

Visby

Gotland County · Sweden

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Visby is the walled medieval capital of Gotland, Sweden's largest island. Cobbled lanes, half-ruined church towers, and rose-covered stone houses give the town its nickname: the city of ruins and roses. Hanseatic Town of Visby preserves one of Europe's most complete Hanseatic-era townscapes, ringed by a strikingly intact medieval wall.

The town grew wealthy from Baltic trade in the 12th to 14th centuries, then spent centuries as a quiet backwater. That slow decline is exactly what saved its old core. Today Visby balances that history with a lively summer season, when outdoor cafés fill the old squares and Medieval Week turns the streets into a costumed festival. It also makes a natural base for exploring the rest of Gotland, from sea-stack coastlines to Fårö, once home to filmmaker *Ingmar Bergman*.

When to visit

Summers (June to August) are mild and the liveliest time to visit, with long daylight hours and outdoor life in full swing. Winters are cold and quiet, and many small businesses close for the season. Spring and early autumn are milder and less crowded, a good trade-off if you don't mind cooler evenings.

Plan around **Medeltidsveckan** (Medieval Week) in early August, when the old town fills with jousting tournaments, a medieval market, and costumed crowds. It is Visby's biggest annual event, and accommodation books up well in advance.

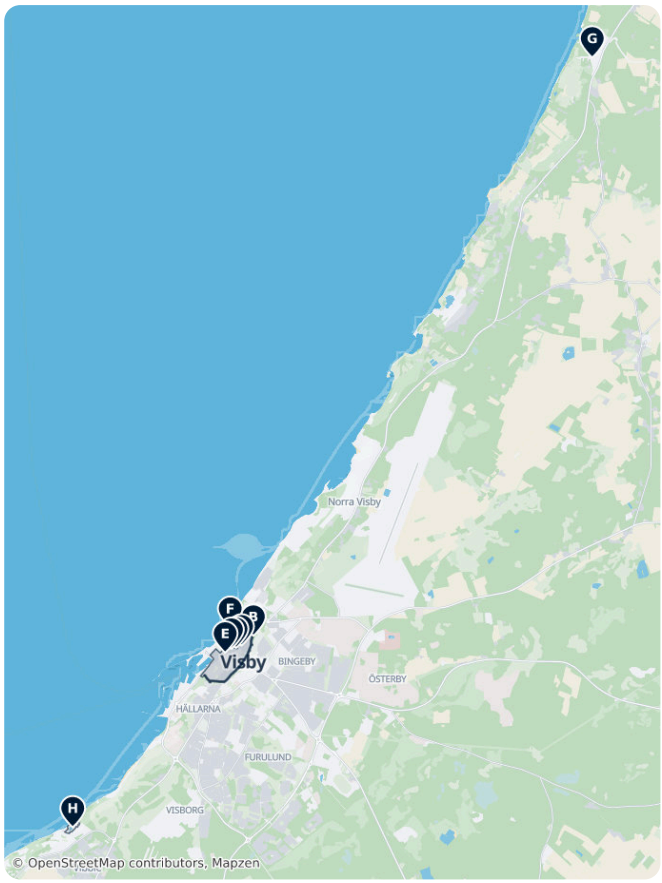
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	2° / 7° Feels like -4°	-1° / -6°	12 rainy days · Dry air
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	2° / 7° Feels like -4°	-1° / -7°	Dry air
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	4° / 10° Feels like -1°	0° / -6°	Dry air
April	Fair Fair for cycling	9° / 15° Feels like 5°	3° / -1°	Dry air
May	Good Good for cycling	14° / 21° Feels like 11°	7° / 2°	Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 24°	12° / 8°	Dry air
July	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	15° / 12°	
August	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 26°	15° / 12°	13 rainy days
September	Great Great for cycling	17° / 21°	12° / 8°	Dry air
October	Fair Fair for cycling	11° / 16° Feels like 7°	8° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
November	Poor Poor for sightseeing	7° / 11° Feels like 2°	4° / -1°	13 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	3° / 8° Feels like -2°	1° / -5°	13 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, July, August

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

July and August bring the warmest, driest weather, while autumn and winter turn wet and grey.

