



# POWERED BY TOURISM

STRATEGY FOR  
VISITAARHUS

Tourism as a driving force

# Tourism is a driving force

**Tourism is not interesting in itself. That may sound strange coming from VisitAarhus. But it is all the things that tourism drives that create the real value.**

Right now, you have VisitAarhus' strategy '*Powered by Tourism*' in front of you. As the title suggests, it is a strategy designed to break with the perception of tourism as a 'feel-good industry'. Tourism is much more than that.

Tourism is a driving force and helps to tackle some of the major societal challenges we face. Nothing less. When we work together, tourism has the power to create jobs, drive local development across the country, relocation, attract talent, attract investment and foster mutual understanding. Tourism helps people on the margins of the labour market find work, breathes new life into local communities, acts as a catalyst for sustainable transition, boosts the region's local strongholds through conferences and generates local revenue.

That is the core of this strategy: **what can tourism positively influence, and how can we all rally together to make it happen?**

That is why '*Powered by Tourism*' is, to a large extent, an invitation to collaborate. VisitAarhus has a unique responsibility as a unifying and developmental catalyst for tourism in the Aarhus Region, and the strategy will really take off when all the positive forces in tourism work together. The vision is to **use tourism as a driving force to make the Aarhus Region a better place to live and visit**, and the ambition is for tourism to

generate economic activity, development and growth at the hyper-local, regional and national levels. At the same time, '*Powered by Tourism*' must actively contribute to achieving the objectives of the national strategy '*Veje til bæredygtig turismevekst*', the municipal tourism strategies and '*Udviklingsplan Jyllands Østkyst*'.

Challenges and changes are lining up – from geopolitical unrest to the climate crisis and technological quantum leaps. And in the tourism sector, there are rising costs and increasing competition for visitors' favour.

Fortunately, the conditions to succeed are good. The Aarhus Region is a fantastic destination with a wealth of experiences and strong tourism businesses that contribute to great experiences for visitors. Tourism in the Aarhus Region holds great potential, and VisitAarhus can document a high level of professional specialisation and solid results after six years as the joint DMO for seven municipalities. VisitAarhus' role is to **unite, develop and promote the destination**, and with this strategy we are focusing on precisely this and on the choices and trade-offs that follow.

'Powered by Tourism' has been developed with valuable input from tourism businesses, municipalities, partners, board and staff. It is collaboration with precisely this group that will now be absolutely crucial to bringing the strategy to life and creating **community, focus and momentum** in our tourism efforts in the coming years. VisitAarhus is taking on the role of tour guide – and we look forward to the journey with you!



**Nina Smith**  
Chair of the Board

**Pia Lange Christensen**  
Director

## Table of contents

|           |                                                                 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Foreword</b>                                                 |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>A single DMO for the entire Aarhus Region</b>                |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Tourism as a driving force</b>                               |
| 7         | A driving force for residents, visitors, businesses and society |
| 8         | Tourism is a team sport                                         |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Tourism in the Aarhus Region</b>                             |
| 10        | Tourism of the future                                           |
| 11        | Potentials for tourism in the Aarhus Region                     |
| <b>12</b> | <b>VisitAarhus' role in tourism</b>                             |
| 13        | VisitAarhus unites, develops and promotes the destination       |
| 14        | Tasks that make a difference                                    |
| 16        | Measuring and monitoring with purpose                           |
| 17        | Objectives for VisitAarhus                                      |
| <b>19</b> | <b>From words to action</b>                                     |



📍 Volunteer Rethinkers at Moesgaard  
© Photo: Per Bille



# A single DMO for the entire Aarhus Region

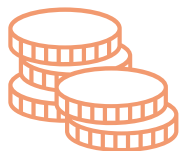
## Who is VisitAarhus?

Since 2020, VisitAarhus has been the joint DMO for the municipalities of Aarhus, Syddjurs, Norddjurs, Favrskov, Randers, Silkeborg and Viborg.

VisitAarhus is currently Denmark's largest destination management organisation outside the capital (in terms of revenue), with around 50 staff, 3,000 volunteers and 400 tourism businesses.

VisitAarhus' responsibilities include national and international marketing, attracting meetings and conferences, visitor services, competence development within the industry and much more. We have particular strengths in sustainability, volunteering & hospitality, as well as AI & digitalisation.

