



WELCOME TO THE KOSTER ISLANDS

On the Koster Islands, you are met by unique nature, rich flora and fauna and interesting cultural history. Have a look at the map. It shows you which areas of the archipelago are part of the nature reserve and national park.

The islands' nature is rich and diverse – you can spot rare and protected plants, like the yellow horned poppy and sea holly (locally known as the Koster thistle). Fungi enthusiasts will find stalkballs and earthstars, while birdwatchers can scan the area for seabirds or migratory waders in autumn and spring. Moose, foxes, roe deer and hares all permanently live on these islands. Crabs, prawns and fish swim amid the seaweed and eelgrass off shore.

Have fun exploring!

KOSTER ISLANDS NATURE RESERVE *YOUR GUIDE OUT INTO NATURE*



Sea holly



The blue trail around N  st  ngen

2 N  ST  NGEN

N  st  ngen is rich in cultural history and an excellent example of Koster's characteristic nature. In autumn, heather blooms on the cliffs, while the meadows come alive with cowslips and early purple orchids in spring. These areas were once shaped by coastal agriculture. Now, the land has been returned to its former glory, and the meadow is tended the traditional way.



Early purple orchid and cowslip in the meadow



Cobble fields at Valn  s

3 GEOLOGICAL TRACES AT VALN  S

Valn  s is home to one of Sweden's most impressive cobble fields. The eroded embankments are evidence of past storms, which lobbed stones onto the beach. As the years went by, land uplift pushed the embankments further away from the ocean. A sign on the spot tells you more.

The distinct black lines you can see here are diabase sills cutting through the gneiss cliffs. They are sometimes called "the devils harrows": legend has it the devil's draught animal tore away as they were ploughing, scraping its hooves against the rock.

FOUR TOP TIPS



Naturum is open all year round

NATURUM KOSTERHAVET

At Eken  s harbour, you can visit naturum Kosterhavet, a visitor centre that simultaneously serves as the national park's main entrance. Here, you can learn more about the area's 12,000 species through exhibitions and videos. There's also an aquarium where you can get up close to and pet marine animals and algae. Naturum organises activities, guided tours and lectures – all free of charge. Its staff will be happy to answer any questions or suggest interesting spots to visit.



Snorkellers at R  rvik

4 SNORKEL TRAIL

An underwater nature trail! Follow the rope at R  rvik beach out into the water. The trail is 200 metres long but no deeper than two metres. There are underwater signs, so bring along a diving mask or borrow one at naturum. Remember: never go snorkelling by yourself or without someone on land keeping an eye on you.



Shore crab



DISCOVER KOSTER ALL YEAR ROUND



Thrift at Långevik

IN SPRING...

...the meadows and fields are a burst of flowers. The early purple orchid blooms from May onwards. Soon after, the sea thrift turns the beaches a lovely pink. Brooding oystercatchers on the beach will let you know when you're getting too close.



Common blue

IN SUMMER...

...bees and butterflies buzz in the fields and meadows. Small bush insects are gobbled up by the lesser whitethroat's and the red-back shrike's young. From mid to late summer, the sea holly is in bloom. Remember: both the sea holly and local orchids are protected, so you can't pick any of them.



Close encounters with seals

IN AUTUMN...

...the sky and sea take on the same greyish blue, erasing the horizon. Grab the opportunity to kayak through the archipelago at this time, when there are no roaring boat engines. You might spot some seals bobbing up next to you!



Winter walk

IN WINTER...

...the only sounds you'll hear will be the waves and the wind. But winter's storms toss all kinds of treasures on the beach – shells, sea urchins and skeleton of cuttlefish, as well as rubbish and driftwood. An ideal time to go on a treasure hunt! With a little luck, you'll be able to spot both oceanic and arctic birds.

MAREEL In autumn, you might get to swim in glittering mareel. The phenomenon of “milky seas” or mareel occurs when bioluminescent plankton floats to the surface. Touch the water when it's dark, and the waves will light up and sparkle. During the day, mareel looks like a brick-red coating.



PACIFIC OYSTERS Watch where you put your feet when you go swimming! The Pacific oysters on the beach have sharp edges.

