

**DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL
ECOTOURISM STRATEGY FOR EASTERN BAVARIA**
STRATEGY, WORKSHOP AND GUIDE FOR THE
VALORISATION OF THE EUROVELO ROUTES



FINAL REPORT

BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOPS ON
26.09.2019 AND 29.01.2020

BTE
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Hannover, 30.03.2020

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1 Regional ecotourism strategy cycle routes for Eastern Bavaria

The Interreg Danube Region project "EcoVeloTour" is implemented within the framework of the "Danube Transnational Programme" of the European Union. The project aims at the valorisation of EuroVelo routes and the promotion of sustainable tourism. EuroVelo is a European network of 15 long-distance cycle routes.

The project focuses on the long-distance cycle routes along the Danube from Germany to the Danube Delta. **The aim is to develop and implement strategies for the sustainable development of cycle tourism along the EuroVelo cycle path network in the Danube region.** A total of ten project partners and six associated partners from seven countries along the Danube, including the Tourismusverband Ostbayern e.V., are involved.

Within the framework of "EcoVeloTour", the Tourismusverband Ostbayern e.V. is developing an **ecotourism strategy for the region of Eastern Bavaria, which supports the valorisation and potential of the EuroVelo cycle routes for the regional tourism industry.** The strategy includes an **implementation guideline.** It is intended to contribute to the strengthening and sustainable development of cycle tourism in the region of Eastern Bavaria. The guide is addressed to regional players in the tourism industry and local public transport providers.

The spatial focus of the strategy is on the sections of the EuroVelo Cycle Route 6 (including the **Danube Cycle Path**) and the EuroVelo Cycle Route 13 (**Iron Curtain Trail**). **In terms of content**, the focus is on the **integration of tourism service providers and local public transport.**

The focus of the work was on

- consideration of the basic principles, above all the basic analyses provided within the framework of EcoVelo ("Guidelines for ESS-based ecotourism strategy", Hegedüs et al. and "Guidelines for sustainable bicycle tourism", Aschauer et al.)
- Desktop analysis of the offers in Eastern Bavaria, with a focus on cycle tourism, cycle tourism offers of the hosting companies and bicycle transport in public transport
- Results of the three workshops in Eastern Bavaria in September 2019 and January 2020 on the initial situation and the development of offers.

The procedure of regional coordination and involvement of local partners chosen in the project corresponds to the layout of the "Guidelines for ESS-based ecotourism strategy".

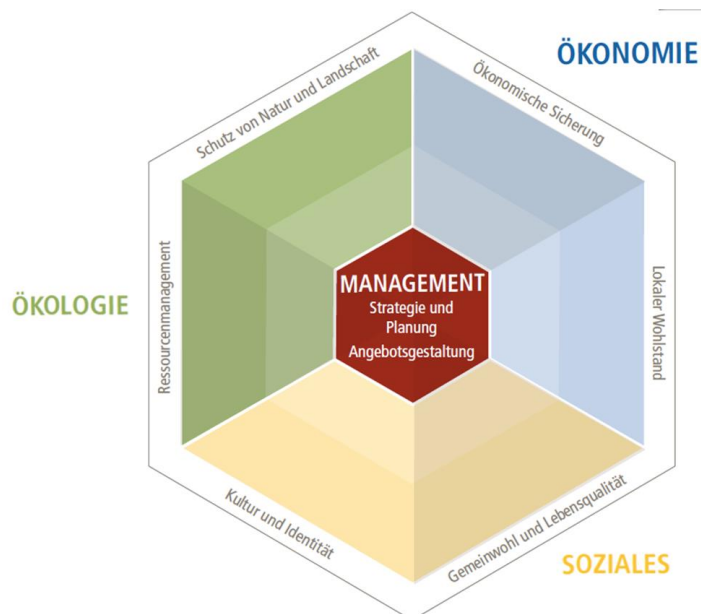
The **main focus of the project was "valorisation of the EuroVeloRoutes Danube Cycle Path and Iron Curtain Trail for the tourism region and its service providers"**.

1. involvement of service providers, above all the hosting companies, with the aim of developing cycle tourism offers in the companies, expansion of the hosting companies' participation in cycle tourism
2. involvement of public transport providers with the aim of using bicycle transport services in the development of tourism products.

2 Sustainability

Sustainable tourism includes economic, ecological and social criteria and requires management geared to sustainability (BTE, 2017).

Fig. 1 Components of sustainable tourism



© BTE 2017

Cycling can contribute to sustainable tourism but is not sustainable per se. Cycling tourism in combination with travel/transfer by public transport meets essential criteria of sustainable tourism: low consumption of resources, small ecological footprint, small carbon footprint¹.

Sustainable tourism also includes regional economic effects (income in the region visited, contributions to regional economic cycles), the strengthening of culture and identity and the quality of life. This can be achieved by bicycle tourism especially if the offers are integrated into regional value chains and, for example, regional specialities from local producers are included or the income is used to preserve landscape and culture.

A prerequisite for creating benefits for the population and the regional economy is the successful acquisition of guests. This requires an attractive, customer-oriented offer. In cycle tourism, this means above all creating a high-quality product and experience (cf. Chapter 6). The Guidelines for sustainable bicycle tourism (Aschauer et al.) provide suggestions and standards for this.

¹ see Guidelines for sustainable bicycle tourism, chap. 2.2, p. 6.

Against this background it becomes clear:

- Cycle tourism can make important contributions to sustainable tourism, provided that it is an efficient and attractive offer.
- Renouncement of the private motor vehicle reduces the CO2 footprint of the journey, provided that there is an efficient public transport system, especially the possibility of taking bicycles with you.
- A prerequisite for regional value creation is the involvement of regional hosting companies and service providers. The use of regional products is a prerequisite for regional economic cycles and can strengthen the preservation of landscape and culture. A prerequisite for this is the organisation and distribution of appropriate offers².

From this point of view, the layout of the project with its focus on proposal preparation, integration of public transport services and involvement of service providers meets the criteria of sustainable tourism.

² see Guidelines for sustainable bicycle tourism, pp. 4, 7 ff.

3 EuroVelo routes: International context of the offers in Eastern Bavaria

Cycle tourism is a market of considerable importance both nationally and internationally. Long-distance cycle routes are the figureheads of cycle tourism and appeal to national and international cycle tourists. The current thirteen EuroVelo Routes are the international flagships of the European Cycle Route Network.

Fig 2. Extract from the EuroVelo route network in and around Germany



© <http://www.worldbiking.info>

The ADFC Cycle Journey Analysis 2019 ranks the **Danube Cycle Path** as the most popular international long-distance cycle route among the German (out of 159 routes) and 4th among the international long-distance cycle routes (out of 174 long-distance cycle routes).

Considerable potential is attributed to the **Iron Curtain Trail** due to its great historical significance. The Iron Curtain Trail is currently the subject of intense discussion and is being promoted in many places. The "bikeline" guidebook to the Iron Curtain Trail has already been published in its fifth edition.

The ADFC Cycling Trip Analysis 2019 lists Bavaria as the most popular cycling region in Germany (out of 185 regions).

From these basic conditions is derived:

- The **Danube Cycle Path** is an already established product with already strong demand and will continue to be very important as a national and international long-distance cycle path in the future.
- The **Iron Curtain Trail** is currently being developed internationally (<https://de.eurovelo.com/ev13>). The authors expect that the Iron Curtain Trail will gain in importance in the foreseeable future and attract national and international guests.
- The sections of the EuroVelo Routes in Eastern Bavaria are sections of larger long-distance cycle routes. This results in the task (even the "obligation") to keep the routes/products within Eastern Bavaria in good quality, because: If Eastern Bavaria is focusing on cycle tourism, it would be problematic to offer below-average quality on the EuroVelo Routes of all places.

In view of this, ensuring a good quality offer on the Danube Cycle Path and the Iron Curtain Trail plays a key role in the development of cycle tourism in Eastern Bavaria.

4 D-Route network

The Danube cycle path is part of the D-Route network³ in Germany and thus part of the cycle paths of national importance.