**15,3**  
mia. kr.



**DKK 15.3 billion in  
annual tourism revenue  
in the Aarhus Region**

**13.195**  
jobs



**13,195 jobs in tourism  
in the Aarhus Region**

## What is the DNA of the Aarhus Region?

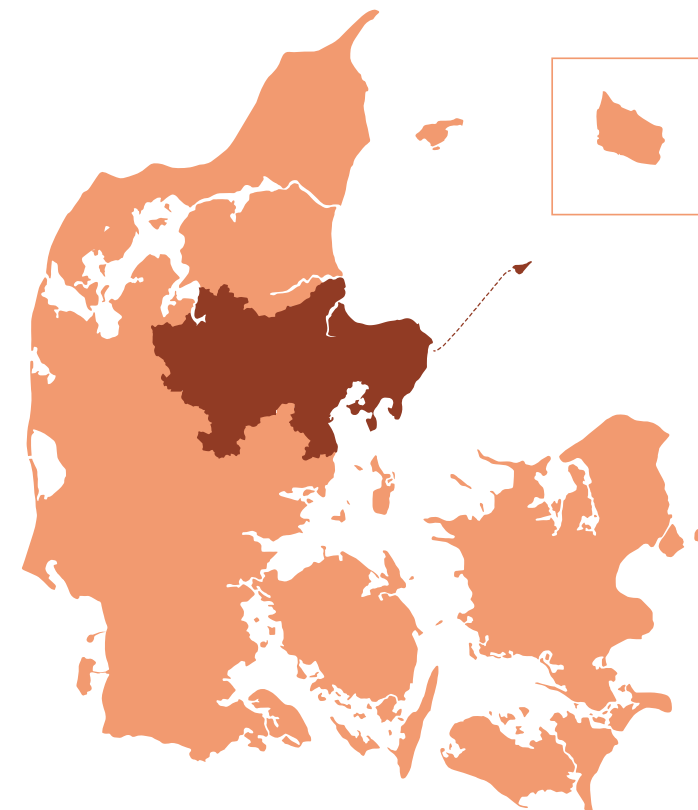
The Aarhus Region is the collective geographical term for the destination. A region that offers unique diversity: nature, the coast, the city, attractions, museums, gastronomy and much more – all within a short distance.

As Denmark's second-largest city, Aarhus enjoys high brand recognition, which helps to position the Aarhus Region as an attractive destination for many national and international target groups. The region is also characterised by larger towns such as Randers, Viborg and Silkeborg, whose wide range of cultural, gastronomic and shopping experiences attract visitors.

Outside the towns, the destination offers unique nature experiences that are ideal for active holidays such as hiking, cycling and sailing. The Gudenå River, Søhøjlandet, Hærvejen and the Mols Bjerge National Park are among the highlights. Add to this kilometres of child-friendly beaches on Djursland and many of Denmark's largest attractions.

These are the strengths of the Aarhus Region.

Another distinctive feature of the Aarhus Region is that the three business sectors of tourism (measured by revenue) are roughly equal in size. There are significant synergies and potential in the fact that the destination encompasses coastal and nature tourism, city tourism and business tourism.





# Tourism as a driving force

# A driving force for residents, visitors, businesses and society



**Tourism is Denmark's fourth-largest export industry. And in terms of jobs, the tourism and experience sector is larger than the agricultural sector, the pharmaceutical industry and the IT sector combined. Yet tourism is often overlooked as an industry and underestimated as a strategic tool. This has to change! Tourism is, in fact, a driving force in our society – not only generating 168.5 billion kroner in revenue in Denmark – but also delivering a range of positive effects for residents, visitors, businesses and society.**

**For residents, tourism is a driving force** for a better place to live. Tourism brings more life to local communities all year round, with more shops, cultural activities, restaurants and job opportunities. It fosters local pride when visitors choose to travel to one's local area, and it creates opportunities for new communities to form. At the same time, tourism provides a foundation for investments and local development, making it an even better place to live and encouraging more people to move there.

**For visitors, tourism is a driving force** for a better place to visit. Tourism enhances the quality of experiences, strengthens cohesion across the destination and supports investment in culture, nature and urban life. Tourism transforms local strengths into meaningful, personal and hyper-local experiences for visitors and creates authentic encounters.

