

The logo 'Leading Quality Trails- Best of Europe' is used on national as well as international trails. Certification is only available for complete trails. Prerequisite is a distance of at least 50 km with three daily stages. Exceptions to the rule are the European Long Distance routes. They can be certified in part, as long as the minimum length is given.



**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' renders the attractiveness of routes measurable and guarantees a high quality walking experience. Such a system has to capture the complexity of different landscapes, infrastructures and route character in comparable dimensions. To allow for the variety and uniqueness of the landscapes and walking routes in 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.

The rating as 'Leading Quality Trails- Best of Europe' is an award as well as a transparent method to optimise the overall route infrastructure. The criteria can be used as a checklist and help countries that have to build up their walking route network. In countries that already have a functioning route network, such a system can strengthen walking tourism further.

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

- giving 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

## Step by step to Leading Quality Trails Best of Europe



Process	
1.	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.
3.	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.
4.	When the route fulfills the 'Quality route' criteria, an application for certification can be applied for with the ERA.
5.	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.
6.	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'.



### Sustainability

**Nature conservation** The proposer confirms that the route of the 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 (Bechyně/Czech Republic, 2004).

**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.

### EUROPEAN RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION

Wilhelmshöher Allee 157-159  
34121 Kassel  
phone +49(0) 561/93873-0  
fax +49(0) 561/93873-10  
info@leading-quality-trail.eu  
www.era-ewv-ferp.com  
www.leading-quality-trail.eu



## Leading Quality Trails Best of Europe

**SPECIAL QUALITY CERTIFICATION FOR WALKING TRAILS.** WALKING IS VERY POPULAR. ALL OVER EUROPE MORE AND MORE PEOPLE TIE THEIR BOOT LACES DURING THEIR HOLIDAYS AND LEISURE TIME, AND DISCOVER A VARIETY OF NATURAL BEAUTIES ON FOOT. THE SPECIAL QUALITY CERTIFICATE OF 'LEADING QUALITY TRAILS – BEST OF EUROPE' OFFERS A TRANSPARENT SYSTEM OF CRITERIA FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TRAIL QUALITY THROUGHOUT EUROPE.



# Leading Quality Trails

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

© European Ramblers' Association 2012

culture	limit
<b>17. pleasing urban scenes</b> e.g. old town areas, representative buildings and squares, rural village scenes	at least 1 (more counts double)
<b>18. local attractions</b> cultural and historical sites of local and/or regional importance	at least 2
<b>19. national attractions</b> e.g. castles, monasteries, national monuments	at least 1 (more counts double)
civilisation	limit
<b>20. intensively developed environment</b> intensively built up areas, industrial parks, water treatment plants,	maximum 300 m
<b>21. service provision</b> gastronomy or shops for catering provisions open from midday and at least 5 days per week	at least 1
<b>22. access points for public or private transport</b> regular service, at least a connection every 2 hours	at least 1
<b>23. resting places</b> e.g. benches, picnic tables, service areas, huts, etc.	at least 2

© European Ramblers' Association 2012



#### core criteria – based on daily stages

core criteria	characteristic
<b>safety</b>	on all daily stages the safety regulations/requirements have to be in accordance with national law/legal framework
<b>grading of the daily stage</b>	easy, moderate, strenuous, very difficult
<b>walker friendly entry, walking portal, walkers' car park</b>	availability of information about the trail
<b>mobility</b> 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
<b>accommodation</b> hotel, questhouse, B&B, hostel, campsite, pick up transfer	at the start and end of each daily stage there has to be overnight accommodation or transfer possibility available
<b>luggage transport</b>	can be booked through a local provider (accommodation provider, taxi company, tourist information, etc.)
<b>private property/access</b>	access to private property (restricted by gates, fences, walls, hedges, etc.) has to be guaranteed from 9am to 5pm

#### core criteria – based on the total route

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

© European Ramblers' Association 2012