THE NATURE RESERVE

The 1,254 hectares Koster Islands nature reserve include most of North and South Koster and part of the ocean. It was established in 1984 to preserve the archipelago, with its small-scale coastal agriculture and rich flora and fauna.

It prevents the area from being exploited, preserves its biodiversity and promotes outdoor activities. Two sections of South Koster are also part of the Kosterhavet national park, established in 2009.

Both the nature reserve and the national park are managed by the County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland, which has an office by naturum Kosterhavet.

SMALL-SCALE TENDING OF THE LANDSCAPE

Koster has been inhabited for more than seven centuries. The islands' residents used to mainly be fishermen and farmers. Crops were grown on the fields, while the meadows were harvested for hay. The animals themselves got to graze the slightly poorer land, on the heath and cliffs. Many of the old stone walls that kept the livestock off the fields and meadows are still standing.

These days, the heritage landscape is regularly hayed, grazed and burnt. This is done to ensure that many of the islands' rare and endangered species will continue to thrive. The heather that dominates the heath has adapted to the fires; the young shoots that pop up after the land has been burnt are excellent forage for the cows and sheep.



Great black-beaked gulls

Photos: Roger Borgelid (seal and hikers) and Jonas Ingman (naturum) vastsverige.com. Edwin Sahlin (gull, barnacle goose), Lars-Ove Loo (crab), Mikael Skärström (mareel), Katrin Sjögren (snorkellers). Other photos County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland).



Länsstyrelsen
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WALKING TRAILS

Many of the trails cut through fields where sheep, horses, goats and cows graze. The animals are used to this and tend to ignore hikers. Still, please be respectful: don't disturb or scare the animals. Do not feed them, and always keep your dog on a leash.

NORTH KOSTER

North Koster is characterised by its desolate nature, rough waves and striking geology – not to mention its two lighthouses. Its landscape shows many traces of the most recent ice age. The north of the island offers views of the Kosterhavet national park and two marine national parks over in Norway, Ytre Hvaler and Færder. The trails on North Koster are inaccessible to wheelchairs or prams, except for the white one: on that trail, lifting your pram a few times lets you take it to Norrvikarna. Remember that cycling is only allowed on the roads.

YELLOW TRAIL 5.3 KM

A beautiful walk that loops around the north of the island. There are smooth cliffs on the west side of the island, and lovely sandy beaches at Norrvikarna. At Valnäs, you can marvel at geological traces of the latest ice age.

Migratory birds perch in the coastal meadows and the shallow pools at Valnäsbukten. Some species nest and raise their young here. Near the pools, you risk stepping on nests or scaring the hatchlings, so please stick to the trail.



Barnacle goose in the pools at Valnäs

WHITE TRAIL 1.3 KM

If you'd like to take an easier, shorter route straight to Valnäs and Norrvikarna, follow the white trail through the forest.

BLUE TRAIL 2.3 KM

South of Basteviken, the blue trail takes you westward. The terrain is a bit more challenging here. Stairs take you up the hill. You soon pass Björnsängen, a secluded and white sandy beach tucked away among the cliffs. The trail then continues across the cliffs and cobbles to the southernmost part of North Koster.



Grass of Parnasus



Early bumblebee



Silver-washed Fittillary



Cross-leaved heath



Earthstar



A cable ferry shuttles visitors from North to South Koster. It is operated during summer and on many holidays. The regular Koster ferry frequents both islands and Strömstad all year round.

SOUTH KOSTER

South Koster's fields, meadows and pastures are clear signs of human land use. There is forest, and hillier areas with Scots pines and juniper bushes. Many parts of South Koster can be reached by road. The majority of the island's trails are inaccessible to prams and wheelchairs.

BLUE TRAIL 13.1 KM

The blue trail takes you around all of South Koster. Read more about the trail's different sections below. Here and there, you can take an easier route – marked in dotted lines on the map.

LÅNGEGÄRDE – EKENÄS 3.3 KM

From Långegärde harbour, you follow the beach along the Koster strait. The hay meadow at Sanna is alive with blooming flowers in spring and summer. One option is to take the path that runs alongside the meadow, up into the forest. After you've passed a hazel grove, you'll see a massive oak tree. The other option is to take the easier way straight through the meadow.

