

# THE BLUE FLAG



eco-label for beaches and marinas



The Foundation for Environmental Education

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## The Blue Flag Campaign

The Blue Flag campaign is an exclusive, voluntary eco-label for beaches and marinas. The campaign is run by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), a non-profit non governmental organisation with member organisations in 38 countries as of 2005. The Blue Flag campaign started in Europe in 1987 with the purpose of encouraging beaches to comply with the EU Bathing Water Directive. The campaign criteria has since developed to address a wide range of issues and the number of participating countries and number of beaches and marinas receiving the award has increased yearly.

The Blue Flag is given to beaches and marinas that meet a specific set of criteria concerning environmental information and education, water quality, safety and services and environmental management. It has become a symbol of quality recognized by tourists and tour operators and can be used for the promotion of the awarded beach or marina.

The campaign is designed to raise environmental awareness and increase good environmental practices among tourists, local populations and beach and marina management and staff. The campaign criteria are also designed to work with the national, regional and local legislation of each country, thereby assuring that the legislation is being followed, or it can be used to set a benchmark higher than what already exists.

As of 2005 there were over 3000 sites awarded with the Blue Flag in 33 countries including 26 countries in Europe, countries in the Caribbean, Morocco, Canada and South Africa. Current information about participating countries and awarded sites can be found on the website [www.blueflag.org](http://www.blueflag.org).

### Other campaigns run by FEE

- Eco-Schools
- Young Reporters for the Environment
- Learning About Forests
- Green Key

### Campaign Criteria Areas

- Environmental Education and Information
- Water Quality
- Environmental Management
- Safety and Services

## Blue Flag Beach Campaign

The criteria for the Blue Flag Beach Campaign have developed over the years to become more holistic and to address the various issues of sustainability. The criteria have also been adapted and expanded to encompass issues encountered in areas outside of Europe. The criteria are either guideline or imperative or not applicable. Some of the criteria are:

- Information on sensitive areas in the coastal zone must be displayed
- Information about the Blue Flag Campaign must be displayed
- Information about bathing water quality must be displayed
- Code of conduct for the beach area must be displayed
- A minimum of 5 environmental education activities must be offered
- Compliance with standards for excellent bathing water quality
- Monitoring of the health of coral reefs located in the vicinity of the beach
- Compliance with community sewage treatment and effluent requirements
- Algae or other vegetation should be left to decay on the beach unless it constitutes a nuisance
- The beach must be clean and waste management and recycling facilities in place
- Sanitary facilities should be clean and have controlled sewage disposal
- No unauthorised camping or driving on the beach and no dumping
- Regulations concerning domestic animals on the beach must be strictly enforced
- All buildings and equipment on the beach must be properly maintained
- First aid and adequate number of lifeguards and/or lifesaving is present
- There must be management of different users and uses of the beach
- Emergency plans to cope with pollution must be in place
- A minimum of one Blue Flag beach in each municipality must have access and sanitary facilities for disabled persons
- Map of the beach indicating different facilities must be displayed



For more detailed information about the beach criteria, please refer to the beach explanatory notes which can be downloaded from the Blue Flag website.

## Blue Flag Marina Campaign

The criteria for the Blue Flag Marina Campaign have also developed over time to become more demanding and to address issues within the broader context of sustainability. The criteria are either guideline or imperative. Some of the criteria for marinas are:

- Information about natural sensitive areas must be displayed
- Code of environmental conduct must be displayed
- Information about the Blue Flag Marina Campaign must be displayed
- Three environmental education activities are offered to users and staff of the marina
- The individual Blue Flag for boat owners is offered through the marina
- Production of an environmental policy and plan at the marina
- Adequate and well managed litterbins and/or garbage containers
- Facilities for receiving and disposing of at least three kinds of hazardous waste
- Facilities for receiving and disposing of at least three kinds of recyclable waste
- Bilge and toilet pumping facilities are present
- Buildings and equipment are well maintained and integrated
- Sanitary facilities are clean and well posted
- No pollution from boat washing/repair areas may enter the sewage system or natural surroundings
- No parking/driving in the marina, unless in specific designated areas
- Adequate and well signposted lifesaving, first-aid and fire-fighting equipment
- Emergency plans in case of accidents must be produced, and safety precautions posted
- Electricity and water must be available at the berths, properly installed
- Facilities for disabled people
- Map indicating the location of the different facilities is posted at the marina
- Visually clean water and marina



For more detailed information about the marina criteria, please refer to the marina explanatory notes which can be downloaded from the Blue Flag website.