Top sights



A Hanseatic Town of Visby is Visby's UNESCO World Heritage core, a compact medieval town wrapped in stone walls and narrow lanes.

B City Wall of Visby rings the old town for around 3.4 km, punctuated by dozens of towers. Walking a stretch of the rampart path gives the best overview of the town's layout.

C Visby Cathedral is the only one of Visby's medieval churches still used for worship. Its stepped gables and tall spires dominate the skyline.

D St. Katarina Ruins is one of several roofless church ruins scattered through the old town, a reminder of how many congregations Visby once supported.

E Gotlands Museum traces Gotland's history from the Viking Age onward, including the Spillings Hoard, the largest Viking-era silver treasure ever found.

F Visby Botanical Garden sits inside the old ramparts by the sea. Its sheltered position lets exotic plants and roses grow that would not otherwise survive this far north.

G Lummelunda Cave, north of town, is one of Sweden's longest known caves, with guided tours through its dripstone chambers.

H Kneippbyn is a family theme park built around Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking, whose fictional house still stands on the grounds.

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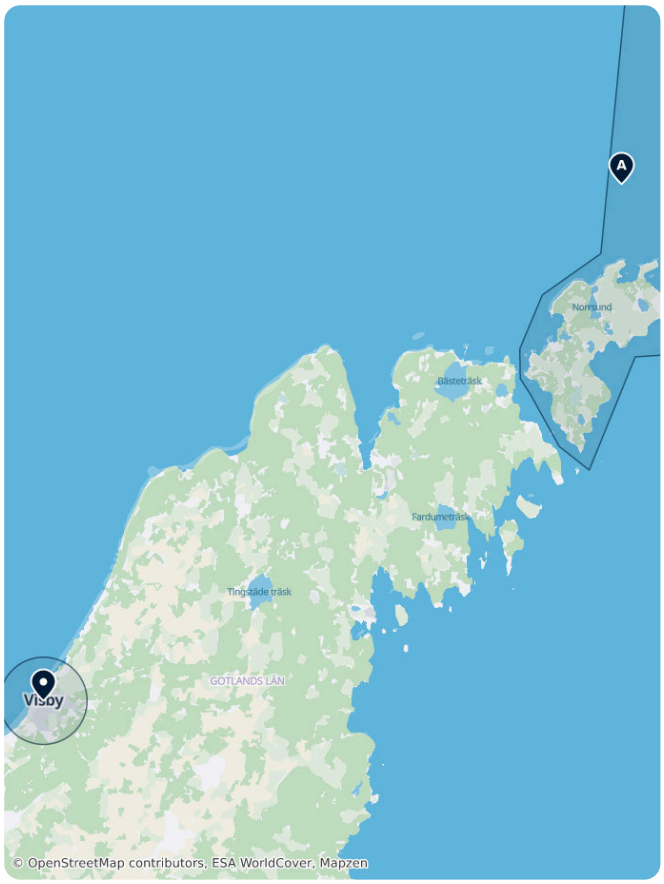
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What to experience

- Catch a concert inside the roofless walls of St. Nicolai Ruin — its ruined nave hosts an atmospheric summer concert series.
- Join the crowds for **Medeltidsveckan** (Medieval Week) in early August, when jousting tournaments, a medieval market, and costumed reenactors fill the old town for a week.
- Rent a bike and ride the coastal paths beyond the city wall — Gotland's flat terrain makes it one of Sweden's easiest places to explore by bicycle.
- Swim at one of the small gravel beaches tucked right against the ramparts, a rare way to cool off minutes from a medieval wall.
- If your visit falls in late June, look in on **Almedalsveckan**, Sweden's largest open-air political festival, when Almedalen park fills with debate tents and speeches.

Day trips

Gotland rewards a day away from Visby, especially along the coast and on the island of Fårö. Rent a car or bike, since public transport beyond Visby is limited.



