

Cycling Tourism:

How the Dutch Cycling Vision Can Advance the Field



Trekvaartbrug in Voorhout, Netherlands

Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

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The Netherlands' LF Coastal Route - EuroVelo 12
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy



01. About the Dutch Cycling Embassy

The Dutch Cycling Embassy (DCE) acts as an intermediary between international demand for Dutch cycling expertise and Dutch parties that can deliver. We help governments, businesses, and organizations access the best of Dutch cycling: from planning and policy to design, products, and infrastructure.

The DCE is a non-profit with a public-private network for cycling-friendly cities and regions worldwide. Our network brings together Dutch cycling knowledge, experience, and experts from private companies, NGOs, research institutions, and national and local governments.

Cycling in Groningen, Netherlands
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy



02. Introduction

Cycling tourism is an increasingly important tool for advancing economic development, promoting sustainable travel, expanding mobility options for residents and tourists, and enhancing opportunities for leisure and recreation. From long-distance cycling routes to regional trail networks connecting cities and towns, investments in cycling tourism can strengthen existing mobility networks, attract visitors to a wider range of destinations, support local businesses, and improve health, well-being, and quality of life for both residents and tourists.

With interest in cycling tourism growing globally, many communities are recognizing the value of investing in cycling tourism infrastructure, programming, and administration. **While the Netherlands is not the only country which has invested in cycling tourism, Dutch cycling principles offer a framework for supporting cycling tourism.**

With a focus on creating networks of cohesive, safe, and attractive cycling infrastructure, these principles have made cycling a part of everyday life in the Netherlands. The same strategies that make day-to-day cycling practical and enjoyable can also create exceptional experiences for recreational cyclists and tourists. This report explores the current state of cycling tourism, examines how Dutch cycling principles can advance the field, and highlights cycling tourism best practices, both in the Netherlands and globally.

03. Understanding Cycling Tourism

This section defines cycling tourism, highlights its benefits, and provides a brief overview of the global state of affairs.

What is Cycling Tourism?

Cycling tourism refers to recreational travel between places by bicycle for leisure purposes where cycling is an integral part of the tourist experience. It can encompass a wide range of activities, including multi-day cycling tours, independent long-distance travel by bike, excursions that blend cycling with other modes of transportation, mountain biking, or short recreational rides. Cyclists may choose to travel to a specific destination specifically for cycling or incorporate cycling into one or two days of a longer vacation.

Why Invest in Cycling Tourism?

Cycling tourism offers significant economic, environmental, and social benefits for communities. Unlike many other forms of tourism, it can support local businesses across both urban and rural areas while also encouraging sustainable travel and active recreation. Strategic investments in cycling routes can attract visitors, extend their stays, and distribute tourism to smaller, less well-known communities and destinations that do not often benefit from tourism.

The economic impact of recreational cycling is substantial. [Decisio](#), an economic research and consultancy firm and DCE network participant, found that cyclists in the Netherlands took approximately 300 million day trips and 5.85 million overnight trips, contributing a total of approximately €3.6 billion to the Dutch economy and supporting 38,700 full-time jobs³. Other research estimates that cycling tourism across Europe contributes approximately to 525,000 associated jobs and €44² billion in annual economic value.

The benefits of cycling tourism extend beyond the visitor economy. Investments in a recreational cycling network can improve safety for all road users, reduce environmental impacts by encouraging sustainable travel, and contribute to healthier, more livable communities. For a more comprehensive overview of the benefits of investments in cycling, see the DCE's 2026 report, [Dutch Cycling Vision: The Wellbeing of Cycling](#).



Continuous Regional cycle route in Nijmegen, Netherlands
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

Cycling Tourism, an international perspective

Cycling tourism has received growing attention in recent years as travelers increasingly seek outdoor recreation, active experiences, sustainable travel, and authentic local experiences ⁵⁻⁸. In response, governments and the tourism sector are recognizing cycling tourism's potential to support economic development, active and sustainable mobility, and regional tourism.

Across Europe, public investment in cycling tourism has increased at both the European and national levels. In 2024, the Council of the European Union, European Commission and European Parliament signed the European Declaration on Cycling, the first inter-institutional cycling policy at the European level. The Declaration calls for greater support for touristic and recreational cycling in both urban and rural areas ⁶⁻⁷, with EuroVelo routes, a network of long-distance, trans-European cycling routes, forming the backbone of Europe's cycling network ¹. In addition to improving EuroVelo routes, many European countries, including Spain, Poland, and France, have also recently established broader cycling tourism strategies and goals.



