

## EDITORIAL

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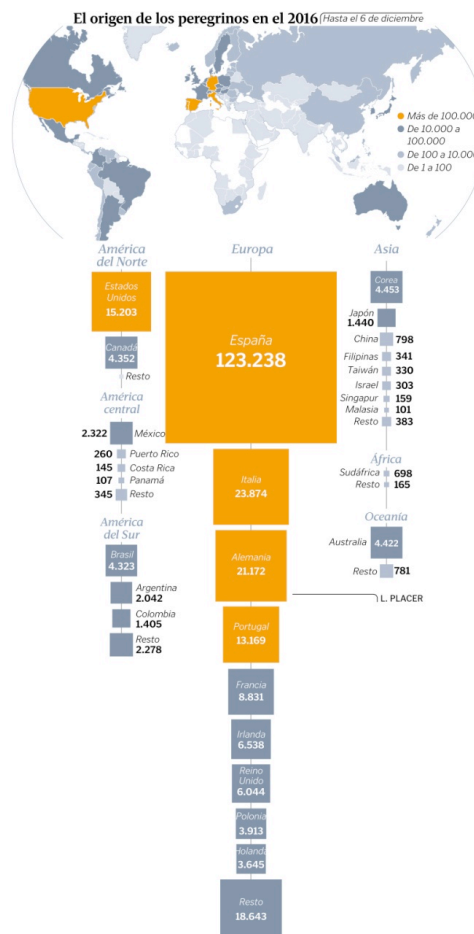
Starting from this special issue, Almatourism is pleased to introduce a new series of yearly publications (due every January) devoted to research, education and project development on the interactions between Heritage, Cultural Tourism, Landscape and Cultural Itineraries (including also specific focuses on pilgrimage), especially addressing the growing scientific, professional and public community interested in this field. These geopolitical and territorial phenomena have increasingly lent themselves to being interpreted as tools for sustainable cultural tourism and sustainable local development, also useful to rescale social participation, with the enhancement of Europe's cultural and heritage diversity as a main priority.

This publication is the outcome of the International Conference "Via Francigena: the Long Way of Peace among the European Landscapes" (2016 April 28/30 between Fidenza and Piacenza). The event was organized in the framework of the European project "Via Francigena and the Pilgrimage Ways", to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the European Association Vie Francigene (2001), seven years after the European Council label (1994) of the Sigerico's path from Canterbury to Rome, winding along the pilgrim's historical route from North "Francigena" regions to St. Peter's City. This project represents a very important cultural and academic step for the Via Francigena route and the other trans-national pilgrimage routes certified by the Council of Europe, capitalising upon the 2012-2013 DG Growth funded project "This is Europe PER VIAM - Pilgrims' Routes in Action".

The latter was aimed at encouraging and strengthening European cooperation among public-private partners involved at all levels of governance in the European cultural routes. The European Universities Network of Knowledge (EUNeK, active since 2013) has been the main scientific strategic outcome of the project: a university and research center's network established to support the Via Francigena and more in general pilgrimage Cultural Routes. This network - open and still growing thanks to new bilateral agreements - supports academic research as well as national and international projects, events and workshops. The Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST) act as the coordinator member of the network, since its mission is in line with the one of EUNeK: to coordinate and strengthen research, dissemination and lifelong learning in the field of tourism, with special focus on cultural routes and itineraries (e.g. member of HECTOR Project - Heritage and Cultural Tourism Open Resources). Furthermore, research and teaching modules devoted to tourist systems, tourist travels and routes also with the use of G.I.S., were started in 2002 at the Faculty of Economics, in the Rimini Campus (University of Bologna) in close

collaboration with the Advanced School in Tourism Studies and thus with CAST. A forward-looking investment to approach the phenomenon of cultural routes across the whole European space with updated research tools and methods. AlmaTourism and CAST research background on cultural routes underpin this special issue, where cultural routes and their peculiar, multilayered background have proved to be extremely useful tools of heritage preservation as well as territorial improvement, also supporting a slow and experiential tourism development.

Last year, (2016) as Andrea Mattei underlines (running.gazzetta, 2017), about 300,000 travelers walked the Camino de Santiago, which has become an icon in the collective imagination of postmodern experiential practices. Among the international walkers, Italian travelers (23,874) were the largest group. These people obtained the Compostela (or the official authentication of travel at least 100 km walk or 200 km by bicycle) along the most famous pilgrimage route: foreign pilgrims from 147 countries account for about 55% of the total. First among foreigners, again Italians, followed by Germans, Portuguese's, French, Irish, English, Korean, Australian and Brazilian pilgrims (La Voz de Galicia, 2016, December 6).



Source: La Voz de Galicia (2016, December 6).

For the Via Francigena, 2016 was a record year too: a survey (conducted along 328 km out of the 380 km of the path within Tuscany Region and based on G. Bambi and S. Iacobelli's research) investigates the tourist/traveler phenomenon related to pilgrimage along the Via Francigena in Tuscany. The research attempt to define a "user" profile of the Via Francigena and a quantitative estimation of passersby along all Tuscan section (380 km), where consistent investments in accommodation and signage have been made. 30.000 pilgrims/travelers were recorded as an incoming flow, with an increase of 30% compared to 2015. This result was positively affected also by the Holy Year proclaimed by Pope Bergoglio and the Year of Walking paths decided by the Italian Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage: only in the North Francigena the walkers recorded in hostels exceeded 10.000 units. Furthermore, since 2015, the Francigena-Toscana WIFI project implemented by the Tuscany Region, has provided 80 access points, with 25 municipalities covered along the way; the line coverage in these municipalities is connected with points of interest such as churches, hostels, resting areas and monuments, visited by a growing number of e-pilgrims on the roads, the latest icon of the contemporary traveler (about 24.000 login and 347.000 accesses in 2016).

