

Europe looks for best cities with smart tourism offer

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 12 October, 2021



Smart tourism, as it sounds an oxymoron, refers to very specific categories in which the candidate cities are evaluated. The European Union has made this initiative with intent to highlight the achievements of the cities of the continent in four areas: accessibility, sustainability, digitisation, and cultural heritage and creativity.

Seven cities, so different in geography, rhythms, moods, music and weather, were picked from among 30 cities from 16 countries. It is not surprising that the local authorities are looking for the seal of quality of a third edition competition that has already been awarded to Helsinki and Lyon in 2019 and Gothenburg and Malaga in 2020.

Smart Tourism Cities

Focusing on 2022, the communiqué from the European Commission highlights that the city of Valencia "has avant-garde architecture, a futuristic City of Arts and Sciences". "Its tourism sector employs more than 30,000 professionals"; and highlights "innovative practices" to measure the carbon footprint of tourism activity.

Spain's Canary Islands Palma, highlights the accessibility concerns of its representatives and the environmental certification of its beaches. It also mentions the effort for reusing the water, among other healthy practices for the protection of

urban forests.

French Bordeaux, the largest UNESCO-listed area in the world with 347 monuments, is making use of its existing resources and repurposing them to propel their smart tourism practices to the top.

Copenhagen in Denmark aims to be the world's first CO2-neutral capital by 2025. The new Planet Copenhagen App will contribute to a sustainable visit. Moreover, the iconic port buses of Copenhagen transport up to 700,000 passengers per year and are solely powered by electricity besides the newly reopened Museum of Copenhagen utilizes new technology to enrich the visitor experience.

In 2020, the Dublin City Council, Fáilte Ireland and Smart Dublin came together to launch a new strategic partnership: the city's first and very own Smart Tourism Programme. The aim of this programme is to make Dublin City a smart tourism destination and to capitalize on the opportunity to blend the city's expertise in technology, tourism and smart city collaboration.

Italian Florence has implemented several multilingual apps and resources, as well as physically altering the older and thus more challenging city areas, to increase accessibility. Florence has the largest European pedestrian area in the city center and the highest number of disabled parking spaces in Italy.

Slovenian Ljubljana has launched the URBANA smart card or URBANA App that can be used on public buses, for the bicycle-sharing system, as well as parking fees and cable-car rides to the Ljubljana Castle. An emission-free electric train enables disabled people to drive by attractions while listening to audio guides. The Ljubljana Wheelchair App gives advice on more than 130 wheelchair-accessible locations.