

# St. Olav Ways Study Visit Report 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2018

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*“European tradition, Nordic history, Norwegian culture.  
And at the same time a very personal experience”*



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## Introduction to the Study Visit

The Ministry of Culture in Norway has ordered a revision of the 2012 Pilgrimage Development Strategy. The strategy's overall goals are routed in four columns or themes. These are: Environment, Commerce, Church and Culture.

### *Environment*

*Heritage sites, cultural communities, landscape and nature is to be shared, maintained and made available as resources for the development of local communities. Nature, culture and landscape experiences, combined with outdoor life, are important components of pilgrimage. The pilgrimage is an environment friendly and gentle form of travel, making pilgrimage development desirable from an environment viewpoint.*

*From a national health perspective, there is potential in pilgrimage development. The more people walk the pilgrim trails, the more people engage in physical activity.*

### *Commerce*

*The pilgrimage tradition can form the basis for a number of initiatives within the tourism industry. It could contribute to the development of commerce and sustainable tourism along the pilgrim trails. In order to market the Pilgrim's Route as a national and international tourism asset, it needs to be a continuous route of sufficient quality. Norwegian tourism is dependent on the development of experiences which support the overall Norway brand.*

### *Church*

*Reinvigorating pilgrimages will contribute to the Christian faith and traditions remaining important sources of human identity and sense of belonging. The Church of Norway, in cooperation with the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations, share a common will to engage in the reinvigoration of the pilgrimage tradition. Pilgrimage heritage and ethos can also be a way to engage with other faiths and none.*

### *Culture*

*A reinvigoration of pilgrimage traditions should contribute to strengthening activities of an artistic and cultural nature along the trails. The status as a European Cultural Route offers a potential advantage in terms of international networking, exchange of expertise and cross border dialogue. These are arenas that will be facilitated.*

## Learning objectives of Study Visit

### Day 1 - Conference

National Pilgrim Centre in Norway is given the task to revise the National Pilgrim Strategy by summer 2019. Head of the National Pilgrim Centre, Hans Morten Løvrød, gave an insight to the political involvement in pilgrimage development and the need for a revision of the strategy.

*The first groups of pilgrims coming to Trondheim in modern times date back to the late 1950s when small groups of people came from Sweden travelling by bus. In the 1970s, ministers of the cathedral of Trondheim reported people coming to the cathedral and describing themselves as pilgrims. The late dean of the cathedral recalls how they as protestant ministers were not well versed with pilgrimage, lacking knowledge of both the theology and praxis. At the same time, Norwegians also started travelling to Santiago de Compostela in order to experience the modern phenomenon of pilgrimage. Inspired by having experienced the Camino and Santiago de Compostela, the book "In the pilgrim's footsteps" was published in 1992, a book that presented the mediaeval pilgrim routes in Norway for a Norwegian audience.*

*Gradually local church congregations organized pilgrim walks to Trondheim. Another factor was that Norway and Lillehammer hosted the Olympic Winter Games in 1994. When the Games were over the tourism industry began looking for other ways to make use of the available accommodation capacity. They came to focus on the old medieval pilgrim route through Gudbrandsdalen, the old inland route, and thereby contributed in renewing the pilgrimage tradition of walking to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim.*

*Toward the end of the 1990s, it was decided to signpost the route from Oslo through the Gudbrandsdal as well as the route through Mid-Sweden via Stiklestad, which both ends up in Trondheim. A total distance of 930 km. The initiative came from the Ministry of Environmental Affairs in Norway, and the Norwegian Crown Prince opened the first official pilgrim route in July 1997. At the request of the Ministry for Cultural and Church Affairs, a report on how the tradition of pilgrimage could be developed and renewed in Norway was commissioned and submitted in 2008/09.*

*Hans Morten Løvrød*

The Minister Cultural and Church Affairs at that time gave a speech in 2009 pointing out the further direction of the governmental work on pilgrimage in Norway. In this speech, he pinpointed the reasons why the Norwegian government is involved in pilgrimage. He pointed to the contemporary trends of spirituality, simplification and ecology, as driving factors behind the present-day pilgrimage renaissance. From this point of view, he envisions the government's work on pilgrimage to be part of an answer to these trends, underlining that commercial interests in pilgrimage are secondary.

*On the one hand, the report suggested a large-scale economic investment on behalf of the state in pilgrimage, on continued way-marking, the establishment of lodging and pilgrim centres, investments that have only partially been realized.*

*On the other hand, the report created enthusiasm and the belief that it would be possible to rekindle the pilgrim traditions in Norway on a large-scale. The report was inspired in particular by Santiago, and gave vivid reports of present-day pilgrimages on the Camino. Experiences from Santiago showed the potential for business development related to pilgrim tourism. This applies to both cities and the countryside, aspects that have been important factors in triggering the government's focus on pilgrimage in Norway. The overarching vision of the report was that Trondheim in 2030, the 1000-year celebration of St. Olav, would be one of the most important pilgrim destinations in Europe.*

*Hans Morten Løvrød*

Only a small number of suggestions in the report were implemented. However, the most important undertaking has been the establishment of a National pilgrim centre and regional pilgrim centres along the route, and support for continuous way-marking.

In 2010 Route of St. Olav Ways succeeded in receiving the European cultural route status for the network of pilgrim paths through Denmark, Sweden and Norway, paths ending by the shrine in Trondheim.

*Although there are certain similarities to what happened in Spain with regard to the government being involved in the renewal of pilgrimage, the situation in Norway is very different from most other European countries in the fact that the government is deeply involved in not only the establishment but also the maintenance and further development of pilgrimage.*

*Hans Morten Løvrød*

At this point it is underscored that the revitalization of pilgrimage is to also contribute to the continuation of Christian faith and tradition as an important source of identity and belonging for people of today. It is emphasized that this is of mutual ecumenical interest uniting all the Christian churches.

*Christian heritage, which is also characterized as "St. Olav's Heritage" (No: Olavsarven), shall not have an exclusionary effect in how pilgrimage is promoted with regard to other beliefs and worldviews. The work in this regard is to be inclusive with regard to different interests and motivations.*

*In this way, the government of Norway has unfolded a strategy that is historically rooted, yet renewed and adapted to the multi-cultural and multi-religious society of present-day Norway. Pilgrimage is promoted as an inclusive praxis of identity-formation, along cultural, historical and religious lines.*

*Hans Morten Løvrød*

What impact and effect does the governmental initiative and focus have on the local and regional level?

*There are both strengths and challenges of the Norwegian model. Let us start with the challenges:*

- *The Governmental initiative and funding might lead to less local ownership and enthusiasm, and less local funding*
- *Pilgrimage as bureaucracy can be perceived distant to the idea of pilgrimage.*
- *Local dissatisfaction with centralised management.*

*Strengths:*

- *Legitimacy to the concept of pilgrimage*
- *Funding's to common visibility, maintenance and developing of the main routes*
- *Coordinated efforts on infrastructure and marketing*
- *Governmental focus gives regional and local attention and support*

*As far as we are aware of the challenges, we can prevent and minimize the negative consequences of our model. Overall, this model have positive impact on development of pilgrim routes, and thanks to the National strategy, we see more pilgrims along St. Olav Ways year by year!*

*Hans Morten Løvrød*

Will the Green Pilgrimage Project and others for that matter, get to have a say in the revision of the National Pilgrim Strategy?

*Last summer National pilgrim centre hosted the Minister of Cultural Affairs and invited guests on a pilgrimage from Oslo to Trondheim. The group of politicians and decision makers spent four days along the pilgrim path. During this pilgrimage, the Minister announced a renewal of the strategy, and a long-term plan to strengthen the pilgrimage. The Ministers idea was to look into ongoing development and experiences so far, both national and international. Within this framework, we shall discuss vision and main goal, and key questions and issues, such as organisation, funding and priorities.*

*Throughout this work, we will have positive synergies with the Green Pilgrimage Project. During the next six months, we will have stakeholder meetings and regional workshops to get inputs to key questions. Our schedule is to complete the report by June 1st next summer.*

*Hans Morten Løvrød*

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Pilgrim enthusiast Stein Thue, former advisor for Trondheim Local Authority, shared his experience based on the project Pilgrim Crossing Borders.



