

# EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS



IMBA Europe Summit  
Schweinfurt (DE)  
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Giacomo Benelli  
**EUROPARC Federation**

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MOUNTAIN BIKING?

# OUR JOURNEY TODAY

- Who is the EUROPARC Federation?
- What is the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas?
- **Case studies and best practices**



# INTRODUCING EUROPARC

EUROPARC Federation was founded in **1973** with the aim of **supporting protected areas to fulfil their role as preservers of Europe's natural beauty.**

It is a non-profit organization based in Germany and the oldest and largest Network of **European protected areas.**

*Sustainable nature,  
valued by people.*



# OUR VISION AND MISSION

In order to describe succinctly and encapsulate our aspiration as an organisation we have condensed our thinking into a vision, mission and strategy.

The VISION, describes what EUROPARC wishes for European nature. The MISSION indicates the role, EUROPARC as an organisation, believes it can play, in realising that vision. The strategy indicates broadly how EUROPARC intends to accomplish the mission and deliver the vision. The strategy is not a detailed tasks and action plan; this will be created on an annual basis.

**Our VISION** is:

Sustainable nature, valued by people.

In order to realise that vision,  
we commit EUROPARC, to accomplish the following

**MISSION:**

EUROPARC works  
for our natural and cultural heritage,  
to improve and champion the policy  
and practice of Protected Area management,  
in order to deliver sustainable nature,  
valued by people.



# EUROPARC VALUES



## **FUN**

provide opportunities for enjoyable networking experiences. Cultural and professional barriers can be overcome to enable people and organisations to cooperate better together.

## **RESPECT**

for each other, for cultural differences, people in the landscape and for the intrinsic value of nature.

## **SHARING**

experiences, knowledge, ideas, best practise.

## **LEARNING**

new skills, how to manage nature and sustainable development.

## **COOPERATING**

with each other, on projects, to develop and innovate for Protected Area management, to conserve nature and promote sustainable development.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

to consider the impact of our operations on the environment and to ensure we make sustainable choices whenever possible.

The EUROPARC Federation's members are organisations  
(protected areas authorities, regional and national governmental bodies, NGOs)  
from 36 countries, **that work for the benefit of our nature.**



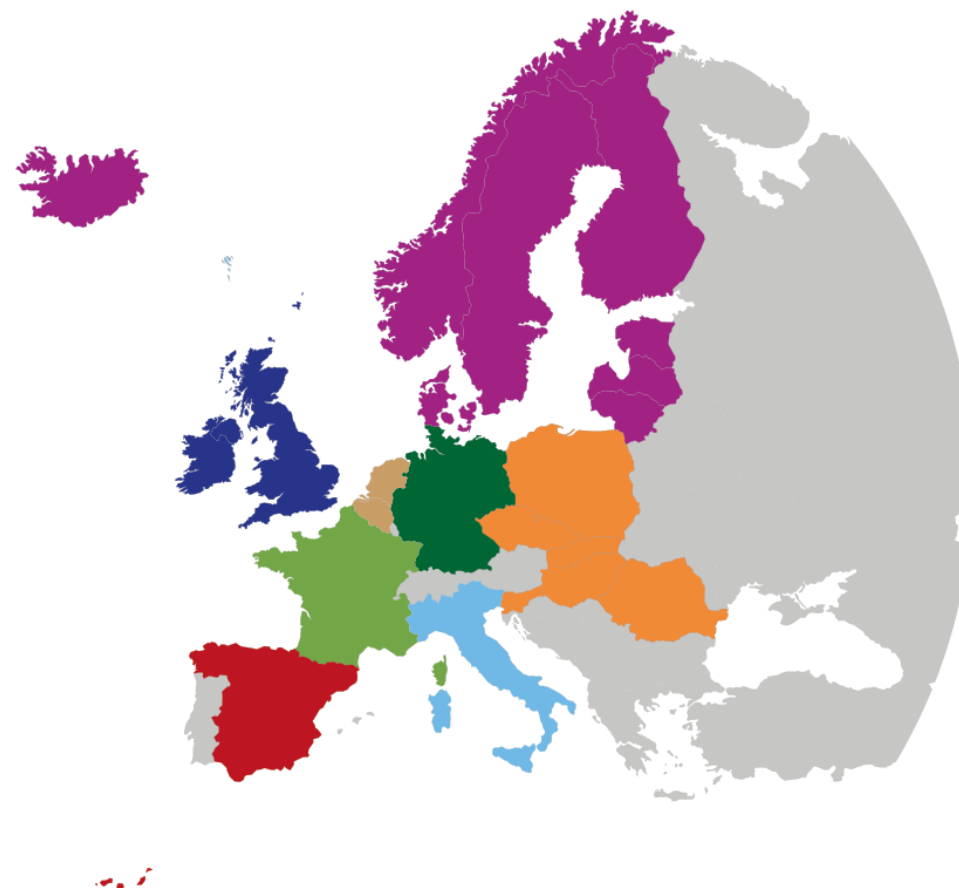
## EUROPARC SECTIONS

Over the years, the  
Federation has  
supported the creation  
of eight regional and  
national sections.

