GSI JOURNALS
GLOBAL SCIENCE INSTITUTE
e-ISSN 2645-9116
https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/atrss
DOI: 10.53353/atrss.1615824
GSI Journals Serie A: Advancements in Tourism, Recreation and Sports Sciences
(GSI Dergileri Seri A: Turizm, Rekreasyon ve Spor Bilimlerindeki Gelişmeler)
ATRSS 2025, 8 (1): 430-445 - Review Article/Derleme Makale - Received/Geliş T.: 08.10.2025 - Published/Kabul T.: 15.02.2025

Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Certification: A Comparative Review of Turkiye and International Examples*

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Abstract

This study examines the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate implemented by Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkiye within the framework of sustainable tourism. By comparing this certification system with international examples, the research identifies similarities and differences in governance, criteria, and inspection processes. The findings reveal notable commonalities and distinctions among the certification systems. While all systems feature mandatory components such as secure parking, repair tools, and tailored nutritional services, the Turkish model stands out with its state-led, legally grounded framework and its points-based evaluation system, which is designed to encourage service enhancements. However, the study also identifies challenges in post-certification inspections and international visibility, which may limit the model's impact. The findings suggest that aligning Turkiye's certification system with best practices from international models could enhance its effectiveness and foster the growth of bicycle tourism. The insights derived from this research offer actionable guidance for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to promote sustainable tourism practices on a global scale. These insights include the identification of gaps in inspection processes, the enhancement of international cooperation, and the adoption of innovative solutions.

Keywords: *Bicycle tourism, bicycle-friendly accommodation, tourism certification, sustainable accommodation, Turkiye.*

* This study is not included in the study group that requires TR Index Ethics Committee Approval.

1. Introduction

In recent years, growing environmental concerns have increased interest in sustainable tourism and eco-friendly travel practices (Kang, Stein, Heo, & Lee, 2012; Esparon, Gyuris & Stoeckl, 2014). Today, it can be stated that sustainable tourism has become a fundamental requirement for nearly all tourism activities (Bramwell, 2015). This shift in the traditional tourism perspective has become more evident with the rising popularity of eco-friendly tourism types such as nature-based tourism. Bicycle tourism, as a form of nature-based tourism (Mehmetoglu, 2007), has emerged as a developing type of tourism on a global scale (Bakogiannis et al., 2020). In addition to promoting physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, bicycle tourism contributes to economic development—especially in rural areas—and, as a sustainable form of tourism, limits environmental impact (Ritchie & Hall, 1999; Faulks, Ritchie & Fluker, 2007). The positive environmental impacts of bicycle tourism can be attributed not only to its nature-based character but also to the fact that bicycle tourists tend to be relatively more conscious individuals with generally environment-focused motivations (Simonsen & Jorgenson, 1998; Weston et al., 2012). With its wide range of economic, social, and environmental benefits and increasing recognition, bicycle tourism has become a significant contemporary tourism trend.

Bicycle tourism directly contributes to the tourism economy through expenditures on accommodation, food and beverage, and transportation, while also promoting rural development and supporting local economies. According to the European Cyclists' Federation's 2018 report, the annual economic benefit of cycling across European Union countries is estimated to be around 150 billion euros (ECF, 2018). Turkiye, with its diverse geography, climatic variety, and cultural richness, holds substantial potential for bicycle tourism. By using this potential, the country can encourage sustainable tourism and rural development, thereby obtaining economic benefits. Particularly for bicycle tourists from Europe, Turkiye has the potential to become an appealing destination and, with the right planning and investments, could become into a key bicycle tourism destination (Güvenç, 2022). Turkiye's bicycle tourism potential has also led to increased interest and investment in this field.

Various certifications in the tourism sector, particularly those centered on sustainability, have become vital tools to verify that businesses fulfill their environmental, social, and economic responsibilities. Globally recognized certifications such as Green Globe, Travelife, EarthCheck, and LEED demonstrate that tourism enterprises meet certain standards in areas including energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, and contributions to local communities. In Turkiye, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's "Green Star" certification, along with the "Blue Flag" certification granted by the Turkish Environmental Foundation for beaches, also promote sustainable tourism practices. These certifications provide a competitive advantage to businesses while assisting consumers in making informed choices.

Bicycle tourism, despite its growing economic impact and increasing popularity as a trend, has not yet attained the prominence of more established tourism types. Consequently, a noticeable gap exists within the tourism literature concerning this field (Güvenç, 2022). The expanding economic scope and rising trend of bicycle tourism underscore the necessity for further research in this area. This study addresses this gap by examining one of the fundamental components of tourism—accommodation facilities—within the context of bicycle tourism and conducting a comparative analysis of bicycle-friendly accommodation certifications. Using literature review methodology, the research focuses on the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkiye and four prominent certification programs in Europe. These certifications were analyzed comparatively in terms of their criteria. The comparative approach applied to Turkiye's certification system and its alignment with international models offers a novel perspective, particularly for the analysis of local policies, and provides significant insights for both policymakers and sector stakeholders.

