



Hicle Hiking Route of the Year

With the 'Hiking Route of the Year' trophy, Hicle/Fiets en Wandelbeurs annually awards a new hiking initiative. Any Belgian, Luxembourg or Dutch organisation or institution may submit a hiking initiative. The deadline is 1 June each year.

Institutions and individuals can submit routes via the form on our website Hicle-events.com. An independent jury of experienced hikers evaluates the routes on behalf of Hicle/Fiets en Wandelbeurs. The award ceremony takes place during the Fiets en Wandelbeurs in Ghent (Belgium). The nominees and the winner can count on significant media attention. No cash prize is attached to the trophy.

Selection criteria

1 Conditions

Eligible entries include:

- Multi-day hiking routes or a combination of day hikes which, due to their originality, thematic coherence and experiential value, form an attractive hiking product. Short or medium-length hiking routes (< 30 km) are not included in the selection unless they are part of a broader project that includes multiple such walks. A hiking network (Flanders, the Netherlands) or *liaisons intervillages* (Wallonia) may only be considered if it is more than an inventory of pedestrian-friendly or low-traffic roads and paths, for example if there is a strong thematic network framework with well-developed route proposals.
- New or substantially renewed routes that were completed or proposed between September of the previous year and September of the current year.
- Routes that run for at least half of their length through Belgian, Dutch or Luxembourg territory. Cross-border routes developed with support from the Interreg fund are also eligible.

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2 A high-quality hiking experience

The jury evaluates the quality of the initiative based on the following characteristics:

- A high degree of variation in landscapes (forest, plateau meadows, river valleys, nature reserves, agricultural areas, heathland, panoramic viewpoints, etc.) and points of interest (character villages, rock formations, historic buildings, landscape art, etc.). Noise pollution and walking along characterless roads or industrial areas are considered negative.
- Safe, legally secure and accessible paths, preferably well-maintained single tracks and double tracks with unpaved or only lightly paved surfaces, exclusively for hikers.
- Too much paved surface (asphalt, concrete or cobblestones) is considered negative, unless the paving is part of the landscape character, such as an old cobblestone road or historically valuable surface.
- Good signage is a plus (but not a requirement). If present, signage must be well maintained, uniform, clearly recognisable and easy to follow. Rest areas, picnic benches or shelters are also considered a positive addition.

3 Accessible information

Information about the hiking initiative must be easily accessible:

- The publication of a printed guide is considered equivalent to easily downloadable information on websites or accessible information via apps. GPS tracks are a plus. Availability in multiple languages is also a plus.
- Route descriptions must be accurate, concise and clear. The level of difficulty must be indicated. Topographic maps should be clear and sufficiently detailed to resolve any uncertainty about the route.
- Additional regional information must be accurate and well written.
- Practical information (public transport, hospitality, etc.) must be up to date.
- A clear stage breakdown is a plus for multi-day routes, as is practical information about public transport accessibility and infrastructure support (hospitality, shops, accommodation, luggage transfer services, etc.).
- Information about route changes must be easily accessible.

For more information: wandelroute@fietsenwandelbeurs.com