

St. Olav Ways III- The Østerdalsleden Path

From Karlstad to Trondheim

Michael Schildmann

A Pilgrim Diary
With All The
Original Maps And
Tracks On The Road

Foreword by
Hans Morten Løvrød, Director of the
Norwegian National Norwegian Pilgrimscentre

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Thank you Pü.

This translation was created with the help of DeepL, a very helpful translation programm, and was then further revised. I apologize for any translation errors.
The basis was the 2018 edition of my book „Unterwegs auf dem Østerdalsleden“
Michael Schildmann

Table of Contents

Preface

Forord

Tag 01: Thursday, June 20 / Oldenburg-Berlin-Rostock-Copenhagen

Day 02: Friday 21.6. 3:15 Copenhagen-Göteborg-Karlstad

Day 3: 22.6 - Karlstad - Nedre Frykken/ B&B Sköne Rum Fryksta 23km, Weather: mixed

Day 4: 23.6. Nedre Frykken - 18km to GPS „Campsite“ Hagudden Midsummer Night

Day 5: 24.6. „Campground“ Hagudden - Humletorp 12km

Day 6: 25.6 Humletorp - Prästbol 18km

Day 7: 26.6. Prestbol - Lappnäs 27 + 2km Weather: sunny, overcast, rain,

Day 8: 27.6 Lappnäs - Lysvik 16 km sunny, sometimes slightly cloudy

Day 9: 28.6. Lysvik-Torsby 21 km (plus car approx. 5 km)

Day 10: 29.6. Torsby - Camping 45 21,5 km

Day 11: 30.6. Overbyn/Camping 45 - Värnäss 35 km

Tag 12: Saturday 1.7. Varnäss, beautiful weather, light wind, 4km

Tag 13: Sunday 2.7. Renates birthday, 28 km Varnäss - Brönäs / Maya, beautiful weather, light wind

Tag 14: Sunday 3.7. 10km , car + 7km footpath Brönäs - Ransbysäteren, weather beautiful, light wind

Tag 15: Tuesday 4.7. 23 km Ransbysäteren-Långberget, nice weather, light wind

Tag 16: Wednesday 5.7. 14Km Långberget - Södra-Aselbergsäteren, nice weather, light wind

Tag 17: Thursday 6.7. 18km Södra-Aselbergssäteren - Hölljes, sunny, cool, light wind

Tag 18: Friday 7.7. Bus ride 29km, running distance: 21 km Hölljes-Mandfloen/Elfried, sunny, cold

Tag 19: Samsatg 8.7. 23km Mandfloen - Trysil, first sunny, then slightly cloudy, cold, then rainy

Day 20: Sunday 9.7. / 9 km Trysil, first sunny, then partly cloudy, cold, then rainy

Tag 21: Monday, 10.7. / 26 km Hyttegrend Trysil - Camping Fredbo, slightly cloudy, not so cold anymore, later rainy

Tag 22: Tuesday, 11.7. / 26 km Camping Fredbo - Eltdalen, rainy

Tag 23: Wednesday, 12.7. / 21 km Eltdalen - Munkbetsætra, cold. rainy, stormy

Tag 24: Thursday, 13.7. / 9km Munkbetsætra - Osdalssjøen

Tag 25: Friday, 14.7. / 22 km Søre Osdalssjøen - Nodre Rensjøen, clear, cool, windy

Tag 26: Saturday, 15.7. / 17 km according to GPS Nodre Rensjøen-Åkrestømmen, blue sky, little wind

Tag 27: Sunday, 16.7. / 32 km Åkrestømmen - Mountain set, mix, thunderstorm, wind, sun

Tag 28: Monday, 17.7. / 27 km Bergset-Smedberget, Mix, Thunderstorm, Wind

Tag 29: Tuesday, 18.7. / 26 km according to GPS Bergset/Smedberget - Cottage at Skårsjøen, Sun, Cloudy, Wind

Tag 30: Wednesday, 19.7. / 27 km Hut at Skårsjøen - Småvangen ski hut, sunny, cloudy, windy

Tag 31: Thursday, 20.7. / 17 km Småvangen Ski Hut - Tynset Sun, Cloudy, Wind

Tag 32: Friday, 21.7. / 26 km Tynset-Vingelen Sun, Cloudy, Wind

Tag 33: Saturday, 22.7. / 21 km according to GPS :Vingelen - Dalsbygda Rain

Tag 34: Sunday, 23.7. / 22 km Dalsbygda-Spelmovollen hazy at first, then sunny, rain showers and sun in the afternoon

