

Sustainable Tourism in Nordic Harbor Towns



Nordic
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For more information please visit:
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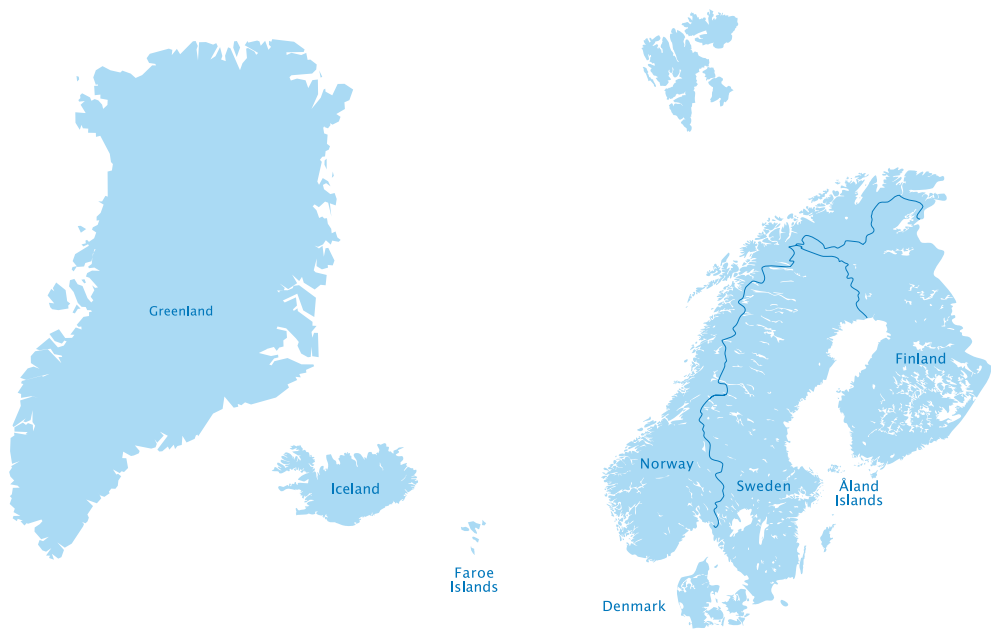
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The development of sustainable tourism in the Nordics depends on integrated technological innovation and active collaboration between public and private actors in the region.





Sustainable Tourism in Nordic Harbor Towns represents novel and meaningful ways of sharing a unique cultural offering with new groups of interested visitors - national and international alike. Despite the challenges that a sudden influx of people creates for harbor towns, cruise tourism still holds the potential to provide a concentrated authentic experience for visitors in a way that develops and strengthens local businesses, communities and environments.



The Nordic Innovation funded project Sustainable Tourism in Nordic Harbor Towns aims at a fruitful collaboration between Nordic municipalities, cruise ship companies, industry experts along with other stakeholders in the field. With a concerted effort from all partners, a socially and environmentally sustainable harbor tourism in the Nordic region is possible!

The project will achieve its goals through the following activities:

- Engagement of municipals from all Nordic countries as well as cruise industry players to collaborate on achieving project visions.
- Implementation and innovations in Nordic harbor towns, exploring their potential for scalable impact on cruise tourism sustainability.
- Establishment of a comprehensive map of relevant innovations, that act as a catalogue of next-step solutions for all project partners, both public and private.
- Creation of a platform for facilitating the sharing of experiences and strategies between municipal stakeholders, ensuring a cumulative development of solutions and approaches. The results of the pre-project workshops demonstrate the value of this element.

Project Vision

The vision of this project is a world where the visit of a cruise ship is a balanced and celebrated event for Nordic harbor towns, rather than a social and environmental challenge. This entails:

- The opportunity to share unique local value propositions, natural and cultural offerings, with novel international groups of visitors.
- Securing local quality of life through mitigation of congestion and deterioration of local resources.
- Development of reciprocal business models for local products and services, increasing revenue of local businesses while strengthening the integrity of destination branding.
- Access to inter-regional technologies and networks of collaboration between stakeholders in similar and different positions of the stakeholder network.
- Ensuring the long-term availability of authentic and dynamic tourist experiences, that run smoothly for both visitors and operators.



Parameters of success

The main project is envisioned as a series of initiatives between Nordic harbor towns and cruise operators. It incorporates the experiences and initiatives of local citizens, as well as the interests of local and international industry players. The solutions devised and tested through this project are innovations with a technological or digital component to ensure scalable impact and adaptive integration to local contexts. A significant emphasis is put on innovations from the Nordic region to foster the integrated development of more sustainable business in the region.

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Project Background

For many Nordic harbor towns, the visit of a cruise ship constitutes a considerable pressure on the rhythm and integrity of destination environments - cultural as well as natural. In local and national media, many citizens express concerns related to cruise tourism in the Nordic region. At the same time, the growing tourism in the region illustrates a great potential, if developed in a sustainable direction.