"Germany's long-distance cycle paths are second to none. No other country in Europe has such a broad, high-quality route network for cyclists. River cycle paths and theme routes exist in almost unmanageable abundance.

The D-Routes link these long-distance cycle routes in order to open up all German regions and offer cyclists attractive connections between interesting places. The focus is not on unwinding kilometres in order to get from A to B at racing speed if possible. Rather, the keywords for the German cycle network are relaxation, enjoyment and experience on routes that offer relaxation, safety and variety. Via the D-Routes, the German regions are simultaneously integrated into the Europe-wide Eurovelo network. Yet another reason for our European neighbours to discover Germany by bike". (Source: www.radnetz-deutschland.de/D-Routen.html)

In addition to upgrading a route by recognising it as part of the D-Network, the recognition of a route as a D-Network route is also of interest from a fiscal point of view: At the 2019 Cycle Tourism Conference, it was announced that the federal government will assume the construction load of the D-Routes in future.

The Iron Curtain Trail is not (yet) part of the D-Network of routes. This is remarkable, because with the classification as "EuroVelo-Route" it would be logical to anchor it in the D-Route network: International long-distance cycle routes should be part of the D-Route network. The future inclusion of the Iron Curtain Trail in the D-Route network is currently open.

³ The D-Route is a system of (currently) twelve long-distance cycle routes, which is currently being developed throughout Germany as part of the national cycle traffic plan. The project had a ten-year term from 2002 to 2012, and in the NRVP 2020 it was decided to continue the project.

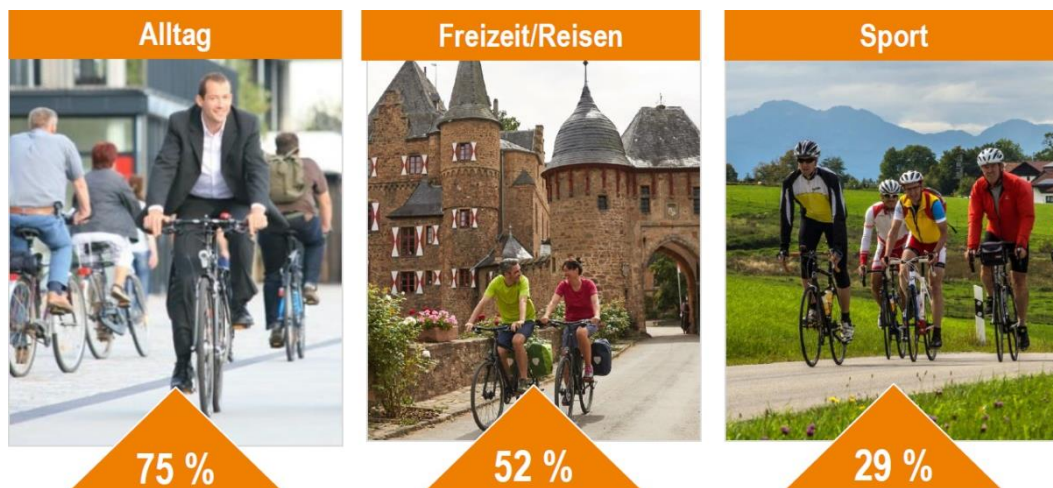
Fig. 3 Long distance cycle route network (D-routes) in Germany



5 Cycle tourism - key points, general conditions

Cycle tourism is a volume market with a high degree of constancy and further development potential. According to the ADFC cycle travel analysis 2019, 79% of Germans ride a bicycle occasionally or regularly.

Fig. 4 Cycling as an important activity for Germans



Source: adfc-Radreiseanalyse 2019

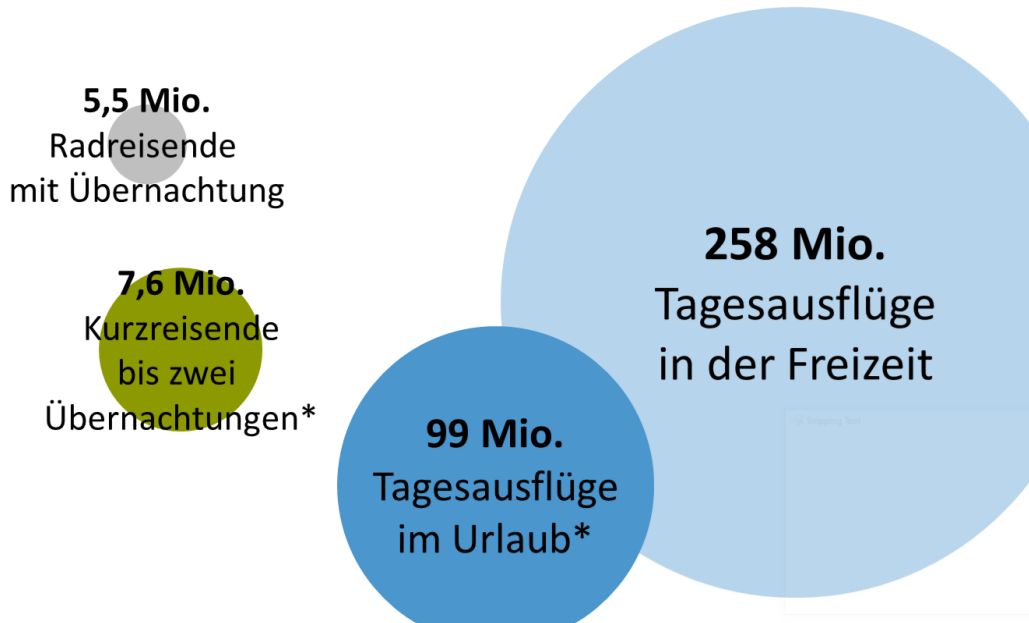
Long-distance routes are the leading products in the market, which attract a lot of attention and demand. Nevertheless, day trips are also of outstanding importance in terms of demand. This also applies to day trips from the holiday destination (see Fig. 5).

Long-distance cycle routes are also of great importance for day trips: **long-distance cycle routes are often visited as part of day trips.** The motive is the interest in getting to know the lead product. Thus, long-distance cycle routes form lighthouse projects far beyond the multi-day tour market. Against this background, the creation of circular routes in daily format (approx. 60 to 80 km in length) along the long-distance cycle routes is of importance.

The loops laid out in Eastern Bavaria, including the **Lower Bavaria Tour ("Niederbayertour")**, correspond to the preferences of the guests and the requirements of the market. Here it may be necessary to highlight a selection of the best day tours.

It is important to note that it is possible to combine day tours with bicycle transport in public transport, either to reach the starting point or to return from the destination to the starting point or holiday destination.

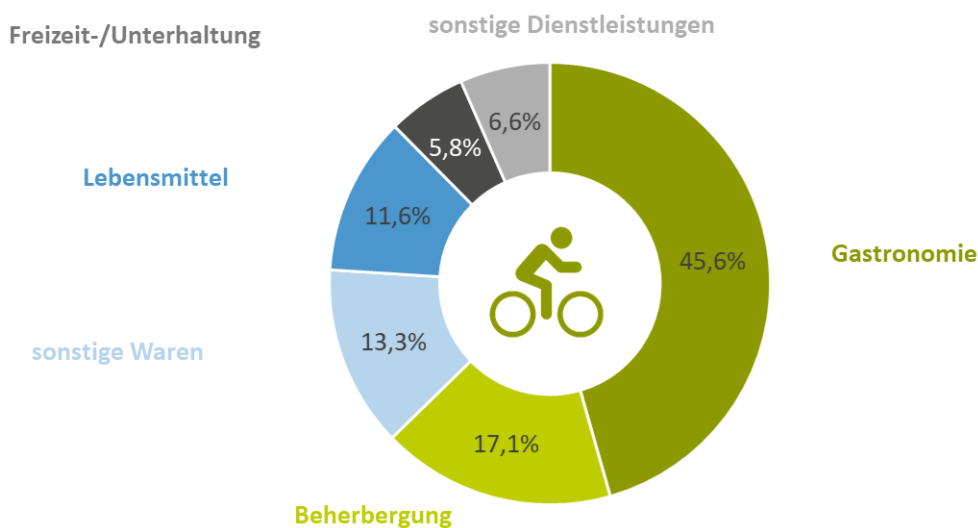
Fig. 5 Demand volume in cycle tourism 2018



© BTE 2020; data: ADFC- Travelbike: Radreiseanalyse 2019, * ibid., 2018

With a **gross turnover of 3.9 billion euros** (last projection from 2009), cycle tourism generates considerable turnover locally and in the destination. The turnover is generated by **different profit earners**: In addition to restaurants (45.6% of total sales) and hotels (17.1%), other retailers (13.3%), grocery stores (11.6%) and leisure and entertainment facilities (5.8%) also benefit (see BMWI 2009: Basic research on cycle tourism in Germany; data: dwif 2005-2007; Europäische Reiseversicherung und DZT 2008).

