

A Double Strategy towards sustainable tourism: Offers for visitors and opportunities for people employed in tourism in the Wadden Sea National Park in Schleswig-Holstein

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Schleswig-Holstein's part of the Wadden Sea is a traditional holiday destination. Tourism and leisure activities are the most important regional economic activity. Two million of overnight guests and four million of day trippers travel to this part of the North Sea coast each year. However, the unique landscapes of tidal flats, salt marshes, dunes and beaches are not only popular with human visitors. There is no off-season for the bird-life; even in winter thousands of geese, ducks and other birds stay in the region. In spring, migratory birds come in to refuel before continuing their trek to their nesting areas far to the north. When they leave, the summer guests take their place, start to breed and raise their young. Besides these avian visitors, permanent residents like seals and harbour porpoises must not be overlooked. An area of 4.400 km² is protected as a national park "Schleswig- Holstein Wadden Sea" since 1985 and established as a UNESCO biosphere reserve since 1990.

A proper strategy for communication, information and visitor guidance is essential to achieve nature conservation goals, and to make them understandable and acceptable to the general public. LIFE Nature has helped to finance information panels, maps, information kiosks, nature trails and observation platforms which all aim to inform and guide visitors.

A number of attractive indoor and outdoor nature experience and nature-compatible offers exist. However external and internal marketing has to be intensified to make these offers better known to both, visitors and locals. A LEADER+ projekt has been set up to take better advantage of the national park status as a unique selling proposition and for tourism advertising.