



**Umbria**

# THE WAY OF SAINT FRANCIS

## Sustainable tourism in action



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## The Way of St. Francis - where

The Way of St. Francis (Via di Francesco) links cultural treasures and sites from the life of Francis of Assisi into a 400 / 550 km pilgrimage.

It runs from **LaVerna/Florence** (Tuscany) and from **Rome** (Lazio) to **Assisi** (Umbria).



# What is The Way of St. Francis today?

a **unified itinerary** to experience first-hand the places from the life of St. Francis

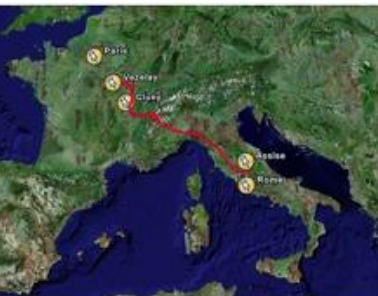
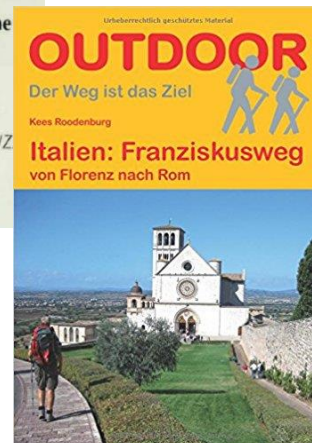
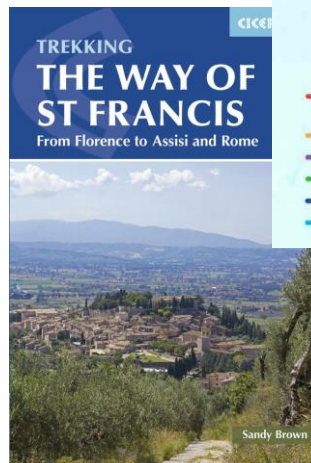
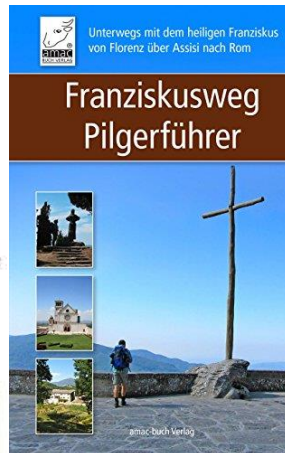
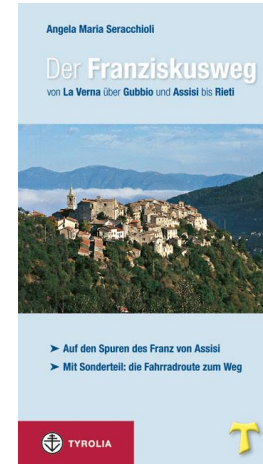
**messages acceptance and respect for others, including nature and animals.**

Not just for the faithful, but also for those seeking a **slow tourism** experience of **nature and culture.**



# The Way of St. Francis: spontaneous itineraries

Not a historic pilgrimage route, but one defined by guidebooks and associations.



# Created spontaneously (bottom-up)

## Advantages:

- Made with the passion, engagement, creativity, ingenuity of individuals
- Source of revenue and employment for rural and mountain communities
- Created without public funds
- Rediscovery of overlooked villages and cultural heritage sites
- Attracting visitors for sustainable slow tourism

## Disadvantages:

- Multiple similar and sometimes conflicting itineraries
- No coordination among communities, institutions and local associations
- No infrastructure work, lack of trail maintenance
- Hospitality sector unprepared

## Main strategic actions

- Define, map and signpost a single route
- Integrated Marketing Communication Plan: multilingual maps, guidebooks and brochures in several languages; press tours; comarketing activities/events with publishers
- Fundraising
- Monitor and analyse traffic



# Monitoring tourist flows



We collect information about the number of visitors using the Way through:

- *Statio*: pilgrims' office in Assisi, which welcomes those reaching the Basilica and issues them a certificate
- Totems: automatically count how many bicycles pass
- Analysis conducted by the University of Perugia.

## Increase in sustainable tourism

- Increase of **35%** in number of hikers on the Way from 2015 to 2017
- The Via di Francesco website receives 250k visitors/month (July 2018), with an average duration of 8 minutes
- From 2015 to 2017, the Way has registered a nearly **3x** increase in visitors from the USA, Netherlands, Germany and Austria and more than doubled those from Brazil



## Local involvement example *PiccolAccoglienza*, Gubbio



# Way of St. Francis and the Urban Agenda

In Umbria the Urban Agenda (SHARE policy instrument) includes the five largest cities of the region: **Città di Castello, Foligno, Perugia, Spoleto** and **Terni**.

The Way of St. Francis passes through or near all five.



# Way of St. Francis and the Urban Agenda

## Towns and Trails

Urban trails and cross-country trails are essential city infrastructure involving issues from transportation to recreation and wellbeing.

Connecting trails with public transportation

Connecting cultural attractors

Increased awareness of the importance of pathways for hikers, cyclists and horseback riders.





# Way of St. Francis and the Urban Agenda



## Trails and Accessibility

The Way is made up of personal stories, which, shared on social and traditional media, can powerfully influence the behaviour and attitudes of citizens... much more so than political or institutional declarations.

**Andrea deVicenzi** – Viaggi in Gamba / “travel by foot” has been widely covered in Italian media.

# Way of St. Francis and the Urban Agenda

## Trails and sustainable management of cultural heritage

Intangible benefits of increased flow of visitors:

- Encouraging local communities and cultural heritage to open
- Increasing the pride of communities for their cultural heritage
- Monasteries, hermitages and convents rediscover their ancient function of hospitality, and acting as meeting places.



## Other benefits



Recognised by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, which plans a significant economic investment to extend the Way of St Francis.

Community-building / personal and professional development of the people involved.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**

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