

GOOD PRACTICES GUIDE

Marking and signage of equestrian routes



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GLOSSARY

Marking: Mark on an hiking route allowing to **guide and reassure the user all along its path**. These marks are a group of symbols represented by forms and colors.

Signage: It is complementary to marking. **It answers the need for information and direction of users**.



INTRODUCTION

Equestrian hiking gathers the discovery of the natural and cultural heritage of a territory and the connection with nature, while being in a company with a horse or a donkey, on foot, on horseback or with carriage. From a walk of a few hours to hikes of several days or weeks, equestrian hiking is suited for beginners as well as advanced riders.

In order to have an equestrian hike taking place in good conditions, it is necessary to have equestrian routes identified, mapped perhaps marked. Equestrian marking guarantees the security of riders and horses, and the good running of the path.

Marking and signage of equestrian routes enable the development of equestrian hikes and contribute to the touristic development of a territory.

This good practices guide is a tool proposed by the Fédération Internationale de Tourisme Equestre to its Nationals Equestrian Tourism Organisms (NETO). Each NETO can get to grips with it, complete it and modify it, to fit territorial specificities, while respecting the national and local legislations in effect on this topic.

In order to make equestrian tourism accessible as possible, while taking into account local specificities in each country, the FITE works towards the marking harmonization at the international level.

MARKING AND SIGNAGE

Marking and signage punctuate equestrian routes and enable to guide riders and drivers and guarantee the security of the path.

Moreover, they offer information regarding the route to the user. By delimiting paths, they also protect surrounding areas and the natural environment of the route.

Finally, signage highlights equestrian routes as well as the main touristic points of interests and contributes to the promotion of equestrian tourism.

Some advices about marking and signage:

1) To avoid the multiplication of marks with many forms and colors, not understandable for the user, marking of equestrian routes should, as much as possible, constitute a **coherent and homogenous marking** in a country or at least at local level.



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2) **Essential to make a successful marking, it should be:**

- **Clear,**
- **Visible, well identifiable ,**
- **Understandable for all,**
- Clean,
- Discreet, fitting in the landscape,
- **Equestrian marking should not become confused with other sport markings** as pedestrian or cycling ones. In case of overlapping of routes (pedestrian, cycling, equestrian...), it is recommended to affix all beacons on the same support.

To preserve historic, archeological and ethnic monuments, it is recommended not to fix beacons on them, likewise for natural protected components.



3) Support and marking:

Supports used for marking and signage should fit as much as possible in the environment whether natural or urban.

Marking with paint is recommended when the marking is made on trees, non-metallic sign poles, electric poles, telegraph poles or static stones (having the authorization of the poles owner). Marking is made with stencils.

Paints with less environmental impacts should be chosen as much as possible. It is recommended not to nail or stick beacons on natural supports.



Marking with self-adhesive beacons is recommended on metallic supports.

If there is any support on the path, poles, preferably wooden poles, can be used to be marked up with paint or in some cases on which PVC sheets can be fixed with clips or screws.

It is recommended to clean the surface before marking. Likewise, previous marks should be canceled, before proceeding with a new marking or any modification, to avoid creating supplementary pollution and confusing users.

For the signage, natural materials like wood are recommended.

4) Types of marking and signage:

Different markings:

- **Of continuity of a route,**
- **Of wrong direction,**
- **Of change of direction.**

If any marking exists in a country, the NETO can create its own official marking, with forms, colors and sizes defined, and make it validated by authorities in charge of it. An international marking can be done on transnational routes, by taking national markings. For instance, in the case of the European Route d'Artagnan, in countries where there is no official marking, the orange - French- beacons have been used.

Different signages:

- **Directional signage:** mentions one or several places located on the path, in kilometers or hours. If the place is mentioned on the first directional sign panel, it is recommended to mention it on the following panels, until the hiker reaches it. Directional signage can indicate touristic points of interest or other places for users (watering place, loop attachment point, camping area...),
- **Informational signage:** completes information on marking, in particular at the starting point and where there are intersections of routes. It informs on the duration of the path, distance, points of interest during the ride...It also can remind the rules of conduct or of environment preservation,
- **Signage on security:** warns the user on dangerous passages or where the user has to be more careful.

BEACONS AND SIGNS SPOT

Some advices:

- 1) The person making the marking must **put herself in the user's place** who doesn't know the path and reminds that on horseback, a rider is higher than a pedestrian. It is recommended to place beacons at approximately 1,70 meters.
- 2) Beacons must be **visible from far away and easily identifiable.**
- 3) Marking must be made perpendicularly of the path and not parallel to the path, to enable the user to find the beacon in front of him.



4) **A special attention must be paid to:**

- **The signage at the beginning and the end of the path,**

- **The entrance and exit of dangerous points,**

- **When the continuity of a route is not clear enough:** intersection, crossing of several routes. Thus, after an intersection it is recommended to put a beacon of continuity to confirm the right direction. When the risk of taking the wrong direction is high, it is recommended to mark the wrong direction.

- A route can be marked one way or in both ways, depending on its characteristics. Nevertheless, it is recommended in order to avoid dangerous crossing with other users, in particular pedestrians and cyclists, to mark the route in both ways if the path is wide enough.



5) If some sections are shared by several routes, **marking should be organized in an harmonious way**, to limit the visual pollution.

FREQUENCY OF BEACONS AND SIGNS

Marking and signage guide and reassure the user. However, lovers of big hikes will not appreciate to find beacons too frequently all along the path. Moreover, unnecessary marking contributes to the area's pollution. **Thus, the distance between beacons depends essentially on the risk of errors during the path** (wrong track, crossing, passing through fields...).

In suburban areas, it is recommended to reinforce marking to compensate the environment.

Once the marking is done, it is better to walk one more time along the route, to verify the relevance of marks.



MAINTENANCE OF BEACONS AND SIGNS

The maintenance of beacons is necessary for the security of riders and also to minimize their environmental impact (panels' degradation, visual impact but also environmental...).

Some advices:

- 1) **It is necessary to regularly verify the condition of beacons** and sign panels. Indeed, because beacons are exposed to variable climatic conditions (sun, wind, rain, humidity), they can be damaged quickly.
- 2) **Look after the visibility of beacons.** The vegetation can quickly recover marks.
- 3) When a route is modified, previous marks should be canceled, avoiding chemical products or by rinsing abundantly, if there is no alternative.

For the layout and maintenance of equestrian routes and in particular the marking, it is possible to contact local authorities, to make them contribute to the promotion of these routes, which benefit their territories. Thus, the local authorities can financially or technically support the equestrian marking. In this case, their logo can be added to the beacons.

BEYOND MARKING AND SIGNAGE

Marking and signage, in order to enhance the information for users, can be completed with tools such as maps, guides, roadbooks, index cards or multimedia tools.



*Hiking in France
with GeoCheval*



*Hiking in Spain with
Turismo Ecuestre*



*Hiking in the
Netherlands with
Buitenrijden*



*Hiking in Germany
with Pferdaktuell*



*Hiking in the USA
with Trail Meister*



*Hiking in the USA
with TrailLink*

Sources :

Manual de senalización y homologación de itinerarios ecuestres RFHE

FFE/CNTE, *Balisage et signalisation d'un itinéraire de randonnée équestre*, 2014

FERP, *Charte de balisage*, 2019

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