### Federation offices:

- Regensburg, Germany
- Brussels, Belgium

- Nordic-Baltic
- Atlantic Isles
- Central and Eastern Europe
- Low Countries
- Germany
- France
- Italy
- Spain

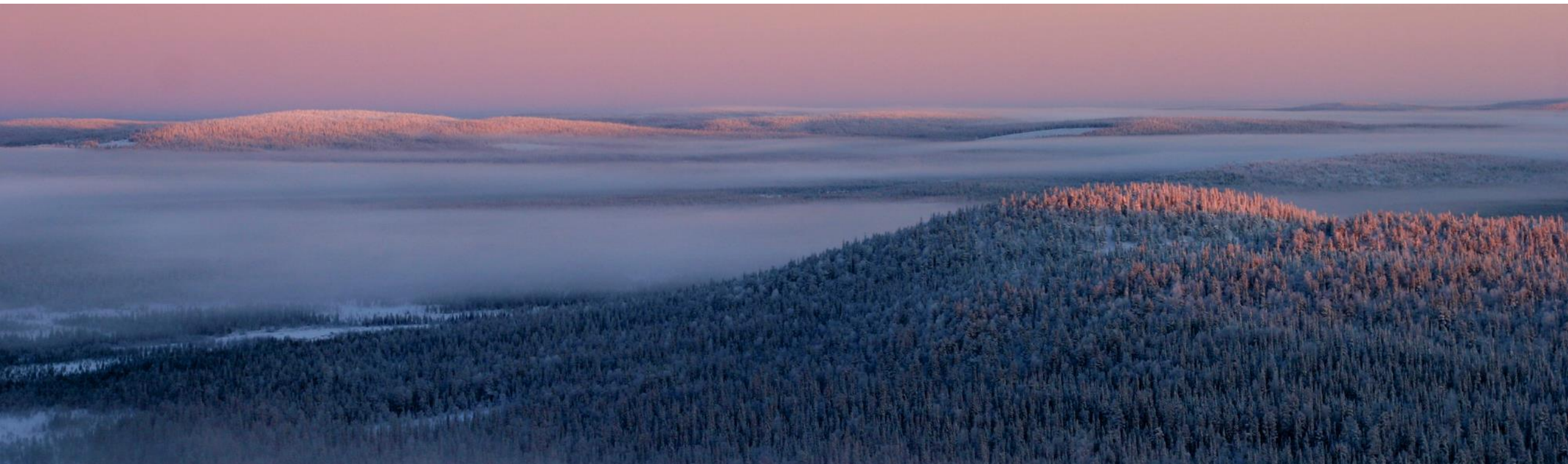


**EUROPARC is founded on the principle that the future protection and conservation of nature is achieved through :**

- International Co-operation
- Personal Contact
- Mutual understanding, shared experiences
- Knowledge and Innovations



***Nature knows  
no boundaries***





# WHAT DOES EUROPARC DO?

- ✓ Improves the **quality** of protected areas **management**
- ✓ **Supports** parks in their management strategies and practical skills
- ✓ Involves **youths and volunteers**
- ✓ **Trains** individuals
- ✓ **Enhances** European network of protected areas
- ✓ Influences **policy** at EU Level
- ✓ Develops programmes and different projects





# EUROPARC PROGRAMMES

## 1. Environmental education and capacity building



Every year about 40 young people and Rangers come together to learn and contribute to the conservation of protected areas in Europe.



A new programme to engage youngsters over 18 to support the work developed by rangers in their local protected areas.

# EUROPARC PROGRAMMES

## 2. Foster cross border cooperation



Help protected areas which share a common border to create a sustainable relationship through increased cooperation.

**19 Protected areas in 11 countries working together**



## 3. Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas





# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS



**EUROPEAN CHARTER  
FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN  
PROTECTED AREAS**

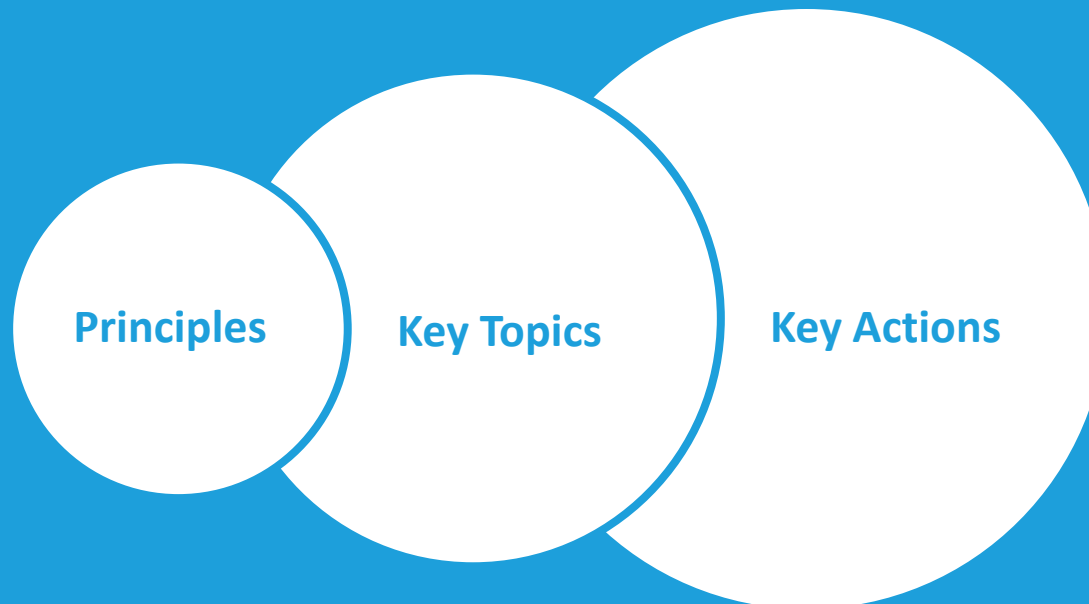


# WHAT IS THE ECST?

ECST = EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS

A **practical management tool** that enables  
**Protected Areas to develop tourism**  
**sustainably**, based in 5 Principles

**Principles** over-arch the key topics  
and associated actions that are  
developed in the strategy





# WHEN WAS IT CREATED?

## “Loving them do death”

The report created by the EUROPARC Federation in **1993** called for sustainable tourism in Europe’s Protected Areas.

With over 20 years of implementation, the ECST is a **continuous process** for parks and for the Federation. It has been updated and widely approved, leading the way of **sustainable tourism in Europe**.



## WHERE?

Currently it is implemented in  
**144 Charter areas in 17 European countries**



# VISION

Sustainable Tourism in European protected areas provides a **meaningful quality experience**, **safeguards natural and cultural values**, **supports local livelihoods** and quality of life and is **economically viable**.





