

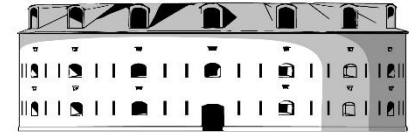


Bomarsund Fortress is located in the Eastern part of the Åland Islands and easily accessed by car and bicycle.



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Bomarsund



BOMARSUND FORTRESS

Today Bomarsund is one of the Åland Islands' most important historical sites.

Bomarsund Visitors Centre was inaugurated in 2022. Here you can learn more about the history of Bomarsund and the Åland Islands.



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Pictures:
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In 1809 Finland and Åland, who for several hundred years had formed part of Sweden, became a part of Russia, the westernmost part of the Russian empire.

It was important for Russia to show its presence in the new area and fortify its border. Therefore, Russian military stayed on Åland and planned a military and a naval base.

The fortress was placed in Bomarsund due to the geographic location of the site. The fact that it was located on the East side of the main island was strategically wise, since this resulted in better connections with Russia. Bomarsund was also located between two maritime routes. Whoever attacked Bomarsund would have to divide their fleet in two, or leave one of the routes open.

The site comprised among other things fortified barracks which could house around 2000 people. They were made of bricks with a granite façade and were equipped with cannons. Around the site, twelve independent towers were planned which were to be connected by walls and roads. A garrison town, Nya Skarpans, which was intended to become Åland's new central hub, was also built.

There was a military hospital and cemeteries for the different faith groups of the garrison located in Prästö. The fortress was built by military working colonies and prisoners. During the summer, soldiers also participated. The construction of the fortress started in 1832 and continued all the way up to its fall in 1854.

In 1853 Russia attacked the Ottoman empire. England and France joined the war on the Ottomans' side to protect their interests in the Middle East and Asia. The conflict that is called the Crimean War lasted 1853-1856. In 1854 the war spread to the Baltic Sea when English and French ships also reached Bomarsund. On 8th August about forty British and French war ships approached, and 12,500 French and British soldiers and seamen disembarked.

The fortress, which was not even half-completed, was now completely surrounded. Both maritime routes were blocked by the British and French ships. On 13th August, the Bränklint tower was attacked and on 14th August the tower was stormed. The next day the Notvik tower was besieged and on 16th August the Bomarsund fortress surrendered. The Russian garrison was brought to France and England as prisoners of war.

England and France then offered Åland along with the Bomarsund fortress to Sweden. Accepting, however, would have meant that the neutral Sweden would have occupied Russian territory during an ongoing war, and therefore the Swedish government declined in order to avoid the risk of provocation. To inflict the greatest possible damage on Russia's hold on the Baltic Sea, the fortress was instead blown up on 2nd September.

Åland remained Russian until 1917. But the battle of Bomarsund and the threat that a rebuilt fortress could have meant for Russia's opponents resulted in a decisive decision during the peace negotiations in Paris in 1856. The Åland Islands were no longer allowed to be fortified. The treaty became the foundation for Åland's demilitarisation, which is still in force today.