*Pilgrims Crossing Borders is a collaborative project. It's goal is to build friendship, engage in dialogue and cross borders literally and metaphorically. Our walks will always symbolize diversity and solidarity, and we welcome participants with different backgrounds and religious denominations to walk together.*

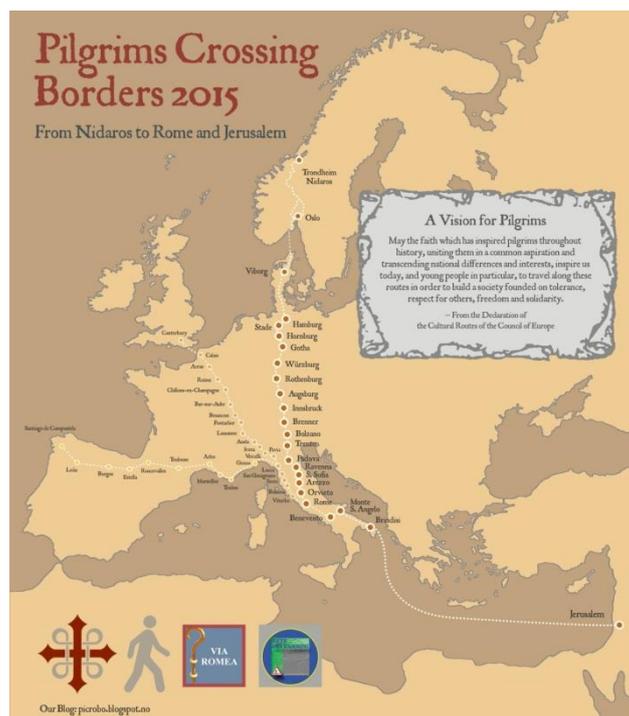
*Stein Thue*

Representatives from pilgrim associations across Europe were gathered in Rome 17 October 2014 to introduce Pilgrims Crossing Borders to the general public, and to muster up supporters and participants. An enthusiastic audience were gathered at the premises of the Società Geografica Italiana in the centre of Rome.

Among the prominent speakers was Mrs Silvia Costa who attended the meeting to show her support for Pilgrims Crossing Borders. Mrs Costa is a member of the European Parliament where she chairs the Committee on Culture and Education. The different sections of the pilgrim way from Norway to Italy were described with passion and enthusiasm by speakers from Denmark, Germany, Italy and Norway. The audience was attentive and posed relevant questions concerning the infrastructure and logistics of our relay.

There was consensus regarding the ideological aim of the relay, adopted by the European Council as a mission statement for the European cultural routes:

**May the faith which has inspired pilgrims throughout history, uniting them in a common aspiration and transcending national differences and interests, inspire us today, and young people in particular, to travel along these routes in order to build a society founded on tolerance, respect for others, freedom and solidarity. We appeal to all Europeans and in particular to the youth of Europe by recalling the fundamental values and the importance of respect for cultural diversity, and intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.**



*The distance from Trondheim to Rome is approximately 3000 kilometres (walking distance). The pilgrimage started off Wednesday 22 April 2015 from Trondheim/Nidaros. The chosen route was to follow Gudbrandsdalen down to Oslo and onwards to Larvik to take the ferry bound for Hirtshals in Denmark. The relay continued along Hærvejen – the pilgrim way through Jutland (Jylland) – to Padborg near the border between Denmark and Germany. Pilgrims from Jacobi Kirche in Hamburg met us at Bov kirke in Padborg.*

*Stein Thue*

After one and a half week walk in Germany, the pilgrims reached Hamburg where they exchanged pilgrim staff with pilgrims from Jacobi Kirche and then on to Friends of the Via RomeaStadensis. At the Brenner Pass they met up with participants from the Club Alpino Italiano who joined the pilgrims on part of the way toward Rome. Members of the Via Romea Germanica walked with Pilgrim Crossing Borders from Ravenna to Rome, where they all had a day of rest and celebration.