Tag 35: Monday, 24.7. / 27 km to GPS Såttåhaugen/Spellmovollen-Storbekkøya/Budalen at the beginning hazy, then rain showers, from noon sunny

Tag 36: Tuesday, 25.7. / 16 km to GPS Storbekkøya/Budalen - Varda/Budalen hazy at first, then cleared up, partly sunny, later rain showers, dry in the evening

Tag 37: Tuesday, 26.7. / 13 km Pilgerbua Varda/Budalen - Kari's summer residence/Bjørga/Singsås light, slightly

cloudy, partly sunny, dry

Tag 38: Thursday, 27.7. / 21 km to GPS Kari's summer residence/Bjørga/Singsås light, slightly cloudy, partly sunny, dry

Tag 39: Friday, 28.7. / 10 km Pilgrimsbua Okstjønnå - Ski hut Samatun light, slightly cloudy, partly sunny, dry

Tag 40: Saturday, 29.7. / 18 km Ski hut Samatun-Heimvollen bright, slightly cloudy, partly sunny, dry

Tag 41: Sunday, 30.7. / 13 km to GPS Heimvollen-Fogdegården Borten sunny, dry, temporarily cloudy

Tag 42: Monday, 31.7. / 18 km to GPS Fogdegarden-Rødde, sunny, dry, at times cloudy with rain and thunderstorms

Tag 43: Tuesday, 1.8. / 8 km Rødde Folkehøgskole - Tiller/Birgittakloster sunny, dry

Tag 44: Wednesday, 2.8. / 15 km Tiller/Birgittakloster - Trondheim/Nidarosdom sunny, dry

Tag 45: Thursday, 3.8. / Trondheim/Nidarosdom / sunny, dry

Tag 46: Friday, 4.8. / Trondheim/Nidarosdom slightly cloudy, sometimes sunny, dry

Day 47: Saturday 5 August, Trondheim - Oslo train ride, sunny, rain, alternating

Tag 48: Sunday, 6.8. / Oslo slightly cloudy, sometimes sunny, dry

Tag 49: Monday, 7 August / Oslo slightly cloudy, sometimes sunny, dry

Tag 50: Tuesday, August 8th / Oslo-Copenhagen-Berlin-Oldenburg

Preface

The pilgrimage, both yesterday and today, consists of a walk along historical paths to sacred places of pilgrimage. Unlike in the past, today we live in a culturally and religiously diverse society, which also shapes the modern pilgrim phenomenon. Today's pilgrim defines to a greater extent cause and motivation for his pilgrimage. Pilgrims are tolerant and searching, and for many the pilgrimage is a journey to find meaning in their own lives.

Experiences of nature, encounters and community, culture and history are important. Central to many is the desire for peace, freedom, simplicity, carelessness, silence, spirituality and sharing. Today's pilgrim is free to decide on his pilgrimage, and no one can claim to influence and define the pilgrim phenomenon for religious or other reasons.

In summer 2012 I met a tired pilgrim in Stiklestad, Michael Schildmann, who was soaked with rain. He had literally followed in the footsteps of Olav Haraldson and wandered via Sweden to the place where Olav was killed in the battle of Stiklestad in 1030.

As I met him later, Michael is enthusiastic, curious and in a good mood. He was looking forward to getting to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim this way. Some people like to walk on predetermined paths. Others prefer to go their own way. Michael belongs to the last category; he is a pioneer who seeks silence in the woods and mountains and rediscovers the ancient paths to the medieval pilgrimage destination of Nidaros.

This time Michael hiked on almost forgotten and overgrown paths from Karlstad to Østerdalen and on to Trondheim. The pilgrim paths must be constantly remarked

and maintained so that everyone can find their way, and Michael is a pioneer in this regard.

Michael's dedication and enthusiasm inspire and motivate many. It inspires other people to pack their backpacks and embark on a pilgrimage that captivates people. Thank you and good hike!

