

The Dynamics of Cycle Tourism by Ted Liddle

What is a cycle route?

A cycle route is a cycle journey of any distance which may or may not be mapped and signed, either on-road or off-road or a mix of the two. A really good quality cycle route is a work of art and every part of it should be a pleasurable.

A short cycle ride is like a poem or a song - every part of it should be quality

A day cycle ride is like a short story or film – it should have a start, a middle and an end and be made up of several mini sub plots with a surprise or two for good measure

A three + day cycle tour is like a book – every day is a chapter and the ‘story’ should develop naturally and progressively with varied and changing situations being introduced like different characters in a good story line. The plot should unwind with highs and lows and on completion, each cyclist should feel good about every aspect of the experience and head home wanting more and telling everyone what a fabulous time they’ve had.

Routes are not products – they have to be turned into products and then managed. The process to do this is an amalgam of the factors outlined below. This doesn’t happen by itself!

There are two main categories of cyclist

- On road cyclists – riding road bikes with narrow tyres / 80%
- Off-road cyclists – riding tracks on mountain bikes or flat man-made paths / 20%

Mountain Bike Participation Pyramid

The Participation Pyramid comprises millions of bricks; each *brick* represents one person; each *level* is a progressive stage in commitment and acquired skill; each colour change represents incremental growth in terms of commitment and acquired skill: Note colours are in line with universally accepted Freeride gradings.



The Participation Pyramid shows how the massive pool of novices progresses upwards to become a limited number of experts. There is only one brick at the very top of the pyramid and that is the world champion. Widening the base means that every subsequent level will automatically have more participants. It is short-sighted to focus on any one level without giving due consideration to the needs of, and impact on, all other levels.

There are 3 types of Cycle Tourist:

- Touring cyclists on linear / circular routes with a minimum of one overnight stay
- Cyclists who cycle once or twice during a holiday
- 'Day' cyclists including cycling event participants

There are 3 principal strands to Route Development:

Creating high quality routes : linear or loop routes

Managing the experience* : looking after the 'customer'

Unlocking the potential : linking the 'customer' with service-providers for mutual gain

**Looking after the end-to-end experience of the route user AND the start-to-finish condition of the route. This is not done as standard.*

There are 5 elements of Route Management (*Managing the experience*):

SIGNAGE - signing quality correlates with 'on route' SPEND – see diagram at the end

MAPS - the route in a package (the concept - the tour - the memory - the trophy)

MARKETING - if a product is not seen in the market place then it is not IN the market place

MONITORING - you can't improve or manage what you don't understand or know about

MAINTENANCE - low on recognition / high on impact / key to 'managing the experience'

There are 5 types of cycle route SPEND & 2 types of 'visit' SPEND:

Route Spend

Pre-route: *maps, clothing, equipment, advance bookings, tour operator, cycle hire etc*

On route: *accommodation, meals, refreshment stops, postcards, stamps, snacks etc*

Post route: *T-shirt, certificates, books, further planned trips*

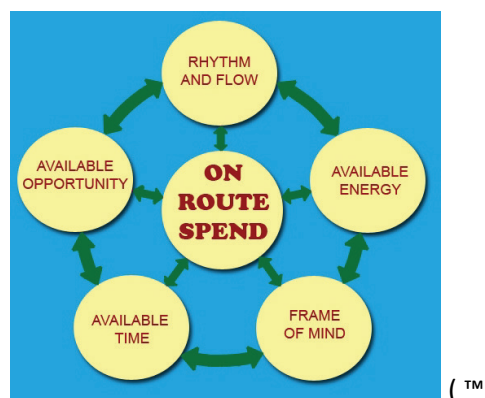
To / from route: *train, bike taxi etc*

Charity fundraising: *sponsorship, corporate 'donations' etc*

Visit Spend

PRIMARY VISIT SPEND: *Generated from cycling a linear or loop tour invariably based on linked one night stopovers*

SECONDARY SPEND: *Generated from subsequent centre-based multi nights visits – community-centred cycle route maps are bought to provide information about local routes*



