

# NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR HIKING TRAILS



MED FINANSIERING FRÅN



In association with Swedish environmental protection agency, Swedish tourist association, Nature tourism entrepreneurs, Federation of Swedish farmers, Church of Sweden, Network of lowland trails among others.





## About me

Trail expert, pathfinder and guide book writer.

Outdoor education.

Trail manager Skåneleden (Skåne Regional Council)

Consultant development/management.

Mindtrekking.

Dalby-Skåne.

WHW to GR 11.



## Hiking trails in Sweden

- Regional lowland trails.
- Pilgrim routes.
- Local paths.
- National parks and nature reserves.
- Mountain areas.
- National trails only for cyclists.



# NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR HIKING TRAILS

## QUALITY CRITERIA

- Physical trails
- Organization
- Experience
- Service
- Communication



## TOOLBOX

### Implementing quality criteria Supporting documents

- Manual for signposting
- Sustainability
- Facilities
- Contract templates
- Economics
- Difficulty rating



A national system of criteria and tools for developing sustainable, quality-assured and attractive hiking trails for visitors and residents.

Open and accessible to support and help everyone who works with developing and managing hiking trails.

Contributes to higher quality and a common standard for hiking trails over time.



[Nationella friluftsmålen](#)

Hornborgasjön, Västergötland  
Fotograf: Lukasz Warzecha



## Why quality criteria?

- More and more people reach out to nature. The increased visitor pressure on trails means greater wear and tear in some places. There needs to be an organization in place that can handle this.
- Work on trails is characterized by temporary solutions and selective measures. There is a need for long-term, on-site commitment to secure trail management over time and that the necessary resources are used efficiently.
- Visitors are often not used to walking on trails. This means demands on maintenance levels, signposting and toilet service have increased.
- Landowners demand that everything is kept in order as the number of trail visitors grows. Written agreements create clarity between stakeholders, prevent conflicts and future threats to the Right of Public Access (Swedish Allemansrätten).







- Visitors demand hiking experiences that are safe and attractive. The importance of quality assurance as a marketing argument increases as visitors will often choose routes that can offer this.
- Working with a trail must involve many parties to function well. The complexity and depth of this work requires coordination between relevant administrations at municipal level, regions, destination companies and responsible authorities. Landowners, residents and the hospitality industry need to be involved in any efforts.
- Information about a trail needs to arouse interest, guide visitors and assist with relevant facts to facilitate hiking planning. Correct information that reflects real conditions is important, not least for visitor safety.
- Investing in trail development benefits businesses connected to the trails. Growing companies lead to new jobs and increase attractiveness. Prosperous societies lead to better public health. We also know that an attractive outdoor life is a strong incentive for settling in a municipality and starting/moving a business there.



## Introduction to quality criteria

- The criteria describe what is important in developing a sustainable, quality-assured and attractive hiking trail.
- The criteria should be read as a recommendation that can support and inspire long-term improvement work. You implement criteria according to resources and the ambition for the hiking trail.
- The criteria will be presented in a digital process tool with several supporting documents. The contents provide opportunities for in-depth study and good examples of how to implement the criteria.
- The criteria link to both global goals and national outdoor goals. This connection is clarified in the digital process tool.
- The criteria state that accessibility should be taken into account in all work with the hiking trail. Every change in all areas is an opportunity to make the trail accessible to more visitors.
- The criteria state that sustainable material choices should be made with the least possible negative environmental impact.
- The criteria refer to lowland trails during the season without any covering of snow. We refer to guidelines for the state mountain trails for people working with mountain trails.





# Physical trails

What characterizes a hiking trail that is attractive and safe for visitors?



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



## Trail Markings

- Visitors should be able to follow the trail in both directions without other aids than the trail markings.
- Trail markings should be discreet but clear.
- Trail markings should be placed together on both sides of each marking object (tree/post).
- Trail markings should be in an even flow without being too close together.
- Use orange for trail marking. Colour code NCS: S 0580-Y50R. If several trails run together, mark long hiking trails at the top. Distinguish other trails by name, number or other colour.
- Remember to take different types of colour blindness into account when choosing a colour, and feel free to use a trail name or logo to create contrasts. Thematic trails such as the Pilgrim Trail, may need additional trail marking requirements.
- The distance between trail markings should be adapted to the terrain. For instance, in forests, visitors should always be able to see the next trail marking. The distance between respective trail markings **should not exceed 250 meters**.
- Don't forget to get permission from owners before placing trail markings on places such as power cable poles, lampposts, railings or fences.



