The logo 'Leading Quality Trails- Best of Europe' is used on national as well as





How is it possible to ensure this? Through the creation of a system of assessment that takes into account the needs of walkers!

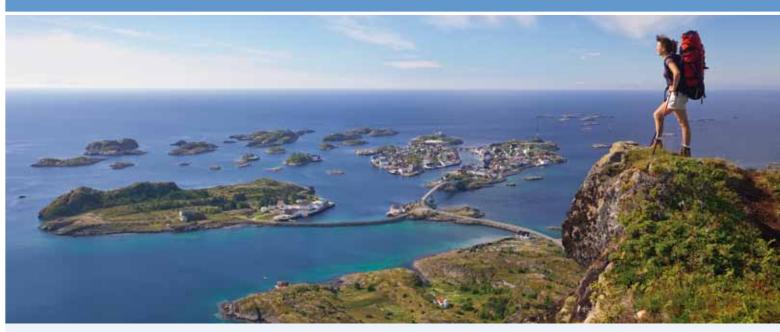
Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe

The use of the criteria system 'Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe' ren- The rating as 'Leading Quality Trails- Best of Europe' is an award as well as a ders the attractiveness of routes measurable and guarantees a high quality transparent method to optimise the overall route infrastructure. The criteria walking experience. Such a system has to capture the complexity of different can be used as a checklist and help countries that have to build up their landscapes, infrastructures and route character in comparable dimensions. To walking route network. In countries that already have a functioning route allow for the variety and uniqueness of the landscapes and walking routes in network, such a system can strengthen walking tourism further. the different regions of Europe, the criteria system has been constructed with maximum flexibility. It uses the years of practical experience in countries that already use quality criteria to plan and upgrade walking trails.

With the "Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe", the ERA sets a European standard bringing multiple uses for walking tourism:

- iving the walking tourist an overview and decision aid
- → giving regard to ecology and nature preservation
- → involvement of all affected parties in the quality process
- → trained and competent trail experts in the area e.g. from walking groups, wildlife reserves and tourism
- → competitive edge for the walking region in marketing

Best of Europe



Process

- An interested region (tourism body, National Park, walking group, etc.) contacts the ERA to start the quality process.
- 2. The ERA offers a 2-day European-wide uniform course for assessors in the region.
- The trained persons gather the data necessary for the quality assessment on the trails and assess them initially (analysis of strength and weakness). Thus shortcomings in the quality of the route can be identified quickly and possibilities for upgrades can be found.
- When the route fulfills the 'Quality route' criteria, an application for certification can be applied for with the ERA.
- The data gathered on the route are independently assessed and analysed by the ERA. Qualified ERA personnel carry out spot checks on the route locally.
- When the results of the checks are positive, the route gets the certification 'Leading Quality Trails' for the period of 3 years. After this time, the quality of the route has to be tested again. The quality mark can be used in printed matter and on the internet to market the walking route.

The ERA appointed the Deutscher Wanderverband Service Ltd. with the implementation of the 'Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe'.



Best of Europe

SPECIAL QUALITY CERTIFICATION FOR WALKING TRAILS. WALKING IS VERY POPULAR. ALL OVER EUROPE MORE AND MORE





walking trail complies with all environmental protection regulations (particularly in sensitive areas like natural reserves, biotopes, etc.).

Maintenance The proposer guarantees for the complete period of use of the certification that maintenance of the trail - surface and furniture - is ensured. The ongoing regular inspections and care has to be documented and sent to the ERA. The fundamental principles of ERA way marking apply (Bechyné/Czech Republic, 2004).

Nature conservation The proposer confirms that the route of the

Validity period The certification period starts with the handing over of the certificate and runs for 3 years.

Co-operation All affected interest groups that are part of the quality process in the trail region have to be involved by the proposers from the very start. Interested parties can include forest services, NPWS, tourism groups, mountaineering organisations, walking clubs, land owners, local authorities and communities.

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Sustainability



ERA-EWV-FERF

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Best of Europe





Choice and core criteria – an overview...

A walking route is examined on three levels: 4-km sections (= ca. 1 hour walking time), daily stages, overall length of route. This multi-dimensional assessment assures that the route is attractive throughout, offering the walking tourist the most variety possible. Every 4-km section will be assessed and judged by using the following 23 criteria. To achieve full accreditation each 4-km section must achieve 11 points for the choice criteria. Throughout the overall length and all daily stages all core criteria must be met.