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To learn more about the impact that pilgrimage has on the city Trondheim, we invited Morten Wolden, Chief City Executive to share the city's view.



*Trondheim. Green, smart, young and old.  
Morten Wolden*

*The city's vision is: Little, big Trondheim. Our four development goals by 2020 are:*

- *To become an internationally-recognized city for technology and knowledge.*
- *To become a sustainable city where it's easy to live an environmentally friendly life.*
- *To become an including and diversified city.*
- *The municipality plays the role as an active society developer and an attractive employer.*

*Morten Wolden*

Energy-Smart Nidaros Cathedral. An open Innovation Competition was held entering four teams from Italy, Poland, Serbia and Norway. Their task was to develop sustainable energy-smart solutions for the Cathedral. The idea behind it was to combine knowledge from the technological capital of Norway with 1000 years of history. It turned out to be a unique playground for innovation, each team pitching their solution in the medieval chapel.



The Pilgrimage Path on the Way to Trondheim

*Green Pilgrim Cities Project is part of our Climate Plan. The project focuses on four axes:*

- *Information to the public*
- *Certification for SMBs*
- *Footprint*
- *Promoting*

*Morten Wolden*



Are Skjelstad, Senior Advisor at The National Pilgrim Centre talked about the challenges and possibilities managing the status as a European Cultural Route.

There are 33 certified Cultural Routes in Europe in 2018, representing a great variety of common European heritage. Many cultural environments around Europe are applying to be certified as a European Cultural Route. The criteria for applying are:

- Defining a theme representative of European values and common to at least 3 countries of Europe
- Co-coordinating common actions to encourage different kinds of cultural co-operation, also the scientific level stimulating social debate on its theme, propose to European citizens an interpretation of their common history and shared heritage and provoke a series of coherent activities for young Europeans coming from different cultures and backgrounds and finally encourage cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development
- Creating common visibility to allow the identification of the items part of the Route, ensuring recognisability and coherence across Europe.

*What the official criteria doesn't say anything about is what you need to take into consideration before applying. For instance, you need to make sure you can create a democratic member-based association and that the association is registered as a judicial entity. You will also need to elect a Governing Board, appoint a Scientific Committee, keep statistics and prepare for an annual report. Most important of all, you will need a plan for funding.*

*Are Skjelstad*

Some of the benefits of being certified as a European Cultural Route are:

- Develop a transnational membership network (legal association), including a European scientific committee, transnational program of activities
- Use of the label "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" and use of the Council of Europe logo
- Access to information on funding opportunities (European, national, local)

*We see benefits in networking and the impact of accounting different perspectives. For us, the opportunities that offer themselves is the greatest benefit, keeping in mind that opportunities need to be seized to have any effect.*

*Despite the benefits, there are also a great amount of challenges to be tackled. The fact that the European Cultural Route crosses borders arise bureaucratic challenges such as product development and distribution, research and statistics, as well as governmental issues.*

*We still believe the potential in a European Cultural Route is worth the effort. We hope to extract synergy effects from international projects, to take part in innovative solutions for a sustainable pilgrimage and hopefully work our way from cross-border to no border!*

*Some advice for future applicants: Be sure to ask yourself why you want to be certified as a European Cultural Route. Be sure to establish an administration that can handle the workload before you apply. Be sure to secure funding and prepare yourself for opportunities.*

*Are Skjelstad*

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After a healthy lunch, we visited both the Nidaros Cathedral (Lutheran) and the St. Olav Catholic Cathedral. We had talks with Parish priest Egil Mogstad, who told us about the catholic community in Trondheim. He also spoke of the catholic pilgrims who especially came to visit the Saint Birgitta and Saint Olav. In Mogstads view, the catholic pilgrims where dedicated to their belief and the catholic pilgrim tradition. Most pilgrims made contact before coming to the Cathedral, and they did not necessarily come by foot.