- Lickershamn, about 30–40 minutes north by car, has one of Gotland's best-known sea stacks (*raukar*), the Jungfrun rock formation, rising from the shore.
- Stora Karlsö, a nature reserve island off the west coast near Klintehamn (about 30–40 minutes by car, then a boat crossing), protects seabird colonies and rare orchids on its limestone cliffs.
- A Fårö, roughly 1 to 1.5 hours away by car plus a free 6-minute ferry, is Gotland's northern island neighbor, known for dramatic rauk coastlines, sandy beaches, and its long association with film director *Ingmar Bergman*.
- Ljugarn, about an hour southeast, is a laid-back seaside village with its own raukar and a sandy beach, popular with Swedish summer visitors.

Getting there

- **By air**: Visby Airport (VBY) is about 3.5 km from the town centre. Regular flights connect it to Stockholm's Arlanda and Bromma airports, a flight of around 45 minutes. Taxis and airport buses run into town. Visby Airport
- **By ferry**: Destination Gotland operates year-round car ferries to Visby from Nynäshamn (about 3 hours 15 minutes) and Oskarshamn (about 3 hours) on the Swedish mainland. This is the main way to bring a car, and summer sailings should be booked well ahead. Destination Gotland
- **By train and bus**: Gotland has no rail link of its own. Travelers combine a mainline train to Nynäshamn or Oskarshamn with the ferry crossing above.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: Gotland's regional bus network connects Visby with towns across the island. Buy tickets through the operator's app or onboard. Kollektivtrafiken Gotland
- **On foot**: The old town is compact, largely car-free, and best explored on foot, though the cobbled lanes and rampart path have some steep, uneven stretches.
- **Cycling**: Gotland's flat terrain and marked routes make it one of Sweden's best cycling destinations. Bike rental shops are common in Visby, and many visitors explore the wider island by bike.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The walled old town is compact and mostly pedestrian, though cobblestones and the rampart path have some uneven, sloped sections.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

Gotland's flat terrain and marked routes make cycling a popular and practical way to explore beyond the old town.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not inside Visby itself — the old town is small, largely pedestrian, and easiest on foot. A car earns its keep once you leave town, since Gotland's beaches, rauk coastlines, and countryside churches are spread across the island with limited bus service.
- **Parking**: Paid parking zones sit just outside the city wall near the ferry terminal and the main gates; pay by app or meter. Free parking is easier to find a short walk from the wall.
- **Restrictions**: Much of the old town inside the walls is closed to general traffic, especially the narrow lanes near Stora Torget.

Food & drink

Gotland's kitchen leans on what the island and the Baltic Sea provide: lamb raised on the island's limestone pastures, fresh herring and other Baltic fish, and Gotland asparagus in early summer. Do not leave without trying *saffranspannkaka*, a golden saffron-and-rice dessert cake unique to the island, usually served with whipped cream and jam.

For a meal, head to the lanes and squares around Packhusplan and Stora Torget, where the old town's cafés and restaurants cluster. Outdoor seating fills up fast on summer evenings, so arrive early or book ahead in peak season.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Open Sandwich · Smörgås
Single-slice bread topped with a range of ingredients — cheese, egg, shrimp, or cured meat — a common Swedish lunch.

Daily Lunch Special · Dagens lunch
A set weekday lunch including a hot main dish, salad bar, bread, and coffee for around 120–160 SEK — the best value hot meal.

DINNER

Meatballs · Köttbullar
Small pork-and-beef meatballs served with cream sauce, mashed potato, and lingonberry jam — Sweden's most iconic dish.

Cured Salmon · Gravlax
Salmon cured with salt, sugar, and dill, sliced thin and served with mustard sauce on rye bread or as a starter.

Pickled Herring · Sill
Marinated herring in preparations ranging from mustard to matjes, a staple of Swedish festive tables and smörgåsbord.

Potato Gratin with Sprats · Janssons frestelse
A baked gratin of potato, onion, cream, and pickled sprats — a classic Swedish comfort dish, especially at Christmas.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Cinnamon Bun · Kanelbulle
Soft, spiced bun flavoured with cinnamon and cardamom, the centrepiece of Swedish fika culture.

DRINKS

Aquavit · Akvavit
Scandinavian spirit distilled from grain or potato and flavoured with caraway or dill, traditionally drunk at celebrations.

