



# Green Pilgrimage

Lessons Learned  
for Sustainable  
Economic Growth

A Study of the Green Pilgrimage  
Project 2017-2022

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

United Nations World Tourism Organisation

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# Executive Summary

The Green Pilgrimage project is a five-year, €1.18M Interreg Europe project which brings together six regions in the United Kingdom, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Romania to promote the integrated management and development of natural and cultural heritage. Its aim is to show how growth and development policies can economically exploit whilst, at the same time, protecting and enhancing natural and cultural heritage.

The Interreg Green Pilgrimage project includes the following partners:

- **Kent County Council (England) (Lead Partner)**
- **Östergötland County Council (Sweden)**
- **Norfolk County Council (England)**
- **Puglia Region (Italy)**
- **Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop (National Pilgrim Centre)**
- **National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism (Romania)**
- **Diocese of Canterbury**

## Green Pilgrimage and Regional Development

Each year, nearly 300 million people worldwide undertake a pilgrimage, equivalent to a trade volume of €300 billion. Within a European context, pilgrimage is a flourishing and growing activity. The increase in pilgrim numbers along the Camino to Santiago de Compostela is impressive and this explosion in interest has been matched in other partner countries. Long-distance pilgrim numbers for St. James Way in Spain increased from fewer than 3,000 in 1986 to nearly 350,000 in 2019, with the route receiving millions of short-distance visitors. St. Olav Ways in Norway have witnessed a year-on-year rise in visitor numbers, with a remarkable 310% increase in pilgrims between 2011 and 2017.

Each region has identified pilgrimage as being a key opportunity to support local businesses, promote local heritage, and develop a locally distinctive tourism offer that market evidence shows is growing in popularity.

Some regions have already dedicated significant regional investment to pilgrimage. Tuscany's regional authority made investments totalling €16 million for the development of the Via Francigena as a cultural route in 2009 and have since seen a €3 return on every €2 invested. The Galician Regional Government has invested €56.1 million in the St. James Way pilgrimage route, with a return on investment expected to be €650 million.

## Best Practice and Lessons Learned

**The project has gathered best practice from across Europe with regard to how pilgrimage routes can support natural and cultural heritage, while creating and nurturing rural jobs and commercial and developmental opportunities in a proportionate, sustainable manner.**

Each region has produced a Pilgrimage Action Plan to develop and enact project learning whilst going forward.

This report details the learning experiences, research, and background information with which to guide partners in the implementation of their action plans.

A summary of key lessons is listed below:

### Know the market

- Conduct research to establish whom the pilgrims in your region are, what they enjoy and what their expectations are
- Know the seasonal advantages that your route offers to different markets
- Visitor monitoring must be nuanced so that visitors can be accommodated while avoiding negative impacts
- Promote local, authentic produce and living traditions, as well as supporting local economies

### Culture and Heritage

- Pilgrimage is living cultural heritage and can take a variety of forms to maintain the link between vibrant communities and their traditions
- Integrating existing heritage features makes a route an authentic experience for visitors and brings new uses for heritage locations

### Governance

- A successful trail can only be achieved through cross-sectoral collaboration – no single body can achieve sustainable success on their own
- Local communities are vital in perpetuating lived cultural practices and traditions; they should be empowered and engaged in the opportunities of green pilgrimage

- Routes and the sites along them should prioritise pedestrian and other forms of sustainable access over motorised access
- An integrated strategy is fundamental to sustainable development

### Modernisation, Marketing and Promotion

- Make the best use of technological opportunities to enhance the pilgrimage experience
- Coordinated branding must ensure that a route's identity and image reflect each other through an authenticity that is legible and appealing to visitors
- Authenticity is crucial in making a destination appealing, but the overall experience of place is significantly enhanced through a pilgrim-appropriate welcome

### Society, Community and Wellbeing

- Pilgrimage can address a range of physical and psychological needs, with people coming together in a shared experience, with time for reflection and meditation
- Long-distance pilgrimage can put life into perspective and, with hospitality at its core, provide renewed faith in humanity for pilgrims and residents along the way
- Pilgrimage – grounded in inclusive ethics – can be a powerful mechanism for social change, outreach to marginalised groups, and the reduction of social inequalities
- If pilgrimage is really for everyone, it should be made accessible to everyone; those with limited or alternative mobility requirements should be made equally welcome

### Keeping pilgrimage Green

- Green pilgrimage is conscious not only of its ecological and environmental footprint but also of its impact on social, economic, cultural and political variables along the route

## Recommendations

Following an analysis of policy and action plan documentation from partner regions, the Green Pilgrimage project produced the following list of policy priorities for partners, stakeholders and decision makers for integration into their policies:

- 1. Governance** – Partners should establish a Participatory Governance Model for routes.
- 2. Engagement** – The promotion of green pilgrimage opportunities should be undertaken through a transparent public engagement process.
- 3. Cultural routes are diverse** – Policies should acknowledge that cross-border cooperation supports rural communities sharing common challenges.
- 4. Rural economic lifeline** – Invest in pilgrimage routes because they have been shown to reverse rural depopulation and consequent social and environmental structural weaknesses.
- 5. Authenticity** – Include local and living traditions along routeways.
- 6. Territorial planning** – At a regional and local level, territorial planning should include specific reference to ambitions for the conservation and enhancement of walking (and cycling) routes.
- 7. Route management** – Achieving consistent quality standards across a long-distance network is essential.
- 8. Marketing and communications** – The key message is that pilgrimage is for everyone.
- 9. Technological opportunities** – The added value of digitalisation should be recognised and future planning for pilgrimage should keep an eye on emerging innovations.
- 10. Putting the 'green' in Green Pilgrimage** – Invest in infrastructure, advertising and promotion that encourage sustainable choices.
- 11. Knowledge is paramount** – Commit to monitoring wellbeing, sustainability and demand profiles, as well as wellbeing effects on pilgrims as part of overall economic benefits.

## Conclusion

**Pilgrimage as a cultural route is a growth opportunity for regional development based on heritage, nature, sustainability, tourism, and community development.**

Some European regions such as Spain and Italy have already invested heavily in this holistic development tool; meanwhile, others such as Norway, the UK, Sweden and Romania are catching up.

Pilgrimage development needs increased market research, monitoring, and grounding in authentic regional heritage.

Italian and Spanish evidence shows that investment brings significant returns that evenly spread benefits across regional economies disproportionately when compared to conventional tourism offers.

This report offers guidance to Green Pilgrimage partners in implementing their pilgrimage action plans and developing a sustainable tourism product of the future that is embedded in a shared heritage.



## Introduction

The Green Pilgrimage project is a five-year, €1.18M Interreg Europe project which brings together six regions in the United Kingdom, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Romania to promote the integrated management and development of natural and cultural heritage. Its aim is to show how growth and development policies can economically exploit whilst, at the same time, protecting and enhancing natural and cultural heritage.

**Key to this is our focus on the power of the idea of pilgrimage, which is recognised today as being one of the fastest-growing segments of the travel industry (UNWTO, 2015) with more than 300 million pilgrimage journeys every year.**

The Green Pilgrimage project has gathered best practice from across Europe with regard to how pilgrimage routes can support natural and cultural heritage while creating and nurturing rural jobs and commercial and developmental opportunities in a proportionate, sustainable manner. Such positive enhancements have included the promotion of low-impact tourism, digitalisation, pilgrim accommodation, and the strengthening of local traditions and place identity. This report summarises the learning and best practice from the Green Pilgrimage project. The report makes recommendations on how partners can implement their action plans to develop pilgrimage in their regions, and explains how these can be applied locally in order to achieve measurable impact through policy and practice.

## What Is Pilgrimage?

**One of today's fastest-growing travel industry segments (UNWTO, 2015)  
More than 300 million pilgrimage journeys per annum  
€300bn in trade (National Geographic, 2011)**

Pilgrimage is a practice found in each of the world's major religions. It typically involves a physical journey to a site of significance to a person's beliefs in order to connect with the power of the place or to follow in the footsteps of ancient traditions. The aim usually constitutes spiritual renewal, emotional enrichment, renunciation of the past, guidance for the future, performing a rite of passage or seeking physical and spiritual healing.

Even back to the very beginning of human history, as well as the end of the last Ice Age, there is evidence of ceremonial journeys. The landscape surrounding Stonehenge has evidence of occupation and monument construction dating back to the eighth millennium BCE (Richards, 1990), reaching its apex as a pilgrimage centre in the third and second millennia BCE (Darvill, 2016).

The word 'pilgrimage' usually conjures up images of travellers undertaking long, arduous journeys to religious shrines around the world. The majority of this imagery is predicated on notions and concepts drawn from medieval pilgrimage, a social movement that occurred between 500 and 1500 CE. Pilgrimage offered a temporary escape from the generally harsh existence in an agrarian-based society, so much so that medieval pilgrimage is generally given as the first example of mass tourism as we know it today.

The medieval roots of pilgrimage are also reflected in the word itself, which is derived from the Latin 'peregrinum', meaning 'one that comes from foreign parts'. This is linked with its usual meaning that denotes a journey (usually involving a long distance) to a sacred place in order to undertake demonstrations of religious devotion.

In literature, novels by Paulo Coelho (1987) (about pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela) and Dan Brown (2003) (with scenes of pilgrimage to Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer), among others, have inspired exploration along routeways to old and even new spiritual sites. At the same time, new media and technologies have made it possible to share one's own personal pilgrimage experience with the world via websites or blogs, or to undertake virtual pilgrimages complete with videos of rituals or the ability to post messages to saints or light a candle. Furthermore, alternative spiritual experiences can be found in places such as Glastonbury, which have become beacons for some social groups and have received approximately 150,000 visitors annually since the 1980s (Bowman, 2016). Meanwhile, films such as Lourdes (2009) and The Way (2010) have also highlighted a burgeoning interest in pilgrimage revival.

**Pilgrimage, be it religious or secular, is experiencing a resurgence around the world. It is of no less relevance today as an opportunity to encounter new places and experiences while keeping alive an ancient cultural practice. Motivations for pilgrimage are more diverse than ever before, and today's travellers are drawn not only to a religious imperative but also to the heritage, environmental, health and wellbeing or other benefits of long-distance walking.**

## Green Pilgrimage Project Summary

The Green Pilgrimage project was launched at Canterbury Cathedral with a conference and study visit between 15 and 17 May 2017. A further seven study visits took place, which were arranged thematically as follows:

- 1. Suceava, Romania: 6–9 September 2017**  
Relationships between tourism, religions and pilgrimages to stimulate and facilitate the dialogue among different civilisations and different faith groups.
- 2. Galicia, Spain: 16–20 April 2018**  
Linking pilgrimage-driven economic growth with natural and cultural heritage protection.
- 3. Vadstena, Sweden: 29 May to 1 June 2018**  
Modernising Pilgrimage: Digital innovation to increase digital knowledge and best practice among regional stakeholders.
- 4. Trondheim, Norway: 4–7 September 2018**  
Pilgrimage: combining European tradition, Nordic history, Norwegian culture and a very personal experience. Reviewing the four pillars of Norway's National Pilgrim Strategy: Environment, Commerce, Church and Culture
- 5. Bovino, Puglia, Italy: 1–5 April 2019**  
Highlighting the importance of destination and innovation in a hub-based approach to regional development.
- 6. Kent, England: 11–15 June 2019 (Kent Downs Staff Exchange on 10 June 2019)**  
Exploring modern manifestations of pilgrimage, both religious and secular, as a means of cultural engagement and building community cohesion.
- 7. Norfolk, England: 10–13 September 2019**  
Looking at visitor management and onward tourism, including planning for tourism development and pilgrim opportunities.

## Partners and Stakeholders

The Interreg Green Pilgrimage project includes the following partners:

- **Kent County Council (England) (Lead Partner)**

*Policy addressed: Originally working on European Structural and Investment Fund South East Local Enterprise Partnership, but as a result of Brexit, the focus shifted to integrating pilgrimage and long-distance walking into local and regional economic and tourism policies*

- **Östergötland County Council (Sweden)**

*Policy addressed: Tourism Industry Strategy of Östergötland*

- **Norfolk County Council (England)**

*Policy addressed: Interreg VA Channel France England Programme, including the production of local and regional economic and tourism plans*

- **Puglia Region (Italy)**

*Policy addressed: Regional Operational Programme POR Puglia 2014-2020*

- **Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop (National Pilgrim Centre)**

*Policy addressed: Nasjonal Pilegrimsstrategi (Norge) [National Pilgrim Strategy (Norway)]*

- **National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism (Romania)**

*Policy addressed: ERDF Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020*

- **Diocese of Canterbury**

Official advisory partner to the project through the European Green Pilgrimage Network, whose formal role was to advise on integrating the faith and green aspects of the project

The project emerged at the suggestion of the European Green Pilgrimage Network (EGPN), a network of pilgrimage places, pathways and cities in Europe that are committed to promoting green, or environmentally friendly, pilgrimage. Several of the EGPN's member institutions have been actively working with the project on an advisory



and stakeholder basis, with representation from the following (not complete but including):

- Canterbury Cathedral; Canterbury City Council; Dover District Council; Maidstone Borough Council; North Downs Way National Trail; Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome (Kent, UK)
- Trøndelag County Authority; Norwegian Regional Pilgrim Centres (notably Pilgrimcenter Dale-Gudbrand)
- Diocese of Linköping and the Pilgrim Centre at Vadstena (Sweden)
- Norwich Cathedral; Diocese of Norwich; Roman Catholic Shrine of Our Lady, Slipper Chapel; Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, Walsingham Abbey (Norfolk, UK)
- Xunta de Galicia, Galicia, Spain – The Xunta acted in an advisory role, rather than taking a formal part in the project

Each of these has witnessed a rise in pilgrim interest over the past few years, and each has implemented strategies for improving and managing key routes and sites along the way.



