

Sustainable Travel around the Bothnian Coastal Route

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Abstract:

- Sustainable travel is an important element of planning and creating new tourist routes.
- Visitors from the DACH market prefer individual traveling and appreciate a green infrastructure at the places where they travel.
- In this paper, we discuss a research trip of four media and communication specialists with a decent knowledge of the needs of potential customers from the DACH market who would travel the Bothnian Coastal Route.
- The region around the BCR is exceptionally interesting. From the country border Torne River in the north to the Kvarken archipelago in the south, the route passes most scenic parts of Sweden and Finland and showcases a rich and diverse cultural heritage.



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1. Introduction: Why is sustainability important in general and in this region?

When traveling, protecting our ecosystem and preserving natural resources for future generations must also become the norm. Examples of the impact of mass tourism abound. Popular destinations and cities suffer from overtourism. More and more travelers are beginning to discover new forms of tourism. People are looking for insider tips, untouched places, or new challenges. One of these places is the region along the Bothnian Coast.

In addition, more frequent climatic extremes mean that countries with notoriously cooler conditions are increasingly coming into focus. It is essential to avoid repeating the mistakes made in the early days of broad-based tourism in the mid-20th century. Tourism can destroy what has made a region a popular destination.

Today, we know that the opposite of mass tourism shall be ecotourism. When developing and expanding a tourist route, sustainability should be the focus from the very beginning.

Along the Bothnian Coastal Route, travelers can experience differences but even more connecting elements of the two countries, Sweden and Finland. Here, travelers can immerse themselves in the Arctic way of life amidst breathtaking nature. This region is much more than an excellent vacation destination in the summer months. It's a holistic experience worth touring all year round and cannot be recorded within a few days or even while passing through. Something that is unique and absolutely worth preserving.

Sustainable travel is, therefore, an important element of planning and creating new tourist routes. *The Sustainable Development Goals*¹ are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.

The SDGs are a core element of the United Nations 2030 agenda (UN, 2015). The plan promotes sustainable development by way of monitoring and controlling the use of natural resources and encouraging conservation efforts, creating employment opportunities for local communities while promoting local culture and

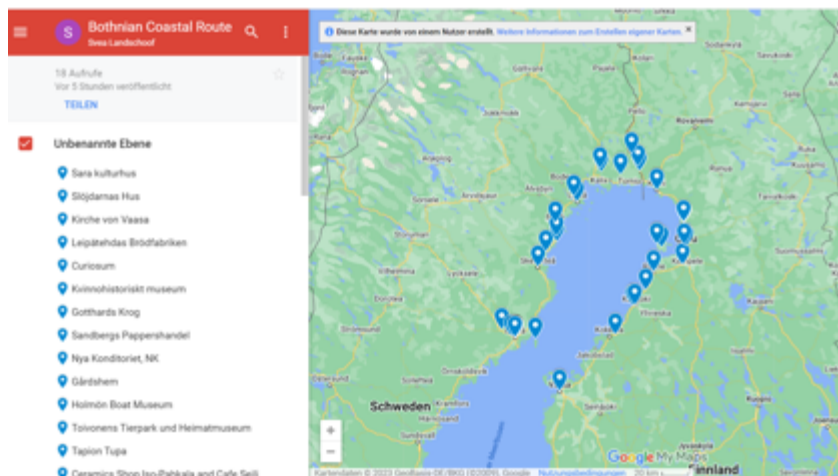
¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

products, and using marine resources sustainably to increase the economic benefits for small islands, developing states, and underdeveloped countries².

2. Our Itinerary

Due to the fact that we all had to travel to a starting point of the route and that it wasn't so easy to find the perfect starting point we decided to start at the Swedish side of the BCR. We selected Skellefteå as the location for our group gathering. We had the possibility to travel to the following destinations (in order of our itinerary):

- Skellefteå (S)
- Piteå (S)
- Luleå (S)
- Haparanda / Tornio (S)
- Kemi (FL)
- Ii (FL)
- Oulu (FL)
- Raahe (FL)
- Kalajoki (FL)
- Kokkola (FL)
- Vaasa (FL)
- Umeå (S)



² <https://www.unwto.org/global/publication/unwto-annual-report-2017>

3. Material and Methods

We divided our focus for sustainable travel into four different fields that are, in our point of view, necessary for having a whole range of experiences in the region.

A - Traffic and Transport

B - Food and Accommodation

C - Cultural Heritage

D - Landscape, Nature, and Outdoor Activities

This paper will explain our different experiences, the planning possibilities, and the difficulties we had when performing a sustainable trip around the Bothnian Coastal Route.

Because we wanted to get more detailed insights into what tourists from the DACH market wish for, we conducted a short survey within our social media channels asking them what they favor when traveling to Scandinavia. The results of this poll help to understand the wishes and needs of tourists from the DACH region.

A - TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

Planning, Preparations, and Booking

When planning the round trip to this relatively unknown and exotic destination, Germans tend to accurately prepare and study various options to travel up to the region and arrive safe and sound.

We started with *Google Maps* and an old paper map from the *German Automobile Club* to get a picture of the region. This way, we identified how far up we would travel and what cities offer airports since we didn't consider a long ride up by car.

Our goal was to travel as smoothly and sustainably as possible by testing various ways to reach the destination. Travel by plane, car, van, train, boat, and bus are the options for getting one of the starting points for taking the round trip around the bay.

Research on suggested flight booking platforms (*Supersavertravel*, *kiwi*, *Skyscanner*, *Momondo*, *Expedia*, etc.) made us decide on Skellefteå as our meeting point for the group. This airport had sufficient connection and was our most practical first step.

Our goal was to travel by train inside Scandinavia as much as possible. Traveling through Finland and Helsinki would have given us VR.fi as good option to easily select quick and affordable routes. Since our first destination was in Sweden, we started research with *Visit Sweden*. The page hints to various platforms for schedule and price comparison. *SJ*, *MTRX*, *FLIX*, *Inlandsbanan*, *Snälltåget*. *SJ.se* had the most comfortable overview and seemingly trustful maneuvering to check schedules and book a seat. The train went via Stockholm and overnight. Each night train ride was booked inside a 3-person-sleeping cabin.

Two of the group took flights from Stockholm to Skellefteå to meeting point for the first day.

Our initial search for bus routes on Finnish and Swedish side didn't provide enough information to make a fair comparison of comfortable transportation. We had trouble hitting connection between regions. Local bus schedules were in f.ex. Finnish language and long distance bus companies (OnniBus) don't stop between the cities.

Very early in the process, we decided to take the road trip with an electric car, preferably a larger family version for four people with luggage on a journey where we wouldn't know the condition of the roads. A camper van has not been an option for this shorter roundtrip. The famous German car rental platform *billiger-mietwagen.de* gave a perfect orientation on models and vehicle prices, available in Skellefteå, where we started our trip. We booked directly with the suggested car rental operator, *Europcar*, to discuss additional insurance and 2nd driver and ensure the reservation is safe.

Our Trip

Beside using the *electric car* for the route, we have boarded two *car-ferries* – Hailuoto island and Wasaline from Vaasa to Umeå – and 1 *passenger ferry* to Holmön.

At the beginning of the trip, the feeling of a brand new comfortable passenger car was calming, and the extra time to learn about the vehicle's functions was worth every minute. The Volkswagen was our go-to place with all our belongings and good times for discussion and planning along the route.

Roads and general traffic around the Bothnian Bay are easy to drive on and cope with. We chose the scenic road along the Torne River, which led us to our destination for the first night. We experienced ordinary city traffic with short after-work jams outside the city centers.

The landscape, even though not completely diverse and drastically changing, was showing different views after every corner. The views to the sea on the Swedish and the Finnish side, the wild river through Tornedalen, endless treelines, curvy scenic roads, and exciting side stops with vista points to follow sunsets or spectacular views are all amazing and lined up every day for our delight.

We followed the instructions reading the recharging of our car battery and had several tense moments when either the app of the (Norwegian) energy provider would not function, the loading time of a particular station was incredibly slow, the information in a second and third app was incorrect, and staff responsible for the maintenance of the (new) charging station was not educated and experienced enough to handle the connector to our car or deal with the payment information.

The Hailuoto car ferry was very convenient and exciting to travel. The 20 minute trip takes the daily commuter and us visitors safely to the island, which always gives a special remote feeling. We loved the fact that this is quick to free to board.

Booking and boarding the Wasaline Ferry from Vaasa to Umeå has also been easy and very comfortable. All cars during our ride have possibly been on the vessel before, and the routines with the crew functioned fantastically. Knowing about the environmental development with Wasaline and the technical features of the new boat gave us a good feeling of trust. The ship was sufficiently well-

conditioned and equipped. Offboarding at our destination harbor was as smooth as the boarding process.

Another ship trip has been with the small passenger ferry to the island of Holmön, north of Umeå. Friendly staff and being close to wind and weather made this excursion a very atmospheric passage. Our car was parked safely during our afternoon visit to the island.

Handling the return of our rental car to Europcar was quick and smooth. We recommend using a passenger car for the route - to experience all the sights and not be stuck on a campground or hindered by many train or bus terminal stopovers. It is good to plan the trip with some time ahead. This ensures a better rental price and gives time to study the different charging apps along the road.

B - FOOD AND ACCOMMODATION

At this point, we will split into two topics for clearer elaboration.

FOOD

Research before traveling

The research before the trip focused on sustainable restaurants and local food: How do the ingredients taste that come directly from the country's waters, fields, and forests?

There is a lack of awareness of the region's possibilities along the Bothnian Coastal Route, so the rich offer and the variety of products were surprising. The Nordic countries share history and fabulous food with fresh and clean ingredients. Nordic food never fails to fascinate and brings people together.

Commonly known is reindeer, fish, or the treasures of the forest. But at least finding various farm shops or stalls with freshly harvested goods was not expected up in the north.

It makes people want to fill a picnic basket or try outdoor cooking. The knowledge that there are eight seasons to taste in the north is less widespread in German-speaking countries.

Gathering information

Even when never having been to the Bothnian Coastal Route, it is quite possible to find out about the tastes of the North. The official websites of the destinations visited or of the respective countries are very detailed in this respect.

Deeper insights were possible through personal contacts with locals and through the work of influencers. Their tips on restaurants or specialties proved to be helpful.

During our trip, we tested different conversation situations. We asked service staff, locals, and employees in tourist information offices for advice and tips.

During the Trip

Positive Experiences

Food connects people.

The best conversations came up when it was about culinary traditions. At a place we got recommended, *Arthotel* at Hedenäset, we met a young cook who harvested the ingredients that ended up on our plates before our eyes.



She also told us about traditional fishing and the timing arrangements of the two countries.

We discovered that the Arctic lifestyle gives space for creativity. We gave the German cook at *Pensionatet* in Piteå a free hand in preparing any food - and were delighted. Combining local and seasonal ingredients in international dishes works perfectly! And creating new food based on traditional dishes turned out to be amazing!

The fact that one tour participant is a vegetarian was not an obstacle throughout the trip. The vegetarian offers were a tasteful experience that even the meat eaters in the group were eager to try.

All the hosts we encountered took great pleasure in introducing us to the flavors of their homeland. We enjoyed listening to further information about food traditions, the products, and some local stories. It didn't take a designated star kitchen to eat excellent food. The grainy porridge for breakfast on Hailuoto was one of the most delicious experiences of the trip, much to the staff's amazement.