Fig. 6 Profiteers in cycle tourism

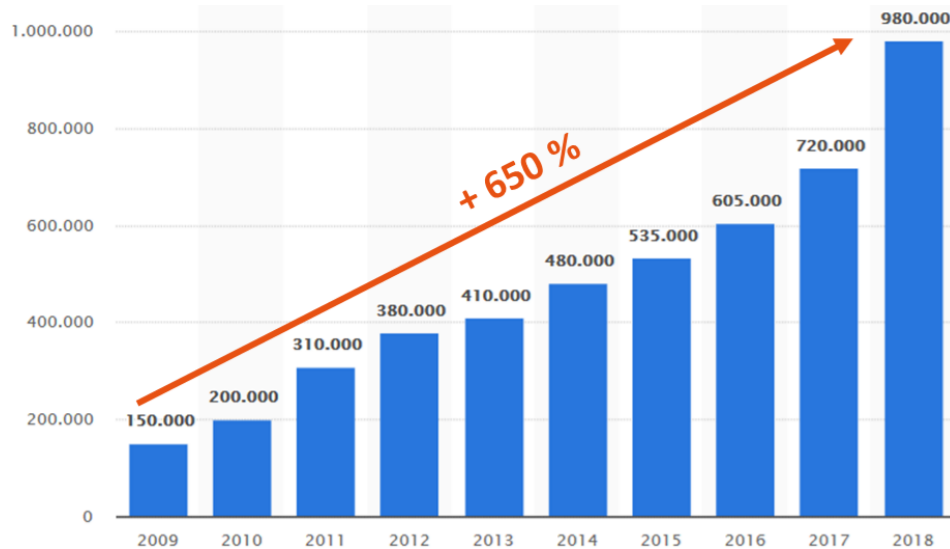


© BTE 2018 see BMWI 2009: Grundlagenuntersuchung Fahrradtourismus in Deutschland; data: dwif 2005-2007, Europäische Reiseversicherung und DZT 2008

Impulses in bicycle tourism through e-bikes

The current boom in e-bikes is giving new impetus to bicycle tourism: in 2018, 980,000 e-bikes were sold - **almost every fourth bicycle** sold was equipped with an electric motor (Statista 2018; Zweirad Industrie Verband e.V.).

Fig.7 E-bike sales in Germany from 2009 to 2018



© BTE 2020 in the style of Statista 2018; Zweirad Industrie Verband e.V.

In the first workshop the participants confirmed the high importance of e-bikes on the Danube Cycle Path and also the increasing share among mountain bikes. The e-bikes opened up new user groups for Eastern Bavaria (older, less fit guests). E-bikes already have a market share of 23.5%. Trekking bikes have the highest share (36.5% of the stock of e-bikes), e-mountain bikes make up 25 % of the e-bike range.

E-bikes allow for different action radii, make it easier to cope with ascents and thus open up additional target areas for cyclists. Joint riding fun is also possible with unequally trained pairs/groups.

- E-bikes no longer require special offers. The high capacities of the batteries make charging infrastructures along the route unnecessary. However, the hosting companies should be prepared for occasional requests for charging current. Overnight guests will charge in the accommodation, no special infrastructure is required for this, only a power outlet.
- At night, the expensive bikes (average price of a new e-bike in 2018: 2,500 euros) require secure accommodation. This must be easily accessible with the heavy bike.
- For transport in public transport, the heavy e-bikes need the right comfort: ramps, flat gradients and no lifting. Older guests in particular, who like to use e-bikes for reasons of comfort, have difficulty loading the heavy equipment.
- Current qualities of stations, train material and buses as well as future plans vary in the different regions and must be surveyed and made known.

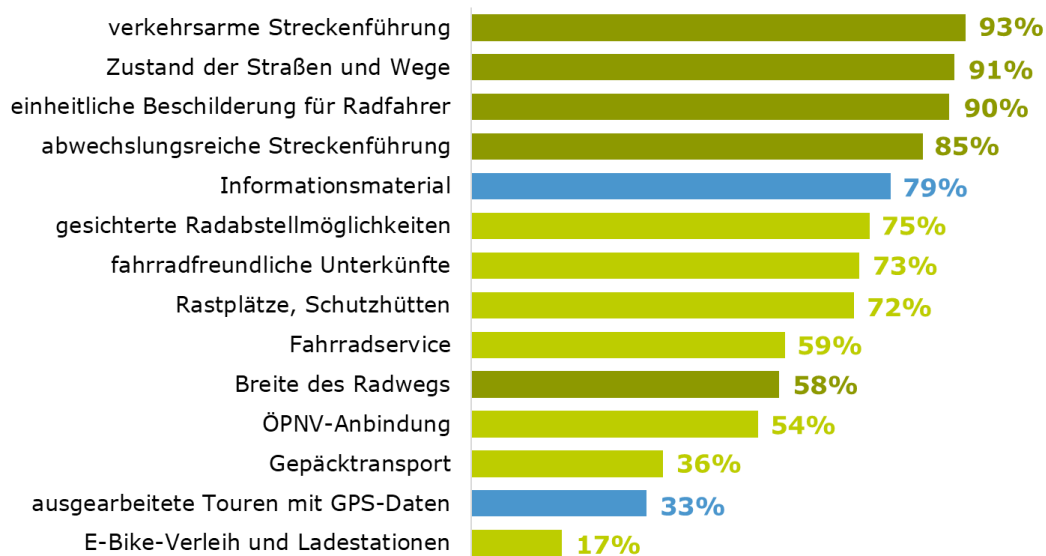
6 Quality requirements of the bicycle tourists

The quality requirements in bicycle tourism depend on the material used, roughly divided into touring bikes, mountain bikes and racing bikes.

For long-distance cycle paths, touring bikes or touring cyclists are by far the most important target group. Touring bikes with electric motors are assigned to this group.

The following figure gives an overview of the touring cyclists' preferences.

Fig. 8 Needs of the target group cyclists



© BTE 2019, Important aspects of a cycling holiday or excursion; data: Trendscope 2012: Radreisen der Deutschen; n=1.023; multiple answers possible

According to this, qualities of the routing and path quality are of great importance, as are service quality and public transport connections⁴.

The quality requirements that cycle tourists place on cycle regions can be illustrated in the "**pyramid of needs of cycle tourists**" developed by BTE (based on Maslow's pyramid of needs). This makes it clear that the needs of cycle tourists can be assigned to different levels.

The foundation of the pyramid is the fundamental need for a **basic quality**. This need is basically the same for all cycle routes and all types of cycle tourists and focuses, among other things, on good route quality, safe, low-traffic, attractive routing, cycle route signage that allows easy and safe orientation while travelling the desired route, and the availability of catering and accommodation facilities along the route⁵.

⁴ see Guidelines for sustainable bicycle tourism, p. 50

⁵ see Guidelines for sustainable bicycle tourism, pp. 16 f

The second level is based on the needs of cycle tourists to be able to "experience" the **regional and local peculiarities and characteristics** of the region by bike. The cycle routes must therefore enable the cycle tourists to satisfy this need, for example, by opening up and integrating important local sights, themes or other "points of interest" (POIs).

