



A stand up paddle universe for outdoor tourists

- **2024 ISA WORLD SUP & PADDLEBOARD CHAMPIONSHIP**
- **COPENHAGEN, 15-22 SEPTEMBER 2024**

AN EVENT FULL OF ACTION

In Copenhagen's clean waters, over 12,000 spectators watched the world's best stand up paddleboarders (SUP) compete in the world championship. The seven-day event was organised by **Surf & SUP Danmark** (the Olympic governing body in Denmark) with strong support from various stakeholders and partners.

Spectators and passers-by at the event were guided through four competitions (Technical Race, Team Relay, Long Distance, and Sprint) with live commentary and big screens. The event also featured various SUP-related activities, creating a buzzing atmosphere in Copenhagen:

- **Copenhagen Paddle Festival:** A full-week festival filled with water and SUP activities
- **School Program:** Three days with activities for school children
- **Volkswagen SUP City Tour:** A pre-tour around Denmark to introduce the sport to locals and tourists

STAND UP PADDLE AND OUTDOOR TOURISM

Before the championship, **Copenhagen Legacy Lab** wanted to investigate how

stand up paddle is linked to outdoor tourism. To do this, the lab joined forces with **Epinion** to conduct an analysis. The findings highlighted that national and international tourist segments are attracted by physical outdoor activities (e.g. SUP).

However, only 5% of tourists find SUP and surfing attractive during a vacation in Denmark (Epinion, 2023). To make SUP more appealing, Copenhagen Legacy Lab, **VisitDenmark**, **Surf & SUP Danmark**, and **Danske Destinationer** initiated a project to promote Denmark as a unique destination for SUP enthusiasts.

A UNIVERSE FOR TOURISTS

The involved partners agreed to co-develop **VisitDenmark's stand up paddle universe** to highlight Denmark's best SUP spots (e.g., charming lakes or calm fjords). The project group invited **the 19 Danish tourist boards (DMOs)** to select the best SUP spots in their regions and create regional SUP guides (e.g., local SUP communities, rental info, additional spots).

On June 19, VisitDenmark launched the universe on social media, coordinating with the DMOs to send a strong, shared message.



Photo: Wonderful Copenhagen



Photo: Wonderful Copenhagen

LOCAL WATER EVENTS

To increase the DMO's involvement, they were invited to take part in Surf & SUP Danmark's pre-tour around Denmark promoting the world championship (Volkswagen SUP City Tour). Early dialogue with the DMOs allowed the tour schedule to align with local water sports events, proving to be a clear win-win situation:

- **Local events:** Benefited from Surf & SUP Danmark's presence, promoting SUP at their destination.
- **Volkswagen SUP City Tour:** Helped the tour engage a broader audience in SUP activities.

"Hosting the Volkswagen SUP City Tour at SHORES Langeland was an incredible experience. It brought a vibrant energy to our community and helped showcase our stunning coastline to a wider audience. The event is perfectly aligned with our mission to promote outdoor activities and sustainable tourism on the island, and it was a joy to be a part of such a big event."

Thomas Røddik Konradsen, Project Manager at Langeland Municipality

"The collaboration with all the tourist boards made it possible to establish the Volkswagen SUP City Tour to promote the World Championship and make it possible for everybody to try stand up paddle."

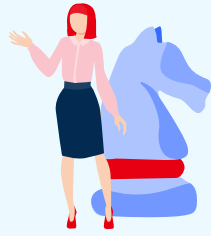
Michael Lindberg, CEO at Surf & SUP Danmark

In total, the pre-tour visited 14 Danish destinations throughout July and August.

WATER SAFETY AMONG TOURISTS

During the project, the chance to collaborate with **Søsportens Sikkerhedsråd** (focused on sea safety) and Surf & SUP Danmark to develop five safety rules for SUP in Denmark presented itself. To prevent future water accidents, these rules were included in the SUP universe and the DMOs' SUP guides.

LEGACY PROCESS



Strategic goals and societal needs

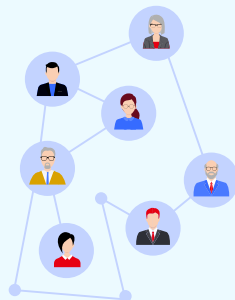
The project's overall ambition was to promote Copenhagen and Denmark as a great destination for outdoor tourism and water sports (primarily stand up paddleboarding). This ambition aligns with [Surf & SUP Danmark's strategy](#), [the national tourism strategy](#), and [the strategy of Wonderful Copenhagen](#).



Objective

The legacy project aimed to use the world championship to:

- Promote stand up paddleboarding among tourists in Copenhagen and Denmark.
- Elevate local water sports events across Denmark.
- Prevent future accidents when stand up paddleboarding in Denmark.



