

Sustainable Birgitta Ways
GP sustainability report
Vadstena case



Produced by: Emil Selse, Region Östergötland, Sweden

December 2019

Contents

- Acronyms..... 3
- 1. Executive summary 4
 - 1.1 Purpose of report 4
 - 1.2 Approach, Work undertaken..... 5
 - 1.3 Result..... 5
 - 1.4 Proposed next steps 5
- 2. Introduction..... 7
 - 2.1 Green Pilgrimage Project..... 7
 - 2.2 Background..... 8
 - 2.3 Content in this report 9
 - 2.4 Task..... 10
- 3. Method..... 11
 - 3.2 Interview..... 11
 - 3.3 Analysis..... 11
 - 3.4 Suggestions..... 11
 - 3.4 Deliverables 11
- 4. Definitions 12
 - 4.1 What is a destination?..... 12
 - 4.2 Tourism or Outdoor life?..... 12
 - 4.3 How to work with sustainability for a destination 13
 - 4.4 What is sustainability?..... 15
- 5. What is the destination today? 17
 - 5.1 Ödeshög..... 18
 - 5.2 Omberg (south) 18
 - 5.3 Omberg-Vadstena 20
 - 5.4 Vadstena..... 21
 - 5.5 Trail status 24
- 6. What is the situation in the destination today?..... 27
 - 6.1 Carrying capacity 28
 - 6.2 How many visitors come here? 28
 - 6.3 What is the value of a Pilgrim?..... 30
 - 6.4 Visitor involvement and sustainability information 31
 - 6.5 Other positive effects of Pilgrims and walking..... 31
 - 6.6 Voluntarism 32
 - 6.7 Proposed action to describe the current situation in the Destination better 33

- 7. What do we want the destination to be? 35
 - 7.2 Proposed action to describe the future situation in the Destination better 36
- 8. How could we get to the wanted destination result? 38
 - 8.1 How to handle the destination around the Birgitta Way as a sustainable destination? 38
 - 8.2 Sustainable Economy 38
 - 8.3 Sustainable society 41
 - 8.4 Biological Sustainability 42
 - 8.5 Proposed action to describe how to get the wanted situation in the Destination 44
- Appendices 45
 - A1 Questionnaire for stakeholders along Birgitta Ways 45
 - A.2 Policy in Practice – pre workshop prep 47

Acronyms

- DMO – Destination Management Organisation (tourism)
- GP – Green Pilgrimage, used for the Green Pilgrimage project
- GSTC – The Global Sustainable Tourism Council is managing the GSTC Criteria, the global baseline standards for sustainable travel and tourism; as well as acting as the international accreditation body for sustainable tourism certification.
- GSTC-D –GSTC Criteria for a destination (80 criteria)
- SDG – Sustainable Development Goals. In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1. Executive summary

This report is produced as part of the Interreg Green Pilgrimage project involving partners from Norway, Sweden, Italy, Romania and UK. The project is concerned with the potential of pilgrimage as a growing form of low impact tourism to protect natural and cultural assets. The report is a key project contribution from Sweden, where Region Östergötland is managing the project together with Linköping Diocese and Vadstena Pilgrim Centre.

1.1 Purpose of report

The purpose of the work is to find out what is needed for a Pilgrim destination in order to work with sustainability and to be more sustainable.



Figure 1 Saint Birgitta Ways going to Vadstena in Sweden. The dotted lines are the suggested trails to be used, but none of them are ready in terms of good signage and infrastructure. The green part around Vadstena is ready in 2020, and has been in focus for this report.

The report is describing findings from and suggestions for the Vadstena case, where the Birgitta Ways has been investigated (the part of the Saint Birgitta Ways in green in the image above). The work has been performed by an expert in sustainability tourism, Emil Selse, who was responsible for a national and regional project about sustainable product development of tourism products and services for nature and cultural experiences from 2016-2019. Mr Selse is also certified in sustainable tourism through GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) and is also involved in the global network of Green Destinations.

The work has been done during November and December 2019, in the end of Phase 1 for the Green Pilgrimage project.

The aim of this report is to try to describe the challenges and possibility of managing a sustainable destination with focus of Pilgrims. It is an attempt to describe the destination as it is today, a suggestion of how the destination would like to be and how to get there.

Most of findings from the Vadstena case can be applied also for the other partner's destinations, but some are just for the Swedish case. This report has not compared the different regions, and is only focusing on the Vadstena case, but with some input from other partners.

1.2 Approach, Work undertaken

Work undertaken involved:

- Creating a questionnaire used in interviews with 14 stakeholders
- Individual interviews
- Analyse the result of the interviews/questionnaire
- Investigate different solutions for the problems and challenges identified during the analyse
- Reviewing on methods and tools from other destinations and actors
- Describe the destination
- Describe how the stakeholders would like to see the destination to be and possible ways how to get there

1.3 Result

There are a number of findings described here. The most important findings and corresponding proposed actions are:

- 1) **Better understanding of the number of visitors** and the visitor flow. Without knowing how many visitors we have today, it is hard to decide how to handle them sustainable. Getting visitor data is a crucial thing, which is the same challenge for all destinations, especially the ones outside main cities.
- 2) Create or decide upon a **Destination Management Organisation** for the Birgitta Ways, where the existing organisations is not working with sustainable destination in a structured way
- 3) Along the Birgitta Ways there are section where there are too few visitors today and places where the number of visitors during peak season cannot grow without actions. Actions both to get more visitors (Pilgrims) and to **spread out existing visitors** (Pilgrims) geographically and in time are found in this report.
- 4) There are **very few products, services and packages for Pilgrims** available and possible to book today. There is a big need and opportunity here, for all kind of products (accommodation, food, shopping, services, guiding, ...)

1.4 Proposed next steps

This report are describing the situation as it is today and includes a number of recommended actions for the Birgitta Ways to be more sustainable. The report is made in the end of Phase 1 of Green Pilgrimage, and is linked to the Action Plan Green Pilgrimage Sweden December 2019¹. The actions listed there are:

- 1) Incorporate lessons learned in policies (regional and local)
- 2) Strategic Partnership for pilgrim development
- 3) Pilgrims Welcome
- 4) Vadstena -The Swedish Pilgrim Destination

¹ Action Plan Green Pilgrimage Sweden December 2019, available on the <https://www.interregeurope.eu/greenpilgrimage/>

Sustainable Birgitta Ways – GP sustainability report

Phase 2 is about how to implement findings and actions from Phase 1. Green Pilgrimage in Vadstena is not part of any pilot actions financed by the project in Phase 2, which means that all suggestions in the report (and Action Plan) has to be financed and managed from external stakeholders.

Nothing in this report is yet decided to be implemented. The suggestions and recommendations in the end is priorities from the author after best effort based on input from the stakeholders and the main responsible organisation for the project – Region Östergötland, Vadstena Pilgrim Centre and Vadstena municipality.

2. Introduction

2.1 Green Pilgrimage Project

Green Pilgrimage is an Interreg Europe project funding partners from Norway, Sweden, Italy, Romania, as well as partners in the UK – Kent County Council, the Diocese of Canterbury, and Norfolk County Council.

2.1.1 What do we mean by Green Pilgrimage

Green Pilgrimage brings together the concept of sustainability with pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is recognised as being engaged in by both religious groups and by others in a secular context. Over the course of the project an understanding of ‘green pilgrimage’ has developed as the undertaking of meaningful journeys via sustainable means (for example via walking or cycling).

The wider picture of assessing the ‘green’ nature of pilgrimage requires examination of practices wider than transportation, including the contribution of pilgrims to a local economy, and environmental practices engaged by pilgrim services provided on route.

2.1.2 Aims of GP project

Green Growth and Pilgrimage

The continued fragility of Europe’s economy means that growth and development policies often take precedence over environmental policies, threatening our cultural and natural heritage assets. The Green Pilgrimage (GP) project will show how growth and development policies can economically exploit AND protect natural and cultural heritage. Key to this is our focus on the power of pilgrimage, recognized today as one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry (UNWTO, 2015) with more than 300 million pilgrims every year².

The Power of Pilgrimage

Ancient pilgrim routes such as The Way of St James to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, report an annual 10% increase in numbers, particularly among non-religious. Harnessing this increased popularity to protect natural and cultural heritage is a common challenge faced by those responsible for Europe’s major pilgrimage routes. GP will show policy makers how to protect natural and cultural heritage whilst developing jobs and growth along pilgrim routes through developing low impact tourism, digitalization, pilgrim accommodation and strengthening local traditions. This reconnects pilgrims with their environment, landscape and culture.³

2.1.3 The role of Sweden

In Östergötland, the tourism industry is a primary industry, an industry that is growing with regards to employment and growth in our region today. Along with a tradition of small businesses and entrepreneurship, this has led to a strong enterprise base in tourism and events. The opportunities for continued development are large, thanks to the unique natural, environmental and cultural values, in combination with innovative and strategic development and continued investments. The Swedish domestic market is the most critical market to the Vadstena destination, but there is also a need for further actions abroad, in order to activate and increase the international import market. It

² Green Pilgrimage: A report on methodologies to measure the economic, social and environmental impact of pilgrimage (Norfolk in December 2019)

³ Green Pilgrimage Interreg - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/greenpilgrimage/>

is necessary to continue developing the travel opportunities to the destination of Östergötland and Vadstena in particular.

Other areas that require further development for the destination to become a leading pilgrim experience destination, is sustainability in the destinations, product and business development, marketing and training. Sweden is at the cutting edge when it comes to sustainable development in the tourism industry. This comes almost naturally for those of us living in a relatively sparsely populated country and having a tradition of being close to nature and the surrounding environment.

With the potential increase of pilgrims along the pilgrim routes we see a raising need for more sustainable solutions on food, lodging and services along the trail. The interest for pilgrimage is increasing in Sweden, but there is still not a lot of people walking. The timing is perfect to set a good example for stakeholders along the trails to increase the sustainability and provide updated digital information for pilgrims

2.2 Background

2.2.1 Vadstena and the Birgitta Ways

Vadstena is one of the mayor places to visit for pilgrims in Sweden, where the Vadstena Pilgrim Centre is a typical meeting place for people on their way. With the potential increase of pilgrims along the pilgrim routes there is an increasing need for sustainable solutions on food, lodging and services along the trail. The Green Pilgrimage project has been working on the trails, digital map⁴ and digital information for pilgrims (the coming Pilgrim's Welcome concept), the signage and also to include stakeholders along the trail to be part of a sustainable offer for the Pilgrims. The main goal for pilgrims in this part is Vadstena, and the Pilgrim trails leading to Vadstena is called the Birgitta Ways. The Birgitta Way in focus for Green Pilgrimage and for this study is the one coming from the south – from Ödeshög to Vadstena.



Figure 2 Birgitta Ways in this report is focusing on the part in green above, the pilgrim route between Ödeshög and Vadstena

⁴ <https://maps.visitostergotland.se/en/maps/209802/map>

Saint Birgitta (or Bridget of Sweden) is one of the six patron saints of Europe, and has a strong position in the catholic world. She was born as Birgitta Birgersson in 1303, moved to the west of region Östergötland (Ulvåsa) in 1316 and died in Rome 1373. She was canonized in 1391 and founded the Vadstena Abbey and monastery. Birgitta's reliquary is now found in the Abbey Church, which has a huge number of visitors per year.

Vadstena and the area around is today one of the most popular areas for tourists in the region, and there are places that is very crowded from time to time already today. This is not mainly because of pilgrims, since this is currently just a minor part of total number of visitors. The reasons for visitors to select the Vadstena and Omberg area is nature and culture, which is well in hand also for the pilgrims.

The Birgitta Way is today not handled as a destination, more like several (at least three) destinations for different purposes – *Vadstena* to experience the medieval city centre with the castle and monastery, *Omberg* for the nature and *Rökstenen and Alvastra Monastery* in Ödeshög for the history.

2.3 Content in this report

This report is an attempt to describe what can and may be done to start working to manage Birgitta Ways as a Destination. There is a section about what the destination is today, what could be the wanted destination and a number of suggestions how to get there in the end. The report is made in the end of Phase 1 of Green Pilgrimage, and is linked to the Action Plan Green Pilgrimage Sweden December 2019⁵. The actions listed there are:

- 1) Incorporate lessons learned in policies (regional and local)
- 2) Strategic Partnership for pilgrim development
- 3) Pilgrims Welcome
- 4) Vadstena -The Swedish Pilgrim Destination

The proposed actions in the end of this report, in section 6.7, 7.2 and 8.5 are in many cases a part of one of the actions from the Action Plan, even if some are not.

Phase 2 is about how to implement findings from Phase 1. Green Pilgrimage in Vadstena is not part of any pilot actions financed by the project in Phase 2, which means that all suggestions in the report has to be financed and managed from external stakeholder.

Nothing in this report is yet decided to be implemented. The suggestions and recommendations in the end is the prioritisation from the author after best effort based on input from the stakeholders and the main responsible organisation for the project – Region Östergötland, Vadstena Pilgrim Centre and Vadstena municipality.

⁵ Action Plan Green Pilgrimage Sweden December 2019, available on the <https://www.interregeurope.eu/greenpilgrimage/>

2.4 Task

Green Pilgrimage has mainly two tasks – make sure we have a long time commitment from responsible stakeholders and to work on sustainable pilgrimage in all dimensions – for the economy, biosphere and society. The long term commitment and the policy part is handled through a strategic partnership between Linköping Diocese/Vadstena Pilgrim Centre and the Region Östergötland but also the selected participation on the creation of a national standard for low land trails (Action 1 and 2 from the action plan).

This report is focusing on the sustainability aspects. All different regions in GP has been working with sustainability in different ways. Some of the stakeholders in the region express their concern about the number of visitors on the Birgitta Way today, and what will happen if that number will increase. They see that the area has already reached the limit of what the destination can manage. Some other stakeholders have a completely different view: they see that an increase is needed in order to be long term sustainable.

Working with the sustainability of a destination, you need to find out a number of things.

- 1) What is the destination today?
 - Where are the borders, and what are should be included?
 - Who is managing and responsible for the destination?
- 2) What is the situation in the destination today
 - Do we have too many visitors or too few? Where and when? And for who?
- 3) What do we want the destination to be?
 - In focus of pilgrims – where and when do we want how many and what type of visitors?
- 4) How could we get to the desired result from point 3?
 - How to handle the destination around the Birgitta Way as a sustainable destination?
 - How to maximize economic benefit to the local economy and minimize the negative impact?
 - How to protect and develop the culture and spiritual value in a sustainable way?
 - How to protect nature and minimize negative impact on environment?

