

Faro free Applications



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Metropolitan trail

Brief description

■ The Metropolitan Trail explores the peri-urban area, cutting across a number of municipal boundaries. Devised and planned with artists, local people and hikers, this trail is a means of discovering the interface between the city and the countryside, a territory shaped by human beings for thousands of years. Those who instigated and developed the trail organise “heritage walks” enabling participants to discover its artistic and sensitive aspects.

Tutor for the application

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Reference sites

■ The route is 365 km long and is cutting across 38 municipal boundaries of the Département Bouches-du-Rhône.

Background

■ In 2008, Marseilles was chosen to be European Capital of Culture. In 2009, the association Marseille-Provence 2013 commissioned a study entitled “Popular culture and territories” from the publisher Wildproject (www.wildproject.org/chemins/), specialising in the relationship between urban and natural areas, which led to a proposal to set up a hiking trail based on the many innovative urban walks existing in the greater Marseilles area. In 2010, Marseille-Provence 2013 brought together the “artist-walkers”, a group with a strong presence on the Marseilles arts scene and invited them to propose a joint project.

■ These two initiatives led to the idea of commissioning the artist-walkers to devise an accredited long-distance hiking trail on the theme of the relationship between natural and urban spaces. The route quickly became self-evident, running through the non-constructible zones at the city-countryside interface and

resulting in a trail in the shape of a figure eight. Marseille-Provence 2013 obtained the agreement and support of the French Hiking Federation, the Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre – FFRP (<http://www.ffrandonnee.fr>), which brings together hiking enthusiasts, and this federation's local committee (Comité Départemental de Randonnée Pédestre), responsible for the trails in the area.

■ An initial proposal was sent to all the municipalities concerned in 2011, which made it possible to launch municipality-by-municipality monitoring of the trail's development. At the end of 2012, the trail was accredited as a “Chemin de grande randonnée”, or major footpath, since it met all but one of the FFRP specifications; this single derogation, linked to its peri-urban nature, concerned the fact that built areas represented more than 30% of the trail. During winter 2011/2012 the 360 kilometre trail was blazed and the required official trail guide was drawn up. The GR2013 long-distance trail was inaugurated in 2013.

Tutor's comments

■ Obtaining the “Chemin de Grande Randonnée” accreditation is the most difficult means of creating a metropolitan trail, which can exist in less rigorous forms, such as a literary trail (Stendhal's “Tour of Italy” is an example). The more literary the trail, the less practical constraints are imposed on the artist, but at the same time it becomes less easy for the general public to appropriate it. A trail that complies with an institutionally defined set of specifications is more accessible and sharing it with the public becomes more feasible.

■ Municipalities and local authorities have a key role in the development of a metropolitan hiking trail – authorisations, maintenance, promotion and so on – which must nonetheless be nuanced in so far as they sometimes also create constraints that they are unable to solve because they are not close enough to the situation on the ground, for instance when it comes to obtaining access permissions or dealing with safety issues. Although it takes an average of twelve years to bring to fruition an accredited major footpath project, this one was completed in two years. The cost, excluding the official trail guide, is estimated at 100 000 euros.

Implementation process and conditions

Recognition of the right to walk: establishing a metropolitan footpath is easier than the process followed for a traditional long-distance hiking trail, because the route largely follows the public road network and intrudes into very few highly regulated natural areas. The existing short-distance trails are all potential paths where the right to walk is already recognised. These paths are sometimes interconnected at the level of a municipality, or even a département.

The story of the Metropolitan Trail is partly that of the construction of a future new landscape, that of the greater urban area through which people can roam. It makes it possible to approach the city as a “second form of nature” whose urban and natural environment is worth exploring, following a route devised by placing end-to-end a number of comfortable urban walks.

The skills required to run the project made it possible to mobilise participants with complementary profiles in the fields of town-planning and urban design, archival research, gathering of oral histories, hiking, knowledge of access rights, map-reading and so on. In the case of the municipal authorities, which are used to reasoning in terms of paths serving a limited urban area, the project obliged them to reach agreement on different territorial scales – the municipalities, the conurbation, the départements – and to work together. The walkers – hikers, artists and so on – gave them a new insight into their urban footpaths and the stories they tell: workplaces, industrial sites, urban sprawl and so on. They contributed new ways of practising urban walking and a renewed insight into the areas concerned. They were also capable of prioritising the aesthetic, social or historical perspectives over an approach all too often confined to issues of security and public responsibility.

Documenting the footpath entailed reading up on it at increasingly detailed levels, beginning with the most general works and moving on to more detailed, specific ones, whether maps, archives, literature or oral knowledge – a screening process. In literary terms, this meant beginning with the works for a general readership (tourism guides, road maps, hiking guides, etc.) and progressing towards the more scientific ones, so as to list the points of interest. In cartographical terms, it meant beginning with the first land register of 1820, then sourcing aerial photographs taken as from the 1920s, gradually moving on to the most recent

aerial photographs so as to identify changes in the landscape. In oral terms, it meant listening to those interested in the footpath from school pupils to the very oldest members of society – those who live along the route – moving on to the local hiking associations who use the route, so as to comprehend their feel for it. Bringing together all this research, a concept or general project could be devised, with possible options, which were then decided upon in agreement with all the stakeholders – walkers, public authorities and the footpath's neighbours.

Drawing the route involved various stages, following a method which, once the theme and general direction of the Metropolitan Trail had been determined, made it possible to launch the feasibility process – authorisations, responsibilities, adaptations, maintenance:

- ▶ Identification of the locations visited: cadastral research and knowledge of their legal status (private or public ownership, protected areas, and so on);
- ▶ Identification of the legal status of the paths, the public highways and the non-public roads and pathways (country lanes, private lanes or paths), with the problem, in the peri-urban areas, of keeping the trail at least 5 metres distant from the nearest road as far as possible;
- ▶ Identification of the legal status of specific areas crossed by the trail: the coastline, waterways and their banks, forests, pasture land, municipal property and areas concerned by a “right of way”;
- ▶ Obtaining permissions to walk and to place markers and signs (agreements with entities or individuals) ;
- ▶ Study of the adaptation, maintenance and conservation conditions;
- ▶ Identification of accommodation possibilities (with each stop-off point about 20 km distant from the next) and of public transport facilities, which in the case of the Metropolitan Trail provide opportunities for enjoying the urban and natural environments in different ways.

The operators running the Faro application

Edition Wild Project : www.wildproject.org/chemins/

Caravan : <http://www.caravan2013.org>

Hôtel du Nord cooperative:

<http://hoteldunord.coop/formation/sentier-metropolitain/>