Gömma (gömma = hiding place)

Torkel's hiding place is situated in a wild mountain terrain north west of Lilla Hålsjön. It is a cave made out of boulders at the floor of a sheer rock face. According to folklore, Torkel is said to have hidden there to escape the Danes during the times of unrest between Sweden and Denmark. You can climb down into the cave using the ladder, but you will need a torch to explore it properly.

Road directions: From the car park at Lilla Hålsjön's bathing area walk 100 m to the north east and follow the sign for Torkel's Gömma.

7. The ancient beech tree (legally protected)

This ancient beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) has been protected since 1946, when it was made a natural landmark. It is important to protect trees like this as they ensure the survival of many species of insects, mosses and lichens. They are part of the local history and village folklore, often mentioned in tales passed down through generations.

8. The nature reserve at Liagärde (lia = scythe; gärde = enclosed field) and Stora Hålsjön (Lake big hole)

The viewpoint at Liagärde looks over the lake and the nature reserve. You can see steep, wooded ravines, meadows and open pasture. The viewpoint is reached by taking the well-marked path from the car park. The lake is home to many species of fish, including one of Sweden's rarest, the vårlekande siklöja (spring-spawning cisco *Coregonus trybomi*). The path descends steeply to another viewpoint at the foot of a 32m sheer drop which according to folklore is an old precipice. The path continues downwards joining a Stone Age path leading to the once Stone Age settlement by the edge of the lake.

The Hyssna Trail continues from the car park down to the lake, winding through meadows and stonewalled pastures. At the lakeside there is a small sandy beach and a picnic area with a toilet. Firewood is kept in a box for those who want to cook or barbeque over an open fire. The picnic area is situated 1 km from the car park, where a map of all the walks within the nature reserve can be found.

Road directions: From the old church take the road to Seglora which passes the new church. After approximately 7.5 km turn right at the sign for Liagärde.

Map of Hyssna

The main attractions along the Hyssna Trail are marked with pink numbers. Each number has an accompanying text and road directions.

Hyssna Trail highlights no. 1- 17.

Other sights within the area no. 18-23.

9. Høkås (Hök = hawk, ås = Esker) Viewpoint and camping site.

Høkås is situated 200m above sea level and is the highest point in the area. The views are stupendous and can be enjoyed from the picnic tables provided. The camping site for six small tents has a wind shelter, toilet, drinking water well, and a wood store for cooking purposes. Pitches must be booked in advance at the local petrol station 0320-39059. A road leads to the viewpoint, making it accessible for handicapped people.

Road directions: From the old church take the road to Seglora which passes the new church. After passing Liagärde turn right when you see the sign for Høkås.

10. Porten till tassemarkerna (the gateway to wolf territory)

Here the landscape changes, becoming wilder and more untouched. Even today this remote and barren region is still known as the wolf territories, though wolves haven't roamed here since the middle of the 18th century.

Road directions: From the old church take the road to Seglora which passes the new church. After 4.5 km turn left following the sign to Hesserød. After 5 km turn left again following the sign to Pjätared. After 600m you will see a barn and a sign showing the way. When you turn off to Pjätared the road is gated, passing through pasture. Be sure to close the gates as you pass through and show consideration for the animals and people that live here.

The trail continues to Gropabergen (grop = hole; cavity; berg = mountain) and the viewpoint overlooking the blanket bogs at Uttermossen (approx 600 m)

11. Uttermossen (utter = otter; mossen = wetland bog)

Uttermossen is a beautiful, untouched expanse of wilderness covering an area of 255 hectares on the borders between Hyssna and Seglora. The 30 or more naturally forested islets are the breeding grounds for Pygmy and Tengmalms owls (*Glaucidium passerinum* and *Aegolius funereus* respectively). In spring, the open wetlands are the courting grounds for black grouse and cranes. Lakes Utter and Abbore (perch) are located within the wetlands, which stretch northwards into Stora Kållesjön (Lake Large Kålle). (See number 10 for road directions)

12. Kröselia ("kröser" = dialect name for lingonberries, lia = the slope)

The trail passes an old earth cellar, a relic of the crofters' cottages which once stood here. The cottages' name, Kröselia, indicates that lingonberry (*Vaccinium vitia-idea*) bushes must have covered the forest floor here in the past. Today though, the open Scotch pine forests have been replaced by dense fir trees that cut out the light.

13. Jättegrytorna i Ansered (The giant potholes at Ansered)

The giant potholes were formed during the last ice age by stones harder than the bedrock being trapped in swirling water and boring there way downwards. The largest potholes are over a metre in diameter and have a depth of 40-70 cm. Often you can still see the stones in the bottom of the potholes.

Road directions: From the old church at Hyssna take the road to Bollebygd. After 6 km turn right to Ansered. Follow the road for 1.5 km until you see the signpost to the Jättegrytorna on the righthand side.

14. Glafsered's old stone bridge

The beautiful, two-vault stone bridge was built in 1865. The craftsman charged 60kr (£5) for his work, providing the stones were transported to the site. He left one year's guarantee on his craftsmanship and the bridge is still standing today. 100m downstream is the ruin of an old saw mill.

Road directions see number 15.

15. The ruined saw mill at Rya

The surrounding countryside is very picturesque and well worth seeing. The trail takes you over a footbridge high above the River Surtan which rushes through a deep ravine at this point. In the past, a water-powered wood turning factory was situated here, manufacturing bobbins for the textile industry up until the early 20th century.