# ORGANIZATION

What you need to do to develop a sustainable hiking trail

## Features

Trail coordinators should be available for longer trail systems. The trail coordinator is responsible for coordinating work with longer trails that involves several trail managers/trail administrators.

The trail administrator must be available for all trails. The trail administrator is the main person responsible for the trail or trail sections and has written agreements with landowners. The Trail manager is responsible for operating and maintaining the trail or trail sections.

Trail partner organizations, associations, landowners, companies and locals who are engaged in the work of the hiking trail.

## Quality standards

The trail coordinator should have developed a quality standard for the trail and secured this with all trail partners. The quality standard must clarify target groups, purpose and ambition with the trail.

It must also be clear what characterizes the trail regarding trail quality, marking and signposting, how the trail is to be maintained and quality assured, what the visitor can expect in terms of service and experiences and how the trail is to be communicated.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS





# Allocating responsibilities

The division of responsibilities between the trail manager and other trail partners should be stated in the trail's quality standard and be regulated in written agreements.

The division of roles in trail cooperation should be decided by the highest instance of each organization.

## Content should show who is responsible for:

- Strategic development
- Production of supporting documents
- Legal issues
- Coordination of work efforts
- Inspecting the trails
- Digital management
- Website
- Agreements with landowners
- Insurance liability
- Care of the trail with its objects
- Dialogue with visitors and other stakeholders
- Map production
- Marketing efforts

All trail partners should appoint a contact person who is responsible for their organization's commitment to the trail manager or trail coordinator.





## Maintenance plan

- The trail manager should produce a management plan for their part of the trail.
- The management plan should account for how the trail manager intends to solve ongoing management and report any need for special measures.
- It should be clear what is to be done, how it is to be done, when maintenance measures are to be implemented and who is responsible for execution. The plan should also define what should be done before the trail's main season.
- In cases where the trail manager has delegated parts of the assignment to another party, there should be a written agreement between them that describes the scope of the assignment, content, insurance liability and any payment.
- Supervision and measures taken should be documented and reported to the person responsible for the management plan with its operating budget.
- Everyone who works practically with the trail should have completed maintenance training.





## Inspection and follow-up

- It is important that the trail coordinator or trail manager follows up on quality criteria regularly and that long-term work is carried out with quality assurance to maintain the quality of the trail.
- This requires a well-functioning system for follow-up and inspection of the trail.
- The trail should be checked annually before the season opens. Faults and wear must be documented and fixed.
- There should be an established method for measuring the number of visitors to the trail and linking this to appropriate management measures.
- The trail should be inspected i at least every three years by a party other than the trail manager.
- Defects and wear that appear during inspection and that need to be remedied should be reported to the trail manager no later than six months before the next season opens. This is so that the necessary improvement measures are carried out before the main season starts.

## Finance and budget

There should be a dedicated trail budget for the relevant trail partners, which must be in accordance with the ambitions in the trail's quality standard.

## Authorization and assignments

The trail manager and trail partners should have a clear and long-term mission from their own organization.



## Landowners

- Written agreements should be in place between the affected landowners along the trail and the trail manager.
- There should be a separate agreement for objects such as campsites and car parks or drinking water.
- The trail manager should have a current landowner register.
- There should be a dedicated resource responsible for contacts with landowners.
- Landowners should be offered the opportunity for dialogue with representatives from the trail manager such as an annual landowner meeting.

## Insurance

Non-life insurance that aims to compensate landowners in the event of a forest fire as well as a liability insurance that protects landowners against claims for damages should be available. Insurance for workers should be available. Who is responsible for insurance should be stated in the division of responsibilities document.





## Digital management

- The route of the trail and its objects should be entered in the municipality's GIS system and reported to the National Land Survey. This is to ensure that the trail is taken into account in community planning. The data should be updated annually so that current conditions are reflected in digital material.
- The trail manager or trail coordinator should ensure that current conditions are communicated digitally on the website, in apps and in printed products.