Trondheim, 4 October 2018

Hans Morten Løvrød /National Pilgrim Centre Trondheim

Forord

Å vandre på historiske leder til gamle helligsmål er selve pilegrimsvandringens særkjenne, både historisk og aktuelt. Til forskjell fra tidligere tider lever vi i dag i et kulturelt og religiøst mangfoldig samfunn, dagens pilegrim definerer i større grad selv både årsak og motiv for sin vandring. Vår tids pilegrimsfenomen er preget av mangfold, pilegrimen er åpen og søkende og pilegrimsleden er for mange et sted å søke mening i eget liv. Opplevelser av natur, møter og fellesskap, kultur og historie, er viktige. Sentralt for mange er ønsket om langsomhet, frihet, enkelhet, bekymringsløshet, stillhet, åndelighet og det å dele. – Dagens pilegrim har selv eierskap til sin vandring, ingen kan gjøre krav på å «eie» dagens pilegrimsfenomen.

Sommeren 2012 møtte jeg en sliten og gjennomvåt pilegrim på Stiklestad. Michael Schildmann hadde bokstavelig talt gått i forsporene til Olav Haraldson tvers gjennom Sverige og inn til stedet hvor Olav ble drept i Slaget på Stiklestad i 1030.

Michael var entusiastisk, nysgjerrig og i godt humør, og han gledet seg til å fortsette vandringen inn til Nidarosdomen i Trondheim. Slik har jeg også lært han å kjenne i ettertid.

Noen mennesker liker å gå i gode spor, og andre liker å gå opp disse sporene. Michael tilhører siste kategori, han er en pioner som søker stillheten i skog og fjell, og som gjenoppdager de gamle ferdselsvegene mot Middelalderens pilergimsmål.

Denne gangen har Michael gått opp spor på gjengrodde veger fra Karlstad mot Østerdalen og videre til pilergrimsmålet i Trondheim. Fortsatt må disse vegene

merkes og tilrettelegges for at andre lett kan finne fram, men Michael har vist vei.

Michaels engasjement og entusiasme gleder og motiverer mange, han er en døråpner som bidrar til at stadig nye mennesker pakker sekken og legger ut på en reise som berører. Takk, og god vandring!

Trondheim, 4. oktober 2018

Hans Morten Løvrød /Nasjonalt pilegrimssenter

Tag 01 Thursday, June 20 / Oldenburg-Berlin-Rostock-Copenhagen

The green (Flix) bus starts at a quarter past six. I am sitting in the second row on the right, have taken a pillow with me and soon fall asleep. Bremen and Achim are two more stops, then we are on our way to Berlin via Hamburg. Sometime near Hamburg I wake up again, search in my pocket and find a roll. At the opposite window, there's a man of my age. He's on his way to his grandchildren's „service“ in Berlin, he tells me. His own are already thirteen and sixteen, those of his second wife are three and a year. My own grandchild is almost two years old. He is not a hiker or „pilgrim type“, as he says, but explores the world by bicycle, with his wife and friends, formerly through the whole world, now along German rivers.

While waiting in Berlin for the bus to Oslo I meet another guy. He's about ten years younger than me and unemployed right now. As a young man he often travelled with the Interrailticket, he still lives on it today, because today he only sits on a bench in the bus station and dreams himself away, takes off with the bus in his mind. The destinations are on the outside of the bus.

I am listening to Mendelssohn's Scottish Symphony while we are on the way to Rostock. In 1829 Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was travelling in England and towards the end of the year in Scotland. Similarities between the landscapes of Norway and Scotland don't seem so far-fetched to me... Thoughts go through my head: Do I overdo myself with this huge backpack? MUST there be so much food, couldn't I just look first, on the spot? And the path is still unclear. Shall I use a track or clarify it on site? Where are hostels or cabins in Sweden? - My thoughts go back and forth. At the moment

the „fear“ is gripping me a bit more (not for the first time), but nothing can be changed any more.

„Dearest“, I listen to the old song by Buddy Holly – it’s like a flashback into our early days, almost fifty years ago now. A lot of feelings, melancholy, longing rise up in me. And do I always have to get out? Do I have to go far away again to feel the longing? There’s an older couple sitting next to me now. He folded his hands, she put her hand between his hands. That’s what we do sometimes, my wife and me. Do others become stingy, too, as they get older? Do they realize that dreams are still pushing for fulfilment? Some things can’t



Göteborg centralstation - built in 1858



Karlstad - SFT-Wandrahem in Former barracks

be done by two, some things can only be done by two. Must separation be practiced to say to oneself, „Yes, I can.“ „Yes, but I don't want it.“ Whoever stays longer must be able to live on. Can one practice that?

Shortly after six, I am on the ferryboat to Gedser. There is a strong wind blowing, the ferry is only occupied to one third. In the restaurant I finally take fried fish fillet with French fries and mayonnaise. Rarely have I eaten so „unhealthy“ in recent years, but my rolls are all eaten up and the choice here in the restaurant is limited. „The exchange office closes in five minutes.“ This announcement is driving me up. To be on the safe side, I change two hundred euros to one thousand and eight hundred and fifty Swedish crowns. Having some cash with you is certainly useful even in Sweden, I think. Suddenly a Finnish ferry is crossing our course, is it coming from Kiel?

Just before eight a.m.. Now I'm sitting upstairs in the bus, in the second row, with a wonderful view of the landscape that flies by on the right and or on left. Usually these are extensive grain fields. An African is sitting in front of me with his girlfriend. On the right a woman is talking all the time, she is already on the phone for more than an hour.

Half past nine. Since some time we are waiting at the main station of Copenhagen, the drivers have to take a break. It reminds me of a night five years ago when I was on my way to Sundsvall, my second pilgrimage to Trondheim and we had to wait here in Copenhagen for the bus from Paris.

From here I'll go to Gothenburg, arriving at about three in the morning. But I only realized that an hour ago. So I ask myself: „What am I doing at three o'clock in the morning at Gothenburg station? Where can I stay? And how do I bridge the time until I continue on to Karlstad in the afternoon?“

Day-02 Friday 21.6. 3:15 Copenhagen-Göteborg-Karlstad

Fortunately, a young Swede got out with me here in Gothenburg. He was helping me find a place to stay. Most places are closed, but not McDonald's. They're open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and they have free access to the Wi-Fi. And so now

I'm sitting here a latte macchiato in front of me, not far from the station. An old man is sitting in a corner, he has fallen asleep, despite the rap music. Groups of young people constantly come in, buy burgers, coke, sit down and leave large amounts of rubbish behind when they are gone. Everybody looks at their smartphone all the time. I take off my jacket, the heating runs. At some point there is a shift change, everything is cleaned, and other employees take over the places behind the counter.

Tonight is the shortest night this year, it's summer solstice. You can tell that even here in town. It's not getting dark, and at 4:10 a.m. it's sunrise again.

On the bus, I was wondering if I should find a room in a hotel. It turned out to be difficult despite Wi-Fi in the bus, and when I arrived in Gothenburg I renounced and classified the stay as part of the adventure. Nevertheless, I am now downloading some overnight apps, such as Hostworld or a camping app for Scandinavia. And then there's possibly Airbnb, where I could also find a room. Most of the young people who are still on tour at this time are chic dressed, many seem to have African roots. Or are they migrants? A young man sits at my table. He says he stayed at the

station because he missed the last train. But then he was kicked out, an overnight stay was illegal, the guards told him. He tells me that I could have booked my route from Gothenburg to Karlstad easier and faster. (I had done it by Swebus, but got a train/bus ride on the ticket.) „If you had taken the Swedish Railways website,“ he says, „they would have just sold you a train ticket. Probably the train would leave sooner than this afternoon.“ That annoys me a little, of course. Then more young people come, friends of him. They ask me about the Pilgrim’s Way, have never heard of St. Olav’s Ways, but find pilgrimage an interesting possibility. At some point, they go home, go to bed I think.

And I go to the station - it’s five o’clock, it should be open again and sitting here in McDonald’s gets boring for me. In the station I find a bench, put my backpack next to me and look at the people around me, including the interior of the station. Then I try to book a ticket to Karlstad at the nearby ticket machine. There are quite a few earlier departures, even relatively soon, but when I try to pay I find that I don’t have the pin of my credit card. And my German cash card is not accepted by the ticket machine. Now I’m getting worried. If I can’t pay with my credit card here, how will I shop on the way - that’s what the card was meant for. In Sweden and Norway, the credit card is accepted at every small kiosk and used a lot. Why didn’t I try that? „Well,“ I think, „I’ll go straight to the ticket office and buy a ticket.“ Unfortunately it will take a long time before it opens.

