

# IRON CURTAIN CHANGES TO POPULAR CYCLING TRAIL



The iron curtain, spreading from Finland to Greece and staining the last century with thoughts and feelings of horror and oppression, is now a scene for keen cyclists and nature lovers. The transformation is immense and the whole area has a totally new reputation.

Let's start by taking a glance at the horrendous situation in Korea. A demilitarised zone separates the two nations, north and south, respectively communist and capitalist. This zone serves to separate two extreme conflicts of interest and is also free of human involvement. This means that **wildlife flourishes and nature thrives**. The belt is relatively small, yet Europe's equivalent of the former Iron Curtain is far more impressive.

The 8,500 km long former Iron Curtain line stretches from Northern Scandinavia to the Aegean Sea and used to strike terror into those anywhere near it. The mere thought of approaching the Curtain used to invoke images of machine guns, watchtowers and horror.

**Since the Curtain came down in 1989, nature enthusiasts and cyclists have replaced the watchmen and snipers.** In Germany alone, black storks, winchats and wild cats thrive whilst being scarce in other areas.

Where man missed out, nature took full advantage. **The Germans refer to the former border as the "Green Belt", providing a plethora of trekking options for visitors.** Similarly, cyclists view the strip as an ideal, ironically peaceful and beautiful place to pedal.

There remain a number of reminders of the oppression of the Iron Curtain, yet these serve to aid tourism today. Some watchtowers and fencing remains and a number of museums have sprung up, especially in Germany.

An example is in Hornburg, a town precariously positioned just in the west of Germany. The museum,

almost on the border, displays weaponry and instruments of oppression, which utterly contradict the purpose of the Iron Curtain today.

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