Cycle lane in Bratislava, Slovakia
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

Cycling tourism is also growing outside of Europe. Both national and local governments in Japan have taken steps to integrate cycling into their tourism goals by developing the National Cycle Route network and modifying public transport to accommodate bikes ⁹. In 2024, Vélo Québec, a non-profit organization promoting and developing cycling culture and tourism across Québec, launched “La Grande traversée — Bicycle tourism roadmap,” its strategy for developing bike tourism as an accessible and distinct offering in the province by 2030 ¹⁰. These examples, plus countless others, demonstrate a growing interest in investing in cycling tourism.

Despite this momentum, approaches to cycling tourism vary. Some communities, like the Netherlands, have coordinated cycling networks supported by consistent signage, high-quality branding, route planning tools, and long-term funding. **Elsewhere, cycling tourism is often approached primarily as an infrastructure project or a destination branding challenge, with less attention given to where cycling infrastructure and the tourist experience intersect.**

Cycling tourism sits at the intersection of transportation, recreation, tourism, and economic development. **Success relies on both safe and comfortable infrastructure, and also on creating an attractive visitor experience,** through coordinated governance, easy-to-understand route information, route amenities, and partnerships with local businesses. With interest in cycling tourism growing, the Dutch Cycling Vision offers a framework to integrate these elements into a coherent strategy.



Cycling bridge in Zoetermeer, Netherlands

Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy



Bicycle parking in Amsterdam

Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

04. Advancing Cycling Tourism With the Dutch Cycling Vision

The Dutch Cycling Vision recognizes that every community has the potential to be a great place for cycling, not simply by copying what the Netherlands has done, but by using the Dutch experience as the outline to write their own cycling story.

The Dutch Cycling Vision relies on an integrated cycling policy with the following three components:

- **Hardware:** Modifications to the physical elements of the built environment, such as cycling infrastructure, bike parking facilities, and wayfinding systems
- **Software:** Attempts to change user behavior to encourage cycling, including awareness campaigns, education, or outreach
- **Orgware:** Organizational and institutional elements, such as capacity building, governance frameworks, and stakeholder collaboration

It is not enough to focus only on building the hardware (e.g. development of cycle paths or bike parking). Rather, communities can attract cyclists by building the physical infrastructure required for cycling (hardware), promoting cycling (software), and establishing governance models and collaborative structures (orgware). The Dutch Cycling Vision is frequently applied to cycling as a form of mobility for commuting or daily errands. However, the principles also apply to recreational cycling and cycling tourism.

05. Hardware Creates the Foundation for Cycling Tourism

Hardware refers to modifications to the physical elements of the built environment to enable more people to cycle more often. These modifications make cycling tourism possible through connected recreational cycling networks with safe, high-quality infrastructure; clear signage and wayfinding systems; and supporting amenities along cycling routes. Together, these components create a cycling experience that is safe, easy to plan, and enjoyable for all types of tourists while also supporting the everyday mobility needs of local residents.

Build Recreational Cycling Networks with Consistent Signage

A connected recreational cycling network is the foundation for successful cycling tourism. Rather than developing individual trails or isolated routes, destinations should plan networks that connect attractions, accommodations, transportation hubs, and other visitor amenities. **Connected networks ensure that investments in cycling infrastructure function as a cohesive system that attracts riders, rather than a series of disconnected projects.** Consistent and informative signage ensures that the network is easy to understand and follow for all types of cyclists.

While the Netherlands offers one model for planning and maintaining a recreational cycling network, there is no one correct approach. Rather, communities can draw inspiration from the Dutch network while adapting their own network based on their unique context. The following case studies illustrate how different governance structures, the presence of existing cycling infrastructure, and local priorities have shaped successful cycling networks.

