

A stand up paddle universe for outdoor
tourists



National and international tourists are attracted by physical outdoor activities like stand up paddle

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.

- **Copenhagen Paddle Festival:** A full-week festival filled with water and SUP-related activities
- **School Program:** Three days with practical and interactive activities for school children

- **Volkswagen SUP City Tour:** A pre-tour around Denmark to introduce the sport to locals and outdoor 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 and nature adventures. To do this, the lab joined forces with Epinion to conduct an analysis. The findings highlighted – in line with the existing research - that national and international tourist segments are attracted by physical outdoor activities (e.g., water-related activities like 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

"As a sport federation, we work hard to develop stand up paddle and surfing across Denmark together with all our clubs and volunteers."

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



The online SUP universe highlights some of the best stand up paddleboarding spots across Denmark

[Online universe ↗](#)

Denmark as a unique destination for outdoor tourists and SUP enthusiasts.

A universe for outdoor tourists

Before the championship, the involved partners agreed to co-develop and launch 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. Fortunately, all DMOs saw the value in a unified universe and agreed to develop individual SUP guides (landing pages) with regional information (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.

Local water events around Denmark

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 across. Merging the pre-tour with these local events proved to be a win-win situation:

- **Local events:** They 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.

In total, the Volkswagen SUP City Tour visited 14 Danish destinations throughout July and August.

"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 basic safety rules for paddleboarding in Denmark is an integral part of the SUP universe and the regional SUP guides

Water safety among tourists

During the project, the chance to collaborate with Søsportens Sikkerhedsråd (focused on sea safety) presented itself. Together with Surf & SUP Denmark, Søsportens Sikkerhedsråd developed five safety rules for stand up paddleboarding in Denmark. To prevent future water accidents among locals and tourists, these rules were included in VisitDenmark's universe and the DMOs' SUP guides.

Safety guidelines for your SUP adventure

When stand-up paddling, it is essential to be aware of certain safety elements. With the following 5 basic rules, we want to help you have a safe trip on the water.

- Always use a leash that connects you to the board.
- Remember to wear a life jacket or personal flotation device (PFD) - it's illegal to paddle without one.
- Bring your phone along in a waterproof bag.
- Don't go onto the water alone and inform someone where you will be going and when you expect to return.
- Always check wind and weather conditions before going out. Do not go offshore if you are a beginner or only slightly experienced.

Legacy process

Objective

Strategic alignment

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 Denmark's strategy, the national tourism strategy, and the strategy of Wonderful Copenhagen.

Obejectives

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

Stakeholder involvement

- **Copenhagen Legacy Lab:** coordinated the overall legacy process
- **VisitDenmark:** developed and launched the national stand up paddle universe
- **DMOs:** contributed to the universe by creating individual SUP guides
- **Surf & SUP Danmark:** Executed the Volkswagen SUP City Tour in coordination with the DMOs

Activities

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).

Evaluation

Outputs (immediately after the activity)

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 boosted 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

Evaluation

Outcomes (after 6 to 12 months)

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.

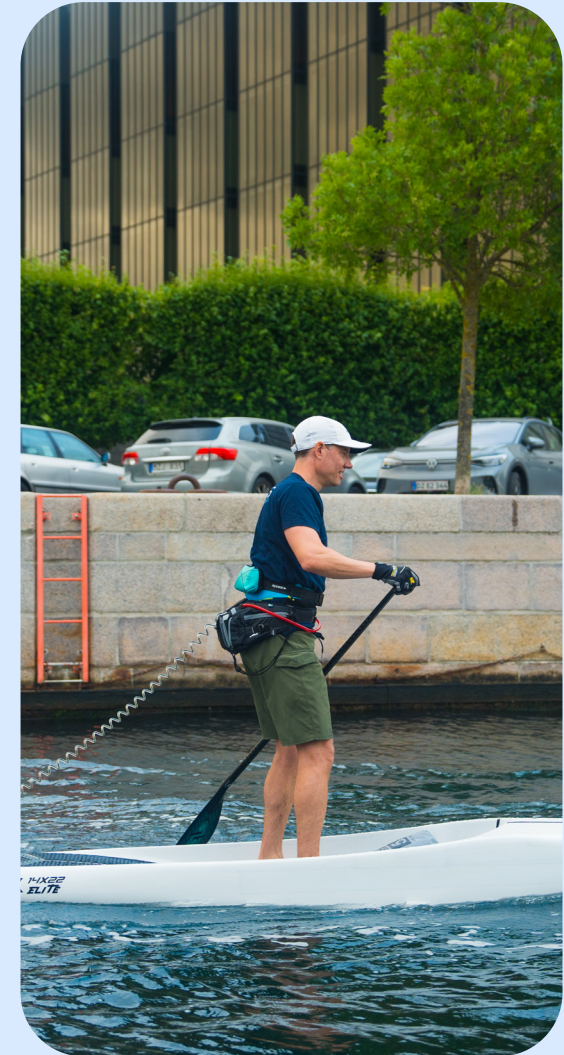
Safety rules: Surf & SUP Danmark continues to collaborate with Søsportens Sikkerhedsråd to promote the safety rules.

Impact and legacy (after a year)

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.

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.





Copenhagen Legacy Lab is an award-winning strategic initiative under Copenhagen Convention Bureau that drives positive long-term impact from congresses and events.

For more information and additional cases, visit www.wonderfulcopenhagen.com/cll