A queue in front of the closed doors of a café in Umeå aroused our interest. When people are waiting for the opening, it must be perfect. We tasted delicious cakes at *Nya Konditoriet* and enjoyed the unique atmosphere.

Difficulties

However, the timing proved to be somewhat difficult.

On the one hand, we encountered the notice of the season's end on 13 August several times. On the other hand, we could only reconcile some destinations with charging the e-car.

Visiting Oulu on the day of the *Air Guitar Festival* proved to be an unforgettable cultural highlight, but the city was well attended. Too long a wait at *Tuba* - our intended destination - led us to follow a local's tip. The dishes at a *Viking restaurant* were more like show food than local food. We regretted not returning to Pikisaari to eat the season's delicacies at the timber storehouse.

The stop in Kokkola was unplanned and time-pressured due to delay with loading the e-car. Local research into sustainable food did not yield any results.

We could not explore food in Vaasa as intensively as we planned to do. Because of time lags, we sadly had to leave without being in one of the restaurants or pubs in the city center. There was no time for a breakfast in town, but we booked a buffet on the ferry to Umeå on Sunday morning. This, on the other hand, was a small highlight of our tour. We enjoyed a rich boat breakfast with unforgettable views of Kvarken and the sea.

We had to learn that a simple transit cannot do justice to the full experience of this region.

ACCOMMODATION

It was comparatively easy to book sustainable accommodations. The websites of the destinations are abundantly filled with suggestions and helpful information and forwarded directly to the booking.

Before Departure

We opted for accommodation that was as varied as possible. We wanted to try hotels, but also more unusual accommodations and the experience of a typical Mökki with an original Finnish sauna, which has been included as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. It is far more than mere body care.

Getting Information

When planning our trip, we found that the destinations' websites already offer a very good selection of accommodations with certification and sustainable concepts. Tourists can choose between different housing types and, in some cases, dive deep into culture and history.

We wanted to avoid bookings on general booking platforms to support local tourism. In addition to the official sites of the destinations Skellefteå, Oulu, Vaasa, Umeå, and *www.swedishlappland.com*, we asked local acquaintances for tips and suggestions. That's how we spent a night on the beautiful island of Hailuoto, which was recommended to us.

As part of a spontaneous travel planning, we decided to check out the following accommodations:

- Arthotel Tornedalen, Hedenäset
- Arctic Lighthouse Hotel, Hailuoto
- Best Western, Oulu
- Brita Härtullin tupa, 30 km north of Vaasa
- Stora Hotellet, Umeå

Customer Experience

We always felt welcome - even when planning our trip. It took a while to read through the varied offers on official websites

[Visitumea.se/en](https://visitumea.se/en), [Visitskelleftea.se/en](https://visitskelleftea.se/en), [Swedishlapland.com](https://swedishlapland.com), [Visitoulu.fi/en](https://visitoulu.fi/en)

There we found unique offers and detailed information about sustainability, certification, culture, and history. Making decisions was hard and, of course, tied to availability.

As a tourist, you really are spoiled for choice! Each destination is dedicated to sustainable tourism and invites people to discover and experience the Arctic way of life. Using *Trello* was, therefore, a good idea to ensure structure and orientation along our route, because structuring the variety of offerings was not easy for us. One quickly loses the overview, and it has helped us to reduce to a few choices. (This tool is explained later in the report and proved to be very practical during the trip.)

We had to wait until our stay to learn more about Hailuoto. <https://hailuoto.fi/> is only in Finish, so we trusted the positive recommendation a local has given to us.

As the trip developed, we ended up staying in these places:

- Arthotel Tornedalen, Hedenäset
- Arctic Lighthouse Hotel, Hailuoto
- Scandic Hotel, Vaasa
- Stora Hotellet, Umeå

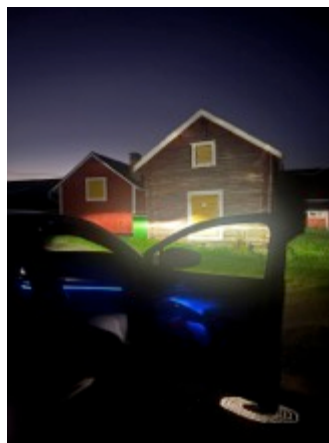
During the Trip

Staying at *Arthotel Tornedalen*, it became clear for the first time how close the geographical and cultural ties of Sweden and Finland really are along the Torneälv. We looked into the other time zone, enjoyed wonderful food surrounded by nature, listened to beautiful stories, and got amazing insights into the local culture. The service we received made us feel like we were staying with friends.

Already, the crossing to the island of Hailuoto, a small island west of the city of Oulu, was an experience. We reached the hotel relatively late and had to trouble the staff again due to the incorrect programming of the room cards. But even here, we felt consistently welcome and courteous care.

We were surprised by the furnishings of the consistently clean and well-maintained rooms. We would have liked to know in advance that the bathrooms are so tiny and that young students celebrate all night long. Having breakfast on the ferry with that view was outstanding.

Of course, we wanted to experience a Finnish sauna and a mökki. We wanted to try sauna culture as it is an integral part of the lives of the majority of the Finnish population. We therefore chose *Klemetsgårdana* in the region of Vaasa. When we showed up, everything was closed and dark. A note on the door informed us of the end of the season.



We had to change our plans for this evening and decided to drive to Vaasa. On our way, we called several hotels by using the cards on our Trello Board. We found rooms at the *Scandic Hotel*.

Despite unforeseen changes in plans, we could enjoy a Finnish sauna at the hotel.

Both the refund of the booking costs and the communication with those responsible were accurate and kind.

C - CULTURAL HERITAGE

Although most Tourists from the DACH-Market are heading toward the southern regions of Europe, there are still tourists who are very interested in the northern part of the continent. Those kinds of travelers are mostly highly interested in the cultural heritage of a region. They would like to discover an area and learn much about its history. A spontaneous stop by an interesting sight is always possible during a road trip. But how to coordinate and plan a trip from abroad before being on the road? We looked at the different websites and tried to find as much information as possible.

Getting Information

The easiest way to find information about the BCR region is to look at the websites of the different destinations around the Baltic Sea. Customers from the DACH market love to read in their mother tongue and prefer those offers over English websites.

We looked at the websites of *Visit Vaasa*, *Visit Kalajoki*, *Visit Oulu*, *Visit Luleå*, *Visit Skellefteå* and *Visit Umeå*. It is notable that *Visit Kalajoki* and *Visit Oulu* offer their website services in German. Nevertheless, all destinations provide information in English and at least one other language (e.g. Swedish or Finnish).

The Websites are accessible to people who speak English, so they should be reachable for information for most tourists from the DACH market.

We could find much information about cultural experiences inside the cities, like museums. Finding hidden gems further away from the tourist or city routes wasn't that easy.

Besides the websites of the different destinations, we got a lot of information via social media, particularly from Instagram.

Before the trip, we wanted to plan as detailed as possible.

During the Trip

We started our trip with a visit to the *Sara Kulturhus* in Skellefteå. The building impressed all of us, and we immediately liked the atmosphere. Unfortunately, we couldn't find much information about the building, its climate-positive construction, and why everything was designed as it is. However, we understood the function as a building with different aspects and as a place where the inhabitants of Skellefteå could come together. The museum was still closed when we were there, but the library and everything else about the building were impressive.

In Skellefteå, we also had a look at the beautiful area of Nordanå, an old church town with beautiful old wooden buildings and log cabins by the river Skellefteå Älven. Situated right there is the *Exploratoriet*, a science museum for kids. We particularly liked that even smaller kids can try things and understand scientific

contexts. The part where kids should try to make their own dinner with locally produced food from Västerbotten was very interesting, and how they tried to teach kids about farming or reducing food waste were good examples of sustainability.

We also had a little stroll through the city center, where you can see the changes the city of Skellefteå is undergoing at the moment.

Our next stop was unplanned and spontaneous. On our way to Piteå, we saw a picturesque lighthouse close to the highway E4: *Jävre Fyren*.



We took the opportunity to find out more about this hidden gem. Before our trip, we didn't find any information about the lighthouse, the little restaurants, and last but not least, the beautiful view from the top of the lighthouse. It was a big surprise that the lighthouse was open to the public and that we could walk up the stairs.

The restaurant was closed during the week but still open on the weekends. All in all, we were delighted that we stopped and found this beautiful treasure along the way.

When we drove further, we followed the suggestion of a friend who told us to check out *Pensionatet Malmgatan* in Piteå. The food was excellent, and the whole place was a must on the BCR. The house is a cultural heritage, and the little shop where you can buy handmade and often locally produced items was worth visiting.

Our next stop was in Luleå. We enjoyed the view from the Skärgård of the city. The little ferries, the bars, restaurants, and cafes along the water were very inviting. The city center made us want to return as soon as possible. We spotted something tremendously exciting when we walked at the quai: a floating sauna. Considering that the sauna culture is a Finnish (and maybe also northern Swedish) tradition, we were so fascinated seeing a floating sauna at the Baltic Sea.

Just outside Luleå, we discovered the UNESCO world heritage site of Luleå's *Gammelstad* - an impressive ensemble of old buildings. Unfortunately, we did not have that much time to stroll around because we had to head north to the Swedish-Finnish border to Tornedalen.



We had the opportunity to interview Theodor Ringborg, the director of *Konsthall Tornedalen*, later that day. Theodor told us a lot about the ambitious project of having a place for local art directly at the Finnish-Swedish border. Once the art gallery is finished, it will be very interesting for visitors from all over the world, but especially for visitors from the DACH market, who are often very interested in local culture and history.

Speaking about culture and living history, the next day, we started our journey with a stop at *Kukkulaforsen*. There, we could see how the ancient fishing technique at the Torne River is still alive. Both on the Finnish and the Swedish side of the river, people were fishing with this extraordinary technique. This raw and pure moment was very special and unique for us.

We were heading to Finland and had our first stop in Kemi. There, we learned something about the importance of icebreakers and an old one still used for tourists. It would have been nice to be here in the winter and see the old vessel operating on the frozen sea. This counts as a part of history and culture, and those things are unique for the BCR and highly exotic to tourists from the DACH market.

We were heading south again, and our next stop was Oulu. Before we went to Oulu, we wanted to check out an environmental art park in Ii. Unfortunately, the park wasn't in good condition, and we were pretty disappointed that the art pieces were not maintained well and the whole park looked entirely forgotten.

In Oulu, we arrived in the middle of a big event: the world air guitar championship. The city was enjoying the last official summer weekend. Instead of visiting the famous art museums, we decided to go with the flow, discover the city on foot, and wonder about the exciting mix of architecture and the variety of cultural possibilities. We understand why Oulu will be Europe's cultural capital in 2026, and we have to come back to have the time to check out the city's cultural capital. It was a surprise to find so many things written in various languages and to have so much art around.



