

Cycle around Sweden's largest lake

- » Cycle route around Lake Vänern
- » About 640 km
- » Divided into four stages

VÄNERLEDEN 

Discover all the gems around the lake



Vänerleden is being inaugurated this summer and is a new national cycle route that takes you round Sweden's largest lake. The route is about 640 km long and divided into four stages. If you want to cycle at a gentle pace, it's reasonable to estimate spending 3-4 days on each stage. All the stages include great sights and attractions, convivial restaurants and overnight accommodation.

Around the lake you'll find magnificent experiences in nature and a range of wonderful accommodation to choose from right by the shore on campsites and in hotels and B&Bs. In addition, the towns around Vänern have a wealth of culture and many popular attractions to enjoy. The idea is that it will be just as much fun to go on a day trip with your family as to treat yourself to a whole week's holiday around the lake.

Varied nature

The Vänerleden route goes through picturesque and varied natural landscapes and in many places takes you close to the

water. Parts of the route are on separate cycle paths, others are along minor roads with low-speed traffic. Some stretches of the route are gravel tracks.

Sights and attractions

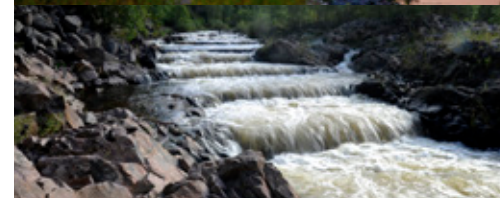
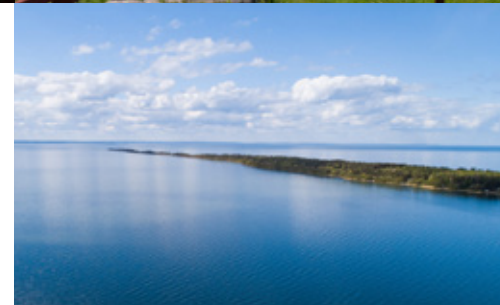
Vänerleden presents cyclists with Lake Vänern's finest bathing beaches, world-class cultural experiences and natural phenomena well worth a longer stop in your journey. Along the Vänerleden route you will encounter cosy cafés, well-stocked farm shops, and restaurants with White Guide status for quality that can satisfy hungry visitors.

Starched hotel sheets or snug tents

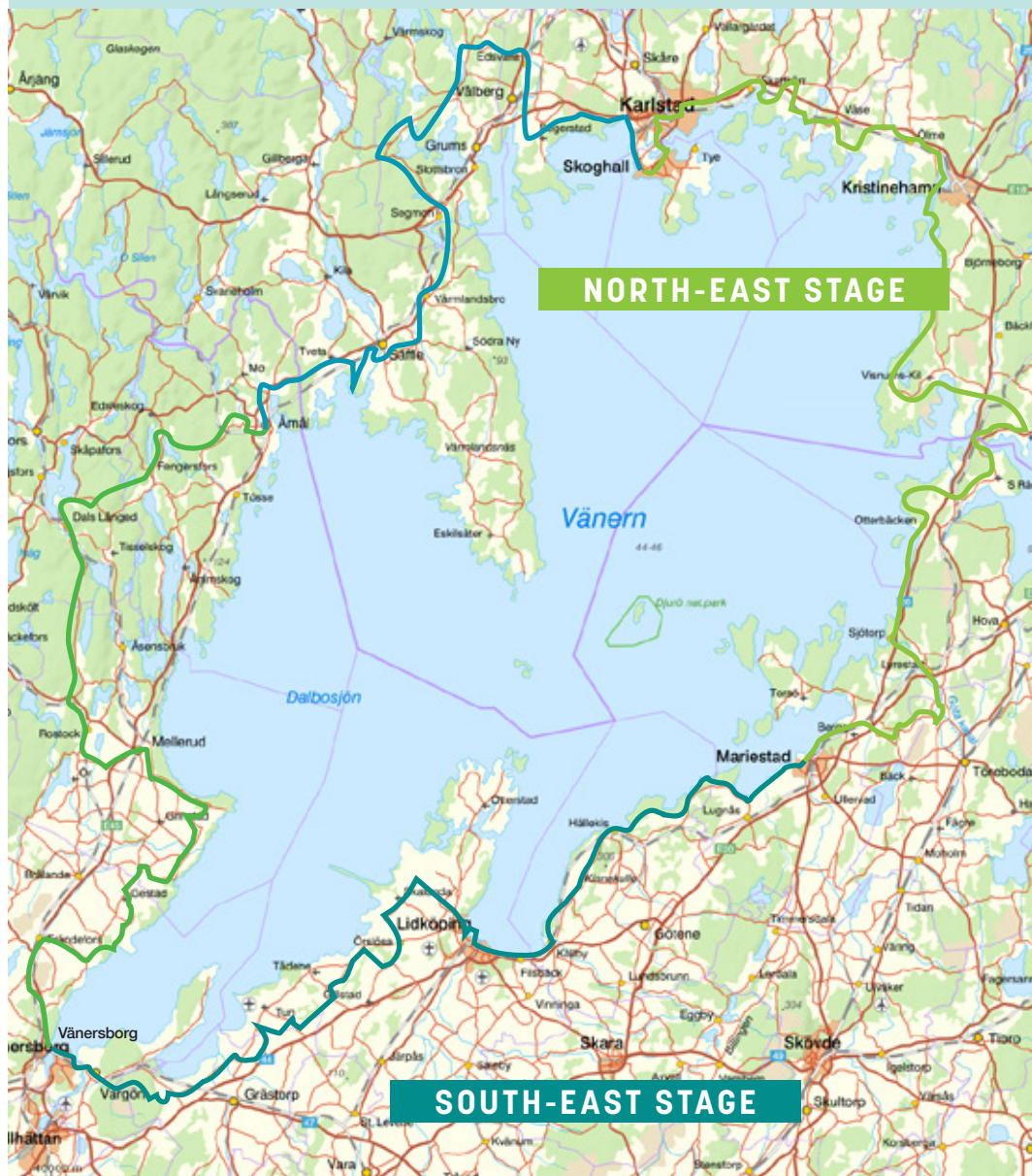
Vänerleden gives you the opportunity to compile your own journey and experiences. If you pack a tent and portable stove, you can stay overnight on one of the many campsites right by the shores of Vänern. Or you can check into hotels or bed and breakfasts along the way and enjoy comfortable beds and culinary delicacies.

