

Höjentorp Castle Ruin


Flowering rocks and a royal connection


If the beautiful hills of Valle could be said to have a heart, it would be in the form of Höjentorp Castle Ruin. Royalty have enjoyed the verdant landscape and glittering lakes here for centuries.


Höjentorp Castle was once a royal residence whose turrets were reflected in the lake in the park, Trädgårdssjön. But it was built of wood, and in 1722 it burned to the ground. When Carl Linnaeus visited the ruins 25 years later, he stated that it would have been hard to find a match for the former “kongsgård” anywhere. It may seem odd to have built a royal demesne here, but Valle was a central community in the County of Västergötland, only a short distance from Varnhem Monastery and Skara. Gustav Vasa, John III, Charles IX and Charles XI were some of the kings of Sweden that often resided at Höjentorp.

Today, only the stone steps leading up to the courtyard and a basement – possibly part of a medieval castle that was burned by the Danes in 1566 – remain. The area around the ruins still shows the signs of a royal park with such gracious plants as Turk’s cap lilies, aquilegia and wild garlic.

Since anything green is good for you, walking around here must be a very healthy pursuit as you are surrounded by layers of greenery climbing up the hills with green caves made up of wild garlic, dog’s mercury and majestic lime trees. If you continue walking east towards Lake Ormsjön, the lush landscape turns into coniferous woodland where marsh-myrtle and saw-sedge grow. The Höjentorp-

 **Don’t miss:** West of the castle ruin is a path that leads to an island in a field that features a large stone table. Charles XI allegedly signed a document here, which put a government body in charge of a military allotment system that required farmers to provide soldiers for the King’s army. After signing the document, the King banged his fist on the table and declared that this institution would survive as long as the table. In 1901, the top cracked as two boys were moving it, and the same year the allotment system was abolished.

 **Wildlife:** Bird’s eye primrose, lungwort, Solomon’s seal, cowbane, lesser spotted woodpecker, tawny owl.

 **Picnic spots:** The most obvious spot is above the steps to the castle ruin. If you are looking for privacy, find the little jetty. The seats overlooking the lake are completely surrounded by reeds. The perfect spot is where the dragonflies reside. But the water gets deep beyond the jetty, so it is less suitable for small children. To get there, do not head for the castle ruin from the car park, follow the west-bound path instead.

 **Getting there:** Road 49 from Skara towards Skövde. Turn left towards Öglunda at Varnhem junction. Drive a short distance and turn right towards Eggby. After a few kilometres, you will reach the car park Höjentorp Castle Ruin.



In May, there is a scent of wild garlic over hills around Höjentorp.

Drottningkullen nature reserve is the largest in the Valle area, and you can extend your walk far beyond the well-trodden paths around the castle ruin.



The common noctule is one of fourteen bat species that fly around Valle County in the summer. This is one of the most bat-rich areas in Sweden.