This report will try to answer the questions above, and will in the end give a number of suggestions, recommendations and needs in order to be a sustainable destination for pilgrims in the end.

3. Method

3.2 Interview

The method used has been to, based on input from the project and from the knowledge in the municipalities and the region, set up a number of questions for all stakeholders along the Birgitta Way.

The document from the Green Pilgrimage Study Visit to Norfolk, where the Policy in Practice was used, was the base for the questionnaire, see Appendix A2. Experiences in sustainable destination management from Slovenia⁶, the GSTC Sustainable Tourism Program⁷ and criteria from the Green Destinations Standard⁸ has also been used in the questionnaire, which had 10 different topics:

Expenditure, Visitors, Seasonality, Type of visitors, Carrying capacity, Feedback, Equipment, Visitor involvement, Sustainability information and Data. See Appendix A1.

3.3 Analysis

An analysis was made based on the input from the interviews. Provided data and reports was processed and a summary of the current status done. Missing data was researched and collected when available.

3.4 Suggestions

Based on the analysis, a number of areas of improvement has been found. For each section – *What is the destination today? What is the situation in the destination today?, What do we want the destination to be? and How could we get to the wanted destination result?* – tables with items describing the need and possible solutions are listed.

Most of the suggestions are generic and could be applicable also for other Pilgrim destinations. Some may only be valid for the Birgitta Ways.

3.4 Deliverables

3.4.1 Report

A report in English is delivered to the project during last period, (December 2019), where suggestions on a general level is described. There is some more details available for the Swedish stakeholder, like contact information, prices etc.

3.4.2 Presentations

Presentation of the method and expected outcome was made on the stakeholder meeting in Borghamns Strand the 22nd of November 2019⁹.

A summary of the report will also be available in a PowerPoint presentation, which will be used during meeting with steering group and stakeholder during 2020.

⁶ 1910 Management of Tourism Flows

⁷ <https://www.gstcouncil.org/>

⁸ <https://greendestinations.org/green-destinations-standard/>

⁹ 191122 Hållbara Birgittavägar Pres

4. Definitions

4.1 What is a destination?

The Birgitta Ways is not a destination today. Not even the small part discussed in this report and in focus for Green Pilgrimage – the Birgitta Way from Ödeshög to Vadstena. The infrastructure has not been in place until right now for some sections and the Pilgrim's signage on trail is still to be done. The actors along the trail has not been focusing on Pilgrim's and no one is responsible for the area as a destination. The definition of Destination can be written¹⁰:

Destination:

A geographical area where private and public sector jointly contribute to making the area more interesting and competitive as a destination for tourists, where a tourist can stay over-night having full travel support - transportation, accommodation, drinks and food, shopping, attractions and activities provided by different actors.

All actors, private entrepreneurs as well as actors in the public sector, are working together for a common vision, with defined goals and strategies.

So even if Birgitta Ways is a destination according to the first part of the definition, it is not a definition according to the second part. Common vision, goals, targets and appropriate actions is crucial for a destination, especially when talking about sustainability, which is not in place for Birgitta Ways. It is also important to work with Destination Management and not Destination Marketing, since the latter (which has been the usual way of working with a destination where the goal and target has been the increase of visitors as the top priority) will not focus on sustainability.

When zooming out, the complete Saint Birgitta Ways is not a destination according to any part of the definition. It is a future task to find a way how to get private and public sector to jointly contribute in making the area more interesting all the way from Hamburg to Vadstena for example.

This report will describe Birgitta Ways in focus as a destination even if some of the suggestions and recommendation cannot be done without having a Destination Management Organisation, whereas some others can. All suggestions should be agreed and prioritized as if there was a Destination Management Organisation. (In practice, this have to be done in agreements between the different sub-destinations and other important actors, like the land owners.)

4.2 Tourism or Outdoor life?

Is there a difference between a person coming from abroad coming to the Birgitta Ways and a person living in a nearby town doing similar thing? Yes, there are a lot of differences. There is probably a difference in how well prepared it is, and how long in advance the trip is planned. It can be described in

¹⁰ http://partner.visitsweden.com/Global/Vårt%20arbete/Exportmognad/VS_destinationsutv_A4-Vinter-110630.pdf?epslanguage=sv

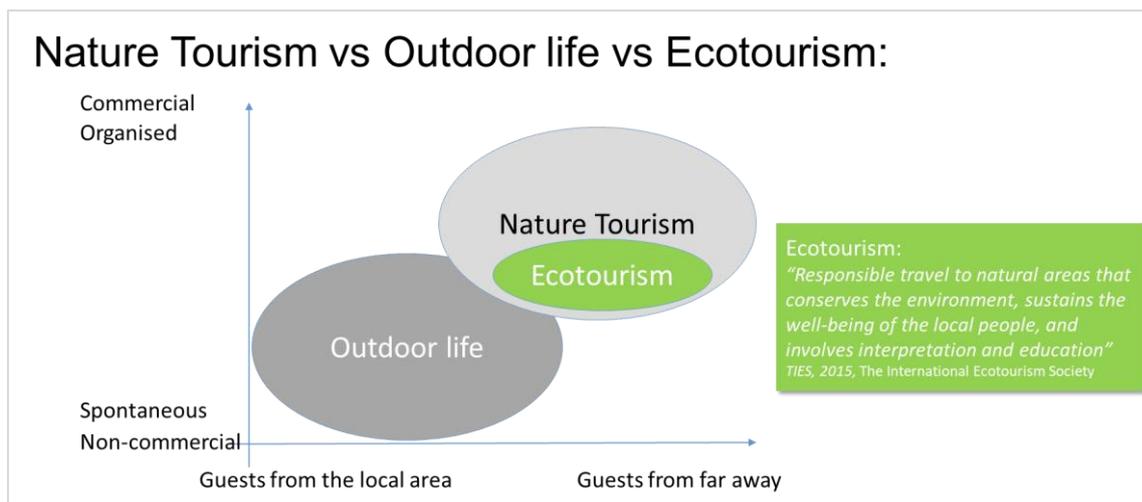


Figure 3 Trying to explain what just outdoor life is, and what tourism is. Pilgrims may be of both types, but in focus for this report and Green Pilgrimage is the tourists.

The inhabitants probably have other accommodation possibilities like staying with friends, knowing of hidden places to camp etc., which is not possible for the ones coming from far away. The need of having products, services and packages suitable for Pilgrims are much more needed for an international and national tourist than for the local visitor. There is a huge possibility in the “Commercial” and “Organised” labels in the Figure 3.

4.3 How to work with sustainability for a destination

There are several systems and tools in Sweden and the world to work with sustainability on company and destination level. Many countries have a national program for this, like the Baerekraftigt Reisemål in Norway run by Innovation Norway or the Green Scheme for Slovenian Tourism run by GoodPlace in Slovenia. Similar systems and national programs in Scotland, Finland and in Estonia. According to the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) there will be no national program in Sweden. The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth ordered a study about the different systems available (in Swedish¹¹) which has a lot of interesting information regarding all systems available. The preferred standard to use for a destination is GSTC-D¹². The GSTC criteria is a global baseline standard for sustainable travel and tourism, connected to UN and handled by the independent and neutral organization Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

¹¹ <https://tillvaxtverket.se/vara-tjanster/publikationer/publikationer-2019/2019-05-27-verktyg-for-hallbar-turism.html>

¹² <https://www.gstcouncil.org/>

<p>A1 Sustainable destination strategy</p>	<p>The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year destination strategy that is publicly available, is suited to its scale; that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health, and safety, and aesthetic issues; and was developed with public participation.</p>
<p>A2 Destination management organization</p>	<p>The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector and public sector. This group is suited to the size and scale of the destination, and has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues. This group’s activities are appropriately funded.</p>

Figure 4 The two first items in the GSTC-D. GSTC-D consists of 4 parts (4 pillars) - first part A about Destination Management, B about maximizing local economy, C about Social sustainability and D about environmental sustainability

Using GSTC-D is a good help to get a good structure of the sustainability done and to be done. It will also give the possibility to set up where to put focus for next step.

When using GSTC-D it may be interesting to get some relative numbers of each criteria - how good are we compared to other destinations in this or that sense? It may also be interesting to get ideas from other destinations regarding how they have worked with whatever sustainability aspect. If this is the case, Green Destinations may be the tool to use. Green Destinations is a non-profit world-wide organisation helping destination to describe sustainability in 100 different aspects, to set up Action Plans based on findings (mandatory), to coach destination to be more sustainable and offer a certification program for those who reach good enough result. The Green Destinations program is used in more than 200 destinations world-wide, but only one in Sweden so far (Lake Åsnen)

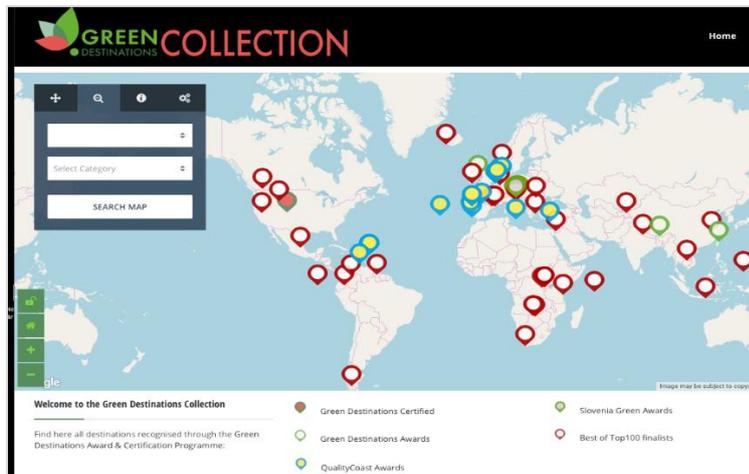


Figure 5 Green Destinations world-wide, showing the top destinations in the system as of 2019.

According to destinations using Green Destinations, it is a great way of collecting all that is done regarding sustainability in one system, giving the inhabitants and company’s proudness in what is

already done and also what need to be better. It is also a great network of destinations around the world, where Birgitta Ways would benefit a lot in networking with.

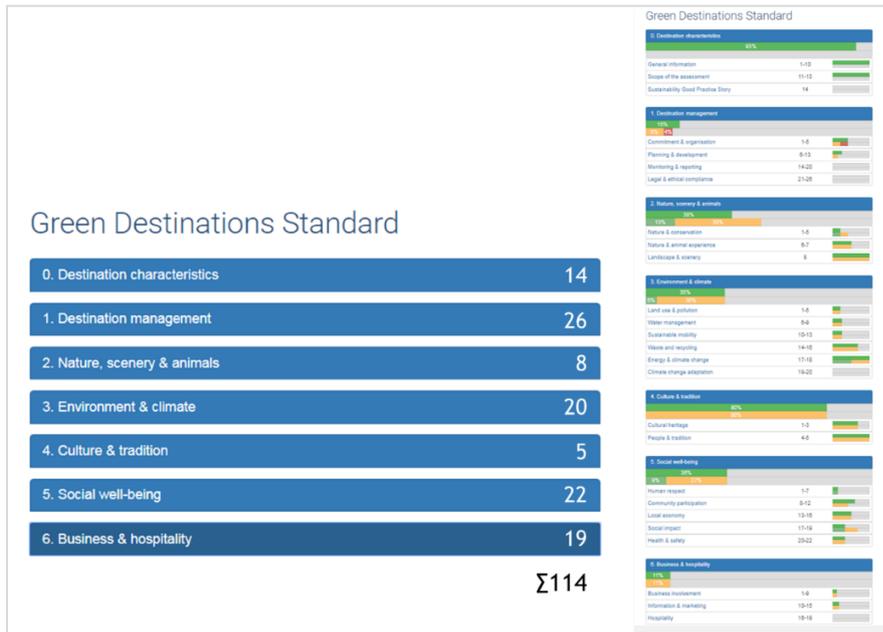


Figure 6 Green Destinations Standard consists of 100+14 different aspects in sustainability

That will give the total view in a structured way, and also a help to prioritize what to focus on.

4.4 What is sustainability?

If we want something to last forever, we must make sure it is long term sustainable. It is valid for whatever topic you choose, a product, your life or a place. A place, or a destination, must consider environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health and safety and aesthetic issues in order to be long term sustainable. It is usually described in three dimensions: economy, biosphere/ecological and social/society aspects, where all the issues are put into.

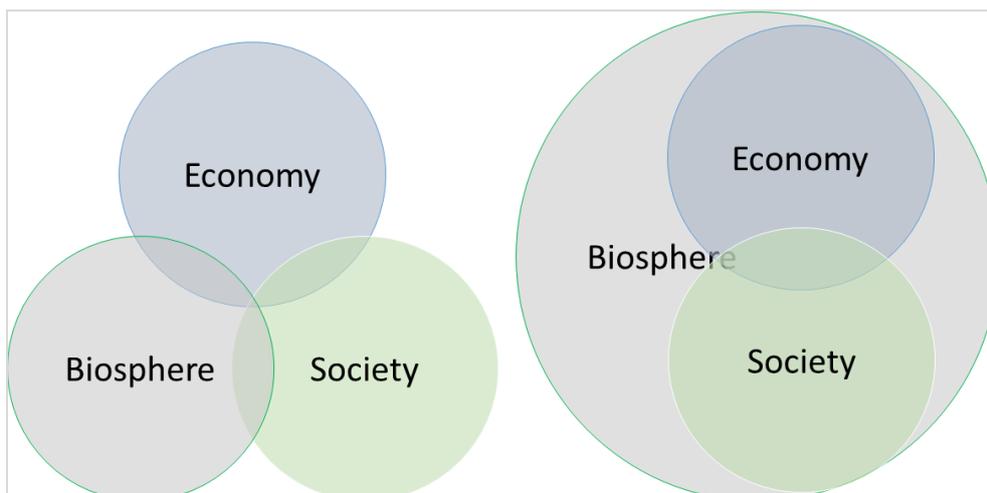


Figure 7 Sustainability in the three dimensions. There are overlapping issues between the dimensions, and there may also be conflicts within or between different aspects and solutions. An example of an overlapping issue may be restoration of a nature reserve, where there is a positive effect both for biosphere and economy, since the increased biodiversity makes more people to come and spending more money in the nearby ice cream shop. An example of conflict within biosphere dimension may be the use of electrical cars, where the emissions are none – i.e. good effect – but the area around the mine where necessary minerals are found will see a bad effect. Some people claims that the three dimensions are not of the same importance, and may describe it as the image to the right.

Working with sustainability issues often connects to the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) from the UN. The 17 SDG may also be described in the three dimension, see image below.



There is a huge debate how to handle transportation in tourism. “Flygskam”, flight shame, is a Swedish word describing why people (in Sweden) opt out flights because better knowledge and insight. See also the report from Forbes¹³.

To travel more climate neutral or stay at home during the vacation, Staycation, is a growing trend. There are several presentations about this subject, but it may be good to go to research projects to find facts.

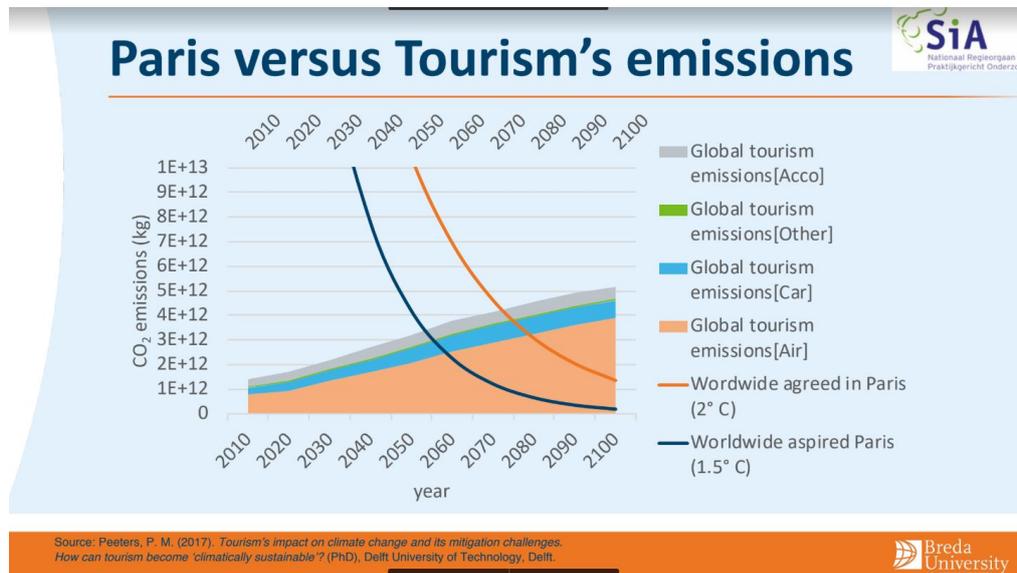


Figure 8 Tourism's impact on climate change. The trend is not going in the right direction, where the current estimation is that global emissions from air will increase the next 80 years. Presentation from Breda University, presented during Global Green Destinations Day in Croatia 2019.

This trend is also valid for Pilgrims, and when marketing a sustainable destination, the way have to come to that destination must be included. Train and public transportation should be used when

¹³ - <https://fores.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Grounded-Beyond-Flygskam.pdf>

available, and calculations about the alternatives may be taken from <https://travelandclimate.org/> which is made based on research made in University of Gothenburg.

5. What is the destination today?

The Birgitta Way is using trails in a relative touristic and popular area in Östergötland.

It can be divided into at least 4 different areas.

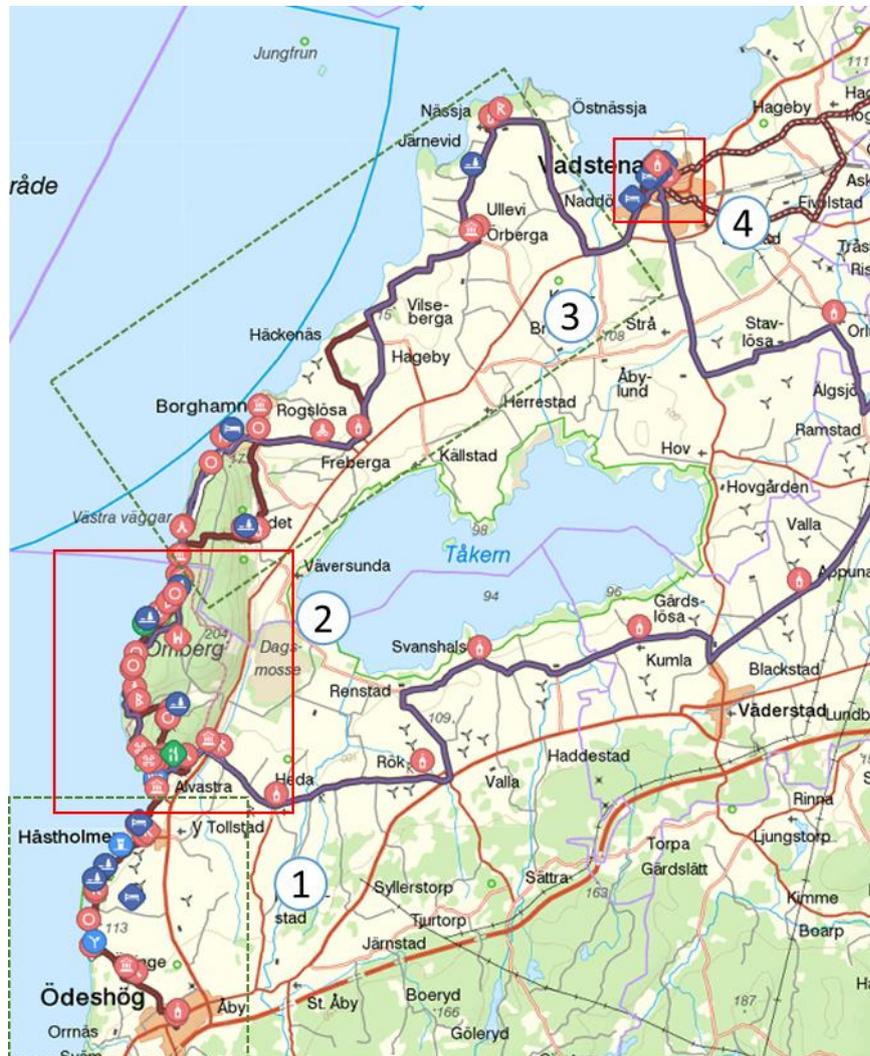


Figure 9 Birgitta Ways – where the two parts that are experiencing too few tourists today are marked in dotted green (① and ③) and the two areas experiencing too many tourists at some times during year is marked in red (② and ④)

- ① First part is from Ödeshög to Omberg, where a golf course and Hästholmen harbour is the main sights and attractions.
- ② Second part is the southern part of mountain Omberg with multiple attractions and sights; Alvastra Monastery (from 1143 for French Cistercian monks), Ombergs Turisthotell (classic hotel in a huge wooden building), the Hjässan peak (fantastic view), Ellen Keys villa Strand, Stocklycke äng (meadow with fantastic flowers in the spring and summer) and a huge Ecopark with a lot of trail for hikers and bikers¹⁴.

¹⁴ <https://www.upplevvadstena.se/en/omberg.htm>

- ③ Third part is the northern part of Omberg and the trail to Vadstena, also with multiple attractions (Convent of Sacred heart, Ombergsliden (rich in orchids and have a slalom slope in winter) and a limestone quarry) but far less known than the south¹⁵
- ④ The last part is Vadstena itself, an internationally known destination from people all over world coming more or less all year around¹⁶.

In addition to those 4 parts, there are a number of attractions in the neighbourhood. To the west, there is lake Vättern, second largest lake in Sweden famous for its clear and drinkable water and deep and cold lake with a lot of great fishes. To the east there is one of the best birdwatching lakes in Sweden, lake Tåkern, a popular visit for Ornithologist. Around lake Tåkern, there are a number of historical sights, like the Rök runestone featuring the longest known runic inscription in stone. There is a Pilgrim Route for bikers¹⁷ around lake Tåkern, but that has not been in focus for the project or this report.

5.1 Ödeshög

First part ① of the Birgitta Way is quite undeveloped for tourists. The trail in the Ödeshög part is not used that much and do not experience many visitors in general (maybe with the exception for the parking lot in Hästholmen harbour).

5.2 Omberg (south)

Second part ②, south of Omberg, have a lot of tourists when weather is great and when the nature is colourful. Most of the visitors on Omberg today are locals, going there for a day in the nature, and it is also a great part of the visitors coming back (repeating visitors). This means that most of the visitors may not have planned the trip long in advance, but take the opportunity whenever the weather is nice to take the car there and walk around for a day. Most of them know exactly where to go, and have been there before. In weekends from April to June and in late August and September, the parking lots around Stocklycke äng and Hjässan are completely full and has become a limiting factor and making problems for actors around with traffic jam and illicit parking. Weekdays, rainy weekends and winter season is very calm in this area though. Also July is not a big problem, since this is the mosquito season and you perhaps rather go to places where it is possible to bath as well. This is also the time of year when international visitors finds Omberg. There are not very much data on the number of visitors per year. The official number is 300000 per year from 2001¹⁸, or 350 000¹⁹, from but it has not been possible to get how this number is calculated. Actors in the area are all saying that the number of visitors today is much higher than in 2001.

Ödeshög and Omberg (south) is both part of Ödeshög municipality, which have some data to be presented here.

A visitor survey was done 2011 on Omberg²⁰, where following data was found: 70% was day travellers, 62% was there for walking in nature, age was fairly high (50% over 50 years) and 50% of them come in groups over 2 persons. Another interesting statistic data was that more than 25% had

¹⁵ <https://www.upplevvadstena.se/en/omberg.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www.visitostergotland.se/en/vadstena/>

¹⁷ <https://www.pilgrimscentrum.se/pilgrimsvandring/våra-pilgrimsleder/pilgrimsrundan---cykel-41254794>

¹⁸ <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/ostergotland/tjanster/publikationer/ombergs-natur-och-kultur-kunskapsammanstallning-och-historiebeskrivning-efter-fyra-ars-inventeringar.html>, Download the pdf, page 83

¹⁹ <https://www.sveaskog.se/upplev-skogen/besoksomraden/ekopark-omberg>

²⁰ Besökarstudie Omberg 2011

been there more than 10 times before. Looking into the visitor’s age, you find an interesting pattern, see Figure 10.

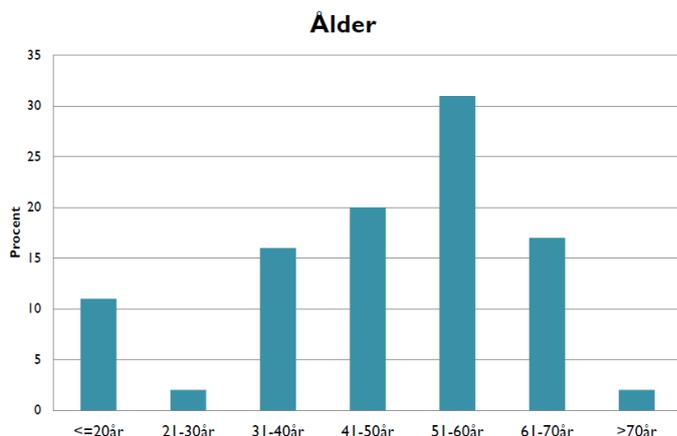


Figure 10 Ages of the visitors on Omberg in a visitor survey 2011²¹.

Even if the survey was very small (54 people in the summer of 2011), it shows the image of a place attracting local people coming back, where nature is the reason to come, at a fairly high age and coming in groups. Pilgrims are often found in this kind of category as well.

Another survey and report made in 2016²², the number of international visitors during high season (May-September) is about 20 %. 60% is just there for a day and Omberg is their main destination to visit.

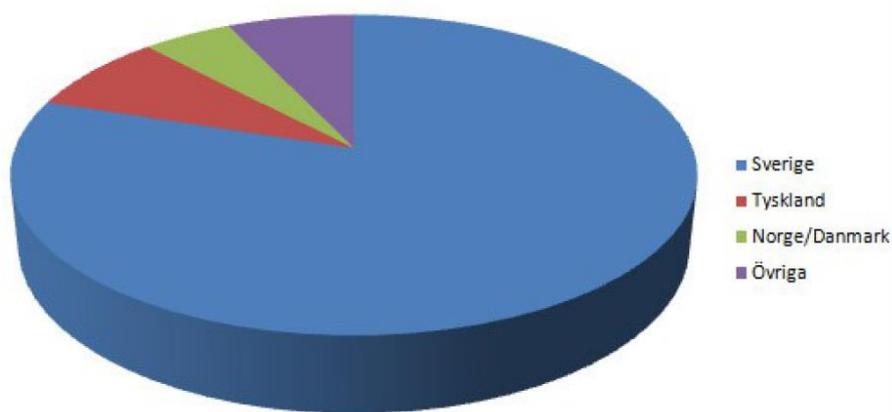


Figure 11 Visitors coming to tourist attractions in Ödeshög municipality, from a survey in 2016 made with 642 persons at 12 places. According to the survey, experiencing nature was the main reason, but historical places and guiding are also popular and much higher for visitors here than visitors to the rest of Östergötland.

Looking into hard statistics, the official number of overnight stays show a decline in number of guest nights reported since 2014. Even if it is a reporting issue where one or two entrepreneurs have missed reporting, it shows that there is probably potential for more accommodations. There is an

²¹ Besökarstudie Omberg 2011

²² Besöksnärringsrapport+Svecia+Travels+AB+2016

increasing number of visitors according to the survey, most of them are not staying overnights today, the official accommodation is not growing → other accommodation may be present or needed.