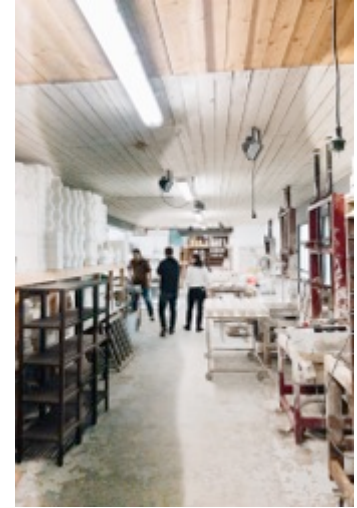
The night we spent on the picturesque island of Hailuoto. There, we slept close to an old lighthouse.

On our third day, we headed south to Kalajoki. On our way from Oulu, we found a marvelous place along the road: Raahe. We were stunned to - more or less by accident- visit a site called *The Trade House of Lang - A House Full of Stories*. It was a part of living history, and the owner of the place was so friendly to tell us a lot about the history of the whole building complex.

The little town of Raahe was also remarkable for us because the old town reminded us with its architecture a lot about some places in northern Germany.

In Kalajoki, we found an exciting place that is also an example of preserving cultural heritage: the ceramics manufactory *Iso-Pahkala*.

We were lucky to meet the owner in his shop, and he told us about his family business that keeps traditions alive. Regarding sustainability, he told us that the sand they need to produce the ceramics is taken from the shore of a nearby river and the Baltic Sea. We were fascinated by this remarkable craftsmanship and his spontaneous hospitality.



Kokkola was a short stop on our tour, but nevertheless, it's important to say that we were totally fascinated by the fact that you could see street signs in Finnish and Swedish language, that we could speak Swedish again, and that coming from a more or less monolingual country this was an experience that was super interesting for us.

Unfortunately, we couldn't give the beautiful city of Vaasa the time we wanted to spend there. Before heading to the ferry, there was only time for a quick look on Saturday night and Sunday morning. Vaasa definitely needs time to be revisited, especially since it offers a wide range of excellent museums, and last, but not least, it's also part of the UNESCO world heritage. So we were sad that we missed the opportunity to scout this city.

On the last day of our journey, we traveled by ferry to Umeå. The city was the European capital of culture in 2014, and we understood why. We had the chance to visit different museums and were, for example, in the *Bildmuseet* - the Museum of Modern Arts. There, we took the opportunity to join a workshop and visited an exhibition about the indigenous art of the Arctic region. We also visited the *Västerbottens Museum* and the *Curiosum* (science center). All museums offered a wide range of interesting facts, great family options, and were very well available for people who don't speak Swedish.



As well as we liked the *SARA Kulturhus*, we also enjoyed the *Väven* in Umeå. Unique architecture and the idea to make different parts of culture accessible for many people is an enjoyable concept.

A special surprise was the visit to the little island Holmön. We found a real hidden gem when we accidentally ran into a German volunteer who worked at the *Holmön Båtmuseum*. He gave us an unplanned museum tour after the official opening hours. The museum holds a lot of old and unique boat types that were typical for the island. Also, a big point of interest was that you can book workshops there to keep these ancient traditions alive. We didn't expect that on such a small and remote island.

The very last stop was at the following day, a visit to the Umeå sculpture park, the *Umedalen Skulpturpark*.

D - LANDSCAPE

Before the Trip: Getting Information and Customer Experience

Embarking on exploring the Bothnian coast, we approached the task as travelers originating from the DACH countries with a focus on the accessibility of information. Our aim was to unravel the potential for outdoor activities and natural encounters along the Bothnian coast. In this section, we recount our experience, particularly noting the convenience of finding information in English as a testament to the region's commitment to inclusive tourism.

Our research journey started with checking a variety of online resources. What struck us immediately was the remarkable availability of comprehensive online

resources dedicated to the Bothnian coast. Government websites, regional tourism boards, and dedicated travel platforms offered a wealth of information tailored to outdoor enthusiasts like us, with much of it available in English.

Navigating the region's official websites was a seamless experience. The Bothnian coast's tourism bureaus not only provided detailed guides and interactive maps but also ensured that a substantial portion of the content was accessible in English.

Our experience researching outdoor activities and natural sights along the Bothnian coast was characterized by accessibility and user-friendliness, with a notable appreciation for the prevalence of information in English. The plethora of online resources, multilingual support, and engagement with fellow travelers and local experts facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the region's outdoor potential. This accessibility ensures that travelers from the DACH market, like us, can confidently plan and embark on adventures along the Bothnian coast, fostering a deep appreciation for its natural wonders.

During the Trip: Positive Things and Difficulties

Even though our time was limited, and we couldn't go on hikes or actually participate in any outdoor activities, nature was a constant companion throughout our trip. Already taking the train up North was a beautiful way of witnessing the nature outside the window change slowly but surely.

When we began our journey in Skellefteå, we were immediately struck by the breathtaking natural beauty of the surrounding landscape. We stumbled upon a charming meadow near Frostkåge, known as *Ostvikfjärdens Havsstrandängar*. This lovely spot invited us to take a brief stroll and explore the local flora and fauna through an informative signboard.

While there, we couldn't resist taking in the stunning views of the sea from a picturesque lookout point. However, we faced a minor challenge as we couldn't find any information in English, and our attempts to locate hiking trails to another viewpoint mentioned on a map proved unsuccessful.

Continuing our trip northwards to Piteå and Luleå, we were getting glimpses of the Baltic Sea glittering through the car window, which was a very special sight. In

Luleå, we got the chance to take a short walk along the waterline and very much enjoyed our view of the sea and spotting a little archipelago island in the distance.

Another natural highlight of the trip was the car ride in the North and along the Torne River, including the Kukkolaforsen. The scenery is unique and worth exploring, especially for a tourist from the DACH market. There's something about arctic vegetation that is hard to pinpoint yet fascinating and wildly beautiful.

Continuing our trip to Kemi, we had a beautiful view from the terrace of the *Ice Hotel*. As far as the eye could see, the Baltic Sea captivated us with its vast, blue beauty. Especially exciting were the little cabins of the hotel, which were located right by the sea. While the view is already amazing during the summer, experiencing nature during the colder months must be breathtaking. All cabins feature big windows and even a roof made of glass, allowing guests to gaze into the night sky and watch the northern lights from the comfort of their own bed.

In Oulu, we started our city tour with a quick stop at the *Nallikari Lighthouse*. While the area certainly has potential, it could have been more inviting when we arrived. The sights of the big old abandoned hotel and many construction sites in the area made us continue with the rest of our trip rather soon.

The trip to the island of Hailuoto, on the other hand, was a great success. We enjoyed the (free) ride on the car ferry and the most amazing sunset that evening. Hardly anyone on board was sitting left in their car - everyone walked on deck to appreciate the sun covering everything in the most spectacular golden light. Even though it was relatively dark when we arrived at the island, we could tell that Hailuoto was one of those hidden gems worth visiting. Our impression was confirmed the next morning when we had time to explore the beach and the little harbor around the *Luotsihotelli*, where we spent the night.

We continued our trip to Vaasa and took the ferry there to Umeå. That ferry ride is absolutely worth highlighting, as we were captivated by the beautiful view from our window seat at the breakfast buffet. The ferry connection between the two cities (and countries) is not only a convenient way of traveling around the BCR, but also a wonderful natural sight. The Kvarken Archipelago, with its 5.600 islands, invites travelers to pause and appreciate the ancient forces of nature.

INTERVIEWS

We traveled as mystery shoppers and checked in as “normal” guests. We asked the employees/owners about their way to promote sustainable travel. We would like to present five interviews as an outline of what we could find out.

1. Simmi Ojalehto, Host at Arthotel Tornedalen and Theodor Ringborg, Project Director Konsthall Tornedalen. -

Simmi's dishes were like a feast for the senses and a perfect complement to the conversation with Theodor.

Theodor gave us an inside look into the future plans with Konsthall Tornedalen and the effect this meeting place will have on the whole region. And he even showed us photos of the secret sandy beaches of Torne Älv.

Simmi served freshly harvested potatoes, herbs from the garden, and local salmon and chocolate brownies. Simmi talked to us about how the food is traditionally prepared and the combination of traditional ingredients. Most exciting for us were her explanations about fishing at Torne Älv and the organization between Finland's and Sweden's fishing. The way she spoke about tradition and culture gave us a sense of understanding of the Arctic way of life.

She gave us valuable tips for exploring the area, particularly referring to local businesses' cooperation. She emphasized that mutual recommendations instead of competition are common in her region. And last but not least, she shared her recipe for gluten-free brownies with us.

2. Pasi Eskola - Langin Kauppahuone - The Trade House of Lang, Raahе

Listening to Pasi's stories about his journey to breathe new life into the former The Trade House of Lang in Rahe was great. We got to hear about the journey from a forgotten cultural asset to one of the most exciting projects of the trip. The former Trade House is not just about delicious food, but style, charm, and stories. The

owner's love for the history and culture of the place is evident in every detail. A place we are too happy to recommend.

3. Hotel manager at the Luotsihotelli, Hailuoto

Nestled on the picturesque island of Hailuoto in Finland, one can find the Luotsihotelli - a testament to responsible hospitality and a deep appreciation for the local environment. During our stay at Luotsihotelli, we had the privilege of engaging in a conversation with the hotel manager, who shared valuable insights into the hotel's efforts to become even more sustainable.

At Luotsihotelli, the values of independent responsibility saturate every facet of their operations. The hotel takes pride in promoting responsibility through its actions, meticulously focusing on even the smallest details. This dedication enables them to uphold their commitment to responsible practices transparently.

The hotel avoids using individually packaged products, limiting unnecessary plastic packaging and refraining from using disposable containers in daily work. This commitment to minimizing waste aligns seamlessly with the principles of sustainability.

In 2020, Luotsihotelli took another significant step towards reducing its environmental footprint by introducing water-to-air heat pumps alongside its existing oil heating system. This strategic move resulted in a remarkable reduction of more than 50% in annual oil consumption, highlighting their commitment to sustainability.

Moreover, the hotel boasts a solar power plant on its roof, generating sufficient electricity to fully cover the kitchen's energy needs. Thus, every meal prepared at Luotsihotelli is made using renewable energy, contributing to a greener and more sustainable future.

Talking about food - one of the hallmarks of Luotsihotelli's dining experience is the emphasis on local ingredients. From breakfast to dinner, guests have the opportunity to savor the flavors of the region. Their porridge, for instance, is often made from whole grains sourced from the Kujala farm in Hailuoto. Even their tea

selection, a testament to community engagement, hails from the Pikku-Panda tea shop in Oulu.

As a visitor to Luotsihotelli, you can't help but be impressed by their commitment to sustainability and responsibility. The hotel not only provides a comfortable and historical setting but also serves as a beacon of eco-consciousness, where every detail is considered in the pursuit of a greener and more responsible future.

4. Employee at Gårdshem, Umeå

Strolling through Umeå, we accidentally came across a small shop that caught our attention. The shop is called “Gårdshem” and specializes in local food from Northern Sweden. We had the pleasure of talking to one of the employees who passionately told us the story behind the concept.

Located in the Utopia area of Sweden, Gårdshem is more than just a shop; it's a culinary destination that embodies the essence of Northern Swedish food culture. Specializing in Northern food crafts and local folk beer, Gårdshem caters to those who seek locally produced, high-quality culinary treasures.

Gårdshem's philosophy revolves around simplicity and sustainability, making it effortless for everyone interested in embracing locally sourced, quality products. When you step into Gårdshem, you'll discover an assortment of goods exclusively sourced from local farms, dairies, roasteries, breweries, and other skilled food artisans within our immediate region.

