



DUTCH NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK

Unique product for stimulating cycle tourism



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The Netherlands is well known for being the number 1 cycling country of the world. We are famous of our great facilities for cycling and the immense use of the bike. To illustrate: 17,1 million inhabitants do have 22,8 million bicycles. Annually the Dutch cycle in total more than 15 billion km, about 880 km per person. The main reason: cycling is often the quickest way of travelling from a to b. And not to forget ... it's pleasant and healthy!

Basis for successful cycle tourism: nationwide cycle network

Cycling in the Netherlands is not only a mobility item. It's also a very popular sport and recreational activity. It's the best way to explore and to enjoy the huge variety of landscapes we have. Beside the given circumstances (flat, short distances, a lot of roads where cycling is possible) the Dutch created a superb national route network and offers good services. These facilities motivate people to use their bike and stimulate both locals and tourists to make millions of cycle tours.

developed, how it functions and what might be in it for other countries. This publication is offered to you by the Dutch national cycling organisation Fietsplatform, the independent expertise and co-ordination center for cycle tourism in the Netherlands (public-private partnership, foundation). Fietsplatform is specifically responsible for the national cycle routes (long distance cycle routes; LF-routes). We are the national EuroVelo co-ordinator for the Netherlands.

This publication gives a practical overview how the national cycle route network in the Netherlands is

This publication is supported by Folkersma Routing and Sign.

PRINCIPLES OF THE DUTCH NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK

The network contains two types of routes: Long distance cycle routes (so called “**LF-routes**”)

– the backbone of the network;

A nationwide covered network of regional routes (“**junction routes**” – in Dutch: knooppuntroutes). The next page shows an overview map that illustrates the network.



Long distance cycle routes (LF-routes)

LF-routes are developed to guide long distance cyclists, especially people that like to make cycle holidays – long or short.

The routes constitute a national network of approximately 4.500 kilometres. With the support of the national government and regional authorities all LF-routes are signposted uniformly and continuously in two directions.

The major selection criteria for the current LF network:

- 🚲 Connecting touristic, rural areas and city centres; (city centres: because they are often interesting for the cyclists, because they give connection with public transport/ railway stations and also because a big part of our target group is living in the cities – we offer them an interesting cycle route to the rural area around the city);
- 🚲 Using existing infrastructure: cycle-paths and quiet roads (safe, less traffic);
- 🚲 Not creating the fastest routes, but routes where you can enjoy the landscape;
- 🚲 Passing points of interest (musea, viewing points etc.) and other places to stop (restaurants, accommodation for overnight stays etc.);
- 🚲 Realizing good connections both with regional routes/ route network (complementary!) and international routes

Cycle tourism in the Netherlands

As a part of its role as a national expertise centre, Fietsplatform publishes regularly figures about recreational cycle tourism in the Netherlands. Some key figures:

- 🚲 Cycle infrastructure (outside the towns): ± 100.000 km (cycle paths and quiet, safe roads);
- 🚲 Based on this infrastructure: 33.500 km signposted recreational cycle routes (national plus regional network);
- 🚲 ± 50% of the Dutch inhabitants make recreational cycle tours, in total almost 200 million tours;
- 🚲 94% starting at home
- 🚲 22% of the Dutch inhabitants make use of the national route network;
- 🚲 Average length cycle tour: 20,6 km; Average duration (incl. stops): 2,6 hour;
- 🚲 More than 1 million holidays in NL by the Dutch people with cycling as main activity;
- 🚲 Economic effects (1): recreational cyclists spend in total ± € 510 million per year on the road;
- 🚲 Economic effects (2): recreational cyclists spend ± € 400 million per year for bicycle equipment.



Junction routes

The principle of junction routes is a densed regional network of connected routes that unlocks a region. The first target group are people that want to make short trips – the majority of the recreational cyclists. Crossings of routes are the junctions – the choosing points. Each junction has a number. Signs with these numbers guide the cyclists from junction to junction. Signposting therefore is always in two directions. Cyclists can plan their cycle trip easily by pointing out and combining a set of junction numbers. This can easily be done on a map or via a digital route planner. Info panels on the junctions with an

overview map of the nearby region help cyclists orientate or to make changes in the planned cycle trip.

The major selection criteria for the junction routes:

- 🚲 Just like the LF-routes: carefully selection out of the existing infrastructure (quiet and safe roads/paths);
- 🚲 Focus on scenery routes who give connection to touristic points of interest;
- 🚲 Connection rural area with towns and city centres (containing lots of points of interest! and the location where most of the cyclists start their trip).