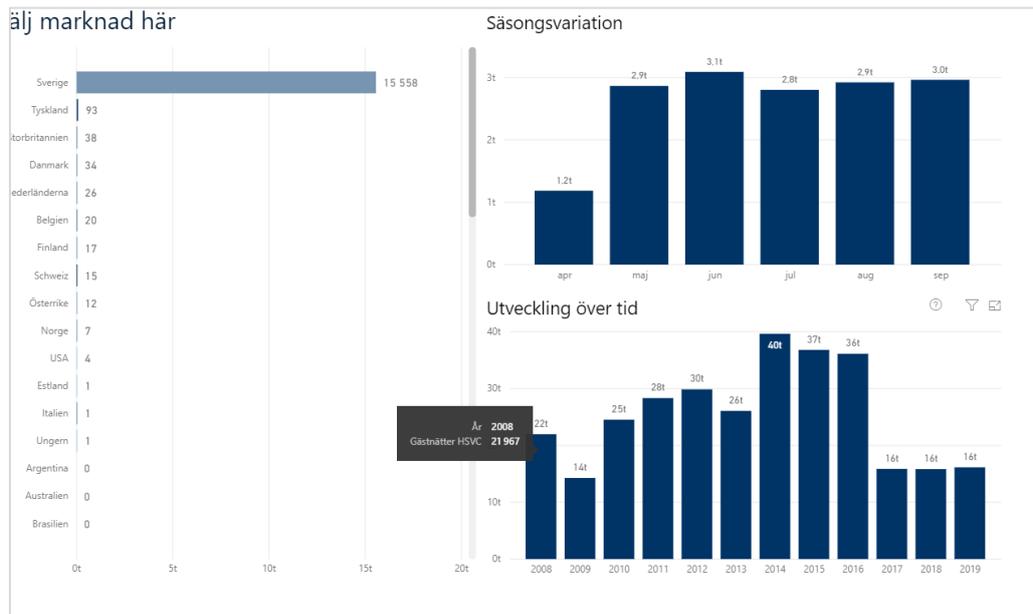


Figure 12 The number of guest nights in Hotels, Hostels and Camping sites in Ödeshög Municipality. The number of places open all year around is too few to get statistics on for October to March. The decline in 2017 may be a reporting reason, but even before that it was a decrease in number of reported guest nights. Hard to see from this statistics that we have too many visitors there at any time.²³

Regarding destination management, a number of private tourism entrepreneurs already have a network working together with product development, common webpage, cooperation and collaboration. They are already thinking on how to work on a sustainable future for tourism. Pilgrim's will not be in their focus until the number is increasing a lot. The problem with the network of entrepreneurs is that they do not have authorities outside their own companies, and need support for public sector if they should be working with destination management.

The rest of Ödeshög and south of Omberg do not have any destination management at all currently. This part will probably be the first destination where an increase of Pilgrims will make a difference already the first year. Ödeshög do not have the organisation or resources like Vadstena to work with tourism and destination management on a strategic level.

5.3 Omberg-Vadstena

The trail in the third part ③, Borghamn to Vadstena, is completely new and not used at all yet. The people counter in the Ombergsliden nature reserve counted 1100 visitors one year. 1100 per year gives a daily rate of about 3 persons a day, not very crowded.

²³ <https://www.visitostergotland.se/for-branschen/statistik/>

Årtal	Använd data	Start	Stopp	Antal mätdagar
2013/2014	In	2013-11-28	2014-10-23	329

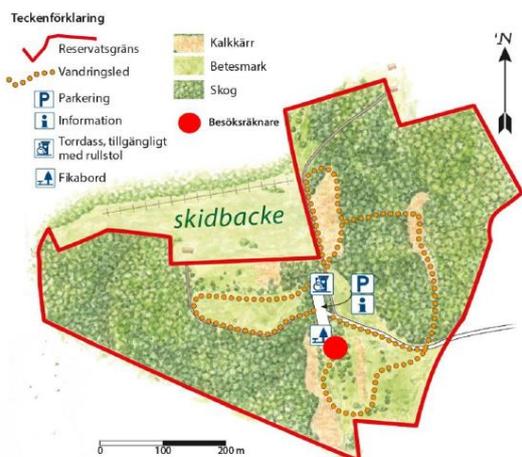


Figure 13 People counter in the nature reserve Ombergliden²⁴

5.4 Vadstena

Vadstena ④ have tourists all year around, but the majority is in July and August. The number of pilgrims on the Birgitta Way today is very few, at least the ones using commercial services.

The last part from Omberg to Vadstena has not been a part of the regional trail system “Östgötaleden²⁵” until the end of 2019. It has also not been promoted as a Pilgrim route until Green Pilgrimage project has put this section in focus. The pilgrims today are usually just visiting Vadstena and if they were walking, they would have taken the section coming from northwest, from Motala.



Figure 14 The Birgitta Way coming from North-East, a section ready before Green Pilgrimage project²⁶

Vadstena is the only part of the Birgitta Way where international guests are significant, and where pilgrims are one of the focus target groups already today. The number of visitors in Vadstena per year is not known.

²⁴ Besöksräkning i Östergötlands naturreservat 2011-2018

²⁵ <https://www.visitostergotland.se/ostgotaleden/>

²⁶ <https://maps.visitostergotland.se/sv/kartor/209802/karta>

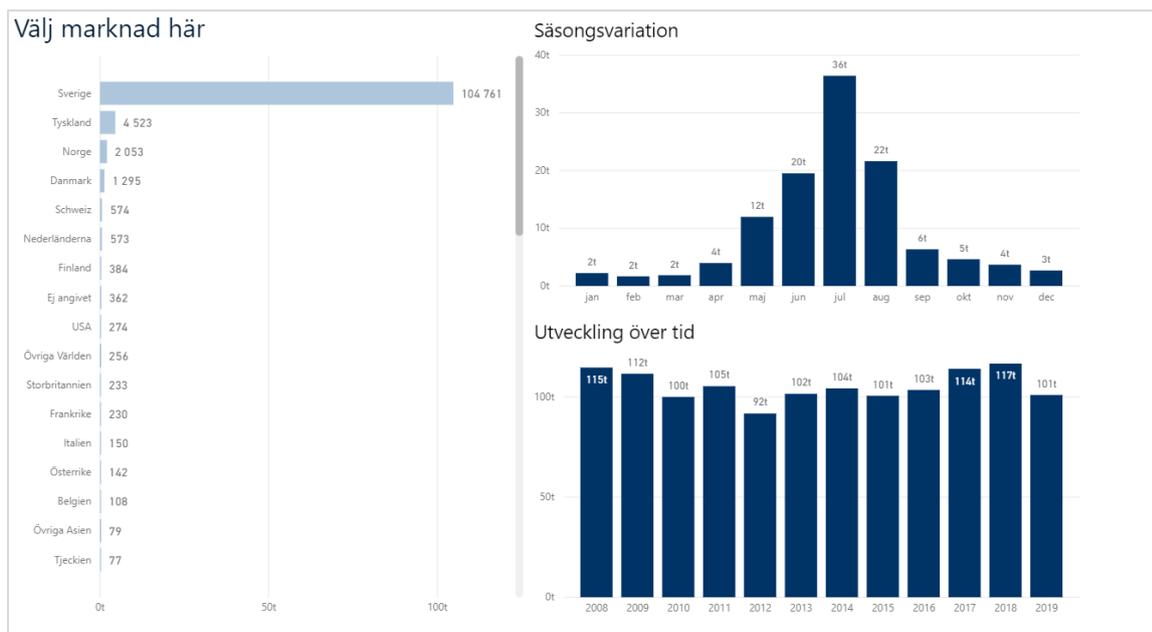


Figure 15 The number of accommodations in official beds in Hotels, Hostels and Camping in Vadstena Municipality. Total number per year is about 120 000 guest nights, and July has the highest number by far. To the left, you see the origin of the visitors. Mostly Swedes, and Germans, Norwegians and Danes are the only ones above 1000 guest nights in year 2018.²⁷

An estimation based on the number of official number of used beds in the accommodations (around 120000 per year, see above), the knowledge that in addition to this a great number of unofficial accommodation is present (connected to boarding schools, camper vans and AirBnB – perhaps 50000 per year) and the fact that the number of day-visitors are just 40% according to [Regional Besöksundersökning 2019, Vadstena], the total number of visitors is probably at least half a million visitors each year. The estimations for the neighbour city Motala that was 700000 per year, and according to the responsible person for Vadstena Tourism today, who was working in Motala before, the number of visitors in Vadstena is much higher than in Motala. Also, the number of visitors in just Vadstena Abbey is about 300000 per year, so the number of 500000 in total is probably too low. It may be that there is already almost 1 000 000 visitors to Vadstena, but this should be investigated further.

Giving the fact that Vadstena Pilgrim Centre and Vadstena Abbey is in Vadstena, this is probably the part where the pilgrim visitors will increase the most (from a very low number today) and should be the most prioritized part of Birgitta Ways to start working on as a sustainable destination. What will be done in this part may then be used by the other parts when proven to work.

There is a number of surveys done in Vadstena, to find out who is coming and why. One observation is that the average age of the visitors is much higher than in the rest of the region. 60% are above 50 years, which is also higher than the same number on Omberg (which was 50%)

²⁷ <https://www.visitostergotland.se/for-branschen/statistik/>

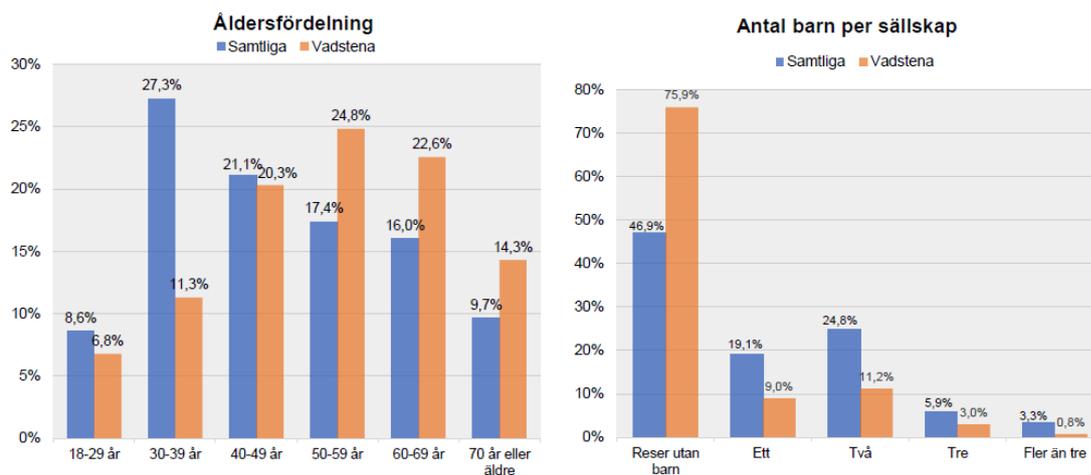


Figure 16 The typical visitors in Vadstena according to a visitor survey²⁸. Blue bars – answers from visitors to all part of Östergötland, amber bars Vadstena visitors. More than 60% of the visitors to Vadstena are above 50 years (table to the left) and more than 75% are travelling without children (table to the right “Reser utan barn”). This is in line what pilgrims are and want.

When trying to find out the reason to select Vadstena, the message is clear – it is to see the town and experience all the sights that is the reason.

Vilken är den huvudsakliga anledningen till ert besök?

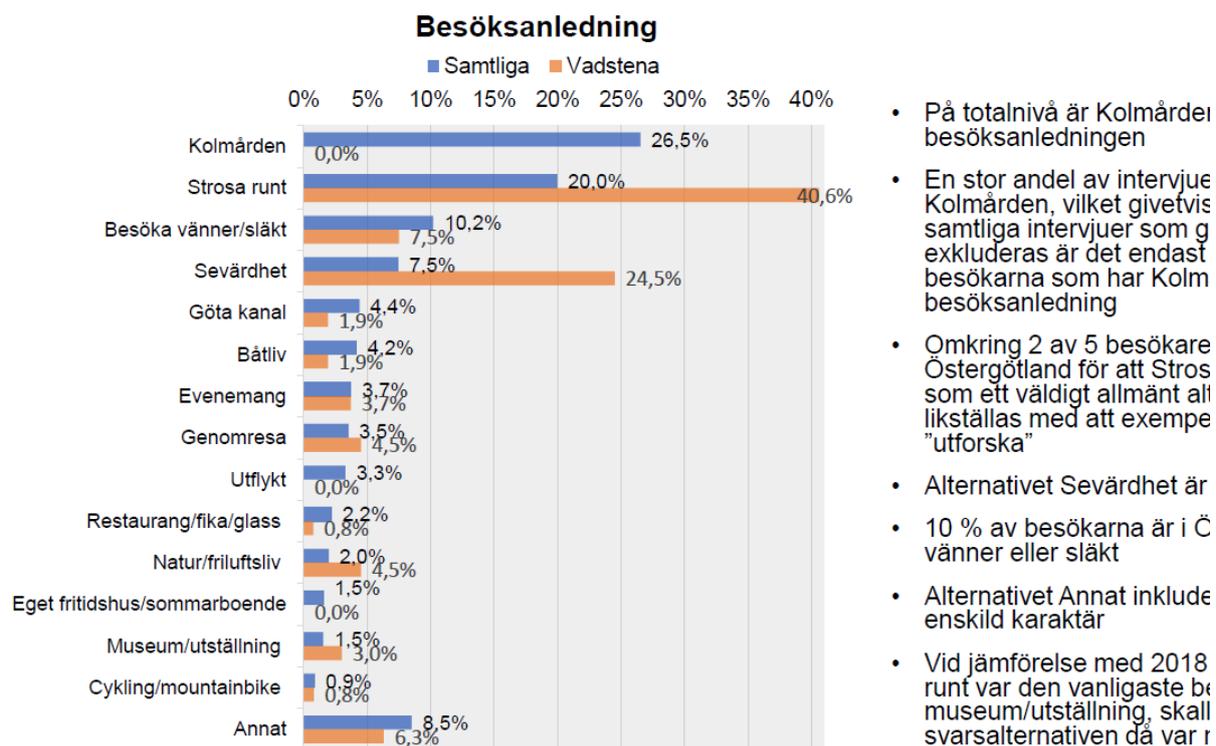


Figure 17 From visitor survey performed in Vadstena summer 2019. “What is the main reason coming to Vadstena? More than 40% has “Strosa runt” = “walk around to see things” and “Sevärdhet” = “see sight/monument” is 24,5%. The blue bars are the answers from visitor to Östergötland in total, and the amber bars are the Vadstena visitors

