

# Policy Brief

## Managing cruise volume at Nordic cruise destinations

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### Policy Recommendations

1. **Deliberate and locally steered cruise management:** National and regional authorities should empower local communities to pro-actively and intentionally manage cruise activities locally. This should include equipping communities with the tools to influence decisions regarding the increase or decrease of cruise activity.
2. **Support cross-learning:** Promote collaboration and knowledge exchange among ports and cruise destinations regarding local management of cruise-related activities.
3. **Promote transparency and close collaboration with international cruise operator:** Encourage cruise operators to plan itineraries in collaboration with local stakeholders to ensure that local characteristics and priorities are reflected.
4. **Need for further research:** Fund pilot projects and studies that examine how adaptable the cruise industry is to guidelines, regulations, and new locally driven models for sustainable cruise tourism.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cruise tourism is growing in the Nordic region, raising concerns about sustainability, local management, and community impact. This policy brief draws on recent research examining how four Nordic destinations—Gotland (Sweden), Ísafjörður (Iceland), and Lofoten and Svalbard (Norway)—are using institutional tools to manage cruise ship arrivals. The findings show that local actors are developing innovative institutional and social arrangements to influence cruise traffic, despite having limited formal power. These efforts offer valuable lessons for stakeholders aiming to promote locally driven sustainable tourism.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Local institutions matter:** All four destinations have implemented formal and informal institutions—such as regulations, guidelines, voluntary agreements, and innovative measures—to manage cruise traffic.

**Diverse strategies:** Approaches vary by context, including caps on ship size, scheduling systems, environmental standards, and adaptive management practices developed through stakeholder collaboration.

**Community-based tourism:** There is a shift toward tourism that prioritizes local needs, values, and participation.

## IMPLICATIONS

The Nordic experience shows that even with limited formal power, local communities can influence cruise traffic through innovative institutional arrangements. The study insights are relevant for other destinations facing similar challenges and seeking to balance tourism growth with sustainability and community well-being.

## REFERENCE

Persson-Fischier, U., Wigger, K., Olsen, J., & Sveinsdóttir, Á. M. (2025). Managing cruise volume at Nordic cruise destinations. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 1–18.