The Netherlands, a nation-wide network of cycling routes

The Netherlands has one of the most comprehensive recreational cycling networks through its National LF (Landelijke Fietsroutes) ¹¹ network and easy-to-understand cycle junction system. LF routes are long-distance routes perfect for both short recreational outings and multi-day cycling trips. These routes are centrally managed by Fietsplatform, a non-profit organization focused on recreational cycling in the Netherlands. LF routes have consistent signage and quality standards. Both LF routes and other regional cycling routes are included in the country's national numbered junction network (knooppuntensysteem). Each junction, or place where multiple routes intersect, is numbered. This allows cyclists to plan a route without relying on GPS or a physical map. Like LF routes, every node in the junction network has standard signage, creating a cohesive cycling experience across the Netherlands ¹². **Both LF routes and the junction system work together to provide a consistent, enjoyable experience for recreational cyclists and those making their daily commutes.**



Signage on the LF Coastal Route - EuroVelo 12 (R)
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

International Examples

Switzerland's outdoor Recreation Networks

Switzerland offers an alternate model built around strong national coordination. The country's unified approach to route planning and management creates a consistent recreational cycling experience across all 26 of Switzerland's cantons. SwitzerlandMobility (SchweizMobil) is a non-profit designated as the official organization for recreational cycling and mountain biking. The organization develops national guidelines for route development, establishes uniform standards for routes, and supports the network planning, signage, and infrastructure improvement processes in partnership with cantons ¹³.

Austria's Approach to Building Recreational Cycle Networks

Austria has taken a different approach, gradually building a connected cycling network by relying on existing assets, such as EuroVelo routes and low-traffic roads. Rather than replace the infrastructure nationwide or coordinate the management of existing infrastructure at a national level, Austria started at the provincial level. Lower Austria introduced route improvements and consistent signage on their EuroVelo routes and secondary routes which connect with EuroVelo routes. In 2017, a federal working group determined which long-distance cycling routes elsewhere have the highest potential and started the process for improving those routes ²¹. **Austria's gradual approach to building a recreational cycling route highlights how incremental improvements to existing infrastructure can create a cycling tourism network over time in the absence of a central coordinating body.**

Key Takeaways

- **Think in terms of networks, rather than individual routes.** Recreational cycling routes see the greatest success when routes are connected to each other and to various attractions and amenities.
- **Consistent signage and a standard route classification system can help tourists and residents navigate recreational cycling routes** with greater ease.
- Communities don't need to develop their cycling network from scratch. Rather, **existing assets, such as individual cycle paths and low-traffic roads, can serve as a foundation for network development over time.**
- **The model of governance should fit the local context.** Successful networks can be developed through national leadership, regional collaboration, or more incremental local investments.
- **Invest in supporting infrastructure.** Supporting infrastructure, like bike parking, repair stations, drinking water, public toilets, rest stops, and e-bike charging stations, are essential components to creating an attractive recreational cycling experience.



Rural cycling route in Drenthe, Netherlands
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

o6. Software Transforms Routes into Experiences

Software refers to strategies to influence user behavior and encourage cycling. Where hardware provides the physical infrastructure necessary for cycling tourism, software includes the tools, information, and promotional elements that help cyclists plan their journeys and encourage new riders to participate. These elements transform cycling routes into attractive and compelling tourist experiences.

Developing Route Planning Tools to Make Trips Easy to Plan

Particularly for tourists, who may be unfamiliar with the area they are visiting, route planning tools make trip planning easy and exciting. Route planning tools, often used online or via an app, can help cyclists identify different routes, determine the best route for their level of cycling experience and time constraints, and identify stops along the selected route. These tools reduce cyclist's uncertainty by providing information about route difficulty, elevation changes along the route, distance, and expected travel times while also highlighting different attractions and amenities. They can also allow cyclists to customize their route by selecting their desired starting point, points along the route, or their end point.

The Netherlands' Fietsland Platform

The Nederland Fietsland platform brings together LF routes and junction system routes into an easy-to-use online platform which allows cyclists to plan a custom route ¹⁴. The platform also includes over 250 pre-planned routes organized around various themes and attractions. When browsing the pre-planned routes, a cyclist can filter routes by province or by the length of route to see only day trips, weekend trips, or longer cycling holidays. To make the planning process even easier, Nederland Fietsland also highlights cycling friendly businesses, including hotels, campsites, and restaurants, which will provide water bottle refills, electric bike battery charging, and bike repair tools.