²⁸ Besöksundersökning Östergötland 2019 – Vadstena

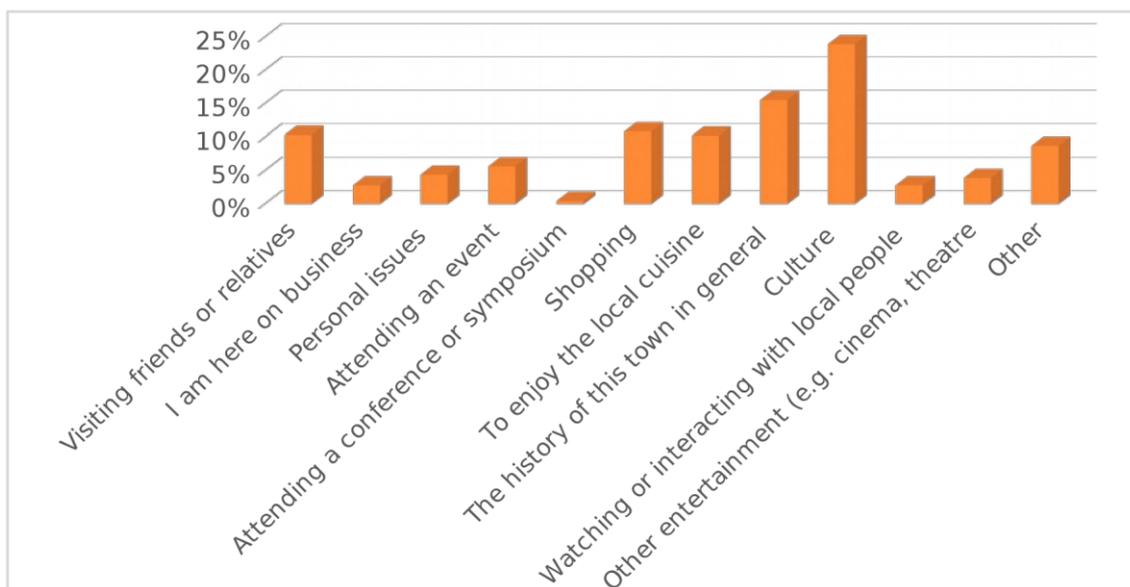


Figure 18 Survey performed in the Share project. What were the main reasons that you came to Vadstena?²⁹

What is also interesting is about how positive the visitors are. Net Promoter Score is 52, a loyalty index that is used to measure how good a place has been. 52 is a high and good number.

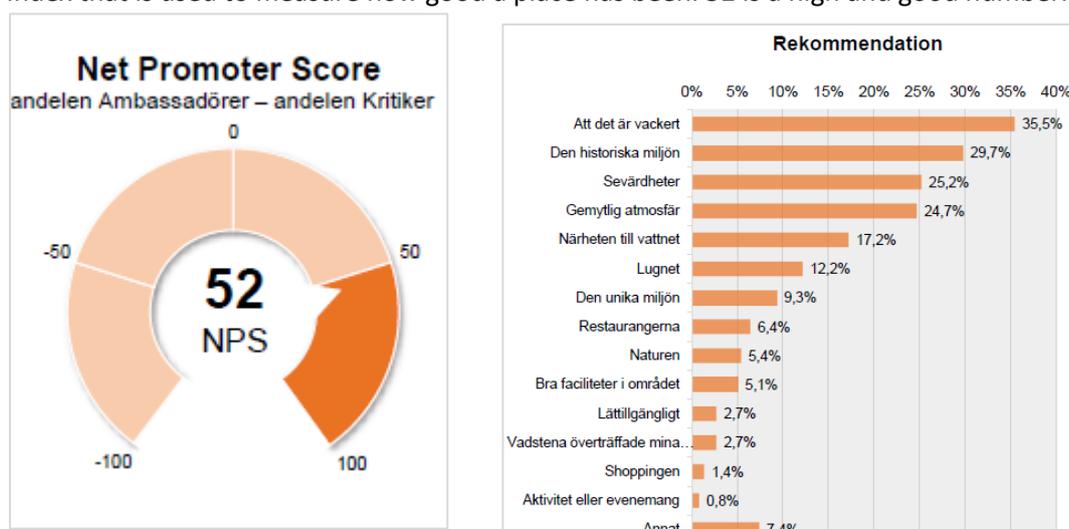


Figure 19 Vadstena is a popular place for visitors, and its beauty and historical environment is the main reason.³⁰

5.5 Trail status

The Pilgrim trail from Ödeshög to Vadstena has the potential to be very popular for pilgrims as well as other users (visitors or inhabitants). In 2019, the trail from Boxholm to Vadstena became a Signature trail by Swedish Tourist Association. Birgitta Ways are the main part of that trail, and this gave attention and focus on this part in Östergötland.

²⁹ Share report Vadstena

³⁰ Besöksundersökning Östergötland 2019 – Vadstena

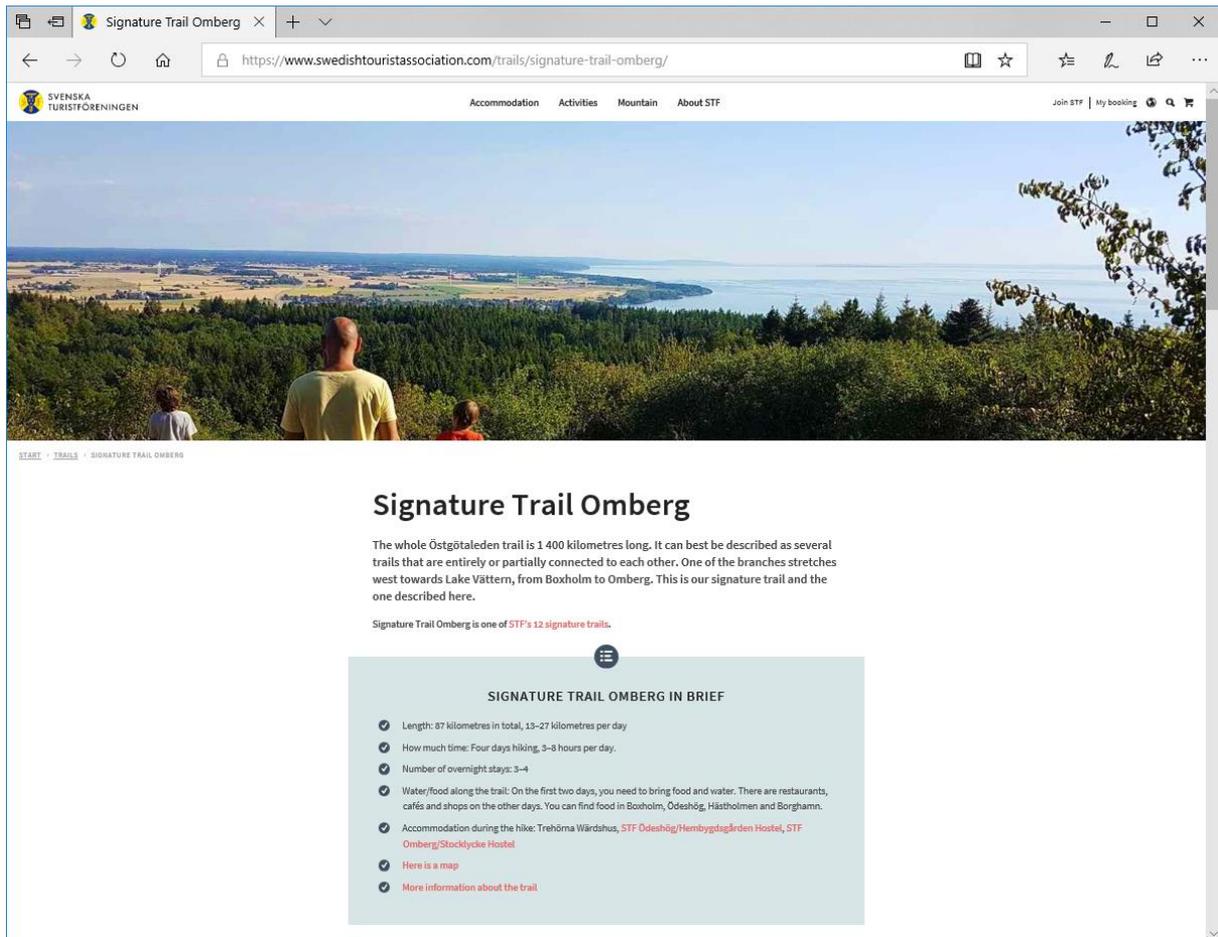


Figure 20 Birgitta Ways is part of the Signature Trail Omberg, selected as one of 12 trails to experience in Sweden³¹

This is just one example of why the trail which Birgitta Ways are using has huge potential for attracting more visitors and pilgrims. Here is a summary of the reasons for that.

- 1) The trail is new
- 2) There are very many points of interests along the trail
- 3) You find accommodations and places to eat in relatively frequently (compared to other trails areas in Sweden)
- 4) The infrastructure to handle many visitors (about 1 million in total) is already present in most places, and it is close to big towns and transportation hubs nearby
- 5) Birgitta Way is a mix of undeveloped and developed parts, meaning that you will see few people in some areas, and more people in others (it is not the same all way)
- 6) Birgitta Ways is a part of one of 12 “Signaturleder” in Sweden, where the Swedish Tourist Association are promoting walking in the lowlands
- 7) A great variation in nature and cultural sights
- 8) The idea from the Green Pilgrimage project to start with Pilgrim’s Welcome, a marking system for actors along the trail used by the pilgrims to get what is needed for them, will create a We-feeling for the actors around the pilgrims as visitors/customers.

³¹ <https://www.swedishtouristassociation.com/trails/signature-trail-omberg/>

- 9) The number of pilgrims today are few, so you will be feeling unique
- 10) Vadstena Pilgrim Centre has been selected to be part of a national program to set national standards for low-land trails, where Birgitta Ways are the pilot area for Pilgrim trails, giving the power and long term commitment to develop Birgitta Ways further

6. What is the situation in the destination today?

The sustainability of a destination, and how to make sure a destination can handle increased number of visitors in a long-term sustainable way, is often referring to its “Carrying Capacity”. This is the possible or optimal number of visitors coming to a specific place. This can also be referred as Balanced Tourism, in contrast to unbalanced tourism, or over-tourism. A destination aims for an optimal number of visitors, where for instance transportation, parking places, accommodation, restaurants, activity providers, trail status, number of people at the same time in the natural and cultural sights are all used to a good level. This is often not the case, where at least one of the parameters is not fulfilled.

Over-tourism is often used as a word to describe this, but is sometimes misleading what is a good and sustainable solution. A place does not have too many visitors all the time, and it can be as bad for the sustainability of a destination to have too few visitors, as it is to have too many visitors.

The Birgitta Ways destination have three main problems in the Carrying Capacity according to the answers presented in the questionnaire:

- 1) Parking situation
 - a. on southern Omberg during weekends in April-June and August – mid oktober (when nice weather)
 - b. around Borghamns Strand during weekends in July
 - c. in Vadstena during summer holiday (mid June – mid August) in city centre
- 2) Too few visitors
 - a. In winter in Southern Omberg
 - b. During weekdays in summer around Borghamn, and also the period September – May in the same area
 - c. Weekdays in Vadstena during September – April (especially Sunday and Monday nights)
 - d. All year around in the Ödeshög-Omberg area (except Hästholmen in July)
- 3) Too few products for Pilgrims
 - a. Too few packages for Pilgrims, where accommodation, guides and luggage transportation is handled
 - b. Too little knowledge what a pilgrim needs at the actors
 - c. Products/souvenirs to buy with local and Birgitta connection
 - d. Shops not open evenings and weekends
 - e. Accommodation on all levels

6.1 Carrying capacity



Figure 21 When talking to tourism businesses in Vadstena and southern Omberg (red rectangles in the image above), the main problems are regarding too many visitors at the same time and same place is in focus. The situation for tourism businesses in the parts in green dotted rectangles, the Ödeshög part and Omberg-Vadstena, is rather too few visitors in order to be able to have a service open or all year around

The main limitation today for visitors seems to be parking. At least that is the main problem brought up by actors along the Birgitta Ways. When the closest parking lots are full, it may lead to other problems, like illegal parking or parking on places meant for inhabitants, restaurant guests or sight visitors. It could also lead to traffic jams.

Included in the parking and traffic issue is how to handle camper vans, a growing type of transportation to destinations. The number of prepared places for those huge cars, where waste management and electrical supplies is needed, is very few in Birgitta ways. The camper vans are therefore parked in normal places, with unwanted result.

It may be discussed if Pilgrims are part of the parking issue. As long as the possibility to come to a good start and end place using public transportation is not known, it will be an issue also for Pilgrims. Better information, other services provided (perhaps luggage transport) and Pilgrim packages including public transportation will make this issue less problematic.

6.2 How many visitors come here?

An observation is that even if there are a lot of surveys done, the knowledge about the current number of visitors, what they do and where they go is very limited.

The number of visitors on Omberg goes from 50 000 (based on the number of parking lots available, to assumption that most people are coming by car, every car has 3 persons in average) to more than 400000 visitors a year (from the land owner Sveaskog).

In Vadstena it goes from 150000 (number of overnights stays) to 1000000 a year. It is a huge difference in those numbers, and it is urgent to get more detailed numbers to be able to get

priorities on investments needed and also to set a target for the destination. This can be achieved by different solutions.

Using people counters, car counters, measure number of lunch guests in a number of restaurants would make a good estimation for that specific trail, road and lunch places. See Figure 13 People counter in the nature reserve Ombergsli and Figure 22.

