



AtlanticOnBike Project extension, Work Package 5

Transnational Guidance Document on Rest Areas

European Cyclists' Federation

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www.eurovelo.com



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Good-quality bike racks in Le Goulet, France along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route © France Vélo Tourisme

1. Introduction, methodology & aims

This Guidance document on rest areas is created by the European Cyclists' Federation in the framework of the Interreg Atlantic Area AtlanticOnBike project extension. It will serve project partners as well as the larger EuroVelo network and public administration bodies, and it will set recommendations and European standards for rest areas along long-distance cycle routes.

This document was created with a comparative approach, analysing different policy documents of National EuroVelo Coordination Centres (NECCs), regions and local cycling routes initiatives across Europe (see the *Reference documents* section below for the full list of references).

The underlying matter is that, on long-distance cycle routes, rest areas are needed to provide cycle tourists a place to stop by the road, recover, drink some water, get information on the itinerary, and sometimes repair their bikes. However, criteria and standards for rest areas vary between European countries, and no international standards have been set in this respect. The aim of this document is therefore to give instructions and advice on rest areas with an international view, with the ultimate scope of helping harmonise rest areas on long-distance cycle routes.

The topic of rest areas is complex and multi-faceted. It is closely related to cycle route planning and to regional planning, involving a varied set of stakeholders at the local level. In some countries, rest areas may be planned only at a later stage of route development – only once the basic infrastructure is completed – while in other regions they may be planned simultaneously with the creation or improvement of a cycle route. In addition, the variables in landscape, accessibility, conditions and routes across the European continent are numerous. Such complexity does not allow setting international standards without raising concerns or debate. This document cannot and does not want to be exhaustive on the topic, but rather hopes to inspire discussions, give general instructions, and share best practices.



2. Rest areas' concept and services

a) Definition

A rest area is an open space for cyclists to consume their own supplies and take a break alongside a cycle route, preferably in nice surroundings. A rest area should be located alongside or at a maximum of 500m from the actual cycle route and must be clearly visible or adequately marked with signs.

Rest areas should be found regularly on long-distance cycle routes, especially outside of urban areas. Ideally, there should be the opportunity to eat, drink, and rest in nice surroundings – urban or rural – every 15km.

In general, a rest area should have the following essential services:

- Seating: table and benches
- Shelter from sun or rain, especially in very rainy or sunny climates
- Public toilet
- Drinking water, unless available elsewhere along the route, less than 15km away
- Bike parking facilities
- Bike repair station, unless there is a bicycle shop elsewhere along the route, less than 50km away
- Information board, at least once every 50km

Please note that in some cases, the installation of a public toilet will be difficult, for instance in very remote areas. The need of a public toilet should be evaluated against maintenance costs and requirements, and the location of the rest area.

These and other non-essential services will be discussed in detail in the following sections.



Picnic area of Capbreton, France, along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route © France Vélo Tourisme

b) Location

This section explores the requirements in terms of the location of rest areas, issuing useful recommendations in the planning phase.



Necessary	Recommended
Flat ground	Scenic location
Route proximity (max 500m)	Quiet area
Barrier-free	Greenway
Visibility and signalling	

Regarding the location of a rest area, it is essential to choose a flat space, directly accessible by bike and located alongside or in direct proximity of the cycle route. Rest areas should not be located more than 500m from the actual route and must be visible from the route itself or appropriately indicated with clear signage.

It is preferable that such areas are built in a scenic location – close to a viewpoint, in nature – and in a quiet area, away from traffic, highways, or industrial areas. Rest areas may be built in or close to urban areas, but additional efforts to maintain them should be planned. Rest areas may be situated close to specific points of interest, services and shops (except in the case of isolated sites) and tourist services (hiking trails, tourist sites, etc.). Additionally, to make rest areas used and attractive, the more they are integrated within other types of routes like mountain paths, walking paths or horse riding tracks, the better.

Depending on the country’s regulations regarding wild camping and bivouac areas, bikepackers could benefit from having an accessible green space to pitch their tent next to the rest area. These are especially recommended if the route section in question is far from urban areas and camping is the only possible accommodation type in the surroundings. If it is legally allowed in the country to wildcamp or bivouac in the area, there should be an information board making it clear to travellers, and giving them some recommendations (e.g. along the lines of the [“Leave No Trace”](#) principles). The Leave No Trace principles have been established with the idea to limit the impact of human recreational activities in natural areas. They include recommendations on waste disposal but also on topics such as wildfires, wildlife, surface durability, etc.



Rest area in Le Pellerin, France, along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route © EuroVelo

c) Services & requirements

Accessibility & inclusivity

EuroVelo routes are for everyone, including people with reduced mobility, the visually impaired, or people with other disabilities. Bike travelling is an opportunity for these people to experience nature, and boosts social inclusion. For this reason, it is crucial that rest areas are accessible and can be used by everyone.

As a principle, rest areas should be barrier-free – ensuring that bikes and bikers can access them. Infrastructure provisions for visually impaired people should be put in place when possible, including accessible toilets. The infrastructure should also be safe for children.



Service area in Mimizan, France along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route, © France Vélo Tourisme

Seating: table & benches

Necessary	Recommended
Benches	Space for at least 6 people
Picnic table	Covered benches and table

To eat or simply to rest, seating is necessary, and it is therefore an essential feature of rest areas. Rest areas should be large enough to provide seating for at least 6 people, and covered benches and tables are a sensible choice in rainy or very warm climates, where cyclists could need additional shelter from the rain or the sun. Ideally, the tables must be located facing the bicycle parking lots.



Rest area with benches and covered picnic table along a common section of EuroVelo 10 – Baltic Sea Cycle Route and EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail in Gdynia, Kolibk, Poland © Pomorskie.travel

Shelter

Necessary	Recommended
Fixed and stable rain and sun protection	Wind protection

A shelter gives a temporary space for cyclists to recover and be protected from the rain or the sun, depending on the climate. In very sunny or rainy climates, it is even more important that shelters are a constant feature of rest areas, but they should be considered an essential feature anywhere.



Rest area in Les-Ventes-de-Bourse, France © France Vélo Tourisme

In very windy areas, such as in the proximity of the sea or in exposed sections, wind protection should be considered too. An example of wind protection is a shelter that is closed on one side – generally, the side where the wind blows most often or the strongest.



Showcase of best practice:

“Sitting boxes” can be found in Snefjord, Norway, along the Scenic Route Havøysund. Those boxes are composed of small benches covered with a roof and two sides to offer cyclists protection from the wind coming from all directions. Depending on the main direction of the wind, there are different boxes placed in different directions. These shelters are a result of a collaboration between the Norwegian Public Roads and the architect agency Pushak.



© Tonje Tjernet, Statens vegvesen



© Roger Ellingsen, Statens vegvesen

The Pushak’s agency also designed another type of rest area purposely to fit extreme wind conditions for the Norwegian Public Roads. It can be found in Reinoksvatnet in the Nordkynn Peninsula.



Rest area in in Reinoksvatnet, Norway © Pushak

As indicated on their website: “The rest area is located in a flat landscape at the top of a mountain pass and is very windy. Cozy sitting niches, fireplaces and toilets are baked together in an elongated volume, where the ceiling relates to the changing horizon, and the floor follows the terrain.” These “niches” are also oriented in a manner to benefit in the best way possible from the view and the sun/midnight sun across the sky.¹

Public toilet

Necessary	Recommended
Access to public toilet	Dry toilets

The presence of restrooms along long-distance cycle routes is a subject of debate. Without a doubt, access to toilets is necessary on a long trip. But the installation and maintenance of toilet facilities in rest areas are not easy. As a rule, free toilet access should be possible every 15km, whether they are part of a rest area, public toilets, or inside cyclists-friendly services that allow cyclists access to their toilets.

In the planning phase, pre-existing toilet facilities should be privileged, pointing the visitor at using public toilets in urban areas and signalling them appropriately. In remote, rural areas, the options for the installation of toilets should be thought through. Dry toilets should be privileged because they are a better solution for the environment, are more flexible and have low construction costs (no power, no effluent treatment). There are several types of dry toilets, as composting toilets. Conventional toilets are a cheaper option but require a canalisation system and more frequent maintenance. Similarly, self-cleaning toilets require canalisation, despite little maintenance needed and higher installation costs.

The access to persons with reduced mobility must also be kept in mind.

¹ Pushak website, consulted on 14/04/203, URL link: <https://www.pushak.no/rasteplass-reinoksevatn>



Automatic toilets in Thoissey and Trévoux, France, © France Vélo Tourisme

Drinking water

Necessary
Access to water every 15km

Regular access to drinking water is necessary while on a long-distance cycle route. Drinking water (from fountains or other natural sources) needs to be ensured at least every 15km.

Rest areas may not have a water fountain in case there are fountains or drinking water access along the route sections (i.e. in a nearby village or town, or a fountain by the road) in the vicinity of the rest area. If water access is not directly visible from the cycle route, information panels or signage should be installed to mark the closest available free water fountain.

If there is a need to set up a water point, it should be ensured to provide taps high enough to fill a water bottle. Taps with push buttons are to be favoured to limit water waste.



Waterpoints in Rochefort, France along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route and in Marans, France © France Vélo Tourisme

Bike parking facilities

Necessary	Recommended
Bike parking	Lockers/bike shelters

Safe parking is necessary on any kind of trip. Only bike stands which allow to lean the whole bicycle with luggage against them and lock the frame with a U-lock should be considered bicycle parking; devices that only hold one wheel can cause serious damage to a loaded bike.

Additionally, there should at the very least be enough stable stands to lean on the same number of packed bikes as the number of seats at the rest area.



There should also be enough space between two racks to be able to easily move a bicycle around and potentially unload it, taking into account the likely presence of multiple bicycle bags.



Rest area with many bike parking spaces along a common section of EuroVelo 10 – Baltic Sea Cycle Route and EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail in Puck, Poland, © Pomorskie.travel

As EuroVelo 1, similarly to several EuroVelo routes, is also used by cyclists doing family trips and for daily use, cargo-bikes must be kept in mind. Indeed, cargo-bikes have specific needs in terms of parking as they are larger than a traditional bike. Therefore, they require longer bike racks and as their locking point is lower, the height of the stand must also be adapted. Offering a few cargo-bikes racks in rest areas can be very useful in addition to the traditional ones.



Cargo-bike parking, © Saris Infrastructure²

² Source: Saris Infrastructure website, consulted on 14/04/23, URL link : <https://www.sarisinfrastructure.com/post/blog-cargo-bike-dock>



The reverse U-shaped rack solution (with or without a crossbar) remains the most universal and most comfortable/safe option for cyclists. The racks can be adapted to a wide variety of bicycles (the intermediate crossbar allowing to lock children's bikes, bike trailers, handbikes, etc.).



Bike racks in Belgium, © Pro Velo

Lockers for bikes and luggage are also an important feature, especially in the vicinity of tourist attractions that cyclists cannot access by bike. A bike locker should have space for the bike and for luggage to store them both safely.



Bike lockers allowing for the safe storage of bicycle bags, along the Art Cities Route in Mechelen, Flanders, © EuroVelo

There are now connected luggage systems working with apps.³

³ Many examples: Casebook: <https://casebook.fr/>, Stow Your Bags <https://www.stowyourbags.com/>



Connected lockers are usually safer as they often have alarm and monitoring features. There are connected bike parking systems, sometimes closed, but also connected boxes to safely store the bags. These apps allow to have an overview of the nearest available bike parkings/storage boxes. These smart technologies also enable the users to be completely independent and not rely on opening hours of private bicycle parkings for example.



Showcase of best practice:

In Spain, a rest area was equipped with smart technology in Valencia. Four SMART-RAKs have been installed, a new type of connected support to park two bicycles per module. The bike can be locked using the PVerde mobile application, saving the cyclist the trouble of carrying a heavy lock.⁴ The bicycle remains stable by inserting the pedal into the intended hole, avoiding any damage to the wheel. It also incorporates two compartments to place the saddle and the helmet.

The rest area also has three picnic tables, different seats and a public water fountain.



© 2020 El Nostre Ciutat

Bike services

Necessary	Recommended
Access to bicycle repair	Tyre/spare parts vending machine
	Helpline
	Charging stations (for e-bikes and other electronic devices)

Bike repair stations are an often-needed feature for on-the-way bike maintenance, as it is not feasible to carry supplies and tools for every possible emergency. Most users will need facilities where bikes can be repaired by skilled personnel. If these are not available in the vicinity of the rest area, it may be a good idea to install a bike repair station, with a vending machine for tyres and spare parts, and a self-service station.

⁴ Source : El Nostre Ciutat website, consulted on 14/04/2023, URL link: <https://www.elnostreciutat.com/es/instalan-una-area-de-descanso-ciclista-con-tecnologia-smart/>



However, it should be noted that bike repair stations (tyre inflating pumps, repair tools, etc) can be objects of vandalism and theft, resulting in poor infrastructure that is hard to maintain and not sustainable in the long term.

Therefore, cooperation with local businesses is crucial to prioritise access to bike repair shops or have bike repair facilities along the route in cycle-friendly accommodations, shops, or restaurants, as well as communicating about it on guidebooks, information panels, signs, etc.

If a rest area is located in a place where there are no bike repair shops nearby, it may be important to provide cycle tourists with a bike helpline, i.e. a designated phone number that a user can call to ask for assistance, and not only repair tools. Cycle tourists could be put in touch with someone able to provide them with guidance to repair their bike – a cycling-friendly local or national organisation, for example.



Rest areas equipped with repair kits in Saint-Brévin-les-Pins and Longeville-sur-Mer, France, along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route, picture 1: © en.saint-brevin.com, picture 2: © France Vélo Tourisme



Tyre inflating pumps in Saint Léonard des Bois, © France Vélo Tourisme

Given the boom in the usage of e-bikes, rest areas on long-distance cycle routes should ideally offer charging stations as well. But seeing the risk of vandalism, the difficulty of having electricity in remote areas and the charging time, e-bike charging stations should be preferentially installed at accommodations or refreshment points (e.g. restaurants) where cyclists stop for a longer period and that are safer and easier to connect to electricity. Once again, cooperation with local businesses and actors is necessary to guarantee constant e-bike charging possibilities.



Showcase of best practice:

In France, an entity dedicated to energy distribution in the Maine-et-Loire department (Syndicat intercommunal d'énergies de Maine-et-Loire (SIéml)) started a network of 30 charging stations in partnership with cities, taking over between 25 and 75% of the costs of the station. The first station built is the one featured below, in Montjean sur Loire. It allows free battery charging through secure lockers with standard sockets near tourist attractions.⁵



Charging station in Montjean sur Loire, France, along La Loire à Vélo, part of EuroVelo 6 – Atlantic – Black Sea, © SIéML

Information board

Necessary	Recommended
At least one every 50km (more or less)	Cultural and gastronomic information
Route map and exact location	Information on doctors, pharmacies and hospitals
Information on next towns or rest areas, toilets, attractions, accommodation and bike repair shops	Information on Wi-Fi zones and lockers to store luggage
Information in the local language(s) and English	Information in additional languages
Use of symbols and pictograms	Digital features
In line with the official cycle route design recommendations	

Information boards are crucial to provide travellers with necessary information about the route, their current exact location and the surroundings. They should include information on bike repair shops and self-service stations, cycling-friendly service providers, and an indication of the next rest areas, water fountains and toilets. More touristic information about culture and traditions, national emergency numbers, doctors, pharmacies and nearby hospitals, etc., is welcome.

The information must be at least bilingual (the local language and English) for better accessibility of content. In border areas, or in areas where the strong presence of groups of tourists is known, information should be provided in other languages, too.

⁵ Website of SIéML, consulted 14/04/2023, URL link: <https://www.sieml.fr/velos-electriques-bornes-recharge-loire-a-velo/>



In order to better take into consideration every user's needs, the use of icons and pictograms should be prioritised as well. The boards must provide clear and easy-to-read signage, including for people with visual impairments or illiteracy.

If the long-distance cycle route along which rest areas are installed has official design and/or communications standards, these should be respected for the information board. For instance, along EuroVelo routes, information boards should include the relevant EuroVelo Route Information Panel and follow the EuroVelo Corporate Design.

The boards can also include digital features such as a QR code that link to websites with the most up-to-date information. This is useful in areas often afflicted with floods and fires that may lead to alternative itineraries. This limits the need to regularly update physical signs.



Information panel set in a rest area in Dunakeszi, Hungary, along EuroVelo 6 – Atlantic-Black Sea © EuroVelo



Panel with pictograms of the services of the next rest area along EuroVelo 7 - Sun Route in Czechia © EuroVelo



Rest area with a bilingual tourist map along EuroVelo 6 – Atlantic – Black Sea in Serbia © EuroVelo

Other desirable services

Recommended
Playground
Trash disposal
Power outlet
Wi-Fi access
Barbecue

Playgrounds are a much-welcome feature for families, although not all locations are suitable to have one.



Playground in Etel, along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route, copyright: France Vélo Tourisme // Rest area with playground near Krynica-Zdrój, Poland, along EuroVelo 11 – East Europe Cycle Route, © Znajkraj

Trashcans are a topic of discussion and their placement along a cycle route must be carefully evaluated. In remote areas, bike tourists should be encouraged to take their trash with them as garbage may attract insects or animals or pollute the environment, while trashcans should be forecasted in areas that are close to agglomerations and where bins can be regularly emptied.

In case the installation of trashcans is deemed adequate, they should preferentially enable sorting waste. The installation of selective sorting bins depends largely on which actor will be responsible for the maintenance of the rest area. Important note: glass bins should never be located in the vicinity of cycle routes in order to limit the risk of punctures.



It can also be good to remind tourists to take their waste away with an informative panel according to the principles of [Leave No Trace](#).

In rest areas where electricity is available, for example in areas that already include e-bike charging stations, **power outlets** should be installed to quickly charge phones, GPS devices, etc. Although it is not essential, this feature is particularly useful given the widespread use of portable electronic devices and the increasing use of digital maps instead of printed ones.

Access to **wireless internet connection** is recommended by several reference documents on rest areas (such as the one from Vélo & Territoires) and such access may be particularly useful in countries where EU roaming legislation does not apply. However, Wi-Fi routers need electricity to operate, and can be the object of vandalism, or require frequent maintenance. It is advisable that wireless internet connection is made available at accommodation providers and shops or restaurants along or near the route.

Barbecues may be provided at sites that encourage conviviality between cyclists. They may only be installed in places where their use is permitted (Département La Vendée).

d) Different categories of rest areas

Along with the differences in provided services, rest areas can be differentiated too based on their location along the route, the cycling traffic on the section, the importance of the section, and their role in the urban and rural landscapes. This differentiation is useful to keep in mind in the planning phase.

Vélo & Territoires (France), La Vendée department (France) and Pro Velo (Belgium) have different categories that may be interested to investigate for more detailed inspiration. However, a common difference is the duration of stay. There are usually rest areas for shorter stays with basic services (for example, the “flash” rest area can only be composed of a bench and a bike rack according to Pro Velo) whereas main rest areas are designed for a prolonged stay, in particular for daily sections that are mostly rural. These rest areas offer more services and equipment to support a long stop.

Drawing conclusions from these different documents, we recommend here a simple distinction between short-stay rest areas and long-stay rest areas.



	Long-stay rest area	Short-stay rest area
Frequency	Every 50 km	Every 15 km
Barrier-free and inclusive	Necessary	Necessary
Table	Necessary	Necessary
Benches	Necessary	Necessary
Shelter	Necessary	Necessary
Bike parking	Necessary	Necessary
Water point (if no water fountains in the vicinity)	Necessary	Recommended
Repair station (if no bicycle shop in the vicinity)	Necessary	Recommended
Information panel	Necessary	Recommended
Public toilet (if no other option in the vicinity)	Necessary	Recommended
Lockers	Recommended	Optional
Recharging station	Recommended	Optional
Electricity plugs	Optional	Optional
Trash disposal	Recommended	Optional
Wi-Fi access	Optional	Optional
Playground	Optional	Optional
Barbecue	Optional	Optional

e) Additional recommendations

Lighting

Lighting choices should take into account the type and volume of traffic during low light conditions and in particular for autumn and winter evenings. Lighting can have a positive impact on anti-social behaviour. Good quality anti-vandal lighting is recommended as it is likely to have lower long-term maintenance costs.

The use of motion sensor lights is recommended as this can reduce energy costs and the impact on wildlife. Limitation of light pollution is mainly achieved through these smart lighting, the correct orientation of the lights and the adjustment of the intensity. LED lights, in combination with photovoltaic panels, provide low-cost lighting in remote or single-site locations. Lighting levels might possibly be switched off or reduced between the hours of midnight and 6 am as a means of reducing energy costs and light pollution. Cyclists should be made aware of any no-lighting periods (Irish guidelines).

Opening period – winter breaks

Rest areas should be accessible throughout the year and sanitary facilities should be open at least during the cycling tourism season (generally from April to October, but this may vary depending on the region).

Information on rest areas, in guides or online (location, type of equipment)

In general, there should be regular information boards along the cycling route indicating the next rest areas. Tourist offices should also be able to provide the information.



Information on the location of rest areas can also be communicated to editors of route guides.

Ideally, the information should be available on the website of the national EuroVelo coordinator in order to not spread the information too much between several websites. The information there should be available in English.

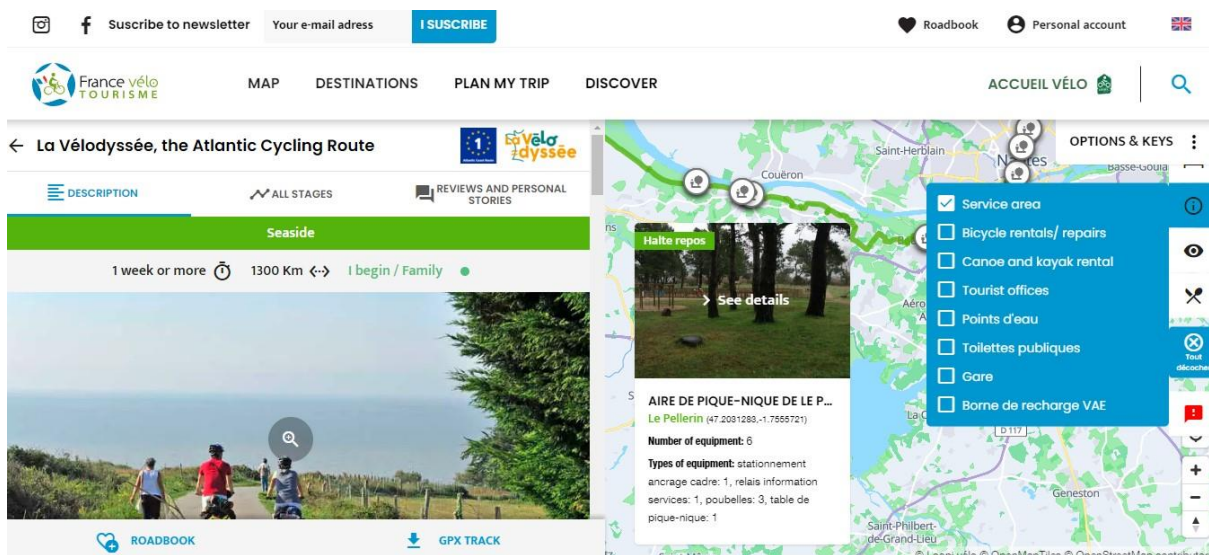


Showcase of best practice:

- *Website of France Vélo Tourisme*

The website of France Vélo Tourisme, part of the French National EuroVelo Coordination Centre, is an example of good practice on how to display the information on rest areas online.

Indeed, there is an interactive map that allows to show the different route itineraries and to find out about the location of service areas and different kinds of equipment. There is a short description of each rest area, the types of equipment available and often a picture.



Screenshots of www.francevelotourisme.com

- *Véloroute des Bleuets*

Another possibility is to integrate the information into an already existing app.

In the "Charte de qualité", the entity responsible for the Véloroute des Bleuets advises using the mobile application *Ondago* where cyclists can find the maps and types of equipment available along the route. They also complete the information with their website.



3. Maintenance of rest areas

a) Organisation

Maintenance must be anticipated from the design phase of the rest area. As soon as furniture and equipment are chosen, maintenance must be a determining criterion rather than turning to cheaper options. In terms of sustainability, it is also better to adopt a life cycle approach.

In order to ensure future regular maintenance, the entity in charge of maintenance must be defined upstream of the project as well as the maintenance methods and their funding.

The maintenance of the sites is generally the responsibility of the local level (municipalities). The maintenance capacity of the local authority should therefore be taken into account in the design phase of the site. (Pro Velo's referential).

According to Pro Velo's referential, there are three main considerations regarding maintenance:

- Evaluate the maintenance methods, their frequency, cost, and approximate replacement times.
- Modulate the frequency of maintenance according to the equipment concerned and the frequency of use (high or low season).
- Determine who is responsible for this maintenance, what funding will be used, and ensure that the stakeholders concerned are integrated into the project in order to make them responsible for monitoring the equipment placed.

Site management issues such as grass cutting and litter management should be considered when selecting the design, base and location of the picnic tables. Some design choices allow for simplified or reduced maintenance, even if this remains an unavoidable fact.

For example: choose native, indigenous and non-dirty tree species (e.g. avoiding chestnut trees), place flowerbeds at the foot of the information panels (to avoid weeding), set up the most fragile equipment where it can be sheltered from harsh weather, etc.

The general guideline is the following: rest areas should be checked **at least twice a year** for cleaning, regular fixes and vegetation cuts. There must be a check before the start of the cycling season and another intermediate check at midseason.

The main elements to check are the quality of seat strips, the damage to screws and paint and the anchoring of furniture. There must be particular attention paid to the equipment if there are lockers, a repair station or a recharging station.

The sanitary facilities require more regular cleaning, in particular during high season.

Regarding landscaping, there can be intervention 3 to 6 times a year depending on the growing season and variety considered (cutting, weeding).

Finally, if there are trash disposals, the collection of bins must be organised depending on the period of the year and frequency of cyclists.

Preventing damage and vandalism

Social control is an essential component to preventing damage and vandalism. Several approaches can be put in place to prevent it:

- Place the most fragile equipment in places where passage or surveillance is assured.
- In places with less social control, give preference to materials that are less susceptible to vandalism.
- Involve the local population (see 3. C Involving the community).



b) Data collection

In order to organise the maintenance of rest areas along a cycle route, it is important to put in place a proper method for data collection and to have a database containing up-to-date information on all the rest areas (e.g. geolocation, types of equipment available, date of last maintenance, etc.)

At an early stage of the process of data collection, **OpenStreetMap** is a good data source. For territories without a good database, OSM can represent a preliminary step to identify the location of rest areas as they are generally already mapped.

To go further, a dedicated **geographic information system (GIS) database** must be created. In their referential, Pro Velo recommends that before setting up new areas or renovating existing ones, an inventory of existing facilities should be made and mapped on GIS.

Additionally, ECF has developed a **methodology for assessing the quality of long-distance cycle routes, the European Certification Standard (ECS)**, and a smartphone application allowing to collect detailed data through a field survey. The ECS App can be used to register existing rest areas and their equipment (table and benches, shelter, toilet, drinking water, playground, vending machine, self-service station, helpline, e-bike charging, information board), which can be added as geolocalised point data. Pictures can also be taken through the ECS App and be linked to the specific rest area.



Showcase of best practice:

In the « Schéma directeur des équipements de la V50-la Voie Bleue », there is a very good example of best practice.

In order to map the existing infrastructure, they used QGIS, which is an open-source, cross-platform GIS software. It is compatible with most tools used by local authorities (particularly their databases). It allows the export of databases in shapefile and the creation of metadata necessary for the evolution of the database over time.

Lizmap was used as an interface between QGIS and the people filling in the database. It is an open-source software used to create web map applications based on QGIS. It is by connecting to Lizmap that contributors were able to transmit and read information from field surveys or information integrated from local authority databases.

Mapillary was the second tool used. It is a service for sharing crowdsourced geotagged photos. It can be understood as a participatory Google Street View. Members add geolocated and dated images of the territory. This common database allows easy access to the images.

They used a significant amount of data extracted from OSM as an initial step. They conclude in the document that OSM is a good source of quantitative data, but also qualitative data, as the field survey confirmed.

As a complementary step, they created heat maps based on the data for each type of facility to better understand their distribution and add or complete rest areas.