One of Gårdshem's driving passions lies in sustainable food and drink enjoyment, a commitment that resonates throughout their offerings and ethos. Joining Gårdshem on their journey means partaking in a shared mission to create exquisite taste experiences while championing sustainability.

The dedication and expertise of Gårdshem's staff shine through in their devotion to showcasing Swedish cheeses. From small farm dairies to larger national producers, this year's cheese counter is a testament to their profound knowledge and genuine interest in Swedish cheese. Beyond in-store tastings and service, during COVID-19 times, Gårdshem went the extra mile by starting to offer digital cheese tastings - the first in the world!

Gårdshem's impact extends beyond their own operations. Their emphasis on regional products not only drives purchases at their store but also bolsters the competitive edge of restaurants that feature regional cuisine and empowers producers' direct sales channels. During the pandemic, Gårdshem successfully maintained a robust digital presence, offering everything from online tastings to home deliveries of their goods. In doing so, they not only sustained their own business but also served as a lifeline for the numerous small-scale producers who form the bedrock of Västerbotten's culinary landscape.

Gårdshem is more than a shop; it's a testament to the rich culinary heritage of Northern Sweden and a beacon of sustainable, local gastronomy. By preserving traditions, fostering regional partnerships, and embracing innovation, Gårdshem embodies the essence of a modern, dynamic, and socially responsible food destination.

5. Receptionist - Stora Hotellet, Umeå

Umeå has a rich maritime heritage, and Stora Hotellet is a captivating establishment that tells the story of the shipping city's glorious past. During our visit to this historic hotel, we talked to a knowledgeable receptionist who shed light on the rich history and sustainability of the glamorous hotel.

Stora Hotellet first opened its doors in October 1895, offering a unique blend of accommodation and maritime charm. For over a century, it has held its position as Umeå's premier hotel, with an extensive renovation preceding its grand reopening during the city's designation as the 2014 European Capital of Culture. Today, resplendent in its nautical-themed decor, Stora Hotellet stands as a symbol of Umeå's maritime legacy and is prepared to welcome guests for another century of hospitality. The hotel boasts 82 distinct guest rooms, ranging from spacious accommodations to cozy seaman's bunks, along with a restaurant, bar, libraries, and meeting rooms.

Beyond its historical significance, Stora Hotellet plays a vital role in shaping Umeå's present and future. The hotel actively champions sustainability from economic, social, and environmental perspectives. This dedication has earned it the prestigious international Green Key eco-label, recognizing its efforts to use ecologically certified cleaning products, implement waste recycling, and adopt energy-saving solutions.

Stora Hotellet takes its role in the local community seriously, often collaborating with local representatives, suppliers, and producers to strengthen its positive impact. As part of the Blå huset group of companies, the hotel continually strives to enhance its sustainability commitment, evaluating and implementing improvements one step at a time. With every nautical mile traveled, they contribute to a more sustainable world.

In essence, Stora Hotellet Umeå is not just a place to stay; it's a living testament to Umeå's maritime history and a beacon of sustainable hospitality. It beautifully combines the echoes of the past with a forward-thinking commitment to a greener, more responsible future.

TOOLS

Survey

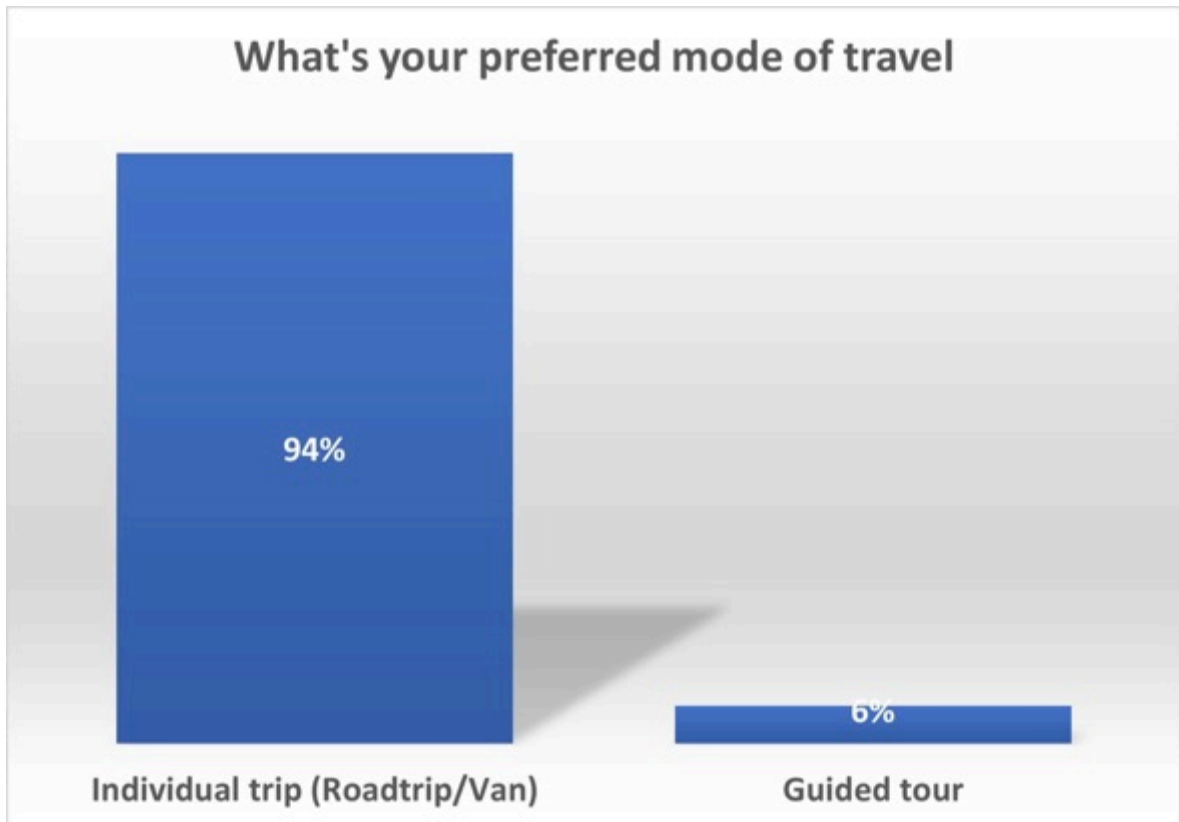
On Saturday 11/9/2023, we used our social media accounts on Instagram (@svealandschoof, @meermond; @arctic_for_beginners @matthias_assmann) to conduct a small poll. The poll ran for 24 hours and had a total of 864 participants.

The majority of our followers are from Germany with an average of 66%. We have an average of 3% followers from Austria and 2.6% from Switzerland. The majority (71.6%) of our followers, therefore, belong to the target group that is the subject of this paper.

The age structure of our followers is well distributed: Marion has the most followers between the ages of 45-54 (26.2%), Wiebke between the ages of 35-44 (32.5), and Svea between the ages of 25-34 (39.4%). Most of our followers are women, with an average of 78.03%. The advantage of our quite small accounts is a very good engagement rate/response rate: we achieved a rate of 35.64% engagement for the survey. The respondents are interested in Scandinavia in principle and have a preference to travel to Scandinavia. For the target group of the DACH region, which informs itself on social media about tourist destinations in Scandinavia, we see the results for our group of followers as representative.

The results provide valuable insights into the following questions:

1. What's your preferred mode of travel?



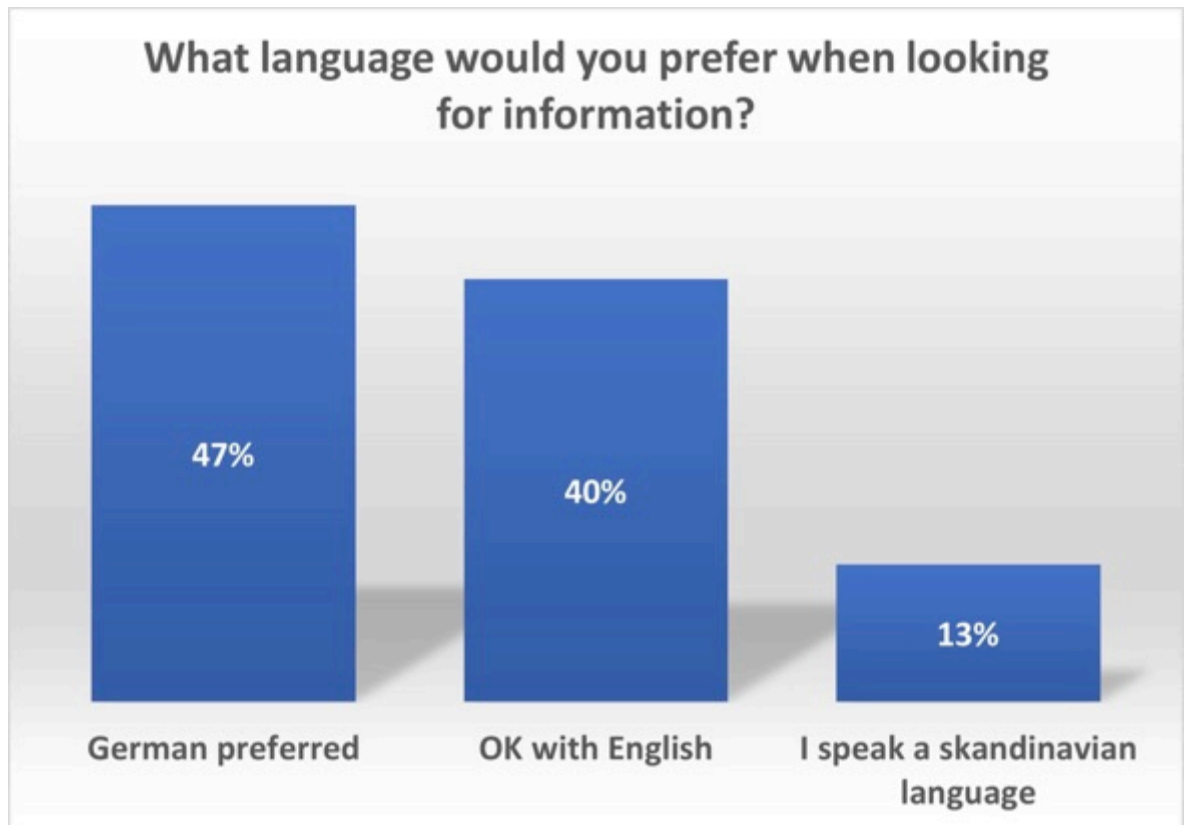
We asked our followers if they would be interested in offers and possibilities for individual traveling in Scandinavia or guided tours from tour operators. The answers were very clear in that point: just 6% of the participants would be interested to book a guided tour via tour operators. This result fitted very much to our own estimation: Tourists from the DACH-Market that travel to Scandinavia are more likely individual travelers. We see a future in addressing foreign individual travelers (FIT). Additionally to tour operators we suggest also focusing on those kinds of travelers.

2. Where do you look for information when planning a trip?



We asked our followers where they go to find out about their destination before they travel. The majority of the respondents (41%) inform themselves about Scandinavia on social media channels or blogs. 39% of the respondents inform themselves online at the websites of the individual destinations. Only 20% inform themselves through travel guides in book format. We can recommend creating a website for the BCR on which the interested tourists for example from the DACH market can inform themselves and all destinations are represented with their highlights.