## Application Procedure

Beaches and marinas who would like to apply for the Blue Flag award should first contact their national FEE organisation's Blue Flag operator. The national operators provide interested parties with the national Blue Flag application form and procedural instructions. A pre-application review of the applicant is sometimes done to help identify problem areas that could be improved.

The National Jury meets once a year to review the candidates from that country and to judge if they are in compliance with all of the Blue Flag criteria. Approved candidates are then forwarded to the International Jury.

The International Blue Flag Jury meets twice a year to review candidates from different areas of the world. Once the candidates have been accepted by the International Jury they are awarded with the Blue Flag for one season.

Control visits are made during the Blue Flag season by both national and international controllers to assure that all criteria are being met. If problems are found the flag is withdrawn until they are fixed. If the problem is very serious or if the problem is not fixed within a given period of time then the flag is withdrawn for the rest of the season. The public also help keep watch over the Blue Flag beaches and marinas and are encouraged to report any problems to the national and international Blue Flag contacts.



## Blue Flag in a New Country

To establish the Blue Flag campaign in a new country a nationally active non-profit, non-governmental organisation must first become a member of the Foundation for Environmental Education and the national representative and responsible body for FEE in that country. This NGO should have environmental education as one of their aims, have the necessary resources available to run the campaign, and meet other criteria set by FEE.

Interested organisations should contact the FEE secretariat and apply for Associate membership. In the application they must demonstrate their capabilities and how they plan to run the Blue Flag campaign. They must also present a plan for how they will, within three years of becoming members, start running a second FEE campaign. The new FEE member organisation will be assigned a mentor to instruct them through the first few years.

At the start of the Blue Flag Campaign, a national information workshop must be held, and a Steering Committee will be established consisting of representatives from the national water, tourism, education and environmental authorities and other relevant experts and interest groups such as beach/marina association and recreational groups. This committee will review the international criteria and identify how it fits with their local legislation and situation. They will then choose one or more beaches or marinas to become the first Blue Flag pilot sites. These first pilot sites will serve as learning opportunities and examples for other beaches and marinas in the country.

Once the pilot sites have successfully completed a season and they show to be in full compliance with the Blue Flag criteria, they can apply for the full Blue Flag status.

### National Jury Composition

- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Tourism and/or National Tourism Association
- Association of Local Authorities
- National Sailing Association or other marina experts
- Association of beach/marina managers
- National lifesaving association
- Education experts
- Other NGOs
- Other experts

### International Jury Composition

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- World Tourism Organization (WTO)
- International Lifesaving Federation (ILS)
- International Council of Marine Industry Association (ICOMIA)
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- European Union for Coastal Conservation (EUCC)
- European Union

### More information

For more information about becoming a member of FEE and starting any of the campaigns please refer to the FEE website or contact the FEE Secretariat.

[www.fee-international.org](http://www.fee-international.org)  
[fee@friluftsradet.dk](mailto:fee@friluftsradet.dk)



## Environmental Education

Each Blue Flag marina and beach are required to carry out three or five environmental education activities respectively. The activities should target different groups such as tourists, boat owners, staff, children or local populations. The activities can vary from drawing competitions to clean-up days, seminars, guided nature walks, publications etc.

### Italy – Environmental Education Course for Municipalities

Instructional seminars and presentations are made to municipalities to teach them about Blue Flag. The accompanying handbook has three parts: introduction and brief historical overview of the notion of “sustainable development”; the EU politics for sustainable development, systems of environmental management and the implementation of an environmental system (ISO 14001) in an institutional organization; and a description of the Blue Flag campaign including the criteria, waste treatment practices, tourist facilities, etc.



### Denmark – Marine Life Exploration

The Blue Flag informational centre, manned by a volunteer, has buckets and nets available for the children and parents to borrow to catch small crabs in the marina area. The children are encouraged to bring the crabs to the centre where the volunteer tells them about the sea life they have found. The animals are then released back into the sea.