# PRINCIPLES

1. Giving priority to **protection**
2. Contributing to **sustainable development**
3. Engaging all **stakeholders**
4. Planning **sustainable tourism effectively**
5. Pursing **continuous improvement**

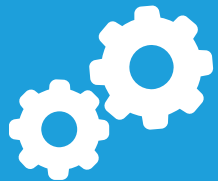


# COMPONENTS



**Sustainable  
Tourism Forum**

A **permanent Sustainable Tourism Forum** must be established between the **protected area authority** and all relevant stakeholders, **which may include local biking associations**



**Strategy and  
Action Plan**



**Partnership and  
Communication**



**Evaluation**



**Monitoring  
and review**



## Assessment of the current situation

- Natural, historic and cultural heritage;
  - Tourism and recreation
- Infrastructures;
- Current visitors and potential future markets;
- Impacts of tourism



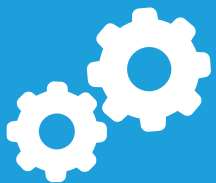
## Strategic direction

Defining clear **strategic objectives** concerning nature conservation, economic and social development, improving quality of life of locals and quality of tourism.



## Action plan

Description of each action: timing, resources, partners for implementing, monitoring proposal



## Strategy and Action Plan

# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

## FOR PROTECTED AREAS



Bring measureable **economic, social and environmental benefits** from well-managed sustainable tourism



Strengthen relations with local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry



Provide access and membership of an extensive and dynamic European network





# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

## FOR BUSINESSES



Encouraging customers to respect the environment  
in their actions on the property and in nature



Engaging in energy and water saving activities



Using environmentally friendly products  
Reducing, recycling and managing waste



# WHO CAN APPLY?

## Organisations managing Protected Areas

- Parks authorities
- Municipalities
- Regions
- National bodies
- NGOs
- Foundations





# SUSTAINABLE PARTNERS IN CHARTER AREAS





# Sustainable partners

*The engagement of local businesses is vital to the effective development and management of sustainable tourism.*

**The overall requirements of EUROPARC for Part II are that recognised tourism businesses should:**

- Commit to the vision, mission and principles of the Charter;
- Relate to the local sustainable tourism forum and support the implementation of the sustainable tourism strategy and action plan;
- Demonstrate compliance with relevant quality and sustainability criteria or certifications;
- Have their own sustainability management plan for their business that is agreed with the protected area authority;
- Maintain close relationships with the protected area authority and other businesses and stakeholders engaged with the Charter.

*Part II is only available to businesses in areas that have been awarded the Charter under Part I.*



Author: Ennio Billi, Artist: Sasso Simone, Simoncello Park (IT)  
**Fostering employment in local communities**



# Sustainable Tour operators

*Tour operators to commit to the Charter vision, mission and principles and to demonstrate significant adherence to sustainability criteria in their own operations and management.*

**Tour operators working under this framework will agree to work in partnership with the authority responsible for the strategy in the protected area and the local tourist-service providers.**

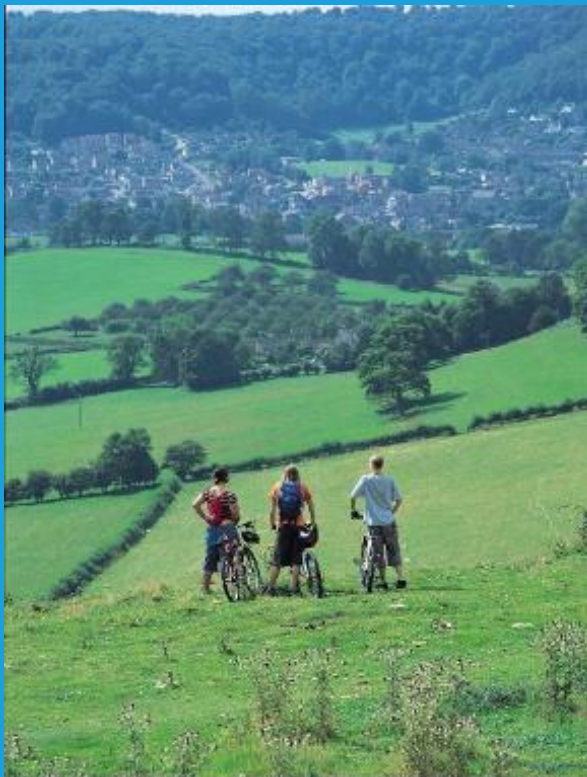
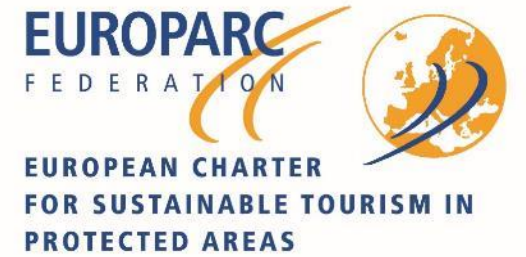
This will involve **analysing the compatibility of its products with the objectives of the area**. The visitor flow they attract to an area must respect and not damage the heritage resources that the tourists come to see.



*Parc National des Ecrins (FR)*



# Case Studies In Charter Areas





# Montserrat Nature Park BTT Trails

Catalunya, Spain

The "Via de Montsant" is a circular mountain bike route of 95 kms that is the result from the collaboration between the company Costa Dorada Sport Nature and the Montsant Natural Park, which has received the support of the local Municipalities, the Province (Tarragona) and the Regional (Catalunya) Tourism council.

The "Via de Montsant" leads to the edge of the great cliffs of Montsant, through ancient paths as the path of the Carthusians, reaching monasteries located in emblematic places full of spirituality.