Wayfinding in Delft, Netherlands
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

Creating a Destination, Not Just a Route

Attracting cycling tourists requires more than just the physical infrastructure necessary for safe, enjoyable cycling. Communities must also leverage their existing attractions to build or promote routes that connect with destinations. Local culture, history, landscapes, and partnerships with local businesses can transform a cycling route into an experience that tells the unique story of a place. **By connecting cycling routes with local attractions, food, culture, and heritage, destinations can encourage cyclists to spend more time and money in the communities they visit, offering a direct benefit to tourism and economic development agencies.** These cycling routes can also divert traffic away from standard tourist hotspots and towards less-visited communities, spreading the economic benefits of tourism more broadly.

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In the Footsteps of De Ploeg Route Booklet

This page of one of the route booklets shares information about Route 2: In Vivid Detail (In Geuren en Kleuren). Route 2 takes visitors to several sites that inspired works of art from De Ploeg artists. The page shown here includes an image of Jan Wiegers' Landscape with Canal (Landschap met Kanaal) and the section of the Groningen landscape which directly inspired it.

Groningen, In the Footsteps of De Ploeg Cycling Route

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Groningen's In the Footsteps of De Ploeg cycling route demonstrates **how an existing cycling network can be used to tell a compelling story in partnership with local cultural institutions.** 2018 marked the one hundred year anniversary of the formation of De Ploeg, a group of young artists focused on growing the artist community and expanding opportunities for up-and-coming artists in Groningen, a city in the northern part of the Netherlands. Several notable Dutch Expressionists and Impressionists were members of the group ¹⁵.

To honor the occasion, the Groninger Museum partnered with GRAS, a local architecture center; provincial and municipal government; and [AbelLeisure](#), a DCE network participant focused on developing recreational cycling routes. Together, they developed 12 cycling routes covering approximately 1,000 kilometers ¹⁶ which take riders past various sites where De Ploeg artists spent time, allowing cyclists to experience the "Groningen countryside through the eyes of De Ploeg." The routes use the existing junction network to create a cultural experience for tourists. Each route includes a downloadable route map and custom signage explaining why each stop was selected. The route organizers also created six booklets which pair with different routes and provide information about the routes and their connections to De Ploeg ¹⁷.

Jeroen Drabbe, founder of AbelLeisure, emphasizes the importance of creating routes that use storytelling to communicate the DNA of a neighborhood, identifying a region's unique strengths and assets to highlight within a cycling trip, engaging with local entrepreneurs and community organizations in the planning process, and clearly communicating what the cyclist should expect from the experience ¹⁸.

International Examples

Delhi by Cycle's Route Planning

India has very few cycle routes. Therefore, the staff at Delhi by Cycle, India's first cycle tour company, dedicate significant time to the route planning process. They typically begin by determining which attractions they'd like to stop at, and then determine how they might connect some — or all — of those stops into a logical route. They start their city cycling tours early in the morning to avoid rush hour traffic and pivot onto low-traffic roads during rush hour. Delhi by Cycle typically partners with small businesses for their tours. For example, they often coordinate a stop for breakfast or a chai from a small, local vendor during the tour. They also take cyclists to local markets or visit local artisans. These partnerships support small businesses that may not often be the target of tourist spending and appeal to tourists interested in a more authentic cultural experience ¹⁹.

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Using Route Competitions to Promote Cycle Tourism in Hungary

In 2020, Hungary's National Forestry Association (Országos Erdészeti Egyesület, or OEE) launched an annual Forest Cycle Route of the Year competition to promote cycling in the country's forest. Various cycling routes can enter the competition. From there, OEE partners with the Hungarian Cycling Tourism Association (Magyar Kerékpáros Turisztikai Szövetség, or MAKETUSZ) to select a shortlist of routes that the public votes on to declare a winner. They prioritize selecting lesser-known routes for the shortlist, as the most popular cycling routes in Hungary already experience heavy cycling traffic. Anecdotally, the competition has led to a significant boost in cycling tourism for winning routes. The Forest Cycle Route of the Year competition offers one strategy to creatively promote underutilized cycling routes and divert touristic traffic to lesser-known attractions ²⁰.