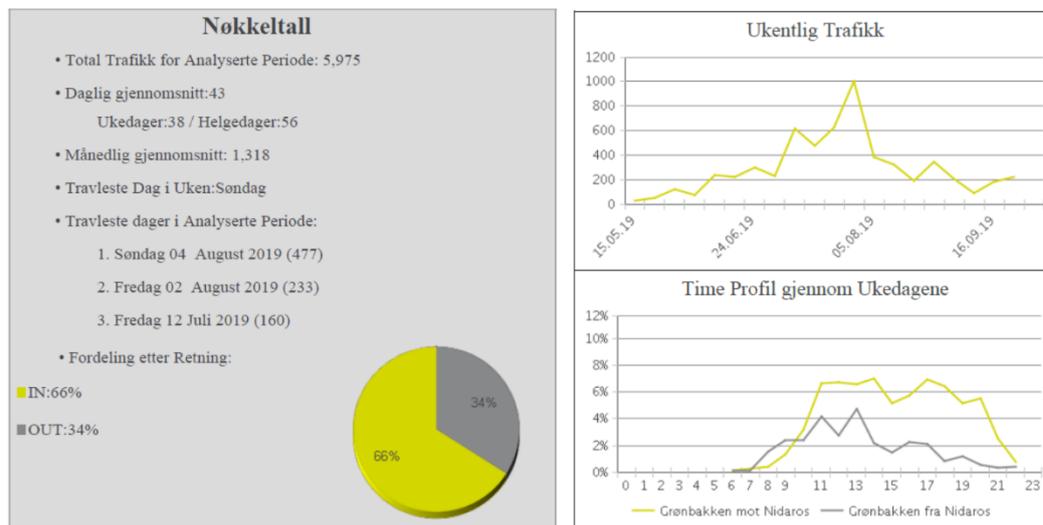


Figure 22 Measurements done in at least 10 positions on the Pilgrim trail to Trondheim (St Olof), image taken from the sensors in Dovrefjell 1. Those people counters give a very exact number of visitors as well of time when they pass and in which direction.

Another type of information, is to use data from mobile phone apps, like Strava. Strava is an app for runners and bikers, giving the user information of possible trails, length, height map etc. It cannot be used to measure the number of visitors, but how visitors are using the trails. And where they prefer to go.

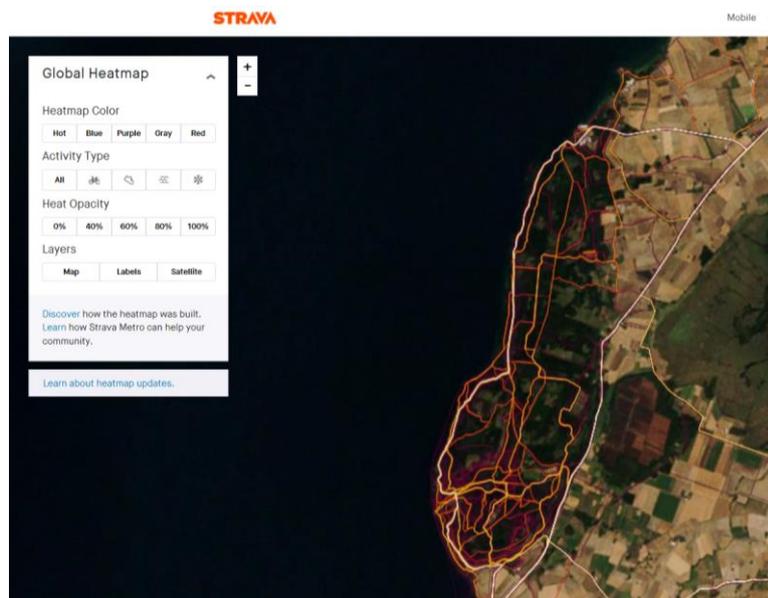


Figure 23 Strava "heatmap" for Omberg. It shows aggregated "heat" from public activities over the last two years. It can be used to see where people go, to see which trail that is most popular, but give no information about number of people.³²

³² <https://www.strava.com/heatmap#11.81/14.76544/58.35160/hot/run>

Sustainable Birgitta Ways – GP sustainability report

Apps like Strava or a future Pilgrim App will get good information of those specific users. But to get the total number of visitors, you may need to find measurements including all people in a specific region/city etc. This data is available by mobile service providers today, and it is recommended to find out if this kind of data could be bought somehow. The tele communication company Telia has a Crowd Insight service, providing data from their mobile phone users.

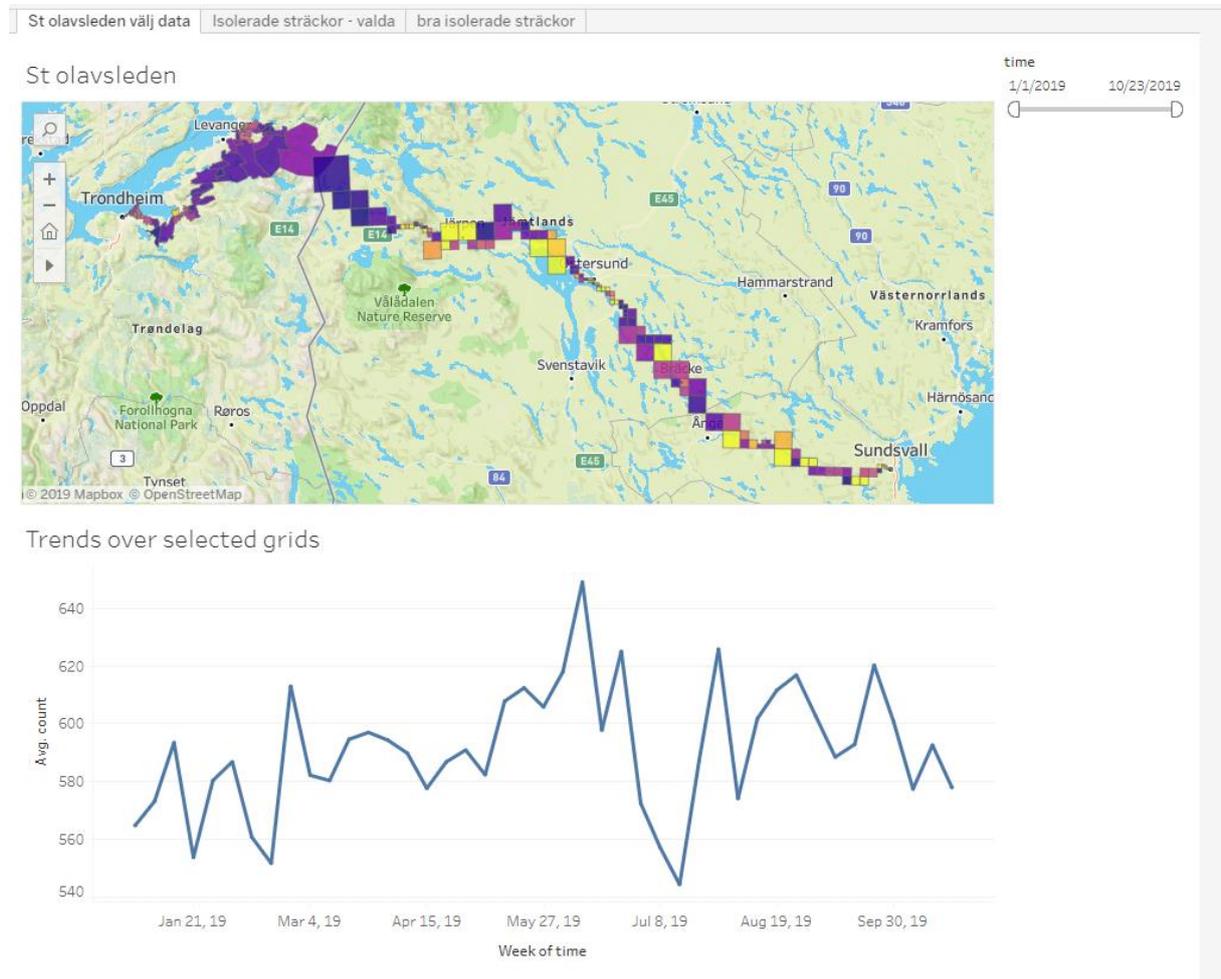


Figure 24 Data from mobile phones may show where people are, how many and where they go. Possibly also nationality. Image above from a test along St Olofs trail between Sundsvall and Trondheim. This is still just test in progress, and the data is anonymized and aggregated. It should in the end be possible to see how many they are, how long they stay and how they are moving.

A problem with any of those solutions where data collected needs to be completely anonymized is to get enough people per area and/or time. In the case above from Telia, the minimum number is 5 per selected square, otherwise the number is set to 0. One square is from 250 m x 250 m to several square kilometres. It will be a balance in knowing where visitors are (resolution/size of the selected area) and getting correct data. Further investigation is needed to find out a suitable solution per Pilgrim route.

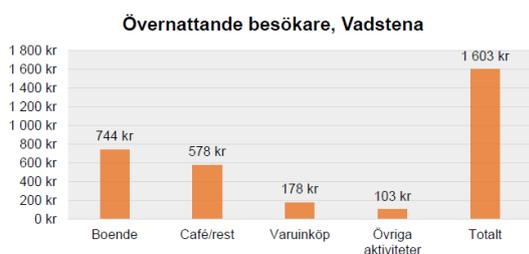
6.3 What is the value of a Pilgrim?

It is not clear what the value per visitor (Pilgrim) is and what is a cost per Pilgrim. The investigation/report about who is pilgrim³³ showed that there are at least 5 different type of pilgrims, where the ability and willingness to pay for “normal” accommodation and food service is not clear.

³³ The Modern Pilgrim, <https://www.visitostergotland.se/media/2869/the-modern-swedish-pilgrim.pdf>

The questionnaire (see Appendix A1) showed that a day traveller in this region spend between €10 to €100 per day, and the over-night visits gives €100-€200 back to local economy with the visitors in Vadstena and Omberg today. This is well in line with the result from a visitor survey in Vadstena performed during summer 2019³⁴, see Figure 25. The number of €160 is much higher than the value of £11.32 (for day travellers, estimation of double this for a multiday visitor) presented in GP project from the English partners³⁵, which is perhaps because of different target groups.

Under de senaste 24 timmarna, vänligen uppskatta hur mycket du har spenderat på följande:



- Övernattande besökare i Vadstena har spenderat i snitt 1 603 kr under det senaste dygnet
- Kategoriernas andel av totalutlägget i procent (jämför med utländska besökare nedan):
 - Boende: 46 %
 - Café/restaurang: 36 %
 - Varuinköp: 11 %
 - Övriga aktiviteter: 6 %



- Dagsbesökare har spenderat i snitt 304 kr under det senaste dygnet
- Kategoriernas andel av totalutlägget i procent:
 - Boende: 0 %
 - Café/restaurang: 62 %
 - Varuinköp: 24 %
 - Övriga aktiviteter: 14 %

Figure 25 Survey in Vadstena summer 2019³⁶. “During the last 24 h, how much money have you spent?”. Total number for overnight stays: 1600 SEK (€160), where accommodation was 744 SEK. Day visitors spend 304 SEK (€30) in average. This is for all visitors to the town, and not specifically for pilgrims.

6.4 Visitor involvement and sustainability information

How the visitors are taking part to keep the destination attractive is not very known today. Tourism businesses are often describing some sustainable part, and how they for instance are doing to minimize food waste and save energy. But most of the sustainable work is not communicated, and the visitor involvement is in general quite low except for minimizing single use items. To know more what to be done and set target, it is suggested here to start measure current waste produced and single use items used.

6.5 Other positive effects of Pilgrims and walking

In parallel to the cost and the value for the Pilgrim, it should also be possible to find out the effects of walking and being out in the nature. There is a tool available from World Health Organisation, WHO, to calculate on this. There is a project³⁷ in Östergötland using this, based on international model³⁸. In

³⁴ Besöksundersökning Östergötland 2019 - Vadstena

³⁵ Green Pilgrimage: A report on methodologies to measure the economic, social and environmental impact of pilgrimage (Norfolk in December 2019)

³⁶ Besöksundersökning Östergötland 2019 – Vadstena

³⁷ <http://sättöstergötlandirörelse.nu/nyheter/ostergotlands-gang-och-cykeltrafik-vard-5-miljarder-i-forbattad-halsa/>

³⁸ <https://www.heatwalkingcycling.org>

that project and study, it has been proven that walking and biking instead of taking the car would save a lot of lives, and would save billions of SEK every year. The study has not been done for Östgötaleden or Birgitta Ways, but could be a future study perhaps?

6.6 Voluntarism

Voluntarism is important for Pilgrims and Pilgrims Routes. Visitors would like to give back to the society they are visiting and it is an opportunity to offer this for actors along the trail. The trail itself is also a result of voluntarism, since the maintenance of the trail is performed by non-profit organisations and associations. They do get some money for the work (paid per kilo metre trail they are responsible for) and the money goes back to the association/organisation, which is by that strengthening the local society.

6.7 Proposed action to describe the current situation in the Destination better

The actions here are more detailed than the one in the Action Plan Green Pilgrimage Sweden. The link to action 3 – Pilgrims Welcome – is found in column “PW” in the table. The other actions in this section is mainly to collect data for further analysis.

ID N as in Now	Type	Description of need and <i>possible solution</i>	PW Could be part of Pilgrim's Welcome	Level of urgency 1: Urgent 2: Recommendation 3: Good to know
N1	Carrying Capacity	Investigate what and when the parking situation in southern Omberg is not working well. How often does this happen and what is the main reason for this? <i>Ask land owner or actors nearby to report when full to someone appointed</i>		1
N2	Carrying Capacity	Investigate what and when the parking situation in Borghamn is not working well. How often does this happen and what is the main reason for this? <i>Ask actors nearby to report when full to someone appointed</i>		1
N3	Carrying Capacity	Investigate what and when the parking situation in Vadstena is not working well. How often does this happen and what is the main reason for this? <i>Ask responsible for parking lots or actors nearby to report when full to someone appointed</i>		1
N4	Expenditure	How much does a modern Pilgrim spend per day and night? <i>Use feedback system by each actor and process result</i>	X	2
N5	Visitors	Find ways to get the total number of visitors in Vadstena and Omberg? Where are they, how many and when? Is it also possible to get information about how they are moving around and what they visit? <i>Find out who has the data today and ask what is available and for which cost</i>		2
N6	Visitors	Find ways to get the total number of users on the Birgitta Ways/Östgötaleden. <i>Use people counting sensors and put them in the appropriate position(s)</i>		2
N7	Visitors	Find ways to get the total number of cars passing over Omberg today. <i>Use car counting sensors and put them in the appropriate position(s)</i>		2
N8	Feedback	What is the benefit of walking/being out in the nature? What is the value of a (new) trail? <i>Can the Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) be used? Is it possible to do a (pilot) study for Birgitta Ways?</i>		2
N9	Expenditure	How much is the cost per guest? How to calculate the cost for energy, wages, heat, food and infrastructure – and how to know when it is break-even for a place to open up? <i>Ask national or regional tourism organisations about tips for calculation. Or perhaps a research project for the academy?</i>		3
N10	Visitors	How many visitors are staying overnight in Vadstena every day and what is the booking status?		3

Sustainable Birgitta Ways – GP sustainability report

		<i>Larger cities in Östergötland are using Benchmarking Alliance</i>		
N11	Feedback	What does a Pilgrim (or trail user) think about the trail status today? <i>Add TripAdvisor to the different sections, make it possible to check in using Facebook and read comments</i>	X	3
N12	Feedback	From where are the visitors and why did they chose to come to Birgitta Ways? <i>Add TripAdvisor and places in Facebook to check into and follow comments using for instance https://hootsuite.com/platform/monitoring</i>	X	3
N13	Sustainability	How much waste is produced by tourists today? If every actor (especially restaurants and accommodations) had this data, it would be possible to use this data for a future target and perhaps in making visitors more aware. <i>Add this is suggestion in Pilgrim's Welcome</i>	X	3
N14	Sustainability	How much single use items are used today? If every actor (especially restaurants and accommodations) had this data, it would be possible to use this data for a future target and perhaps in making visitors more aware. <i>Add this is suggestion in Pilgrim's Welcome</i>	X	3
N15	Sustainability	How did the pilgrim get to the destination? <i>Add this is suggestion in Pilgrim's Welcome. See also suggestions under feedback</i>	X	3
N16	Visitor Involvement	How many hours of voluntarism is spent on the trail during a year? <i>Municipalities know how many kilo metres that is handled, but not how long time it took maintaining the trail</i>		3

7. What do we want the destination to be?

Since there is no defined Destination Management Organisation for Birgitta Ways, there is a number of different (un-official) visions for the destination and what the Birgitta Ways should be in the future.