More information:

Nature Sport Costa Daurada [www.natura-esport.com](http://www.natura-esport.com)

Parque Natural Sierra de Montsant:  
[http://www.gencat.cat/parcs/serra\\_montsant](http://www.gencat.cat/parcs/serra_montsant)

[http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/es/serra-montsant/visiteu-nos/equipaments\\_i\\_itineraris/itineraris/sm\\_itineraris\\_bicicleta/via\\_btt/](http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/es/serra-montsant/visiteu-nos/equipaments_i_itineraris/itineraris/sm_itineraris_bicicleta/via_btt/)



# Route TransNevada

Sierra Nevada, Granada, Spain

The Transnevada is a mountain bike circular route in Sierra Nevada, mainly along the perimeter slopes delimiting National Park between 1,500 and 2,000 meters, with a total length of nearly 450 kilometers (divided into 8 stages ranging between 45 and 80 kilometers). Most of the route runs along roads and dirt tracks. It is a well marked route with several access roads signposted from the main towns, and 11 routes a day (between 16 and 36 kilometers) by some of the most interesting corners.



SIERRA  
NEVADA  
PARQUE NACIONAL  
PARQUE NATURAL

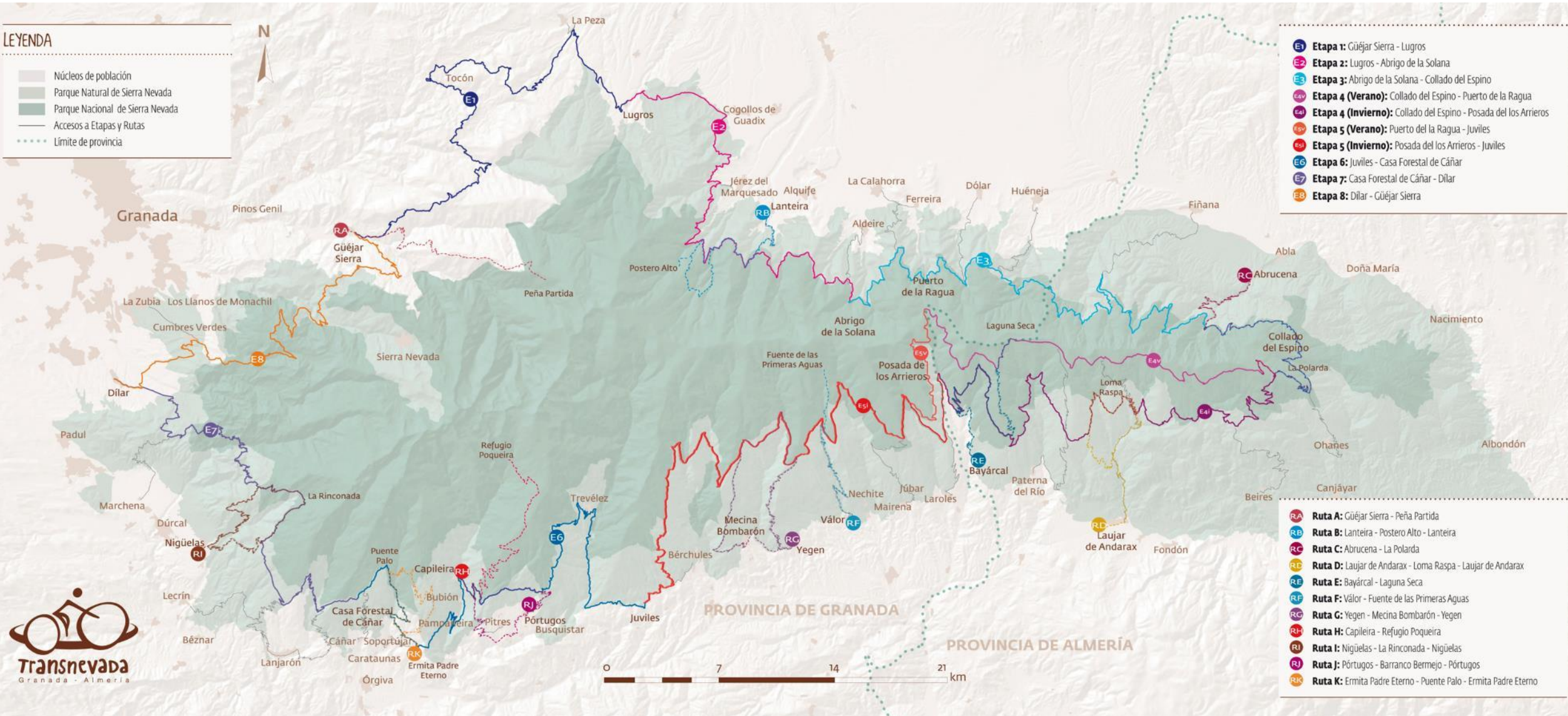
Ruta para bicicleta de montaña en el Espacio  
Natural de Sierra Nevada





## LEYENDA

- Núcleos de población
- Parque Natural de Sierra Nevada
- Parque Nacional de Sierra Nevada
- Accesos a Etapas y Rutas
- Límite de provincia



- E1** Etapa 1: Guéjar Sierra - Lugros
- E2** Etapa 2: Lugros - Abrigo de la Solana
- E3** Etapa 3: Abrigo de la Solana - Collado del Espino
- E4V** Etapa 4 (Verano): Collado del Espino - Puerto de la Ragua
- E4I** Etapa 4 (Invierno): Collado del Espino - Posada de los Arrieros
- E5V** Etapa 5 (Verano): Puerto de la Ragua - Juviles
- E5I** Etapa 5 (Invierno): Posada de los Arrieros - Juviles
- E6** Etapa 6: Juviles - Casa Forestal de Cañar
- E7** Etapa 7: Casa Forestal de Cañar - Dilar
- E8** Etapa 8: Dilar - Guéjar Sierra