Key Takeaways

- **Route information should be easy to find, understand and access** before and during a trip, even for beginner cyclists.
- A route planning tool should allow cyclists to **customize the route based on their interests, ability, and desired trip length**. It should also integrate information about attractions, accommodations, and other amenities along the route.
- **Collaboration between mobility, recreation, and tourism sectors** can support wide adoption of a route planning tool.
- Existing cycle networks can be transformed into tourist attractions with **careful planning, storytelling, and collaboration with local businesses**. Without a cohesive cycling network, **creative route planning and analysis of traffic patterns** can create a similar experience.
- **Local businesses, including restaurants, farms, cultural institutions, and galleries, can act as important partners** in planning and promoting a cycling route, developing tourist packages, and promoting a route.

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Traffic in Delhi, India
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

07. Orgware Fosters Collaboration and Cooperation

Where hardware provides the physical infrastructure necessary for cycling tourism and software enhances the visitor experience, orgware forms the organizational foundation for a strong cycling tourism sector. **Orgware refers to organizational and institutional elements, such as institutional capacity, governance frameworks, and cross-sector collaboration.** Cycling tourism sits at the intersection of transportation, recreation, tourism, and economic development. Thus, it requires collaboration and coordination across multiple levels of government and a wide range of sectors. Establishing a shared vision, defining roles and responsibilities, and fostering collaboration are essential for a cycling tourism sector to succeed.

Developing a Clear Vision

Communities should develop a clear vision and strategy for developing their cycling tourism sector. This process includes determining which types of tourists they would like to attract to their community and what those tourists want. It may also include identifying target areas to prioritize work in. For example, a country may want to prioritize cycling tourism in a community that already experiences high levels of tourism in order to encourage tourists to cycle rather than relying on more carbon intensive forms of mobility. Alternatively, a community may want to prioritize attracting tourists to an existing recreational cycling route that isn't frequently used by tourists.

Tourist Profiles

Developing a clear vision might begin with understanding the types of tourists a community would like to attract. Different types of tourists are looking for different cycling experiences.

Long-Distance Cyclists

Long-distance cyclists typically cycle quickly on asphalted or paved roads over multiple days. While these cyclists may enjoy the sights and amenities along the route, the primary appeal of the trip is the cycling. They may go on cycling trips within the country they reside in or travel elsewhere to experience new cycling destinations.

Day Trippers

Day trippers spend a half- or full day visiting a destination by bike. They typically visit tourist destinations in close proximity to their homes or as part of a longer non-cycling vacation. They may not always be regular cyclists, but instead, view cycling as the most enjoyable and simple way to get to their destination. Families with children are most likely to go on day trips, rather than dedicated cycling holidays.

Mountain Bikers

Mountain bikers typically organize their own trips. They seek out rugged pathways with dirt roads and challenging routes. They may also seek out dedicated bike parks which are designed for mountain biking experiences.

Tour Cyclists

Cyclists who chose to go on a coordinated cycling tour typically enjoy cycling as a hobby, and prefer to do limited planning. Their experience can easily be paired with other types of tourist experiences, such as food and wine tours, boat trips, and more.

The Netherlands' Collaborative Approach to Governance

The Netherlands' blended approach to the development and management of recreational cycling routes encourages consistency and collaboration. LF routes, the Netherlands' long-distance national routes, are managed and monitored by Fietsplatform. While LF routes and the junction system have standard signage, regional route agencies, also called route bureaus, take the lead on development, management, and maintenance of their regional network. Route bureaus themselves are collaborative in nature, coordinating with local and regional tourist agencies and local governments within the region. Fietsplatform plays a national coordinator role, offering technical assistance to regions and facilitating cross-regional dialogue to ensure a cohesive network across regions ²³. While this approach fosters collaboration across sectors and levels of government and allows local knowledge to take center stage, it comes with downsides. Two regions in the Netherlands have yet to appoint a regional route bureau ²⁴. In these regions, route offerings and management are more fragmented.

Establishing Clear Governance Structures

Governance is what ensures that cycling routes are built, maintained, and promoted to tourists. Formalized governance structures across the federal government, state and local government, the private sector, and NGOs are essential for the success of cycling tourism. Roles should be clearly defined to leverage the unique strengths and available resources of each organization involved in the development and operation of cycling tourism networks. While models vary across countries, each model ensures that cyclists experience a cohesive and enjoyable experience.

