

Vadstena, Östergötland, Sweden

Study Visit Report

29th May – 1st June 2018



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Introduction

The Interreg Europe project Green Pilgrimage fourth study visit and meeting was held in Vadstena, Östergötland, Sweden 29th of May-1st June with the main theme digitalisation. Responsible for the meeting was Visit Östergötland, Region Östergötland with stakeholders, notably the Diocese of Linköping, the Pilgrimcenter of Vadstena and the municipality of Vadstena.

Vadstena was the natural place for the meeting as it is a nice small town, with quite a lot of tourists, in different forms. The town grew up around the Birgittine monastery in late middle ages and became together with Nidaros the most important pilgrim site in Scandinavia. Pilgrimage was made illegal in the 16th century and was reintroduced in the 1990-ies. Today about 20.000 pilgrims come to Vadstena each year. The church of Sweden has a pilgrim center which also has a function as an overall center for the whole of Sweden. The Abbey is the nave of the shrine which also includes the parish, Sancta Birgitta Klostermuseum, the new Birgittine monastery and the monastery garden.

The programme started with a pilgrim welcome and an introduction to the monastery area in Vadstena. Day two an international conference was held, day three there was a visit at the pilgrim center, and pilgrim walk as an introduction to the Swedish way of pilgrimage. The last day was dedicated to a steering committee meeting with discussions about coming meeting and the future development of the project.

Participants Green Pilgrimage meeting in Östergötland 29/5-1/6

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Day one

Pilgrim welcome

The group was welcomed in a short pilgrim welcome ceremony led by Ewa Lund, from the Pilgrimcenter, by the saint Birgitta shrine in Vadstena Abbey. The ceremony was followed by a guided tour in the monastery area and monastery museum by Markus Lindberg, Visit Östergötland and Sancta Birgitta Klostermuseum.

The evening ended with a dinner in the Klosterhotel hosted by the municipality of Vadstena.

Day two

International conference

The conference took place at Vadstena Folkhögskola.

09.00 Moderator Maria Jönsson

09.10 Pilgrimage and Saint Birgitta as a part of tourism in Vadstena and Östergötland

Ewa Lund, Pilgrimcenter, Jessica Hallros Vadstena Municipality and Susanne Fredriksson, Region Östergötland

An introduction to tourism in Östergötland and Vadstena, and what pilgrimage and the saint Birgitta means to the picture of a Lutheran area. Also an introduction to pilgrimage in Sweden and the pilgrims seven keyword.

09.40 Digitalisation in Östergötland policy and project

Petra Nordin, Region Östergötland

Region Östergötland has a focus on digitalisation in its current development policy. The regions main task is healthcare but also coordination and development within culture, tourism, outdoor activities etc. In all those areas a lot can be gained with more digitalisation. A project about how to use VR, AR etc in connection with heritage was presented.

10.00 Coffee break

10.30 Digital pilgrim trail, presentation. Best practise.

Markus Lindberg, Region Östergötland and Knut Bergsten, Basetool

The pilgrimtrail from Ödeshög to Vadstena has been digitalised in the basetool system. A digital map with connected information about logistics, heritage, nature and spiritual logistics such as info about what pilgrim is, good places for services and prayers and prayers connected to the places. Attached is a facebooksite for interaction.

11.15 Digitalisation in Kent

Peter Morris, North Downs Way Trail and Anne Clark, National Trails

The North Downs Way Trail was trekked in cooperation with Google three years ago. The same system as googles road pictures. A good help for walkers, a way to promote the trail and helpful in maintenance. But soon out of date and hard to update.

The National trail has a website with interactive maps providing trail information. Funding is a big issue, donations, selling of old signs and collaboration with local breweries is a way to finance the work.

12.00 Lunch, Vadstena Folkhögskola

13.00 Digitalisation and cultural heritage, science and tourism – Example Vadstena Abbey

Eva Lindqvist Sandgren, Uppsala university

A project to make a virtual model of Vadstena Abbey in order to reconstruct how the medieval Abbey would have looked and sounded. The model includes objects that can be shown from all angles and how it would have looked like.

13.45 Quality and sustainability

Kim Ross, Swedish Welcome

There is a lot to think about sustainability and quality in a growing business. How to you avoid leaving footprints. How to use digital information as a way of keeping your business sustainable and what expectations do you want your customers to have.

14.15 Peer review of digitalisation and the future pilgrim

Erika Charbonnel, Kairos Future

A peer review of what the regions in the project has done in digitalisation around it's pilgrim trails and what opportunities there is. Also, a trend analysis of who the pilgrim of tomorrow is.

14.45 Coffee break

15.00 Digitalisation of Cammino Materano

Angelofabio Attolico, Initenero association

The Cammino Materano has used GIS in the planning and building of the trails. The trails are marked and the strategy for social network is about building a community to provide and share information. As it is a new trail a lot of work has been done on branding and promotion.

15.15 Panel discussion, questions, conclusions

16.00 End of conference

The purpose of the conference

To purpose of the conference was to discuss different digital solutions for pilgrimage, hiking and cultural heritage. How the use of technology and digitalisation could enhance the experience and at the same time contribute to better sustainability and protection of cultural and natural heritage. And what has been done in different regions and what could be done. The peer review and an attached report on who the future pilgrim is was presented as well as best practises.