3. What language do you prefer when looking for information?



For us personally, the language plays a minor role, we speak English very well and several other Scandinavian languages. However, the majority of our followers from the DACH region want to find offers in their native language. While southern Sweden, for example, already works with German-language websites here and several of the Finnish regions we visited also offered German-language websites, we still see some catching up to do in this area in northern Sweden. German is the largest language in Europe and tourists from the DACH_Markt also make up the largest share of tourists in Sweden^{3*}. An investment in this area could therefore be well worthwhile.

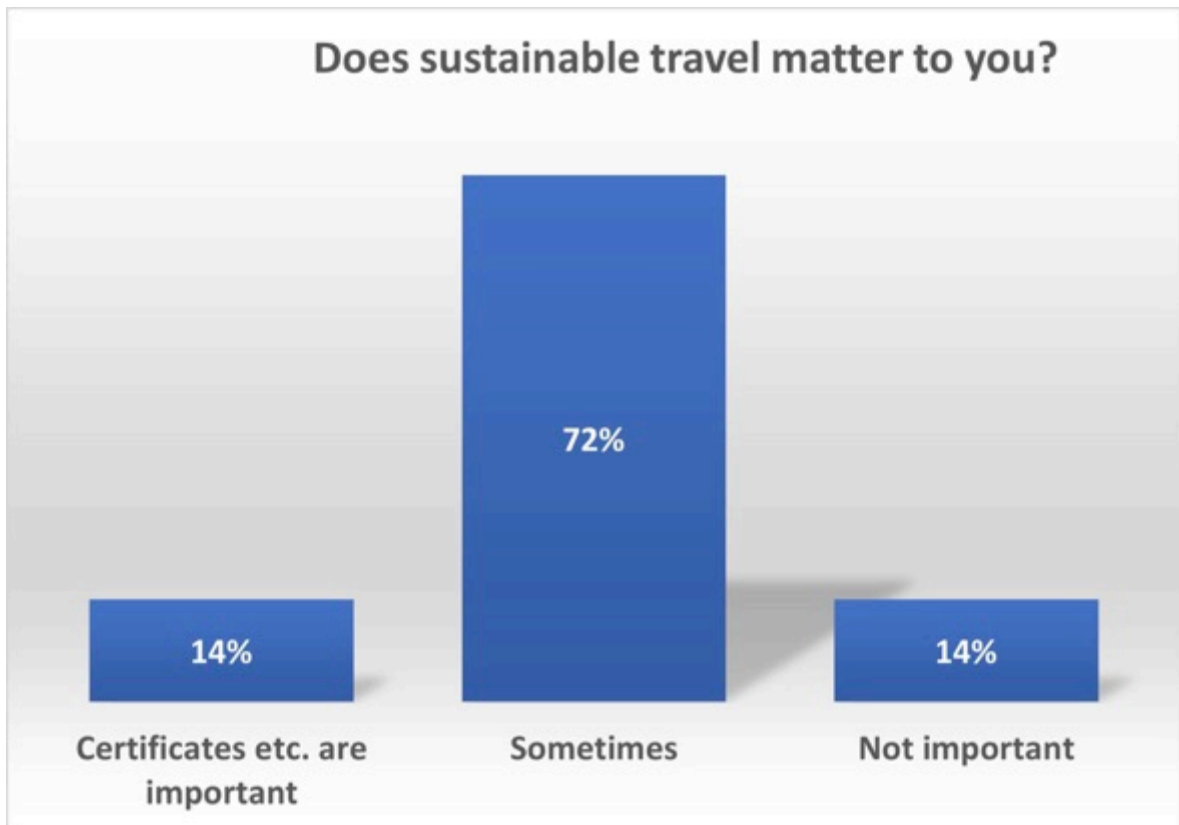
³ [Main origin for inbound tourism in Sweden 2021 | Statista](#)

4. Would you prefer destinations/locations with information in German?



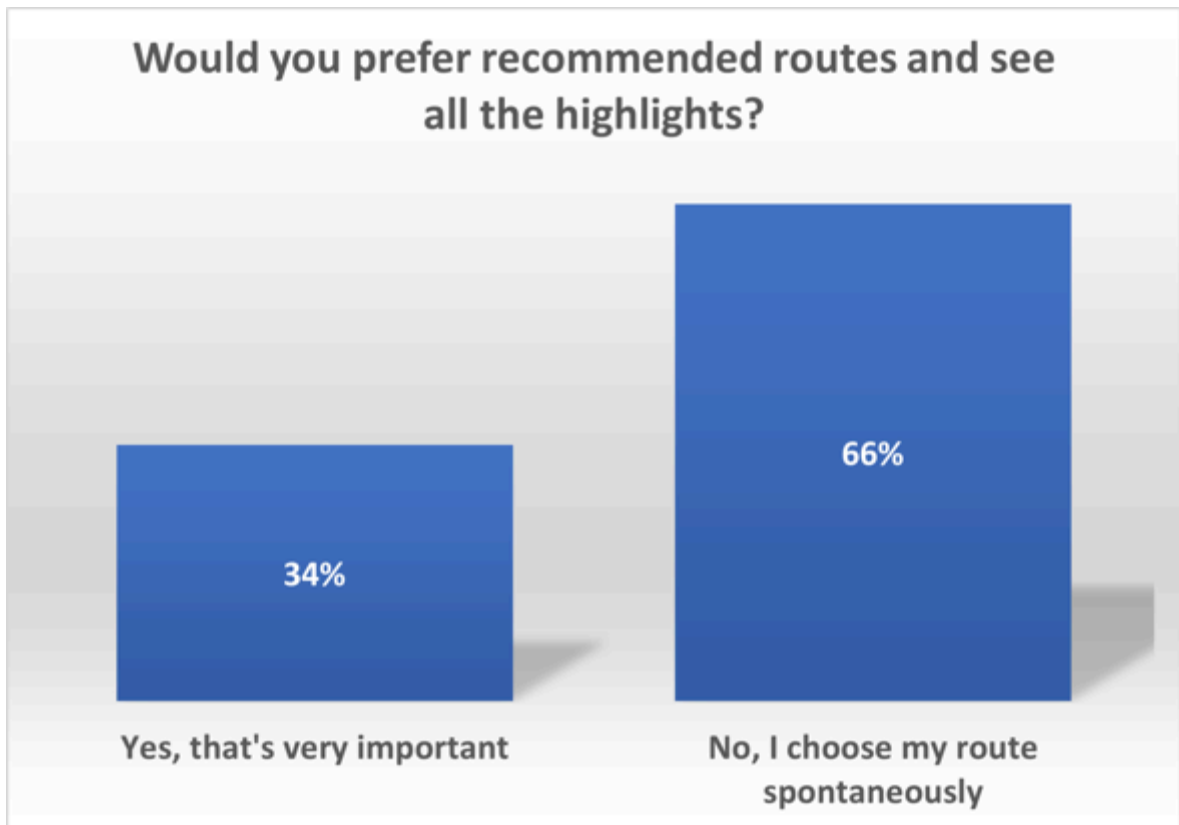
We also asked our followers if they would avoid visitor destinations if there was no information in German. Only 39% could confirm this. For 61%, it would be okay to visit a vacation destination as long as there are offers in English.

5. Does sustainable travel matter to you?



We asked our followers how important sustainable travel is to them. 14% of respondents feel that sustainable travel is extremely important. This group pays attention to certificates and awards when choosing travel destinations. 72% of respondents sometimes pay attention to them. Another 14% have no interest in the topic at all. It is good to note that awards and certificates do not play a role for most of the respondents, as there are different certificates in the various countries. So making a new certificate that is cross border reliable would be pretty complicated. However, many of our respondents are interested in and support sustainable travel. We would therefore also put a focus on sustainability in the marketing.

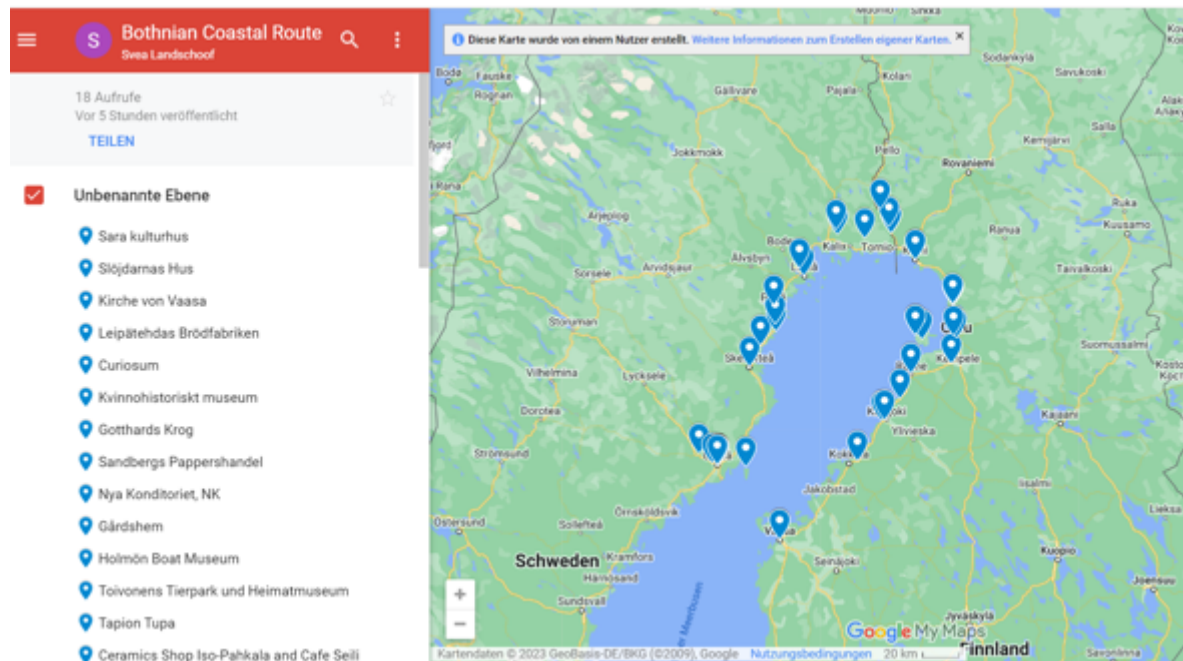
6. Would you prefer recommended routes and see all the highlights?



The last question was again somewhat related to planned tours. Most of the respondents seem to belong to the FIT group. They do not want a planned route with highlights that they have to visit. Individual travel is what interests them and how they want to travel. Nevertheless, for these trips, for example, one could offer a social media channel to the BCR and point out possible destinations along the BCR there. A general website would also be conceivable to help FIT plan their trips and also get them to desired locations.