- RA** Ruta A: Guéjar Sierra - Peña Partida
- RB** Ruta B: Lanteira - Postero Alto - Lanteira
- RC** Ruta C: Abbrucena - La Polarda
- RD** Ruta D: Laujar de Andarax - Loma Raspa - Laujar de Andarax
- RE** Ruta E: Bayárcal - Laguna Seca
- RF** Ruta F: Válor - Fuente de las Primeras Aguas
- RG** Ruta G: Yegen - Mecina Bombarón - Yegen
- RH** Ruta H: Capileira - Refugio Poqueira
- RI** Ruta I: Nigüelas - La Rinconada - Nigüelas
- RJ** Ruta J: Pórtugos - Barranco Bermejo - Pórtugos
- RK** Ruta K: Ermita Padre Eterno - Puente Palo - Ermita Padre Eterno



# Sierra de Espuna Regional Park

Murcia, Spain

The Espubike Challenge <http://espubike.com/en/>

A 146 km route, 4,300 m ascent, 4 sections

Can you follow the complete route? “Face the challenge” You can start and finish at any point of the itinerary. There are two possible ways of following the route: either the free or the official one –‘Espubike Challenge’–. In the second case, Espuñaturística – the organisation which manages the route – gives a jersey with the special Espubike design to those who have completed it. If you wish to complete the official route, you should register in the website and get your passport stamps at each of the indicated checkpoints. You will obtain your passport when you start the route at Sierra Espuña Campsite in El Berro.



Parque Regional  
Sierra Espuña

## ACTO DE FIRMA DE COMPROMISO

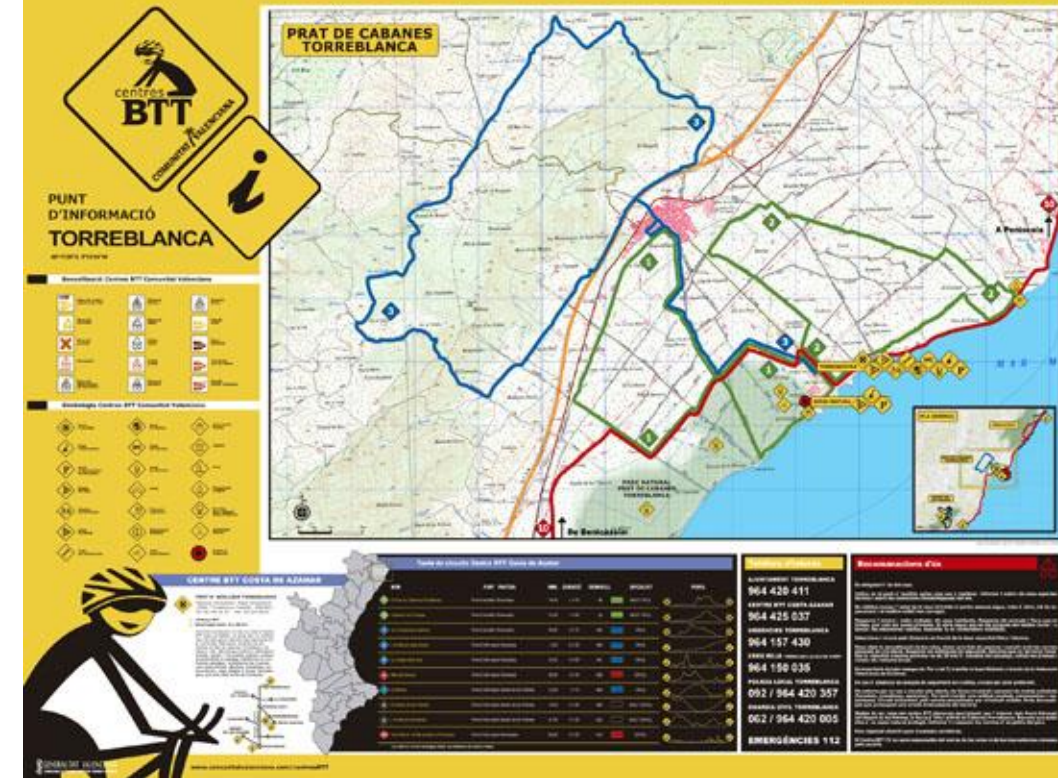
“Carta sobre Ciclismo Responsable en Sierra Espuña”



# BTT Centers

Torreblanca, Valencia, Spain

BTT center: Comunidad valenciana. Supported by regional administration. They offer routes and accommodations. Routes are in protected areas or use old train tracks (called green tracks).





## Zona Zero Pirineos

Private initiative. Offer routes inside protected areas (**Parque natural Sierra y Cañones de Guara, Parque Nacional de Ordesa y Monte Perdido**)

## GeoParque Pyrenees Route

**Geo Parque Sobrarbe:** Parque geológico de los Pirineos. Offer routes, geoparks information, accommodations. Supported by regional and national administration.

## Centro btt Bajo tietar:

**Parque Regional sierra de Gredos.** Offer routes, accommodations. Supported by regional and national administration

<http://centrobttbajotietar.es/>

## **Parque Nacional Sierra de Guadarrama.**

Offer routes, accommodations. Supported by regional and national administration

<http://www.parquenacionalsierraguadarrama.es/visita/actividad/bicicleta-de-montana/106-rutas-btt>





# The working group on mountain races in Spanish Natural Parks

EUROPARC-Spain is coordinating a working group on mountain races in Spanish Natural Parks. In the working group key members are the Spanish environmental administrations, the mountain Federation, the University, environmental experts consultants and racers. At the time being, it has been drafted a document on "Best practices for the development of mountain races in protected areas".

