



Nota de premsa

Girona, 23 July 2018

Girona Greenway route adapted for the blind or for users with impaired vision

The first stretch, crossing the city of Girona, has been equipped with horizontal guides along the route, braille signs, and an accessible mobile application with lots of information in different languages.

The Girona Greenways Consortium, a body belonging to the Regional Council of Girona, has completed adaptation work on the first stretch of the greenways for the visually impaired. This can be found on the route between the city of Girona, heading out from the Plaça dels Països Catalans, and the Technological Park. A horizontal guide which can be followed with a walking cane has been installed along this stretch, as well as vertical signposts with information available in braille. An accessible mobile app has also been designed, providing full information about the route, the history of the greenways, and the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The project has been co-financed by the Strategic Tourism Plan of the Government of Catalonia, with a total cost of 185,000 euros for all the work carried out to make the route visually accessible.

The adapted route in Girona covers 1.3 kilometres and will serve as a pilot test for the development of more stretches of inclusive routes. Work is currently being carried out on the Iron and Coal Route - 9 kilometres between Ripoll and Sant Joan de les Abadesses - which will be completed in September. The routes chosen to develop this project include a short one, between Girona and the Technological Park, and a longer one between Ripoll and Sant Joan de les Abadesses, both with starting points in places which can be reached without assistance via public transport (in this case by train).

The work and improvements carried out are aimed at a wide spectrum of visually impaired users, from those with reduced sight, to blind people with guide dogs or walking with the aid of a cane. The combination of horizontal and vertical signposting promotes the full autonomy of users.

Inclusive routes that facilitate autonomy

Highlighting the fact that the greenways are accessible by definition, since they are easy and safe stretches set apart from traffic, Albert Gómez, president of the Greenways Consortium, stresses that "inclusion is one of the Consortium's priorities: providing accessible and inclusive greenways that everyone can enjoy; as such, from now onwards, this will also include the visually impaired".

When proposing this project, the Consortium's objective was to ensure that the greatest number of people could enjoy these routes with the maximum autonomy possible. This has also led to plans to install audible traffic signs at the bus stops located at the start and end of the routes next Autumn, with the collaboration of the Girona City Council. During the summer,



Nota de premsa

it is advisable to access the start of the route with a companion, or to ask for assistance to cross the road in front of the Guardia Civil headquarters in Girona or at the Technological Park.

The project has been carried out with companies specialised in visual accesibility and has been tested with blind people and those with impaired vision. Last Friday, the first test was carried out with two volunteers from Barcelona, Francesc and Agustí, and also Isaac Padrós, from the Associació Multicapacitats in Girona. All three pointed out that the stretch is easy to follow and very safe, and expressed their satisfaction at having been able to enjoy the natural environment of the river that crosses through the city centre. According to Agustí, "being able to go with blind friends, just on our own, it's a dream come true. The feeling of autonomy is not at all common; it's amazing!".

It should be noted that signposting has also been updated for all users, especially for cyclists; who are now advised that the stretch is shared with people in wheelchairs and the visually impaired.

Actions to improve visual accessibility

The complete project to adapt two stretches of the Girona Greenways for blind people includes **horizontal signposting** with a guide along the margin of the path and special paving for walking, made out of material that provides information through different sounds and textures; **vertical and visual signposting** providing information on location, orientation, routes and the histories of the routes and the local environment; the creation of accessible visual-touch guides, available at the information points along the route at the end of summer, and the development of a mobile app for Android and IOS.

The mobile app is called "Vies GI accessible" and can be downloaded for free from any device. It provides on-screen and audio information on how to practice leisure activities safely and on the adapted stretches in four languages. It also presents a menu of routes with general and complementary information, so that the user can do more than just cycle along and can also interpret the environment and get to know its history and heritage. It will also be possible to inform about incidents along the route as well as special activities and so on. The application is open to further enhancements and is also available in off-line mode.

This is part of a wider project funded by the Department for Business and Knowledge of the Government of Catalonia, titled "Project for the improvement of the Girona Greenways as inclusive touristic infrastructures". The project includes the improvement of different stretches of the route at different points of the Girona comarcas, the acquisition of new adapted bikes, and the creation of an accessible website that will be up and running very soon. The website will include information on the routes of the Girona and Pirinexus routes, the accessible mobile app, and details of the latest updates.

(Adjuntem imatges de la ruta i la prova amb persones amb discapacitat visual)

For more information:

Girona Greenways Consortium/ info@viesverdes.org / 972 48 69 50

Regional Council of Girona / comunicacio@ddgi.cat / 972 18 46 85