# Green Pilgrimage and European Cultural Routes

Cultural routes, pilgrimage routes and long-distance walking routes are considered complex cultural goods that combine tangible and intangible cultural assets whose added value is greater than the sum of its parts.

To date, 38 Cultural Routes have been certified by the Council of Europe (2019), with the Camino de Santiago, Via Francigena, St. Olav Ways, and many other pilgrimage routes having been awarded this status.

The Council of Europe defines a Cultural Route as:

*“a cultural, educational heritage and tourism co-operation project aiming at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values”.*

Council of Europe Resolution CM/Res(2013)66 confirms the establishment of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA).



Cultural routes, pilgrimage routes and long-distance cultural trails can offer an effective means of developing creative and sustainable solutions to a sustainable rural tourism offer based on local cultural identity. For both residents and visitors, cultural routes offer several opportunities, supported by territorial policies which seek to promote economic development without destroying an area's natural and cultural resources.

The Council of Europe Resolution considers transnational routes to be a “complex cultural good”. This concept brings together tangible and intangible (cultural) assets whose added value is greater than the sum of its parts, underlining the relationship between cultural and natural heritage and the surrounding territory.

This resolution, otherwise known as the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, seeks to reinforce the potential of Cultural Routes for cultural cooperation, sustainable territorial development, and social cohesion, with a particular focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture and values and the discovery of less well-known destinations. It helps to strengthen the democratic dimension of cultural exchange and tourism through the involvement of grassroots networks and associations, local and regional authorities, universities, and professional organisations. It contributes to the preservation of a diverse heritage through theme-based and alternative tourist itineraries and cultural projects.

Routes requesting official certification should demonstrate the following:

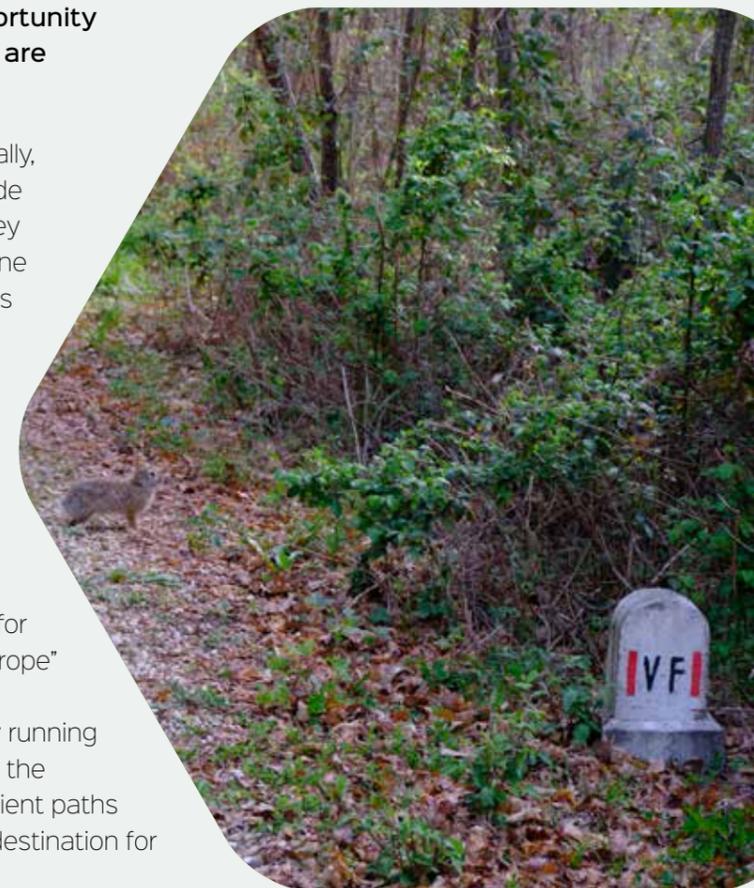
- focus on a theme representative of European values and common to several European countries;
- follow a historical route or (in the case of cultural tourism) a newly created route;
- give rise to long-term multilateral cooperation projects in priority areas (scientific research; heritage conservation and enhancement; cultural and educational exchanges among young Europeans; contemporary cultural and artistic practices; cultural tourism; and sustainable development);
- be managed by one or more independent, organised networks (in the form of an association or a federation of associations).

There is an opportunity to capitalise further on the success of these routes, as well as for the expansion of future opportunities. The requirements for certification are based on a shared heritage, involving three or more European countries, and having a European thematic focus on promoting cultural heritage and identity. This designation combines a whole host of tangible and intangible assets and its added value is not simply the sum of all individual sites, monuments and landscapes along the path, but rather the new significance deriving from the unity of their connection, underlining the relationship between cultural and natural heritage across territories.

## Cultural Routes – Italian Case Study: Via Francigena

The transnational cultural route provides an opportunity for ‘glocal’ development, wherein local and global are interconnected (Robertson, 1992).

In Italy these principles have been implemented regionally, including in Puglia and Tuscany. These two regions made an economic decision to invest in cultural routes as a key component in developing their tourism offer. The Regione Toscana committed €16 million to the development of its 23 sections of the Via Francigena (almost 400km) as a cultural tourist product. Expenditure focused on safety infrastructure, rest and water points, information boards and signposting, cultural heritage rehabilitation, and accommodation facilities. This has already paid for itself (Regione Puglia, 2018). Moreover, Puglia is working on the development of a 400km Via Francigena extension from Rome. It submitted a dossier to the Council of Europe, applying for the extension of the “cultural route of the Council of Europe” certification to this section. What is more, the region is investing in the recovery of the Roman-era Appian Way running between Rome and Brindisi, and has recently launched the Cammino Materano as a ‘slow’ itinerary that follows ancient paths and drovers’ roads, establishing the region as a major destination for a cultural walking experience.



# Green Pilgrimage and Economic Growth

Each year, nearly 300 million people worldwide undertake a pilgrimage, equivalent to a trade volume of €300 billion (National Geographic, 2011). While such travel includes the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca for Muslims, or the Kumbh Mela festival for Hindus, pilgrimage in Europe is also experiencing a renaissance. Developments in tourism, improved infrastructure, open borders, and a common European currency, alongside ecological considerations and the known benefits of walking to health and wellbeing, are changing the collective and personal experience of pilgrimage.

UNWTO (2019) research shows pilgrimage as being the fastest-growing sector of the travel industry, and research in Spain shows that the most successful pilgrimage experiences are green and celebratory of natural and cultural heritage.

Within a European context, pilgrimage is a flourishing and growing activity. The increase in pilgrim numbers along the Camino to Santiago de Compostela is impressive and this explosion in interest has been matched in other partner countries. In Norway, for example, those receiving the St. Olav's Letter accreditation have generally witnessed **year-on-year percentage increases, with a remarkable 310% increase in pilgrims between 2011 and 2017.**

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of Letters Issued	650	900	907	1,365	2,139	2,329	2,670

Figure 1: St. Olav's Letter (Olavsbrevet) recipients 2011–2017

While pilgrimage has firm roots in several religious traditions, even in an increasingly secularised world people are increasingly opting for long-distance walking for a variety of spiritual, health and well-being, as well as cultural tourism, reasons.

Pilgrimage journeys on the Camino to Santiago in Spain continue to increase, with a 6.17% increase between 2018 (327,342 pilgrims) and 2019 (347,538 pilgrims). After the 2008 economic crash, unemployment in Spain hit 25% and regions across the country were in recession; however, Galicia went against the trend, showing the economic benefits of the Camino in northern Spain.

Meanwhile, in Italy, Tuscany's regional authority pledged investments totalling €16 million for the development of the Via Francigena as a cultural route in 2009. By 2014, all 32 sections of the trail had been improved. The president of the region stated that regional income linked to the Via Francigena in 2014 amounted to €24 million, and that 150,000 overnight stays were recorded along the route in Tuscany. Broadly speaking, for every €2 of investment, €3 returned to the regional economy.

Pilgrimage routes can promote the integrated exploration of existing cultural and natural heritage in a sustainable manner. Walsingham in Norfolk receives on average circa 300,000 visitors per annum, and Norfolk County Council has invested in centralised teams that monitor usage and other data relating to pilgrimage and multiuse pathways. NCC is able to measure the direct and indirect economic impact of these networks and the economic viability of new routes through sophisticated valuation methodologies.

Community groups can also benefit from this expertise as a means of attracting funding and promoting these routes. Norfolk estimates that its coastal routes add £12,171,662 per annum (equating to £23.41 per visitor) in direct expenditure, and knows that this can be increased and passed on to community enterprise if existing trends can be capitalised upon through focused actions (Norfolk Trails, 2018).

There is a clear economic advantage in investments in the promotion of cultural routes, and pilgrimage promotion provides unprecedented economic opportunities, as the experience of the Camino de Santiago demonstrates.

## Economic Growth Case Study: Pilgrimage as a Mechanism for Rural Tourist Development in Northern Spain

The Camino de Santiago is the pilgrimage route that leads to the historic town of Santiago de Compostela. It is Europe's most popular pilgrimage route and spearheads economic development for the Galicia region of northern Spain.

- Initial investment in the Camino totalled **€120 million** in the early 1990s, the largest single proportion of which went to infrastructure.
- Annual expenditure by pilgrims on the Camino provides **€60–100 million** in gross value added to the economy.
- Each pilgrim has **2.3 times** the economic impact of a domestic visitor.
- Each euro spent by a pilgrim provides a multiplier of **11% to additional output and 18% to additional employment.**
- The economic impact of the pilgrimage in Galicia alone is estimated to be worth approximately **€200 million**, i.e. 0.5% of GDP (Ulloa and Ruiz, 2010).
- Pilgrimage has curbed the rural population decline in many villages along the route.
- Spain is ranked second in the world for tourist arrivals (with 83 million annual international visitors). Furthermore, it is ranked second in the world in terms of tourist expenditure (with \$74 billion in receipts).
- After the 2008 economic crash, unemployment in Spain hit 25% and economic statistics across Spain were in a deficit; however, Galicia went against the trend, showing the economic benefits of the Camino in northern Spain.

The Camino became important in the 10th century following the 'discovery' of the tomb of St. James, and institutional efforts by monarchs across Europe established routes to the shrine in areas in which there were none previously, building bridges over rivers and financing the construction of churches and cathedrals.

Traditionally, the route starts at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in South West France and finishes in Santiago de Compostela, covering a distance of 780km. By the 13th century, this long route was believed to be hosting approximately 500,000 pilgrims per annum (Murray & Graham, 1997). The Reformation in Europe (along with the rise of the Spanish Inquisition) effectively put an end to the Camino for a number of years.

Following the fall of Franco's regime, the two Holy Years of St. James of 1976 and 1982 saw renewed interest in Santiago and the Camino. In 1982, Pope John Paul II walked the Camino, and in 1985, Santiago de Compostela was listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Spain acceded to the European Community (EC) in 1986, opening the door to applications for European convergence funding. The Council of Europe named the Camino the first European Cultural Route in 1987. Since then, interest in the route has grown exponentially.

Year	1986	1996	1999*	2000**	2002	2003	2004*	2005	2006	2007
Compostelas Issued	2491	23,218	154,613	55,004	68,952	74,614	179,944	93,942	100,377	114,026
Year	2008	2009	2010*	2011	2012*	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Compostelas Issued	125,141	145,877	272,413	183,366	192,488	215,880	237,882	262,447	277,854	301,036

Figure 2: Number of 'Compostelas' issued. Source: Pilgrim's Office statistics, Archicompostela. \*Holy Year, \*\*EC designated Santiago de Compostela as European Capital of Culture (European Commission, 2009).

Certificates of completion – or 'Compostelas' – are given to pilgrims who, via horse riding, walking or cycling, collect dated stamps in a special passport from designated churches, cafes and inns along the pilgrimage route. The figures in the table (above) refer to 'Compostelas' officially issued by the Pilgrim's Reception Office under the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. A 'Compostela' is evidence of completing the pilgrimage and is given regardless of the recipient's religious background.

The modern Camino provides an integrated focus for cultural, heritage and natural tourism in northern regions – namely Navarra, La Rioja, Castilla y León, and Galicia. The Spanish Government included these considerations in its strategic actions designed to prevent visitor decline and, more pressingly, rural depopulation and unemployment by way of sustainable tourism. In each of the separately administered regions, the Camino has become a cultural resource and an icon of regional identity, and is marketed as such. The Xunta de Galicia, for example, used the 1993 Ano Xacobeo (Year of St. James), marking the 1,000th anniversary of the supposed discovery of St. James' tomb, to promote the city of Santiago de Compostela and Galicia in general as a 'green tourism' region.

**Public expenditure on 'Xacobeo 93' activities was equivalent to €120 million, the largest single proportion of which went to infrastructure,** followed by cultural and socioeconomic stimuli by municipalities along the Camino. In particular, environmental improvements associated with the physical routes of the Camino, scenic areas, and repopulation with native flora were paired with schemes responsible for the cultural heritage of the Camino, including the restoration of monasteries, churches and traditional structures, as well as general improvements to the five Galician cathedrals.

This investment has secured steady annual growth in tourism in the region. A long-term study on the added value of such investments has revealed that **annual expenditure by pilgrims on the Camino created €60–100 million in gross value added** (based on 2010 values) **and between 1,362 and 2,162 jobs.** Not only is the majority of the impact generated within the 'Retail and Travel Services' industry, the 'Industry and Manufacturing', 'Services' and 'Financial and Real Estate Services' industries also benefit from pilgrimage expenditure (Graave et al., 2017). Furthermore, employment in tourism increased from 4% of all jobs in 1991 to 10.6% in 2010 (Martinez-Roget et al., 2013).

UNWTO (2019) research shows pilgrimage as being the fastest-growing sector of the travel industry, and research in Spain shows that the most successful pilgrimage experiences are green and celebratory of natural and cultural heritage. **The economic impact of the pilgrimage in Galicia alone is estimated to be worth approximately €200 million, i.e.**

**0.5% of GDP (Ulloa and Ruiz, 2010). A long-term study on the added value of such investments has revealed that annual expenditure by pilgrims on the Camino created €60–100 million in gross value added (based on 2010 values) and between 1,362 and 2,162 jobs. The Xunta de Galicia estimates that for every €1 spent on plan making, an €11 yield for the local economy is achieved.**

The Xunta de Galicia's Analysis of the Socioeconomic Impact of the Camino (2018) study presented an ongoing positive picture of pilgrimage on economic, social and environmental measures. It revealed that each pilgrim has the equivalent economic impact to that of 2.3 domestic visitors, with a higher average stay and expenditure and a preference for local produce, and that each euro spent by a pilgrim provides an extra 11% to additional output and 18% to additional employment.

In social terms, the presence of pilgrims is curbing the rural population decline, as pilgrimage supports local services and facilities in that community. Meanwhile, in environmental terms, locals perceive that pilgrims overall do not contribute to problems with litter or environmental decline in general terms. The majority of respondents along the route were pleased to be part of the pilgrimage experience.

**It is the Camino's experience of success in raising the value of pilgrimage as an environmentally low-impact and economically beneficial activity, along with the renewed focus that it has placed upon the safeguarding of local natural and cultural resources while enjoying physical activity in a peaceful setting, that has formed the basis of the Green Pilgrimage project.**

With 464,000 pilgrims expected to arrive in Santiago during 2021, the Xunta de Galicia has invested €56.1 million in producing and implementing its Master and Strategic Plan of the Way of St James 2015-2021, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund Galicia 2007/2013. This plan acts as a roadmap that establishes guidelines for promoting restoration and protection of the Way in Galicia, coordinating every public and private actor

concerned. What is more, it is a management tool for the Galician Government and will contribute to the strengthening of Galicia's tourism brand, ensuring that everyone involved in the route knows their role.

While the Xunta acknowledges the relative expense of the investments, it is expected to **result in a €655M benefit to the economy as a result of the coordinated measures that it promotes over the plan's period.** Priorities are categorised into the following eight strategic axes:

1. Administrative coordination and organisation
2. Protection and promotion of the heritage values of the Camino de Santiago
3. Conservation and maintenance of the Camino de Santiago
4. An environmentally sustainable Way of St. James
5. Strengthening of the city of Santiago de Compostela as the destination of the Camino
6. Enhancement of every path of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela
7. Specialisation and quality in pilgrimage service
8. Researching, communication and dissemination of the Camino's culture

This asset-focused policy document involves a cross-sectoral, integrated approach to heritage management, business promotion, nature conservation, and social improvement. Another key improvement emergent in this strategic plan is the concept of accessibility.

**Attracting tourists is only one part of the project. The other key aspect is the management of those resources that make the route special and safe so that assets can be enjoyed by this generation without prejudicing the ability of future generations to enjoy the same resources.**

## Sustainable Development: The 'Green' in Green Pilgrimage

In light of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and global commitment to climate change, sustainability must be at the heart of all policy and decision-making processes. Sustainability is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987).

How do we maximise the economic and social benefits of increasing awareness of and access to our natural and cultural heritage without damaging the very heritage that we seek to promote? Pilgrimage as a cultural tradition reconnects people to heritage within an ethos of low consumption – respectful of the environment but offering opportunities for a wide range of economic and social improvements.

**By 2030, Europe aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% in comparison to 1990 levels, increase the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to 32%, and achieve a 32.5% increase in energy efficiency** (European Council, 2014; 2018). This year, the UK Government has pledged to go even further, requiring the **UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 in comparison with the previous target of at least an 80% reduction from 1990 levels** (HM Government, 2019).



### What Is Green Tourism?

Green and sustainable tourism implies the concept of visiting a place whilst making a positive (as opposed to a negative) impact on its people, environment and economy. It shows respect for the communities who live there, as well as their traditional cultures and customs. Furthermore, it means leaving a minimal footprint on the surrounding ecosystems or helping to conserve and enhance their beauty and significance.

Sustainable tourism means supporting the local economy and community tourism initiatives. For example, purchasing local products helps to support the community, ensuring that financial benefits remain with people there. This, in turn, helps to counteract social problems that result from a lack of employment, as well as to establish a sense of dignity, putting local people in charge of their livelihoods.

Green tourism seeks to balance the opportunities provided to communities and the continued use of cultural heritage by tourism, while avoiding the negative shocks that unmanaged influxes can have within a location.

By tradition, pilgrimage is a low-consumption cultural experience, and pilgrims are expected to leave a light footprint and respect and celebrate the natural and cultural environment along the route. The whole ethos of pilgrimage is consistent with a green tourism ethos.

Tourism can be accompanied by environmental degradation and, if not well managed, damage to heritage assets. Even pilgrimage can yield unexpected negative impacts on their destinations.

### Pilgrimage Route and Waste Management

**Spain:** One of the key learning points from the Galicia study visit was the importance of route maintenance and litter picking. Despite local data highlighting that pilgrims are less likely to leave waste, over time the route will require attention, particularly in a context of significant year-on-year visitor growth. In February 2019, **the Xunta de Galicia pledged to invest an additional €15.6 million in the maintenance** of the Camino de Santiago in preparation for 'Xacobeo 21' festivities (in 2021). This budget will allow a permanent action team to monitor, maintain and repair the pilgrimage routes, with actions ranging from scheduled supervision operations to occasional ones such as cleaning and clearing or preventative tasks. Over the past few years, volunteers and groups have participated in The Great Camino Clean Up, whereby making a positive difference along the route for its communities and fellow pilgrims. The 'green' in Green Pilgrimage is a joint commitment, but nevertheless must be overseen by somebody.

**Sweden:** Östergötland County recognises that funding and creating a route is one thing but that maintenance is another – maintenance must be a fundamental part of the plan to develop a route. This was firmly the case in planning a new route for St. Birgitta's Way from Alvastra to Vadstena. Local organisations, including sports and outdoor clubs, are instrumental in making this possible.

**UK:** Another good example of waste management is the National Trail management body. Major public rights of way (PROWs), designated as National Trails, are covered by national legislation that requires them to be "safe and pleasant to walk on". This has led to the development of institutional management systems that deal with general waste and follow-up on fly-tipping with integrated mechanisms.



# Lessons Learned by the Green Pilgrimage Project

This section presents some of the key lessons gleaned from the Green Pilgrimage project's partner exchange experiences, as they relate to the following broad sustainability categories: Cultural, Social, Environmental, Commercial and Governance – with a strong overlap between themes, ensuring balanced and sustainable development. It summarises best practice for the development and management of pilgrimage resulting from the Green Pilgrimage project and its study visits.

## Knowing the Market: Who Are Modern Pilgrims?

**Lesson:** To promote the pilgrimage (tourism) offer, you need to know your market: whom the pilgrims are, what they enjoy and what their expectations are.

Whilst pilgrimage is an ancient tradition, monitoring data for pilgrimage visitors is patchy. The problem of different types of data collection and analysis – at different levels of detail and in different regions – is a problem identified within the Green Pilgrimage project which needs to be addressed.

On established pilgrimage routes, some monitoring has been ingrained into the cultural heritage of the route. For example, along the Via Francigena the River Po has always been a major natural barrier. To traverse this, a ferryman has carried pilgrims between Orio Litta and Piacenza for centuries, with the requirement that the pilgrim's name is recorded in his ledger. Therefore, details of every pilgrim who has ever undertaken the crossing are recorded.



Figure 3: Each pilgrim crossing the River Po by boat must sign his or her name in the boatman's ledger; this is an ancient tradition

	2015 (29 apr - 05 giu)	2016 (12 apr - 09 giu)	2017 (12 apr - 10 giu)
PELEGRINI	270	306	261
TURISTI	30	37	28
CANTIERE	0	10	13
<b>TOTALE</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>292</b>

Figure 4: The boatman is an important monitor of pilgrim numbers on the Via Francigena

The number of pilgrims travelling a particular route section is the first step to knowing your market. If you know the amount of people to whom the trail appeals, you can design further data collection and monitoring measures accordingly. In Norway, the Pilgrim Centres collect data on the number of pilgrim and non-pilgrim visitors whom they receive, and automated people counters have been installed at strategic points along the trail. This helps to target maintenance in particularly popular sections while exploring the reasons as to why other sections are visited less and focusing promotional efforts upon these.

## Pilgrim Research in Galicia, Spain

In Galicia, given pilgrimage's centrality to the local economy, monitoring is particularly advanced. The recently launched strategic plan for the Camino de Santiago is underpinned by an extensive socioeconomic study which collected data from local communities and pilgrims through the use of comprehensive questionnaires. This enabled regional authorities to understand different types of visitors and be able to respond to their requirements in a more targeted fashion. Meanwhile, a more in-depth understanding of the Camino's and pilgrims' impact on local communities allows authorities to focus resources upon particular aspects in identified locales in order to achieve balanced and sustainable outcomes.

Pilgrims along the Camino were invited to respond to a series of questions addressing their motivations and abilities, triangulated using demographic data. Through a process of 'self-entrapment', walkers classified themselves into one of the following six categories:

- **Expert (Experto):** Domestic in origin; repeat visitors; long and short distances; 40–50 years of age; serious 'pilgrims'
- **Traditional (Tradicional):** International origin; non-repeat visitors; long distance; 20–40 and 60+ age groups; 'pilgrims'
- **Traveller (Viaxeiro):** International origin; non-repeat visitors; long distance; young; 'traveller'
- **Modern (Moderno):** Domestic in origin; non-repeat visitors; short distance; mainly female; 'pilgrims'
- **Playful (Lúdico):** Both domestic and international origins; long and short distances; serious walkers
- **Young (Xove):** Domestic in origin; non-repeat visitors; short distance; young; 'traveller'

## Pilgrim Research in Sweden

In Sweden, the regional tourist authority Visit Östergötland undertook a qualitative online investigation into visitor motivation. They identified the following five different types of pilgrims:

- **Organised Christians:** Typically join group hikes organised by churches or other civil society organisations.
- **History buffs:** Historical interest can be just as important as religious motives, and places in which well-known historical events have taken place are central.
- **Spiritual:** Many of these visitors seek stillness and silence for undertaking an 'inner journey', while others are seeking deep conversations with other pilgrims in order to meditate on life's mysteries together.
- **Stressed:** Seek relief and relaxation via meditation, silence and the 'inner journey'.
- **Backpackers:** Primarily seek adventure and to make friends with other pilgrims from around the world.

These typologies have undergone repeated testing and review in Sweden. Knowing your market means that public and private agencies are better able to understand and accommodate its requirements, ensuring that different abilities and interests can be catered to, as well as providing something for everybody while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the route.



## Pilgrim Research in Romania

Basic visitor monitoring has been undertaken for some time, yet attention towards pilgrims and walking tourism is lacking in many regions. In Suceava, the Romanian county in which the sumptuously frescoed UNESCO-listed Churches of Moldavia can be found, tourist expansion has been similarly impressive over the past 15 years. In the main towns serving these monasteries, i.e. Gura Humorului and Sucevița, there were respective increases of 630% and 850% in accommodation provision between 2001 and 2016, as opposed to general stagnation elsewhere in the county.

Even more impressively, in terms of the number of tourists accommodated in certified tourist accommodation during the same period, the number of tourists increased in Sucevița by 600% from 2,735 to 16,317, and in Gura Humorului by a phenomenal 627% from 947 to 59,331. Once again, this is in a context of stagnation of the county's premier tourist resort, i.e. Vatra Dornei.

This is a remarkable expansion that not only demonstrates considerable interest in the cultural, religious and natural heritage of this region, but also indicates a pressing need for careful management of tourism here in order to ensure that the inherent qualities of the local environment are not compromised through the sheer weight of visitor pressure emerging in such a short timeframe.

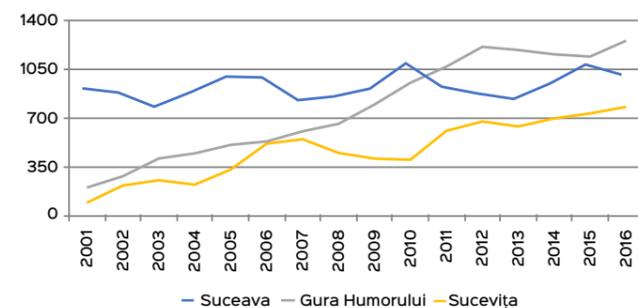


Figure 5: Accommodation capacity in Suceava (number of bed places)

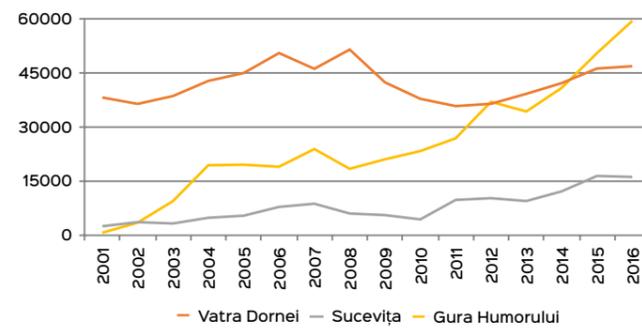


Figure 6: Number of tourists in Suceava

There is phenomenal interest and growth in cultural heritage tourism, including from pilgrims, and even modest promotion and improvements in infrastructure provision can yield phenomenal results. However, there is a need to manage such growth wisely in order to ensure that the appeal of your assets is not undermined. This can be achieved through even simple monitoring measures.

## Seasonality

**Lesson:** Know the seasonal advantages that your route offers to different markets.

Given the different environmental and climatic conditions through which different routes pass, it is logical that different types of pilgrims navigate different routes at different times. For example, while local pilgrims are quite willing to walk the Camino de Santiago in high summer, Northern Europeans prefer to visit outside of the scorching months of July and August. However, the same phenomenon is not observed along the Via Francigena in Tuscany, where pilgrims ply the trail mainly between May and August. Likewise, the colder climes of Norway and Sweden have shorter seasons, given the challenges of winter. Comprehensive monitoring, once established, means that route managers can be more responsive to seasonal imbalances.

Different pilgrimage routes can capitalise on seasonality by offering walking opportunities to markets with specific preferences. The UK offers seasonally mild walking during hot summer weather for Southern European markets, or mild winter walking for Scandinavian markets. Italy and Spain can provide sunnier offers during poor weather in Northern Europe. More detailed visitor research is needed in order to fully cross-capitalise on this opportunity, and different trails (or even different parts of the same trail) can be promoted for different times of the year.

## Integrating Society, Commerce and Heritage

**Lesson:** Promoting local, authentic produce and living traditions, as well as supporting local economies.

Green pilgrimage can be used as a motor for fulfilling global commitments to environmental and cultural heritage management as part of an integrated approach outlined in UNESCO's recommendation on the historic urban environment. Such principles include engaging the local community as active and willing stakeholders and participants, and local capacity building through the opening of opportunities for economic entrepreneurialism.

One of the biggest motivators for travel has traditionally been the experience of difference and novelty (Bello & Etzel, 1985), as well as the search for an authentic experience (Belhassen et al., 2008). In an increasingly globalised world, the local becomes ever more precious and valuable, whilst opportunities for responsible production and consumption can be capitalised upon through green pilgrimage in direct encounters between the producer and the consumer.

In Spain, local evidence highlights the increased interest that pilgrims have in exploring local produce and craft traditions, especially local food and drink, with pilgrims spending 61% of their total expenditure on these as opposed to 26% of the expenditure of a standard tourist (Xunta de Galicia, 2018).

## Pilgrim Hostel Local Produce

In Norway, the Munkeby Pilgrim Hostel, which is located on a farm in the rural area of Skogn, outside of the village of Levanger in the county of Trøndelag, is an example of successful rural collective entrepreneurship. Gradually adapting the historic farmhouses, the hostel now offers accommodation, food, and local produce. By restoring the old scullery and transforming it into a farm shop they managed to create a local marketplace for creative businesses and local producers and artists, which has been popular with visitors along St. Olav's Way. Whenever a product is sold, it is registered against the producer and when the accounts are submitted at the year end, each producer receives their profits minus a small fee to cover cashier and banking costs.



Figure 7: Munkeby Pilgrim Hostel, Trøndelag

The concept is easy to adopt in rural areas, as long as there is internet infrastructure with which to set up a banking terminal and an online cashier. To set up the sales point, you need someone with a strong belief in their local community. The lesson learned is that **the business model boosts local creativity as well as the local economy, and a wide range of businesses have emerged in order to support pilgrims, including essential luggage transfer services**, allowing pilgrims to enjoy the walk rather than lugging baggage. These are only some of the ways in which the sharp growth noted for the St. Olav route is being used for community benefit.

## Ale of the Trail, Kent

In Kent, UK, the North Downs Way National Trail has explored how local food can enhance the walking experience. This area has for centuries been associated with the production of hops, and hop vines have come to symbolise the Kentish rural idyll. **The North Downs Way National Trail has teamed up with local breweries in Kent, Medway and Surrey to create an 'ale trail' for walkers to explore along the route. Each brewery has dedicated an 'Ale of the Trail' as an official beer of the North Downs/Pilgrims' Way. The majority of ales have a link to the trail through either their name or local ingredients, or have links to military or cultural heritage. All breweries involved contribute to the upkeep of the trail in order to help keep the route in top shape, maintain signage and keep pathways clear.**



Figure 8: The 'ale trail', along the North Downs Way

Each year, £20,000 is spent on vegetation management in order to keep the route open and a further £150,000 has been invested over the past five years in replacing damaged trail sections. In this scenario, the greater the amount of people who participate, the greater the contribution to these costs made by the breweries and the greater the amount of local resources that can be invested in other value-added work.

Pilgrimage has been proven to deliver notable multipliers to local economies. Integrated opportunities to capitalise on the opportunities provided by pilgrim visitors, which add to and do not detract from the pilgrimage experience, should be

encouraged and supported. For example, while cross-promotion of local produce and perhaps officially branded souvenirs would be welcome, the overall experience could be compromised by excessive commercialisation.

## The Canterbury Tales, Kent

In Canterbury, Kent, UK, the strong literary link with pilgrimage has been commercialised proportionately through what is claimed to be the city's most visited tourist attraction. The Canterbury Tales, taking its inspiration from the first work of literature in the English language, is an interactive and immersive experience that brings to life five colourful tales of love, infidelity, intrigue, courtship and death, through sights, sounds and smells of medieval England. This experience is housed in the redundant 12th-century St. Margaret's Church, whereby providing a new and popular use of an ancient building.



## Champing: Church Camping

**Lesson: Integrating existing heritage features makes the route an authentic experience for visitors and brings new uses for heritage locations.**

The connection between religion and pilgrimage has traditionally been incredibly strong and, with the sharp decline in church attendance in Western Europe and the urbanisation of the past two centuries, rural parishes have found themselves underutilised and in urgent need of a new role and income. The biggest threat to heritage is when it stops being used or is forgotten, since objects are retained because they hold value to the members of a society (Appelbaum, 2007).

In Kent, the concept of 'champing' (i.e. church camping) was started by the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) in 2015. Working with the Diocese of Canterbury, they launched a pilot church at Fordwich to raise awareness and encourage volunteers to manage the scheme. Champing is not a new activity, but rather has been reimagined for the 21st century in respect of making church buildings accessible to a new tourism audience. Fordwich was chosen because it is one of the churches on the Way of St. Augustine pilgrimage route to Ramsgate, wherein Augustine arrived to bring Christianity to Britain. This opened up possibilities of short pilgrimages of 1-2 days and of staying overnight in a historic building, simultaneously promoting interest in the conservation of historic buildings and providing opportunities for local businesses in rural Kent to receive visiting clientele.

The project received much interest in national and international media on the basis of its innovation and its ability to reconcile low-impact travel and proportionate economic development with the safeguarding of historic buildings. There is considerable work being undertaken on the use of places of worship, as well as working with volunteers in finding new ways of using heritage buildings. Such a task is made considerably easier when considering the United Kingdom's strong tradition of volunteering and interest in natural and historic environments, as pioneered by such organisations as the National Trust.

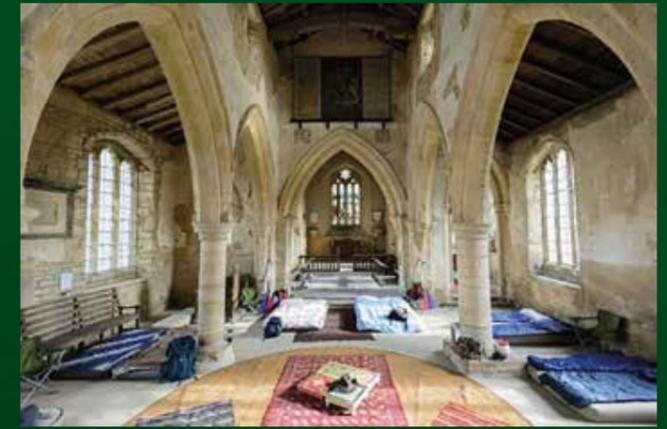


Figure 9: Champing setup (Churches Conservation Trust)

Champing has become nationwide and a number of churches in Norfolk are currently taking bookings via the centralised website. Special events, such as 'bat walks', that run alongside champing have raised interest in the natural world, so very much intertwined with historic cultural landscapes. The concept demonstrates that the use of heritage can be reimagined for the present generation beyond, but not exclusive to, religious rites.

**Champing provides the best of both worlds – combining new uses and income streams for underutilised or disused heritage, and providing characterful accommodation for visitors (be they on a pilgrimage or not) in rural areas that may not receive many tourists. The scheme, which focuses in particular on heritage at risk (there are several churches on the Historic England Register of Heritage at Risk), has given new life to previously abandoned, vandalised and precarious heritage.**



## Culture and Heritage – Public Art, Storytelling and Film

**Lesson:** Pilgrimage is a wide church of living cultural practices. Opportunities exist even in the smallest communities to highlight local traditions, heritage and culture and stimulate a thirst for discovery and engagement along pilgrimage routes.

Culture is whom we are and what shapes our identity. No development can be sustainable without including culture. Integrating culture into pilgrimage development policies and programmes fundamentally contributes to their effectiveness and sustainability, breathing new life into heritage assets. As confirmed by the UN General Assembly in Resolution A/RES/68/223 of December 2013, culture is the fourth pillar of sustainable development, alongside environmental, social and economic considerations.

### Pilgrims Festival, Kent

In Kent, UK, several ongoing projects have demonstrated how different cultural and artistic activities can provide practical infrastructure and interpretation to routes, thereby creating interest to wider audiences through storytelling and engagement activities. To celebrate the anniversary of the promotion of the Pilgrims'North Downs Way to a National Trail, a series of events under the ambit of the Wye Pilgrims Festival promoted the trail and brought together communities and various cultural

practices that make up pilgrimage. This week-long festival in September 2018 included a series of events and workshops through which to explore the full range of pilgrimage experiences, including sessions focused on natural and cultural heritage, drama, poetry, film, and well-being, as well as more academic and theological workshops. **There were more than 700 event attendances and the success of the event led to its establishment as an annual highlight, with the 2019 edition being held in Canterbury.**



Figure 10: The Wye Pilgrims Festival offered a range of different activities to engage different groups and interests under the umbrella of pilgrimage

The event brought together different groups spanning different interests, generations and traditions. It allowed them to share their experience of the different aspects of natural and cultural landscapes through which the trail passes, while sampling the local bounty provided by those very same landscapes and produced along the route.

### Cultural Routes Film Festival, Italy

The town of Monte Sant'Angelo in Puglia was host to the 'Mònde - Festa Del Cinema Sui Cammini' (Cultural Routes Film Festival) in October 2018. This event was dedicated to routeways and the pilgrims that use them, highlighting the strong relationship between people and territory. Hosted and promoted by the Pugliese Regional Government, it was widely promoted and brought together a wide range of people and interests, leading to the route table discussion entitled 'Cammini di Puglia: international experiences, projects, interregional collaborations and local networks for the development and promotion of the Cultural Routes'.

The event provided an opportunity to disseminate information on the recently completed extension of the Via Francigena to Puglia, as well as sending the message out with regard to resultant opportunities for the wider community. The success led to the festival being repeated this year, supported by a high-profile launch at the 76th Venice Film Festival.

Through the event, a multimedia approach to pilgrimage was promoted, combining walking (including guided routes) with anthropological and sociological storytelling through film. This has encouraged pilgrimage-related activities during autumn, extending the regular tourist season, and has resulted in a cluster of complementary events in the area.

### Animation and Re-Enactments –Bringing Heritage Sites to Life, Norway

**Lesson:** Animation adds an additional level of stimulation to the pilgrimage experience, acting on the senses, spirit, and encouraging social engagement and immersion in place-based heritage.

Stiklestad, in the county of Trøndelag, Norway, has held a unique position in Norwegian history for almost 1,000 years. This was the site of the battle in which the Viking King Olav Haraldsson, while attempting to spread Christianity, was killed on 29 July 1030. He was soon recognised as a Christian martyr, canonised only a year later on 3 August 1031, and was thereafter known as Olav the Holy or St. Olav. Stiklestad therefore has a strong symbolic function for Christianity, the monarchy, and the Norwegian nation in general.

Stiklestad National Culture Centre was established by parliamentary decree in 1995 with the primary purpose of conveying the wide-ranging dimensions of heritage in relation to St. Olav. The centre provides an interactive experience of the exciting cultural history of Stiklestad through the medieval farm Stiklastadir (currently undergoing a major expansion programme), exhibitions, the Folk Museum, historical re-enactments, guided tours, the annual St. Olav Drama and Festival, and other activities. This keeps the cultural heritage of the region alive and, following the Skansen model of open-air museums, reconnects modern populations with the ethnographic traditions that created the landscape and cultural inheritance that we enjoy today. In the most comprehensive study of such museums, it was highlighted that one third of all museum visits in the EU are to ethnographic open-air museums (Rentzhog, 2007).

While Stiklestad receives visitors all year round, special re-enactments during 'Olsokdagene' (St. Olav's Festival) during the summer attract more than 50,000 additional visitors to the site to watch the 'Spelet om Heilag Olav' (The St. Olav Drama) (Thue, 2008). This number is likely to increase, given expansion works on the site. Bringing history to life in an authentic setting is a significant visitor draw to this region and breathes life and contemporary relevance into this historic site. The locality is reliant on the new 'spiritual economy', a concept initially developed here upon Norway's Christianisation in 1030, and now once again taking centre stage on St. Olav's pilgrimage route (Gåullbekk, 2019).

## Governance: Including Management and Route Development

With ever-larger global tourist movements (1.4 billion international arrivals per annum, UNWTO 2019), conflicts arising from the spatial distribution of investment, as well as the spread of costs and benefits pitting local residents against visitors, can create strong public conflicts. Inclusive governance and management structures that respond to the needs of different stakeholders, and that include these people in key decisions, ensure that a sense of community and belonging is cultivated. Effective governance includes the establishment of mechanisms with which to monitor the short-term and long-term impacts and effectiveness of projects.

### Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

**Lesson:** A successful trail can only be achieved through proactive collaboration. No single body can achieve sustainable success on their own.

The Camino provides an integrated focus for cultural and natural heritage tourism across Spain's four northern regions – Navarra, La Rioja, Castile y León, and Galicia. It has become a cultural resource and a symbol of regional identity in Galicia in particular, and has achieved considerable buy-in from groups at national, regional and local levels, resulting in important partnership working initiatives across various geographical and thematic areas in order to ensure its success.

At a local level, the fostering of rural tourism is being promoted through community-based action groups, funded through numerous EU initiatives, particularly the LEADER and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) programmes on rural development. Projects have often combined the promotion of the Camino with the rehabilitation of heritage



assets for commercial uses (e.g. establishment of accommodation). Such projects achieve several Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring that heritage is safeguarded while employing local tradespeople in restoration, creating jobs in service roles and encouraging visitors to leave their cars at home.

The Camino's exponential growth has been dependent on successful multi-stakeholder collaboration in order to achieve growth while, at the same time, ensuring local benefit. **Collaboration must include academia, government, faith organisations, residents, and NGOs and grassroots organisations, since no single body can achieve sustainable success on their own.** They must come together over time towards a shared vision, values and strategy. This was a crucial learning point from Galicia.



## Bottom-Up Governance in Route Creation – Camino Materano

**Lesson:** Local communities are vital in perpetuating lived cultural practices and traditions. They should be empowered and engaged in pilgrimage and the opportunities that green pilgrimage offers.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Global Code of Ethics for Tourism commit all institutions, grassroots organisations, and citizens to a collective ownership and to active participation in order “to shift the world into a sustainable and resilient path”.

There is no reason as to why local people cannot take the lead in promoting, managing or even creating a new and high-quality long-distance walking route with minimal public funds. There are numerous examples of this across Europe, but a particularly impressive achievement was the opening of the Cammino Materano route in Puglia, Italy.



Figure 11: Map showing the Cammino Materano network

The Cammino Materano is a ‘slow’ itinerary and based on an international movement that values local engagement and production, along with having time to ‘smell the roses’. The trail follows ancient paths and drovers’ routes. The points of departure are situated at the Basilica of Saint Nicholas in Bari, the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas the Pilgrim in Trani, the Roman column that marks the end of the Via Appia in Brindisi, and the Roman amphitheatre in Lucera, while the point of arrival is located at the Cathedral of Matera, which is dedicated to the Madonna della Bruna. This is a pilgrimage between Puglia and Basilicata, a route that countless pilgrims from the Mediterranean area and beyond have used for millennia. The four

Ways of the Camino Materano celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Puglia and Basilicata, consisting of cathedrals, medieval villages, rock-hewn churches, and Greek and Roman ruins, as well as farmsteads, trulli, dry-stone walls, and extraordinary traditional cuisine deriving from peasant traditions.

Yellow and green marks on walls, rocks and trees signpost the route for its entire length of 170km. The route is promoted and advertised mostly through social networks, but the formalisation of the route has garnered keen national media interest, with the public broadcaster RAI dedicating an hour-long special to the trail.



Figure 12: Brochures promoting each section of the Cammino Materano while providing pilgrims with all of the practical information that they may need in a clear, attractively presented publication

The creation of these routes did not require any major infrastructural work, but rather used existing cattle tracks, paths, and state-owned roads. Woods, parks and archaeological, architectural and landscape heritage were considered and regional patronage was forthcoming, albeit mainly in a non-financial sense. Furthermore, local volunteers were highly valuable.

The Cammino Materano was **formally inaugurated in January 2018, and in less than a year, more than 500 wayfarers and pilgrims from the country and abroad undertook the journey along it.** It is hoped that, given the success of the route, the interest of municipalities will increase in order to help provide assistance in terms of **accessibility, route promotion, and maintenance and litter picking** along the route.

## Route Management: Competing Tourist Interests and Access

**Lesson:** Routes and the sites along them should prioritise pedestrian and other forms of sustainable access over motorised access.

The world is a diverse place with different traditions, customs and behaviours. While some people may undertake the journey to a cultural heritage site on foot, traversing large distances in the process, others may experience this journey differently. Berit Lånke, Director of the National Pilgrimage Centre in Norway, remarked that modern pilgrimage in Southeastern Europe often relies on modern transport and involves dressing smartly for a ceremonial event; meanwhile, in Western Europe, pilgrimage is concerned with the simplicity and ongoing process of discovery. Pilgrimage must, however, be a broad church inclusive of different needs, beliefs and traditions.

Along mature European routes, pilgrims always have generally had a lower overall environmental impact than that of conventional tourists, as data from the Camino de Santiago demonstrate. They support local produce and the local economy, and pilgrimage offers an increased opportunity for cross-cultural engagement and encounters. However, one of the biggest impacts is traffic – while the Spanish experience is positive, other European studies have highlighted the need to mitigate the impact of problems caused by the practices of mass tourism (Terzidou et al., 2008).



Suceava County in Romania has a great deal to offer in terms of the development of religious tourism and pilgrimages due to its invaluable, world-renowned heritage, possessing an impressive ensemble of eight churches listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In addition, there are several other churches belonging to different denominations with a rich tradition of pilgrimage that belong to different religious and ethnic groups.

Management coordination is most effectively undertaken at the county level, while local teams in three locations – Gura Humorului, Putna, and Vama – provide responsive, immediate action. The establishment of a network of tourist information centres in the county has accompanied recent infrastructural improvement, with the development of appropriately signed pedestrian and cycle routes alongside the creation of the E8 strategic road. UNESCO designation can be both a blessing and a curse, with greater visibility and, therefore, greater visitor numbers drawn to this accolade. Measures are being developed to protect, preserve and restore these assets whilst promoting their value through tourism.

### Walsingham Visitor Management, Norfolk

The tradition of pilgrimage to Walsingham, Norfolk, is predicated on a late medieval legend through which a Saxon noblewoman, i.e. Richeldis de Faverches (or 'Rychold'), is said to have experienced a vision of the Virgin Mary, which led her to establish a Marian shrine in 1061 in Walsingham. By the mid-12th century an Augustinian priory had been established there and by the 13th century a significant series of pilgrims were arriving, including several English kings. The national importance of Walsingham probably dates to the 14th century, during which time the village acquired a Franciscan friary in addition to the main priory and had begun to compete with Canterbury as a pilgrimage venue. By 1535, Walsingham was the only English shrine that continued to draw substantial income in pilgrims' offerings (Dickinson, 1956). Among the relics on display at Walsingham were the milk of the Blessed Mary, water sacred to the Virgin in a group of holy wells on the monastery grounds, the remains of St. Lawrence in a separate chapel and, most importantly, the Holy House (which is said to have been built by Richeldis with the image of Our Lady therein). The Holy House stood in a sumptuous

chapel specially built over it in the 14th century, to which access was gained through the north side of the priory church.

While it has been difficult to estimate the number of pilgrims who visit Walsingham each year, and to determine how to distinguish them from casual tourists, the estimated total seems to have remained broadly constant (at least over the past 40 years) at between 200,000 and 300,000 per annum (King, 1984; Williams, 1996; UEA, 2019). Visitors of divergent denominations arrive by the coachload, often at the same time each year. Moreover, special days attract pilgrims, such as the National Pilgrimage run by the Anglicans at the end of May (nicknamed by some the 'Grand National') or those containing liturgies specifically devoted to specific groups (Coleman & Elsner, 2004). This has created extreme pressures on the tiny village at certain times of the year, and visitor management measures are currently being pondered which would create and promote a walking route in order to manage the mismatch between the destination size and the visitor numbers and spread the benefit of numbers through a wider area.

### Strategy and Planning

**Lesson:** An integrated pilgrimage strategy is fundamental to sustainable development.

Sustainable development means integrating economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives in order to maximise well-being and opportunity in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This means seeking mutually supportive approaches whenever possible and making trade-offs where necessary. The pursuit of sustainable development, then, requires improving the coherence and complementarity of policies across a wide range of sectors in order to respond to complex territorial development challenges ahead. Planning for green pilgrimage and cultural routes is no different.

Green Pilgrimage brings growth together with heritage development for the public good; therefore, it is best situated in a developmental strategy that understands how the requirements of tourist development and local social and economic prosperity can be reconciled through the integration of sustainability indicators into policies impacting on natural and cultural heritage.



### St. James Way Strategic Master Plan, Spain

Galicia's Master and Strategic Plan of the Way of St James 2015-2021 is a roadmap providing guidelines and parameters for the promotion, restoration and protection of the Way in the region, coordinating every public and private actor concerned. Galicia invested €56.1 million in producing this definitive management tool for this esteemed asset, but production was co-funded by the Regional Operational Programme ERDF Galicia 2007/2013. The master plan recognises the Camino's contribution to the promotion of the 'Galicia' brand, which is mainly based on three fundamental aspects:

- Pilgrim's experience
- Inner experience of every walker along the Camino
- Strategic and supportive leverage of the Galicia destination as a whole

The Strategic Master Plan on the Saint James Way 2015-2021 has the following objectives:

- Protect and preserve the Camino to guarantee that its identity is transferred to future generations, and enhance its cultural and natural heritage
- Meet the needs of the 21st-century pilgrim, offer excellent hospitality and facilitate a high-quality experience throughout the entire pilgrimage
- Boost the social cohesion and territorial development balance
- Continue to enhance the universal identity of Galicia and Europe

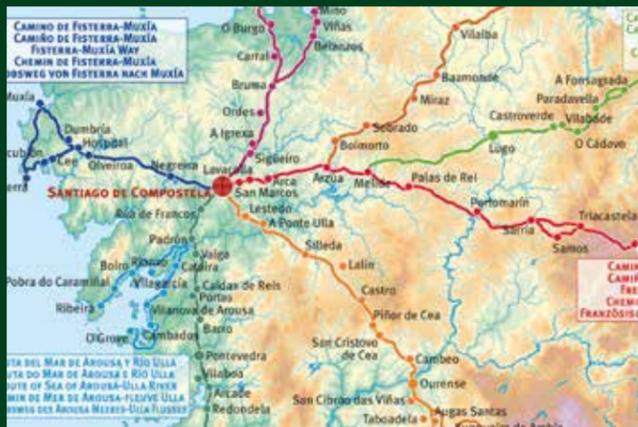


Figure 13: Official map showing the routes of the official 'Caminos' in Galicia

At the regional level in Italy, Tuscany addressed the improvement of the Via Francigena through its territorial planning processes. Tuscany recognised this European Cultural Route as holding strategic importance and potential for the enhancement of its inland areas, being less prone to the seasonal tourist fluxes experienced in coastal areas. The strategic choice was intended to preserve local cultural identity whilst creating opportunities for economic development in rural and culturally rich areas crossed by the routeway. Through a master plan (2009) and the subsequent operational plan, Regione Toscana has identified, planned and implemented all works to make navigable the 23 sections of the Via Francigena in Tuscany (almost 400km) by the end of 2014. The regional master plan and operational plans took an integrated approach to territorial planning along the Via Francigena in Tuscany, including route development for the promotion of cultural tourism. In Puglia, a Master Plan of the Apulian Cultural Route is currently in production.



### Local Strategies

Local policy support can be a real motor for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. The European Tourism Strategy (COM(2010) 352) seeks to stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector (diversification of products, reinforcing competences, etc.), promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism (European high-quality brands, raising awareness campaigns, set of indicators, etc.) and consolidate Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations. Within this, cultural routes across Europe have shown enormous potential for SME generation, clustering, networking (intercultural dialogue), and encouraging widespread community participation in cultural activities raising awareness of a common cultural heritage. These noble, strategic goals can only be achieved through local policy implementation that takes specific conditions into account. As noted above, while several regions (including Galicia) have established laws regulating their routes, local policy is needed in order to deliver ambitions for the routes over particular timeframes.

Local development plans in the UK are required to have sustainable development objectives at their heart, and must be supported by a wide variety of background evidence that the strategy proposed in a local plan is the most sustainable option, demonstrating the public good. Pilgrimage routes can serve a number of indicators, particularly in the conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage assets, the promotion of the rural economy, and the growth of balanced tourism. It is therefore important that historic routes not be prejudiced by inappropriate development.

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (MGCLG, 2019: paragraph 185), local plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In developing their strategy, plan-making bodies should identify specific opportunities within their area for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets, including their setting. In the adopted heritage strategy in Ashford Borough, as well as the emerging heritage strategy in Folkestone and Hythe District, specific attention is given to historic routeways as significant assets in Kent's heritage offer that are worthy of protection and enhancement for the benefit of sustainability objectives. This means that planning and developmental decisions in these areas must take these routes, or the potential for the existence of these routes, into consideration, thereby highlighting their significance in the public imagination.



Figure 14: Archbishop's Palace, Charing – a historic resting place on the Pilgrims' Way to Canterbury

Such a strategy is currently supporting the integrated rehabilitation of the former Archbishop's Palace in Charing, Kent. This complex, situated on the Pilgrims' Way to Canterbury, served as an important stop-off point in the Middle Ages. The complex fell into decline and remains on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. Strong local policy has framed the partnership between the landowner, Historic England, the Spitalfields Trust as the developer, and a local community partnership group with aspirations to ensure local benefit from the site. Parts of the complex have now been restored as living accommodation within heritage safeguarding parameters.

### National Strategy

The Norwegian Government's strategy on pilgrimage (Strategi for Pilegrimssatsing) was published in November 2012 and is, to date, the only national-level pilgrimage strategy in Europe. The strategy document highlights the fact that pilgrimage is an important part of European cultural heritage and, at the same time, represents a unique opportunity to experience Norwegian nature, national heritage sites, culture, faith, and people. Four areas are considered central to the strategy: Environment, Business, Church and Culture. Included within these areas are the dissemination of history and culture, public health benefits, the establishment of businesses along the pilgrimage routes, and the promotion of the St. Olav Ways as an attractive product for national and international tourists. This is a historically rooted strategy, providing renewed vigour to an ancient practice in order to enable it to respond to and be inclusive of an increasingly multicultural and multireligious society (Jensen & Løvrød, 2017).

**Clear policy – be it at a national, regional or local level – establishes certainty for all partners and diminishes risk for private investment or partnership. Therefore, financing for and investment in heritage restoration are more likely.**



## Modernisation, Marketing and Promotion

### Digitalisation of Pilgrimage Routes

**Lesson:** Make the best use of technological opportunities to enhance the pilgrimage experience.

#### St. Bridget's Trail, Sweden

The Östergötland region in Sweden has pioneered the digitalisation of a section of the St. Birgitta's Way pilgrimage route between Ödeshög and Vadstena.



Figure 15: St. Bridget's Way digital platform

Following renewed interest in the route from the 1990s, trails were renewed, reconnected and formalised as far as possible along their medieval alignments. Whilst the modern tradition in Sweden has been a Lutheran/Catholic-led revival, wider interest is growing and it is important to offer a cultural route that is open to all, including pilgrims who are beginners requiring more help. At the same time, an increase in numbers will stretch the resources of existing pilgrimage organisations that currently provide pilgrimage support and maintain the route.

The solution was to develop a digital solution that assisted pilgrims along their journey, with maps containing InfoPoints. Each InfoPoint contains practical information, including advice on where to eat, sleep, find fresh water, bins, toilets, etc., as well as information on cultural and natural heritage along the way. Moreover, it contains advice on spiritual aspects, including traditional pilgrimage practice, prayers, services, and a community in which to share thoughts and experiences with other pilgrims. The work was undertaken in close connection with a software

producer, i.e. Basemap.se, and is also supported through an app.

There were already some semi-digitalised routes; however, none were fully navigable with good maps, and none of these specifically targeted pilgrims, especially those new to pilgrimage. This model is available in Swedish and English and will now be extended to other public and promoted routes.

The development of this interface was neither resource- nor time-intensive in the least, with one (albeit enthusiastic) developer being able to produce the whole system during working hours at a very low cost. Visitor expenditure in Vadstena has now reached, on average, €160 per person (Östergötland, 2019).

One note of caution, however, is that digital assistance is not substitute for marked and properly laid-out routes. Pilgrims, like any long-distance walkers, should use the correct equipment for the terrain.



#### Via Francigena Mobile Phone App, Italy

Elsewhere, the official app of the European Association of the Via Francigena (EAVF) allows users to easily find their way along the route while walking or cycling. The interactive map allows pilgrims to locate their position on the route through the device's GPS, even without an internet connection. The maps and pathways can be preloaded, whereby avoiding roaming costs. In the case of deviation from the path, an alarm advises whether the user is going astray; furthermore, it is possible to mark problems along



the itinerary for other users via GPS positioning. Accommodation options along the route are geolocated on the map, and pilgrims can call providers directly from their smartphone.

The app was developed thanks to the contribution of the regions crossed by the Via Francigena, tracking the route from Canterbury to Rome.



Figure 16: Screenshot of the Via Francigena mobile phone app

## Pilgrimage Branding and Route Marking

**Lesson:** Coordinating branding activities must ensure that a route's identity and image reflect each other through an authenticity that is legible and appealing to visitors.

Brand heritage recalls the brand's origins and includes the evolution of values, symbols and meanings associated with the brand, thus providing authenticity and differentiation.

Brand identity, image and pilgrimage do not necessarily sit comfortably together, but in terms of the consumptive aspects relating to travel, there are clear advantages to establishing a recognisable brand. What makes a pilgrimage brand different has to be its authenticity – the projection of an image of a cultural route that knows what it is and has clearly established values and credibility, and that can be perceived as such by its clients, i.e. pilgrims.

A key feature of a successful route is the ability of its travellers to find their way, and the projection of the route's 'authentic' identity along the way can serve as a useful navigational aid while establishing a connection and relationship between the route and the pilgrim. In Spain, the distinctive yellow arrow and viera (or scallop shell) have achieved wide recognition, enabling pilgrims from different linguistic backgrounds to find their Way to Santiago. Along with simply finding the way, however, the symbol carries therewith a whole host of assurances, including the quality, accessibility and availability of pilgrimage facilities.

**In 1996, the Xunta of Galicia passed a law (Lei 3/1996, do 10 de maio) which establishes specific regulations and bylaws for the Camino network. The symbol provides quality assurance for the route's high standards.**

Partners in the GP project recognise branding as being important in marketing a pilgrimage route in the global tourist market while retaining those values of integrity and spirituality which are often perceived to be polar opposites of commercial tourism.

**Sweden:** The Birgittamärket pilgrimage symbol was created in the Vadstena Pilgrim Centre and designed by Gunnar Grantinger. The symbol unites the white pilgrim cross with the five red wounds of Christ and a blue looped square (known as Sankthanskorson, or St. Hans' Cross) within the golden circle of wholeness. **The symbol is patent-protected and is owned by the Vadstena Pilgrim Centre, which authorises and manages use.** It can be used both for pilgrimage routes related to St. Birgitta and for other pilgrimage routes in Sweden apart from St. Olav's routes. Furthermore, pilgrimage churches may be signposted with this symbol.

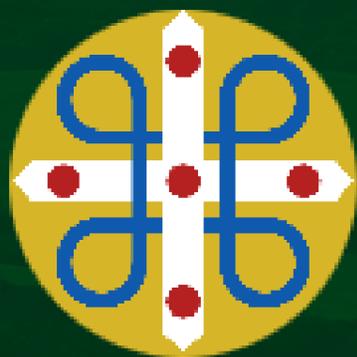


Figure 17: Birgittamärket, symbol of the route to Vadstena

A willingness to identify what are the important parts of this brand in particular and to be open-minded about the spiritual part of the 'pilgrim' brand. The symbol has created increased awareness among stakeholders along the pilgrimage route that a pilgrim is a special kind of visitor, blending religious and secular traditions, and different from a general hiker. It has brought the commercial and religious realities together in a greater understanding of each other's needs.



**Norway:** In Norway and Sweden, another symbol is used to mark pilgrimage routes and places associated with St. Olav and Trondheim. This symbol combines the looped square (St. Hans' Cross) with the Olav Cross. The symbol was designed by Johanna Figur Waddington for the Norwegian pilgrimage routes, and again is protected, with specific guidelines issued for the approval of usage for signage and other branding. **The symbol projects an identity and aids placemaking along the route.** Since pilgrimage routes run through Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encompass heritage sites of great aesthetic value, keen consideration is given to signage so that it conserves or enhances, rather than detracts from, the significance of these wondrous settings.



Figure 18: Marking along the Pilegrimsleden, Norway, designed to be in keeping with and not obtrusive in the local landscape



<p><b>Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James)</b></p> 	<p>Covered by a law (Lei 3/1996, do 10 de maio) passed by Xunta of Galicia. The official symbol for the Camino is the scallop shell with a yellow arrow. The scallop shell is often found on the shores in Galicia and may have been taken home as a souvenir by medieval pilgrims.</p>
<p><b>Pilegrimsleden (St. Olav's Way)</b></p> 	<p>A registered symbol for use only in Norway and Sweden by the relevant authorities. This symbol combines the looped square (St. Hans' Cross) with the Olav Cross.</p>
<p><b>Birgittaleden (St. Birgitta's Trail)</b></p> 	<p>A registered symbol owned by the Vadstena Pilgrim Centre for use only on St. Birgitta's Trail. The symbol unites the white pilgrim cross with the five red wounds of Christ and a blue looped square (St. Hans' Cross).</p>
<p><b>Cammino Materano</b></p> 	<p>Registered by the association In Itinere Aps, signage on the route draws from the traditional marking of mountain routes in rural Puglia, placed every 300m. Signage in urban areas is more formalised.</p>
<p><b>Via Francigena</b></p> 	<p>Registered at a European level to protect them from improper use in order to guarantee the homogeneity of all communications and all services. Sanctioned for use by public authorities (pending approval). The symbol represents a stylised image of a medieval pilgrim.</p>
<p><b>National Trails</b></p> 	<p>While not a pilgrimage symbol as such, the acorn is used on National Trails across England and Wales. The symbol provides assurances to users that the route will provide continuous walking through the country's finest scenery, that routes are carefully maintained to a high standard, and that there is a special guidebook for each of the fully developed trails.</p>

Figure 19: Guiding the way – branding symbols of quality along partner trails

Not only is pilgrimage concerned with hiking or walking, there is also a commercial strand to it. The brand needs to be recognisable as a trustworthy symbol of quality for the traveller walking long distances and often through difficult and confusing terrain. The brand acts as the pilgrim's North Star, leading the way to the ultimate destination. The importance of the authenticity of heritage assets is equally important in symbols, branding, and route paraphernalia. These routes have been navigated for centuries and while the branding is new, it should speak clearly to the medieval experience and such a traditional spiritual

quest. In this way, the signage should support the aspirations of the brand and its branding, e.g. being made out of local materials by local craftspeople and businesses.



Figure 20: Local craftspeople can add local distinctiveness to standardised signage

As trails often cross administrative boundaries, and pilgrimage routes cross international boundaries, efforts should be made to standardise signage across these routes and ensure that the signage reflects the common shared values of communities embedded in often different cultural contexts. What is more, efforts should be made to ensure that signage is recognisably standardised across all sections of a long-distance trail.



Figure 21: Integration of national and international route symbols on signage in Kent



### Nidaros Pilgrim Centre and St. Olav Ways

**Nidaros Pilgrim Centre** was founded in 2008. It serves as a reception centre for welcoming pilgrims to Trondheim and offering **accommodation, as well as conversation with fellow pilgrims** and even a **specially dedicated pilgrims' priest**. The accommodation constitutes an open-all-year-round offer and while it is not limited to pilgrims, they do receive a discount.

At the pilgrim reception, new arrivals register and can receive the Olav Letter (or pilgrimage diploma) if they have covered at least 100km of the route. **There are three permanent employees and nine part-time employees at the centre, but the majority of the staff are volunteers** who provide coffee and conversation. In addition, the reception has a big map upon which all pilgrims are asked to mark their hometown.