Maps

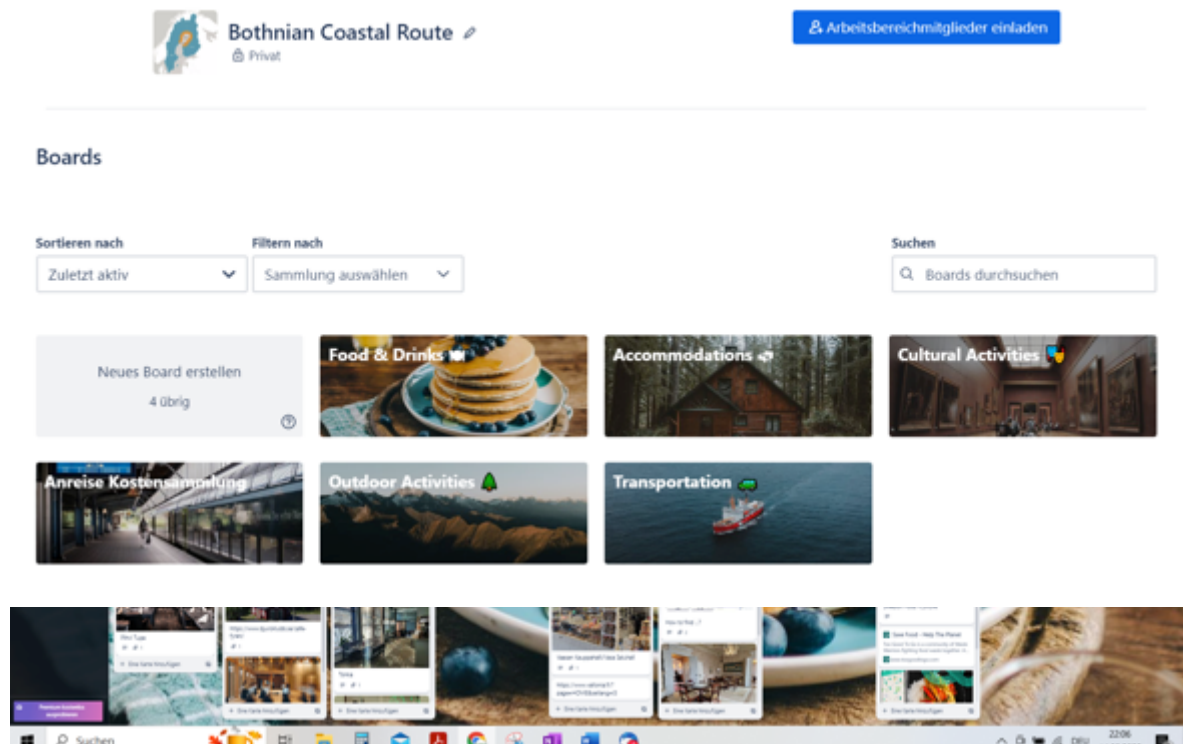
Before and during our trip we worked with the help of a map. Prior to the trip, we planned the rough route with a custom Google Map to which we added all our stops along the way while we were traveling the BCR.



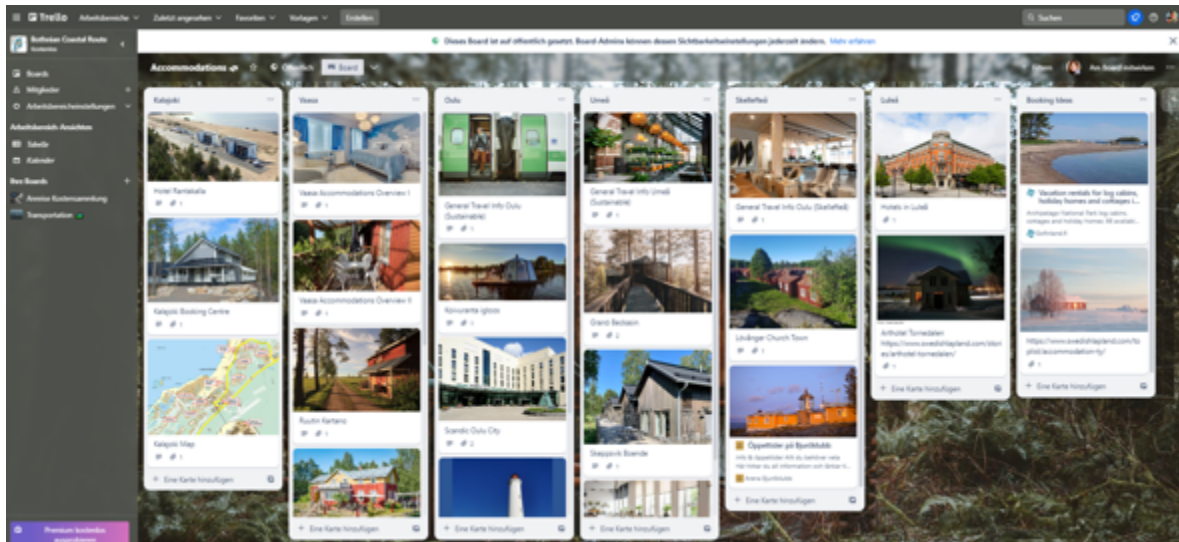
https://www.google.com/maps/52.5363758,13.5050927,14z/data=!4m2!6m1!1s1ZvKVipUdUUhHROjbnQFGj0bK_xt6NAI?entry=ttu

Trello Boards

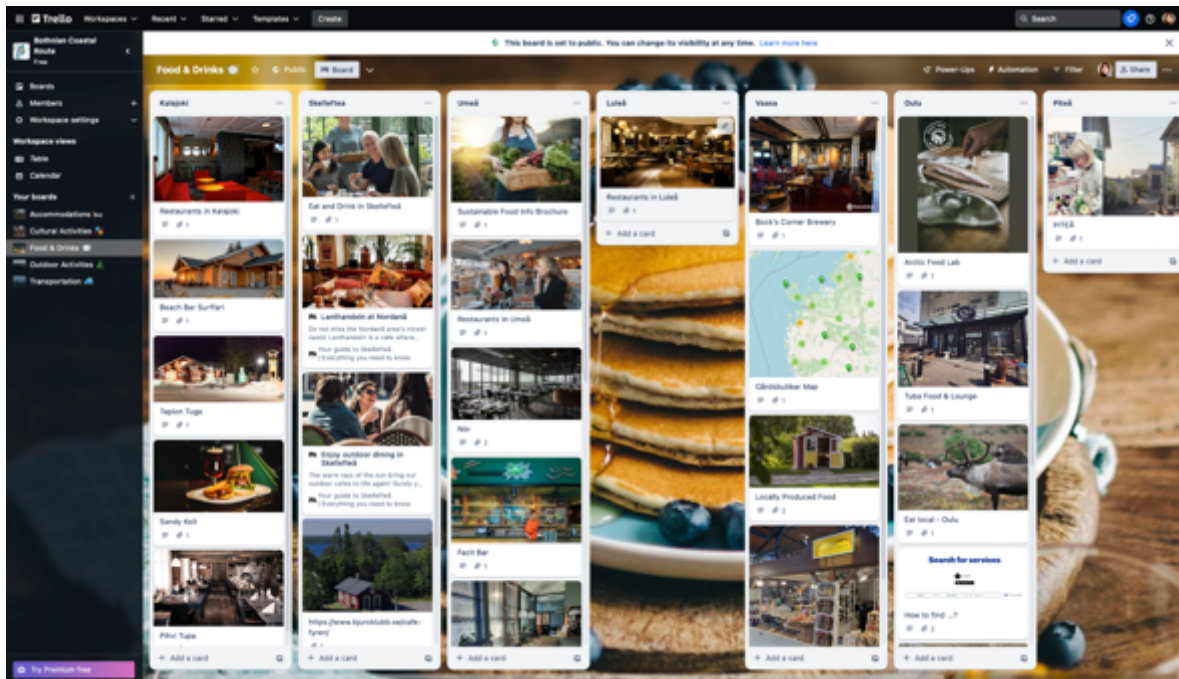
We organized our ideas by using Trello boards. Separate boards with maps were created for each planning area to create links, information, and a general overview. And it was a helpful overview during our trip.



Accommodation: <https://trello.com/b/LlelxcNt/accommodations-%F0%9F%9B%8F>



Food and Drinks: <https://trello.com/b/beZsOgjn/food-drinks-%F0%9F%8D%BD>



DISCUSSIONS AND SOLUTIONS

There were a lot of positive but also negative experiences we had during our journey. We'd like to discuss that.

A - TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

As mentioned in chapter A, we have been convinced by the method of traveling along the Bothnian Bay in an electric car. No other means of transport will give this freedom and mobility. Accessibility has been an issue we have been discussing throughout the trip. Due to the characteristics of the Nordic regions, distances between exciting sights and destinations are far and complicated and nearly impossible to reach by a bus system. Local bus systems are not prepared for international guests and are not connected between the cities around the bay.

The charging of our electric vehicle created situations where our tension turned into laughter - when we fought with another new charging app and experienced slow loading times and insufficient knowledge of dedicated service personnel. It's sad if you are forced to pause your journey and get stuck for hours at a roadside gas station with a low-quality buffet offer and no bench outside near the station with fresh air and a resting place.

Generally the Europacar briefing and the Volkswagen car instruction give a good idea on where there is loading stations. The actual trip required trial and errors.

This factor deserves a whole chapter on a website or a folder: how to navigate around the Bothnian Bay with an electric car and enjoy very good food and accommodation beside safe and solid charging stations. We believe this information will ease the planning and travel and inspire and encourage visitors to take a road trip.

B - FOOD AND ACCOMMODATION

FOOD - Pros and Cons regarding Sustainability

Eating as sustainably as possible on a trip means eating mainly local food. The range and variety of options along the route is wonderfully rich and filled with hidden gems.

As a tourist, you are rather spoilt for choice here! The Bothnian Coastal Route is an attractive destination for all who want to experience an inspiring journey in the cuisine of the North.

Travelers wanting to eat as sustainably as possible on a trip want to focus on local or traditional food. In order to be able to ensure this throughout, they have to take a lot of initiative, do careful research in advance, and be always on task during the trip itself.

For us, it was not easy to make clear decisions in advance of the abundance of tempting information and stimulating pictures. It is easy to get lost in the wide range of information and links to individual participants. Especially if those who have never traveled the Bothian Coastal Route before, could need some support.

Therefore, clear selection criteria for the search function on websites, the possibility of activating certificates, and map sections for spatial classification proved to be very practical. In this way, tourists can see at a glance where and what can be eaten locally or whether a separate journey to the suggestions makes sense or is feasible.

In this way, tourists can see at a glance where and what can be eaten locally or whether a separate journey to the suggestions makes sense or is feasible. Tourists from the DACH region prefer individual travel and love to plan by themselves, but follow recommendations. This assessment, based on our experience, is also reflected in the small survey we conducted which is also presented here in the report.

A concise guide with both an overview of traditions and mapped recommendations can save a lot of time before and even more during the trip.

During the trip, it is hard to stay motivated to keep looking for sustainable and local food in case of unexpected deviations from made plans. And then stop at the nearby fast food vendor.

For us, it was difficult in places to consistently reconcile the connection of charging time and charging stations with the desire for local food. It was disappointing when we tried to eat local food at a motorway service station.

Although the traditional food along the BCR offers predominantly meat and fish, the vegetarian in our tour group was offered wonderful and interesting dishes with fresh herbs and mushrooms from the region. Most surprisingly was the vegan menu at a restaurant with attached fish smokehouse at Jävre Fyr.

We talked to chefs, who loved to create new dishes based on traditional food. So interesting - even for the meat-eaters!