## Laws

- Trail partners must follow the laws, rules and regulations that affect work with a hiking trail. When planning work along the existing route or a new route, you must get information about what applies to the specific location to get the necessary permits or exemptions before work begins. Examples are consultations with the County Administrative Board for new paths, when protected areas are affected or necessary building permits from the municipality.
- The trail manager must be able to show that the necessary permits have been obtained.



# Experiences

What forms visitors' experiences along a hiking trail?





## The landscape

The trail should guide the visitor through a varied landscape with habitat typical of the area.

## Environmental interests

The trail should pass areas with high environmental interest, nature formations and places that are distinctive and sights such as national parks, vantage points and waterfalls. Avoid areas susceptible to wear or disturbance.

## Cultural values

The trail should pass through cultural environments and places that are worth seeing, such as ancient monuments, buildings with a special character and older local environments.

## Themes

A trail could develop a theme that highlights the area's history or offers visitors other values. This could add more requirements and recommendations. For example, Pilgrim trails may have requirements for historical connections and places for spiritual reflection along the trail. Pilgrim routes that have historical connections with city centres means that certain criteria such as paths, surfaces and intensively developed environments may be adapted to the needs of the theme



*Svartedale, Bohusleden, Bohuslän  
Fotograf: Lukasz Warzecha*



# COMMUNICATION

What should information addressed to visitors about a hiking trail contain?





## Web information

Information about the trail should be collected and available on the web and should contain:

**Description of the trail:** Current trail status, trail route, trail entrances, distance indications, trail grading, trail marking and signpost in the field, accessibility-adapted trail sections.

**Security:** Level of fire risk, equipment, mobile coverage, map with offline functionality, local weather forecast, contact information, error reporting, hunting season, wild animals.

**Visitor responsibility:** The Right of Public Access or area regulations such as nature reserve rules, sensitive areas, the visitor's responsibility for waste management.

**Service:** Drinking water, toilets, parking spaces, regional public transport, accommodation both commercial and camp sites, food and restaurant, guide services, luggage transport.

**Experiences:** Description of what experiences visitors can expect, as well as environmental and cultural values in the area. Information about when conditions are good for hiking on the trail.

## Trail grading

Use the national grading system for hiking trails developed in the national framework for hiking trails.

## Language

Information on signs, printed matter and website should be available in Swedish and English as a minimum.



# SERVICE

What characterizes the content of eat-stay-do offered along a hiking trail?

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



15 LIFE ON LAND





# Toilets

- Toilets should be located adjacent to trail entrances and campsites.
- The toilets should be available around the clock during the trail's opening hours.
- Routines for supervision of toilets should be regulated in the maintenance plan.

# Drinking water

- There should be an opportunity to refill drinking water at least once a day along longer hiking trails, preferably next to campsites.
- The place for drinking water refills should be marked in the field.
- Water quality should be checked in accordance with guidelines from the relevant municipality's unit for environment and health.

# Public transport

- The trail's start and end points should be accessible by public transport for longer hiking trails.
- If possible, all trail entrances should be connected to a bus stop.





## Overnight stays

A longer hiking trail should offer at least one overnight stay per stage. This can be a commercial accommodation such as a hotel or a free campsite/shelter.

A campsite should include:

- A fireplace that follows the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's guidelines.
- Access to water for putting out the fire
- Access to firewood
- Toilet
- Shelter or equivalent
- Flat surface for putting up tents
- Clear instructions for how visitors should handle their waste, the visitor is always responsible for their own waste.
- Information at the campsite about the current fire risk level.
- The site should be secluded and offer a positive nature experience and be accessible by a motor vehicle only for maintenance personnel and landowners.

For longer hiking trails with the ambition to attract target groups that demand a higher level of service, each stage should offer at least one type of commercial accommodation. The distance from the trail should not exceed 3km.

For short hiking trails that want to attract groups that demand a higher level of service, commercial accommodation should be offered within a maximum distance of one hour by car.





## Doing

Implementation.

Web application.

Tutorial for Tourism trails.

Difficulty rating.

Who will manage the criterias?





For more information about the work:

<https://tourisminskane.com/sv/projekt/nationellt-ramverk-for-vandringsleder>

kenneth.joelsson@skane.se

Koster, Bohuslän  
Fotograf: Lukasz Warzecha

**tourism** in skåne



MED FINANSIERING FRÅN