Before you get to Ekenäs, you walk through deciduous forest. In spring, the ground here is covered in wood anemones. Follow the sign "Bohuslinden" to see the lagre-leaved lime, one of Sweden's most unusual deciduous trees.

EKENÄS – KILESAND 2.7 KM

The trail starts behind naturum and then heads along the shore, past plenty of excellent swimming spots. You walk across the cliffs and beaches near Nästången (there is an easier route here). This section of the trail ends at the flat shallows of Kilesand where sea holly blooms in late summer.

KILESAND – BREVIK 3.8 KM

Parts of this section pass through the Kosterhavet national park. The trail takes you through the charming village of Kyrkosund. Afterwards, you enjoy stunning views of the Koster archipelago and the national park. This section is rather

rocky, with plenty of ups and downs. Look to the south-west and you'll see the two lighthouses of Ursholmen. The trail then crosses open coastal meadows, towards the colourful boathouses of Brevik harbour. An easier path takes you along gravel roads, through pine forest. When you get to a sign that says "Ramnefjäll", you can make a brief but challenging detour up the hill.

BREVIK – LÅNGEGÄRDE 3.3 KM

This trail takes you from Brevik harbour up the hill, then on into the forest. The hay meadow at Bölebackarna is home to countless species of flowers, like brown knapweed and grass of Parnasus.



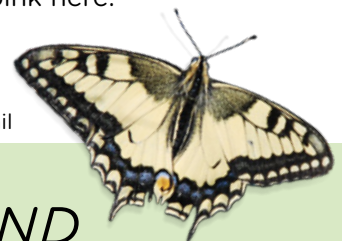
Cows grazing in the coastal meadows

BROWN TRAIL/RÖRVIKSSLINGAN 2.5 KM

An excellent trail if you don't have much time on Koster, and a great choice for young children who would prefer a shorter stroll. The trail still gives you a good idea of the island and provides lovely views towards the east. It is a bit hilly, but these are fairly easy climbs. It both departs from and ends at naturum in Ekenäs harbour. The first section down to Rörvik's shallow sandy beaches is accessible to both wheelchairs and prams. The snorkel trail is located at the end of the beach. The trail then continues up the hill. As you head back to Ekenäs, it converges with the blue trail through deciduous forest.

YELLOW TRAIL 4.8 KM

The yellow trail meanders east-west across the island, taking in forests, fields and pastures. In the middle of the island, you can make a detour to the church and the viewpoint on Valfjäll. The trail ends on the western shore, at the meadow at Långevik. In spring, the blooming thrift colours the entire beach pink here.



Common swallowtail



VIEWPOINTS

HÖGEN

Rising 59 metres above sea level, **North Koster's** Högen hill with its two lighthouses is the archipelago's highest point. It offers outstanding views of three national parks: Kosterhavet, Ytre Hvaler and Færder. The lighthouses are best reached from the eastern side. On the way up, you'll see the foundations of what used to be the homes of the lighthouse keepers.

VALFJÄLL

The 103 stairs opposite the church on **South Koster** lead up Valfjäll. The hill lets you gaze out over the Kosterhavet national park, the two lighthouses on North Koster, the mountains of Norway in the west, and the Väderöarna islands in the south.

RAMNEFJÄLL

Ramnefjäll hill on **South Koster** offers a good view of the Koster archipelago and Kosterhavet



One of the lighthouses on Högen

national park. Look to the south-east to spot the lighthouse on Ursholmen. You can make your way here by following the easier blue trail, which runs from Kilesand to Brevik. Follow the sign across the cobble field, then continue up along the eastern flank of the hill. Careful: the climb is very steep and challenging!

KEEP IN MIND



Dogs need to be on a leash all year round.



Moving, stacking or taking stones with you is not allowed.



Take off or landing a drone is not allowed.



You can rent a bicycle on South Koster, but the best way to explore the islands is on foot, really. Stick to the roads; bicycles are not allowed on any of the walking trails.



North Koster is home to the island's only campsite. Camping anywhere else in nature is forbidden.



Starting a fire is only allowed at designated places – see the map. Bring your own firewood or charcoal. Feel free to use a camping stove or your own barbecue. Disposable grills are forbidden, however.

For all regulations, see www.kosterhavet.se