1.1 Certification Systems in Tourism

Drawing on secondary sources, this study examines the "Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility" certificate—issued by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism—within the broader context of green

tourism certifications. By comparing it with global examples, the article also presents views on the significance of bicycle tourism in the context of sustainable tourism.

Certification practices in the tourism sector are utilized to verify that businesses and destinations meet certain criteria, and to inform consumers about this compliance (Graci & Dodds, 2015). These practices serve purposes such as environmental protection, the promotion of sustainable practices, providing information to tourists, and creating a competitive advantage (Font, 2002; Xue, Chan & Wan, 2023). Certification programs can help businesses improve their environmental performance, offer tourists the opportunity to make informed choices, and reduce the negative impacts of tourism (Castillo-Manzano, Castro-Nuno, Lopez-Valpuesta, & Zarzoso, 2021). In particular, certification has been observed to significantly boost new hotel investments in luxury accommodations and economically advantaged communities (Blackman et al., 2014). However, the effectiveness of certification systems in tourism is being questioned due to low consumer awareness of certification programs and logos, as well as the multitude of eco-labels available (Font, 2002; Puhakka & Siikamäki, 2012; Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016). Consequently, improving the effectiveness of certification programs requires enhancing consumer awareness, clarifying certification standards and criteria, and preventing greenwashing—i.e., acquiring numerous labels solely for promotional purposes without genuinely meeting the underlying criteria.

Although there are many types of sustainable certifications in the tourism field, some are more commonly used than others. Widely used sustainability certifications include Green Star, Blue Flag, Green Globe, Travelife, and GSTC. These certificates are international certificates that can be given to various tourism stakeholders such as restaurants, accommodation establishments, tour operators.

1.2. Bicycle-Friendly Certifications

Recognized as an important component within the broader concept of sustainable tourism, bicycle tourism has recently driven accommodations to enhance their service standards in this area. Various certification systems have been developed in different countries to meet the needs of bicycle tourists and to standardize service quality (Weston et al., 2012). Nonetheless, there appears to be no comprehensive standard for bicycle-friendly certification. In terms of visibility, however, certain certifications stand out more prominently. Among these are Bett+Bike, Cyclists Welcome, Bicycle Friendly Business, Cycle Friendly, Velo Label, Fietsers Welkom, Bike Friendly by NatTour and Accueil Vélo.

Bett+Bike: Bett+Bike is a certification granted by the German Cyclists' Association (ADFC) for more than 25 years to accommodation facilities in Germany and several other European countries (including Denmark, Belgium, Italy, etc.). It can be awarded to hotels, campsites, and shared accommodations, provided they meet certain requirements tailored to bicycle tourists. To receive the basic Bett+Bike quality certificate for hotels, applicants must fulfill the following minimum criteria:

- Guests also accepted for one night only
- Lockable room to store bicycles overnight
- Extra room for drying clothes and equipment
- A wholesome breakfast
- Information about regional tourist offers for cyclists
- Provision of a basic repair kit
- Contact a bicycle repair shop

In addition, hotels aspiring to obtain the higher-tier Bett+Bike Quality Certificate must meet at least three of the following criteria:

- Advice for guests on environmentally friendly departure and arrival by public transportation (especially for bikes on trains)
- Pick-up and drop-off service for cycling guests
- Bikes for rent
- E-bikes for rent

- E-bike charging stations
- Day trips offered
- Luggage transfer to the next accommodation
- Cooperation with a bicycle workshop
- Navigation devices for rent
- Free WiFi
- Packed lunch

As one of Europe's most established bicycle-friendly certifications, Bett+Bike has been awarded to more than 5900 businesses (EuroVelo, 2020; Bett+Bike, 2024). This number also illustrates the wide prevalence of bicycle tourism in Europe.

Accueil Vélo: Accueil Vélo is a national accreditation program in France, administered by France Vélo Tourisme. Covering French bicycle routes. It guarantees a high standard of hospitality and accommodation services for cyclists. 8500 businesses, 6000 of which are accommodation facilities, have this certificate. The criteria for obtaining the Accueil Vélo label are as follows:

- Being within 5 km of a cycle route
- Having adapted equipment for cyclists: secured bicycle shelter, repair kit
- Benefitting from a warm welcome (useful information and advice on routes, weather, etc.)
- Having services adapted to cyclists: luggage transfer, washing and drying facilities, bicycle rental, bicycle washing, etc.

This label is not limited exclusively to accommodation services but also extends to restaurants, points of interest, tourism offices, as well as bicycle rental and repair businesses (EuroVelo, 2020; France Velo Tourisme, 2024).

Bike Friendly by NatTour: In 2017, NatTour, in collaboration with the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (EEPF), initiated efforts to develop bicycle tourism across Greece. As part of this initiative, the "Bike Friendly" label is awarded to various tourism stakeholders such as accommodation facilities and municipalities (NatTour, 2024). To obtain this label, accommodation providers must fulfill a set of mandatory and optional criteria:

Mandatory Criteria

- Information about bike-friendly services either on the website or in the hotel brochure, or in a special brochure, which will be available to customers free of charge.
- Area map with cycling routes in printed or electronic form (free service).
- Secure parking or storage area for bicycles or co-operation with a corresponding space near the hotel (free service).
- Tool kit availability (free service).
- Washing machine-dryer available on a daily basis (on-site or off-site – paid service).
- Renting and repairing bicycles in the hotel or near the hotel (paid service).

Optional Criteria (The hotel must meet at least three of the following criteria.)

- Collaboration with a company that organizes cycling tours.
- Parking places with a special rack for bicycles.
- Electric bicycle battery charging point.
- Rent a mini van service for bicycle transport.
- Lunchbox availability with fruit, toast, energy drinks, etc.
- Availability of healthy breakfast with organic-bio products.
- Gym-fitness area.
- Wellness services availability (at least one): Sauna, Hammam, Jacuzzi, Massage, Thalassotherapy pool.
- Green Key Label.

- Certification ISO 14000.

Currently, Bike Friendly labels awarded by NatTour encompass 135 hotels, 9 municipalities, and 60 other stakeholders (Bike Hotels, 2024).

Cyclists Welcome: In Great Britain, the Cyclists Welcome program is administered by Cycling UK, one of the country's leading cycling organizations (Cycling UK, 2024). Under this program, accommodation establishments, food and beverage businesses, shops, and tourist attractions can be listed. Certain criteria for accommodation facilities are mandatory, while others are optional. Examples of these criteria include:

- Secure bike parking on premises - under cover
- A room or an area for drying clothes and footwear
- Food and drink options available (early morning or late evening options, or self-catering)
- A bicycle pump, puncture repair kit, and tools available to borrow
- Free water bottle refills
- Secure bike locks for customer use
- Bike wash facilities
- Accommodating group visits from cyclists, such as cycling clubs
- Electric charging facilities available for use
- Facilities to recycle or dispose of waste
- Discounts or other incentives for anyone arriving by bike

Upon examining certifications granted to bicycle-friendly accommodations, one finds that they generally apply similar criteria. Nevertheless, the diversity and sheer number of certification programs can complicate identifying and reaching bicycle-friendly establishments, creating challenges from the user's perspective.

1.3. Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate (MCT)

In Turkiye, bicycle tourism has recently become an important sector, driven by growing interest in recent years. The implementation of bicycle-friendly accommodation facilities is still relatively new. Within this context, in 2020, the "Regulation on Granting Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificates to Tourism-Certified Accommodation Facilities" was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkiye and entered into force (T.C. Resmî Gazete [Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkiye], 2020). According to this regulation, the "Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate" issued by the Republic of Turkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT) establishes service standards for accommodation facilities catering to bicycle tourists and encourages these facilities to enhance their quality. This certificate facilitates bicycle travel for both domestic and international tourists and increases Turkiye's bicycle tourism potential.

The Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate standardizes the services that tourism-certified accommodation establishments offer their cycling guests. It includes specific criteria and standards to ensure that accommodation facilities provide bicycle-friendly infrastructure and services. By assessing whether hotels are sufficiently equipped to offer these services, the certificate aims to create a favorable environment for bicycle tourism. Similar to other international certifications, both mandatory and optional criteria are requested from accommodation facilities under the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate. As of December 2024, 48 accommodation facilities have obtained the "Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate" (GoTürkiye, 2024).

Table 1. Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Evaluation Criteria

Mandatory Services	
1	The establishment must have a bicycle-friendly policy and publish its practices on the facility's website.
2	Staff knowledgeable about regional bicycle routes must be employed.
3	If regional bicycle route maps are available, written, visual, or digital information about those maps—as well as cultural, historical, and natural attractions in the area—must be provided at the
4	Continuously updated information on detailed weather and road conditions must be posted in visible common areas.
5	A locked, covered bicycle garage or a covered bicycle parking area with secured side walls must be available for parking and securing bicycles, and this garage/area must be monitored by a
6	A designated and clearly marked area equipped for washing bicycles must be provided.
7	Basic maintenance/repair tools (e.g., inner tubes, chains, pumps, and wrench sets) must be available for guest use.
8	Express laundry and drying services must be provided, or at least one washer and one dryer for every 1% of the total number of rooms must be accessible to guests 24 hours a day.
9	In facilities with a restaurant or a breakfast hall, a special breakfast menu must be prepared for cyclists, with accompanying information on content and nutritional values.
10	In facilities with a restaurant, takeaway packages containing carbohydrates and protein-rich options must be offered upon request.
11	Guests must be able to purchase electrolyte and/or carbohydrate beverages as well as energy gels/bars that can be consumed while cycling.
Additional Services	
1	Availability of drinking water 24 hours a day in common areas or guest rooms.
2	Availability of hot and cold beverages and snacks 24 hours a day in common areas.
3	In facilities with a restaurant: • If a buffet is offered, a separate buffet should be provided for cyclists.
4	In facilities without a restaurant, a kitchen area equipped with cooking facilities must be available so that cyclists can prepare their own meals.
5	The sale of clothing, equipment, repair kits, spare parts, and similar products for cyclists.
6	A bicycle repair workshop equipped for maintenance and repair must be available, staffed by personnel capable of repairing bicycles.
7	Bicycle rental services—including safety equipment—must be offered (evaluated if at least five bicycles, or 5% of the total number of rooms, are available).
8	Within the bicycle rental service, seats or trailers for children must be provided (each type of child seat or trailer is evaluated separately).
9	The availability of bicycles suitable for women and different age groups of children within the rental service.
10	GPS devices must be available for rental (evaluated if at least two devices, or 1% of the total number of rooms, are provided).
11	Charging facilities for electric bicycles must be provided in the bicycle garage or parking area.
12	Printed or digital maps indicating bicycle sales, rental, and repair points near the facility or on local cycling routes (if applicable).
13	Information on public transportation options (printed or digital maps, guides).

14	Detailed information on guided bicycle, city, or regional tours.
15	Provision of a guide upon request.
16	Upon request, the facility must offer group transport of bicycles and equipment to/from tour points (evaluated if the transport vehicle is owned by the facility, under long-term lease, or if a
17	Employment of personnel certified in sports massage.
18	Regularly organized programs aimed at encouraging and promoting bicycle use among children.
19	In facilities with extensive grounds, staff should use bicycles for on-site transportation and, where feasible, for carrying materials.
20	To reduce the carbon footprint, staff should be encouraged to commute by bicycle, and a dedicated staff bicycle parking area must be provided.
21	The facility must have an area or room equipped with at least three types of exercise equipment that enable fitness or training activities.

Accommodation facilities wishing to apply for this certificate must first submit an application through the e-government portal to ensure that they meet the specified criteria. Once the initial review is completed, facilities whose applications are approved are included in an inspection program. The certification process involves inspection and evaluation stages, during which the quality and safety of the services provided by the facility are assessed. In the evaluation conducted by the Ministry inspector, compliance with the eleven legally mandated minimum criteria outlined in the "Regulation on Granting Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificates to Tourism-Certified Accommodation Facilities" is examined first. If a facility fully meets these mandatory criteria, the second phase involves evaluating the 21 additional service criteria. While the mandatory criteria are not scored, a minimum required score must be obtained from the additional services component—25 points for holiday villages and 4- or 5-star hotels, and 10 points for other facilities—to qualify for the "Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility" certificate.

2. Comparison of Bicycle-Friendly Certifications

The Bett+Bike, Accueil Vélo, Bike Friendly by NatTour, and Cyclists Welcome certifications, along with the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate, can be compared under five main headings: Scope and Governance Structure, Mandatory Criteria, Additional Criteria and Services, Certification and Inspection Process, Overall Similarities and Differences.

2.1. Scope and Governance Structure

The certification process for bicycle-friendly accommodation facilities in Turkiye is carried out in accordance with a regulation published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2020, and thus rests on a legal framework. This framework creates an official structure wherein tourism-certified establishments are mandated to meet specified criteria. In contrast, certification programs in other countries typically operate under the coordination of non-governmental organizations or tourism-focused associations. For example, the Germany-based Bett+Bike scheme has been coordinated by the German Cyclists' Association (ADFC) for over 25 years and has also been adopted in several other European countries (EuroVelo, 2020; Bett+Bike, 2024). In France, Accueil Vélo functions as a nationally accredited program under the supervision of France Vélo Tourisme (EuroVelo, 2020; France Velo Tourisme, 2024), whereas in Greece, the Bike Friendly label was introduced as part of a civil society/private initiative model jointly managed by NatTour and the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (EEPF) (NatTour, 2024). In United Kingdom, the Cyclists Welcome program is similarlyoverseen by Cycling UK, a non-governmental organization, and extends from accommodation facilities to food and beverage establishments, covering a broad range of tourism stakeholders (Cycling UK, 2024). Consequently, the state-led, legally grounded nature of Turkiye's program constitutes its most distinct point of divergence from these international examples.

Table 2. Scope and Governance Structure of Bicycle-Friendly Certifications

Program / Certificate	Country / Region	Coordinating Institution	Legal Status	Scope
Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility (MCT)	Turkiye	Republic of Turkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism	Regulation published in the Official Gazette; official & mandatory	Tourism-certified facilities; legislation-based
Bett+Bike	Germany (and some European countries)	German Cyclists' Association (ADFC)	Operated under an NGO (25+ years)	Hotels, campsites, shared accommodations; Europe-wide
Accueil Vélo	France	France Vélo Tourisme	National accreditation program, public-private collaboration	Accommodations, restaurants, tourism offices, bicycle rentals, repair services, routes, etc.
Bike Friendly by NatTour	Greece	NatTour & Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (EEPF)	Civil initiative and NGO collaboration	Accommodation facilities, municipalities, tourism stakeholders
Cyclists Welcome	United Kingdom	Cycling UK	Non-governmental organization	Accommodations, food & beverage businesses, shops, tourist attractions

2.2. Mandatory Criteria

When the core or "mandatory" criteria of national and international certification programs for bicycle-friendly accommodations are examined, it becomes apparent that each system centers on fulfilling the most essential needs of bicycle tourists. Notably, in the Bett+Bike program, "one-night-only" stays are explicitly required, whereas programs like Accueil Vélo, Bike Friendly, and Cyclists Welcome do not strongly emphasize this topic or list it as an optional criterion. In the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate (MCT) issued by the Republic of Turkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, there is no specific requirement pertaining to one-night stays. This situation may seem like a contradiction for accommodation establishments, because it is expected that cyclists will stay in a bicycle-friendly accommodation facility.A secure parking or storage area for bicycles emerges as a mandatory criterion common to all certification systems. Bett+Bike, Accueil Vélo, Bike Friendly, and Cyclists Welcome each stipulate the availability of a lockable or covered storage space. Similarly, the MCT Certificate mandates the presence of a "covered or enclosed bicycle garage or parking area monitored by a security camera," underscoring the importance of securing bicycles.

Regarding maintenance and repair options, all programs consider having basic repair equipment (e.g., a pump, patch kit, wrench set) compulsory. While Bett+Bike, Accueil Vélo, and Bike Friendly particularly emphasize accessibility to a repair workshop within the vicinity, the MCT Certificate specifies that such basic repair equipment must be provided as part of the mandatory criteria. However, having a "bicycle repair workshop or employing personnel specialized in bicycle repair" falls under the additional criteria that grant extra points (T.C. Resmî Gazete [Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkiye], 2020).

Laundry and drying facilities constitute another frequently highlighted aspect across all programs. Bett+Bike requires a separate room dedicated to drying clothing and equipment. While Accueil Vélo treats laundry and drying services as optional recommendations, Bike Friendly and Cyclists Welcome likewise

prioritize—or strongly encourage—making laundry and drying services available. Under the MCT Certificate in Turkiye, "express laundry and drying services or 24-hour accessible washing and drying machines" are mandatory.

Criteria concerning nutrition and food-and-beverage services in all systems are designed around the requirements of bicycle tourists; notably, a "healthy and nutritious breakfast" is a shared priority. Bett+Bike underscores a "wholesome" breakfast, and Accueil Vélo highlights suitable meals and beverages for cyclists. Bike Friendly makes it compulsory to offer at least breakfast or a meal, with a lunchbox ("lunchbox") as an optional service. In the United Kingdom's Cyclists Welcome scheme, the focus is on accommodating early or late mealtime needs and providing water bottle refill facilities. Meanwhile, the MCT Certificate mandates a more comprehensive approach, covering "special menus for cyclists, information on nutritional values, carbohydrate- and protein-rich takeaway packages, and the provision of electrolyte and energy drinks" (T.C. Resmî Gazete [Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkiye], 2020).

Overall, an examination of the mandatory criteria in both national and international programs reveals broad alignment around the core needs of bicycle tourists—secure bicycle storage, basic repair equipment, laundry and drying facilities, and tailored nutritional services. In Turkiye's "Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate," all these fundamental requirements are clearly defined under an official regulatory framework, and additional services are scored to incentivize facilities to further enhance service quality (T.C. Resmî Gazete [Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkiye], 2020).

Table 3. Mandatory Criteria

Mandatory Criterion	Bett+Bike	Accueil Vélo	Bike Friendly	Cyclists Welcome	Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation (MCT)
Acceptance of One-Night Stay	Yes (Mandatory)	No (Not explicitly stated)	No (Not explicitly stated)	No (Not explicitly stated)	Not specified
Secure Bicycle Parking Area	Lockable storage	Sheltered space	Secure facility or a nearby partner arrangement	Secure parking area (mandatory)	Enclosed/secure parking area (mandatory)
Basic Repair/Maintenance Kit	Yes (mandatory)	Yes (mandatory)	Yes (mandatory)	Yes (mandatory)	Mandatory (wrench set, pump, chain, etc.)
Laundry/Drying Facilities	Drying room	Generally recommended	Mandatory (may be paid)	Drying area (mandatory/recommended)	Express washing and drying or 24-hour machine access (mandatory)
Food/Beverages (e.g., Breakfast)	"Wholesome" breakfast	Meals suited to cyclists	Breakfast, optional lunchbox	Early/late service availability	Special breakfast menu for cyclists & packed provisions