It's a good idea to book in advance to ensure room availability. By eating at cafés and restaurants and sleeping in hotels, you only need to bring minimal kit with you on your cycling trip, which can be a relief on the hottest days of summer.

If you don't have a bicycle of your own, you can hire one from one of the cycle hire firms around Lake Vänern.



Vänerleden is about 640 km long and divided into four stages



NORTH-EAST STAGE

Karlstad – Mariestad, 186 km

The north-east stage is characterised by historic destinations, quality restaurants listed in the White Guide, and beautiful bathing beaches. The city of Karlstad is located at the north end of Vänern. The River Klarälven and Lake Vänern meet here and create a delta landscape in the heart of the city. It is easy to get here by train and bus, which makes Karlstad a good starting or finishing point for this stage of the cycle route. The same applies to Mariestad, situated at the other end of the stage. Halfway, you cycle round Varnumsviken Bay in Kristinehamn, where the route is right by Vänern and there are plenty of sights and attractions. At the furthest point, you pass the Picasso statue with a fantastic view of the Vänern horizon. If you want to swap your bike for a boat, the Båtbuss ("boat bus") service crosses the water between Karlstad and Kristinehamn. On the second part of the stage, you pass the old Södra Råda church, and when you reach Otterbäcken, the route follows the Vänern shoreline again until you get to Sjötorp and the Göta Canal. In Sjötorp you can take in the comings and goings of the harbour and watch boats navigating the locks. From Sjötorp the route follows the Göta Canal for a while before turning off towards Mariestad.

Sights along the route: the art gallery Sandgrund Lars Lerin, Värmland's Museum, the old manor house Alsters Herrgård, Kummelön nature reserve, the history museum Kristinehamns Historiska Museum, Östervik's chapel, the art museum Kristinehamns Konstmuseum, the Picasso sculpture, Södra Råda church, the salmon ladder Laxtrappan

in Gullspång, Sjötorp's lock area, the Göta Canal, Norrqvärn's hotel and recreation area, Vadsbo Museum and Mariestad's oldest town districts.

