

# RECONVERTING ANCIENT AND DISUSED RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURES IN GREEN WAYS

From the early nineties, the Spanish Railway Foundation has promoted and coordinated the [Greenways Programme](#). This initiative has managed to convert more than 2,000 kilometres of disused railway infrastructure in routes for cyclists, walkers, children, elderly people and generally citizens interested in taking advantage of nature that these greenways value.

In 1992, commissioned by the former Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Environment and in cooperation with both state societies of Railways RENFE and FEVE, the Spanish Railway Foundation had conducted an inventory of unused lines in the country: 98 lines for a total extension of 5,764 miles, plus 89 old lines exploited by mines and industries with an extension of 1,920 km.

The inventory showed the importance of the great historic and cultural value of the patrimony and the opportunity to rescue it from the total disappearance, for its great potential to reuse it in eco-tourism, according to the new social demands purposes. In late 1993, the Foundation began the early work of recovery of old railway lines to return them to citizens in the form of Greenways. This initiative, currently promoted by the Spanish Railways Foundation under the policies of the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, is done with the active participation of the Autonomous Communities, Regions and Town Councils, groups of cyclists, environmentalists and citizen.

*Vía Verde* is now a trademark by the Spanish Railway Foundation (FFE) registered in the Spanish Patent and Trademark Office in 1994, whose use is legally restricted to routes that run on old rail infrastructure.

For its economic, ecological and social results, this Spanish initiative has reached an important impact in Europe. In 1998, in Belgium, it has been created the [European Greenways Association AEVV](#) and since 2008 *Vías Verdes* of Spain is the Secretary General of the European Association moving its headquarters to Madrid.

The sixth edition of the [European Greenways Award](#) was held in Portugal in 2013, during which the excellence of the experiences of Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and England was recognized. In the AEVV website, you can find



information on such European experiences as well as links to access the respective websites.

This innovative initiative of ecological recovery of the old rail infrastructure is also achieving great success in Mexico to promote practices of natural and cultural tourism and sustainable transport in urban and rural areas. The [Greenways Mexico Programme](#) is coordinated by the National Centre for Preservation of Railways Cultural Heritage through its Department of historical and artistic monuments.

A study showed that there are 9000 kilometres of railway lines out of service in the country and Mexico Greenways Program is currently working on the conversion of 1200 kilometres in greenways. As in Spain, Mexico Greenways are a trademark of the National Centre for Preservation of Railways Cultural Heritage and IMPI, Mexican Institute of Industrial Property, whose use is restricted to those old train tracks and rail infrastructure which have been converted and upgraded for non-motorized travel.

### To know more

[Vias Verdes website](#)

[viasverdes.net](http://viasverdes.net)

[Fundación de los Ferrocarriles Españoles](#)

[Vías verdes blogspot](#)

[Greenways Europe website](#)

[Greenways Europe partners](#)

[Vías Verdes Accesibles](#)

[Vías Verdes en Wikipedia](#)

[Article in mundo-geo](#)

[Museo Nacional de los Ferrocarriles Mexicanos](#)

[Article in Conaculta-México](#)

