

The only pilgrims' path with sauna and sea views everyday! A Nordic Heritage Route



St. Olav Waterway
Finland

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Geographical/territorial context: St. Olav Waterway is a newly established pilgrimage route from Turku, through the Finnish Archipelago and Åland Islands. Part of St. Olav Ways, pilgrim paths to Trondheim, Norway and an official Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. It combines hiking paths and utilises free public ferries to island hop between Finland and Sweden, with onward connecting paths to Norway.

Strengths/assets: The pilgrimage route has the potential to be used as a multidimensional development tool. It inherently answers many of the challenges facing tourism development in the archipelago such as spreading the tourism demand, creating higher value tourism and sustainable tourism that can be served by small-scale tourism developments and services that benefits the local, rural economy.

Challenges: Until now the development has been supported by short-term project financing, but long-term viability needs a more permanent structural management model. As the path opened in 2019 and thus has only had one Covid-free season which has hindered development of cultural events although more effort has been placed upon virtual interpretation which can be also used in the future. Development of international market and sales through tour operators has been greatly slowed or postponed.

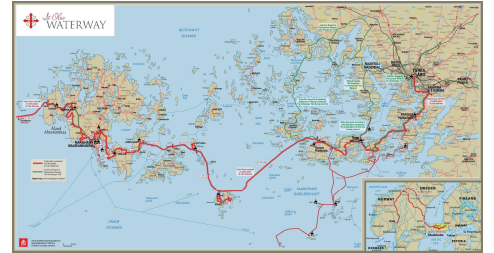


1 Identified Stakeholders, Establishment of the Hub



- * Archipelago Centre/ Biosphere Area
- * Digital Heritage Hub
- * Consortium of local NGOs

2 Co-development of the Action Plan



The co-development of the action plan happened through the following workshops:

- Participatory Workshops (online in March 2021) and on Åland Islands; Kökar, Mariehamn, Jomala and Finnish Archipelago; Nagu and Korpo during autumn 2021 and spring 2022.
- The workshops were a combination of invited stakeholders and open public events with a wide range of stakeholders. The outcomes will help to define a new national handbook for establishing and managing pilgrimage routes.

3 Established Action Plan

The main focus of the Action Plan is to broaden the responsibility to different local organisations and simultaneously widen the scope of related activities from pilgrimage to a wider context of storytelling interpretation, local engagement, cultural events and integration of food providers in the wider nature-based tourism service provision of the area.

Action 1: Arts and festivals. Yearly cultural events connected to St. Olav Waterway
Specific aim: Using new and existing cultural events to add a storytelling dimension to the path and a yearly reoccurring cycle of activity, minimum of four per year.

- Achieved Activities:**
- Establishment of St. Olav's day music and food festival 29.7 established 2021
 - Exhibition about pilgrimage and Olav Haraldsson summer 2021
 - Two art exhibitions, wooden and landscape sculpture about theme of saints.
 - Musical pilgrimage which can be performed a public events and old people's homes featuring local and medieval music from locations along the path 2022.
 - A new local pilgrim's choir that can perform to groups and at events 2022.

Action 2: Local Food
Specific aim: Make local foods more accessible to walkers

- Achieved Activities:**
- A food route of 40 self-service direct sale farm kiosks, making the services more accessible to walkers and cyclists. Established 2021
 - Three restaurants selling pilgrim menus . Established 2020
 - Rural accommodation stocking food provisions for walkers or serving meals or breakfast where there is no normal meal provision for guests. Established 2022

Action 3: Creative interpretation for pilgrims
Specific aim: Cooperation with all local archipelago museums on a common theme of middle-ages during spring and summer 2022.

- Achieved Activities:**
- Cooperation with all local archipelago museums on a common theme of middle-ages
 - Some of the material is accessible outside or digitally as the walking season is outside of the main tourism season.
 - Two church have 360 video guiding of historical and architectural features. Again, most of the churches are closed outside of the tourism season.



Sustainability Beyond RURITAGE

- New cooperation partners in multiple European countries and sectors leading to new ideas and potential new future collaborations.
- Continued development of cultural and musical events.
- Best practice and local engagement events.
- Identification of new international markets and engagement with those through live streamed events during Covid.
- Challenges – sustainable management, development and financing of the trail.
- Benchmarking visit from Ruritage partners NMBU and their stakeholders (Norway) June 2022.