Arrival at the end point of the pilgrimage route, i.e. the mighty Nidaros Cathedral, after having walked for days is an unforgettable experience. All pilgrims are able to visit the cathedral for free, having received an entrance tag from the Pilgrim Centre. **Between 11 June and 21 September, which is the peak pilgrimage season, the cathedral holds a short pilgrimage service at 6 p.m. each day**, with the exception of Sundays (on which there is an ordinary evening mass at that time). These **services have a pilgrim focus**, and the countries of origin of all pilgrims who arrived over the previous two days are announced. Overseas interest in pilgrimage has been notable in Norway, wherein currently over two thirds of pilgrims on the route are non-Norwegians (Duda, 2016).



**Figure 22: A welcome reception for pilgrims in Trondheim at Nidaros Pilegrimsgård**

### Open Arms: The Importance of Welcome and the Character of Destination

**Lesson:** *Authenticity is a crucial factor in making an appealing visitor destination, but the overall experience of place is significantly enhanced by a pilgrim-appropriate welcome.*

Pilgrims are not ordinary tourists and the destinations to and through which pilgrims undertake their journeys hold both physical and spiritual importance (regardless of faith). Infrastructure should reflect this intersection of the physical and the spiritual. A welcome should involve human contact, recognising and reinforcing a sense of achievement upon completion of a long journey. Means of marking a pilgrim's arrival, such as a service, certificate presentation and/or memorable photographic opportunity, are ways in which pilgrims and destinations can come together in mutual celebration of the endeavour.

Some pilgrims may need spiritual counsel upon arrival for journeys of particular significance. The destination should have both physical and human infrastructure so as to ensure that pilgrims receive all of the elements of achievement, care and counselling, recognition, and a sense of importance. This not only provides an authentic experience but also ensures that the experience is reported positively in order to encourage other pilgrims to undertake the same journey.

A dedicated pilgrims' priest works closely with the volunteers. He is employed by the Bishop's Council and his office is based in the hostel. He attends to pilgrimage-related theological work, engaging and cooperating with local communities and churches along all of the pilgrimage paths leading to Trondheim. The overall goal is to strengthen the city of Trondheim's identity as a pilgrimage destination, as well as promoting guided walks, in which visitors can experience the city from a pilgrim's perspective.

The impact of this facility and the dedication of its staff left a lasting positive impression on participants of the Norwegian study visit, proving the cherry to be on top of the pilgrimage experience. Vadstena Pilgrim Centre in Sweden is set up using a broadly similar approach. National pilgrimage is coordinated from these centres, providing a centralised delivery of all pilgrimage-related services, as well as regular reporting on monitoring indicators and statistics. While adequately resourced, its success has emerged from the **participatory approach to delivering services**, with its mission being very much based on the **establishment of common values between all parties involved, along with an active volunteer base**.

**Around 1,000 pilgrims per annum choose to stay at Nidaros Pilgrim Centre.**



### Suceava County, Romania

In Romania, the main message of Suceava's promotional work is that everyone is welcome, whomever they may be and however they decide to get there. While Romanians are more likely to be Orthodox Christians, Suceava, formerly a part of the Austro-Hungarian province of Bucovina, has several minority groups – Reformed Hungarians, Catholic Poles, and Armenian Apostolic traditions maintain cultural sites and monuments in the area. Collaboration and coordination of efforts between local and central public authorities, non-governmental organisations representing thematic or ethnic groups, and the different churches have enabled emerging coordinated action and a joint voice in applying for funding, whereby increasing private sector interest (Minciu and Stanciu, 2010).

**Pilgrimage is for all, and new markets have built on their existing cultural offer in innovative ways.** As noted above, Suceava's tourist arrivals have grown exponentially in recent years and the challenge nowadays lies in **encouraging effective tourist management through a strategy that builds on the diversity inherent in the local historic landscape**.

### Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain

The undertaking of pilgrimage along the Camino is considered a cultural practice in itself. That is to say, a pilgrim is recognised as such through the successful fulfilment of having walked, cycled or ridden 100km and declaring that this journey was undertaken for religious or spiritual purposes. While appearing simple, the pilgrim's journey is not like any other touristic experience, and Santiago de Compostela recognises the tremendous achievement of those who complete the Camino.

At the Pilgrim's Reception Office, which is run by the Cathedral church of the Archdiocese of Santiago de Compostela, a big welcome is extended to all visitors. Those seeking a 'Compostela' are asked to specify their primary reason for undertaking the pilgrimage, defined as religious, religious/cultural, or cultural. Until recently, the answers given had no bearing on the outcome, but in seeking to disaggregate more secular motivations, cathedral authorities will now refuse those a 'Compostela' who are deemed not to meet the basic requirements for pilgrimage

accreditation. Instead, a 'Certificado' will be offered to those completing the journey and whose motivations do not meet the cathedral's 'Compostela' criteria, thus highlighting the special importance of pilgrimage in comparison to regular travel.

The Pilgrim's Reception Office also offers a number of complementary services such as a chapel for prayer and reflection, which also offers mass, bicycle parking, a large garden for relaxation, bathroom and shower facilities, and a host of tourist and travel information. In short, it provides a one-stop welcome and orientation for all visitors, with pride of place being reserved for pilgrims.

In culmination, a pilgrim's mass is held in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, wherein countries of origin of pilgrims are announced.

## Creating New Routes

**Lesson:** *Pilgrimage is a living tradition and, as such, it is important to facilitate this tradition through reopening historic routes along with new routes that facilitate practice.*

The latter half of the 20th century witnessed a fundamental shift in the ways in which people move around. The rise of the private motor vehicle meant that many ancient routes between settlements were 'upgraded' with the car in mind, often done so at the expense of pedestrians and other road users. The roar of motor vehicles is often anathema to pilgrims, incompatible with the senses of peace, tranquillity, and slow travel that many pilgrims seek. Therefore, re-establishing sections of ancient routes alongside or away from the noise and pollution of modern highways can be challenging. It involves multiparty negotiation and can take time, yet it can be highly important for a successful route.

A good recent example of route creation is the Way of St. Augustine, developed in Kent by the Green Pilgrimage Network Canterbury Partnership. The route is based on the historical accounts of St. Augustine's arrival on the Isle of Thanet and his journey to Canterbury, in tandem with the Shrine of St. Augustine in Ramsgate being recognised as a national pilgrimage site in 2015 by the Roman Catholic Church in England. The route was developed using some existing footpaths linked with sites of historical note along the route to Canterbury.

The project seeks to be self-sustaining through the involvement of the private sector in a bid not to be reliant on any particular funding stream. Moreover, the main stakeholders are the main beneficiaries. The lead partner is the Diocese of Canterbury, working in partnership with others such as Explore Kent, the Churches Conservation Trust, the Shrine of St. Augustine, Canterbury Cathedral, local businesses, places of worship, monastic communities, and volunteers.

The development of this pilgrimage route shares lessons with the experience of Natural England. The primary resource needed in the foundational work is officer time in order to research and liaise with any interested party or stakeholder. The research phase is essential so as to ensure that no significant stakeholder or organisation is omitted. **A clear communication approach with effective project management is essential in order to ensure that everyone understands organisational responsibilities and to implement these with confidence.**

**More than 1,500 pilgrim passports have been distributed and the route has experienced growing popularity, particularly during annual celebrations at the Shrine of St. Augustine in Ramsgate at the end of May.**

Given that pilgrimage is closely associated with heritage and tradition, there is a potential paradox in the creation of a 'new' pilgrimage route that has not been well trodden. However, pilgrimage is a living tradition, and when routes can integrate tangible and intangible heritage within living cultural practices and storytelling, their authenticity is assured.



## Society, Community and Well-Being

**Lesson:** *Pilgrimage can address a range of physical and psychological needs. It provides a space for people to come together in physical activity and shared experience, while also providing time for individual reflection and meditation.*

Lifestyles are increasingly characterised by sedentary behaviour, obesity, stress, mental ill health, and disconnection from nature. Contact with nature and heritage has been shown to improve psychological health by reducing stress, enhancing mood and replenishing mental fatigue (Barton et al., 2009). This section outlines best-practice examples of inclusivity in pilgrimage. If pilgrimage is for everyone, how do we address the physical and psychological barriers in order to allow this to happen?

## Pilgrimage for Psychological Well-Being

**Lesson:** *Long-distance pilgrimage can put life into perspective and, with experience with hospitality at its core, provides a renewed faith in humanity for pilgrims and residents meeting along the way.*

A recent high-profile experience was chronicled by Guy Stagg in his bestselling book entitled *The Crossway*, wherein the author offers a nuanced, thought-provoking and hard-earned perspective. Following the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome, he continues beyond Rome via Albania, Macedonia, Greece, Turkey and Lebanon to Jerusalem, the city sacred to all Abrahamic religions, constituting a total of 5,500 kilometres and 10 months on the road.

As a nonbeliever, his initial impetus was, he admits, hazy. Prior to setting out at the start of 2013, he had suffered a nervous breakdown at the age of 23, and had tried to take his own life. Doctors and therapists had subsequently improved his prognosis when, as a way of "wandering out of [his] life", he walked the London to Canterbury route undertaken by Chaucer's pilgrims.

There is no moment of revelation en route, but simply a difficult-to-define instinct that it has done something beneficial for him. Stagg describes, one after another, those people along the route who give him shelter at



the end of a day's walking, be it in the monasteries, chapels, convents and church halls that continue to line this pilgrimage route, or in family homes when he arrives in villages in which there is nowhere else to stay. It is through these physical and symbolic acts of kindness that the human spirit is rejuvenated and social links between people are reinvigorated.

Among the most thought-provoking characters whom he encounters are the two elderly nuns — remnants of a lost, cloistered world — who maintain their tiny guesthouse next to a prison in France because they want to help those who pass "learn what they believe". Likewise, he describes a young Australian nun trying to revive an abandoned Orthodox monastery at Sveta Bogorodica in North Macedonia, who is busy preserving fruit in glass jars and hand-painting eggs for Easter, all the time waiting for something that she cannot quite articulate. While *The Crossway* has no obvious happy ending, for the author and reader alike the road turns out to be more significant than the final destination.

*The Crossway* is one of the latest media iterations promoting the importance of pilgrimage in enabling spiritual and interpersonal development, and even healing, through its ability to offer perspective to one's place in the world. Movies such as *The Way* (2010) by Emilio Estevez and novels such as *The Pilgrimage* (1987) by Paulo Coelho have sustained interest in pilgrimage's promise of a fresh perspective on life and the human condition.

## Mindfulness Pilgrimages

**Lesson:** Techniques and tools drawn from religious and secular practices not only can be useful in enhancing the experience of pilgrimage, but also can assist in navigating everyday life on our wider journey through it.

While pilgrimage can be a tool for the alleviation of acute mental stress, its utility as an everyday coping tool is just as important. The concept of 'mindfulness' – the practice of paying attention to what is going on in the present moment – is considered effective in preventing an accumulation of worry weighing us down and keeping us from enjoying the opportunities offered by the present moment to their full.

At the Wye Pilgrims Festival and at other events in the UK the concept of the 'mindfulness walk' proved to be popular. This consisted of a guided walk during which meditation techniques were imparted in order to keep participants' attention focused on the present moment and on the vivid and multi-textured surroundings. Participants reported a deeper connection with the landscapes through which they had passed, with many pledging to repeat the experience independently.



Figure 23: Pilgrimage can be enhanced, and can in turn enhance health and well-being, through mindfulness practices

The experience of implementing mindfulness while being physically active demonstrates that pilgrimage can improve both physical and mental health.

## British Pilgrimage Trust – Bring Your Own Beliefs

The British Pilgrimage Trust are a charity dedicated to promoting pilgrimage for all faiths and none; their guided pilgrimage walks draw on many religious traditions in a secular interpretation of connection to place. Their walks incorporate practices such as singing, physically connecting to sacred buildings and water sources, reflection, silence, etc. in order to promote a physical and spiritual connection with the natural and cultural heritage of the walking locations.



## Pilgrimage Inclusivity – Welcome, Respect and Social Change

**Lessons:** Pilgrimage – grounded in inclusive ethics – can be a powerful mechanism for social change, reaching out to marginalised groups and reducing social inequalities. What is more, it can relieve some of the causes of these inequalities, such as the symptoms of mental and physical illnesses.

Pilgrimage, as an experience involving nature, culture, spirituality and sociability, can go a long way to integrating or reintegrating individuals or groups within communities. **Several charities and NGOs around the UK are exploring pilgrimage, be it as a concept or in practice, as a means of inspiring and improving the lives of the marginalised.**

## Pilgrimage and Homelessness, London, UK

The Connection at St. Martin-in-the-Fields project runs an annual pilgrimage in May covering the 74 miles (119km) between the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Central London and Canterbury Cathedral for and in aid of homeless people. **On average, 100 walkers participate during the weekend** and the majority of participants complete the whole journey. In addition, they are accompanied by a 30-member support team. A great deal of planning goes into this endeavour, and 'route masters' undertake 2–3 practice walks in order to establish the conditions and get a feel for the walk. During the walk, pilgrims will choose a walking group based on the speed at which they wish to travel. Each walking group will have one or two group leaders and there will be roughly eight to 12 pilgrims in each group. There will be short services at each overnight stop and all pilgrims are welcome to attend. Services may include Compline, Eucharists or even Agape Feasts (at Aylesford Priory), and a luggage lorry carries any luggage to the next destination. In Canterbury, a special blessing service is held and pilgrims receive their certificates. Sponsorship income is all collected by the end of August each year. Through this pilgrimage, money is raised by and on behalf of homeless people and there is a keen sense of individual and collective achievement among participants.

