



Facts

The BEST project – B7 Exchange on Sustainable Tourism – is a joint project between the seven largest islands in the Baltic Sea. The B7 islands are Bornholm (Denmark), Gotland (Sweden, Lead Partner), Hiiumaa (Estonia), Rügen (Germany), Saaremaa (Estonia), Åland (Finland) and Öland (Sweden).

Associated project partners are

- Bornholms Research Centre, Nexö, Denmark
- Estonian ECO-Tourism Association, Pärnu, Estonia
- Gotland University College, Visby, Sweden
- Societé D'Eco-Aménagement, Montpellier, France

The project is supported by the European Union under the Interreg IIC Programme.

This is the BEST project

The Best Project was initiated as a result of the Common Strategy for the B7 islands, which was adopted in Visby in May 1996. The main objective is to promote Sustainable Tourism in the islands. Sub-aims are:

- To create an inter-island cooperation network to promote the development of sustainable tourism
- To establish common systems for codes of conduct, benchmarking and quality control
- To adopt and publish a Green Paper
- To initiate at least three development projects
- To make a B7 contribution to the VASAB and Baltic Agenda 21 processes

Key words for the project activities are:

DEFINITION · POSITIONING · APPEARANCE · NETWORKING

The project has a total budget of 360.000 Euro and a duration of 21 months. In order to take advantage of synergy effects formal agreements about exchange of information have been made with three similar Interreg IIC projects:

- ARCHIBAL (Finland, Sweden, Denmark)
- BTC (Baltic Sea Tourism Commission, Sweden)
- Bothnian Arc (Sweden, Finland)

BEST converence on Rügen

In October 24-25 a big sustainable conference will take place on Rügen. Both participants from the BEST project and from the SUSWAT project will be there and conclude their work with the two B7 Interreg-projects.

SUSWAT concerns sustainable development of the islands' groundwater supply.

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BEST conference on Saaremaa

September 30 the BEST project arranged a conference concerning sustainable tourism. 120 participants from all B7 islands attended the seminar during two days. The main subjects were how to define sustainable tourism, how to position the B7 islands in this area, how to appear on the market and the importance of networking. Through workshops a lot of interesting ideas were documented. February 24 some of these ideas will be discussed with the Gotland participants.



Some facts about the partners. In newsletter No 1 you could read about GOTLAND and BORNHOLM and in this issue ÅLAND and RÜGEN are described

Rügen

With an area of 974 km² (including the island Hiddensee) Rügen is Germany's largest island and has 76 707 inhabitants. The island is linked to the mainland and old Hanse-town Stralsund by a bridge called Rügendamm which is 2,5 km. Rügen also has ferry connections to Sweden, Denmark, Lithuania, Russia and Poland. The international ferry traffic terminal is located at Sassnitz-Mukran. The urban center and capital of district county Rügen is Bergen, a town of 16 400 inhabitants. The economic base is tourism, the service sector, building industry, small- and medium-sized enterprises, agriculture and fishing industry.

The island's growing number of visitors reached nearly a million in 1999. There are over 500 hotels, guest-houses, appartements with a capacity of about 40 000 beds and 20 campingsites, which offer holidays on Rügen.

Special emphasis and policies have been made to prevent the development trends towards masstourism and traffic intensification. The landscape is still intact



due to the dedicated efforts by the environmental and nature preservations institutions. Well known are the two Nationalparks "Jasmund" and "Bay-Landscape of Western Pommerania" and the Biosphere reserve area "South-East-Rügen". The total protected area comprises 527 km².

Åland

The Åland Islands form an autonomous, demilitarized and Swedish-speaking province of Finland, situated strategically on the main ferry routes between the capitals of Sweden and Finland. The archipelago consists of more than 6,500 islands and skerries, with a total land area of 1,527 km². The largest island is called "Fasta Åland" (the Main Island) where 90 per cent of the population live. The only town, Mariehamn, situated on the Main Island has about 10,500 inhabitants. Nature conservancy is fairly well developed.

Åland has its own conservancy law, and there are special regulations for protecting wild flora and fauna. The long-standing basic industries in the Åland economy have been shipping, agriculture and fishing.

Tourism has been an expanding branch ever since the 1960's, but it is strongly seasonal. In pace with the increase in tourism, primary industries have declined, though they are still of importance. It is thanks to the ferry services that tourism has undergone such vigorous expansion. The number of arrivals considerably exceeds a million per year, and tourism creates many jobs. Hotels and guest-houses offer some 2,600 beds and there are more than 2,000 cottages for hire. Many visitors arrives in their own yachts or motorboats in



the summertime, when they can moor at any of the almost 30 marinas in Åland. The environmental awareness among visitors and hosts has increased in recent years. Many tourism operators in Åland offer a more environmental service. There have even been discussions about developing some kind of minimum environmental requirements for tourism operators. The importance of tourism is obvious, but it is necessary to develop the industry in a sustainable way in order to remain an attractive destination.

DO YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION?

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