

Increasing importance of the Baltic Sea as a holiday region

Bordering states agree on touristic cooperation

The European Capital of Culture Vilnius accommodated the second Baltic Sea Tourism Forum at the end of September, 2009. More than 100 experts on holidays and tourism from twelve neighboring countries and supranational organisations gathered in the Lithuanian capital. Their aim: To push the brand "Baltic Sea" and make a better joint marketing.

The holiday region Mediterranean Sea was the benchmark: It's figures are far ahead and there should be a counterbalance, according to Jürgen Seidel, as Minister for Economic Affairs in the Schwerin State Government responsible for tourism. Similiar opinions were heard in the conference, e.g. by Evaldas Ignatavicius, deputy secretary of state, Lithuania.

The whole Baltic Sea region registered last year 125 million overnight stays, one fifth more than at the beginning of the decade. Though the Mediterranean Sea achieved 500 millions, however, it stagnates at this level, while the Baltic Sea shows the 20 percent growth. On the Mare Balticum 37 cruise ships operate, on the Mediterranean Sea there are more than 100 – another figure for the southern lead the conference in the Lithuanian capital was keen to match. At the same time the forum was quite aware that it will take a long time until the Baltic Sea region can compete on the same level as the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, the conference agreed on a „Vilnius Declaration“. It concentrates on six action fields:

- 1st: market research for a better tourist data base,
- 2nd: launching jointly in new markets, e.g. in Far East,
- 3rd: continued extension of infrastructure,
- 4th: designing tourist products and services,
- 5th: joint marketing activities and
- 6th: an integrated internet platform.

The joint website should be on-line before the next World's Leading Travel Trade Show ITB already. For the ITB in March, 2010, itself additional action is planned thus creating a profiled brand „Baltic Sea“ as a touristic region.

The 3rd tourism summit will meet in Kaliningrad next year. If an EU support could be reckoned with was uncertain. But last year, this uncertainty was also the case before the forum met first in Rostock, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania.