

Top Greenest Cities in Europe



What is the greenest city in Europe? Where can you see the most parks, the purest water, or the least cars? The European Commission decided to resolve the issue and award cities dedicated to the improvement of environment. On 23 February 2009, the very first European Green Capital Award was given to the winner for 2010 - Stockholm, and for 2011 - Hamburg. The other six front runners however were also highly praised for their unique initiatives. Tourism-review.com invites you to be inspired.

Amsterdam: Bikes have overtaken cars

Netherlands

Amsterdam has made great efforts to promote greener means of transport, and successfully. The citizens now prefer bicycles over cars as show studies stating that from 2005 to 2007 residents used their bicycle an average of 0.87 times a day and their car 0.84 times. Approximately three out of four of Amsterdam residents own a bicycle, and bicycles are the most commonly used means of transport. Over the last thirty years, the local municipal authority has worked hard on encouraging bicycle use by providing cycle paths and lanes; bicycle and pedestrian friendly roads and an extensive network of parking facilities for bicycles. Today all of Amsterdam is safely and comfortably accessible by bicycle.

Bristol: Focus on parks and green spaces

United Kingdom

Bristol has made particular efforts to promote parks and green spaces. They are very popular among the citizens and important in the struggle against climate change. The city is blessed with over 450 parks and green spaces, which is proportionately more than any other UK city. Its historic parks are of particular significance, being highly accessible and providing extensive natural and mature landscapes. Over 25 million visits are made by 83% of the Bristol population to parks and green spaces in Bristol every year, making it the most used leisure facility in the city. Their role as the 'green lungs' of the city is of increasing importance as the need to tackle the effects of climate change intensify.

Copenhagen: Bathing in the city

Denmark

For years, citizens of Copenhagen have had the opportunity to swim in the harbor and enjoy several 'Blue Flag' beaches surrounding the capital city. Now, the aim is to make all sea waters in the metropolitan area meet standards for bathing by 2015. To reach this goal an improved waste water management system will be put in place. Already in 2007 a decentralized treatment plant with an advanced filter system and UV equipment was built, which paved the way for a bathing beach in the northern part of the municipality. Also, Copenhagen already offers its 1.1 million residents easy access to parks and green areas. According to the overall strategy, nine out of ten citizens by 2015 should be able to walk to a recreational area within 15 minutes. To meet this target, 14 new parks have been planned for, and 3000 street trees are scheduled to be planted.

Freiburg: Energy from wind, sun and water

Germany

Freiburg is working on a concept of supplying all public facilities with eco-power. The city in Southern Germany is the hottest and sunniest major city in Germany. The sun, together with the wind and the waters of small rivers feeding into the nearby Rhine, play a role in supplying the city with electricity. As of today 4 per cent of the city's electricity consumption is derived from renewable energy sources. The aim however is to reach 10 per cent by 2010. Wind power and bio mass are the major sources of renewable energy, and the city council plans to expand the capacity of wind mills and bio mass plants in the city area. A smaller share of renewable energy is also covered by hydro- and solar power and by 2010 solar energy should provide for 1.2 per cent of the city's power needs. Today the share is 0.85 per cent.

Hamburg: Green development in Europe's 2nd largest port

Germany

The Port of Hamburg is Europe's 2nd largest in terms of number of containers handled. With a growing number of containers going in and out of the port, expansion is an issue continuously being discussed. However, instead of geographical expansion into the surrounding areas the increasing capacity needs are met by making more efficient use of existing land and generating new areas by filling in expendable harbor basins. Despite a growing number of containers handled in the port, the overall CO2 emissions from transport from Hamburg City has been kept at a steady level for the past ten years. This success can partly be explained by the efforts which the Port Authority has put into improving air quality in the heart of the big city. For instance, the Authority supports and assists terminal management enterprises in climate protection initiatives such as van carriers with hybrid drive, power feeds at gantry cranes and light management in logistic halls. Hamburg is the Green Capital 2011.

Münster: 40 per cent less carbon dioxide by 2020

Germany

Münster is considered the cultural capital of Westphalia in Western Germany. The City Council put into action a climate protection concept as early as 1995. Today a coordination unit supervises the more than 80 projects that are destined to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions by an ambitious 40 per cent by 2020. Sustainable traffic solutions help getting closer to this aim. Half a million bikes have been counted in Münster and the traffic planners give every support possible by leading bike riders through on privileged routes. Münster's old fortification wall, dating from the middle ages, is nowadays a bicycle highway - a 4.5 km long green belt round the city centre. No wonder that with a share of almost 40 per cent, bicycles are more important than cars in Münster.

Oslo: Toll ring leads to improved public transport

Norway

Over the past years, establishing a toll ring has been discussed in many European cities. In Oslo such a toll ring was put in place as early as 20 years ago. The toll ring has reduced road traffic volumes in the city centre by an estimated 3-5 per cent. But first and foremost it has raised money for public transport systems and service, as 45 per cent of the revenue from the toll ring is reserved

for improving public transport systems and service. Currently, drivers of passenger cars pay approx. €2.8 (NOK 25) to enter the city centre and lorries pay €8.4. This means that for every passenger car passing the barrier, €1.26 is put aside for improving public transport; for every lorry the amount is €3.8. The number of public transport passengers increased by 7 % last year, whilst the amount of cars entering the toll ring was reduced by 1.5 %. The positive changes were stimulated by both an increase in the toll tariffs and a reduction in the public transport fares. Electric cars on the other hand don't have to pay the toll and in the city they enjoy free parking.

Stockholm: Lots of water - and cleaner water

Sweden

'The Venice of The North' is a term often used about the Swedish capital Stockholm. 10 per cent of the city's area is covered by water, and the many lakes and water sheds are highly valued for recreational purposes. In 2006 the City Council adopted a water protection plan whose goal is that all waters of the city should meet the requirements of the EU water directive by 2015. This should be done in a way that preserves the recreational value of the lakes, water sheds etc. Today, the city's waste water is treated by advanced technology before discharged in the inner part of the Stockholm archipelago. A state-of-the-art example of improved waste water treatment is Hammarby Sjöstad, originally pointed out as Olympic village in Stockholm's bid for the 2004 summer Olympics. The urban area has its own waste water treatment plant built to test new and environmentally friendly technologies. Rain water from the streets is collected, purified in a sand filter and then released into the nearby lake, instead of draining into the sewage system causing further pressure on the treatment plant. The waste water from a single household produces sufficient biogas for the household's gas cooker. Most of the biogas is currently used as fuel in eco-friendly cars and busses. Stockholm is the Green Capital 2010.

Read more about the European Green Capital Award on www.europeangreencapital.eu.

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