In the end the employee, who opens his office at seven, can’t help me either, but at least he gives me the idea of putting my backpack in the locker. It’s strange that I didn’t think of it before. It fits in, and now I’m free to leave the station. When I pass an ATM, I wonder if it is taking credit card - and spitting out cash. It works, I’m relieved. Now I can discover the town. I have Gothenburg maps on my GPS, so I

can't get lost. Soon I'll be standing in front and then in a church.

The Christinenchurch in Gothenburg

It is the church of the German-speaking parish. In 1623, two years after Göteborg was founded, a German community was formed there. It consisted of Protestant immigrants from the Netherlands, Germany and Scotland who helped to build the city. In 2014 the parish has about 900 members and is part of the Swedish Church. Sunday services take place at 11:00 a.m. in German in the Christinenchurch and are attended by an average of 80 people.

The foundation stone of a stone church was laid in 1634 and consecrated in 1648. Queen Christina had financially supported the construction of the church and granted the German community basic privileges on 28 April 1649. Therefore the church was named after Queen Christina. On 10 May 1669 the entire northern town with the German Church burned down. The church was reopened in 1672.

The Christinenchurch was renovated between 2000 and 2001. The copper roof of the tower and a large part of the nave were renewed, the walls of the nave were plastered on the outside and repainted on the inside. Since 1961 there has been a glockenspiel with 42 bells in the tower of the church. It plays chorale melodies three times a day.

A little later I reach the cathedral, where I light three candles. There's a reference on the door to a devotion at twelve a.m. Until then, I stroll on, enter the market hall and eat a Swedish vegetable soup at one of the regional stands. After the twelve o'clock devotion in the cathedral I ask the priest for a travel blessing. He's sending me to the priest in Karlstad, before I leave tomorrow morning. But, so he says, he would also like to go on pilgrimage and continues: „These days my wife reaches Santiago.“

Shortly before four p.m. I am back in the station, I get my backpack out again and search for the right platform. Somehow, however, the different information does not fit together. I'm asking. At the counter of the Swedish State Railways I am grumpily referred to the Swebus counter. I show them my ticket, but the lady behind the counter only notices that this connection does not exist. „But,“ she comforts me quickly, „I'll print you another connection. It will take you to Karlstad without changing trains. Please hurry, your train will be leaving soon.“ I wonder about this mess, but I have got a ticket and I'll be in Karlstad in time. The reception at the youth hostel will no longer be manned at that time, they e-mailed me, but I would get the door code if I was there and then called a certain telephone number. Now all I have to do is find my train.

After all, the older train jolts comfortably through the sunny forest landscape, circling Lake Vänern on its southern shore. Arrived in Karlstad, I don't let myself be distracted or carried away to a city tour, but walk past the city hotel, cross the Klarälven, keep left at the Värmland-opera and go to the SFT hostel at the old barracks.

Karlstad is a Swedish town in the historic province of Värmland on Lake Vänern and the capital of the present-day province of Värmlands län. The city with about 60.00 inhabitants (2015) is the capital of the municipality Karlstad and seat of the diocese Karlstad of the Swedish Church as well as a university town since 1999. Karlstad is Sweden's seventeenth largest city. Värmland is known as a landscape of poets, and Karlstad was home to several artists. One of the most esteemed is Gustav Fröding. Karlstad's symbol is a happy sun, known by the *Sola i Karlstad*. The legend says it that it was a cheerful waitress in her town inn that gave the town its sunny reputation. Since 1984, a statue has stood in her honour in front of the Stadthotel.

In front of the hostel I get the door code by phone and move into my room on the second floor. Two beds, but I'm alone. Finally I can take a shower and put on some fresh clothes. Only a few people can be heard in the building. In spite of various rebuilds, one still notices that it was formerly a barracks.

Half past nine: my simple meal is quickly prepared in the members' kitchen. Mexican stew and the fast three-minute noodles. Afterwards I take a walk and explore the old barracks area and its current use. I am in bed at 11:30. It's still light outside.

**Day 3 - 22.6 - Karlstad - Nedre Frykken/ B&B
Sköne Rum Fryksta 23km,
Weather: mixed**

Twenty to seven: I can't stay in bed anymore. I get up and have a shower. I think my backpack is ready. It had been raining last night and while I was listening to it in bed, I thought about my plan, about the route and the pure fact that I want to start my third St. Olav Way this morning. That's a "good" start, it went through my mind. I say to myself, that is not the first rain on my route - and certainly not the last. So what the hell, I've got my rain gear and I'm not made of sugar.