Finally, at the top of the pyramid is the **need for experience**, i.e. the targeted staging and experience-oriented presentation of the landscape, important sights, themes and POIs that make the cycle tour a unique experience⁶.

Fig. 9 Pyramid of needs of cycle tourists



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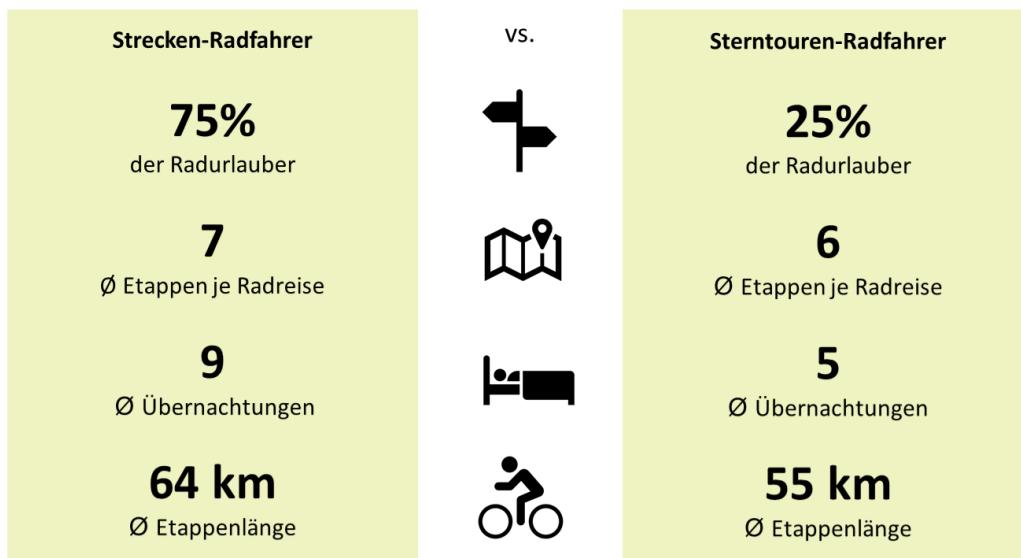
In cycle tourism a distinction is made between

- **Overnight bicycle tourists**
 - **Long-distance cyclists:** several days on a long-distance cycle route, changing accommodation; the importance of taking your bike with you on public transport to shorten stages (illness, bad weather, breakdown, etc.)
 - **Star tour cyclists:** fixed accommodation in a region, different bicycle tours in the region with the same accommodation; high importance of bicycle transport in public transport for the journey to the starting point and/or return to the accommodation. Star tour cyclists are synonymous with the segment "**bicycle excursions at the holiday destination**" (cf. Figure 5, see above).
- **Non overnight cycling tourists:** cycling tours in day-trip tourism

⁶ see Guidelines for sustainable bicycle tourism, p. 10

The following figure illustrates the different preferences of the user groups route- and star tour cyclists. Among other things, it shows the preferred stage length of about 50 to 65 km. According to the participants in the first workshop, the tour lengths of the numerous e-bike riders also do not deviate significantly from these values. The widely used upper limit of a day tour length is therefore 80 km.

Fig. 10 Requirements of distance/star tour cyclists for tours, stage lengths



© BTE 2019, based on data of the adfc Radreiseanalyse 2018

7 Offer quality for bicycle tourism in Eastern Bavaria

The two EuroVeloRoutes are very different in terms of their state of development and the quality of their services.

- The **Danube Cycle Path** has been established, known and popular for many years. The Danube Cycle Path is suitable for the large target group of touring cyclists, can be excellently combined with cultural experiences and is in demand accordingly. The route is a permanent fixture in cycle tourism, generates a demand that is clearly noticeable in the businesses and is recognised and undisputed in the region as an important part of the tourism portfolio.
- The **Iron Curtain Trail** is a comparatively new product and not yet established. The Iron Curtain Trail has great potential throughout Europe. The route through Eastern Bavaria is viewed with caution by the tourism experts involved in the workshops: The trail runs mostly far away from towns, infrastructure, and public transport connections on gravel roads and with strong relief energy. It is probably less attractive for classic touring cyclists (road surface) or for mountain bikers (forest roads, no "flowing" trails). However, the predominant opinion of stakeholders is that it is certainly suitable for the new segment "Gravel Bikes" (see section 8.1.2).

The conditions on both EuroVeloRoutes make it clear that it is difficult to generalise and that the specific conditions of the route and region must be taken into account.

The specifics of the region become particularly clear in the example of the Iron Curtain Trail: The conditions in the Bavarian Forest are different from those in the Upper Palatinate Forest - and in Eastern Bavaria completely different from other regions through which the Iron Curtain Trail runs. In many places, the Iron Curtain Trail runs on suitable cycle paths that can also be ridden well on touring bikes - the product qualities there are completely different from those in Eastern Bavaria.

7.1 Danube Cycle Path

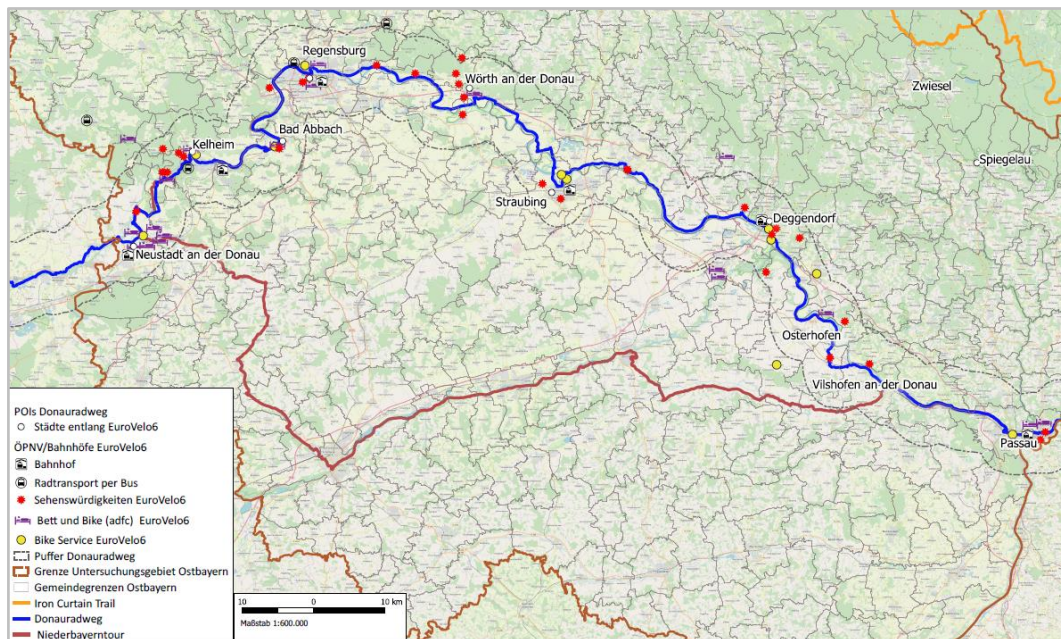
The Danube Cycle Path presents itself as an already established, highly demanded river cycle route with a largely clear route. The route is certified as a 4-star cycle route by the adfc.

The Danube Cycle Path touches numerous places and provides access to a number of **POIs and points of interest for cyclists**.

There are certified bed+bike businesses in many places along the route. However, with around 20 bed+bike businesses along the entire Danube Cycle Path in eastern Bavaria (in a corridor of 5 km on both sides of the route), it is not possible to speak of a strong bed+bike offering.

The Regensburg-Plattling-Passau **railway line**, which runs in the river valley, allows you to shorten routes or return to your starting point by train.

Fig. 11 Route of the Danube Cycle Path in Eastern Bavaria



© BTE 2019, Map basis OSM, results stocktaking

7.2 Iron Curtain Trail

The Iron Curtain Trail is to be regarded as a route connection under development. Travel guides and route recommendations are already available. The Iron Curtain Trail is not yet signposted in its entire course in Germany, also the route guidance is not yet finally determined everywhere. In Eastern Bavaria the course of the Iron Curtain Trail is already marked.