International Examples

The European Union's Danube Transnational Programme

In 2021, the Danube Transnational Programme, a European Union program supporting cooperation across 14 countries in the Danube region, and Corvinus University of Budapest published a [strategy document](#) detailing the stakeholder engagement and action plan for transforming the Rákos Stream into a cycling tourism destination. They also studied the existing condition of the path along the Rákos Stream and the amenities nearby. The data informed a SWOT analysis, development of a vision and mission statement, and an action plan ²².



Cycling in Budapest, Hungary
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

Appointing a National Coordinator

Appointing some type of coordinating organization can help to advance cycling tourism priorities. Public-private coordinating organizations, such as Fietsplatform, can work at a national level and serve as an intermediary between governments, businesses, and community organizations. These organizations do more than simply bring different parties to the table. Rather, they support development of shared national goals and cultivate understanding of the unique role each organization plays in a broader cycling tourism ecosystem. They can also take on a management role for certain aspects of the cycling network, such as establishing signage guidelines, overseeing maintenance for national routes, or collecting data regarding usage on national routes.

Investing in Partnerships Across Sectors

Cycling tourism sits at the intersection of transportation, recreation, tourism, and economic development. Therefore, partnerships across sectors are essential for successful planning, management, and promotion of cycling tourism routes. These partnerships can help coordinate funding, improve the visitor experience, and ensure that cycling tourism supports mobility, sustainability, and economic development goals.

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In addition to partnerships across levels of government, partnerships between the public and private sectors are essential. Many of the amenities that cycling tourists rely on, such as accommodations, restaurants, cafes, bike rentals, tour guides, and attractions, are managed by private sector organizations. Engaging these partners early in the planning process can help to create a safe and compelling tourist experience while also maximizing the benefit for the local community.

Partnerships to Consider

National, regional, and local governments

These organizations coordinate planning, funding, infrastructure design and development, maintenance, and policy. They also play an important role in ensuring routes connect across jurisdictions for a seamless tourist experience.

Destination marketing organizations and tourism boards

These organizations can play a leading role in the marketing and branding of cycling destinations. They have a strong understanding of the experiences and services that tourists are interested in and can integrate cycling into a broader tourism strategy.

Local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, cafes, and retailers

These businesses provide essential services for all tourists, including cyclists. By offering amenities important to cyclists, such as battery charging, bike storage, and water refills, local businesses can tap into a new customer market.

Tour guides and bike rental companies

These businesses expand access to cycling tourism by providing the necessary equipment, guidance, and local expertise for trip planning. In communities without established cycling routes, they often develop their own routes which align with low-traffic roads and tourist destinations. Therefore, they hold a wealth of knowledge about the types of experiences that cyclists seek out most.

Parks, forestry, and environmental management organizations

These organizations can help identify opportunities for route development, coordinate access to natural areas, and manage cycling infrastructure.

Water management authorities and other infrastructure agencies

Many cycling routes follow rivers, canals, or other waterways. These organizations, and the land they own, can play an important role in the planning and management of cycling routes.

Cultural institutions, museums, and heritage organizations

These organizations can contribute to storytelling and attraction development that helps transform cycling routes into memorable experiences for tourists.

Community organizations and local residents

Tapping into the local knowledge of community organizations and local residents can ensure that cycling tourism efforts support local priorities.

Cyclists and cycling advocacy organizations

Avid cyclists and cycling advocacy organizations can offer feedback on route quality, signage, and route planning tools.

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Key Takeaways

- **Develop clear goals** for cycling tourism efforts before investing in infrastructure or promotion.
- **Identify target audiences** and understand the experiences they seek.
- There is no one model for governing cycling tourism. However, **effective governance should foster collaboration** across sectors and levels of governance and should **clearly delineate roles and responsibilities**.



Bicycle bridge in Nigtevecht, Netherlands
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

o8. Conclusion

Every community approaches cycling tourism with a different existing cycling network, cycling culture, governance structures, tourism assets, and public sector buy-in. **Therefore, the best approach to cycling tourism relies on a deep understanding of existing context and current opportunities.** Beyond that, cycling tourism depends on more than just building cycling infrastructure, but instead, requires a coordinated approach that integrates infrastructure, visitor experience, and institutional collaboration and capacity — in other words, the hardware, software, and orgware that the Dutch Cycling Vision encapsulates.