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Safety & health

Visby and Gotland are very safe for travelers, with low rates of violent crime. The main practical risks are physical rather than criminal: the old town's cobbled lanes and steep sections near the city wall can be uneven underfoot, and summer crowds during festival weeks call for normal care with bags and wallets.

Beaches around the island are unsupervised, so swim within your ability, and pack sun protection — long Baltic summer days mean more sun exposure than the mild air temperature suggests.

History

Visby began as a Viking-age trading settlement and grew into one of the Baltic's wealthiest towns by the 13th century, a leading member of the Hanseatic League. That wealth built Visby Cathedral and more than a dozen other churches within the walls, along with the City Wall of Visby that still encircles the old town.

The town's fortunes turned in 1361, when the Danish king Valdemar Atterdag invaded Gotland and defeated a hastily assembled peasant militia just outside the walls. Visby itself surrendered rather than face destruction, but centuries of decline followed. Most of its medieval churches, including St. Katarina Ruins, were left to fall into ruin after the Reformation.

That long quiet period is why so much medieval fabric survives today. Gotlands Museum traces this history in detail, from Viking Age silver hoards to the Hanseatic boom and its abrupt end. Visby was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995, recognizing it as one of Europe's best-preserved fortified trading towns.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Sweden at a glance:

CURRENCY
SEK kr

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



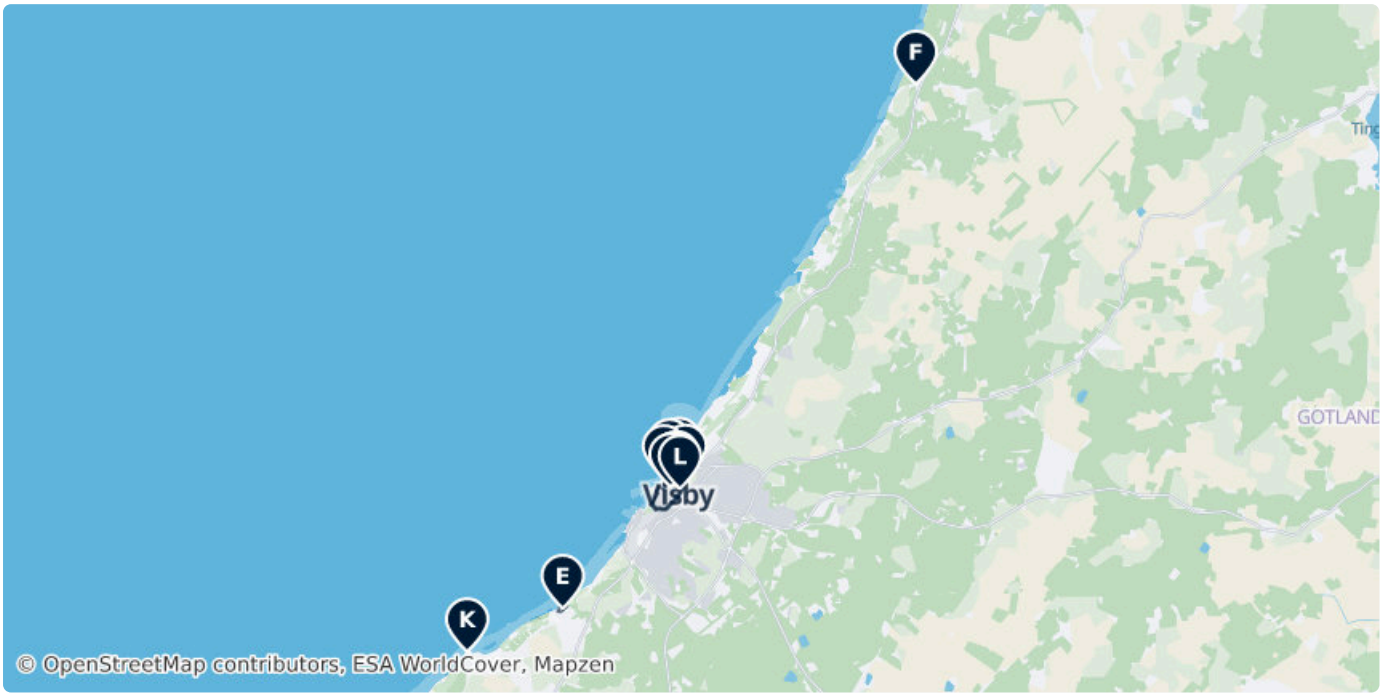
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Swedish