Tourism in Nordic harbor towns represents novel and meaningful ways of sharing a unique cultural offering with new groups of interested visitors - national and international alike. Despite the challenges that a sudden influx of people creates for harbor towns, cruise tourism still holds the potential to provide a concentrated authentic experience for visitors in a way that develops and strengthens local businesses, communities and environments. This mode of 'conscious traveling' aligns with current trends cited by the cruise industry, and it is a clear sign that fruitful collaborative solutions are possible.



Photo: Niclas Jessen

For decades cruises have offered significant temporary boosts to the revenue of local businesses, however, changing business models are gradually challenging this dynamic. Additionally, cruises put considerable pressure on the resources, infrastructure, as well as cultural and environmental integrity of destination towns. This project aims at uncovering the complexity of these issues, while providing and testing meaningful innovative solutions that can integrate and scale across the entire Nordic region. Through its successful completion this project facilitates the development of a sustainable tourism in the Nordic region - socially, financially, and environmentally.



Towards innovative solutions

A long-term sustainable tourism in the Nordics depends on technological innovation, as well as active knowledge sharing and information exchange between actors in the region. As such, the development of sustainable tourism practices is a natural venue for cooperation. In an effort to meet the challenges and achieve the goals outlined above, Nordic Innovation has initiated this project aimed at developing a more socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable tourism in Nordic harbor towns, ensuring a balanced development of local and international business while securing the local quality of life.



Sustainable tourism is achieved through a series of partnerships between public and private actors based in common interests and values, collaborative solutions, and mutual long-term rewards. In short, this entails two main components:

1. Comprehensive knowledge generation through public-private collaboration, and
2. Testing specific technological innovations that can scale across the Nordic region, paving the way for integrated and sustainable business models.

This initiative is comprised of two phases:

A **pre-project** that ran from August to December 2019, and the **main project** proceeding from January 2020 throughout 2021. As Nordic Innovation strives to increase regional integration the pre-project has incorporated and engaged various entities e.g. municipalities, industry experts and private actors.

Pre-project

The pre-project was formally launched in Oslo on 18th and 19th September with the first of three workshops. It included representatives from the municipalities of Stavanger, Rønne, Visby, Torshavn and Isafjordur. Representatives from Kotka, Sisimut, Narvik, and Copenhagen were engaged in the following weeks. When looking at cruise tourism, the local municipalities constitute a central link between the complex of stakeholders. They handle the interests of citizens, businesses and organizations at local and regional levels. As such their perspectives are integral in addressing the 4 main challenges of this project.

The first workshop in Oslo was followed by 2 online workshops in order to further investigate and contextualise the main challenges, as well as outline reasonable criteria for public-private partnerships and the successful testing of long-term solutions. Additionally, input from other stakeholders in the field was gathered to supplement the findings from the initial workshops. The workshops were facilitated by Green Innovation Group, who also gathered stakeholder input, carried out desktop research and innovation scouting, as well as outlining this project description. In total, these efforts constitute the methodological approach of the pre-project.



**This mixed-methods approach
was chosen to ensure:**

1. a strong foundation in the experiences of Nordic municipalities as linchpins of the stakeholder networks.
2. a thorough understanding of the complexity of these issues, as well as the many conditions to be taken into consideration when scoping and testing innovation in this project.
3. a balanced and neutral starting point for the establishment of public-private partnerships needed to achieve the goals of this innovation project.



Preliminary findings

Through the process outlined above, the participants in the pre-project have identified and explored the following 4 main challenges to sustainable cruise tourism that are addressed through this project:

Sustainable value proposition for all stakeholders

Balancing and managing the diverse interests of all stakeholders poses a key challenge on several practical levels. With a holistic approach, this project aims to simultaneously support the integrity and meaningful development of Nordic harbor towns, in ways that are sustainable for both inhabitants, businesses and the many other related stakeholders.



Photo: Karsten Bildstrup/Hurtigruten

Environmental Sustainability

The natural environment constitutes the ground on which all tourism activities take place. The balance between fair use and overuse of ecosystems is delicate on both a local and global scale. As such, this project aims to develop solutions that secure the environmental context of Nordic harbor towns, the natural attractions of tourist destinations, as well as the dynamics of oceans and the global climate alike.

Collaboration

To effectively develop and implement solutions in a context with many stakeholders, a very high degree of collaboration is paramount.

Aligning Perspectives

A realistic and fact-based perspective of the current situation, shared by stakeholders, is a prerequisite for sustainable development, including inconvenient truths and overlooked success stories alike.



Each harbor town's network of stakeholders is different in composition and dynamics, adding to the complexity of cross-regional cruise tourism. However, the typical types of stakeholders and their relations have been codified through case analysis in the pre-project. This visualization is an aggregate representation of that analysis. It should provide project participants with a visualized overview of the types of connections that are relevant to the efforts towards sustainable cruise tourism on both local and regional levels.





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