

The Leiruvogur Harbor Research Project



Looking across the Leirvogur Bay where the Viking Age harbor was located. This project brings together specialists in archaeology, oceanography, geophysics, and saga studies from the University of California, Los Angeles, Kiel University, and the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Studies.

Interdisciplinary archaeological examination of a Viking harbor and its hinterland in Iceland

This project is situated in Iceland and examines the most frequently mentioned harbor in the Icelandic Family Sagas. The Leiruvogur harbor was controlled by the Viking chieftains of the Mosfell Valley from ca AD 871-1100. Archaeological investigations in the hinterlands have revealed the residence and power structure of these chieftains. Focused research on Leiruvogur will shed light on the socio-economic aspect of the harbor, and, in broader North Atlantic contexts, provide data for understanding the infrastructure and organization within the trans-Atlantic Viking World. Our focus is: survey, targeted test excavation, artifact analysis, historical document research, and the reconstruction of the coastal landscape around the harbor.



We have begun our search for the remains of the Viking Age harbor by reconstructing the historic landscape. Here oceanographers from the University of Kiel map subsurface sediments to identify the old Viking Age coastline in the Leiruvogur Bay during our 2013 season.



Geophysics is used to target archaeological remains of the harbor and assist in landscape reconstruction. Geophysics has located several anomalies that may be remains of structures and shown that the mound called 'Ship Mound' is likely artificially constructed before AD 1500. This will be further investigated in the 2014 season.



The geophysics results are archaeologically tested with targeted excavations. The landscape reconstruction accomplished through the combined efforts of oceanography, geophysics, and archaeology has revealed that the inner reaches of the Leiruvogur Bay was an open bay in the Viking period. This bay would have been ideal for landing Viking ships.



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