

Sweden's first marine park opens

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Earlier this month, Sweden's King Carl XIV Gustaf inaugurated Sweden's first **marine national park**.

Close to the border with Norway on the west coast, this small archipelago has been turned into a 45-square kilometre national park to protect the unique marine life around the islands as well as its sandy beaches and heath-clad moorland.

The Koster islands are one of Sweden's best kept secrets. I travelled there last summer to get a preview of this fabulous new marine park, which I feature (p104) in my new Rough Guide book: **Clean Breaks - 500 new ways to see the world**.

Kayaking around Koster's outlying islands.
Photo: Richard Hammond.

There are just 300 inhabitants on the car-free islands, which are linked by a small cable ferry. Cycling is the main mode of transport, while kayaking is the best way to explore the outlying islands. I stayed at Hotel Ekenas - the main hotel on South Koster, close to a sandy beach and with rooms that look out over the Koster Fjord. In summer it opens a specialist fish restaurant...

UK-based with UK-based **Nature Travels** offers three-day kayaking and camping trips in the Koster archipelago from £349 (not including travel).

To get there from Copenhagen, take the train via Gothenburg to Stromstad (8hr 45 min); www.sj.se), from where it's a 10-minute walk to Stromstad North Harbour where you catch the ferry to Ekenas on South Koster (45 min; www.vasttrafik.se) from where it's a 5min walk to Hotel Ekenas (www.skykoster.se; tel: +46 5262 0250).

It is possible to travel by train all the way from London to Copenhagen, via Brussels and Cologne then the overnight sleeper to Copenhagen. For more details, see <http://www.seat61.com/Denmark.htm#by%20Eurostar>.

Right: Cycling is the main mode of transport around Koster.
Photo: Richard Hammond.



For more information on travelling around West Sweden see westsweden.com.

The Guardian has today published an excellent article on Koster:

"Chris Madigan discovers abundant sea life, colourful cold-water reefs and wild, car-free countryside as one of the first visitors to Sweden's first marine national park in the Koster Islands..." where "new restrictions on fishing, fuel type and anchoring protect the marine life".