The terrain is very hilly (considerable differences in altitude) and the bike offers in the Bavarian Forest are mainly designed for mountain bikes. The path quality of the Iron Curtain Trail in Eastern Bavaria does not meet the requirements of touring cyclists or mountain bikers, due to the natural environment. The paths are mostly gravelled instead of asphalted or concreted. This in combination with strong differences in altitude makes the route demanding (in plain language: dangerous for touring cyclists). Mountain bikers, on the other hand, will find a network of good quality mountain bike trails with the neighbouring TransBayerwald - better than the Iron Curtain Trail.

The Iron Curtain Trail runs - due to its concept - in large parts through the Czech Republic. The quality of the overall product therefore depends on the efforts made there. Eastern Bavaria has no influence on the routing, marking and equipment.

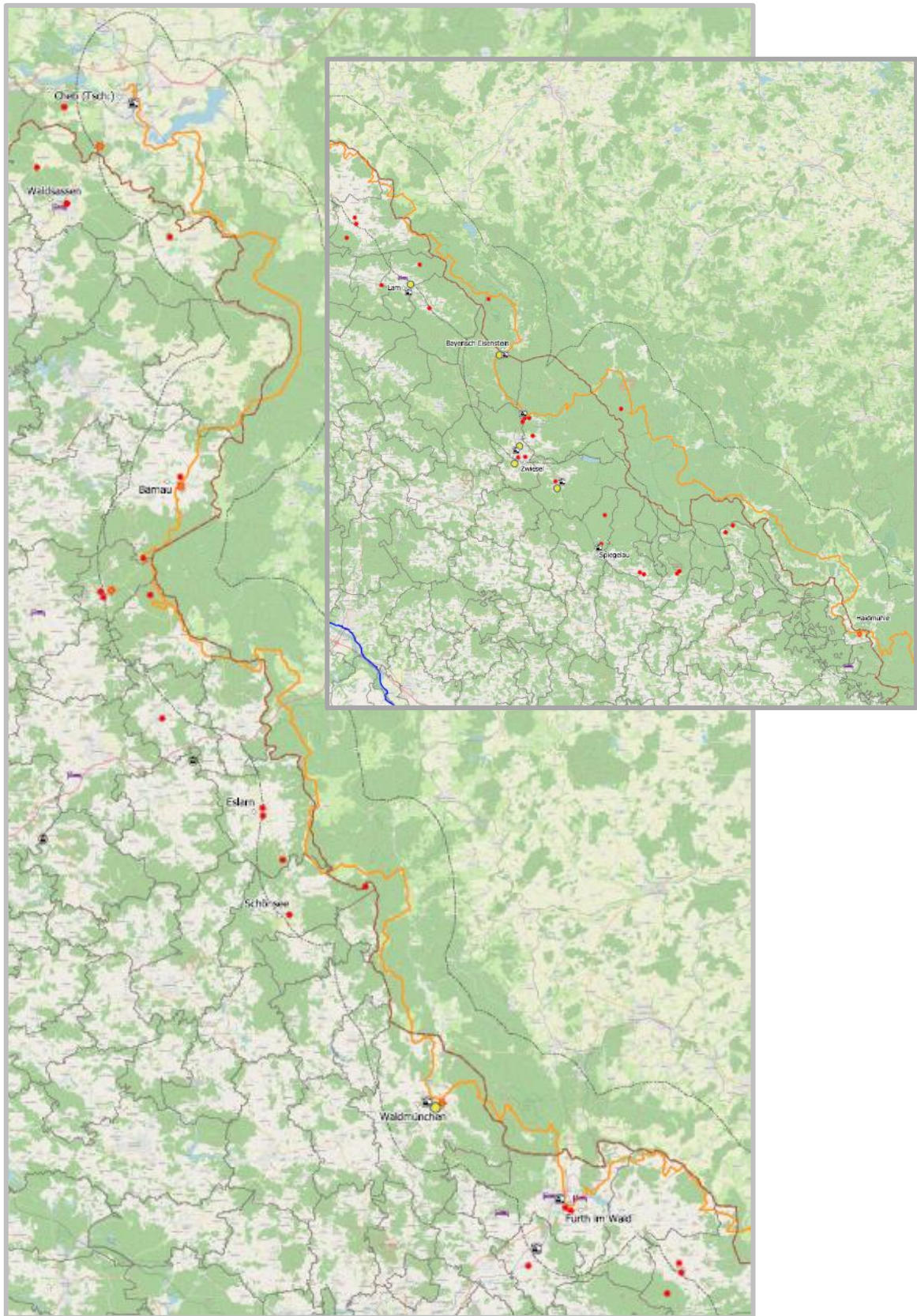
The Iron Curtain Trail follows the course of the border region away from the villages, so that branch paths to places of refreshment or overnight accommodation are required.

All this makes the Iron Curtain Trail in Eastern Bavaria a difficult product. Although the tourism industry in the region is focusing on cycle tourism (in the Bavarian Forest mainly on mountain biking, in the Upper Palatinate Forest mainly on touring and "pleasure cycling"), the Iron Curtain Trail has been little used so far and plays a clearly subordinate role in planning. This is very understandable for the reasons mentioned above, but regrettable in view of the development of the Iron Curtain Trail: The route opens up the former "Iron Curtain" and the history of the division of Europe and the overcoming of borders. It is to be developed in a European context. In this context, it would be regrettable if the Eastern Bavarian section of the Iron Curtain Trail did not have the quality of continuous passability for touring cyclists. For the current state, a warning notice for touring cyclists on the Iron Curtain Trail is recommended ("bad route, conditionally suitable for touring cyclists").

The Iron Curtain Trail opens up **attraction points/POIs**, some of which are related to the theme "Border, overcoming the division of Europe", among others:

- Memorial at the border checkpoint Waldsassen (memorial for the victims of the Iron Curtain), Cheb, Czech Republic
- Bärnau-Tachov History Park, Bärnau
- Borderland- und Trenck Museum Waldmünchen, Waldmünchen
- KulturLandschaftsmuseum Grenzerfahrung, Haidmühle
- Flossenbürg concentration camp memorial, Flossenbürg

Fig. 12 Route of the Iron Curtain Trail in Eastern Bavaria



There are very few **bed+bike businesses** along the Iron Curtain Trail in eastern Bavaria. Due to the very demanding topography, among other things, cycling has not yet been a central market segment for the companies.

The responsible tourism experts in the Upper Palatinate Forest are currently launching an initiative for the low-threshold qualification of "cyclist-friendly businesses" based on the bed+bike criteria of the adfc and with lower participation costs.

Large sections of the Iron Curtain Trail are not connected to the **rail network** and the offer for transferring bikes in the trains is patchy. Moreover, the rail connection does not run parallel to the Iron Curtain Trail route, but via branch lines from the foothills, so that transfers sometimes have to be made via detours.

In contrast to the already established Danube Cycle Path, the Iron Curtain Trail is still in the product development stage. In view of the above-mentioned difficult conditions, this is a very demanding task, which will at best be implemented step by step. The current trend towards e-bikes (cf. Chapter 5) opens up potential here, because the hilly terrain will thus become accessible to a larger target group.

Review of the history of the Iron Curtain Trail

In the workshop it was reported that in Eastern Bavaria, along the Iron Curtain Trail, information on the history of the Iron Curtain should be supplemented. Information on events at the border as well as references to further information in visitor centres and to further information material should be added.

Along the Iron Curtain Trail, hints should be provided on the information available by including the relevant destinations (with distance information) in the signposts.