[javier.gomezlimon@redeuroparc.org](mailto:javier.gomezlimon@redeuroparc.org)



**EUROPARC**  
ESPAÑA

**GRUPO DE TRABAJO**

**"CARRERAS POR MONTAÑA EN LOS ESPACIOS NATURALES PROTEGIDOS  
DEL ESTADO ESPAÑOL"**

Versión 30 de marzo de 2016



**DOCUMENTO DE TRABAJO**

**Guía de buenas prácticas para el desarrollo de carreras por  
montaña en espacios naturales protegidos**

Con el apoyo de



**Diputació  
Barcelona**

**Parcs  
Naturals  
Diba**



Con la colaboración de







# *Mountain Biking in Finnish Protected Areas*

**IMBA Europe Summit, April 2016**

Development Manager Veikko Virkkunen

Parks & Wildlife Finland



# *Parks & Wildlife Finland follows MTB development*

Due to the increasing popularity of MTB and rising demand of designated trails in protected areas, Parks & Wildlife Finland has revised the policy towards mountain biking in protected areas

- Currently P&WF has a generally permissive approach towards MTB

Identified benefits of MTB are manifold, e.g.:

- promotion of physical, mental and social health,
- activating new target groups into outdoors (especially physically inactive young males)
- economical benefits to tourism providers

However, we should be prepared and plan for anticipated risks (degradation, social conflicts) and monitor them actively

# *Mountain biking in Finnish protected areas – a few principles and guidelines*

“Cycling and mountain biking are **allowed by public right of access**, generally also in protected areas. They are usually practiced using existing trails, routes, and roads...

**Mountain biking can cause erosion** on hill slopes, fell areas, and other vulnerable habitats, such as sandy heaths and rocky areas with light vegetation cover.

**Mountain bikers and other path users can generally use the same routes**, though on the busiest routes, mountain biking can be restricted for security reasons.

If a **management plan** is drawn up for a protected area, it **should take mountain bikers into account** and should involve enthusiasts and mountain biking clubs in the planning process...”

Source: [Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland \(2014\)](#), Parks & Wildlife Finland

## Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland





# Mountain biking offer in Finnish National Parks

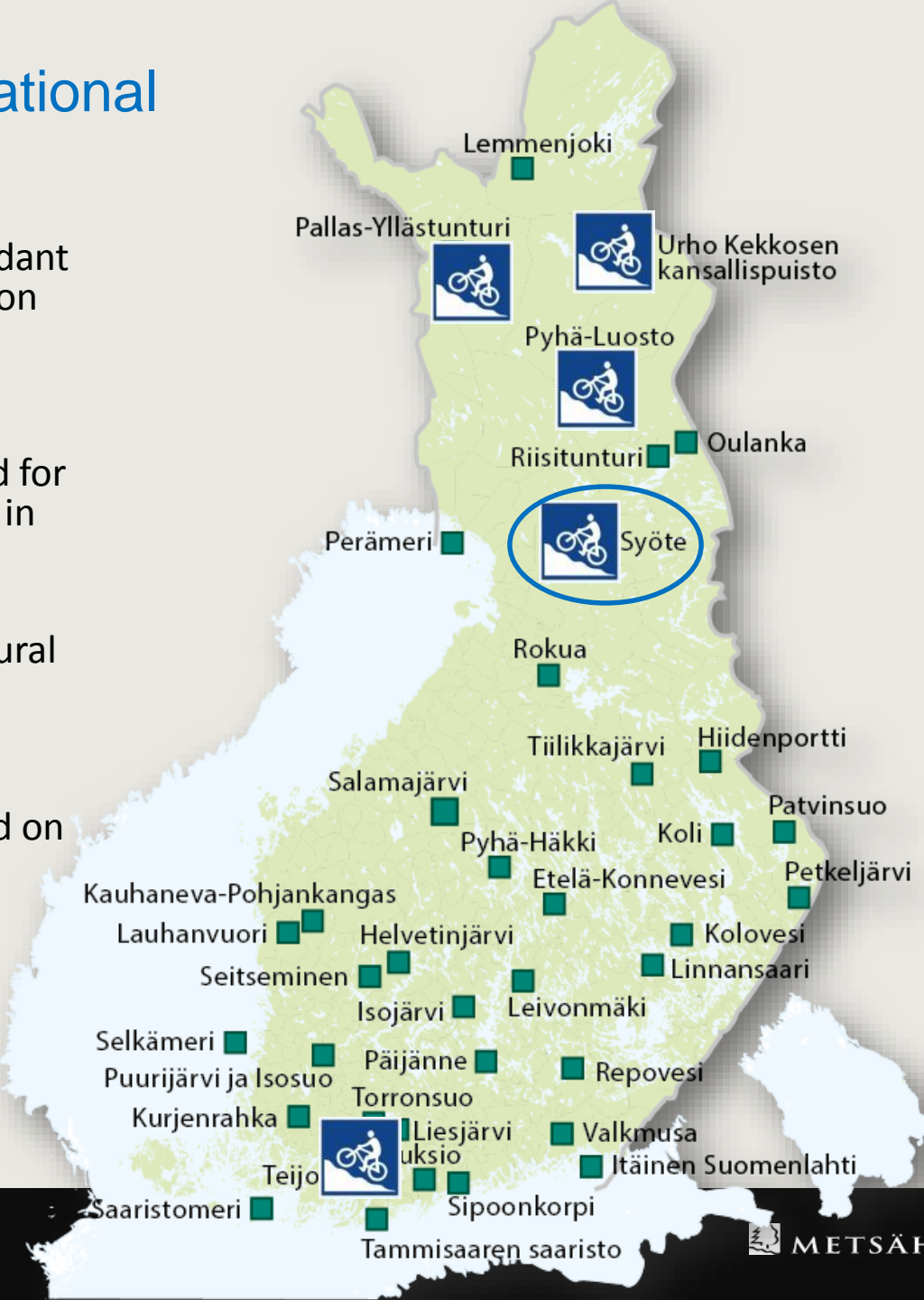
Possibilities for mountain biking in Finland are abundant due to the everyman's rights, which enables access on most natural trails and pathways.

P&WF manages approximately 600 kilometres of designated cycling trails, most of which are intended for mountain biking. New trails are under development in many areas.