And by the way: "At the moment it is only slightly cloudy." I lock my room and go to the breakfast room one floor down. On the way I come across my laundry. I had forgotten that yesterday evening I had washed and fixed it to the railing in the hallway of the side stairwell. A drying room was not available and people I could have asked did not meet me. However, while walking around in this old barracks building, I noticed the warmth especially in this stairwell. Ideal for drying laundry, as the heat climbed up from the cooling unit in the cellar. So now my laundry's dry. My shirt, trousers and underwear are quickly collected, brought back to my room and stowed away in my backpack.

First I pay for the overnight stay by credit card and signature (I don't need a Pincode at all), my DJH ID proves useful for a small price reduction, then I inquire after breakfast. "Yes, there's the breakfast room over there, make another sixty crowns." Okay, who knows, when I'll get the next decent

meal. There is the usual buffet: juice, milk, muesli, fruit, tea or coffee. I'm enjoying it in peace. Today's track is not too long and I want to take it easy.

Again I'm a little afraid of my own courage. Almost 50 days, more than 700 km, many of them not based on pilgrim routes, but on my own planning. How's that work? Can I find a place to stay overnight, again and again? Campsites somewhere in nature? I'd rather have camping sites (with the typical cabins) or B&B sites; at least I'd like a mattress. The tent and mattress, I am carrying, are for emergencies only.

I am ready at a quarter past eight. Backpack on, stairs down and out. Ha, the weather has improved even more. My self-designed path leads along the old barracks.



At the end I approach the through road and cross it at a traffic light. According to the plan I should follow the road to the right, walk next to it on the old roadway. Then I see the large square opposite, look at my GPSTrack and think: „If I cross this square, I could certainly continue more comfortably and calmly back there“.

So there it is again, my „problem“, my inner voice, which always comes up with doubts about the way. No matter whether the way was made by me or the “original” way, this question arose again and again earlier: if I would walk there, then it might..., then it would be certain... I have known this voice for a long time. Already on my first pilgrimage in Spain it had often contacted me. Most of the time I suppressed it. But sometimes it was right, I’ve checked it from time to time. Somewhere deep inside I know that I have a good feeling for space and can usually find my way around the landscape if I’m observant. But unfortunately, this is not always the case. Today I’m looking at the track and stop the (inner) discussion. But not even half a kilometre later I decide spontaneously and turn left into the forest - I leave the preplanned track for the first time. This procedure should prove its worth. The „rough“ direction is determined by the track in the GPS device, I decide on the exact route on the way.

The route through the forest is beautiful. After some time I reach the suburb of Råtorp, have a look at the settlement, leave it at the northern end and finally reach the Klarälven. On the map it looked so nice, always along the river... But the road I chose has far too much traffic, it’s very noisy. But there is no other. So I walk on the wide, asphalted cycle path and footpath.

My new backpack is easy to carry. Of course I had tested it before, but today is the first day I carry it with full luggage for a whole day. It’s already a decent weight squatting on

my back. Strictly speaking, the hips carry the largest part: the hip belt tightly buckled and the shoulder straps loosened. So the shoulders carry only little and do not hurt so easily. So far the theory, and so far my practice. Around ten I take the first break and put my backpack down.

When I want to pee, I notice a problem, a spot in the front of my trousers. What I know from earlier pilgrimages in the late afternoon has already occurred within the first two hours. The belly strap pushes the water down out of my bladder. It's a result of the prostate removal I had to undergo years ago. At that time, the urinary bladder closing mechanism was reduced from two to one. If there is strong pressure on the bladder now, urine will pour out. The remaining closing mechanism normally works fine, but not under the pressure of the hip belt. Since it must be so tight, I will run from now on with a (self-made) insole. Whatever. There are worse things.

After everything is ok again, I eat a sandwich that I could make at breakfast this morning and then I start again. Thirty minutes later I get to Skare and right at the entrance to the village a petrol station awaits me. Petrol stations are often the only meeting places in small villages. Here you fill up your tank, drink a cup of coffee or quickly take a Pölser, chat a little, buy what you forgot, and then go on. That's exactly what I'm doing. The milk coffee ordered from the vending machine unfortunately is only a normal coffee. With a lot of milk and some sugar it becomes drinkable (although unfortunately lukewarm), the piece of cake with it tastes great. Payment again is made by (credit) card. In addition I have to show my identity card and sign it. Cash has not been abolished in Sweden, but it is receding into the background. Payment with credit card is convenient for me because I rarely find an ATM to get cash.