2.3. Additional / Optional Criteria

An examination of the certification programs under review reveals the presence of various optional or additional services beyond the mandatory criteria. These supplementary services enable facilities to achieve "higher-level" bicycle-friendly conditions and offer broader possibilities to cycling tourists. For instance, in the Bett+Bike (Quality Plus) program, services such as e-bike rentals and charging stations are

included among the optional criteria, while the Accueil Vélo program regards services like bicycle or e-bike rentals and bicycle washing as additional criteria. Similarly, in the Bike Friendly (Greece) and Cyclists Welcome (United Kingdom) certifications, elements like electric bike charging points, bicycle rentals, or mini-van bicycle transport appear as optional or bonus-scoring items. In Turkiye's Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate (issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, or MCT), a similar emphasis on "additional services" is apparent; elements such as infrastructure for charging electric bicycles, bike rental options in various sizes, and GPS device rentals can increase a facility's overall points and help it become eligible for certification.

Aside from bicycle and e-bike rental services, there are additional criteria related to tour and route planning that also display similarities across programs. Bett+Bike (Quality Plus) treats guided tours and navigation device rentals as optional features, whereas Accueil Vélo focuses on regional bicycle routes and guide support. Under Bike Friendly, collaborating with an organization that arranges bicycle tours is offered as an optional criterion, while Cyclists Welcome underscores communication with group tours or cycling clubs. In the MCT Certificate, such services have been formalized as point-scoring items—e.g., providing a guide, sharing information on guided tours, and organizing programs aimed at children's cycling activities.

There are noteworthy similarities and differences among the programs with respect to environmental practices and sustainability. For example, in the Bike Friendly program, holding an international environmental certification like Green Key Label or ISO 14000 is presented as an optional criterion. In the MCT Certificate, approaches such as encouraging staff to commute by bicycle or adopting methods to reduce the carbon footprint are considered part of the additional services. In other programs, although sustainability aspects such as facilitating transfer via public transportation or promoting waste management are encouraged, they are not always mandated as formal certification requirements.

Additional comfort and activity facilities—such as fitness rooms, saunas, or massage services—are also categorized as optional in certifications like Bett+Bike (Quality Plus), Bike Friendly, and Cyclists Welcome. In Turkiye's MCT Certificate, employing personnel certified in sports massage and organizing bicycle promotion programs for children within the facility are likewise listed among the optional criteria, reflecting a similar approach.

Overall, once the core requirements are met, all the systems aim to have facilities provide extra services in order to fulfill "more advanced" bicycle-friendly accommodation conditions. In Turkiye, this approach is implemented through a points-based system in which holiday villages and four- and five-star hotels must accumulate at least 25 points, while other facilities must obtain at least 10 points. Meanwhile, some programs—such as Bett+Bike—employ multi-tiered certification levels, such as "Quality Plus," where meeting a set number of optional criteria enables facilities to advance to a higher certification tier (Bett+Bike, 2024).

Table 4. Additional / Optional Criteria

Additional / Optional Criterion	Bett+Bike (Quality Plus)	Accueil Vélo	Bike Friendly	Cyclists Welcome	Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation (MCT)
E-Bike Rental / Charging Station	E-bike & charging station; must fulfill at least 3 optional criteria in total	Option for regular or e-bike rentals	Electric bike battery charging (optional)	Electric charging point (optional)	Charging stations for electric bicycles (Article 11)
Navigation Device / Guided Tour	GPS device rental (optional)	Provision of route and guide information	Collaboration with tour companies (optional)	Collaboration with cycling clubs/groups (optional)	GPS device rental, provision of guides, local tour information (Articles 10, 14, 15)
Bicycle Transport / Transfer Service	(Quality Plus) may include transfer options	Recommendations for guides or tour operators	Mini-van rental for bicycle transport (optional)	Accommodation for group visits (optional)	Transport of groups and equipment to tour points (Article 16)
Wellness / Extra Comfort (Massage, Sauna, etc.)	Optional	Not specifically covered; may vary locally	Sauna, massage, fitness, etc. (optional)	Generally optional	Sports massage (Article 17), on-site training facility (Article 21)
Sustainability / Environmental Certificate	Not directly included	Not mentioned (though recommendations may exist)	Green Key or ISO 14000 (optional)	Waste management, water conservation, etc. (optional)	Staff encouraged to commute by bicycle, carbon footprint reduction (Articles 19, 20)
Additional Food / Nutrition Options (Lunchbox, etc.)	"Lunch package" optional	(Mostly a core service)	Availability of lunchboxes (mandatory or optional)	Water bottle refills, discounts, etc. (optional)	Separate buffet and snacks for cyclists, etc. (Additional Services, Articles 1–2–3)

2.4. Certification and Inspection Process

All bicycle-friendly accommodation certifications include an inspection or verification process to ensure that the facilities meet the required standards. In Turkiye, an application made via the e-Government system is the first step towards receiving the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's (MCT) Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate. This application first examines whether the 11 mandatory criteria have been fully met, followed by an evaluation based on the points earned from additional services. During the inspection phase, ministry inspectors visit the facility in person to verify that all criteria are genuinely being implemented.