### Greece – Brochure for Loutraki Beach

The colourful brochure informs visitors about the Blue Flag Campaign, giving a short history and overview of the criteria, as well as environmental conduct guidelines, safety information and contacts.



## The Individual Blue Flag for Boat Owners

Individual commitment is one of the best ways to encourage good environmental practices. To stimulate this, the Individual Blue Flag was created for the use of boat owners. Boat owners can find the pennant at their local Blue Flag marina office. They can receive the Individual Blue Flag by signing a Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct contains such statements as:



- I will not throw garbage into the sea or along the coast
- I will not release toilet water in the sea in coastal waters and sensitive areas
- I will not release poisonous or toxic waste (oil, paint, used batteries, cleaning agents, etc.) in the sea. I will deliver these types of waste to the containers in the marina
- I will promote and use recycling facilities (glass, paper, etc.)
- I will use the most environmentally friendly products among paints, anti-foulings, paint remover, detergents, etc., that are available and work efficiently
- I will instantly report pollution or other violation of environmental regulations to the authorities
- I will not use forbidden fishing practice and I will respect periods when fishing is prohibited
- I will protect animals and plants in the sea, including no disturbance of breeding birds, seals or other marine mammals
- I will respect vulnerable and protected areas
- I will avoid damage of the sea bottom, e.g. in the way that I anchor
- I will avoid disturbing fishery or fishing gear
- I will not buy or use objects made from protected species or from archaeological underwater findings
- I will encourage other sailers also to take care of the environment

## Baltic Sea Breeze Project

Starting in 2005 there have been nine national Blue Flag campaigns participating in a project partially financed by the EU called the “Baltic Sea Breeze”. The aim of this project is to reduce marine pollution by educating boaters and marina owners on how they should act in this sensitive brackish water environment. Other partners include research institutes, local governments, fishing associations, boat owner associations and media.



The role of Blue Flag in the project is to strengthen the campaign in the region, to establish the Blue Flag programme in Poland and Russia, and to increase the number of boaters signing up to receive the Individual Blue Flag.

## National Blue Flag contacts

For further contact details please refer to the Blue Flag website under “Contact Blue Flag”.

Belgium	Bond Beter Leefmilieu
Bulgaria	Bulgarian Blue Flag Movement
Canada	Environmental Defence Canada
Caribbean	Caribbean Conservation Association
Chile	Instituto de Ecología Política
Croatia	Pokret Prijatelj Prirode – “Lijepa Nasa”
Cyprus	CYMEPA
Denmark	Friluftsrådet – The Danish Outdoor Council
England and N. Ireland	ENCAMS
Estonia	Hoia Eesti Merd
Finland	Pidä Saaristo Siistinä ry
France	FEE France
Germany	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Umwelterziehung (DGU)
Greece	Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature
Iceland	Landvernd
Ireland	An Taisce
Italy	FEE Italia
Latvia	Vides Aizsardzibas Klubs (VAK)
Lithuania	Lithuanian Green Movement
Montenegro	ECOM – Environmental Consultancy of Montenegro
Morocco	Fondation Mohammed VI pour la Protection de l'Environnement
Netherlands	FEEE-N
New Zealand	FEEE-NZ
Norway	FEE-Norway
Poland	Ecobaltic Foundation
Portugal	FEE Portugal
Romania	Central Carpato-Daunbian de Geoecologie
Russia	Keep St Petersburg Tidy
Scotland	Keep Scotland Beautiful
Slovenia	DOVES – FEE Slovenia
South Africa	Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA)
Spain	Asociación de Educación Ambiental y del Consumidor (A.D.E.A.C.)
Sweden	Håll Sverige Rent
Turkey	Türkiye Çevre Egitim Vakfi
Wales	Keep Wales Tidy Campaign

## Blue Flag Sponsors

We would like to thank our cooperate sponsors for their continued support which has made the development and expansion of the campaign possible. Their support has contributed to the health of marine environments and the education and awareness of the world's people.

First Choice Holidays



Beach Trotters



Shipmate



Shore Safety



## Blue Flag Partners

World Tourism Organisation (WTO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

European Union for Coastal Conservation (EUCC)

European Union

International Lifesaving Federation (ILS)

International Council of Marine Industry Association (ICOMIA)  
Reef Check