

Green Pilgrimage Growth and Tourism



Pilgrimage is big business – and growing. According to the UN World Tourism Organisation, more than 330 million people, a third of tourists worldwide, go on pilgrimage each year, visiting key religious sites around the world.

The Green Pilgrimage Project

Five years to 2021



Increase green pilgrimage in Europe

€1.18 million

Romania, Italy, UK, Sweden, Norway

Local Business engagement

Best practice, study visits, exchanges

Key Facts



The Way of St James to Santiago de Compostela is the busiest European pilgrimage, with visitors from 140 countries, and is increasing by 10% each year



Visit Scotland says faith tourism is their fastest growing tourism market with some 2 million overseas visitors each year



England's 14 long distance national trails bring £533 million of direct spending to our economy every year, with over 86 million visitors per year

European countries are seeing the benefits of Pilgrimage growth for tourism, economy, and heritage and nature conservation

Investing in Green Pilgrimage



The Norwegian government invests €1.4 million per year to coordinate pilgrim activities. Pilgrim numbers are growing at 30% per year



Galicia's 2015–2021 Master Plan
€56.1 million investment in the Way of St James to boost pilgrim numbers to 464,000.
Estimated revenue from pilgrims forecast at €655 million



Green Pilgrimage Conference

Canterbury 15th – 19th May 2017

70 attendees from 8 counties

40 business stakeholder workshop -walking tourism

22 stakeholders on local pilgrimage

Study of Santiago de Compostela Best Practice

New Pilgrimage route study visit

National Radio Coverage

Focus on Italy

National Funding 2011–2014 to develop 46km of Via Francigena in Puglia

Italian Government recognises the importance of cultural routes to tourism economy, investing in infrastructure and building restoration to support the routes



Focus on Spain

€120 million was spent on Infrastructure
70 public hostels created for 3,920 pilgrims

Budget estimate per pilgrim – €70.66 per person

Estimated revenue from pilgrims – €655 million

Estimated pilgrim numbers in 2021 – 464,000

Estimated pilgrims in 2015–21 – 2,482,000

Average expenditure per pilgrim – €44/day

Average expenditure per pilgrim/week – €264



Focus on Norway

Five regional pilgrim centres established in 2010
St Olav's Ways became a European Cultural Route in 2010

The National Pilgrim Centre established in 2012

The Government adopted pilgrimage as a national strategy

Norwegian government invests €1.4 million per year to coordinate pilgrim activities

The number of pilgrims increasing by 30% increase per year.



Focus on Romania

32,105 overseas pilgrimage visitors per year

676,546 Romanian pilgrims per year

€427 average visitor spend

€68 average Romanian spend

42% growth in Romanian pilgrim visits

19% growth in overseas pilgrim visits

Routes and visitor infrastructure required in Romania

Rich in UNESCO monasteries and religious sites



“Now is the time to harness the power and potential of pilgrimage to make a positive difference in our world.”

The Secretary General of the UN World Tourism Organisation