



SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY

Outdoor recreation and nature tourism in protected natural environments



Tips, advice and rules
for organised activities



Natural gems for more people based around outdoor recreation and nature tourism

Nature tourism companies, non-governmental organisations and schools offer a way into our finest natural areas. This is making pristine mountain uplands, hidden ravines and cascading water in Sweden's national parks and nature reserves accessible to more people. Caring for nature can be compatible with large numbers of people experiencing magnificent natural environments if the organisers work with the administrative body responsible for the area.

The goal of protecting natural environments as a reserve or national park is the long-term protection and conservation of particularly valuable areas. The aim of this protection is quite simply to safeguard opportunities for good natural experiences, both now and in the future. Non-governmental organisations, schools and tourism companies offering extended visits and activities in natural and cultural environments with experienced leaders who can communicate information concerning plants, animals and culture create added value and security for visitors during their stay. When natural and cultural areas become attractions for outdoor recreation and the tourism and hospitality industry, they also contribute to local development by creating employment for local entrepreneurs.

The challenge for organised outdoor recreation is to find ways of doing this in a way which minimises erosion and disturbance. The impact on natural values can often be minimised through good awareness, e.g. by choosing the right area for an activity or adapting an event according to what nature can cope with. As an organiser or entrepreneur, you should always check with the relevant administrative body when planning your event. The administrative body, which will normally be the county administrative board, can provide you with information concerning experience-related values and other activities in the area, in addition to information on resting areas, shelter from the wind and other matters relating to the organisation of the activity. The administrative body can also provide information regarding what you need to do as an organiser in order to reduce the risk of disturbance.

Using a protected area

The organiser's responsibilities

Sustainability is essential for long-term organised outdoor recreation activities in a protected natural area. What is sustainable may vary depending on the activity, the size of the group, where the activity is taking place and the time of year. It may also vary from one area to another, depending on nature types, species and the aims of the nature conservation.

As an organiser, you are responsible for ensuring that any stays in natural areas affect the environment as little as possible, and for showing consideration both to others taking part in outdoor recreation as well as any other stakeholders. You are also responsible for assessing whether the activity could affect the natural environment to such an extent that it should be reported to the county administrative board for formal consultation. The person or body organising an activity is responsible for what the participants do in the area. Amongst other things, organisers must be familiar with:

- § **The provisions of the Swedish Right of Public Access (Allemansrätten)**
- § **The rules of consideration in the Swedish Environmental Code**
- § **The applicable regulations for the area concerned**





What are the rules?

The Swedish Environmental Code sets out the regulations and framework for consultation and lays down the knowledge-related requirements for organisers regarding the Swedish Right of Public Access, relevant legislation and regulations. The purpose of the area and the type of outdoor recreation activity will determine whether formal consultation and/or a permit is necessary. Contact with the administrative body at an early stage will enable these issues to be clarified.

SWEDISH RIGHT OF PUBLIC ACCESS – SUBJECT TO RESTRICTIONS IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS

It may sometimes be necessary to impose certain restrictions with regard to the Swedish Right of Public Access in order to achieve the aim of protection of a natural area. For example, it cannot be taken for granted that picking flowers or lighting fires and erecting tents will be permitted in a protected area. The general rules of consideration in the Swedish Environmental Code, including the knowledge-related requirements and the precautionary principle, will always apply.

REGULATORY CONTROL

All protected areas are covered by provisions which set out what can and cannot be done in an area. These provisions are always based on the purpose of the protected area. As an organiser, you must be familiar with the rules applicable to the area in which you intend to stay. You must also be aware of the management plan for the area, which sets out how the area is to be managed.

CONSULTATION AND PERMITS

Outdoor recreation activities in a protected area may be covered by the requirements of the Swedish Environmental Code concerning *permits, notification or consultation*. Any activity that could significantly alter the natural environment must be reported to the administrative body for consultation purposes. This requirement also applies to areas designated as 'consultation areas'. There will normally be a *duty of notification* for regular activities and/or visits by large groups of people. In cases where an activity is prohibited or a permit is required, you will need to apply for such a permit. A decision will be made by the administrative body in accordance with the relevant regulations.

The importance of dialogue

The administrative body will be your primary consultation partner in connection with the planning of organised outdoor recreation and nature tourism in protected areas. Dialogue and cooperation at an early stage with other stakeholders are important tools for creating an understanding of activities in a protected area. The dialogue can lead to a common view of the scope and the areas in which organised activities can and should take place. As an organiser, you can obtain information to facilitate and improve your planned activity.

As an organiser, you may need to select areas based on the activity and adapt both your event and your group sizes in order to minimise the impact on natural and cultural environments as well as stakeholders in outdoor recreation. Wherever possible, you should use the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's template to describe the event; see the “Guidelines on organised outdoor recreation in protected natural areas” (*Vägledningen om organiserat friluftsliv i skyddad natur*) in Annex 12. The answers to the questions in the template will provide an overview of how the activity could impact on the environment and can be used as a basis for dialogue with the administrative body. Remember that dialogue may be necessary with others besides the administrative body, e.g. landowners and/or other stakeholders involved in other activities in the area.

Type of impact and the need for consideration

The administrative body may impose restrictions or limit activities depending on the impact of the outdoor recreation and nature tourism and the purpose of the protected area. The tolerance of other visitors and the perception of any changes will be taken into account in the assessment.

The figure below presents an overview of the need for consideration:

NO RISK OF DISTURBANCE OR DAMAGE

Dialogue with the administrative body. Examples of activities: walking, canoeing, swimming, berry-picking

RISK OF DISTURBANCE

Dialogue with the administrative body, possible requirement for consultation. Examples of activities: regular or major events, large groups of 30 people or more and/or activities.

SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE

Dialogue based on regulations, consultation, or permit from the administrative body and landowners. Examples of activities: overnight stays for a period of several days in the same place, events/competitions.



The Swedish national parks brand

Experiences offered in protected areas should be characterised by sustainability, high quality, added value, accessibility and safety. The use of quality marks can demonstrate that the stakeholder is serious in maintaining quality and carrying out sustainability work, which in turn can generate added value with respect to customers. A number of such marking schemes are available on the market.

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency offers organisers the chance to use the *Swedish national parks* brand. You can apply for a user agreement if you would like to use the 'gold star' symbol for Swedish national parks in your marketing. The agreement is entered into with the administrative body, which will assess your activity before the agreement is drawn up.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Consultation with the supervisory authority under Chapter 12 Section 6 of the Environmental Code and permit from the landowner or from the supervisory authority and the landowner. Examples are activities in particularly sensitive areas, competitions or events which could considerably alter the natural environment.

ACTIVITIES FOR WHICH A PERMIT IS REQUIRED

Permit from the supervisory authorities and landowners. Examples of activities: fires, camping, cycling, riding and large and regular events.

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

Dispensation from the supervisory authority and landowners. Examples of activities: digging, off-road driving, tree-felling, breaking of branches, building of camping areas or hides.

Five brief questions

What opportunities are there for me as an organiser?

As an entrepreneur, there is now a good chance that you will be able to operate in protected areas. However, as with all stays in natural areas, you will also be subject to certain obligations. You can get the most out of your activity and at the same time contribute to the protection of the natural environment by establishing a dialogue with the administrative body.

What responsibilities do I have as an organiser?

Those responsible for planning and carrying out one or more activities have an obligation to show consideration by having a good awareness of nature, the environment and human health, and must be able to take account of this in the planning of an outdoor recreation activity. You are also obliged to be familiar with the rules applicable to the area.





What is the difference between dialogue and consultation?

Both statutory consultation and voluntary dialogue involve an exchange of information between the administrative body and the organiser. Establishing a dialogue at an early stage is important so that the activity can be organised and implemented in line with the purpose of the natural area and so that you can obtain information regarding what the area offers. The administrative body is entitled to require consultation to take place in accordance with the Swedish Environmental Code for certain areas or activities. It is the administrative body that determines the scope of the consultation.

When is an event considered to be organised?

An organised activity is considered to take place when a teacher or leader for an organisation/company plans to carry out a trip involving participants in accordance with a predetermined plan/itinerary/route. Organised activities may include:

- Non-governmental organisations/non-profit making organisations (communities, scouts/guides, Swedish Outdoor Association, climbing clubs, etc.)
- Public sector (foundations, schools, childcare, etc.)
- Commercial (nature tourism, entrepreneurs and industry organisations, etc.)

How can I find out about the area and the administrative body?

In accordance with Section 21 of the Ordinance on Area Protection, the county administrative boards and municipal authorities are responsible for administrating state and municipal reserves respectively, unless the responsibility has been transferred to another body. For contact information and regulations and management plans for an area, see the website of the relevant county administrative board.

More information:

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, swedishepa.se

Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, havochvatten.se/en

The County Administrative Boards of Sweden, lst.se

friluftsforskning.se/en (a national project for knowledge about outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism in Sweden)

Sweden's National Parks, sverigesnationalparker.se/en

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It is a positive development that more people are being given the opportunity to experience protected natural environments. Tourism enterprises, outdoor recreation organisations and educators create the necessary conditions for more sustainable outdoor recreation. Organised outdoor activities and nature tourism can enhance the quality of experiences and improve the opportunities to offer visitors enriching experiences. However, the event must also be carried out within the framework of the rules that apply in the protected area. The manager responsible for the area concerned can provide more information.