Target group

Pilgrim and cultural developers, policy makers and politicians. The conference was attended by the members of the Green Pilgrimage project and regional and local politicians, officials and representatives from the church.

Evening

After the conference the project was invited to the bishops residence in Linköping for dinner. There was also time for a visit to the cathedral in Linköping.

Study visit

The Pilgrimcenter in Vadstena started in 1997. It welcomes pilgrims to Vadstena and offers hostel, services and organises pilgrimages in Sweden. It is the main pilgrimscenter for the Church of Sweden and supports other centres in Sweden. The center gave an introduction to its functions and also the background of pilgrimage in Sweden.

On the bus from Vadstena to the walk, we passed a few heritage sites, from the stone age to the middle ages, who all, in some way, were connected with pilgrimage. A discussion was introduced how to use pre-Christian heritage in modern pilgrimage.

Pilgrim walk

The way of doing pilgrimage in Sweden was formed during the 1990-ies. It differs a bit as it is not the end of the walk that is important but rather the walk in itself. To test the method and also to use the digital map we walk from Öninge to Hästholmen along Östgötaleden. The walk was about 4 km and the group made seven stops to think about the pilgrims seven keywords. As a remembrance each word has a pearl in a rosarybracelet and a short text that can be the ground for discussions or meditations. The group was asked to discuss along the way and also walk some parts in silence.

Evening

The day ended with a peaceful evening in the monastery museum with medieval music and reading from the revelations of St. Birgitta. A programme used for external conferences to, whatever subject they have, give a sense of pilgrimage.

Steering committee meeting

The last day was dedicated to a steering committee meeting at the Old Town Hall.

The following was discussed:

Review of actions points from previous meetings.

Claim 2 and reasons for underspendings.

Upload of good practises.

Discussions about pilot actions.

Coming study visits i.e. Norway in September and dates for the rest of the meetings.

Update on coming reviews.

Actions plans and how to benefit from the project in the future and continued work after ending the project.

Final conference, when, where, about what.

See minutes for more details.

Conclusions

The visit took place in an unusual nice summer weather. In organising the visit, the ambition was not to stuff the programme too much in order to get room for reflections and time to talk to each other. That is after all what pilgrimage is about and coming together and discuss ups and downs and compare experiences is important in this stage of the project. Talking about what different regions can do together is crucial to the overall outcome of the project.

The project has come to a point where the participants know each other good enough to give and take and the work is in real progress. We had very good discussions, formal and informal, about what has been done and what to do in the latter half of the project as well as how to continue after. We also had interesting conversations about different ways of doing pilgrimage. The Swedish way is based on heritage but more clearly connected to religious activities along the way as in other regions it is more focused on hiking connected to old pilgrim tradition. To use the method of pilgrim walking was a new experience to many participants. Walking in itself is also a formidable way of supporting conversation and sharing experiences.

The overall theme was digitalisation. That can be many things for example a help for the pilgrims with information in a sustainable way, a way of promoting pilgrim trails, a way to plan and maintain a trail and a way to experience things that is fragile to see or reconstruct something that is gone. To use digitalisation right and in a pilgrim friendly way is not easy. The meeting gave a lot of new ideas, experiences and thoughts about how to use digitalisation and also examples that was not a success.

The visit lay a good ground for a continuing work in the next meeting after the summer. A lot of the ideas can be processed at home and get ready for making action plans.

Thanks

Ewa Lund, Pilgrimscentrum, for showing the pilgrim center and leading the walk.

Bishop Martin Modeus for dinner and a nice evening in Linköping.

Vadstena kommun and mayor Jane Råsten for reception the first night.

Appendix

Invitation and programme:



Green Pilgrimage Interreg Europe Project

Vadstena 29 May- 1 june 2018

29/5 Tuesday

Arrival and check in

17.15 Pilgrim reception in Vadstena abbey

17.40 Guided tour in the medieval monastery

19.00 Reception and dinner

Vadstena City Council

30/5 Wednesday

(Op. 08.00 Mass in Vadstena abbey)

09.00 -16.00 Conference Vadstena Folkhögskola

- Saint Birgitta and Pilgrimage as a part of tourism in Vadstena
- Digitalisation in Östergötland policy and project.
- Presentation of digitalised pilgrim trail. Östergötlands part in the project.
- Three best practise, presented.
- Digitalisation in Kent.
- Digitalisation of cultural heritage, science and tourism – Example Vadstena Abbey
- Quality and sustainability.
- Presentation of report. Digitalisation, pilgrims and who is the pilgrim of tomorrow.

12.00 Lunch

16.00 end of conference

17.00 Bus to Linköping

Visit to the Cathedral

Dinner at the residence of Bishop Martin Modéus

31/5 Thursday

(op. 08.00 Mass in Vadstena abbey)

09.00 Visit to the Pilgrims Center

Tour Rökstenen and Alvastra monastery

13.00 Lunch at Ombergs turisthotell

14.00 Pilgrim walk Swedish style to the Monastery of the Sacred Hart

Ca 10 km, forest. Good footwear is needed.

Test of the digital pilgrim trail.

Ca. 17.30 back in Vadstena

19.00 Optional evening meal at participants own expense

21.00 Optional Peaceful evening Monastery museum

1/6 Friday

(op. 08.00 Mass in Vadstena abbey)

09.00 Steering committee meeting

