

Summer sun in Finland? Åland isles try to attract tourists to cooler climate

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. What is your ideal place for a holiday? Draw and share with a partner.



2 Key words

a. Match these key words from the article to their definitions.

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|------------------|----------|--|
| 1. archipelago | <u>a</u> | a. a group of islands |
| 2. assured | <u>b</u> | b. told someone confidently that something is true or certain |
| 3. breezy | <u>i</u> | c. a place where alcohol is manufactured |
| 4. campaign | <u>m</u> | d. small, rocky islands or reefs that are typically too small to be inhabited |
| 5. craftsmanship | <u>o</u> | e. not very hot or very cold |
| 6. distillery | <u>c</u> | f. increasing quickly and to a very high level |
| 7. mainland | <u>m</u> | g. feel extremely hot and uncomfortable due to excessive heat |
| 8. mild | <u>e</u> | h. a sky entirely covered by clouds, resulting in a uniform greyness and lack of direct sunlight |
| 9. overcast | <u>h</u> | i. weather characterised by light to moderate winds, creating a refreshing and gentle movement of air |
| 10. remain | <u>j</u> | j. continue to be in a particular state or condition without change |
| 11. skerries | <u>d</u> | k. a person who buys and sells things |
| 12. soaring | <u>f</u> | l. the principal landmass of a country or region |
| 13. swelter | <u>g</u> | m. a coordinated series of actions or efforts aimed at achieving a specific goal, typically in areas such as politics, marketing or social movements |
| 14. trader | <u>k</u> | n. covering a broad area or being recognised by many people |
| 15. widely | <u>n</u> | o. the skill and artistry demonstrated in the creation of high-quality, finely made objects, reflecting the mastery and attention to detail of the artisan |

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b. Use the words from task a to complete the following sentences.

1. She assured me that she would meet the deadline and I trust her.
2. Winter tends to be mild in this region so a light jacket should be enough.
3. The company's profits have been soaring since it expanded abroad.
4. Without air conditioning, the office is swelter, so I'm having a hard time trying to concentrate.
5. The sky was overcast so I had to turn on the lights to be able to read.
6. Breezy days are perfect for sailing.
7. The house remained in perfect condition despite dating back to the 1700s.
8. She's been a trader for some time now, so she knows exactly when to buy and sell shares.
9. He's been involved in several campaigns to raise awareness about climate change.
10. It is Widely known that most people prefer hot weather for their holidays.

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Local people on the archipelago sense 'an opportunity in the north' as southern Europe swelters

Miranda Bryant

2 August, 2024

- 1 Jenny Björklund was out on an island in Finland's Åland archipelago with a friend when they saw a boat approaching across the Baltic Sea. She assured her friend, who was visiting from Gothenburg in Sweden, that they would be left alone.
- 2 "Don't worry, they won't come here because we are here. This is our island," Björklund, a co-owner of a restaurant and distillery on the archipelago, says she told her friend. Sure enough, she was right.
- 3 In this Swedish-speaking autonomous region of Finland, there is plenty of space to go around. With 6,757 islands of at least 2,500 sq metres – plus a further 20,000 smaller islands and skerries – and a population of little more than 30,500, there is almost an island per person.
- 4 With direct ferry routes from several Swedish and Finnish ports, Åland has long been an established destination among Swedish and Finnish day-trippers and holidaymakers, many of whom hire summer cottages. But tourists from farther afield are starting to visit.
- 5 It has plenty of sunshine – the most hours in the Nordics in the summer months, according to tourism officials – and a mild climate that puts it in sharp contrast with soaring Mediterranean temperatures.
- 6 At Smakbyn, the restaurant Björklund runs with her husband, where long grass and butterflies are visible through the windows and the mediaeval Kastelholm Castle is up the road, she says she has noticed an increase in visitors from other parts of Europe.
- 7 "We are getting more and more people from middle Europe and a lot more from southern Europe. Before, almost all of them were from Finland and Sweden, about 95%," she said, but that number is going down. "We're getting more from Germany, England. This year I noticed quite a few from Norway, which I haven't before."
- 8 Rising temperatures in more traditional destinations such as Spain, she added, presented "an opportunity here in the north".
- 9 As southern Europe swelters, with temperatures as high as 44C in Spain and forest fires in Greece and Croatia, this Nordic riviera is among the destinations across northern Europe – including Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway – seeking to attract more tourists as the rapidly escalating climate crisis changes tourism habits.
- 10 Visit Åland, the regional tourism authority, said in May there was a 10% increase in hotel stays, with about 1.3 million people now coming to the islands annually. While Swedish tourists have decreased as a result of the weak krona, Finnish tourists have increased, with many also coming from Germany, Latvia and Estonia.
- 11 Kristiina Hietasaari, a senior director at Visit Finland, said it is trying to promote Finland as a summertime destination, as well as a winter one. "Finland has so much to offer in summertime – we want to fight for our share," she said. "Today it's maybe easier than ever before due to high temperatures in Europe."
- 12 Finland has experienced warm weather lately, but it is nothing compared with southern Europe. "The highest we can have is 30C and that's only a couple of days a year," Hietasaari said. As tourist numbers are still relatively low, unlike many of the most popular southern European destinations, Finnish people are generally pro-visitors, she said.
- 13 On Torggatan, the main shopping street in Mariehamn, Åland's capital, the weather this week was overcast and a little breezy. And despite an increase in visitors, it remains difficult for some local businesses that depend on tourists during the short summer season. "Mariehamn shuts down in the winter," said Jenny Stara, 44, a fish trader. "It would be really good if more people from France and Italy came." Her son Kevin, 21, added: "We have noticed there are more Brits and Germans."