The opportunities to make a positive impact – on both people and the environment – through tourism are vast when we act together.

**For businesses, tourism is a driving force** for development, revenue and attracting talent. Tourism can increase awareness of the area and make it more desirable. It can spark visitors' interest for the area, so that they want to work and settle there. And tourism can boost local strongholds through meetings, conferences and congresses.

**For society, tourism is a driving force** in tackling some of the major societal challenges. Tourism can help to bring life to rural areas all year round, provide a pathway to employment for people on the margins of the labour market, contribute to sustainable and regenerative development, and create new local jobs in places where others are moving away. Furthermore, tourism generates 53.4 billion kroner in tax revenue annually, which helps to fund the rising costs of welfare.



📍 Silkeborg  
© Photo: Jakob Vingtoft

# Tourism is a Team Sport

**If tourism is to fulfil its potential as a driving force and engine of growth, it requires a shared direction, prioritisation and long-term investments across businesses, municipalities and the DMO. Tourism is, after all, a team sport!**

Nature, attractions, accommodation, culture, gastronomy and experiences do not, in themselves, constitute a destination. It is the whole picture that makes it attractive – and the whole picture that creates value for both visitors and residents. The tourism product is shaped by the combined efforts of the various businesses (accommodation, restaurants, shops, etc.), public services (transport and cultural offerings) and location-specific qualities (nature, urban spaces, etc.).

The ability to collaborate across the tourism value chain will be crucial in the future, and therefore VisitAarhus' vision and mission are as follows:

**Vision:** Tourism is a driving force as we work together to make the Aarhus Region a better place to live and visit

**Mission:** VisitAarhus unites, develops and promotes the Aarhus Region as a strong destination that creates value locally, regionally and nationally



📍 The volunteering extras of VisitAarhus at Moesgaard  
© Photo: Per Bille

Tourism becomes a driving force for residents, visitors, businesses and society through collaboration. **With this strategy, VisitAarhus commits to co-creating future initiatives and activities with relevant stakeholders.** These include businesses, municipalities, VisitDenmark, Dansk Kyst- og Naturturisme, MeetDenmark, Dansk Storbyturisme, Danske Destinationer, Erhvervshus Midtjylland, local trade-, business-, city- and residents associations, industry associations,

government departments and Danmarks Erhvervsfremmebestyrelse, amongst others.

Collaboration is an absolute necessity – and, as a joint DMO, VisitAarhus can lead the way, set the direction, provide support and set the pace to ensure this happens. Together, we can win the battle for visitors' favour in the rapidly changing tourism sector of the future.

# Tourism in the Aarhus Region



# Tourism of the Future

**Tourism is growing. Globally, the development points to a significant increase in the number of travellers. At the same time, tourism is heavily influenced by global currents, which determine how and where people travel – and what visitors are looking for. ‘Powered by Tourism’ is part of a series of trends which, according to analyses and expert assessments, will shape the future of tourism.**

## AI and digitalisation are transforming tourism

Artificial intelligence and digital solutions are fundamentally rewriting the rules of tourism. Technology is becoming an increasingly natural and integral part of the visitor's journey – from the planning stage right through to their arrival at the destination. At the same time, AI and digitalisation are creating entirely new opportunities for innovation and efficiency gains within the industry, supporting everything from the development of new experiences and more targeted marketing to a stronger knowledge and data foundation in relation to demand, capacity and investment. This area therefore holds significant potential for attracting, strengthening and developing tourism – provided the technology is used strategically and responsibly.

## Tourism with a responsibility for the climate and local communities

Climate change and the growing focus on social responsibility are taking root in the tourism sector. There is a shift towards more sustainable travel behaviour – in both form and substance. More people are choosing to travel outside the summer season, and the visitors of the future will seek out destinations and experiences that take into account the environment, the climate and the communities they are part of – and which manage to remain relevant across all seasons. The ability to develop more sustainable tourism products, spread out tourism and look after the local environment, culture and nature is key to creating a destination that is attractive and vibrant all year round.