SOUTH-EAST STAGE

Mariestad – Vänern, 120 km

Along the south-east stage you will encounter unusual natural scenery in the form of the three table mountains Kinnekulle, Halleberg and Hunneberg. This area is also home to the narrow peninsula and terminal moraine Hindens Rev that extends 5 km into Lake Vänern. At Kinnekulle there are spectacular quarries as well as a lovely manor house and handicrafts village – perfect places for coffee breaks. From Lidköping and southwards towards Vänern, the winding roads make their way through fertile farmland. Here, you pass Svalnäs, one of Lake Vänern's finest and longest sandy beaches. If you want to see two of Sweden's oldest and best-preserved town centres, stop for a look round in Lidköping and Mariestad. At the starting or finishing point of the stage in Vänern, the route gives you picturesque views as you cycle by the shore of Vänern.

Sights along the route: Vadsbo Museum and Mariestad's oldest areas of town, Falkängen's handicrafts village in Hällekis, the manor house Hellekis Säteri and the adjacent garden café, Råbäck's harbour and stonemasonry, Kinnekulle table mountain and the café Utsiktens Kaffestuga, the Lake Vänern museum called Vänermuseet, ceramics at Rörstrand Museum and outlet, the old farming museum Särestad Landsbygdsmuseum, the lookout point Floutsikten on the table mountain Hunneberg, Vänerns Museum and the park Skräckleparken.

SOUTH-WEST STAGE

Vänernsberg – Åmål, 110 km

The south-west stage is best started or finished in Vänernsberg or Åmål. It is easy to reach these towns by train. In Vänernsberg, the cycle route winds its way along Vänern's shoreline, and in Åmål you can visit old town districts right by the lake. Here, the cycle route is mainly on rural roads with mixed traffic and wonderful historic places to visit. The route passes fine rock carvings and the ruins of Dalaborg, a fort from the 1300s. This is an excellent spot for a picnic; you will have an extensive view of Lake Vänern, and in good weather you can see the table mountain Kinnekulle across the water. This area is also home to a peninsula and terminal moraine: Hjortens Udde. It also extends into Vänern, but not as far as Hindens Rev does. If you want to go for a swim by one of Vänern's finest sandy beaches, you should stop at Vita Sannar. You have many good campsites to choose from, and if you want to experience the atmosphere in the harbours, there are several cosy guest marinas along the cycle route such as Sunnanå, Dalbergså and Åmåls Gästhamn. In summer, Åmål harbour is a real hive of activity, and if you're lucky your visit might coincide with the popular blues festival that features performances by artists from near and far.

Sights along the route: *Vänernsberg Museum, the park Skräckleparken, the ruins of the Dalaborg fort from the 1300s, rock carvings, the peninsula and terminal moraine Hjortens Udde, the old water mill Tollebols Kvarn and Åmål's old town districts.* ■