Communities should approach cycling tourism with the following takeaways in mind:

- **Think beyond individual routes.** Successful cycling tourism is built around networks, rather than individual trails or routes.
- **Create a complete visitor experience.** Cycling tourists choose destinations not just because of the cycling infrastructure, but because of the sights and experiences along the way. Destination branding, storytelling, and partnerships with local service providers all contribute to transforming a cycling trip into an experience, rather than just a bike ride.
- **Build on existing assets.** Communities don't need to start from scratch. Rather, they should consider how their existing cycling routes, low-traffic roads, natural landscapes, and recreational and cultural attractions can serve as a foundation for expanding recreational cycling opportunities.
- **Establish strong governing foundations.** Cycling tourism relies on clear governance systems and structures, strategic planning, sustainable funding for the long-term, and intentional partnerships.

CONCLUSION

Cycling tourism presents the opportunity to advance multiple public goals. It can strengthen local economies, particularly rural economies; support climate and sustainability goals; encourage more healthy lifestyles; and improve day-to-day mobility for both residents and tourists. As interest in outdoor recreation and recreational tourism continues to grow, investments in cycling tourism can help places become more resilient, connected, and attractive to live and visit.

The Dutch experience demonstrates that cycling tourism is about much more than infrastructure. Building cycling routes is necessary. However, planning, coordination, and promotion also play an essential role. As communities look to improve their own cycling tourism ecosystem, the Dutch Cycling Vision offers a framework to create places where cycling is not just a mode of transportation, but also a way to reflect and celebrate local culture and character and make life more enjoyable and accessible for visitors and residents alike.



Cycling route in Eindhoven, Netherlands
Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

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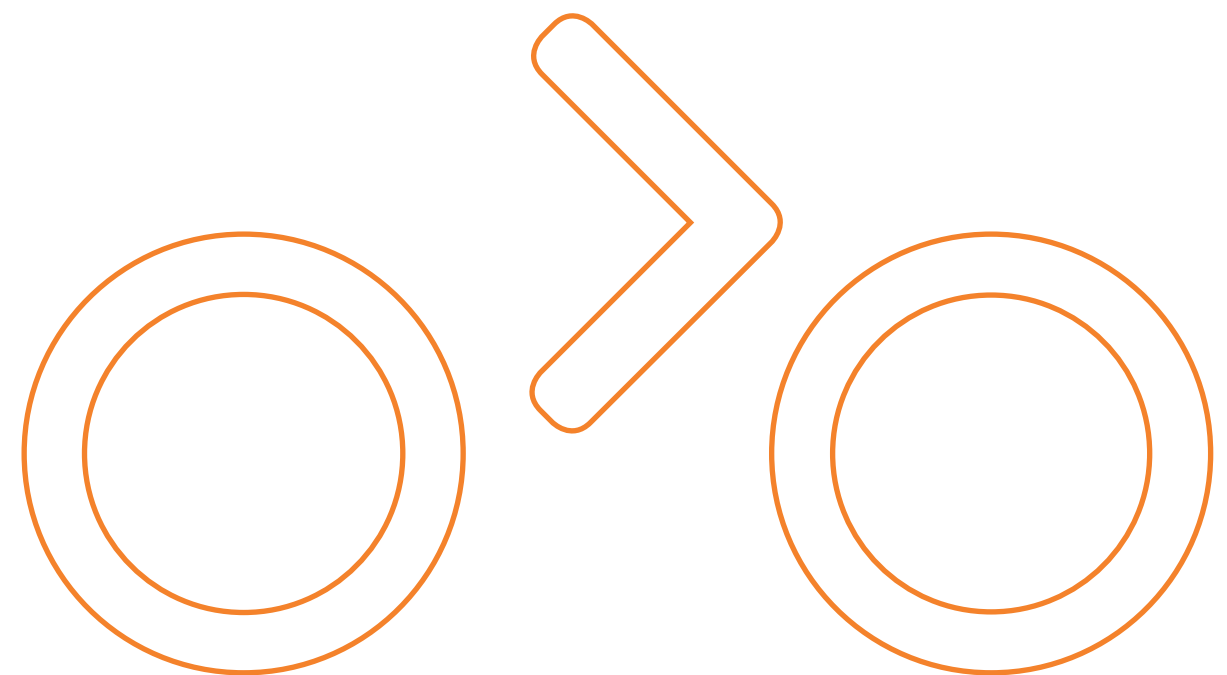
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About the Author

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