(™)

There are 7 types of on route service provider:

Accommodation: *B&B's, hotels, hostels, campsites, self catering, friends & family*

Refreshments: *Tea rooms, pubs, general stores....*

Relevant shops: *Cycle shops, cycling accessories, energy food, clothing, post cards etc*

Visitor attractions: *On-route attractions (planned and / or discovered by chance)*

Transport: *To / from and during*

Cycle holiday support services: *Tour operators, cycle hire, people & luggage transport*

Key support services: *TICs, loos, cash points, medical support*

ROUTE HARDWARE is the route itself and all hard signage

ROUTE SOFTWARE is the marketing, promotion, service provision, route management and route support information

As with computers - the hardware is useless without the right combination and balance of the right software in the right amount in the right place at the right time.

There are 8 aspects that must be put in place and structured by experienced hands to implement a route from scratch and ensure it becomes a product....

	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Summary</u>
1	Route alignment and infrastructure	Report & implementation
2	Route signing (road) and / or waymarking (off-road)	Report & implementation
3	Route support infrastructure	Report & implementation
4	Business training, support and engagement	Implementation & report
5	Cycle route map (usually 3,000)	Manage, print & distribute
6	Website	Implement and manage
7	Route monitoring (basic)	Implementation & report
8	Sustainable route management	Set up & ongoing (route-funded)

NOTES:

1. Safe, attractive, scenic, services, memorable

2. Appropriate signage on road routes and appropriate waymarking on off-road routes

3. Route support infrastructure centrally located in place in on-route communities e.g.

- A distinctive fingerpost
- An information panel with local routes, contacts and a regional context map
- Cycle stands and in some locations, cycle parking boxes
- A community cycling pump
- A publicly available work stand with attached tools

4. User-focused, serviced-provider orientated to provide mutual benefit

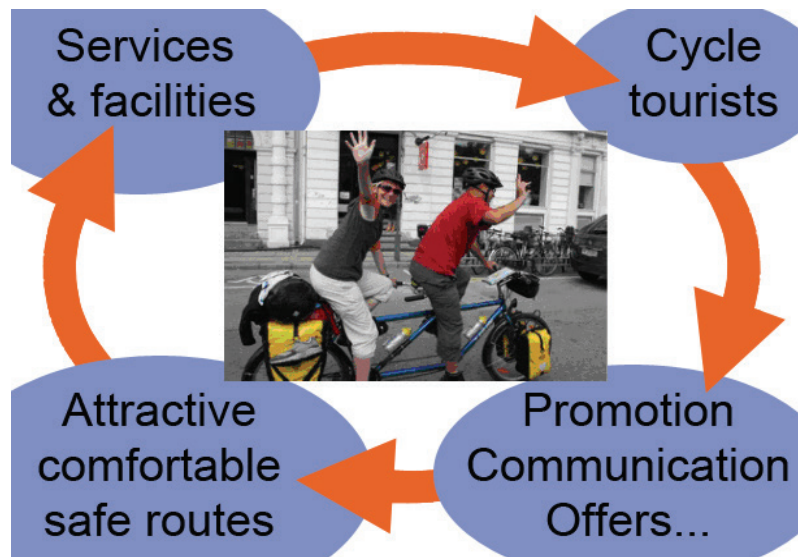
5. A well structured route map and the provision of gpx files

6. An attractive easy to use interactive updated website

7. A robust route monitoring process to include cyclist numbers and economic impact

8. End users need to be listened to & catered for - routes don't look after themselves

The Cycle Tourism Cycle



Investments required

Cyclists need safe, comfortable attractive routes plus support services, high standard, complete and uniform signage, bike-friendly transport, up to date accessible accurate information, a range of friendly informed and understanding accommodation.

The benefits far outweigh the cost of implementation. Organisational development and support is required not just physical outputs.

