

Naturum

Visitor Centres in Sweden



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Preface

This report describes Naturum, a successful model for dissemination and marketing of places where nature is the main attraction.

The report is one of the outputs in the project Attractive Hardwoods.

Attractive Hardwoods aims at developing the hardwoods tourism in the three countries involved in the project, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. It addresses measures to increase business opportunities through a sustainable tourism and by improving and strengthening the cooperation between various national and international players operating in the tourism sector. The project's overall experience will be summarized in a common strategy aiming to increase cross-border tourism in broadleaf forests around the southern Baltic.

More information about the project Attractive Hardwoods can be found at the project's web page:

<https://www.skogsstyrelsen.se/en/attractive-hardwoods/>

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About Naturum

A 'naturum' is a Centre to receive people who visit a natural area. It is the Swedish equivalent of the 'Visitor Centers' of other countries. The purpose of a naturum is to describe, explain and build an understanding of the values of an area as well as to inspire people to spend time and experience nature there.

A naturum consists of one or several buildings and provides information, both indoors and outdoors, about the natural, cultural and experiential values of the area and about the impact that human beings have had on the landscape.

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) owns the rights to the word 'naturum', which is a registered trademark. Today there are 33 naturums in Sweden, naturum Blekinge is one of them. As the owner of the naturum trademark, the Swedish EPA decides which visitor centres may use this word in their names.

A naturum is preferably to be located in or near an attractive natural area of great value for nature conservation and outdoor recreation. This often means national parks or well-frequented natural reserves, but it could also be other natural areas which have great value for outdoor recreation and/or are close to population centres.

Naturums are to offer exhibitions, programme activities and outdoor nature interpretation in their premises or nearby. They are to be manned with welltrained staff and must have generous opening hours. Entrance to naturums owned by the central government is to be free of charge.

The target group is members of the general public without special knowledge. The presentation of information in naturums must be objective and impartial as well as pleasant and inspiring. The buildings and the information must be aesthetically appealing and of high quality. The construction methods and materials used and the operation of the facilities must be environmentally friendly.

The Swedish EPA is the owner of the central-government naturums and contributes financially to their construction and operation. These naturums are

usually managed by county administrative boards. The authority responsible for other naturums may be a municipality or a foundation.

The authority responsible for a naturum has a duty to monitor and evaluate operations. The findings made are to be reported on a regular basis to the Swedish EPA, which has overall responsibility for promoting, developing and inspiring naturum operations in Sweden.

In 2016 the 33 naturums in Sweden had 1,7 million visitors. Almost 30.000 of them where schoolchildren. Naturum Blekinge had 58.000 visitors last year. More than 2.000 of them where schoolchildren. Naturum Blekinge is open for about 180 days under the period of April to November.

Guidelines for naturums



One important task of nature conservation is to inform the general public about nature, especially natural areas which are protected under the Swedish Environmental Code. Naturums are an important tool in this work.

Naturums are centres to receive people who visit a natural area. It describes, explains and builds an understanding of the values of the area, and it inspires visitors to spend time and experience nature there.

Purpose

A naturum is to show the way into nature. It is to give visitors a pleasant experience which provides them with knowledge about nature, with an understanding and a feel for all of its richness and with the inspiration to visit nature, spend time there and experience a deeper connection with nature as a result of their visit. In other words, a naturum is to serve as a gateway to nature in general and to a specific natural area in particular.

The purpose includes the organisation of exhibitions, programme activities and other nature interpretation in order to:

- enhance knowledge about the values of a natural area from the perspectives of natural science, natural and cultural history, culture and experiences to be had;
- give visitors a deeper understanding of the natural area by explaining to them what has happened, what is happening now and why it is happening;
- give visitors guidance about possible sights, experiences and activities in the area as well as suitable ways of getting there;
- motivate/influence visitors to behave in the natural area and make use of it in such a way that its values are preserved;
- create an understanding of the need to preserve and tend to nature in general and the specific area in particular;
- stimulate interest in nature, nature conservation and nature studies, and help meet various educational needs;
- provide knowledge from the perspective of cultural history about how human beings have used and impacted on nature;
- disseminate knowledge about the protected natural areas and other outdoor-recreation destinations of a region.

Target group



The main target group of naturum operations is members of the general public of all ages without special knowledge. School teachers and pupils are an important group. Appropriate translations are to be provided so that those who do not speak Swedish may also acquaint themselves with the content of naturums. The premises, operations and information are to be accessible to people with disabilities to the largest extent possible.

Location and design

Initiation. The establishment of a naturum may be initiated by local or regional actors or by central-government entities.

Planning. Any decision to designate a new naturum must be based on a comprehensive plan for information about the area concerned, including explicit objectives for nature interpretation. In addition, the documentation

underpinning a decision to establish a new naturum must contain estimates of investment and operational costs as well as a plan for financing these costs.

Location. A naturum is preferably to be located in or near an attractive natural area which has great value for nature conservation and outdoor recreation. This often means national parks or well-frequented natural reserves. The naturum should normally be an easily accessible part of the main entrance to the area.

Opportunities outside naturums. In the choice of location, consideration must be made of opportunities to exploit or develop attractive and easily accessible target points, nature paths and other forms of outdoor nature interpretation in the field which are located close to the naturum.

Function and quality. A naturum must be an attraction in itself through its design and content, at the same time as it must enhance the value and identity of the location or area.

Planning and construction. It should be ensured at an early stage that the content and design of exhibitions will interact well with the design of the building.

Co-operation. Opportunities for local co-operation should be exploited, both with local government and with private organisations and individuals.

Environmental friendliness. The exhibition, the building and their operation must be environmentally friendly as regards materials, operation and construction processes. As a minimum, operations should comply with the requirements for environmental certification under ISO 14001. Central-government naturums should be part of the Swedish EPA's environmental-management system.

Operations

Content. The operations at and in connection with a naturum are to focus on communicating values of natural science and cultural history as well as cultural and experiential values. They may also deal with the need to preserve and tend to nature, with human beings' role in nature and their impact on the environment, with the Right of Public Access and with the provision of

knowledge about local protected areas and other outdoor-recreation destinations.

Character. The presentation of information in exhibitions, programme activities and nature interpretation in the field must be objective and impartial at the same time as it must be pleasant, inspiring and convey a positive feeling for nature. Exhibitions and signs must be designed in an aesthetically appealing manner and the construction methods and materials used must be of high quality.

Manning. Naturums are to be manned and their staff must have appropriate training for their job.

Opening hours. Naturums must have generous opening hours to meet the demand from the general public and from schools.



Entrance fees. Entrance to central-government naturums is to be free of charge.

Outdoor activities. Outdoor nature interpretation must be offered at or near the naturum.

Children. Nature interpretation and other activities adapted to the needs of children must be offered.

Shops and restaurants/café. Product sales and food-and-drink services in connection with a naturum are important components of the total service offering for visitors.

Programme Council. Each naturum should have a Programme Council.

The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union, the Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020.



Attractive Hardwoods is a flagship project under the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region