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Visby Essentials

Visby is a UNESCO World Heritage site defined by its exceptionally preserved 13th-century limestone wall, which stretches nearly 3.5 kilometers around the medieval town center. This collection features the city's architectural highlights, including the 12th-century Visby Cathedral and evocative church ruins like St. Katarina and St. Nicolai. Beyond the fortifications, explore the exotic plant collections of the DBW's Botanical Garden, the narrow cobblestone streets of the Klinten quarter, and natural landmarks such as the Högklint sea cliffs and Lummelunda Cave.





A Hanseatic Town of Visby

Well-preserved medieval town and UNESCO World Heritage Site featuring a historic city wall and inner town area. It served as a central trading hub within the Hanseatic League and is characterized by its significant medieval architecture.

1 Nunnegränd, Visby 62156, Sweden (57.64028, 18.29435)



B City Wall of Visby

Visby City Wall is a medieval defensive wall surrounding the Swedish town of Visby on the island of Gotland.

39 Norra Murgatan, Visby 62156, Sweden (57.64243, 18.30117)



C Visby Cathedral

Visby Cathedral, formally Visby Saint Mary's Cathedral, is a cathedral within the Church of Sweden, seat of the Bishop of Visby.

2 Norra Kyrkogatan, Visby 62155, Sweden (57.64083, 18.29749)



D St. Katarina Ruins

Listed as UNESCO heritage, these medieval church ruins are symbol of the glorious history of the city.

Stora Torget 2, 621 56 Visby, Sweden (57.64041, 18.29579)



E Kneippbyn Sommarland

Varied theme park with more than 50 attraction to entertain people of all ages. Highlight: Pippi Villekulla house.

Kneippbyn 15, 622 61 Visby, Sweden (57.61061, 18.24516)

kneippbyn.se, +46 498296150



F Lummelunda Cave

The Lummelunda Cave is located in a nature reserve at Lummelunda north of Visby on Gotland, Sweden.

504 Lummelunda Lummelundsbruk, 62171, Sweden (57.73836, 18.40621)



G DBW's Botanical Garden

Historic botanical garden established in 1855 by the society Sällskapet DBW. It features a unique microclimate for exotic plants and contains medieval ruins alongside diverse plant collections.

Studentallén, 62155, Sweden (57.64377, 18.29398)

visbybotan.se, +46498213333



H St. Nicolai Ruin

Another major ruin listed by UNESCO which history reaches back to the 12th century. Having a great acoustics, it hosts numerous concerts.

Smedjegatan 19, 621 55 Visby, Sweden (57.64412, 18.29832)

gotland.net/sv/platser/st-nicolai-ruin



I Stora torget

A central medieval square established in the 14th century. It serves as the primary hub of the old town and is bordered by seasonal market stalls, restaurants, and the Saint Katarina church ruins.

9 Stora torget, Visby 62156, Sweden (57.64066, 18.29607)

J Kruttornet

The oldest tower in the Visby City Wall, dating back to the mid-12th century. Originally built as a detached defensive tower to protect the harbor, it later functioned as a gunpowder store.

1 Fiskarplan, 62155, Sweden (57.64228, 18.29134)

K Högklint

One of Gotland's highest sea cliffs, located south of Visby. The nature reserve features steep limestone precipices and panoramic views of the Baltic Sea and the city skyline.

(57.60003, 18.20161)