According to the results of the analysis, the Iron Curtain Trail can be reached in Eastern Bavaria:

- **Memorial at the Waldsassen border control post** (memorial to the victims of the Iron Curtain) in Cheb, Czech Republic
- **Bärnau-Tachov History Park**, in Bärnau, Upper Palatinate
- **Borderland- and Trenck Museum**, in Waldmünchen, Upper Palatinate
- **Memorial site concentration camp memorial**, in Flossenbürg, Upper Palatinate
- **KulturLandschaftsmuseum Grenzerfahrung**, in Haidmühle, Bavarian Forest

7.3 Integration of hosting companies and service providers

Tourism promotion is economic promotion and an element of securing and developing living conditions in rural areas. Bicycle tourism can provide impulses here by channelling purchasing power into rural areas, opening up income opportunities there and consolidating socio-cultural structures. A prerequisite for this is the integration of restaurants and other service providers, including retailers, service providers, bicycle repair shops and rental companies.

Cycle tourism is an important but not dominant market segment in Germany (cf. Chapter 5). Many hotels and restaurants see cycle tourism as a niche offer. The situation is different in distinct cycle tourism regions or on important long-distance cycle routes. In these areas, businesses specialise in the target group of cyclists, who often account for more than 10% of turnover.

The discussions in the workshops yielded the following insights into the position of the hosting companies regarding involvement in cycle tourism:

Involvement of the hosting companies in cycle tourism along the Danube Cycle Path

Numerous businesses along the Danube Cycle Path benefit from bicycle tourism. Cooperative relations between the companies themselves and with the tourism departments of the districts appear to be capable of improvement.

- This is due to the tense situation, as the companies are under a variety of pressures, keywords: price competition, lack of personnel/skilled workers. The general conditions make it difficult for the companies to commit themselves to the promotion of bicycle tourism in their region beyond their daily business.
- As a result, there are currently individual informal networks among the companies and personal networks. Strict cooperation between the tourism departments of the districts and service providers in cycle tourism is difficult to maintain. Impulses are provided by the tourism departments of the districts, the service providers participate sporadically within the scope of their possibilities.

There are currently around 20 bed+bike businesses along the entire Danube Cycle Path in eastern Bavaria (in a corridor of 5 km on both sides of the route). The offer is patchy (see chapter 7.1).

Involvement of the hosting companies in bicycle tourism on the Iron Curtain Trail

The regions Bavarian Forest and Upper Palatinate Forest set priorities in bicycle tourism. The Upper Palatinate Forest concentrates on touring cyclists and in particular on "pleasure cycling". The Bavarian Forest concentrates on mountain biking. There, the Trans Bayerwald is a successful figurehead product that is being further expanded.

Bed+bike businesses are the exception, on the Iron Curtain Trail there is only one offer in Furth im Wald. Obviously, the hurdles for an investment seem too high for the companies. The lower-threshold offer "Cyclist-friendly business" in the Upper Palatinate Forest has met with great interest: around 60 businesses are planning to participate.

The importance of the Iron Curtain Trail for bicycle tourism is viewed critically in the Upper Palatinate Forest and the Bavarian Forest: The quality of the Iron Curtain Trail corresponds neither to the preferences of touring cyclists nor those of mountain bikers.

At present, there is only very restrained interest in integrating the Iron Curtain Trail into bicycle tourism. The companies are correspondingly reluctant to act.

Here it seems necessary to first work out common objectives for the further development of the Iron Curtain Trail and then to coordinate these with the service providers.

Basic interest of the hosting companies in bicycle tourism

Hosting companies involved in cycle tourism are interested in offering their own day trips/products in connection with the long-distance cycle routes. To do so, they need specific in-house products; specifically: round trips from/to the company. Ideally, the businesses should be located on the corresponding circular routes, otherwise they must develop their own tour suggestions. If necessary, the tourism departments of the districts can provide assistance.

Hosts are interested in a longer stay for cyclists in order to be able to work profitably. The offer of the star tours as day tours with fixed accommodation, within the scope of a stay of several days, fits in with this. It is in precisely that hosting companies are interested in these offers - regardless of municipal boundaries.

Hosting companies often do not know exactly enough about the development of offers in cycle tourism in "their" region - although the tourism departments of the districts offer this information. The main reason for this is the high workload of the businesses in their daily business.

According to the experience of the hosting companies, cycle tourists regularly request

- secure parking and safe storage of baggage
- if arriving by car: possibilities to park the car safely for the duration of the bike tour
- access to toilets

7.4 Public transport offers in cycle tourism in Eastern Bavaria

Due to the parallel running railway line, the offer of bicycle transport by public transport along the Danube Cycle Path is excellent. The Iron Curtain Trail is patchy, with large parts of the Iron Curtain Trail running away from railway stations.

A connection to train stations and bus stops does not yet mean that there is an efficient, bicycle-friendly offer. What is important is their equipment, e.g. with ramps, or better still lifts to bridge the steps, as well as the equipment of trains and buses for loading the bicycles. Especially the heavy e-bikes require comfortable equipment.

The complexity of the offer became clear in the workshops: different equipment for stations, trains and buses. It also became clear that not all tourism departments in the districts have differentiated and detailed knowledge about the offers for bicycle transport in public transport. This is, however, a prerequisite for product development and advice tailored to this. A systematic, up-to-date overview of the offers and planning of the transport carriers is required.

7.4.1 Bicycle transport on trains

The same applies to bicycle transport on trains as everywhere else in Germany:

- The trains offer bicycle spaces in the public transport system, a bicycle ticket is required for taking your bike with you
- Seats cannot be reserved (exception: groups), bicycles can only be taken along if there is sufficient capacity, wheelchair users and prams always have priority, the train attendant decides whether the bicycle is to be taken along

The lines in Eastern Bavaria are operated by DB Regio, Agilis, Oberpfalzbahn and Waldbahn. They all offer trains with low-floor cars and special bicycle compartments.

Fig. 13 Carrying bicycles on trains



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7.4.2 Bicycle transport on trains along the Danube Cycle Path

The Nuremberg-Regensburg-Plattling-Passau-Vienna railway line, which runs parallel to the Danube, provides an efficient means of shortening routes or returning to the point of departure by train on the Danube Cycle Path and offers excellent connections to the long-distance network. Day trips along the Danube for which the train can be used are thus also possible. If you use the regional express, you have to change trains in Plattling. IC and ICE trains pass through, but there is a reservation requirement for bicycles.

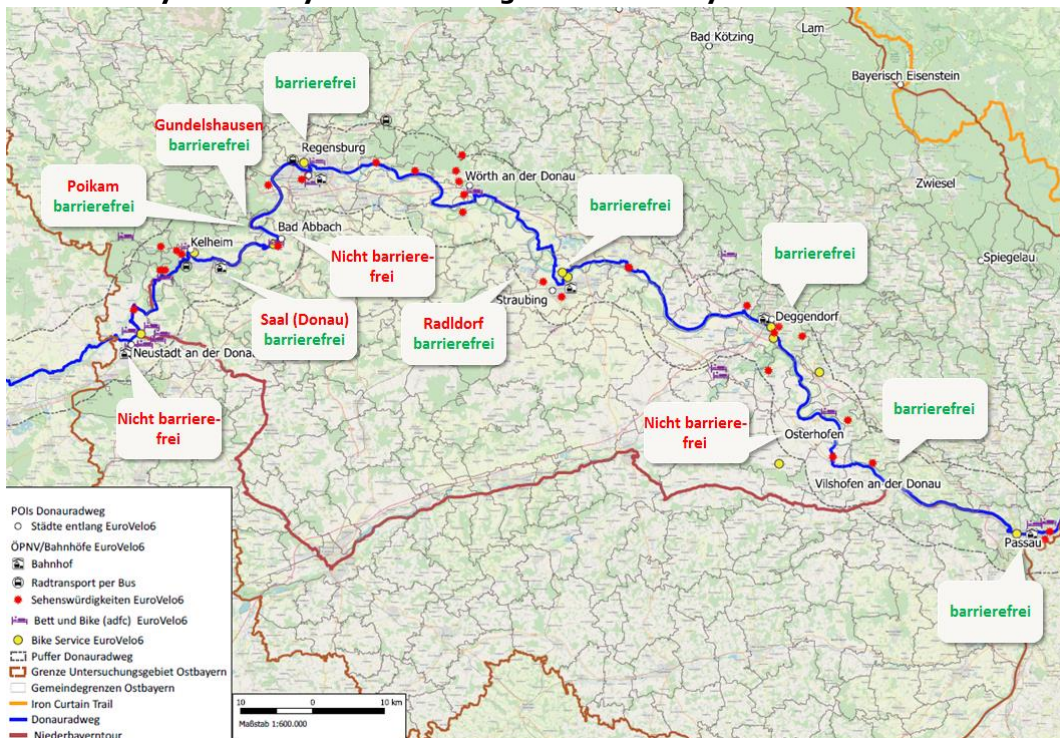
Fig. 14 Rail connection along the Danube Cycle Path



© Deutsche Bahn, Route map Bavaria

Most train stations are equipped for barrier-free bicycle transport, but there are exceptions: Bad Abbach, Osterhofen (Lower Bavaria), Neustadt an der Donau (see Fig. 15).