On our way back to the conference hall, we stopped by the movies and watched the documentary “The Path to Nidaros” by Hilse de Groot. <http://thepathtonidaros.com/>

Day 1 ended with a final talk by Bishop Herborg Finnset from Nidaros diocese, the Lutheran Church of Norway. She was given the challenging topic of pilgrimage being a relic for Lutherans. Through her talk she took us on a journey well beyond the daily pilgrim concept. She gave us the bigger picture and the deeper meaning. She talked to us about the journey that pilgrimage represents the well-being of mankind, the joy of diversity and the importance of awareness.

## Day 2 Steering Committee meeting / Stakeholder visit to Stiklestad

Partners and Stakeholders were divided this day, in order for partners to hold a Steering Committee meeting to discuss action plans, possible pilot actions and budget disposals. As it turned out, the interest for an indoor meeting was greater than an outdoor excursion, so only a small group went to Stiklestad, leaving the majority behind in a meeting room. Being so many, we were able to divide up in groups and spend the day workshopping.

We had a look into possible action plans and worked in groups on the format of action plans. We also discussed the possibility of taking on pilot actions. It was an enthusiastic day with discussions and group work.



Stiklestad has for almost a thousand years had a unique position in Norwegian history. The name first entered the history books as the site of the battlefield where the Viking king Olav Haraldsson was killed on 29 July 1030. Olav Haraldsson, the last of the Christianizing kings of Norway, was quickly recognized as a Christian martyr. The following year, on 3 August 1031, he was canonised and from that day he was known as Olav the Holy or St. Olav. As a result of the battle and Olav's sainthood Stiklestad has had a strong symbolic function both for Christianity, the monarchy and the Norwegian society in general.

Today, Stiklestad is a national symbol, a monument, a sacred site and a museum. The Culture Centre and Stiklestad Hotel is open all year round. Stiklestad National Culture Centre was established by Parliamentary decree in 1995 with the primary purpose of conveying the wide-ranging dimensions in the Olav heritage. Today you can experience the exciting cultural history of Stiklestad through the medieval farm Stiklastadir, The Saint Olav Drama and festival, exhibitions, the Folk Museum, guided tours and other activities.



Photo: Stiklestad National Culture Centre

### Day 3 A full day along the pilgrim path

This was a day for sturdy shoes and windbreakers. We went for a full day along the pilgrim path stopping along the route to learn, eat, drink and explore. Commerce, environment and trail management were key words for the day's pilgrimage, led by Per Gunnar Hagelien, Head of Regional Pilgrim Centre Gudbrand Valley.

The morning started out at Sundet farm, a pilgrim hostel along the path. The traditional farm dating from the 13th century is situated close to a river dividing the landscape. Having no bridge, farmers through history have operated a ferry service and are still today rowing pilgrims across.

Sundet gård is a days walk from Nidaros.

The group walked from Granåsen to Lian where they had lunch before continuing to Nidaros Cathedral. On our way, Hagelien talked about trail management and maintenance.

The day ended at the Nidaros Pilgrim Centre, where General Manager Cathrine Roncale presented their work.



Nidaros Pilgrim Centre was founded in 2008. There are 3 permanent employees and 9 part-time employees at the centre.

Nidaros Pilgrim Centre serves as Pilgrim reception in Trondheim and offer accommodation, conversation with fellow pilgrims or with the pilgrim priest. The accommodation is a year round offer and not limited for pilgrims only.

Pilgrims, who walk the last 100 kilometres into Trondheim, qualify for an Olav letter on arrival at the Nidaros Pilgrim Centre. The pilgrim passport is used to document the length of their pilgrimage.

Nidaros Pilgrim Centre cooperates with volunteers from St. Olav Pilgrim association for registration and conversations with arriving pilgrims.

*Nidaros Pilgrim Centre aims to be a hub for pilgrims and the pilgrim movement. The pilgrim reception is open to all kinds of pilgrims, and strives to promote an ecumenically understanding of pilgrimage. Our work is much diversified:*

- *Pilgrim reception, registration and statistics*
- *Interreg Project with Sweden, pilgrim walks, cultural Café evenings*
- *The volunteers*
- *Library*
- *Bed & breakfast*
- *Regional Pilgrim Centre: information, signposting in the area of Trondheim and the surroundings*

*Cathrine Roncale*

Acting as a Pilgrim reception means that the Nidaros Pilgrim Centre is one of the more reliable sources of information about pilgrimage in Norway. Each year they publish valuable statistics for governmental bodies.

