



## EAST BELGIUM: ENCOURAGING GREEN TOURISM

The East Belgium Tourist Office provides downloadable interactive maps and GPS tracks for mountain bikers.

### The Region

Bordering on the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg, East Belgium has a significant diversity of landscapes, from castles and farms in the north to the High Fens in the centre and lakes and valleys in the south. Such a diversified landscape attracts nature lovers for hiking, cycling, mountain biking, horse back riding and other outdoor activities. The East Belgium Tourist Office is the entity in charge of promoting tourism and assisting visitors in planning and enjoying their stay in the region.

### The Challenge

The territory of East Belgium has a very interesting natural and historical heritage. The Tourist Office promotes green tourism in various ways and puts an emphasis on enhancing cycling and mountain biking as a means to discover the region's beautiful landscapes. 850 km of cycling itineraries covering the whole region ("Velo-Tour"), and 450 km of mountain bike itineraries have been created, together with paper maps which enable visitors to discover the area autonomously. Recently, more than 100 km of the old railway tracks were converted into cycle paths (Ravel).

As the demand for biking itineraries grew, the Tourist Office looked for a way to make a better use of the already existing infrastructure and to reach a greater number of potential visitors by creating online services.



*"The positive evolution during the last few years encourages the Tourist Office to promote East Belgium as a top cycling destination in Europe by using new technologies."*

**Sandra De Taeye**, Director

## LRA SUPPORT INITIATIVE



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### The Satellite Solution

Since 2006, the Tourist Office created sections on its web portal dedicated to cyclists and mountain bikers wanting to discover the diversity of East Belgium in a more active and environmentally friendly way. The "Vélotourisme" section offers 18 thematic biking itineraries designed to meet the demand of cyclists with different levels of ability. Combining urban and rural road stretches, they show the length of the

proposed cycling paths, their degree of difficulty, the nature of the road surface and circulation. Moreover, the website hosts a section especially dedicated to mountain bikers, which provides downloadable GPS tracks that can be visualised on Google Earth

maps. The Tourist Office also offers a rental service of GPS devices for mountain bikers.

### The Results

Since the creation of the downloadable interactive maps and GPS tracks, the Tourist Office can reach new users, who could previously consult the itineraries only on paper maps. The number of visits on the website of the Tourist Office has increased considerably, while the GPS tracks provided are downloaded thousands of times per year. The GPS rental service, applied for the moment to mountain bikes, should soon be used also for walks.

**Thousands of  
GPS itineraries  
downloaded**