Tables de pique-nique



Screenshot of Mapillary and heat map of picnic tables © SuperVitus305 & Fractale | novembre 2020

Finally, they surveyed the route to check the accuracy of their data and complete it. They selected the sections to be surveyed by combining several criteria: sections distributed homogeneously over the entire route, different types of territory (rural, peri-urban, urban), and areas where information was absent or lacking in precision in the GIS database. They proceeded to the field survey by cycling and using Mapillary and Lizmap on two smartphones.

c) Involving the community

When possible, local communities should be involved in the creation and building of rest areas, especially those planned to be located in rural areas. A cooperation process is helpful in building ownership of rest areas, improving their maintenance over time, and making them part of the landscape.

Community involvement can take various forms. For example, communities can be involved in the building of the area, especially if it is created with local materials and traditional building skills. In this respect, creating a building or shelter with ancient techniques can be a way not to lose these skills and transmit them to the younger generations. Involving young people in the maintenance of rest areas, in keeping them clean – on occasions such as Earth Day, for example – can help stimulate ownership of these areas and the urge to keep them nice and functioning for everyone.

Service providers and businesses are also beneficial for the maintenance and long-term care of rest areas. For example, local businesses could be in charge of maintaining a specific rest area, gaining a return in publicity or awareness. Local bike-friendly service providers could also be involved in checking the state of rest areas and reporting potential issues to the authorities.

Lastly, creating a community sense around routes and all their components – including rest areas – is a way to build larger ownership and invite the local population to discover, cycle, care about what is in their surroundings and improve the interaction between tourists and locals.

Street art

To make rest areas unique and attractive and to reinforce community belonging, the creation of art around rest areas can involve local artists, schoolchildren, or artistic associations.



Rest area in Lespecier, France on EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route © France Vélo Tourisme



Showcase of best practice:

The Millenium Mileposts - selection of four artists from each country of the UK and involvement of the community in the maintenance

The Millennium Mileposts are cast-iron sculptures that help navigate the National British Cycle Network. There are four different milepost designs as four artists from the four countries of the United Kingdom were commissioned by Sustrans to design these artworks. They embody the freedom and diversity of the National Cycle Network. Over 1,000 Millennium Mileposts have been installed across the UK since 2000. It is a great example of community engagement as volunteers were invited to help set up these Mileposts and, more recently, a collective audit⁶ was initiated in the summer of 2021 to identify which Mileposts needed some fixes. Volunteers from Sustrans and local community groups took part in the general effort to refresh the paintings.⁷



A Millennium Milepost designed by Ian McColl in Coatbridge, Scotland, © Sustrans

⁶ [Work to preserve 1,000 Millennium Milepost artworks around the UK begins - Sustrans.org.uk](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/news/work-to-preserve-1000-millennium-milepost-artworks-around-the-uk-begins)

⁷ Source : <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network/millennium-mileposts/>



Since they have been set up the Millennium Mileposts have been looked after by volunteers from Sustrans and local communities © Sustrans



A volunteer repainting a Milepost in Lynemouth, Northumberland © Sustrans

The portrait benches



Portrait bench on Pont y Werin, on the Cardiff Bay Trail © Sustrans

In collaboration with communities across the country, Sustrans also created over 250 life-sized sculptures. They celebrate local historical or cultural figures.⁸

4. Sustainability, attractiveness & inclusivity

a) Materials and construction

Rest areas are an integral part of the environment, especially as they are often located in rural areas. They must be conceived as in tune with the surroundings and not as ‘cathedrals in the desert’. They should be harmonious and blend well in the environment around them. This does not mean that rest areas should not be modern or an object of design (quite the opposite, as it will be discussed in the paragraph about attractiveness), but even modern structures should be in tune with the surroundings.

Alongside the landscape concerns, there are environmental concerns, too. Building new rest areas may mean subtracting space from nature, especially in very rural areas. Any planning in such a sense should take into account local rules for environmental protection. Builders and planners should privilege the use of eco-friendly materials to build rest areas, such as local wood, FSC labelled wood, or stone, recycled materials, limiting the use of plastic and concrete, and using durable materials, which are more sustainable in the long term because they require less maintenance. When possible, they should make use of local building techniques to preserve local heritage or use, modernise or readapt pre-existing buildings or shelters.



Showcase of best practice - rest areas for pilgrims on Saint Olav Ways – Sustainability, local crafts and community involvement:



Rest area on Saint Olav Ways in Øyer, Norway © National Pilgrim Center, Association for the Cultural Route of St. Olav Ways⁹

These two rest areas were built with sustainable and local materials using local stone and an old handicraft technique of dry masonry construction (laying the stones dry by hand), this project was led by The Association for the Cultural Route of St. Olav Ways. The rest of the cabin was built with local and short-travelled wood, and when possible it was re-used wood from other buildings. The association also used biological sedum mats on the roof as this rooted plant allows reduced maintenance (by absorbing rainwater,

⁸ Source : <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/national-cycle-network-route-collections/2019/all/artworks-and-art-trails-on-the-national-cycle-network/>

⁹ [Pilgrimsleden | Nordic pilgrimage](#)

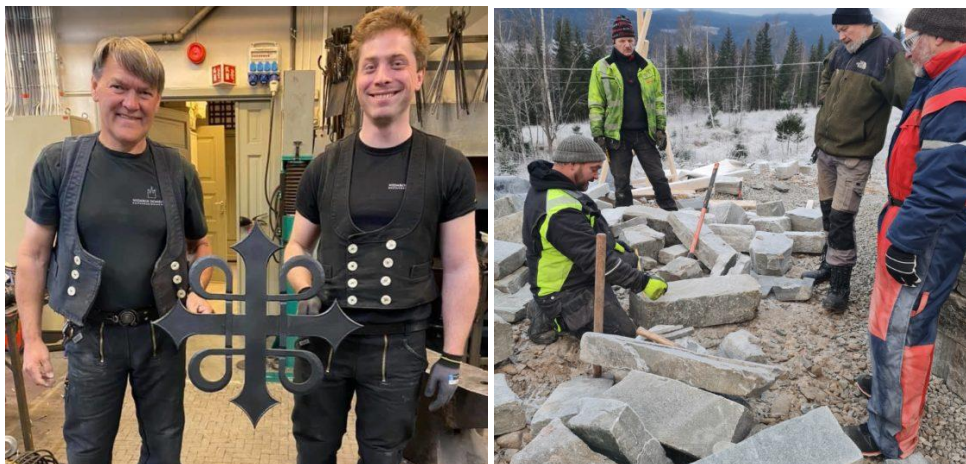
making it less at risk of fire and protecting the roof) and set up solar panels to provide energy to the building. Moreover, there is a water point, electricity access, and the possibility of resting under a roof in case of precipitation.