Long range  
and short  
range pilgrims

<b>2017</b>	<b>2670</b>
<b>2016</b>	2329
<b>2015</b>	2139
<b>2014</b>	1365
<b>2013</b>	907
<b>2012</b>	900
<b>2011</b>	650

# Olavsletter

## Olavs letter

<b>2018. 31.08 2018</b>	1069
<b>2017</b>	1040
<b>2016</b>	1045
<b>2015</b>	797
<b>2014</b>	693
<b>2013</b>	380
<b>2012</b>	580
<b>2011</b>	360
<b>2010</b>	165

## Long Range statistics 31.08.18

### Age group

- 50 – 69 years old 49%
- 21-39 years old 24%

### Gender

- 56,9 % women

### Nationality

Germans 34,6%  
Norwegians 27,5 %  
The Netherlands 8,7%  
Sweden 6,1%  
Italy 1,4 %  
England 0,3%  
Romania 0,1%

## Long Range Pilgrimages

5<sup>th</sup> of September

- 1210 pilgrims (ca 3,5%)
- 1069 Olavsletter (ca 2,5%)

88 % of the long range pilgrims walk at least 100km

Prognosis for 2018: 10% increase of registered pilgrims

Total for 2017

- 1172 pilgrims
- 1040 Olavsletter

## Day 4 Green Pilgrimage Policy in Practice Workshop

A slightly shorter working day set aside for the Green Pilgrimage Policy in Practice Workshop offering partners and stakeholders an opportunity to explore how policy in their own regions does and could affect pilgrimage development. Each partner gave a short presentation focusing on the following questions:

1. Can the policies contribute to pilgrimage development, how can this be strengthened?
2. What are the limits of policy influence on pilgrimage development?
3. What are the next steps for policy in each partner region?

Each partner's presentation led to inspiring discussions. We finally ran out of time because of all the questions and suggestions, but we did get an excellent summary by Puglia Region Consultant, Silvia Lecci. Here are the overall conclusions:

### Overall conclusions

- Partners consider challenging modifying their policies in the next future. However constant and coherent actions feeding policies and their management authorities with data and experiences as well as networking with local stakeholders and other bodies, could lead to useful policy change for the current or future programming period.
- the Review has shown that all examined territories, excluding Romania and Puglia, have so far developed a set of territorial trails, itineraries, bike routes, fulfilling **common quality standards** agreed at national or regional level.
- The same territorial administrations have also created a thematic set of **communication and promotion activities** devoted to this specific segment of the national/regional tourism offering.
- Both Puglia and Östergötland Regions have developed their tourism strategies with an in-depth participative work with local actors and in synergy with the relevant national strategies

## Overall conclusions

- Norway takes into account the multi-level governance of a pilgrimage route (although more specific information could be given on an operational level)
- Interreg VA (France) England Cooperation Program is the only EU-funded clearly mentioning “Cross-border routes referring to common historical and natural assets” as a way to enhance attractiveness
- Östergötland Region Tourism Policy include Pilgrimage in the “**Peace and quiet**” thematic area for those in search of spiritual relaxation. Norway: a **significant experience for human existence and quality tourism**.
- Kent policy underlines the importance of rural tourism for regional economy but could better **stimulate the development of tourism services** (e.g. along pilgrimage routes) given its primary aim (reinforce workforce skills)

## Overall conclusions

- Interreg VA (Channel) England Programme (priority 3) and the Östergötland Regional Tourism Policy assign high importance to green itineraries for **living quality of citizens and tourists**
- To monitor sustainability to mitigate risk of negative impact of economic activities on cultural and natural resources
- International dimension not just as a framework but as an opportunity
- The contribution of religious community on environment-friendly actions should be taken into consideration