Fig. 15 Accessibility of railway stations along the Danube Cycle Path



7.4.3 Bike transport in trains on the Iron Curtain Trail

Large parts of the Iron Curtain Trail are not connected to the rail network (see Fig. 16). In some cases there are long distances between the course of the Iron Curtain Trail and the rail network. This is aggravated by the fact that the train connections do not run parallel to the border, but via branch lines from the foothills. This means that in some cases detours have to be accepted for transfers. The connection to the mainline network is made via the transfer stations Nuremberg, Regensburg, Plattling and Passau, among others.

Fig. 16 Rail connection along the Iron Curtain Trail



© Deutsche Bahn, Route map Bavaria, note: the Iron Curtain Trail runs along the border to the Czech Republic

Most of the stations are **barrier-free**, with the exception of Weiden in der Oberpfalz and Wiesau.

Due to the patchy rail connection of the Iron Curtain Trail, the offer of bicycle transport in buses is gaining in importance, see chapter 7.4.4.

7.4.4 Bicycle transport in buses

Buses generally allow the carriage of two bicycles. As the transport of wheelchair users, prams and rollators has priority, the carriage of bicycles is unsafe and cannot be reliably planned. Research at the district offices showed that there has been little demand for **bicycle transport in public buses**.

In some areas there is a seasonal offer of **bicycle buses** with varying degrees of success: There is a good demand for the Igel buses (leisure buses in/at the National Park Bavarian Forest). In the district of Tirschenreuth, the bicycle bus was discontinued due to the weak demand.

In the districts of Neustadt a.d. Waldnaab (Bockl-Radweg) and Schwandorf (Bayerisch-Böhmischer Freundschaftsweg) seasonal cycle buses for specific cycle paths are firmly established. In Neustadt a.d. Waldnaab this applies to the cycle path Bockl-Radweg, in Schwandorf to the cycle path Bayerisch-Böhmischer Freundschaftsweg. The Iron Curtain Trail is connected to the railway network via this offer.

8 Recommendations/Guidelines

Based on the results of the analysis and the project's focus, measures and recommendations for action were developed in the workshops.

Due to the very different starting conditions on the Danube Cycle Path and the Iron Curtain Trail in terms of supply and demand (cf. chapter 7), the recommendations are partly specific to the conditions on the two different long-distance cycle routes.

8.1 Proposal preparation

As a result of the analysis, there are indications of development opportunities for the Danube Cycle Path and the Iron Curtain Trail. The editors see potential for an improved valorisation of cycle tourism. The chapter "Development of the offer" is placed before the agreed priorities "Involvement of the hosting companies" and "Bicycle transport in public transport".

8.1.1 Proposal preparation on the Danube Cycle Path

The Danube Cycle Path appears to be excellently developed as a long-distance cycle route, the offer is of a high standard. Supplements are conceivable in certain areas: A stronger address of the important day trip market seems essential.

Day Tours

In view of the great importance of day trips in cycle tourism (cf. Chapter 5), particular development potential is seen here. At present, no day tours are offered either for the Danube Cycle Path or for the similar Lower Bavaria Tour. The authors recommend offering the Danube Cycle Path also in the form of day tours and developing appropriate products for this purpose. The editors assume that existing qualified cycle paths can be used for this purpose. A new construction of cycle paths will not be necessary.

There are two possibilities:

- Day tour using attractive sections of the Danube Cycle Path and other qualified cycle paths. Ideally, a thematic focus should be set, e.g. (castles tour) "Schlösserrunde" or (beer tour) "Bierrunde". The starting point of each route should be a barrier-free railway station.
- Day trip to a railway station, return by train (bicycle transport, see Chapter 7.4.2). The use of excursion boats for the transfer could be attractive: one route by bike, the other by water. Since the white fleet does not operate daily, differentiated and easily accessible customer information is needed.

The day trips on the Danube Cycle Path should be presented in the digital and print media. The following list shows the criteria for selecting suitable day trips.

■ **Recommendations for the design of day bike tours**

- Length of the tour: approx. 45 to 65 (max. 80) km
- Guidance on suitable cycle paths in the qualified cycle path network, preferably with FGSV signposting
- Day tours on the Danube Cycle Path
 - either a circular route including a section of the Danube Cycle Path
 - or one-way, to a suitable station, return by train or ship
- Integration of attractive target points, preferably thematic focus
- Integration/display of stations suitable for bicycle transport
- Involvement of committed bicycle-friendly hosting companies (so they can use the day tour for their guests)

The result should be a range of day trips of different lengths and different focuses. Approximately 7 (5 to 9) day tours along the Danube Cycle Path are considered to be an appropriate number of day tours. The offer should express the character of "recommendation, selected attractions", too much would be confusing and unnecessary, too little does not offer a range.

■ **Day tours for hosting companies (= house routes)**

Hosts should offer their guests suitable house routes from/to the company. Preferably, this would be a selection of different routes with different lengths and different experiences. Ideally, existing cycle paths can be used for this purpose, in which case it is only necessary to work out the round tour on existing paths.

- Co-work of possible route guidance by the tourism departments of the counties.
- Presentation of the routes on a simple DIN A3 map (like a "tear-off city map"), distribution to interested parties
- Production of digital tracks, payout via route portals (e.g. komoot, Outdooractive) on smartphones, assistance with use for guests

Offers for E-Bikes

E-bikes are in vogue and demand is booming (see Chapter 5). This development is noticeable on the Danube Cycle Path and should be taken into account. E-bike touring cyclists do not require specific offers, but it is important to consider the following needs:

- The owners of the expensive bikes want safe storage facilities, preferably in locked rooms at night.
- Powerful, modern rechargeable batteries allow long ranges. Overnight accommodation should allow recharging. A house socket is sufficient for this. Charging stations on the road, along cycle paths, are not (no longer) required.
- The heavy bikes are not easy to handle when loading/transporting, e.g. when loading on trains or buses, or when storing in the bicycle cellar of the accommodation. The infrastructure should be designed accordingly to be barrier-free (low gradients, ramps instead of steps, ...)

The editors recommend that the relevant qualities should be explicitly mentioned when presenting the offer, for example with the note "well suited for

E-bikes" with reference to appropriate quality standards. Barrier-free stations (or less suitable stations) should be marked.

Tourist information offices and hosts should know the quality features and be able to inform their guests accordingly.

8.1.2 Proposal preparation on the Iron Curtain Trail

The Iron Curtain Trail is regarded as a difficult product in the Upper Palatinate Forest and the Bavarian Forest (see chapter 7.2). In view of the scarce resources of the tourism marketing organisation, it is foreseeable that the development of the Iron Curtain Trail in Eastern Bavaria and its integration into the cycle tourism offer will not be a focus of work.

The local view of the Iron Curtain Trail (see chapter 7.3) is understandable. However, the editors expect an expansion of the Iron Curtain Trail as an international and national product with considerable potential: The history of the Iron Curtain, the division of Europe and the overcoming of the border is a strong topic of international importance. If the demand for the Iron Curtain Trail increases as expected, the route in Eastern Bavaria should be attractively developed. The supply should at least function in the international context of the route.

