

# Winter Travel: Skis



“Harold [Bluetooth] boasted of his proficiency in that technique, which the Finns use when passing through snow-covered forests; Toke then dared to brag about his own talents and compare them to those of the king. This forced Toke to prove his capabilities on the mountain of Kullaberg. But what he lacked in practice, he made up for in courage. He went to the utmost top of the mountain and with smooth planks beneath his feet and only a slender staff to support him, set off at a terrifying speed. In breakneck fashion he hurdled down on his skis across sharp rocks; nevertheless he succeeded cold-bloodedly to control them. Neither the great danger nor panic of any art kept him from keeping erect. Any other would have been terrified by the great chasm before even venturing upon this experiment. At the end the skis splintered against the rocks and he was



hurled into the air, but this in fact saved his life... he hit the cliff at great speed, the skis broke and thus he ended the run in a safe manner. If not great boulders and deep holes had been in his way, he would for sure have ended up in the sea below the cliff. Here some sailors picked him up and in his hatred to the king he did nothing to slay the rumours that he had ended up worse than was the case... he decided then to shift his allegiance to the son of the king, Sven [Forkbeard]” (*Saxo Grammaticus, 10: 7, 4. From c 1190 -1200.*)

## Timeline

6300 BC: The world’s oldest skis were discovered in Russia, near Lake Sindor.

4000 BC: Rock carvings of a skier from this period were discovered in Norway.

3300 BC: Skis from this time period were discovered in Finland. They were 180 centimeters long and 15 centimeters wide. These skis had five grooves.

2700 BC: Two skis and a pole were dug out of a bog in Sweden.

2500 BC: Archaeologists discovered rock drawings that depict a man on skis holding a stick. The drawings were discovered on a Norwegian island.

200 BC to 200 AD: First documented reference to skiing in China.

*The word “ski” comes from the Old Norse word “skíð”, which means split piece of firewood.*

Illumination



c 1000 BC, Norway



Skiing hunter, from Osterunda Church in Uppland, Sweden



1555, History of the Nordic Peoples

## Extant Ski with Binding



Ski found in Norway, dated to 900 CE



Closeup of binding



Modern ski made using traditional methods in China, showing an attached skin.



~1205 CE



Finsland, ~995 CE



~ 1145 CE