Source: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2012/474569/IPOL-TRAN_ET%282012%29474569_EN.pdf

Key success factors which attract cycle tourists

Cycle tourists are motivated by a mix of elements but especially nature and an opportunity to relax away from everyday life. Themed routes need to express these values to attract cycle tourists. Generally we found a lack of systematic promotion and marketing of cycle routes throughout the literature and survey among stakeholders and experts.

It is also possible to respond to the research question asking about key success factors in attracting cycle tourists to the Euro-Velo network. There are 3 necessary core factors:

- Safe and continuous routes
- Pleasant countryside and cyclist-friendly villages (and cities)
- Clear and reliable signage and interpretation

Other factors are less important in relation to the choice of route or the decision to go

cycling but they are fundamental to the tourist experience: quality accommodation and hospitality venues en route, service facilities and adequate information.

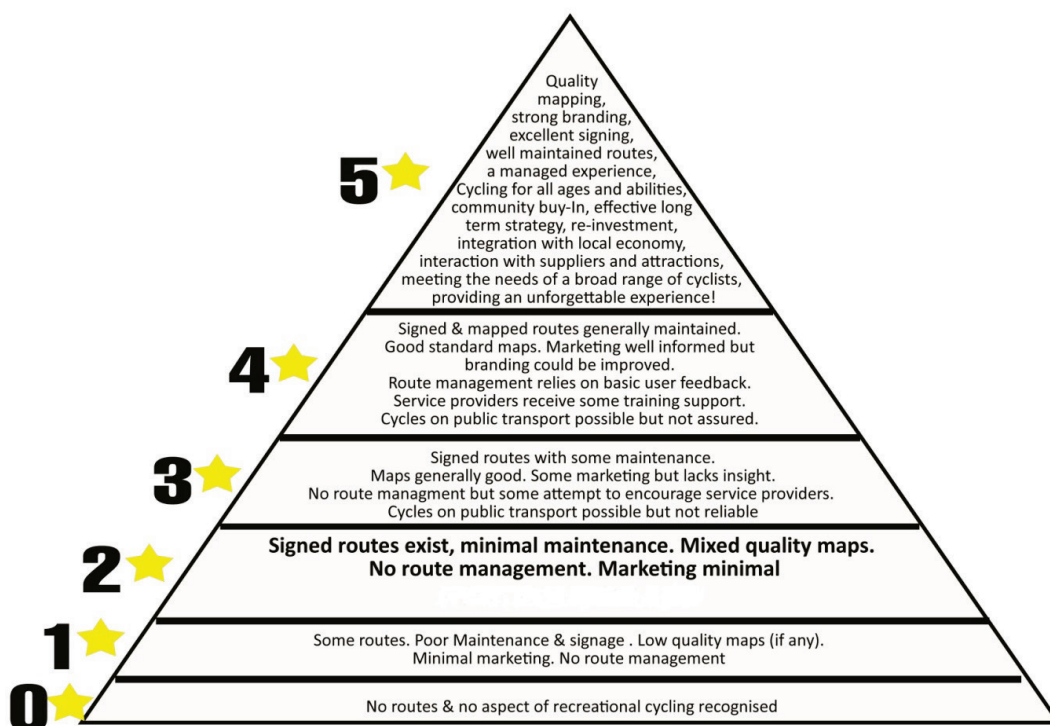
(Eurovelo 2013)

Cycle Tourism Standards rate cycle destinations between 1 to 5 stars. Some of the best examples of successful cycle plan implementation can be found.....

In the Scottish Borders, the 7 Stanes project is now in its seventh year. The seven Forestry Commission sites now average 550,000 day bike visits per year of which 400,000 are to Glentress & Innerleithen bringing £9m into the local economy. As a result, some 3000 new jobs have been created. Ref: www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk

In the South West of England day & staying cyclists spend £3.6m on both the Camel (400,000+ users) and Tarka Trail (28km and 48km) for cyclists in Cornwall but this is thought to be a significant under-estimate perhaps by a factor of 3. Combined, the two trails sustain 60 FTE jobs and sustain many more in part. ref <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=13405>

Cycle Tourism Standards Pyramid



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