- 1) The aim of Green Pilgrimage and Vadstena Pilgrim centre is to focus on the pilgrims wanting to go to and from Vadstena on the Birgitta Ways. Focus there is not the number of visitors but more the connection to church, Saint Birgitta and that the infrastructure is good enough.
- 2) Focus for the Omberg tourism businesses is to use Pilgrims as a target group that could come in current low season, when there is available rooms in the service and nature.
- 3) Focus for the municipalities is to make more people coming to visit, and that Pilgrims could be one of those focus groups.
- 4) Focus for Vadstena entrepreneurs is to use Pilgrims as a target group for low season and coming during days with available capacity (Sundays-Wednesdays), and also to attract a group wanting to stay overnight more than the average visitor.

The thing in common for all those visions/actors is sustainability – they are all very determined that the social, economic and ecological footprint for the pilgrims has to be positive and long term sustainable. And they all agree that the Pilgrims are a target group suitable for the current actors and area – Pilgrims are in general conscious about sustainability and want to do the right thing for the world and environment.

What is not as full agreement about is the economic impact, since the “hard-core” pilgrims are known not to spend more than perhaps 30 € per day, giving very little positive impact on the local economy.

All in all, the stakeholders in the destination are positive to Pilgrims, and would like this kind of visitors to grow. But the growth should not be in high season, so the offer and marketing message to pilgrims who want to come should be for time and places where there are available capacity today. The suggestion for next year is to start to promote March/April and October as the “Pilgrim months”.

Data provided in the previous section should be the base of describing the wanted future better. Slovenia is using a tool for this to set up their Carrying Capacity



Figure 26 Destinations in Slovenia is using 13 different indicators, and have targets and limits for each of them. All are depending on a base line to compare with. In this example the destination are fine with an annual growth of 5% in number of tourists arriving, but a higher growth require planning or actions.³⁹

³⁹ 1910 Management of Tourism Flows

7.2 Proposed action to describe the future situation in the Destination better

The actions here are more detailed than the one in the Action Plan Green Pilgrimage Sweden. The link to action 3 – Pilgrims Welcome – is found in column “PW” in the table. The other actions in this section are issues to be handled by the strategic partnerships, Vadstena as a Pilgrim destination and could also be part of future policies.

ID F as in Future	Type	Description of need and <i>possible solution</i>	PW Could be part of Pilgrim's Welcome	Level of urgency 1: Urgent 2: Recommendation 3: Good to know
F1	Carrying Capacity	Make the parking situation in Vadstena better, perhaps by limiting access to city centre with car for visitors at least during summer (unchanged for inhabitant). <i>Use nudging or restrictions?</i>		1
F2	Sustainability	Communicate plans and visions from the municipalities to the private sector, in order to optimize works and actions <i>Should be done when many actors are met, perhaps during stakeholder meetings or sustainability events</i>		1
F3	Carrying Capacity	Make it possible to get to Omberg top attractions and good starting points with public transportations. <i>With data about number of visitors and parking situation, the region and municipalities together should work on a solution</i>		2
F4	Carrying Capacity	Make it possible to use public transportation between Vadstena and Ödeshög (and from north to south of Omberg) <i>With data about number of visitors and parking situation, the region and municipalities together should work on a solution</i>		2
F5	Carrying Capacity	Make sure camper vans know where to go where appropriate service is found, in order to get those visitors staying longer but not being in the wrong places. <i>With data about number of visitors, camper van and parking situation, the region and municipalities together should work on a solution</i>		2
F6	Carrying Capacity	The number of places to eat in Vadstena is too few during high season. Make sure good alternatives are coming. <i>Make it possible to have food trucks or pop up restaurants in attractive positions in the city during high season</i>		2
F7	Expenditure	Visitors coming to Vadstena today want to buy things and local souvenirs. They want to do this in evenings and weekends, but the shops closes too early. <i>Promote alternative opening hours in at least Vadstena City, or enable pop up stores during summer</i> <i>Make sure that Pilgrim's Welcome actors have at least a base of products to buy</i>	X	2
F8	Sustainability	Make visitors aware they are visiting a sustainable acting actor <i>Describe what is currently done and why</i>	X	2
F9	Seasonality	Make sure Pilgrims are coming when there are free capacity.	X	2

Sustainable Birgitta Ways – GP sustainability report

		<i>Make product and packages for Pilgrims in weekdays and in spring and autumn preferably</i>		
F10	Expenditure	Set a target of what a Pilgrim should spend when visiting Birgitta Ways, in order to show the value of Pilgrims for public sector and other actors <i>Based on current situation and knowledge from other Pilgrim destinations, set a target</i>		3
F11	Sustainability	Make Vadstena a sustainable destination, and communicate this nationally and internationally <i>Make sure that this is decided by politicians giving a long term commitment for Vadstena Tourism and Business.</i>		3
F12	Visitor involvement	Make visitors coming here compensate for the CO2 footprint on sight <i>Offer products/attractions where for instance trees are planted or meadows maintained, to decrease CO2 and preserve biological diversity</i>	X	3
F13	Visitor involvement	Make visitors aware how to go to next attraction in the best (carbon neutral) way. <i>This could be done by analogue/verbal or digital nudging – see resvana.com as an example</i>	X	3
F14	Visitor involvement	Make visitors using trail without leaving any trace <i>Encourage Plogging (picking litter while jogging) or at least bringing back own waste to waste bin, by providing bags and gloves for all</i>	X	3

8. How could we get to the wanted destination result?

8.1 How to handle the destination around the Birgitta Way as a sustainable destination?

We need to handle all sustainability aspects for each part of the Birgitta Ways. It is probably a long way to make Birgitta Ways acting as one destination. The common map, common signs, a standard for what is provided for Pilgrims accommodations and other service providers along the route (Pilgrim's Welcome) and a common goal to reach (Vadstena) which is already planned for or available is a good start though.

But even before treating the destination as a destination, the observation from the interviews and questionnaire give some parts where the need is obvious - there is a huge need to get more real data about the current status, as described in previous sections. Based on the data, target numbers and key performance index (KPI) can be set up for a number of things like:

- 1) How many visitors do we want to have in the different parts? What need to be changed to be able to handle that many visitors in a sustainable way?
- 2) What do the visitors (especially Pilgrims) do and want to do when they are here? What is missing today and who could provide this? What should be the total value of a Pilgrim for the local economy?
- 3) How do we want visitors (Pilgrims) to act and behave when they are here? How could we make them act in a way that sustainability is kept for Birgitta Ways but also inspiring them to act more sustainable also when leaving this destination.? Can we teach them something?
- 4) Who do we want to come here, and how should they get here? What is a Pilgrim and how do we want to attract those? What needs to be done marketing wise? What needs to be done with infrastructure?

These are a number of questions to be answered by the Destination Management Organisation in close collaboration with all included stakeholders. It will be difficult to reach the goals and targets if not all have the same vision and goals. The recommended structure to use when working on the destination plan is to use the standard from GSTC-D or Green Destination. In those standards, it is required to set up criteria's and KPI for a number of issues like the ones above. The list in this chapter can be seen as an inspiration to start with.

8.2 Sustainable Economy

8.2.1 How to maximize economic benefit to the local economy and minimize the negative impact?

To get a fixed number of the money spent by a Pilgrim during the visit is hard to find. And therefore also problematic to set a target for. When looking into why people are coming to the Birgitta Ways area, it is clear that culture visit historical places is on top priority^{40, 41}. It is plausible that a visitor coming to this area because of culture do want to visit a lot of places during the stay. Perhaps could a "Museum pass" or similar show that there is a lot of interesting places to visit, and also making the visitor to plan a longer stay in the area. This pass could include entrance to all historical places, where they most likely will buy souvenirs, coffee, guiding etc. if promoted in a good way.

⁴⁰ Besöksnärringsrapport+Svecia+Travels+AB+2016

⁴¹ and Besöksundersökning Östergötland 2019 – Vadstena

Feedback from current visitors are that the shops are not open when the visitors may be most willing to spend. Typically late in evenings after dinner, in weekend days etc. How to achieve this?

There is a view that pilgrims are not prepared or willing to pay for a hotel, three course dinner or lunch. The average visitor spend according to The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment report⁴² from the Green Pilgrimages project in Norfolk is £11.32. There is a very limited number of commercial accommodations and restaurants that offer this type of basic and cheap accommodation. According to the study done by Kairos Future⁴³ there are several different types of Pilgrims – not just “the organised Christians”. For the existing tourist service providers along Birgitta Ways “the Stressed”, “the Spirituals” and “the History Buffs” are more interesting since those would like to sleep and eat really nice at least every second night. What can be done to attract those target groups?

8.2.2 Target groups

As already discussed, there is not one type of Pilgrim, it is at least 5 different types, according to The Modern Pilgrim⁴⁴. The profiles are based on the different driving forces that are expressed, and can be viewed as separate target groups. They are ‘ideal types’, meaning that real individuals will often match more than one profile.

In Vadstena/Birgitta Ways, we can experience four types, “the organised Christians”, “the historic Buffs”, “The spiritual” and “The stressed”.

The organised Christians

This is a group which typically joins group hikes organised by churches or other civil society organisations, often in the form of one-day hikes in the local area. Some associations announce and discuss pilgrimage events in dedicated Facebook groups.

The history buffs

For pilgrims visiting Israel and Palestine, a historical interest can be just as important as the religious motives, and places where well-known historical events have taken place are central. Old churches, castles, and monuments along the trails are appreciated for their historical value not only in the Holy Land. For others, a sense of historic connection to pilgrims who have walked the same trails in past centuries is more important than the monuments. Walking in the footsteps of a saint can add a special attraction to a pilgrimage trail.

The spiritual

For some pilgrims, the pilgrimage has strong spiritual connotations without being explicitly religious. Many of these seek stillness and silence for doing an ‘inner journey’, while others are looking for deep conversations with other pilgrims to meditate on life’s mysteries together. The question of how much interaction pilgrims wish to have with others is a divider, and different posts reveal different ideas about whether a pilgrimage is fundamentally about ‘me’ or about ‘us’.

The stressed

Related to meditation, silence, and the ‘inner journey’ is a desire to relax and find stress relief. As stillness and meditation is central for many pilgrims, stress relief could be expected to be also a

⁴² <https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2f24d6c942d44e81821c3ed2d4ab2ada>

⁴³ The Modern Pilgrim, <https://www.visitostergotland.se/media/2869/the-modern-swedish-pilgrim.pdf>

⁴⁴ <https://www.visitostergotland.se/media/2869/the-modern-swedish-pilgrim.pdf>

common goal. Stress relief is frequently mentioned as a benefit of pilgrimage in traditional media coverage. In social media, however, references to stress relief are mostly visible in posts marketing pilgrimage trails and events, rather than in posts by individual pilgrims who describe their experience.

The “Historical Buff” type of pilgrim will find a lot of great things to experience on Birgitta Ways, as well as the Stressed. There are currently very few Pilgrims tourists found outside the church community in Vadstena, and there is low experience on what the Pilgrim will spend and want in the end, but a good guess is that they will be more willing to spend and contribute to the local economy if there are customized products available. And perhaps a package with something like a Museum pass, making them experience more and stay longer.

8.2.3 How much do they spend in other destinations?

The average visitor spend according to The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment report⁴⁵ from the Green Pilgrimages project in Norfolk is £11.32.

In Vadstena⁴⁶ it seems to be about €160, quite a big difference! What is correct?

Trying to get comparable products around the world, we may compare Pilgrims Packages with what is called Adventure Travel products (products where nature + culture + some kind of experience/knowledge). Those kind of packages have a cost of 200€ per day and up (see data from Adventure Travel Trade Association from 2018, of what the most popular activity is and what that may cost per day:



Figure 27 Analysis from ATTA in 2019 – Adventure Travel Financial Snapshot. Trip price per person of €214 including lodging excluding airfares is probably the upper limit of what of Pilgrim is expecting to pay for an experience

⁴⁵ <https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2f24d6c942d44e81821c3ed2d4ab2ada>

⁴⁶ Besöksundersökning Östergötland 2019 – Vadstena

As a comparable product, a package for the last 100 km in Santiago di Compostela⁴⁷ can be looked into.