Specific remarks:

LF-routes and junction routes are completely "synchronised": routes and signposting are always combined. This makes it easy for the cyclists to switch, for example for making a detour of the LF-route you are following.

The LF-network has a much longer history than the junction network. However since the junction routes are completely covering the whole country, building together a national network, there is an opportunity to focus on LF-routes with the most potential. **A transition is foreseen from LF-network to iconic national routes ("LF2.0")**.

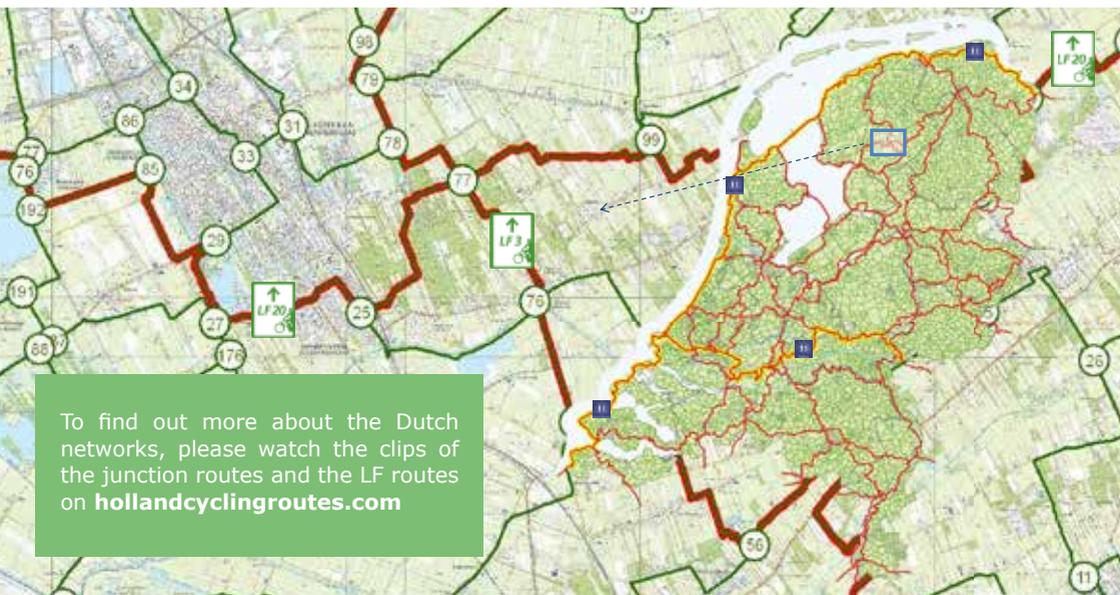
An important success factor of the national network of junction routes is the **uniformity and continuity of the signposting**.

Every region (there are more than 40 of them!) uses nearly the same standard. This is very important for the cyclists: they don't recognize administrative borders and definitely won't be disturbed by these borders.

Following numbers to get from one junction to another might be looking boring at first sight. The junction routes however must primary be seen as a guiding system. **Themed routes are still available**, now as a selection of junction numbers to follow. The experience is completely the same. After 20 years we can conclude that the cyclists are very content with the junction routes. The **maximum of flexibility** to plan your own route is one of the biggest advantages.

How did it all begin?

The cycling junction system was founded by Hugo van Bollen, former mine engineer. He wanted to create a network from junction to junction. Using names of villages and cities would lead to a chaotic network. The alphabet does not have enough letters, so he decided to use numbers instead. His goal was to make people experience nature and diverse landscapes and to create more appreciation for nature.



WHAT'S IN IT FOR OTHER COUNTRIES?

The concept of a cycling network could also be implemented in other countries. Preferably a country broad plan, but as long as the size of the area is big enough for a project there is no need to wait for a country broad approach.

Necessities for the development of a comparable cycle network

- 🚲 Professional projectorganisation and projectmanagement
- 🚲 Cooperation
- 🚲 A sufficient area size
- 🚲 Route design according to the criteria
- 🚲 Uniform approach and realisation
- 🚲 Next to the development, also take management, maintenance and promotion into consideration

A cycling network creates:

- 🚲 A clear and easy understandable system
- 🚲 Ability to apply zoning
- 🚲 A way to motivate people to cycle
- 🚲 Positive effect on environment, health and economy

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