As a **minimum**, the editors recommend the following **measures**

- Guarantee of a minimum quality along the Iron Curtain Trail: clear route, continuous signposting. This is only possible in cooperation with the neighbours in the Czech Republic.
- Knowledge of the tourist information offices and businesses on the Iron Curtain Trail as a prerequisite for passing on information to guests.
- Information on the quality and condition of the route (as a "warning" for touring cyclists and mountain bikers)
- Consideration of the Iron Curtain Trail in the presentation of the cycle tourism offer.

Day Tours

The editors recommend that the route of the Iron Curtain Trail should be included in the development of the offer. The proximity to existing cycle routes enables the creation of day tours including the Iron Curtain Trail. This would make it possible to integrate the international project more strongly into the local offer.

The development of day tours for mountain bikers is recommended because there is a demand in this market segment as well: Mountain bikers prefer star tours in their region. Circular routes are preferred. Start/destination are reached by car. Corresponding offers for mountain bikers are only partially communicated in the Upper Palatinate Forest and the Bavarian Forest.

The tourism experts involved in the workshops are sceptical about this proposal for the reasons mentioned above due to the poor product quality of the Iron Curtain Trail for the core markets of touring bikes and mountain bikes. An expansion of day tours using the Iron Curtain Trail is not planned in the short term.

Development of the Iron Curtain Trail Eastern Bavaria - Gravel Bike Offer

First experience reports provide information about the suitability of the Iron Curtain Trail for the new trend bike Gravel-Bike (= racing bike with wide tyres, optimised for fast riding on gravel roads). The manufacturers expect a booming market, suitable offers are rare so far.

Fig. 17 Gravel-Bike



© Pacopac (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CAT700_2019_Bikepacking_en_bicicleta_de_gravel.jpg), <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>

The requirements of the gravel bikers correspond exactly to the profile of the Iron Curtain Trail in the Upper Palatinate Forest and the Bavarian Forest.

In the workshop it was agreed to examine the development of a gravel bike tour on the Iron Curtain Trail lasting several days. The section between Eger and Bayerisch Eisenstein (or Grafenau) should be used. Entrance and exit should be possible via rail connections. The first steps would be to carry out further test rides (a first one was promising), to communicate the offer, the media/press work and to involve the manufacturers.

The aim is to promote the track as a suitable offer for gravel bikes, combined with a presentation of the track, stages, entry/exit and suitable quarters.

In addition, the editors recommend the development of a daily circular route for gravel bikes with a length of approx. 80 km.

Offers for E-Bikes

The share of e-bikes in mountain bikes is growing. This makes tours with challenging altitude differences accessible to larger population groups. The engine makes the ascent easier, "flowing single trails", originally a downhill quality, are now also conceivable for the ascent. First offers are already on the market. Corresponding offers are also planned

in the mountain bike region Bavarian Forest. An integration of the Iron Curtain Trail fails because of the criticised suitability of the route for mountain bikes.

Expansion of services for families with children

In the mountain bike market there is a growing demand for offers for families with small and younger children: The mountain bike pioneers have entered the family phase and are bringing their children with them. Corresponding offers are already widely available on the market, also in the mountain bike region Bavarian Forest. An integration of the Iron Curtain Trail fails due to the criticised suitability of the route for mountain bikes.

8.2 Involvement of the hosting companies

As expected, the involvement of the hosting companies in the workshops proved to be difficult. Many companies are working at full capacity due to the obligations in day-to-day business and have only limited scope for product development and strategy.

For an efficient cycle tourism offer, the hosting companies are essential as important partners. Partner businesses in cycle tourism should offer **customer-oriented qualities**:

- Infrastructure, especially suitable bicycle parking spaces, safe and easily accessible for expensive e-bikes, charging facilities for e-bikes in the neighbourhood.
- Service/information: Provision of information/map material, helpful practical tips, recommendations for attractive routes, knowledge of regional services, including bicycle transport and bicycle workshops.
- House routes, i.e. recommendations on circular routes from/to the company (see section 8.1.1)

The bed+bike certification of the adfc provides criteria for the equipment of bicycle-friendly businesses. Ideally, numerous businesses should participate in bed+bike, as the recognized platform in bicycle tourism with its own reach.

Positioning/qualification of the companies

In addition to providing a bicycle-friendly offer, the companies are recommended to qualify by means of exceptional offers. Thinkable possibilities:

- Elaboration of own bicycle tourism offers, house routes, recommendations
- Guided tours, thematic tours, integration of special experiences, rental bikes, special material to try out (cooperation with manufacturers, e.g. family bikes, tandems, group bikes, ...)
- Integration of own/regional specialities, picnic service
- Special service, e.g. breakdown service, transfer

Services of the tourism departments of the districts

It is the task of the tourism departments of the districts to seek cooperation with efficient cycle tourism businesses. The most important thing is

- Provision of information on cycle tourism offers and qualities to the businesses
- Inclusion of the companies in the cycle tourism offer as well as consideration of the locations of the active partner companies in the planning of offers/routes

- The presentation of bicycle-friendly businesses in the information media and at tourist information offices. A search criterion "bicycle-friendly establishment" is recommended when searching for accommodation

8.3 Improving service, especially bicycle transport in public transport

Bicycle transport is seen as an important component of the cycle tourism offer on the Danube Cycle Path: This opens up the possibility

- Shortening tours, e.g. in bad weather, exhaustion
- Day trips: a route by bike, back by train. Different star tours would also be possible, e.g. from Regensburg, Straubing, Plattling.

Embedding information on bicycle transport in public transport in the presentation of the cycle route offer

The existing quality of bicycle transport on the parallel railway line (hourly intervals) on the Danube Cycle Path has so far been insufficiently presented and advertised. At present, only general information is provided about this possibility (with a link to the transport association). This does not help much, because the guest lands on the main page of the transport association and has to find out about the offers for bicycle transport and the relevant connections himself - without local knowledge this is a difficult task.

The editors recommend a more differentiated presentation of the quality "Bicycle transport on the Danube Cycle Path railway network". In concrete terms, this means including timetables and conditions in the Internet presentation (and not just linking to the homepage of the transport association). This requires the cooperation of the transport carriers.

Concrete recommendations:

- Own subpage on the tourism portals of the regions for cycling: "Notes on taking your bike with you on public transport" with
 - Display of the network and the usable connections/lines,
 - Display of usable stations (references to accessibility or restrictions),
 - Indications of capacity on the trains,
 - Information on conditions of carriage, fare structure and ticket shops, information on the possibility of buying tickets on the train (vending machines)
 - Deep link to the respective timetables - this saves the need for updating.
 - Information on additional possibilities for taking bicycles on the bus, especially information on the offer of the leisure buses with route network, stops, season, conditions
- Pooling of information for the hosts so that they can advise their guests. Transmission of a file with information to the hosts, who can print it out for their guests.

Knowledge about offers

Tourist information offices and hosts should be aware of the offers for bicycle transport in public transport to be able to inform their guests. The above-mentioned media (website, information package for hosts) are recommended to improve knowledge.

8.4 Embedding the „white fleets“ (Weiße Flotte) in the bicycle tourism offer

The editors consider the combination of "Cycle tour along the Danube/return trip by ship" to be attractive and recommend that the offer be presented and advertised. Therefore, timetables and booking possibilities should be communicated and embedded in the information offer. Ideally, a deep link to the specific offer of the shipping operators would be ideal (cf. chapter 8.3, see above).

The authors recommend the **development of a package consisting** of a cycle tour and shipping (with bicycle transport) with the conceivable elements of a one-way ticket + bicycle ticket + coffee/cake or lunch/dinner/candlelight dinner, ...

It is likely that this offer will not be available on a regular basis, but rather seasonally and only on individual weekdays. Good information about usable connections is therefore essential.

Another possibility is to integrate a river trip into the bike tour. A rest day on the boat can be an attractive addition to the cycle tour.

The packages should be presented and advertised as an offer for cyclists. It is conceivable to develop a group package and to target cycle tour operators.

Project "Fostering enhanced ecotourism planning along the Eurovelo cycle route network in the Danube Region"

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/ecovelotour>

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