In other countries as well, on-site inspection and assessment processes are in place, typically carried out by NGOs, tourism associations, or private organizations. For instance, in the Germany-based Bett+Bike system, local officials or representatives from the German Cyclists' Association (ADFC) confirm that the facility meets the minimum requirements; businesses wishing to upgrade to the "Quality Plus" phase must satisfy additional criteria (Bett+Bike, 2024). In France's Accueil Vélo program, regionally accredited

entities evaluate whether applicant facilities are suitable, then report their findings to France Vélo Tourisme (France Velo Tourisme, 2024). Greece's Bike Friendly system, managed through the collaboration of NatTour and the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (EEPF), likewise involves the online and/or on-site verification of mandatory and optional criteria, with certification renewed periodically (NatTour, 2024). In the United Kingdom, Cycling UK oversees both online and field inspection processes for membership and labeling under the Cyclists Welcome program (Cycling UK, 2024).

Because Turkiye's certification process is anchored in an official mechanism, legislation and state oversight are decisive factors. In contrast, other countries rely more on civil society or tourism-focused organizations to coordinate their processes. Hence, although all programs operate on the principle of on-site verification and inspection, the institutional structures for inspection and certification differ from one country to another.

Table 5. Certification and Inspection Process

Program	Application & Evaluation	Inspecting Body	Mandatory vs. Optional Distinction
Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility (MCT)	Application via e-Government → Preliminary review → On-site inspection → Scoring	Ministry inspectors	11 mandatory criteria + a certain score from 21 additional services (4- or 5-star hotels: 25 points, others: 10 points)
Bett+Bike	Application to ADFC → Local inspection → Process approval	ADFC representatives or accredited inspectors	Minimum criteria + 3 optional criteria for "Quality Plus"
Accueil Vélo	Application to regionally accredited organizations → On-site evaluation → National approval	Regional & national tourism/cycling bodies	Mandatory criteria + additional regional requirements
Bike Friendly by NatTour	Online form → Evaluation of mandatory and optional criteria → On-site inspection (if needed)	Collaboration between NatTour and EEPF	Mandatory criteria + at least 3 optional
Cyclists Welcome	Cycling UK membership & criteria check → Listing / labeling	Cycling UK	Mandatory core criteria + some optional additional services

2.5. General Similarities and Differences

Although national and international certification programs for bicycle-friendly accommodation generally respond to similar needs, each one features distinct characteristics. All programs include mandatory criteria around a common core, such as secure bicycle parking areas, basic maintenance and repair kits, laundry and drying facilities, and food and beverage services tailored to cyclists. Moreover, bicycle rental, electric bike charging stations, guided tours, and collaboration with stakeholders (e.g., repair workshops, rental outlets) are considered optional or bonus-scoring services in the majority of these programs. Another significant shared feature is that all certifications rely on on-site inspections and verifications rather than mere self-reporting.

However, there are some significant distinctions between these certification programs. The program in Turkiye is run under state supervision and operates under a stronger legal framework than the others because it is based on an official statement released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In contrast, long-established certifications like Bett+Bike (Germany) and Accueil Vélo (France) are coordinated by non-governmental organizations or tourism-focused associations; as they have been in operation for many years, they enjoy a broad participant network and deep-rooted expertise. Other elements such as the requirement for one-night stays, environmental certifications, sustainability practices, and the scoring of additional services also vary across programs. For instance, the Bett+Bike certificate mandates acceptance of "one-night-only" stays, whereas there is no such requirement in Turkiye. Similarly, the Bike Friendly certification in Greece may optionally list international environmental labels such as Green Key, while in the Turkish system, sustainability-focused practices—such as staff commuting by bicycle or encouraging bicycle use within the facility—are integrated into a points-based evaluation. Finally, whereas facilities in Turkiye must meet mandatory criteria and obtain a certain score from "additional services," programs like Bett+Bike offer higher-level certification phases (e.g., "Quality Plus") or require "at least three optional criteria" to progress to the next level.

3. Discussion

In this study, the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate issued by the Republic of Turkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT) was compared with international examples such as Bett+Bike, Accueil Vélo, Bike Friendly by NatTour, and Cyclists Welcome, revealing fundamental similarities as well as points of divergence. Considering the rising significance of bicycle tourism, the development of such certification programs for accommodation establishments positively affects both tourist satisfaction and regional development.