choice criteria – based on 4-km sections

	trail surface format	limit
1.	natural trails natural, non-engineered paths without artificial fortification, easy walking	at least 1,000 m counts double over 2,000 m
2.	fortified trails paths with artificial non-sealed surfaces	without limit
3.	uneven but passable trails e.g. rough loose stone/boulder cover, heavily eroded paths	maximum 300 m
4.	sealed surfaces tarmac, concrete, pavement as tread way	maximum 500 m
5. 5.1 5.2	paths trail width less than 1m natural paths: non-engineered paths safety secured paths: paths that have to be fortified for safety reasons	altogether at least 500 m counts double over 1,500 m
6.	on busy roads including unsecured crossings	maximum 50 m
7.	alongside busy roads up to a distance of one lane to the side of the road	maximum 300 m
	trail routing system/visitor guiding	limit
8.	marking recognition of the national marking system, as long as they comply with the fundamental principles of ERA way marking (Bechyné/Czech Republic, 2004)	complete, without gaps, correctly aligned and without errors
9.	signposting with details of destination, direction, distance or time as well as number or trail identification mark	at least 2
10.	network integration with other walking trails	at least 2
	nature/landscape	limit
11.	variety distinctly different landscape formations	at least 3
12.	natural quietness no machine or traffic noises	at least 1,000 m continuous
13.	attractive natural landscapes special biotopes or geotopes, impressive forests, coastal landscapes, rock formations, horticultural areas, etc.	at least 1 (more counts double)
14.	natural waters e.g. natural wells, streams, rivers, lakes, bogs, etc.	at least 1 (more counts double)
15.	points of natural beauty e.g. summits, gorges, ravines, rocks, caves, waterfalls, natural heritage sites	at least 1 (more counts double)
16.	impressive panoramas continuous free views (at least 3 years guaranteed) min. 45 degree openings and 2,000 m visibility	at least 1 (more counts double)

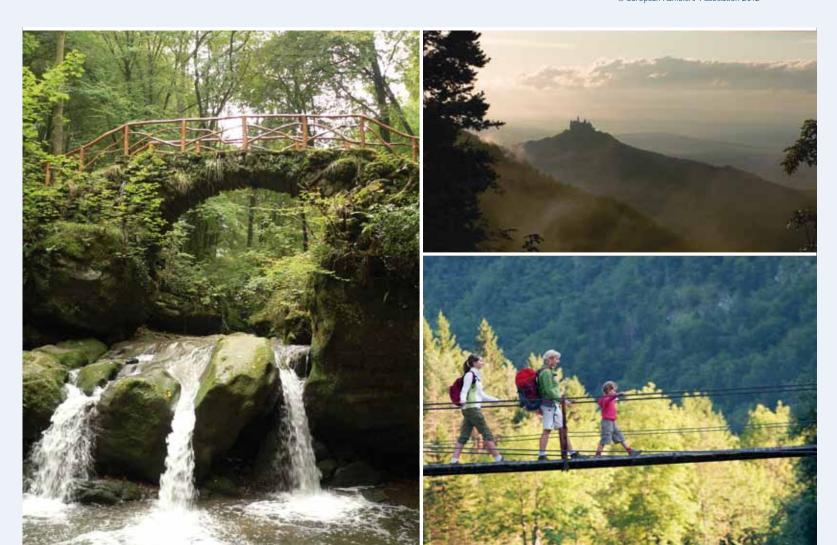
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17.	pleasing urban scenes e.g. old town areas, representative buildings and squares, rural village scer	
18.	local attractions cultural and historical sites of local and/or regional importance	
19.	national attractions e.g. castles, monasteries, national monuments	
	civilisation	
20.	intensively developed environment intensively built up areas , industrial parks, water treatment plants,	
21.	service provision gastronomy or shops for catering provisions open from midday	
	and at least 5 days per week	

culture

23. resting places

e.g. benches, picnic tables, service areas, huts, etc.





	limit		
cenes	at least 1 (more counts double)		
	at least 2		
	at least 1 (more counts double)		
	limit		
	maximum 300 m		
	at least 1		
	at least 1		
	at least 2		
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core criteria – based on daily stages

core criteria	characteristic
safety	on all daily stages the safety regulations/ requirements have to be in accordance with national law/legal framework
grading of the daily stage	easy, moderate, strenuous, very difficult
walker friendly entry, walking portal, walkers' car park	availability of information about the trail
mobility villages/ towns (daily stage access points) along the route are connected to the trail by public transport (bus, train, taxi, cab)	at least 2 connections daily, or access via signposted access routes no further than 2-3 hours walking distance to trail
accommodation hotel, questhouse, B&B, hostel, campsite, pick up transfer	at the start and end of each daily stage the re has to be overnight accommodation or transfer possibility available
luggage transport	can be booked through a local provider (accommodation provider, taxi company, tourist information, etc.)
private property/access	access to private property (restricted by gates, fences, walls, hedges, etc.) has to be guaranteed from 9am to 5pm

core criteria	characteristic
natural trails	at least 35 % of the overall route and half of the safety secured paths can be counted as natural trail
uneven but passable trails	max. 5 % of the overall route max. 1,500 m continuously
sealed surfaces	max. 20 % of the overall route max. 3,000 m continuously
on busy roads	max. 3 % of the overall route max. 300 m continuously
alongside busy roads	max. 10 % of the overall route max. 3,000 m continuously
marking	100 % of overall route
variety	at least 2 formation changes per 8 km
experience/adventure potential	at least 4 points per 8 km for the choice criteria 13-19
intensively used environment	max. 10 % of the overall route max. 3,000 m continuously
walker friendly entry at start and end point of trail	at least 1 head board with information about the route, at least 2 languages (local language + 1 other; English, French or German
mobility at start and end point of trail start and end point of trail are serviced by public transport (bus/train, alternative walkers' taxi)	at least 2 services daily