The organisation resorted to local handcrafters and materials in order to contribute to the local economy. For example, the blacksmiths of the cathedral handcrafted the pilgrim symbol.

Therefore, from the very beginning of the project, there was an important focus on community involvement and ownership as it was required by the foundation. The design of the rest area was fixed by an architecture student competition.

The concept was that The Association for the Cultural Route of St. Olav Ways funded and took care of the building process and then gave it as a gift to the municipality. In return, the municipality is responsible for the maintenance of the rest area for at least 10 years from the opening date.

In order to have successful cooperation, the association started the discussions with the municipality and the land-owner very early on and they kept in mind that the rest area must be as much for the locals as for long-distance walking pilgrims. To better attract the attention of the locals, the organisation held courses on old building techniques, communicated about it to get local attention during the building process, and had big opening events.



The blacksmiths of the cathedral and the handcrafted pilgrim symbol – Courses for the local community of old building-techniques © National Pilgrim Center, Association for the Cultural Route of St. Olav Ways

An additional video is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-NNHMdFKa8>

b) Vegetation and biodiversity

The integration of the rest area into the surrounding landscape can also be achieved through vegetation. It also plays a role in reducing the impact on biodiversity. For example, planting trees and bushes from an endemic origin should be preferred. Moreover, trees provide natural shade during the warm season. Pesticide-free maintenance and differentiated vegetation management are recommended keeping in mind that indigenous species will require less maintenance.

Fruit trees can also be planted but they should be placed at a distance of the picnic area as they may attract wasps.

Moreover, vegetation makes the rest area more pleasant and discreet as it blends with the landscape.



Picnic area of the Anse beach in Préfaillles, France, along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route © France Vélo Tourisme

c) Attractivity – making rest areas a part of the landscape

As already mentioned, rest areas should be part of the landscape and be in tune with the surroundings, complementing and enriching the experience along the route. This is possible by building harmonious shelters and structures, but also by adding an artistic element that tells a story or informs about cultural practices, local arts and crafts, and traditions.

Group work, the creation of murals, mosaics, carvings and so on by community members and local schools, further enhances the local ownership, use, and respect of the rest areas. Signature art pieces also provide icons for the route and points of interest along the way, and can generate touristic interest (Greenways and Cycle Routes Ancillary Infrastructure Guidelines).



Rest area in Saumur, France, © France Vélo Tourisme

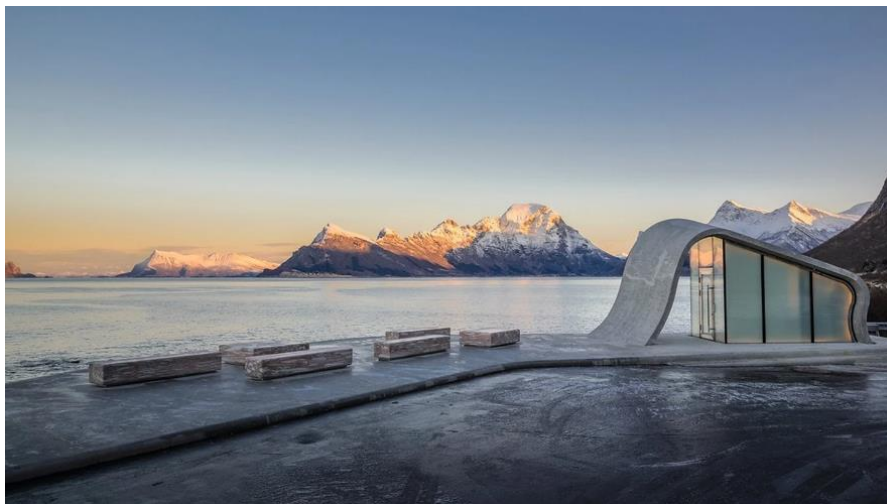
Association with architects



Showcase of best practice - Norwegian Scenic Routes

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration developed 18 Norwegian Scenic Routes and their conveniences. However, they did not decide to go for classic rest areas but rather majestic projects (more than 200 projects) for a budget of over \$500 million. For the toilet facilities along these routes, they decided to call on the services of famous or upcoming Norwegian architecture firms to design original masterpieces. The objective was threefold: attract many visitors along the routes, including an international audience, strengthen rural communities, but also to contribute to a wider renown of Norwegian architects worldwide.

Moreover, their marketing strategy was well-thought out with a website with impressive pictures and videos, an original concept and promotion through international articles.¹⁰



Rest Area in Ureddplassen, Norway, by architecture agency Haugen/Zohar Arkitekter on the Scenic Route Helgelandskysten along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route © Steiner Skaar for Statens vegvesen



Rest Area in Ersfjordstranda, Norway, by architecture agency Tupelo Arkitektur on Scenic Route Senja along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route © Espen Bergersen, Naturgalleriet for Statens vegvesen (picture 1) and Frid-Jorunn Stabell Norwegian Scenic Route (picture 2)

¹⁰ <https://www.visitnorway.com/plan-your-trip/travel-tips-a-z/norwegian-scenic-routes/worlds-best-toilets/>



Rest area in Espenes, Norway, by the architecture agency Code Arkitektur along the Norwegian Scenic Route Hardanger. © Lage Bakken, Statens vegvesen

Land art

Land art is an element that can be added to rest areas, as well as to cycle routes in general. This term defines art made with natural materials such as earth, rock or vegetation, that can be found in nature. Telling a story or adding an artistic element to an otherwise monotonous cycle route can help make the trip a unique and memorable experience, as well as fit the landscape. The examples of land art on EuroVelo cycling routes are plenty – more information on the [EuroVelo website](#).