Stakeholder involvement

Copenhagen Legacy Lab: Coordinated the overall legacy process and facilitated the dialogue between the involved stakeholders.

VisitDenmark: Developed and launched the national stand up paddle universe together with the 19 Danish tourist boards (DMOs).

DMOs: Contributed to the universe by creating individual SUP guides (landing pages) with regional information (e.g., local SUP communities, rental information, and even more SUP spots).

Surf & SUP Danmark: Executed the Volkswagen SUP City Tour in coordination with the DMOs.

Søsportens Sikkerhedsråd: Produced video content explaining the five basic safety rules for stand up paddleboarding in Denmark.



Activity

The legacy process resulted in three different activities:

- **SUP Universe:** VisitDenmark's online universe highlights some of the best stand up paddleboarding spots across Denmark (e.g., charming lakes or calm fjords).
- **Pre-tour:** The Volkswagen SUP City Tour, featuring competitions and activities on land and at sea, took place at various destinations across Denmark throughout July and August. The tour aimed to introduce stand up paddleboarding to both locals and outdoor tourists while promoting the championship.
- **Safety rules:** The five basic safety rules for paddleboarding in Denmark were an integral part of the SUP universe and the regional SUP guides (landing pages).



Outputs (immediately after the activity – direct results)

SUP Universe: The universe was launched ahead of the world championship and gained additional promotion during the 7-day event.

- More than 40 posts on social media helped promote the universe.
- The launch of the universe led to a noticeable increase in traffic and interest on the landing page, which was further amplified during the world championship in September, resulting in over 2.500 views.

Pre-tour: In total the tour visited 14 cities, and around 1,175 locals and outdoor tourists participated in the activities.

Safety rules: They are included in VisitDenmark's stand up paddle universe and in 17 of the SUP guides (landing pages).

After the championship, **Copenhagen Legacy Lab** reached out to the 19 DMOs to gather feedback on their experience with the project. A total of 17 DMOs responded, expressing strong interest in future collaborations on similar projects, thanks to the great success of the SUP universe and the pre-tour.

LEGACY PROCESS



Outcomes (+6-12 months - changed behaviour)

SUP Universe: The guide continues to be viewed organically by stand-up paddle enthusiasts and outdoor tourists. Additionally, Visit Denmark expects interest in the SUP guide to create a spillover effect, increasing engagement with other water activities and sports in Denmark (e.g., surfing, canoeing, kayaking, and kite surfing).

Pre-tour: Since the pre-tour, Surf & SUP Danmark has strengthened its collaboration with destinations and stakeholders across Denmark. As an example, Destination Bornholm and Surf & SUP Danmark are hosting similar SUP events in May 2026.

Safety rules: Surf & SUP Danmark continues to collaborate with Søsportens Sikkerhedsråd to promote the safety rules.



Impact (+1 year – societal value)

Boosting outdoor tourism can support year-round tourism and ensure a more even distribution across Denmark. In 2026, Surf & SUP Danmark are launching a digital platform, SURFHUB, to promote Danish surfing destinations (e.g., articles, podcasts, and locations). The 19 DMO's will be invited to take part in the platform.

Inspired by the SUP Universe, VisitDenmark, Copenhagen Legacy Lab, and the 19 DMOs launched a [cycling guide](#) as part of Copenhagen Sprint 2025 to promote cycling tourism in Denmark.



Potential legacy (+1-3 years and beyond...)

Today, there is a SUP guide and a platform, SURFHUB, which provide valuable services for water sports tourists visiting Denmark.

The project has facilitated collaborations around local water sports events in Denmark; however, it is difficult to assess the extent to which it has enhanced these events.

The safety rules continue to be used and promoted, but it is challenging to determine whether they have actually prevented any water accidents.

The screenshot shows the VisitDenmark website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'VisitDenmark' logo and links for 'Highlights', 'Destinations', 'Things to do', 'Accommodation', and 'Plan your trip'. Below the navigation, the breadcrumb trail reads 'Denmark > Things to do > Active Holiday > Explore Stand-Up Paddleboarding in Denmark'. The main content area features a large image of two people stand-up paddleboarding on the water. Below the image is the title 'Explore Stand-Up Paddleboarding in Denmark' and a photo credit 'Photo: Mette Johnsen'. A short paragraph describes Denmark as a paradise for SUP fans, mentioning the coastline, fjords, and lakes. There are 'Print' and 'Share' icons. Below this is a section titled 'The best SUP spots in Denmark' with a 'List' and 'Map' toggle. Three spots are listed: 'The South Fyn Archipelago', 'Fanø in the Wadden Sea', and 'Juelsminde in Kystlandet'. Each spot includes a photo, a brief description, and 'Info' and 'See on map' buttons.