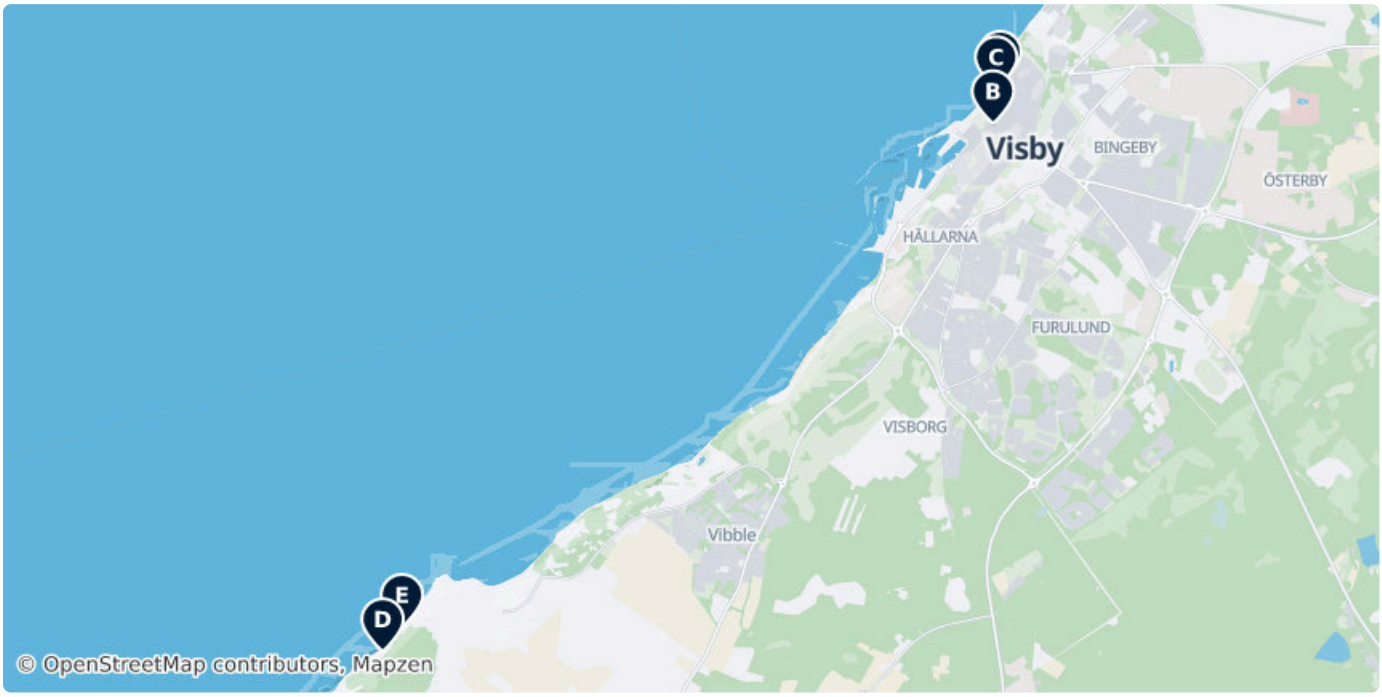
L Klinten

These charming narrow streets and tiny houses once belonged to the worker's quarter. Just wander around and enjoy its peaceful atmosphere.

2 Klinttorget, 62156, Sweden (57.63984, 18.29862)

Hidden Gems

Visby's quieter corners feature a blend of 19th-century horticulture and rugged coastal geography. The DBW's Botanical Garden, established in 1855, utilizes a sheltered microclimate to grow exotic species among medieval ruins. In the historic center, Packhusplan serves as the city's oldest square, marked by a bronze sculpture and fountain. Further south, the limestone cliffs at Rövar Liljas håla and Lillklev offer elevated viewpoints overlooking the Baltic Sea, with the former housing a natural cave historically linked to local folklore.





A DBW's Botanical Garden

Historic botanical garden established in 1855 by the society Sällskapet DBW. It features a unique microclimate for exotic plants and contains medieval ruins alongside diverse plant collections.

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visbybotan.se, +46498213333



B Packhusplan

Oldest square in the city that once served as its central hub. It features a small garden area with a fountain and a bronze sculpture.

18 Strandgatan, Visby 62156, Sweden (57.64028, 18.29278)

C Linné

Memorial dedicated to the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, situated near the botanical gardens.

(57.64329, 18.29329)

D Rövar Liljas håla

Natural cave and viewpoint on the limestone cliffs south of Visby, historically associated with a local legendary outlaw.

(57.59360, 18.19193)

E Lillklev

Elevated coastal viewpoint providing views of the Baltic Sea and the cliffs of the Högklint nature reserve.

(57.59574, 18.19511)

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