Road directions: From the old church take the road to Bollebygd. After approximately 4 km you'll see the sign (Rya svarvruin) on the left-hand side. A path runs from the turnery to the stone bridge at Glafsered and is about 400 m long.

16. The hamlet at Melltorp with its saw mill, mill and café

Melltorp is one of Sweden's national heritage sites. The hamlet has retained its original character and all the houses still remain in a single row. Between the houses are two well-preserved long-loft cottages dating back to the 17th century. There is a waterfall and salmon trap at the saw mill which is still in use. The mill has been converted into a café selling hot and cold drinks, home-made cakes, sweets and locally produced organic produce.

For more information ring the café 0320-38023, www.kvarnenihyssna.se

Road directions: From the old church take the road to Bollebygd. After approximately 700 m turn right when you see the sign for Melltorp. After 400 m, look for the sign "Kvarnen".

17. Torshall (Tor = a god in the Nordic mythology, hall = mountain)

The view from the top of the hill looks out over the Surtan valley (see picture). Looking in the other direction you can catch a glimpse of Lake Lygnern at the nearby village of Sätla. The top of the hill is reputed to have been a meeting place for a prehistoric cult.

Road directions: Torshall is signposted from the bridge at the old church at Hyssna and from the bridge at Melltorp. Map's showing other short walks in the area are located at the bridges.

Other worthwhile sights in the area.

18. The giant boulder at Friared

The giant boulder was deposited here by a glacier during the last ice age. It measures 25 m in diameter and 5 m in height.

Road directions: At the Sandvads crossroads take the road to Skene. After 1.5 km turn left towards Friared. After 1.5 km you will see the boulder on the left-hand side by the three-way crossing.

19. Dansehallerna. (hall = mountain)

At the top of the hill at Dansehallerna you overlook the lowlands of Hyssna. On the way up you pass a large round boulder which, with a little effort, you can get to rock.

Road directions: From the old church take the road to Bollebygd. After 1.5 km you will see the sign for Dansehallerna on the right. It is about 500 m to the top.

20. Skalleberg (berg = mountain/hill)

It's quite a steep climb up to the top, but it is well worth it for the view, which can be enjoyed sitting at the picnic table or on of the well-placed benches.

Road directions: From the crossroads at Sandvad take road 156 towards Gothenburg, after 2 km turn left, taking the road to Flybacka. After 100 m turn right and follow the sign to Skalleberget. There is a small car park at the start of the 250 m walk, which is marked by yellow spots on trees and posts.

21. Härsjöns strandäng (Lake Häsjön strandäng = marshy-meadow)

Between Road 156 and Härsjön there is small expanse of marshy meadowland which is the natural habitat of some rare wild flowers such as the beautiful blue klockgentianan (marsh gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe*). There is also a public bathing / picnic area at the lake.

Road directions: From the crossroads at Sandvad take road 156 towards Gothenburg, after 3 km you will see the lake and car park on the left.

22. Korsås-Augustas ryggåsstuga at Olofsred

The ryggåsstuga is a very low-roofed, one-roomed worker's cottage. The cottage was built in 1862 and is today in the trust of the local preservation society.

Road directions: From the crossroads at Sandvad take road 156 towards Gothenburg, after 3 km turn right towards Dalskog. After 1 km you will see the cottage on the left with a small parking area to the front.

23. The protected natural spruce forest (legally protected)

Here you can experience and wander through natural Norwegian spruce forest. The habitat is protected and contains many rare mosses and lichens found only in these untouched areas. It is a very beautiful area with a fast running stream to the left of the road.

Road directions: At the crossroads at Sandvad take road 156 towards Gothenburg, after 3 km turn right towards Dalskog/Torsered. Continue on the road for 5,5 km until you see the signs "biotopsskydd" on the right-hand side of the road. Do not turn left to Dalskog!!

General information about Hyssna and the Hyssna Trail

The trail is a 40 km circular two-day walk starting at the old church in Hyssna. The trail is well-marked with yellow spots on trees and posts, allowing a start at any point. The main attractions are indicated 1-23 on the map and can be visited by car following the road directions.

At the beech woods, Torshall and the nature reserve at Liagärde there are shorter walks that branch off from the main trail. Maps for these are found at the parking areas. There are 40 notice boards along the way, some in English, giving a detailed historical and cultural background of the areas you pass through.

Picnic areas and benches are placed at most of the viewpoints. There are two small camp sites (for about five tents) at Hökås and Liagärde with basic amenities including a fresh water well, firewood for cooking, a wind shelter, rubbish bin and toilet. The wind shelter or camping pitch must be booked in advance at the local petrol station 0320-39059 or tourist information centre 0320-217270.

The most memorable viewpoints along the trail are to be found at Torberg in the beech woods, Sjögaråsen at Lilla Hålsjön, Liagärdesberget, Hökås, Gropabergen at Uttermossen and Torshall.

There are public bathing areas at Härsjön and Lilla Hålsjön but you are free to bathe when and where you want along the trail.

Services provided in Hyssna:

There are good bus connections to and from Göteborg, Skene (from where you can take the train to Varberg) and Borås.

Taxis service: 0320-30830

Petrol station, post office and village shop: 0320-39059. (Campsite booking office)

Local supermarket: 0320-38040

Café and restaurant: The water mill at Melltorp 0320-38023 www.kvarnenihyssna.se

Pizza bar Lockövägen 0320-39575

More information and guides can be obtained by contacting the local preservation society 076-8009088, the tourist information centre in Kinna 0320-217270 (fishing permits can be brought here) and Hyssna web site www.hyssna.se