When being on a road trip, vegetarians/vegans often end up with rather disappointing offers, as they are served everywhere in the world. Once it had to be a quick decision, and it was unfortunately easier to get sophisticated salmon rolls with Kalix Ljörom than sandwiches with local cheese products, chanterelles, berries or wild herbs.

Our Suggestions

Both restaurants and snack bars should have the courage to develop new ones from Nordic traditions. We were able to experience this on-site and were thrilled. Eating vegetarian/vegan can be fun when unique and made with local ingredients.

Showing and promoting pictures of traditional dishes together with photos of vegetarian/vegan advancements with a Nordic twist.

Include overview food maps in a prominent place on the websites.

Offer a guide for local food with information and tips as a practical print or download in English or German. For example, many tourists from the DACH Raum have no idea about Mesimarja or the healthy meat of reindeer. Having a kind of glossary and translation is inspiring and motivating.

Creating awareness among providers to cater varied for vegetarians/vegans: Throughout the DACH region, there is a trend towards a meat-free diet, and this is happening in all age groups^{4*}. In Germany, for example, the number of

⁴ <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/173636/umfrage/lebenseinstellung-anzahl-vegetarier/>

vegetarians has been rising steadily since 2019 and will reach 8.12 million in 2023. In Austria, the number of flexitarians in particular, has increased sharply⁵. In Switzerland, the number of vegetarians and vegans is slowly rising⁶.

ACCOMMODATION - Pros and Cons regarding Sustainability

Most accommodation providers have made it their mission to be able to offer sustainable options. They communicate their efforts in this area transparently and also as a distinction. As a tourist, finding and booking sustainable accommodation is easy. The websites of the destinations offer a wide range of sustainable accommodation. There is no need for platforms such as Airbnb or booking.com, but there are quite a few people who are not aware that bypassing these platforms is part of sustainable travel.

There are beautiful places to stay along the Bothnian Coastal Route. Modern hotels, but also culturally and geographically significant accommodation.

It is the latter that deserves a prominent place in public communication. For they show the culture, untold stories, and the development of a region that is still abundantly unknown.

For example, the overnight stay at the Arthotel at Torne Älv was an enrichment for all senses. We gained deep insights into the culture and the connecting elements of the two countries. The memories and stories we have come to hear in this place want to be heard!

We were surprised that in Raahe, you can even hear the stories of the people connected with the Lange House told by talking pictures. Spending the night there must be an experience that we hope will soon be possible for people without Finnish language skills.

⁵ <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/709815/umfrage/anzahl-der-vegetarier-veganer-und-flexitarier-in-oesterreich>

⁶ <https://de.statista.com/themen/3360/vegetarismus-und-veganismus-in-der-schweiz/#topicOverview>
<https://www.diegruene.ch/artikel/politik-maerkte/vegetarier-veganer-schweiz-swissveg-studie-447190>

Our Suggestions

The large hotel chains describe their sustainability concepts in great detail. They are rightly awarded certificates and eco-labels.

We noticed, however, that the uniqueness of the respective accommodations is not clear in the rich offer. They are the ones who allow deeper insights into the region.

This may be communicated more clearly, because this region, in particular, has so much to tell! It should be more prominently visible for all that, for example, an overnight stay in Löfvånger Church Town is like a journey into the history of the region around Skellefteå. Or that in Kemi, you can see northern lights lying in bed and combine the stay with a ride on the Icebreaker Sampo.

During our trip, we found out that in Raahe, you can even be told the stories of the people connected with The Trade House of Lang. Technical connections between pictures and online videos make spending the night especially exciting. We hope this will soon be possible for people without Finnish language skills.

C - CULTURAL HERITAGE

Before the trip, we wanted to plan as detailed as possible. Unfortunately, we had to understand that the tourist season in the region of Kvarken/ BCR ends around the 13th of August. So we were too late in the season for some attractions, like *Svedjarn Ost* where we expected to learn about the typical cheese production, an essential cultural heritage in the Västerbotten region. We would have liked to visit other things, but we couldn't find information about the places and heard that these places exist after we conducted the trip, like "Älgens hus" in Bjurholm. For other things like museums, there was simply no time to really visit them, although they were on our list.

We already shared our experiences; now, we would like to take the time to give some advice.

Skellefteå:

The SARA Kulturhus is an impressive building and an architectural and technical masterpiece. We couldn't find any visible information about the house and its

interesting and unique concept. We doubt that tourists who spontaneously stop by understand what kind of house they are in. We would like to advise that the house should have some signs, audio guides, or other offline ways to inform. It would be tragic not to tell visitors about the unique place they are in. The same problem we saw in the cute and interesting area of Nordånå. Outside of (northern) Sweden, the concept of church towns is completely unknown, and we see a need to inform the visitor better about this place.



We were surprised that we found the "Exploratoriet" and liked that this museum tries to focus on sustainability and address smaller kids as well as parents.

Piteå:

The "Jävre fyr" could be a point of interest for tourists, especially from the DACH-Market. Unfortunately couldn't we find anything about it in our research before the trip. After the visit there, we found also just a few information about the place (on a Swedish Wikipedia page). In our opinion is this a clearly underrated place that needs to be named in the BCR.

Visitors from the DACH market prefer still information in German,

although they could also deal with information in English, but having no real information at all is just sad. Maybe we could have gotten some information at the restaurant, but unfortunately, it was closed during weekdays.

Luleå: We were surprised by the nice and relaxed atmosphere in Luleå. Positive was that for example, the floating sauna was advertised a little later on the social media page of the destination Luleå. We also noted positively§ that you could lend

audio guides even in German at *Gammelstad*. It is always nice to provide information in different languages and make them accessible to a lot of people. Were we not that happy with the Website of the destination - it wasn't so easy to get proper information about the city and the surrounding area. We are sure we missed out a lot and would like to come back and get a better overview of the things you could do in and around Luleå.

Haparanda/Tornio: The road situated at the Finnish-Swedish border is already a touristic route along the Torne river and known by many visitors from the DACH



market who want to travel to the North Cape in Norway. We experienced a touristic well built road with a lot of things to discover along the road. We read about the art museum project online and were very curious about it. First, we have to admit that we were a little disappointed to see that the build isn't even ongoing. Nevertheless the whole project sounds incredibly interesting and could be a highlight for the whole region - once it's ready. We hope that this museum will be a constant for tourists on the BCR.

Kemi is a small town, but we liked the cute snow hotel. The fact that you are at the northern tip of the Gulf of Bothnia should be brought out more in our opinion. It is a unique location that would especially interest visitors from the DACH market. In the region, it is possible to see the sun rise and set over the sea. As in many areas and places, auroras can be observed through a glass roof from your bed. The combination of glass roofs at the hotel rooms, of a snow hotel and icebreaker, is exciting for Tourists. We would suggest an expansion of the tourist infrastructure in this area.

Since it does not seem sustainable to cool a room with snow in summer, we asked the management and were surprised to find a sustainability concept. For example, the water of the hotel is heated with the heat of the cooling aggregates. Water is saved, and the sustainability concept is also otherwise present in the hotel. Along the route, we recommend this place more to highlight and possibly also focus more on hiking trails to advertise this northern point of the Baltic Sea more, because we could not find any information about the surrounding area. Especially exciting is that there is a campsite right next to the hotel, so people who are traveling with the caravan/van can stay there without any problems.

On the route to Oulu, we stopped at the small town of **Ii** to find a nice and picturesque place with a great sustainability story from their website. Sadly, the art walk by the lake seemed abandoned and the tourist information sign was run down and not very inviting. The website should be updated also.

The city of **Oulu** impressed us very much after the rather smaller cities on our trip. Full of people, lively, young, modern, exciting architecture, and an active cultural scene. We especially liked the fact that the city already seems quite well developed in terms of tourism. There were maps with possible walks on the island of Pikisaari, for example. Perhaps it would be



It would be nice to describe the architecturally exciting buildings for tourists in more detail. This could be for example through the use of QR codes in front of the individual buildings. This would then also be easily possible in several languages.

We thought here, for example, of the lighthouse, or other historic buildings of the city. Unfortunately, the central square of the city looked a bit like a construction site and the beautiful market hall was also not very busy. We hope that these little things will come to life a little more until the city becomes the Capital of Culture.

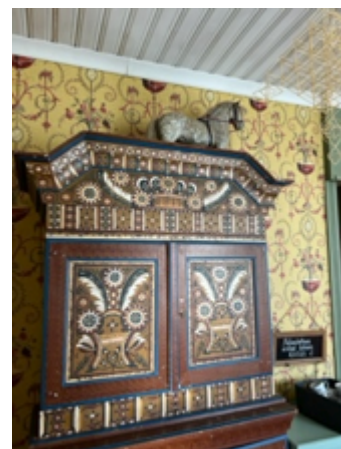
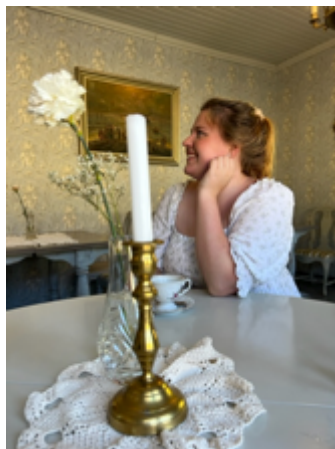
Hailuoto

Late at night we arrived at the beautiful Island of Hailuoto. We spent the evening and the next morning at the easternmost point of the island in a hotel located directly at the lighthouse of the island.



The whole place is very special and has a wonderful atmosphere. We were stunned by the old lighthouse that was still in use. We were really sad that we had to leave so soon and the fact that there is still an old corn mill in use and traditional food seems to play a role as well as there is even an art museum on this island really wants us to come back as soon as possible.

Raahe was not necessarily on our itinerary. But as is often the case on road trips, unexpected places sometimes turn out to be big surprises. The architecture of Raahe's old town reminded us of cities in northern Germany, and the project by Paasi and his wife is simply breathtaking. His innovative ideas to maintain and revive the history of the place are modern and



refres
hing.

There were few offerings in English, or other languages. However, the place is a jewel that should be made accessible to foreign tourists. We highly recommend naming this place as part of the Bothnian Coastal Route and also promoting it. The combination of the history of the Baltic Sea, trade, architecture and last but not least the wonderful people who give life to the place is more than exciting for visitors from the DACH market.



In **Kalajoki**, of course, the great beach plays the main role.

We were looking for cultural highlights in the region, so we were surprised to find the beautiful ceramics factory. By the way, we became aware of it via the destination's website.

The cultural uniqueness of the place seems not pointed out enough. We would suggest developing the region in this area with a little more for tourists' available information and to draw attention to highlights in this area. On the website, a few exciting museums are named, but further information (opening hours, languages, exhibitions) are unfortunately not available in English. Perhaps this area of communication could simply be reworked a bit.





Kokkola was a short and rather unplanned stop on our tour and we can't really say that much about the city, but we would definitely recommend focusing on the bilingualism of the city. Coming from a place where you basically just speak one language in a country this is extremely interesting to see. It would be nice to have some guided walks through the city, where you can see the bilingualism and perhaps learn something about the different very interesting looking buildings. In our short research about the place, we couldn't find such an offer.