Trail characteristics for protected areas: trails of natural origin, long trail distances, remote locations and wilderness-like surroundings.

MTB trail offer in national parks (see map) is focused on northern parks and tourism resorts in their vicinity:

- Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park
- Urho Kekkosen National Park
- Pyhä-Luosto National Park
- **Syöte National Park (case presented)**
- Teijo National Park





## Syöte National Park – *Enjoy an active break in the wooded hills of the north*



- European Charter for Sustainable Tourism member since 2004, first in Finland
- Approx. 40 000 visits per year – we offer silence and peace of nature
- Main activities: hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoe walking
- Key components of ECST in Syöte:
  1. The Charter Forum
    - Advisory body for Syöte National Park management, linking stakeholders together with the park staff. Steering group for park development projects.
    - Forum has recently emphasized the importance of mountain bike development, due to customer feedback and increase in business viability
  2. The Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (2011)
    - Set an aim to develop diverse and demand-based nature tourism products
    - The strategy will be updated in 2016-2017, strong emphasis in MTB development





# Syöte National Park – *Enjoy an active break in the wooded hills of the north*



- Designated MTB trail network of three circular trails, total 70 kilometres, in and around the [Syöte National Park](#)
  - Trails developed in 2009-2010
  - Trail improvements planned for 2016-2017
  - Approx. 10 % of visits to park made by bike
- MTB trails designed with users
  - Mostly natural single track (see photo)
  - User insights utilized in planning
  - User participation enables outstanding attention to important details
- Winter trails for fatbikes (nearly 50 kilometres)
- Commercial services available: bike rental, maintenance/spares, accommodation, food, etc.
  - [Syöte Bike Hotel Concept](#)
- Events: [Syöte MTB](#), [Syöte MTB Winter](#)







# *Current issues & challenges*

## **Are electric assisted mountain bikes welcome in protected areas?**

- P&WF is currently analysing the situation
- Risks: potential safety issues due to increasing speed, increased degradation in slopes due to e-powered pedaling
- For now, P&FW regards e-mountain biking as part of the Everyman's Rights, allowing use in protected areas

## **How to increase user participation and volunteering in MTB development?**

- Mountain bike enthusiasts, groups & clubs are key target group for volunteer events and participatory planning in protected areas
- Good experiences from trail design, implementation and maintenance as well as MTB "mystery shopping"

**Lastly, P&WF Finland is interested in international co-operation in mountain biking development!**





Photo: Veikko Virkkunen

## *Park Contacts*

Development Manager Veikko Virkkunen

Parks & Wildlife Finland

[veikko.virkkunen@metsa.fi](mailto:veikko.virkkunen@metsa.fi)



IMBA Summit 2016

# Mountain biking best practices Park Livradois-Forez (France)

22th April – GERMANY

Park contact: Caroline Le Roy  
[c.leroy@parc-livradois-forez.org](mailto:c.leroy@parc-livradois-forez.org)



*l'Auvergne, côté soleil levant*



# Park Livradois-Forez (Auvergne, France)



## Sustainable tourism in Livradois-Forez

### Context :

- Created in 1986
- Situated in Auvergne in France
- 158 member municipalities
- Specialist services : economic development, biodiversity, town planning, ...

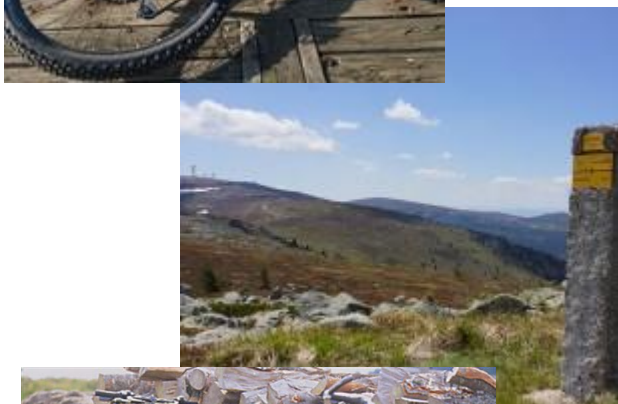
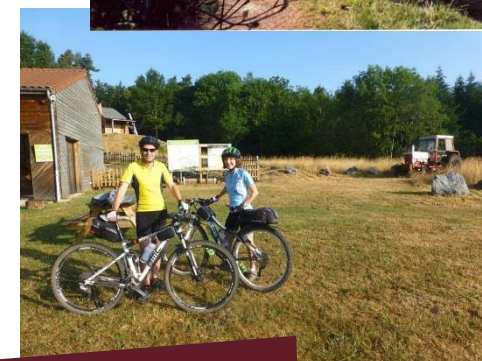
### ECST

- Part 1 since 2005 (re-evaluation in 2016)
- Part 2 since 2011 : 22 companies in 2015 (accommodations, museums, leisure activities)
- Part 3 : in progress

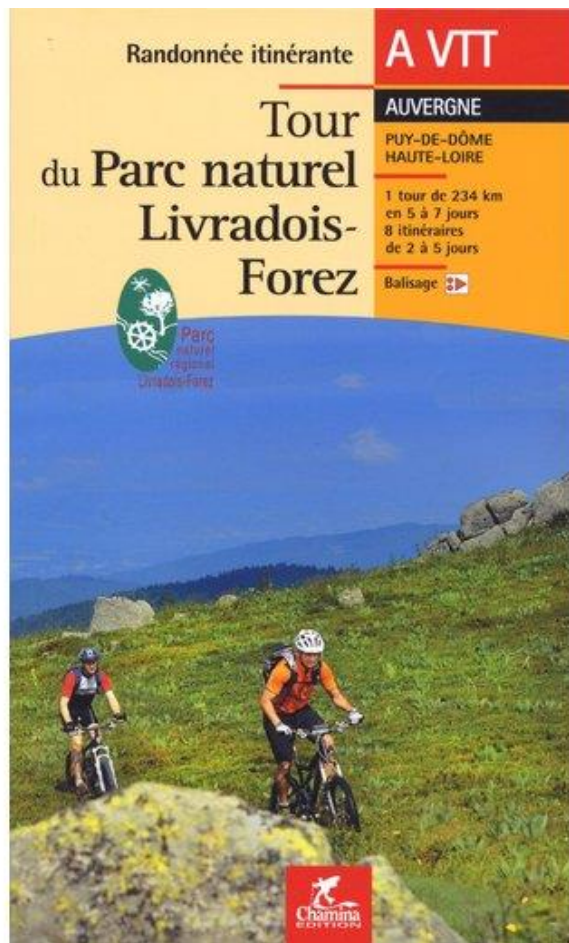
### Tourism strategy :