Drover's Bho in Strathyre, on the itinerary of EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route © Sustrans



Rest area project by architect agency Helen & Hard in Tyrvefjæra, Norway along the Scenic route Hardanger © Visit Norway (picture 1) and final result © Lage Bakken, Statens vegvesen (picture 2)

Scenic views



Showcase of best practice - Norwegian Scenic Routes

The Norwegian Road Administration decided to collaborate with Norwegian architects, as explained above. This resulted also in designing restrooms perfectly integrated with stunning landscapes, offering a basic service that can even be a tourist attraction in itself.¹¹



Toilets in Bukkekjerka, Norway, by architect Morfeus Arkitekter along the Scenic route Andøya © Hugo Fagermo - Statens vegvesen (picture 1) and Stegastein © Espen Bergersen Naturgalleriet.no (picture 2)

¹¹ [The world's best toilets | Loos on Norwegian Scenic Routes \(visitnorway.com\)](https://www.visitnorway.com/en/the-worlds-best-toilets)



Rest area by architects Todd Saunders og Tommie Wilhelmsen in Stegastein, Norway, along the Scenic Route Aurlandsfjellet © Jarle Waehler for Statens vegvesen (picture 1) and © Kjetil Rolseth (picture 2)



Rest Area in Eggum, Norway, by architect Snøhetta along the Scenic Route Lofoten along EuroVelo 1 © Jarle Waehler - Statens vegvesen



Rest area at Tribalj lake along EuroVelo 8 – Mediterranean Route in Croatia, © EuroVelo

5. Conclusions

In this document, general guidelines on rest areas are put together, addressing, in particular, the international dimension of long-distance cycle routes and the variety of environments and climate conditions encountered along the way resulting in different needs. There are recommendations on how to choose the location of a rest area but also a list of essential cycling services (seatings, shelter, public toilets, water points, bike parking facilities, bike repair stations and other desirable equipment). Different types of rest areas are also introduced with a final differentiation between the long break and short break rest areas and the types of equipment to expect for each.

Before making any new building plans, it is recommended to make the most out of already existing facilities (toilets, water points, etc). This is why it is strongly advised to do a mapping of existing cycling services and rest areas before building new ones as to better identify the needs. Maintenance must also be thought through at a very early stage. Indeed, the local level is usually responsible for it and therefore, it is essential to reach an agreement with the municipality beforehand and make sure they are supportive of the project.

That is an additional reason to make rest areas attractive and useful for the locals as well. Information should be made available to the locals as a first step, and the local community must be involved in some way in the process. Therefore, calling on the services of local handcrafters or artists can be a good call, making the rest area more attractive at the same time. Making use of ancient traditions, local techniques, but also local materials can participate in making the building and maintenance of the rest area more accepted by the locals and more environmentally friendly. Sustainability must be a driving thread running through the entire project, from early planning to maintenance. Finally, inclusivity must be kept in mind to make sure that the rest areas are accessible for all, meaning they should be barrier-free, and the equipment must be adapted to visually impaired persons and people with disabilities.



6. Reference documents

The following reference documents were consulted to draft these guidelines:

- ADFC-Empfehlung: Anforderungen und Gestaltung von Rastplätzen an Radrouten, ADFC position paper on requirements and planning of rest areas along cycle routes, January 2017.
Link: [ADFC_Empfehlung_Rastplaetze.pdf](#)
- Vélo & Territoires Fiche – Action n.8 – Équipements, aires de service et haltes repos, document on the equipment and the characteristics of rest areas (short and long-stay), 2018, latest update 2022.
Link (subscribers only): <https://www.velo-territoires.org/resource/fiche-action-n8-actualisee-equipements-aires-de-services-haltes-repos/>
- Panorama des équipements innovants pour les usagers des itinéraires cyclables, document on innovative equipment for cycle route users, developed by La Vélo maritime-EuroVelo 4 and Vélo & Territoires, 2020.
Link: [Panorama des équipements innovants pour les usagers des itinéraires cyclables \(destination-bretagnesud.bzh\)](#)
- Schéma directeur des équipements V50 – La Voie Bleue, position document for the La Voie Bleue cycle route, linking Luxembourg and Lyon, November 2020.
Link: https://www.velo-territoires.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20201109_V50_La-Voie-Bleue_Schema_Directeur_Equipements.pdf
- Charte de recommandations pour aménager les aires d'accueil de la Véloodyssée en Vendée, recommendation document for rest areas along EuroVelo 1 – Atlantic Coast Route in Vendée, France, June 2020.
No link available
- “Greenways and Cycle Routes Ancillary Infrastructure Guidelines”, Irish Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in partnership with Sport Ireland, Published on 22 July 2018, Last updated on 7 January 2022.
Link:
<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/19551/74bbca7b1273434791e473d2e226ba46.pdf#page=null>
- Collection of Cycle Concepts, Troels Andersen, Frits Bredal, Marianne Weinreich, Niels Jensen, Morten Riisgaard-Dam, Malene Kofod Nielsen, ed. Cycling Embassy of Denmark, 2012.
Link: https://bicycleinfrastructuremanuals.com/manuals1/Collection-of-Cycle-Concepts-2012_Denmark.pdf
- Rest Area Norwegian Handbook, Norwegian Road Directorate, December 2022.
Link: <https://www.vegvesen.no/globalassets/fag/handboker/v273-2022.pdf>

European Cyclists' Federation asbl

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