## Tourism with a purpose: A sense of security, immersion and authenticity

In a time of geopolitical unrest and significant change, people are drawing closer together and travelling more frequently within neighbouring markets. The journey centres on a sense of security, connection and immersion, and is increasingly about purpose rather than just geography. Visitors are seeking encounters with local people, as well as nature and cultural experiences that create a special connection to the destination – this applies to both leisure and business tourism. The tourism of the future is hyper-local and experience-based, and the winners will be those destinations that manage to bring visitors and residents together around meaningful, authentic experiences. Local strengths and distinctive features are therefore playing an increasingly important role.

*VisitAarhus is leading the way in the digital transformation and the use of AI in tourism. We are elevating and equipping the sector for the new digital reality, while at the same time developing new solutions to attract, engage and support visitors before, during and after their visit to the Aarhus Region.*

*VisitAarhus has particular strengths in the field of sustainability, which are utilised across various initiatives. We work purposefully to promote year-round tourism and to support the green transition of tourism businesses, influence visitors' behaviour and develop the destination in a more sustainable direction.*

*Hospitality and volunteering are key strengths of VisitAarhus, which – both nationally and internationally – excels in social sustainability through the volunteer organisation ReThinker. We place great emphasis on engaging local residents in tourism and in interactions with visitors, as well as on cultivating and showcasing the Aarhus Region's local strengths.*

It is these trends that VisitAarhus will use to guide its efforts as it works to fulfil the potential for tourism in the Aarhus Region.

# Potentials for tourism in the Aarhus Region

**The visitor of the future will have significant new expectations, and the Aarhus Region's potential to meet them is equally great. The starting point is strong, and the destination holds considerable potential for development.**

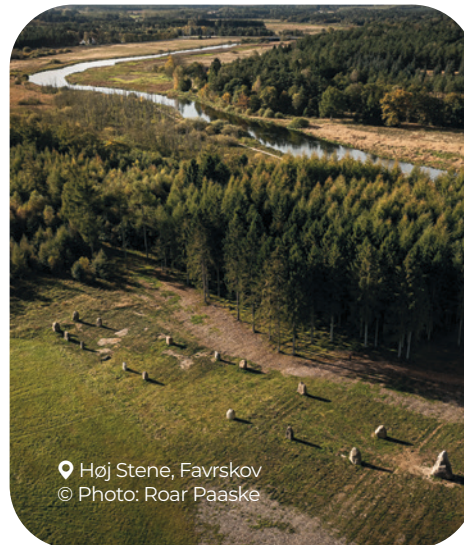
**The Aarhus Region must be:**

## Frontrunner in utilising synergies between rural and urban areas

The Aarhus Region is a microcosm of Denmark's tourism sector, comprising equal parts coastal and nature tourism, city tourism and business tourism. Consequently, the destination has unique potential to create strong synergies between the rural and urban areas. Building on its location-specific qualities, tourism must be spread across different geographical areas and seasons and ensure a sought-after year-round destination.

## The meeting destination of the future

The Aarhus Region is home to a number of specialised knowledge institutions, robust venues and distinctive local strengths. The potential to attract conferences, congresses and meetings is therefore considerable – as are the benefits. Business tourists have the highest daily spending, contribute to year-round tourism and are a driver for attracting talent, knowledge transfer and growth in the business sector. This must therefore be cultivated across the seven municipalities of the Aarhus Region.



## Visitors' favourite coastal and nature destination

The Aarhus Region offers countless authentic coastal and nature experiences in the region's vast forests, along its long coastlines and within its distinctive landscapes. There is considerable potential to create more recreational opportunities and facilities for outdoor and nature-based activities. This potential must be realised – while respecting the destination's unique natural environment and with responsible use for the benefit of visitors, local communities and the environment alike.

## A cultural destination in an international league

The Aarhus Region is home to several of Denmark's strongest and most visited cultural attractions, as well as a wide range of festivals, galleries, events and historical sights. At the same time, the title of European Capital of Culture 'Aarhus 2017' carries obligations. Cultural experiences are a key reason to visit the Aarhus Region – this must be nurtured, as the potential to attract even more cultural tourists is significant.

VisitAarhus is working to ensure that the potential outlined in 'Udviklingsplan Jyllands Østkyst' is realised as we, together with the municipalities, secure funding and support for this – and by working together to integrate tourism into planning across municipal departments.

POWERED BY  
TOURISM

# VisitAarhus' role in tourism

VisitAarhus

📍 Aarhus  
© Photo: Jakob Vingtoft

# VisitAarhus unites, develops and promotes the destination

**Fulfilling the potential for tourism in the Aarhus Region requires raising awareness of the destination, developing tourism products, and making it attractive to invest in accommodation capacity and marketing. It also requires strong collaboration and a clear division of roles between tourism businesses, municipalities and VisitAarhus. 'Powered by Tourism' highlights VisitAarhus' unique roles: to unite, develop and promote the destination.**

## VisitAarhus **unites** the destination

We bring tourism together across geographical boundaries and the value chain. We draw on our expertise in tourism, focus on the bigger picture and on great hospitality to benefit both residents and visitors. And we strengthen collaboration in tourism across businesses and municipalities, so that together we can succeed in generating growth and revenue throughout the Aarhus Region.

## VisitAarhus **develops** the destination

We raise the level of knowledge and professionalism in tourism by leading the way in expertise and driving development and growth when new initiatives are launched. We work to secure support, funding and a favourable framework for tourism by giving the tourism sector in the Aarhus Region a united voice.

## VisitAarhus **promotes** the destination

We invite national and international leisure and business travellers to experience the region's diversity. We unite the destination under a single brand in collaboration with VisitDenmark and coordinate marketing, press initiatives and the attraction of conferences and congresses, so that the Aarhus Region's DNA is presented clearly and inspiringly.

These three roles serve as VisitAarhus' compass for setting priorities and deciding what to focus on and what to leave out.

|                | WHY                                                                                                       | HOW                                                                                                     | WHAT                                                     |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
|                |                                                                                                           | (by)                                                                                                    | (Activities with a focus on)                             |
| <b>UNITE</b>   | Tourism is a driving force as we work together to make the Aarhus Region a better place to live and visit | Getting all parties to stand united and thereby strengthening the sense of community and value creation | Network, volunteering, partnerships, etc.                |
| <b>DEVELOP</b> |                                                                                                           | Fostering engagement in knowledge and skills, thereby enhancing quality                                 | Competence development, data and knowledge sharing, etc. |
| <b>PROMOTE</b> |                                                                                                           | Highlighting the destination's strengths and thereby inspiring a desire to travel                       | Marketing, international press, conferences, etc.        |

