

Pressinfo:

The Island of Light Festival nominated for Sweden's Great Tourism Prize 2026!

Smögen 23th September: The prize is awarded for the 33rd year in a row by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and is awarded to an activity that contributes to the development of the Swedish tourism industry innovatively and sustainably and actively spreads knowledge in the area.

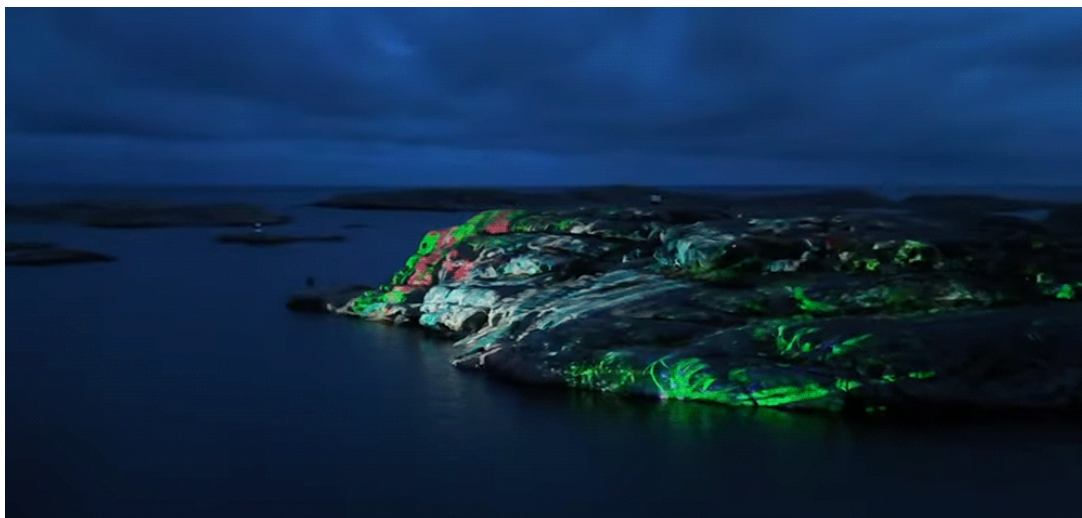
Since 2018, the Island of Light festival has transformed Smögen into a unique meeting place for art, nature and science. The festival's artistic quality has increased over the years, and today world-famous light artists are queuing up to participate in this unique festival, where granite cliffs, characteristic boathouses and lively water mirrors form the stage. Over time, the neighboring town of Kungshamn has also participated with support and activities.

100,000 SEK to the winner

If Island of Light wins the 2026 Great Tourism Prize, the organizer, the non-profit association Smögen Art Light Festival, will be awarded SEK 100,000 to develop a local educational project.

"It feels incredibly honorable to be nominated. It all started as a dream – to use light and darkness, the location, the sea and the sky to create a unique art experience with minimal impact on the sensitive environment. The fact that it has grown into an annual festival with world-renowned light artists and that the local communities come alive and can keep the season alive well into the fall, is an invaluable bonus for all of us who help and support the festival. It is also gratifying that we have noted a record number of visitors also coming from more countries – i.e. France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Holland, China and Mexico"

Dulce Sales Ahlberg, the association's founder and the festival's artistic director



French Miguel Chevalier offered a fantastic light show "Post-Natural: Living Plankton" on two large cliffs at Valleviken. **More:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6z27M9DS0o>

Light, rocks, water and twilight

Through site-specific light installations created by Swedish and international artists, the historic island takes on a completely new look for 10 days and evenings. The festival is held every year at the beginning of September and has become an important reason to travel outside the traditional summer season for visitors and an important addition through an extra month's season extension for the businesses around the festival.

When the location becomes part of the art

What distinguishes the festival is the interaction between the artworks and the Bohuslän environment. Instead of moving the art to a traditional exhibition space, Smögen's natural conditions are used as an integral part of the experience. The surrounding darkness, the sea and the landscape enhance the works and create experiences that can only occur on site – unique every evening.

Art as a tool for learning and sustainability

The festival also uses art as a tool for learning and dialogue. Through collaborations between artists, schools, researchers and the local community, works are created that highlight issues of the marine environment, recycling and sustainability. One example is a project where schoolchildren from Smögen and Kungshamn created hundreds of sculptures from recycled material from the sea which then became part of a larger light installation. Another example is that several of the works of art were created from collected marine waste and garbage and that actors in ocean research participate in different ways. The result is an event that shows how culture, innovation, research and collaboration can strengthen both the place and the tourism industry.



Finnish Anni Laukka offers a shadow image “Cast Away” created from a sculpture of collected plastic and fishing gear. More: <https://annilaukka.com/>

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth presents the award

The award was initiated by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, founded by the government in 2009, and goes to an actor that contributes to new thinking and innovative development of the tourism industry and works purposefully with knowledge dissemination and sustainability.

Our festival was nominated by the West Sweden Tourist Board with these quote:

"Island of Light has turned Smögen's autumn darkness into an asset. International light art and modern technology meet Smögen's unique nature and create a reason to travel outside of the high season. The festival combines international artistic height paired with strong local roots and allows recycled marine materials to become art that raises questions about the marine environment. Children and young people are involved in the creation and local businesses have a reason to stay open longer during the season. By growing from four to ten days, Island of Light has further strengthened its role as a season extender and shows how culture, innovation and sustainability can together develop a destination."

More info, high-resolution film and images



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