« To develop a sustainable tourism with nature and heritage based on meeting »

Goal : « Help tourism stakeholders and travellers towards environmentally responsible »



# Park Livradois-Forez (Auvergne, France)



## Mountain bike « Tour of Livradois-Forez » « Up and down on two wheels »

### Bike Tour :

- 234 km
- 21 sections
- From 2 to 7 days of riding

### Partnerships :

- Edition CHAMINA – tour guide
- Links with accommodations and facilities:
  - Certifications and quality labels
  - Trainings for receptionnists
  - Land settlement for bikers
- GPS tracing.





# Park Livradois-Forez (Auvergne, France)



## Ambert-Crêtes du Forez : promotion of outdoor activities

### Partnership convention with mountain biking « centre of Ambert » :

- Environment part : developing sustainable events, limiting wastes, promoting alternative transport (public transports, carpools, ...), creating an awareness campaign about protected area, toolkit of the Park (in progress).
- Social part : welcoming disabled people, special prices for families / students / unemployed people, promoting local food, ...
- Economic part : developing a tourism strategy, creating a new website and flyers, working with travel agencies, organizing loyalty programs for customers

### New strategy for the « Crêtes du Forez » :

- Outline outdoor offers
- Develop mountain biking quality : services, itineraries, ...
- Awoke reflections about trends of biking : fat bike, electric mountain bike, new technologies, ...
- Realize signage for biking practices
- Special marketing plan for outdoor leisures and mountain bike.





# Park Livradois-Forez



## ECST part 2 : Gîte des 4 Vents – Aubusson d'Auvergne

= Holiday cottage, campsite, restaurant and biking trainings

### Action plan for ECST part 2 (since january 2016) :

*Every actions are in progress*

- Partnership with social centres
- Welcoming sensory disabled people
- Professional trainings (for managers and seasonal workers); yield management, biodiversity, ...
- Promotion of wildlife in the garden (biodiversity boards)
- Creation of a « discovery backpack » (with OS maps, binoculars, magnifying glass, first aid kit, books about ornithology or wooded plants, ...)
- Development of geocaching smartphone app
- Reflections about limited food wastage
- ...







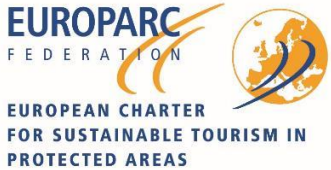
# Park Livradois-Forez

## Other actions in Livradois-Forez

- Help for the organization of mountain biking orienteering
- Mix of mobility : tourist train and mountain bike
- Awareness of the legislation in protected areas for bikers
- Impact analysis after biking events/sports competitions (in particular in Natura 2000 areas)
- Events :
  - Supplying ephemeral road markings
  - Eco-cups
  - Paper bags for wastes



# Other relevant initiatives in the French Regional Parks



PNR Vercors <http://bike.vercors.fr/>

PNR Pilat <http://www.pilat-tourisme.fr/en/my-park-by-bike/circular-mountain-bike-trails-available-for-download.html>

Faced with the development of demand for recreation and outdoor sports, the **French Cycling Federation and the French Regional Parks Federation signed a national agreement on the development of cycling and mountain biking in the regional nature parks.** The French Regional Parks, through this cooperation, will strengthen the development of cycling practices, responding to the needs of both practitioners and the challenges of the Parks territories. The national agreement, valid for a period of 6 years, will be completed by departmental or local agreements on specific projects. Signed on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

Parks that contributed to the content of the agreement are:

**Parc du Luberon, Parc Scarpe-Escaut, Parc Boucles Seine normande, Millevaches en Limousin, Caps et marais d'Opale, Volcans d'Auvergne, Parc Massif des Bauges, Parc Perche.**



David Lappartient, President of the French Cycling Federation and Jean-Louis JOSPEH, President of the Federation of Regional Parks of France, **signing the National Convention on cycling and mountain biking in the French Regional Parks**



# Alta Murgia National Park, Puglia, Italy

## TRANSMURGIANA



### ECST Action Plan

#### Action n. 12

23,24,25 April 2016

Difficulty level: Medium / High

Total length: 205 km (70% on dirt roads)

Transfer of the luggage from the starting point of the trip to the final stage with a van

Registration form on:

<http://www.4cycling.it/transmurgiana-2016.html>

More info on:

<http://www.parcoaltamurgia.gov.it/>

[www.ciclomurgia.com](http://www.ciclomurgia.com)



# How to develop mountain Biking in a Charter Areas?

- 1) Look for Sustainable destinations within your area  
<http://www.european-charter.org/home/>
- 2) Establish contact with the local managing authorities
- 3) Express your interest in being part of the local permanent Charter Forum
- 4) Join and be active in the Permanent Forum – contribute and develop new contacts
- 5) Propose actions aligned with the strategy (new trails, new sign posts, events, campaigns, etc)
- 6) Monitor and assessment
- 7) Share your expertise with the European network!





# FURTHER INFORMATION

EUROPARC Federation  
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For further details on the Charter see also

**[www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org)**  
**[www.european-charter.org](http://www.european-charter.org)**