We could not visit **Vaasa** as planned. This made us seriously sad and we hope to be able to visit this beautiful city in the near future and also discover its cultural richness.

Umeå has already been awarded the title of European Capital of Culture once. Not without reason, because the city has a lot to offer culturally. It looks very chic and modern and offers its inhabitants a rich cultural life. We particularly liked the art museum. Not only was admission free, but all age groups were catered for in this museum. There are regular free workshops for children and families, guided tours with artists, and very different exhibitions. We also find it particularly sustainable that there is a focus on indigenous art. The cultural richness of the region is reflected in the exhibitions. The architecture plays with the surrounding nature. An absolutely recommendable place for culturally interested tourists.



However, the sculpture park did not convince us. The artworks were not well signposted and the park was not in a good condition. Since the park is advertised on the official website of the destination, we recommend overthinking the concept and also making information about the artworks more accessible.

We didn't have the time to have a certain look at the surrounding area. We would have liked to visit places like “Slöjdarnas hus” in Vännäs where you can buy traditional sámí jewelry and art.

Fortunately, what we managed to do was visit the island of **Holmön**. The crossing was a bit adventurous for people who are prone to seasickness, but the island and especially the boat museum were worth it. The Boat Museum is a true treasure and we agree that this museum must be made accessible to international visitors. In addition, the special nature of this place must be communicated beyond the borders of Umeå. We had no idea about such a rich culture on such a small Baltic Sea island in Northern Europe. Discovering so many different types of boats, being able to touch them and hear the story about them is absolutely unique. However, this information is only available to people who speak Swedish on a good level. A translation into English is mandatory, German would be desirable.



D-Landscape

As stated earlier, due to our tight schedule and the scope of our trip, there was no time to fully experience nature and do outdoor activities along the BCR. That was definitely something we were sad about, as there is so much to do and see in the area. Generally, we recommend ensuring that hiking trails, viewpoints, and other points of natural interest are always marked clearly (at least in English) so that it's easy for tourists to find and enjoy them.

In our example, that would have been highly appreciated at *Ostvikfjärdens Havsstrandängar*, where we couldn't find any information in English, nor any hiking trails to the other viewpoint that were drawn into a map. Although the landscape looked beautiful and the variety of birds could be a favor for many nature enthusiasts from the DACH market, there was unfortunately nearly no way to get information about this place. Our Google research didn't lead to information as well as just walking around and trying to find hiking trails to the other obviously visible viewpoints. In the future, this could be a fantastic picnic place close to the highway and an easily accessible hiking adventure for families with kids or bird enthusiasts.

RESUMEE

The Bothnian Coastal Route is an area with a rich cultural heritage, a fascinating landscape, and the possibility of an exotic and interesting border crossing between two fascinating countries in the northern part of Europe. While discovering a geographically exciting area, we felt welcome consistently. And we crossed borders that create more connection than separation.

During our journey along the Bothnian Coastal Route, we collected many experiences. This region is geographically interesting and varied. There were a lot of contrasts during our trip. We traveled through rural regions and wild nature, then immersed ourselves in vibrant city life, before descending to a peaceful island. And, of course, it was an unforgettable experience to do a round trip around the sea.

It was interesting to learn about the Arctic Way of life and to listen to new stories. We found it particularly exciting to be confronted with a language whose content cannot really be derived from English or any of the other Scandinavian languages.

In our discussion to align our tour with the Sustainable Development Goals⁷, we believe to have identified the following 11 out of the 17 SDGs:

- (3) Good Health and Well-Being
- (4) Quality Education
- (5) Gender Equality
- (6) Clear Water and Sanitation
- (7) Affordable and Clean Energy
- (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth
- (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities
- (12) Responsible Consumption and Production
- (14) Life below Water
- (15) Life on Land

⁷ <https://www.globalcompact.de/en/our-work/sustainable-development-goals>

The high level of responsible sustainability practices was evident daily and in various locations through the provision of services, waste separation, the use of eco-friendly resources, and informational signage along the way.

We have accumulated a wealth of experience and valuable insights on sustainable travel during our journey. We'll be sharing these as uplifting news on ScandinavianTravelCodex.com and as an engaging article on Skandinavien.live.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend making the Bothnian Coastal Route “a brand”. Traveling there means exploring and experiencing the stunning nature, food, and culture of two countries. Tourists have several experiences at the same time, Finnish and Swedish characteristics, and various experiences for all senses (food, culture, exciting stories). The BCR should be marketed as a *bucket list destination*:

If you haven't been there, you are not done getting to know the Nordics. This branding could also contribute to a clear differentiation between the High Coast, Kvarken, and the Bothnian Coastal Route.

2. We recommend that information about an itinerary along the BCR be prepared and made available not only to tour operators, but to everyone (both foreign individual travelers and tour operators). Destination websites can offer simplified visualizations, maps, and pre-selections to help everybody with planning a trip. Combining the offer into a route based on the individual destinations is time-consuming and sometimes demotivating.
3. We recommend promoting and making the area accessible for sustainable tourism and attractive travel routes all year round. Each season has its own tastes and experiences that are delightful. Lots of them are quite unknown. Furthermore, due to the different federal states, the summer vacations - the main travel season - in 2023 was from 22.06. to 12.09. The most populous state of North Rhine-Westphalia makes the beginning every year. The second most populous state, Bavaria, will bring up the rear. When Bavarian tourists set off for the north, they have to deal with closed gates from mid-August. In Austria, the school-free days also run from July 1 to September 10. Only in Switzerland do the school vacations in some cantons end towards the end of August.

4. We recommend promoting the area for longer stays. This region can not be recorded in transit. In social media, Scandinavia is associated with slow living and mindfulness by many German-speaking users. And slow traveling can't be an undertaking like we did. Far too much remained undiscovered and the processing of the experiences could not succeed at all.
5. We recommend a kind of handbook for the region along the Bothnian Coastal route. Tourists should get valuable information about the culture and nature at a glance. Just like the Handbook of Finland, it could summarize what to experience, explore and taste in each season. The research before and during a trip should become as simple as possible. The information offered could be so much easier and clearer.
6. We recommend promoting pictures and stories from the region: How does traditional food and modern vegetarian/vegan style taste? Showing that it is possible to travel up north without a plane. Focus also on night trains and ferries.
7. We recommend working with influencers: As we have worked with Instagram for many years now, we can say that influencers are often asked what they eat, where they are, and what they do. Even micro-influencers like us get around 60 to 100 private messages per day. When we tell stories about, e.g., a trip to the Arctic during January and only going by public transport - as e.g., Meermond did in January 2023 - this is fascinating, and people love to "be with them" in stories or posts. Followers do not only follow online, but also in real life. Some of them do travel the same route, as we found out after a cooperation trip to Småland. Followers send pictures and are thankful for advices.
8. We recommend telling stories from and about the region: Still lacking is the awareness that great stories, hidden gems, and secrets lie dormant along the Bothnian Coastal Route. When Emma Bessi published her book "Tante Emma und der Schnee-Express: Wie ich mit meiner kleinen Nichte die Eisenbahn in die Arktis nahm (Zugabenteuer mit Kind)" (Conbook, September 2021), this was totally surprising and new. This woman took the night train and went to the Arctic with her niece. Her book was successful and she made a second trip. There are so many adventures in this region that should be told. Blogs, websites, and authentic films on YouTube invite you to follow along and have your own adventures.

Especially after the pandemic, many Germans have discovered the desire for freedom in vanlife. The urge for individual discovery and adventure is unbroken. Still lacking is the awareness that great stories, hidden gems and secrets wait to be discovered along the Bothnian Coastal Route.

9. Blogging on different websites: German articles and guides for sustainable traveling around the Bothnian Coastal route (as for example soon on Skandinavien.live). German is a very important language, even many tourists use English websites and articles. (see our survey)

6. ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Matthias Aßmann

Matthias is German and the founder and owner of Mandel Media AB, with offices in Sweden, Finland, and Germany. Mandel helps Scandinavian brands and destinations to get introduced and established in the DACH markets.

Matthias was co-initiator of Scandinavian Outdoor Group in 2000 and represents the Association to outdoor media in all Europe. In this function, he is in charge of the Scandinavian Outdoor Award since 2005 and started Scandinavian Outdoor Award TRAVEL together with NordicMarketing in 2018.

Mandel has ownership also in the following projects: Adventure Academy Sweden/Denmark/Germany, Skandinavien.live, Scandinavian Travel Codex, and Scandinavian Media Day. Mandel collaborates in several projects with Business Finland in Sweden and Germany. [LinkedIn Profile](#).

Wiebke Jahn

Wiebke Jahn was born in Berlin and spent most of her life in the capital region of Germany. She loves to travel and took various opportunities to live, work and study abroad. She studied, for example, in Spain (Universidad de Oviedo). She appreciates the Arctic lifestyle and loves the climate and culture of the Arctic region. The contrasts in her CV (southern Europe vs. Northern Europe, capital city vs. arctic country life, natural sciences vs. literature) help her be entirely creative and tell stories about the differences between her life in the arctic region and Berlin. Wiebke Jahn holds a master's degree in both German language and literature and Biology. She also studied Spanish language and literature as an alternative subject as well as basics in psychology and communication studies. She worked at different universities and institutes, such as the „Max-Planck-Institute for demographic research“ and "Freie Universität Berlin".

Due to her contrastive education in languages and natural sciences, she understands to explain complex scientific problems like the impact of climate change in easy and understandable words for her audience. She has two very strong sides: An analytical and a creative side. Wiebke works as well as a translator, and she writes articles for magazines like „Nordis“. She also works as

an influencer, and she sells her pictures as well as posts or articles for various websites and works together with various travel destinations. She is also a part of Kreativ Heimat a network for public relations (PR), social media, marketing, brand collaborations and content production.

Svea Landschoof

Svea was born and raised in Northern Germany, only a stone's throw from the border to Denmark, and was therefore highly influenced by the Scandinavian culture early on. She always loved to travel and explore new places, so it was no surprise that she immediately moved abroad after finishing high school. After working in Canada's capital for one year, she returned to Germany to pursue her biggest passion: photography. Svea attended the international photography program at the „Berliner Technische Kunsthochschule“ (University for Applied Sciences) and later transferred to the „University of West London“ where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Photography). She was awarded first-class honors due to her exceptional achievements during her studies. She also holds a degree in media design, focusing on graphic design (print and digital), communication design, and marketing.

Besides working as a photographer and videographer, Svea loves sharing her life between Germany and Scandinavia on various platforms (Instagram, YouTube, Podcast). She combines lifestyle content with her passion for nature and the outdoors and wants to inspire others to live a more mindful, sustainable, and slower life.

Marion Sorg

Marion Sorg is from Regensburg in the southern part of Germany. She holds degrees in German language, literature, and Geography, which today are equivalent to a master's degree. She worked in various functions and gained international experience: She was a project leader of a Europe-wide project and worked both in schools in Germany and Denmark.

Both private and in her function as Meermond she loves to travel and explore the Nordics.

Due to her professional background, she understands the cultural-geo-graphical and climatic challenges of the present and is able to translate them into understandable words. Marion writes and publishes in various media. Since working with German television, she also works as a translator (Danish to German) and as an influencer.

Her German website *Meermond.de* is filled with stories, travel inspiration, and photos about Scandinavia.

Thank you.
