

# BEER TOURISM IN SCANDINAVIA?

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Our friends and colleagues in the wine industry have for decades been able to benefit from a large and rapidly growing consumer interest in travelling to wine growing regions and touring the wineries. Is there any reason, at all, why we in the brewing industry could not do exactly the same – especially in our region of the world where the brewing scene is as widespread, varied and vibrant as any wine region on the planet?



The Scandinavian Brewers' Review is, of course, a magazine for people with interests – professional, as well as private – in the brewing industry, and all things related to it, not least the products! But if we could conduct an opinion poll amongst our readers as to how many of them have ever included some sort of wine tourism in their holiday plans, my guess is that we approach 90-100 per cent if we include the coincidental visit to a winery during a holiday with other main purposes.

We at the SBR tirelessly keep repeating the fact that the beer scene in our area has undergone an enormous change during the past decades, from being dominated by very few large and medium sized breweries up until the late 1990s to now where hundreds of small craft breweries have emerged, turning out myriads of innovative and interesting beers that excite consumers and media. By now, Scandinavia is without doubt the most vibrant and innovative brewing scene in all of Europe, and we can even compete with the 'hot spots' in the US for the first place worldwide. It is simple logic that this amazing phenomenon will be of interest to a lot of people outside of our own backyard.

The 'New Nordic Cuisine' is attracting unprecedented attention worldwide. To the extent that a significant number of tourists travel to Copenhagen with the main purpose of enjoying a single fascinating meal at 'noma' – now for two consecutive years ranked as the best restaurant in the world. It would seem logical and reasonable for us brewers to 'hook on'

to this craze for our food culture. After all, we craft brewers live and brew according to many of the same philosophies as those Michelin star restaurants in our countries that triumph with new Nordic food.

And we already know that our breweries do attract the interest of tourists in general. This is clearly demonstrated by the hoards of people paying a visit to Carlsberg as part of their agenda of things to do whilst in Copenhagen. This fact also proves that potential beer tourism to Scandinavia need not to be based exclusively on the craft- and microbrewery scene. Our big breweries are important players, also, in the touristic aspect of our industry.

Scandinavian craft beer – and Scandinavian beer in general – already has an excellent reputation amongst the beer geek crowds in the US. And they might not constitute a high percentage of the population, but when the population is more than 300 million people, even a very tiny percentage is a very large number of people! Beer tourism does not only offer a direct way of creating income whilst the tourists are in our countries – it will also very effectively boost the budding export of Scandinavian beers to the US when group after group of influential beer geeks return home as dedicated ambassadors for our brilliant beers.

But as yet, we have seen no real attempts to capitalize on this interest by means of organised beer tourism to Scandinavia. Maybe the reason that this opportunity has not yet been utilised is that the phenomenon is a rather new thing. For only about a decade – somewhat longer in Norway, Sweden and Finland than in Denmark, who has, on the other hand, quite speedily overtaken our Nordic brother nations during the past 6-7 years – has the brewing scene in our area been something to brag about. The craft brewing businesses are quite small and generally operated by people without much general business experience. So, those of us involved in the new beer scene are perhaps so concerned with just getting our businesses up and running, and in solving the urgent daily issues that it has not appeared to us that we have something unique going on? Something that a lot of people from around the world

would find sufficiently interesting to include it in their holiday plans? Not to mention those that would gladly travel all the way here with the sole purpose of exploring the beer scene through a dedicated ‘beer tour’ of parts of or the whole region. I personally know that the idea of attracting beer tourism to Scandinavia is part of the many ideas roaming in the heads of people in our industry when they are not busy brewing or selling beer because it has been mentioned occasionally during discussions amongst colleagues. But the people with these ideas do not have the time, the money or the expertise to do something about it.

What will it take for the potential in beer tourism in Scandinavia to be realised? In my view, the answer is very simple: Someone – or some company – who believes in the idea, has the professionalism, time, money and dedication to organise specific beer tours in Scandinavia – or maybe initially only parts hereof – must take up the challenge and get it started! And let me finish by admitting that the fact that I chose this subject for this SBR issue’s debate column is not coincidental. I have for some months now been in contact with a very dedicated, energetic and gifted young American, Justin Mineo, who, through his relationship with a young Danish girl, has become more than fascinated by our brewing scene, and has been here enough to have had time to explore it. And Justin has begun working very dedicatedly on trying to get organised a set-up catering to American beer enthusiasts and professionals involving packaged beer tours to Denmark under the name ‘ØL – beer in Danish’. It is still early days yet to proclaim the reality of the project, but I feel convinced that all the conditions for a realisation are fulfilled.

Anybody out there who might be interested in taking part of this promising project in whatever way – from breweries offering to host beer tour groups to beer lovers who’d like to be a guide to a good beer pub crawl in Copenhagen – let yourself be heard to either the undersigned or directly to Justin at [justin@beer-in-danish.com](mailto:justin@beer-in-danish.com). It will certainly be a lot of fun!

Enjoy your reading  
Anders Kissmeyer, Technical Editor