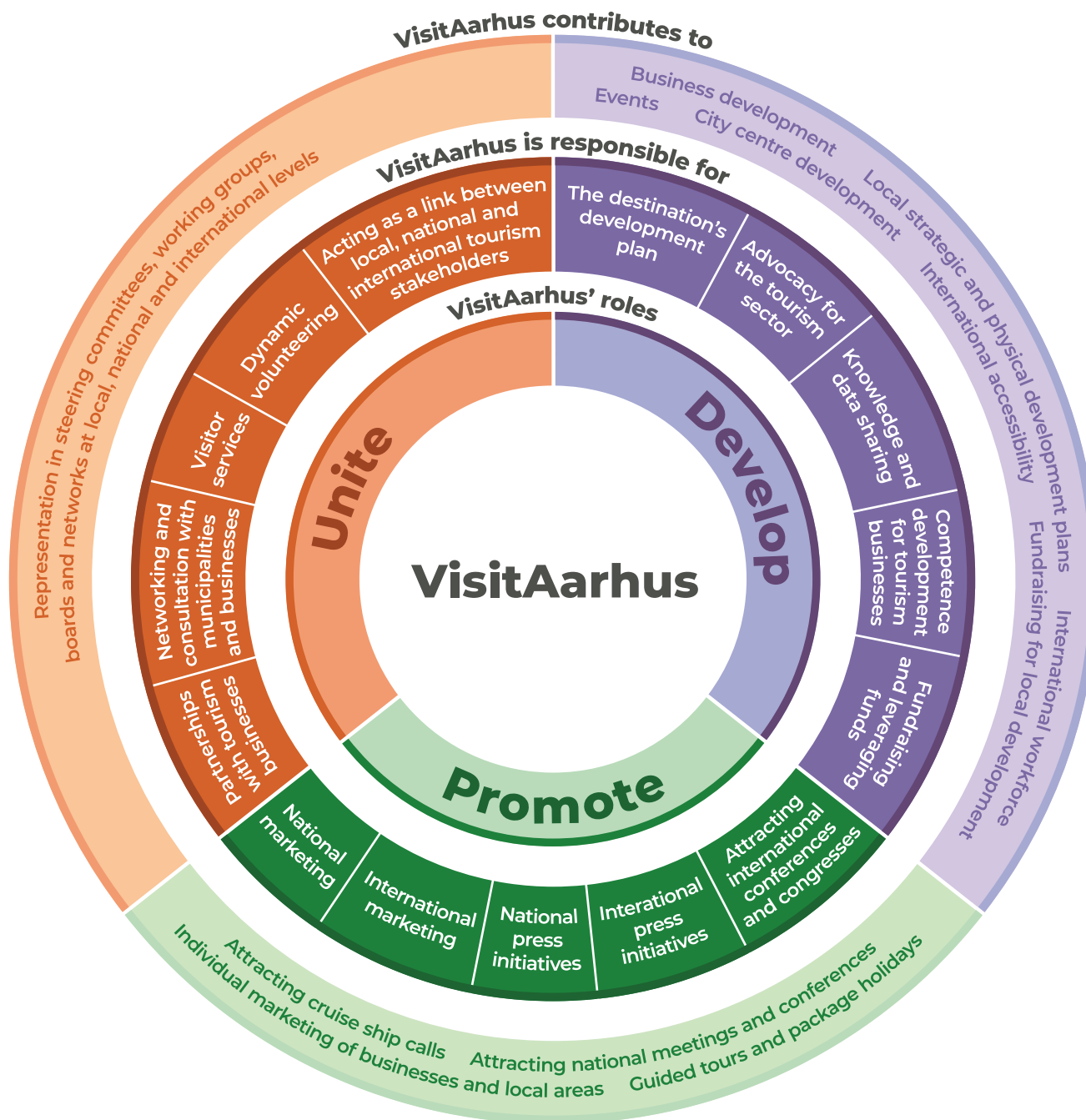
# Tasks that make a difference

**When VisitAarhus unites, develops and promotes the Aarhus Region, it does so through a series of specific tasks.**

*'Powered by Tourism'* zooms in on the tasks for which VisitAarhus is responsible, and which no other stakeholders, businesses or municipalities have the incentive or capacity to undertake on their own. Furthermore, there are a number of tasks to which VisitAarhus contributes, but where other stakeholders take the lead.

The model visualises and clarifies which tasks VisitAarhus is responsible for and contributes to, within the three roles.

These tasks are aimed at all three business areas: coastal and nature tourism, city tourism and business tourism. They are solved using an innovative approach and by drawing on VisitAarhus' strengths in AI & digitalisation, volunteering & hospitality, as well as sustainability – both social, environmental and economic.





# Measuring and monitoring with purpose

**The development of tourism in the Aarhus Region is influenced by many stakeholders and factors. With *'Powered by Tourism'*, VisitAarhus aims to rethink the way in which this development has been measured until now.**

Traditionally, there has been a strong focus on measuring 'overnight stays' in Danish tourism. But this is just one of several indicators of how tourism is developing. It is equally important to track progress towards the ambitions of greater seasonal spread, higher daily spending, increased accommodation capacity, higher guest satisfaction and public support, greater awareness and more sustainable tourism development. At the same time, there is a need to measure what can actually be positively influenced.

VisitAarhus creates conditions for growth and development in the tourism industry. We will therefore, going forward, **measure** what can be directly influenced by the tasks we undertake and the value we create. In other words, we will measure what VisitAarhus has control over and can directly influence. And we measure not only the activities themselves, but also what these activities enable participants to achieve. VisitAarhus also continues to **monitor** developments in all the indicators relevant to tourism – areas where VisitAarhus contributes but does not bear sole responsibility.

**VisitAarhus' objectives contribute directly to increased revenue and more jobs** across the Aarhus Region, and to the achievement of the growth targets set out in the national tourism strategy. That is why objectives and monitoring are closely linked.

|                      | UNITE                                                                                                                                                       | DEVELOP                                                                                                                                      | PROMOTE                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| VisitAarhus measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The experience of value through collaboration</li> <li>• The number of partners and volunteers</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in organised activities</li> <li>• Activation of new knowledge and new skills</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities that highlight the strengths of the Aarhus Region to relevant target groups throughout the year</li> <li>• Engagement among potential visitors</li> </ul> |
| VisitAarhus monitors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitor satisfaction</li> <li>• Staff satisfaction in the tourism sector</li> <li>• Leveraging of funds</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certifications</li> <li>• Public perception</li> <li>• Accommodation capacity and types</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial overnight stays</li> <li>• Tourism revenue</li> <li>• Seasonal distribution</li> <li>• Awareness of the Aarhus Region</li> </ul>                          |

VisitAarhus' new approach to measurement has been developed in collaboration with the consultancy firm Pluss. This also involves new data collection methods for some of the targets, which can therefore only be established by the end of 2026 (baseline).



# Objectives for VisitAarhus

**Tourism must be a driving force for residents, visitors, businesses and society. VisitAarhus' role and responsibility in making this a success lies in uniting, developing and promoting the destination through a series of specific initiatives. To ensure progress, 'Powered by Tourism' includes a series of specific objectives that contribute to growth in overnight stays, revenue and job creation throughout the Aarhus Region.**

**VisitAarhus must **unite** stakeholders to foster even stronger collaboration, a sense of community, and commitment to tourism in the Aarhus Region**

- The proportion of tourism businesses in the Aarhus Region that feel collaboration creates value must increase by 2030 compared with 2026 (target to be set by the end of 2026).
- VisitAarhus aims to strengthen the community and voluntary engagement by increasing the number of partners and volunteers by 25% by 2030 compared with 2026.

**VisitAarhus must **develop** and support tourism businesses in the Aarhus Region by providing knowledge and new skills**

- The level of engagement by tourism businesses in the activities offered by VisitAarhus must be increased by 2030 compared with 2026 (target to be set by the end of 2026).
- At least half of the tourism businesses participating in VisitAarhus' activities or events are expected to put the knowledge or skills they have gained into practice.

**VisitAarhus must **promote** the Aarhus Region as an attractive year-round destination to more Danish and international leisure and business tourists**

- At least 70% of all marketing activities must be targeted to the selected target groups and have a documented year-round perspective.
- Digital engagement among potential visitors must increase by 25% by 2030 compared with 2026.





# Strategy is something we do together

*'Powered by Tourism'* is not written by AI or purchased from consultants. It is homemade and handheld – with broad involvement. Thank you for valuable input to tourism companies, municipalities, partners, the board and employees. It is precisely YOU that will be central to bringing the strategy to life!

A strategy does not create change because it is adopted. It creates change when it is used.



*'Powered by Tourism'* is therefore not the end of a process – but the beginning of a shared journey. The strategy only gains real value when it is reflected in our conversations, in our day-to-day priorities, in the way we work together, and in the choices, we make – even when they are difficult.

The vision is to use tourism as a driving force to make the Aarhus Region an even better place to live and visit. The ambitions for tourism in the Aarhus Region are sky-high, and the potential is great. **Tourism holds a transformative power that we want to harness.** And *'Powered by Tourism'* is intended to set the direction and serve as a shared working tool.

The strategy is also designed to help us navigate wisely in a world characterised by change – from technological breakthroughs to climatic and geopolitical shifts. That is why the strategy is not a static PDF, but a living document that is continuously updated in line with the times and translated into concrete action through annual action plans.

**VisitAarhus has a special responsibility** as a unifying and developmental catalyst for tourism in the Aarhus Region. **But the strategy will only take effect if we help each other and rally together.**

Everyone on the team plays an important role: businesses must drive growth and develop products. The municipalities must prioritise tourism in their strategic and physical development and incorporate tourism into their municipal plans. The national tourism organisations must provide specialist support, knowledge and guidance within their areas of expertise. The government must invest in tourism throughout Denmark. And we must all march in step. **Then tourism will become a driving force for residents, visitors, businesses and society.**



## Follow us

If you'd like to stay up to date with what's happening in the Aarhus Region, follow VisitAarhus on these channels.



LinkedIn



Instagram



Facebook



TikTok

POWERED  
BY  
TOURISM

## Powered by Tourism

- Tourism as a driving force

May 2026

VisitAarhus  
Balticagade 19, 1  
8000 Aarhus C