A comparative analysis of certification systems for bicycle-friendly accommodations (Bett+Bike, Accueil Vélo, Bike Friendly by NatTour, Cyclists Welcome, and the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate granted by Turkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism) shows that, while these certifications serve broadly similar purposes, their organizational structures and inspection processes can differ (EuroVelo, 2020; Bett+Bike, 2024; France Velo Tourisme, 2024; NatTour, 2024; Cycling UK, 2024; T.C. Resmî Gazete [Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkiye], 2020). Although all programs aim to create more suitable conditions for bicycle tourists, some are based on local or national legislation, while others rely on the initiatives of non-governmental organizations or private sector stakeholders. The program applied in Turkiye, with its framework defined by an official regulation issued by the state, differs institutionally from the others in that it is administered under government management and provides a comprehensive set of standards by unifying a scoring system for both mandatory and optional criteria.

On the other hand, while there are globally recognized certification systems focusing on certain areas—such as GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council), Green Key, or Blue Flag—no universal standard exclusively certifies "bicycle-friendly" accommodations worldwide. This situation has created a relatively fragmented certification landscape, in which the term "bicycle-friendly" can vary from one country or region to another, posing challenges for both businesses and tourists. Consequently, the establishment of a globally recognized certification standard could further strengthen bicycle tourism within the framework of sustainability principles and facilitate more direct engagement with bicycle tourists.

The fact that bicycle tourism has attracted increasing interest in recent years and bicycle tourism investments are increasing day by day reveals Turkiye's potential in this field (Güvenç, 2022). Therefore, bicycle-friendly accommodation certificates are one of the appropriate and promising application areas for Turkiye.

In Turkiye's particular case, a notable area for improvement in the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate is the lack of ongoing inspections—whether periodic or unannounced—following the initial approval. Although an inspection is carried out at the outset of certification, there is insufficient

information about how well facilities maintain the required standards in the long term. This limitation may constrain the certificate's effectiveness in terms of both prestige and sustainability. Therefore, introducing post-certification inspection and updates is recommended to maintain consistent standards.

4. Conclusion

When compared to certification programs such as Bett+Bike, Accueil Vélo, Bike Friendly by NatTour, and Cyclists Welcome, the Bicycle-Friendly Accommodation Facility Certificate—granted by the Republic of Turkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism—displays a high degree of similarity in terms of fundamental operational principles. These parallels include secure bicycle parking, provision of basic repair and maintenance services, appropriate nutritional options for cyclists, laundry and drying facilities, and sharing information regarding local routes and tours. These elements reflect the main objectives of each program in supporting bicycle tourism.

However, differing legal regulations and institutional structures across countries lead to unique divergences among the certification programs. In Turkiye, the certification process is centrally administered under government supervision, employing a points-based system for mandatory and optional criteria. Meanwhile, long-standing and geographically extensive programs such as Bett+Bike and Accueil Vélo use their years of experience to provide more flexible solutions that the sector has widely adopted.

This comparative review can make a significant contribution to the development perspective of bicycle-friendly accommodations in Turkiye. Incorporating the strengths of international certifications into the Turkish system may help raise service standards within the sector. Moreover, further expanding certification criteria in the future and increasing collaboration with international networks may accelerate the sustainable development of bicycle tourism in Turkiye.

5. Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it only examines Bett+Bike, Accueil Vélo, Bike Friendly by NatTour, Cyclists Welcome, and the certification program implemented by Turkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Given the existence of numerous bicycle-friendly certification or labeling practices led by various countries and organizations, future research would benefit from a broader examination of these diverse initiatives. Consequently, studying additional international programs focusing on bicycle-friendly tourism would offer a more holistic view of the topic.

Moreover, this study addresses the governance structures, criteria sets, and inspection processes of the reviewed certification programs only through a literature-based perspective. It does not incorporate field research, yet conducting qualitative or quantitative studies (e.g., evaluating business performance, customer satisfaction, contributions to the local economy, etc.) by collecting data from certified businesses could allow for a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis. Such fieldwork would more clearly reveal the extent to which certification criteria align with real-world applications and how bicycle-friendly services impact the tourism sector and local development. As a result, best practices could be identified in Turkiye or other regions worldwide, and a model that further integrates bicycle tourism with sustainability principles could be established.

Acknowledgments and info

Support Info: During the preparation of this study, no aid/support in cash or in kind was received from any individual or institution.

Ethical Approval: In the article, the authors declare that they comply with national and international research and publication ethics. In case of detection of a contrary situation, **GSI Journals Serie A: Advancements in Tourism Recreation and Sports Sciences Journal** has no responsibility and all responsibility belongs to the article's authors.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics Committee Approval was not required for the study.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest or gain in the article.

Contribution Rate of Researchers: The study was prepared with the contribution of two author. Contribution rates: 1. Author = 50%, 2. Author = %50.

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