NORTH-WEST STAGE

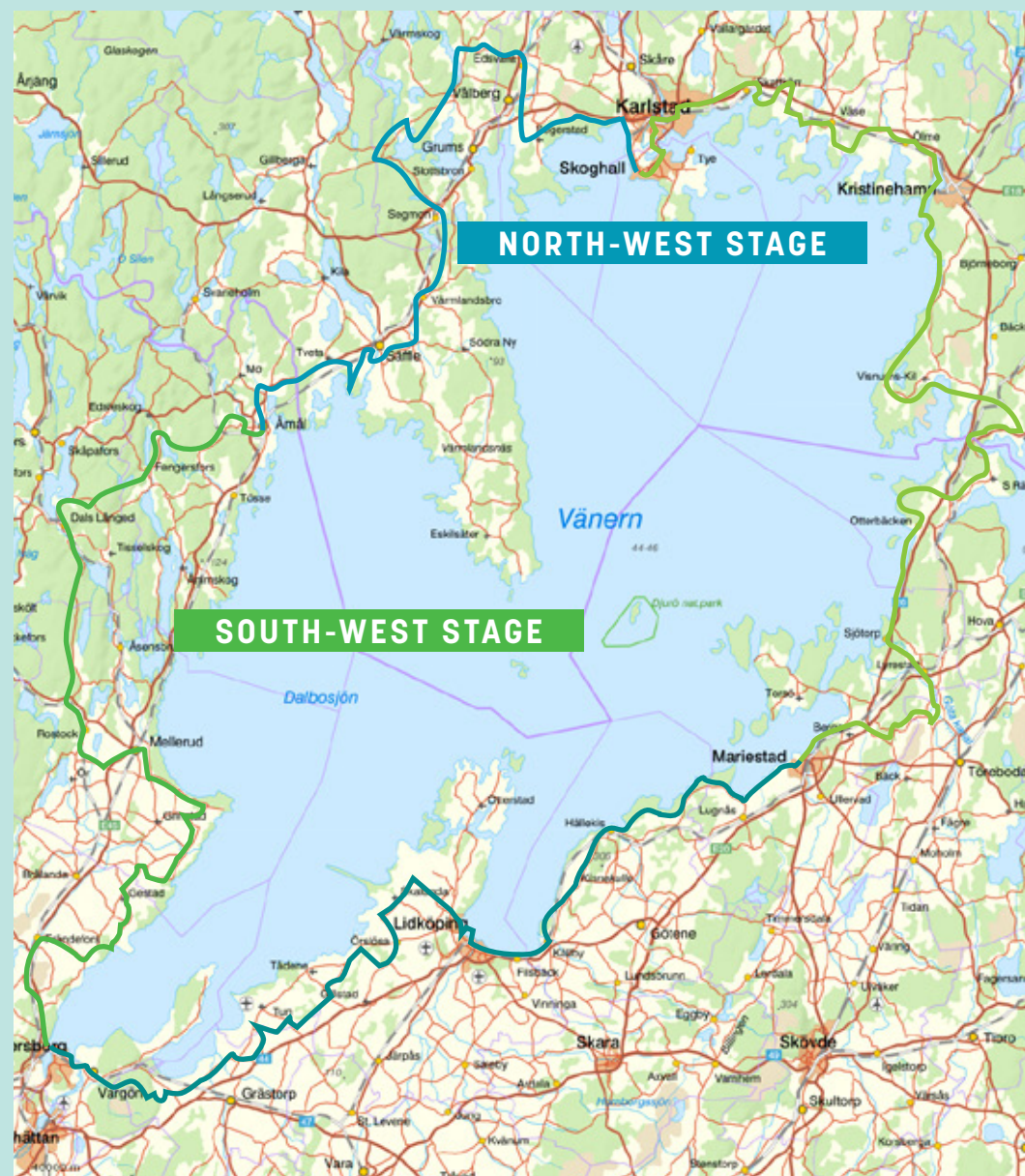
Åmål – Hammarö, 151 km

The north-west stage is partly on roads with mixed traffic but also on separate cycle paths and gravel tracks. In Åmål in summer you can experience a wonderful hub of activity in the harbour and enjoy the old town with its beautifully preserved areas from the 1700s. In the town of Säffle, the Duse Udde peninsula is worth a visit, offering both a campsite and a rocky shore where you can go swimming. Further on in the direction of Karlstad you pass several nice communities such as Värmlandsbro and Liljedal. We recommend a longer stop in Borgvik, a former ironworks community, where you can enjoy art, culture and food. From here, you can either choose to take your bicycle on an archipelago tour boat to Hammarö Island or continue cycling towards Karlstad. Along the route you'll find a couple of great campsites by the Vänern shoreline. On Hammarö Island you can visit the archipelago museum and fish smokery, which includes a convivial restaurant. Mörudden offers good food, swimming and accommodation. In Karlstad, the inner harbour Inre Hamn is a given place to visit. The area includes many restaurants, and there is a cosy hive of activity with both the guest marina and the berth for the local scheduled boats (Båtbussar – boat buses). The aroma of coffee also wafts welcomingly through the air from the Löffbergs coffee roastery.

Sights along the route: *Åmål's old town districts, the Duse Udde peninsula, the Grön Ko market hall in Värmlandsbro, Liljedal, the*

quality-assured walking trail Kycklingleden, Borgvik's former ironworks community with the Sliperiet art gallery, Segerstad nature reserve, the outdoor recreation area Skutbergets Friluftsområde, Lillängshamnen's

fishing harbour and smokery, the archipelago museum Skärgårdsmuseum on Hammarö Island, and Karlstad's inner harbour Inre Hamn with restaurants and the Löffbergs coffee roastery. ■



Vänerleden is signposted with the Swedish Transport Administration's (Trafikverket's) signs for national cycle routes. The signs are red, and Vänerleden is number 6.



At several locations along the cycle route there are information boards with suggested local attractions. They have QR codes that you can scan using your smartphone. One code takes you to the relevant municipality's tourism website, and the other downloads the stretch of the cycle route to your phone's map app.

There are also signs with general information about Vänerleden and the Lake Vänern Grand Tour concept. There, you can obtain tips for other activities on and by the lake such as canoeing/ kayaking, walking and boating.



Tips and maps are available
at vanerleden.se