The first article is devoted to the Camino (Way) to St. James as a major pilgrim route, both in the Middle Age and in present times; after a long period of abandonment, in the last forty years the path has been rediscovered, thanks to formal and institutional recognition from the Council of Europe (23 October 1987), as the first European Cultural Route. In 1993, it also became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the meantime, the well-preserved city of Santiago de Compostela was declared a World Heritage Site in 1985, whilst the itinerary has been turned into a polysemic cultural, tourist, monumental, spiritual and sports route. This is because the Camino can satisfy the needs of pilgrims and tourists with different motivations and expectations, as the authors G. Correia, and L. Lopez show when examining the tangible (huge monumental heritage) and intangible (rituals and practices) heritage. Thus, they address the very important issue of the transferability of good practices to other routes or better pilgrimages. Five articles are dedicated to the Francigene and Italian case studies, with a special focus on the Tuscany region and southern Italy. The authors, Anna Trono, Francesca Ruppi, Fabio Mitrotti and Stefano Cortese present the results of a 10-year archival and field study, carried out by a research group (bringing together archaeologists, geographers, medieval historians and art historians) of the Department of Cultural Heritage of the Salento University, who have rebuilt the Via Francigena Salentina following ancient pilgrim routes heading to the Holy Land. The researchers have mapped and catalogued natural and cultural highlights along the route, also analyzing tourism services on a local scale and the environmental impact of human activities. The Via Francigena Salentina can be considered as a driver of territorial renewal through experiential tourism, as the authors claim.

The article written by Chiara Serenelli, Chiara Savelli, Maria Teresa Idone, and Lucio L. Pettine aims to activate processes of landscape planning and management and promote local tourism within the context of Asciano's rural landscape (Siena, Italy) and among the cultural and natural heritage intercepted by this pilgrimage route. It concerns the Siena branch of the Via Lauretana, the pilgrimage route towards the Sanctuary of Loreto in the Marche Region. The project focuses on the landscape structure of the route, modeled by the territorial dimension and spatial configuration of the itinerary, together with the social processes of landscape perception activated by the route itself. From this point of view, the project consisted of a process of discovering the landscape along the route and intercepting polar elements that make the itinerary a basis for the development of local tourism and cultural activities.

Among the sacred and charismatic medieval characters, the figures of Saint James from Santiago de Compostela and Saint Michael Archangel from Monte Sant'Angelo in Southern Italy can be considered as the main cultural devotional icons, as the young historical researcher Antonella Palumbo underlines. They also exemplify two of the most important places in the Middle Age for the representation of the saints and their actions described in ancient literature. In the historical field, still, the relevant focus can be on the distinction between pilgrimages made by princes and those made by the lower nobility class as an historical memory to contribute to the authentication of the contemporary experience; the pilgrimages of the dukes Eberhard I. of Württemberg and Bogislaw X. of Pomerania, analyzed by A. Behrendt, are the case studies.

With their article on lighthouses, fascinating structures shrouded by mystery, E. Magnani and F. Pistocchi provide a case study where this heritage played a vital role not only in drawing the line of the coast, but also in creating the social and cultural identity of those people who live at the edge of the land, in the *finis terrae*. The article analyses the role of lighthouses in the creation of territorial identities and in the tourist exploitation of the European coastal landscapes in areas with a strong maritime identity, inexorably connected with these coastal "giants", symbols of both defense and openness towards otherness.

In the territorial government strategy, rural development is an important subject for the Tuscany Region, where rural landscape along the Via Francigena is a strong asset and a powerful tourist attraction, as G.L. Corinto reports. Furthermore, local communities have a long tradition in food and wine production, a feature which can be even considered as a landmark of many major and minor destinations off the beaten tracks around the Via Francigena. Thus, the study carried out by G. Bambi and S. Iacobelli, as already mentioned, aims at studying the tourism phenomenon linked to the Via Francigena flow, also identifying possible actions to be taken to foster and improve services along that path.

The many actions undertaken between 1960 and 1975 from Italian Regions (with ordinary and special statute) can suggest a new attention to the

development of cultural policies in the relationship between national and local organization. This period can be defined as a summit of the debate and policies that in Italy began, after the Unification and stills on today. The Seventies of the last Century have been a moment of awareness on the various form and level of heritage and identity, starting from their definitions. The development of cultural itineraries such as the Via Francigena can be also a major issue, as G. Di Giangiolamo illustrates in its article.

Finally, in the section of articles and reports, the major of Monteriggioni, Raffaella Senesi, illustrates the policies of this very important municipality at the heart of Via Francigena, a case study of internationalization and local development, followed by a report of the international Conference "The future of the churches", an heritage at risk.

In this scenario, and starting with the European Association of Vie Francigene, Almatourism intends to contribute to the scientific and academic debate (and beyond) and become part of a long-term vision and perspective towards the tangible and intangible heritage of cultural itineraries, the social-ecological change and the glocal social participation.

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