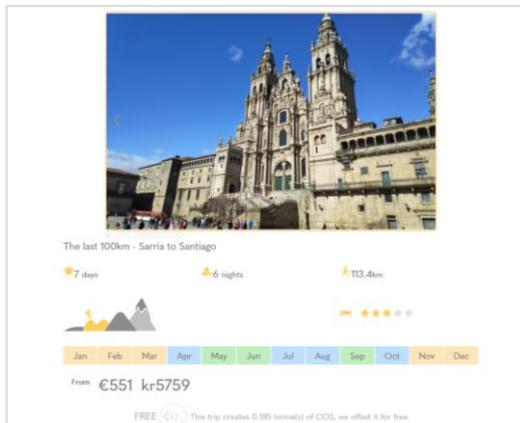


Figure 28 A pilgrim package for the last 100 km on the Santiago di Compostela has a price of €551 for 6 nights in low season for Bed and Breakfast accommodation and luggage transport. Flights, Dinners, transfers, guides, lunches and drinks has to be added.

Based on all those examples, a number of at least €100 per overnight stay by a Pilgrim seems fair (including lodging, excluding transport (airfares) to destination).

8.3 Sustainable society

8.3.1 How to protect and develop the culture and spiritual value in a sustainable way?

The visitors are selecting the Birgitta Ways because of the historical and spiritual value. This must be protected and developed in a sustainable way, when the number of visitors will increase. How this can be done is different for different sights.

The Alvastra Monastery is a ruin on the south of Omberg, with very high historical and spiritual value. This place must be analysed further to see what needs to be done. Things to consider

- 1) Are the ruins well protected
- 2) Is it possible to go here all year around?
- 3) Are the signs in different (and right) languages
- 4) Is it found on TripAdvisor, Google Maps with correct info?
- 5) Do the visitors get information about how to behave on the sight?
- 6) Is it possible to park a car, a bike, a bus and a camper van nearby?
- 7) How about the sign from the main roads and from the Pilgrim Trail positioned?
- 8) How to go there with public transportation to the place?
- 9) Is it possible to have an entrance fee?
- 10) How could the visitors contribute to its preservation and are they informed how they can spend money nearby (food, drinks, ice-cream, souvenirs, guiding)?
- 11) What about waste bin and waste management?
- 12) How to find other attractions and sights?

⁴⁷ <https://followthecamino.com/camino-tours/camino-frances/camino-frances-sarria-santiago>

13) Is there a toilette nearby?

14) Is it possible to fill a water bottle?

The list above include example of what should be thought about and managed correctly. As seen there, it is a number of different actors that have to cooperate in protecting and develop the sight.

In Vadstena Abbey, with about 300000 visitors per year, they have introduced an entrance fee on €2 in 2019 (it was free before), where the money will go to preservation. It will be interesting how and if this will have an impact of the number of visitors. But here other things to take care of as well, just look into the list from Alvastra Abbey. How to get there with public transportation, what about toilettes etc.

8.3.2 Other aspects of social sustainability

How can Birgitta Ways be positive to people health? As mentioned in previous section, positive health could be measured using tool found on <https://www.heatwalkingcycling.org>. Could any KPI be set out of this for Pilgrims?

Voluntarism – can Pilgrims be the way how this can be start measured and where Pilgrims themselves are part of this?

Could immigrants and people currently unemployed find tasks suitable for them to fill the needs from Pilgrims from all over the world? Like guiding in different languages, like leading voluntary tasks etc.?

Nudge⁴⁸ is a concept in behavioural science, political theory and behavioural economics which proposes positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions as ways to influence the behaviour and decision making of groups or individuals. Pilgrims should be perfect target group for nudging.

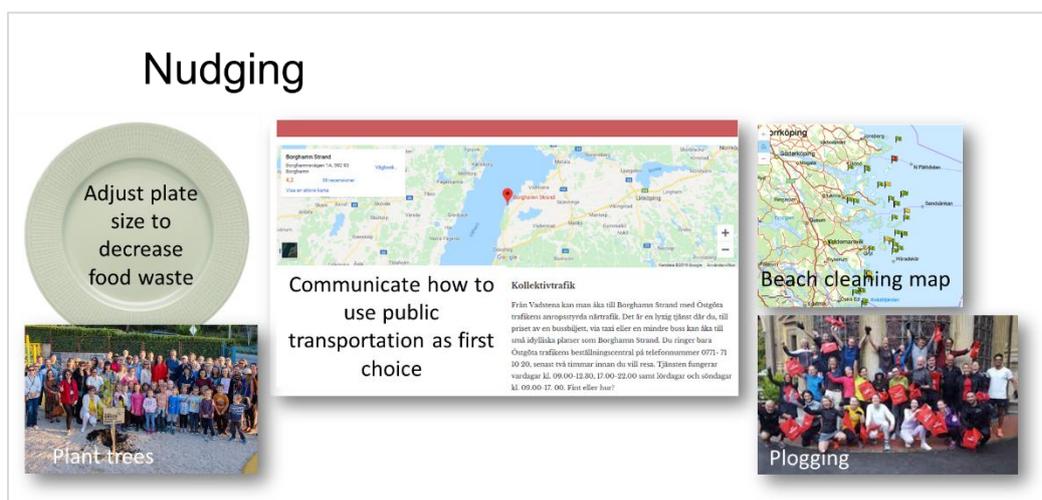


Figure 29 Example of nudging activities presented during stakeholder meeting in November 2019.

8.4 Biological Sustainability

8.4.1 How to protect nature and minimize negative impact on environment?

The nature is not as “easy” as the cultural sights, since it has no clear limitation and no clear entrance. But most of the topics for the Alvastra Abbey is also valid for any nature environment.

⁴⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nudge_theory

In addition, maps and information about Allemansrätten, “the Freedom to roam⁴⁹” is important. Information should be placed in appropriate places, like at parking lots, in Pilgrim’s Welcome houses, by fire places, beaches. Ports and other places of interests. It is also important to inform how to do in nature if you find no toilette.



Figure 30 Example from a kayak guiding company Do The North in the archipelago, explaining how to set up tents, set up fire, do with the waste, how to go to toilette in nature etc. Also providing harmless detergents.

Nudging in order to make people act more sustainable would be interesting to test here, both for traffic and parking lot issues and littering. In the archipelago the municipalities has introduced a beach cleaning map, where visitors are used to report the need of cleaning and also encourage pick up the litter themselves.

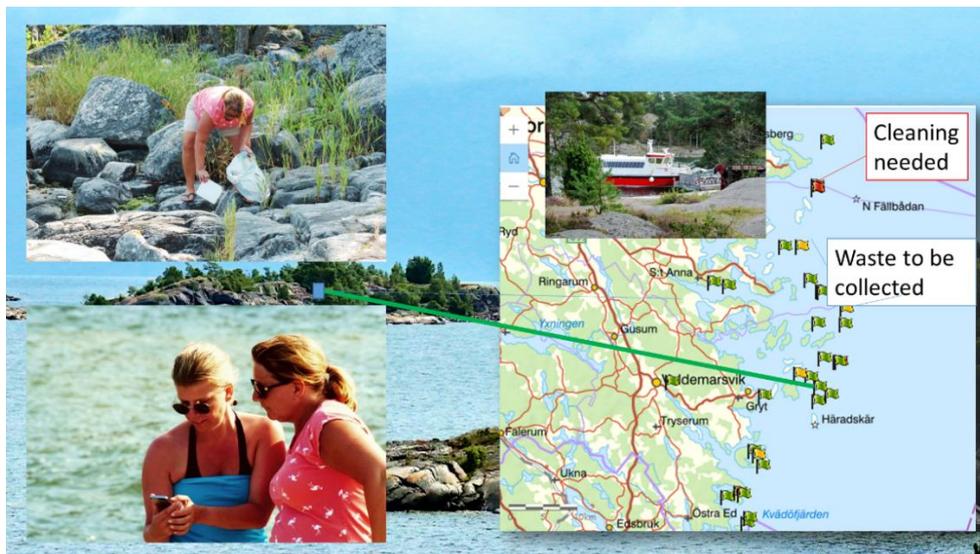


Figure 31 The beach cleaning map is an interactive map on a web page⁵⁰ where visitors in the area can report the need of cleaning/waste handling (red or yellow flag) or indicate a clean(ed) island (green).

⁴⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NT66AXcusFM>

⁵⁰ <http://vastervik.maps.arcgis.com/apps/GeoForm/index.html?appid=dc6d494170ce4aaebf6ddf1d9f19e2c1>

8.5 Proposed action to describe how to get the wanted situation in the Destination

The actions here are more detailed than the one in the Action Plan Green Pilgrimage Sweden. The link to action 3 – Pilgrims Welcome – is found in column “PW” in the table. The other actions in this section are issues to be handled by the strategic partnerships, Vadstena as a Pilgrim destination and could also be part of future policies.

Some of the items from previously presented actions would still be valid here, but there is no copies seen here.

ID <small>H as in How</small>	Type	Description of need and possible solution	PW <small>Could be part of Pilgrim's Welcome</small>	Level of urgency <small>1: Urgent 2: Recommendation 3: Good to know</small>
H1	Sustainability	Set up the Destination Management Organisation and decide system to use and common goals		1
H2	Feedback	Have an information and communication channel for plans and actions from public sector (and DMO) to private sector, in order to make all stakeholders aware of what is happening and act properly <i>Use social media to share this in private/commercial groups</i>		2
H3	Carrying Capacity	Create customized products and packages for the different target groups (i.e. for Pilgrims) <i>Use the available network and knowledge of product development to create and launch suitable products for Pilgrims.</i>		2
H4	Carrying Capacity	Make sure that shops are opened when visitors would like to shop		2
H5	Data	Set up target number of visitors on Omberg and Vadstena / day (or week) and measure this depending on available system used		2
H6	Sustainability	Set up KPI for no littering along the trails and make Pilgrims a part to keep this <i>Use something like beach cleaning map for Birgitta Ways? Or other nudging actions.</i>	X	2
H7	Data	Set up KPI for Waste produced / Pilgrim & month, single use item used / stakeholder & month, measure this monthly and report <i>Use nudging?</i>	X	3
H8	Data	Set up KPI for expenditure/Pilgrim & overnight stay, measure this (survey) once a year	X	3
H9	Feedback	Provide a common feedback system for visitors/Pilgrims, in order to give real time information. This would make it possible for someone to immediately take actions, and perhaps offer guiding, adjust offer in restaurants, maintenance on trails or whatever quickly <i>Automatic feedback system through the solution used, like external system used by everyone (ex GreatRate), feedback from Wi-Fi access surveys or analytic tools gathering data from multiple sources like twitter, TripAdvisor, Booking etc.</i>	X	3
H10	Sustainability	Decide upon a DMO for the complete Saint Birgitta Ways, and what should be in focus for such an organisations		3

Appendices

A1 Questionnaire for stakeholders along Birgitta Ways

Subject	Information asked for
Expenditure	Average visitor spend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day visitors • Overnight • Part to local economy (%)
Visitors	Number of visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High season/day • Low season/day • Total/year
Seasonality	When is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high season (=mainly fully booked) • low season (free capacity) • Closed
Type of visitors	What are the visitors experiencing (Guided tours, Walking around, Pilgrimage - from A-B, biking, other)
Carrying Capacity	If we have too many visitors at the same time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where • When • Why (what is “full”) • Suggestion how to prevent this?
Feedback	Collecting feedback from visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How? (verbally, digital, system used) • What? • What is missing? • Sharing to others?
Equipment	How do the visitors get the lunch/coffee from you? (% single use items)
Visitor involvement	How are the visitors involved in keeping the paths/area attractive? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Nudging • Acting/events
Sustainability	How do you inform about your sustainability work?
Data	What data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is available? • Is needed?

Questionnaire used during interviews with 14 persons representing:

Public sector: Vadstena and Ödeshög Municipalities, Region Östergötland, land owner Ecopark Omberg (Svea Skog, owned by Swedish state), Vadstena Pilgrim Centre

*Private sector: Accommodations (7), Activity providers (7), Restaurants (4)
(some actors represent multiple choices)*

The Norfolk Example included also Physical Health, Wellbeing, Volunteering and School Visits which is not covered in the Birgitta Ways Questionnaire. It has been discussed also how to get this kind of data. For physical health and Wellbeing, see Other aspects of social sustainability. This may also be partly covered by the point “Feedback” in the questionnaire. Volunteering has been discussed with the public sector, especially how to get data from trail support (executed by non-profit organisations/associations, paid by the Region/Municipality per handled kilometre). It may also be

included in the point “Visitor involvement” in the questionnaire. School Visits is not organised by any organisation, and would

A.2 Policy in Practice – pre workshop prep

What are we valuing	Data needed	Example – what is Norfolk using?	Have you got this data? Green = yes Amber = somewhat Red = no	How difficult for you to get or analyse the data? 1 = Very few barriers 2 = ok 3 = difficult	If you have data: Where/how did you get this data?	If you haven't got data: What barriers do you face?
Expenditure Value (Direct)	Average visitor spend	Survey (question – how much would you spend) *Also average spend value available from MENE (Monitor Engagement with Natural Environment) – very approximate as focuses only on recreational activity not added 'pilgrimage value'. But used in EU.				
	Number of people	People counter data * ORVal Tool (statistical modelling of route on map provides estimated visits)				
Physical Health	How long walked for/level of activity	Survey (question – how many minutes exercise) or use an app such as Better Points + HEAT (Health Economic Assessment Tool) EU wide WHO tool which provides value of exercise				
Wellbeing	Four questions based on one point in time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life satisfaction • Life is worthwhile 	Survey (4 standard wellbeing questions) from UK Office National Statistics – now attuned to European Survey on Income and Social conditions)				

Sustainable Birgitta Ways – GP sustainability report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness • Anxiety 					
	Rating of visit/pilgrimage on feeling 'calm and peaceful'	Survey (2 questions)				
Economic Welfare/ Social value (Indirect)	No of volunteering hours	Collect data from local organisations				
	No of school visits	Collect data from local organisations				
	£ figure for proposed route	Survey (question based on choice experiment/contingent valuation) * ORVal Tool (statistical modelling of route on map provides 'Welfare value')				
	Similar studies that value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £ per access to site • £ per km For activities & habitats.	Benefit Transfer				
	Cost visitor would pay for visit	Survey (question based on revealed preference)				

Sustainable Birgitta Ways – GP sustainability report

Environment	Various	NCC is working with UEA and others to develop this area. Progress is being made in conjunction with others actors interested in valuing natural capital.				
Multiplier value	How much money into local economy – spend and jobs created	<p>*Regional Input/Output table recommended</p> <p>*Lighter version feasible using national data coefficients</p>				