While the coffee is standing in front of me, for the first time I try to send home a „point“, my current position. This is quite easy to be done from the GPS program that I installed as an app on the smartphone. Simply by longer finger pressure at the desired place that point „opens“ and with „share with“ it's sent home by E-Mail. (Today to my wife, my daughter and my friend Nicolaus, who is my home-base.)

And why do I send such a “point”? Here at the gas station I leave my track again and prefer to walk through the small village. At the next turn there is a supermarket. There's a coming and going, but I don't need to shop. Most people look grumpy, or don't look at all, which means they are probably somewhere else in their thoughts. A woman in a beautiful blue sweater, probably my age, comes out and lights up at me. She would love to join me, she says, but unfortunately... She shrugs her shoulders and wishes me a good journey.

I arrive at a square with a small pond. Next door is the school. As I leave this village to the north, I pass a refugee shelter. Many of the strangers sit outside, others walk in my direction, to the main road and to a bus stop. The two I'm talking to are from Afghanistan. They are surprised because I'm travelling with backpack. Where Trondheim is situated, however, is not quite clear to them. But they're friendly, almost cheerful. (About being safe?)

The next place on this road is Grava. I had already decided to move the track from the main road to a side road before and now I notice that it leads into a nature reserve. And that it leads to that little church whose tower has been looking at me for some time. This is a surprise for me. Next to the panels with historical information there is a pole with the symbol of St. Olav Way. A great joy twitches through me. Here you go, how wonderful. I'm already on my way to

Trondheim. I decide to take a break to look at the church. Unfortunately, it's locked. But then I discover the cemetery workers. They send me to a flat building and behold, an employee of the church office comes with me, unlocks the church door, explains some important data to me and then leaves me alone. „After some time I leave the church again and look for a sheltered, but sunny place to sit down and have lunch. After that I take a little nap.

Grava Church

The first time the name Grava is mentioned in any action is in a donation letter of 1359, when a man named Olof, a priest in Grava, is mentioned. It can therefore be assumed that Grava had a church in the early Middle Ages. According to Erik Fernow's „Owerwer Wermeland“ (1773-79) it was built of wood and lay north of today's, perhaps under the northern cross arm, which was added only in 1764. This first church must have been small and insignificant. When the church is replaced by a new one, it is built of stone and slightly larger. 11 meters long, 6.5 meters wide and 6 meters high. In 1635 it was extended and a tower was built. In 1645 the church had its full length in west-east direction. In 1684 the southern arm of the cross was added, which gave the church a strange shape. 1764 - 1770 the church was given the cruciform ground plan it now has. The tower was rebuilt in 1862.

(After: www.svenskakyrkan.se)

Although Karlstad is certainly an important place with important churches, I could not decide for an extra day. When I arrive on site after my arrival, I am almost drawn to leave, then there is no stopping. Only once, in Porto in the north of Portugal, when me and my wife wanted to walk the Portuguese Camino to Santiago de Compostela, we indulged in a day to roam this wonderful city more exactly.

When I leave again, I could walk in silence, at least a short distance. The path is away from the main road, first it runs along the river Klarälven, but then I follow road 725 along lake Södra Hyn. Here again there is a small detour, closer to the lake. Everywhere there are holiday homes with access to the lake. Later I follow road 714 from Dyvelsten to Kil. At Illberg I missed the chance for a side track. Later near Apertin I turn left again, hoping for a place to sleep. This is said to be the alternative starting point for „Frykenleden“. This is a marked pilgrim's path from Kils to Torsby along the elongated Fryken Lake. I found the track while googling at some point and included it in my plans. I benefited from the fact that it contains several suggestions for places to stay overnight. This already gave the first half of my Swedish track a certain basic structure. The other starting point is in Kils, right at the station.

Unfortunately the hotel in the former manor house of Apertin is closed today. So I can only walk through the public park, then come to a small settlement on the other side and finally get back to the country road 714, meanwhile close to the trotting track. But nearby is also the old church square of Stora Kil with weathered tombstones and an octagonal funeral chapel surrounded by a stone wall. I'm taking another break here.



Grava church