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- 14 An ice-cream shop owner, Saija Söderlund, 25, who moved to Åland from the Finnish mainland to live with her partner, had also seen an increase in visitors. "They have been doing a lot of campaigns in Finland, lifting up Åland, and it's shown," she said. But she would like to see it promoted more widely. "We can handle the tourists."
- 15 Jussi and Eeva Ojamo, on holiday in Åland from the southern Finnish city of Espoo, said they no longer considered southern Europe in the summer because it was too hot for their two young children. Like many of their friends since Covid, they now tend to holiday within Finland.
- 16 With its cooler climate and nature, Åland has huge potential, they said, but Finland is not promoted as effectively as the rest of the Nordics. "It's a big problem we have here in Finland. We don't know how to market ourselves," said Jussi, 38, adding, "Åland is beautiful. Calm, quiet landscapes with the archipelago, great local products and a lot of craftsmanship and good food."
- 17 But they questioned whether it was in fact the sunniest place in the Nordics. "Usually when we come here, the weather's a lot better than on the mainland," said Eeva. "But this year, it's the other way around."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Complete the sentences using words and phrases from the article.

1. Most tourists visiting Åland used to be Swedish and Finnish but lately there are more visitors from _____.
2. The climate in Åland offers a good alternative to Mediterranean temperatures, which are usually _____ in summer.
3. Nordic countries are trying to take advantage of changes in tourism habits caused by the _____.
4. In comparison with the rest of Europe, tourism in the area is _____.
5. Many local businesses are only open during the _____.
6. There have been _____ to promote the country as a tourist destination.
7. Some locals believe the area should be advertised _____ to continue to increase the number of visitors.
8. For some, the main challenge is learning how to _____ themselves.

4 Key language

a. Complete the sentences from the article with the correct prepositions.

1. In this Swedish-speaking autonomous region _____ Finland, there is plenty _____ space to go around.
2. With direct ferry routes _____ several Swedish and Finnish ports, Åland has long been an established destination _____ Swedish and Finnish daytrippers and holidaymakers.
3. She says she has noticed an increase _____ visitors from other parts of Europe.
4. Rising temperatures _____ more traditional destinations such as Spain, she added, presented "an opportunity here _____ the north".
5. "Finland has so much to offer in summertime – we want to fight _____ our share."
6. "Today it's maybe easier than ever before due _____ high temperatures in Europe."
7. "Usually when we come here the weather's a lot better than _____ the mainland."

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- 'Rising temperatures in more traditional destinations such as Spain, present an opportunity in the north.'
- 'Finland has so much to offer in summertime – we want to fight for our share. Today it's maybe easier than ever before due to high temperatures in Europe.'
- 'Despite an increase in visitors, it remains difficult for some local businesses that depend on tourists during the short summer season.'
- 'Finland is not promoted as effectively as the rest of the Nordics.'

6 In your own words

- In pairs or small groups, do some online research to find a holiday destination that is not very popular with tourists.**
- Prepare a presentation to share your findings with the group, explaining why you would like to visit this place.**
- Listen to your classmates' ideas and decide which place you would choose to visit on your next holidays.**