



Regional Master plan

JÄMTLAND HÄRJEDALEN TURISM

Interreg



Co-funded by
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Introduction

This regional masterplan for cycling tourism was developed by Jämtland Härjedalen Tourism through the project Sustainable Arctic and Peripheral Biking Tourism. The material is based on experiences from the project as well as discussions and workshops with stakeholders, politicians, officials, and associations in the region. It was collected during the project period between 2023 and 2026, with a focus on autumn and winter 2025/2026.

History of Cycling Tourism



Cycling tourism has existed since the 19th century, and since the second half of the 20th century, several types of cycling tourism have developed and grown steadily worldwide. It is an important part of the visitor economy in many parts of the world. Globally, it is worth approximately \$118 billion annually, and already in 2012 in Europe it was valued at €40 billion annually.

Cycling as an activity gained major popularity in Sweden in the 1930s. At that time, the first vacation handbook was also published, offering suggestions for destinations and how to pack and dress for a cycling holiday. Since then, the popularity of cycling has fluctuated, and today it has a natural place in everyday life and, in some places, during leisure time. Cycling can be done everywhere in Jämtland Härjedalen and is a popular recreational activity. It is also something people enjoy doing together in groups, especially building and maintaining mountain biking trails. This has resulted in many good local cycling areas developed and maintained by residents who want to ride. The development is driven by locals, and the goal is not necessarily to create a sellable tourism product.

As a concept, cycling tourism includes many different types of cycling. These different types attract different target groups with varying conditions and motivations. In Jämtland Härjedalen, there are conditions for all types of cycling, but as a tourism phenomenon, mountain biking in various forms has primarily become a reason to travel here. In Europe, the most common form of cycling tourism is touring—cycling to reach scenic locations, enjoy beautiful views, and move through landscapes. Visitors may also travel to ride road bikes in groups as training, use gravel roads to explore the countryside, or use cycling as a means for shorter day trips.

History of Cycling Tourism



Of the approximately 30 ski resorts in Jämtland Härjedalen, several are investing in cycling tourism during the summer. Cycling tourism gained visibility in the 1990s when Åre hosted the Mountain Bike World Cup in 1995 and the World Championships in 1999. During the 2000s, Åre Bike Park was developed, and in 2011 Lofsdalen followed with its own investment in the summer season and cycling tourism. A few years later, Funäsfjällen joined with mountain bike trails and two lift-served cycling areas in Tänndalen and Ramundberget. Larger facilities have developed their offerings to attract external visitors, utilizing terrain, lift systems, surrounding services, and strong brands to create reasons to visit during the snow-free season—primarily through mountain biking, including downhill parks, flow trails, and marked routes. This has enabled destinations to retain more staff year-round and maintain services beyond the winter season.



Current status

In Jämtland Härjedalen

Locally, cycling has developed over time in many villages in Jämtland Härjedalen, driven by volunteers building trails and organizing group rides. Cycling plays an important role in public health and regional development.

Another concept that has emerged as a potential travel motivator is gravel cycling—using forest and gravel roads. In several places, such routes have been marked and marketed to attract visitors and extend their stays.

Because Jämtland Härjedalen is a large region, local needs vary, and therefore different solutions are relevant in different areas.

Östersund

Östersund has strong potential for cycling tourism. There are several areas where locals have built flow trails and mountain biking paths. The roads are well suited for road cycling, and there is also a hill with lift-served biking. Currently, cycling tourism exists mainly through event participation, with a primary audience of elite enduro and downhill cyclists.

In recent years, several gravel routes have been launched around Östersund to attract visitors and encourage longer stays.

There is a need for consolidated information about cycling offerings. Currently, cycling is perceived as “underground” due to a lack of professional development, which can lead to conflicts. It is difficult to find information about where to ride, difficulty levels, rentals, etc. There is a lack of tourist-friendly materials such as maps, signage, downloadable routes, and clarity. A stronger and more structured offering with supporting services is needed.

Stakeholders in Östersund are largely enthusiasts who would welcome more support and organization to enable sustainable development, prioritize safety and quality, and make it easier for new businesses to establish. Östersund has the potential to act as a hub combining cycling and services.



Current status

Åre

Åre has established cycling tourism in several areas, particularly around Åre village, Storlien, and Järpen. It is one of the region's most developed tourism areas, with many companies focused on cycling. Many residents have moved there for outdoor recreation, leading to heavy use of nature and occasional conflicts, especially involving cyclists. Uncertainty about where cycling is permitted affects both individuals and businesses.

Companies are hesitant to promote riding outside official parks due to unclear regulations and responsibilities. There is a desire for clearer guidelines from authorities and the creation of an industry organization to coordinate issues such as landowner relations, agreements, conservation, and trail standards. Maintenance responsibilities are also unclear, contributing to conflicts due to wear and tear.

Berg

Berg has strong potential as a cycling destination. It offers mountain biking in Åsarna, lift-served cycling in Persåsen, and strong gravel potential. Stakeholders aim to collaborate on packaging offerings and creating a shared information platform, improving communication and sustainable development.

Current status



Härjedalen

Härjedalen includes mountain areas where established cycling tourism exists, particularly in Funäsfjällen and Lofsdalen, with emerging development in Vemdalen. Lofsdalen has won awards for best trail biking in 2024 and 2025. Both Lofsdalen and Funäsfjällen have worked on official trails with permits and landowner agreements, where users pay for trail access.

Challenges include attracting enough paying visitors and dealing with a short, summer-focused season. Despite agreements, conflicts with some landowners remain, limiting development and trail expansion. Stakeholders want improved cooperation, structured dialogue, and shared approaches to maintenance and land use.

Other municipalities

Other municipalities also have potential. Many cyclists already pass through during summer, but formal tourism development requires committed stakeholders.

Summary



Challenges

Challenges vary across the region. In mountain areas, competing interests—land ownership, public access, reindeer herding, tourism, hunting, and fishing—create conflicts.

Cyclists are sometimes perceived negatively and blamed for environmental wear, despite no evidence that cycling causes more damage than other activities.

Another challenge is low visitor numbers and low willingness to pay, as paid trail access is still a relatively new concept.

Vision

Stakeholders see value in greater collaboration through a shared platform and possibly an industry organization to improve coordination, communication, and standards.

The vision is increased understanding and alignment around cycling, leading to profitable, sustainable year-round tourism, prepared for climate changes such as shorter winters and longer snow-free seasons.



SUSTAINABLE ARCTIC AND PERIPHERAL BIKING TOURISM -HANKE (SUB)

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