**Recent events have raised £45,000 towards the work of the charity, a major achievement equating to circa £4,500 per pilgrim. This attests to the significant buy-in to the event by the local community and sponsors as a worthwhile way of giving vulnerable people new experiences. The event crosses denominational lines and is well promoted throughout the Christian community and others in the southeast, achieving a high market profile.**



## Pilgrimage and Refugees, UK

Another scheme, **Refugee Tales**, was born out of the work of a charity named the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group, working in an immigration removal centre and engaging with residents on Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Five years later, the organisation has organised five long walks, one each July, the most recent of which was in 2019 from Brighton to Hastings. The first walk was along the North Downs Way, along a pilgrimage route, from Dover (wherein there used to be a detention centre) to Crawley (near the centres at Gatwick). One walk started in St. Albans as a nod to the saint martyred for giving shelter to a stranger fleeing from persecution. Another started in Runnymede, the location of the signing of Magna Carta in 1215. For people who had been in detention, these walks provided a transformative experience – they were no longer ex-detainees or former detainees; they were walkers. There is an equality and levelling of humanity in the activity of walking. Like Chaucer, walkers would take it in turns to tell their tale each day, to be compiled into a publication. After the meeting, participants would support the person who had shared their tale daily, weekly and then monthly, in order to ensure that the sharing did not take a negative toll. But usually those who shared their tales described the relief of being believed, the feeling of strength that the tale was going to be used positively. Furthermore, participants expressed relief in handing it over to the writer who had listened. These tales were subsequently transcribed and anonymised by the writer, and then published and set to Parliament and other audiences to disseminate the experiences of real people in the most challenging of circumstances.

The fifth edition of the event took place in July, which brought together 150 volunteers and refugees on a five-day, 60-mile journey from Brighton to Hastings. During the day they walked and talked; each night they stopped in a different town in order to stage a performance. Local audiences were invited to listen to readings of stories such as *The Fisherman's Tale*, written by Ian Samson, based on the testimony of an unnamed Iraqi man who fled his family farm after Islamic State fighters kidnapped his brothers. (To protect the participants' identities, they are often paired with professional writers who tell the stories on their behalf.) He ended up in Norway, wherein he taught himself to fish, and eventually in Britain, in which he was held in a detention centre. "You are not really going to listen. No one listens," it begins. "You are not really going to hear. No one hears. You are not really going to care. No one cares. But I will tell you my story anyway."

**Refugee Tales harnesses the power of storytelling so as to foster empathy, and the group states that the books have helped to convince dozens of MPs to back an amendment to an immigration bill, proposed in February 2019, that would limit detention to a maximum of 28 days.**



## Accessibility

**Lesson:** *If pilgrimage is really for everyone in theory, it should be made accessible to everyone in practice. Those with limited or alternative mobility requirements should be made equally welcome.*

The European Commission estimates that circa 138 million Europeans experience accessibility or mobility issues. However, pilgrimage and its benefits should be available to all. For this reason, the Xunta de Galicia developed its **Accessible Tourism Plan**, which defines an **accessible destination strategy that includes 29 actions spread across four strategic lines**, aiming to establish the region as a model for innovative, accessible tourism. These strategic lines include the following:

- Improved accessibility of the tourist offer;
- Sensitisation and training in accessible tourism;
- Innovation and market intelligence;
- Promotion of the accessible tourism offer.

Alongside sensitisation and training in accessible tourism, the Xunta will promote material improvements to pathways and accommodation, combining technological solutions with traditional, good practice. Fundamentally, many of these are low-cost measures that one might expect from a high-quality tourist service provider, yet the formalisation of measures and expectations makes it less likely that basic needs cannot be met, and that pilgrims' minds can turn to enjoyment as opposed to worrying about their next stop.



**In 2017 the Cathedral Pilgrim Office recorded 43 wheelchair users arriving in Santiago, which increased to 79 arrivals in 2018**, demonstrating a clear impact. The office has recently moved to new premises which are more accessible to people with disabilities. Many albergues along the route are tending towards being better equipped to provide more accessible facilities, and inventory work has been undertaken for other parts of the route (especially the Portuguese part of the Camino), recommending specific advice and inventory studies on parking, accessible interiors, bathrooms, information systems, and signage for diverse needs (Silva & Borges, 2019). **This demonstrates a practical commitment to the underpinning principle that pilgrimage is for everyone.**

## Keeping Pilgrimage Green

**Lesson:** *Green pilgrimage as a practice is conscious not only of its ecological and environmental footprint but also of its impact on social, economic, cultural and political variables along the route.*

Amid the opportunity of modern pilgrimage, the operative imperative lies in the achievement of sustainable – and green – outcomes. Conversations with regard to the greening of religion have developed in tandem with the environmental movement in general. A prominent article by historian Lynn White Jr. (1967) stated that the Judeo-Christian tradition shares a heavy burden of responsibility for the modern crisis in relations between humans and the natural world. From the debate that followed, the field of 'religion and ecology' emerged, culminating in the Worldwide Fund for Nature-hosted conference in Assisi during which world religious leaders responded to the modern ecological crisis and committed to exerting energy into mitigation measures.

A pilgrim with a high carbon footprint who litters and does not shop locally or engage with local communities is not only missing out on a rounded experience but also actively damaging the very tradition that s/he is attempting to undertake. Green pilgrimage is situated at the interface

between sustainable travel and ecologically oriented pilgrimage. Not all pilgrimage is sustainable and it is an active problem on a number of indicators that it is not; moreover, not all ecologically sustainable travel is socially just. Since pilgrimage is an opportunity for reflection, a green pilgrim must consider the sustainability balance of the journey, but local administrators and partnerships can significantly lower the barriers for a green pilgrim in the ways highlighted in this report, including promoting sustainable options (e.g. transport) through policy and financial incentives that drive consumer preference and achieve a modal shift.



# Summary of Key Lessons

By way of quick reference, the lessons drawn from the section above to be put into practice locally are brought together here.

## Knowing the Market

- To promote pilgrimage, know your market: whom the pilgrims are, what they enjoy and what their expectations are
- Know the seasonal advantages that your route offers to different markets
- Visitor monitoring must be nuanced so that visitors can be accommodated while avoiding negative impacts
- Promoting local, authentic produce and living traditions, as well as supporting local economies

## Culture and Heritage

- Pilgrimage is living cultural heritage and can take a variety of forms to maintain the link between vibrant communities and their traditions; the particular forms that this heritage takes locally should be explored, enhanced and monitored
- Opportunities exist even in the smallest communities to highlight local traditions, heritage and culture and stimulate discovery and engagement along pilgrimage routes
- Integrating existing heritage features makes a route an authentic experience for visitors and brings new uses for heritage locations
- Animation adds stimulation to the pilgrimage experience, acting on the senses and encouraging social engagement and immersion in place-based heritage

## Governance

- A successful trail can only be achieved through proactive collaboration – no single body can achieve sustainable success on their own
- Local communities are vital in perpetuating lived cultural practices and traditions; they should be empowered and engaged in the opportunities of green pilgrimage

- Routes and the sites along them should prioritise pedestrian and other forms of sustainable access over motorised access
- An integrated strategy is fundamental to sustainable development

## Modernisation, Marketing and Promotion

- Make the best use of technological opportunities to enhance the pilgrimage experience
- Coordinated branding must ensure that a route's identity and image reflect each other through an authenticity that is legible and appealing to visitors
- Authenticity is crucial in making a destination appealing, but the overall experience of place is significantly enhanced through a pilgrim-appropriate welcome
- Pilgrimage is a living tradition and, as such, it is important to facilitate this tradition through reopening historic as well as new routes

## Society, Community and Well-Being

- Pilgrimage can address a range of physical and psychological needs, with people coming together in a shared experience, with time for reflection and meditation
- Long-distance pilgrimage can put life into perspective and, with hospitality at its core, provide a renewed faith in humanity for pilgrims and residents along the way
- Techniques and tools drawn from religious and secular practices can be useful in enhancing the pilgrimage experience and navigating our everyday life
- Pilgrimage – grounded in inclusive ethics – can be a powerful mechanism for social change, outreach to marginalised groups, and the reduction of social inequalities
- If pilgrimage is really for everyone, it should be made accessible to everyone; those with limited or alternative mobility requirements should be made equally welcome

## Keeping Pilgrimage Green

- Green pilgrimage is conscious not only of its ecological and environmental footprint but also of its impact on social, economic, cultural and political variables along the route

# Faith Partners and Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage has been discussed mainly as a tourism product; however, it is crucial that non-faith actors remember the origins of pilgrimage traditions and the existing faith organisations that cherish and promote these traditions.

Pilgrimage routes host religious buildings and associated institutions that have been engaged in promoting pilgrimage as a spiritual activity since long before tourism and local government became interested in the theme. Many church volunteers look after church buildings on the routes and welcome pilgrims of all faiths and none in their own free time.

Best practice in Galicia identified the importance of working with a full range of actors interested in pilgrimage in order to ensure authenticity and sustainability. This includes academia, residents, government, churches and NGOs.

The Diocese of Canterbury has produced a useful faith checklist for non-faith organisations to refer to when developing their own pilgrimage tourism strategies. This is summarised below.



## Faith Checklist for Pilgrimage Promotion

Pilgrimage falls into the category of religious tourism because its final goal is a holy place or because it passes by shrines and places of worship or crosses through a 'sacred land'. The people who walk these paths will identify as pilgrims by heart and spirit and/or hikers who prefer to walk a spiritual, historical and cultural route that deepens the traveller's understanding of our common background and values.

An authentic pilgrimage trail will always have a connection with its spiritual content, even if it is formally marked and used by everybody. It should be open to welcoming all faiths and non-faith alike. Almost all faiths have a kind of pilgrimage and in Europe the long-range historical pilgrimage routes and the holy places that punctuate them belong mainly to a Christian tradition.

The majority of institutionalised faiths tell us that all life has been created by God, and almost all are grounded in an environmental ethos. As a result of these beliefs, the faithful are reminded of the need to walk gently upon the earth, respecting all life. With this in mind, the partners of the Green Pilgrimage project should be able to call on faith partners and expect their cooperation for the greening of the pilgrimage routes.

**The European Green Pilgrimage Network (EGPN) offers the following practical pointers for a faith checklist that GP partner organisations could use to integrate religious interests with local and regional authorities in order to deliver an authentic and green pilgrimage route:**

1. Encourage an open and respectful relationship with faith groups responsible for the churches, monasteries and other relevant faith objects that are situated along the route to be able to cooperate for the benefit of pilgrims and the wider environment.
2. Ensure that there is an active link between all of those individuals and groups (e.g. priests, pastors, pilgrim centre managers) responsible for the management and maintenance of assets along a particular trail, ensuring a common approach to the trail and the overall pilgrimage experience.
3. Encourage the faith community to open up churches, chapels or other relevant buildings and assets to pilgrims for refreshments, accommodation wherever possible, or simply to allow pilgrims to have a look around.
4. **Wisdom education and awareness.** Faiths offer traditional teachings about nature. Many also contain traditions espousing simple living that can inspire people to live more sustainably and, in doing so, tread more lightly on the earth. Such philosophies can serve as a basis for local people and faith leaders to further develop a theology of the local environment as a basis for further action.



**Pilgrimage routes bring together cultural, historic, sustainable and authentic tourism, but what makes them special?**

All partner routes fall within the category of cultural routes. They have historical significance, possess a high level of authenticity and carry the potential for being sustainable.

However, the experience of pilgrimage can be enhanced through a clear interpretation of its significance and the stories associated with a trail and its sites. These routes in general have been travelled for several centuries, crossing borders and linking territories through common stories, thereby establishing common and shared European histories. We need to think of ways in which to tell the stories associated with pilgrimage trails. If a pilgrimage route seeks authenticity, the stories should involve a spiritual element.

It is important to disseminate the idea of pilgrimage as bringing added value to the related trends of natural and cultural tourism. Pilgrimage must bring something extra if policymakers are to be encouraged to give pilgrimage special attention and funding. We know that pilgrimage offers exponential benefits (as presented throughout this report), but there is a clear need to raise the profile of the concept as a marketable and appealing tourism product that is not season-specific.

**Furthermore, pilgrimage can offer a greater level of tourist satisfaction, bringing therewith an element of spiritual transformation.**



‘Transformative travel’ is an emerging trend constituted by a three-phase process consisting of the departure, the initiation and the return – the ‘hero’s journey’ – wherein travellers venture into the unknown in order to learn wisdom from cultures and places outside of their own, returning home to implement this knowledge and, ultimately, changing their lives and the lives of others around them. It is this post-travel action that separates experiential travel from transformational travel (Bennett, 2013). This ‘new’ trend is actually more than interesting for our subject, as this ‘new’ research is based on old ideas and research on pilgrimage in which three or four stages of the journey – the departure, the way, the destination goal, and the return home – are well-known components.

The labelling of pilgrimage as being a transformation is well known to those who have been working with pilgrimages for a long time. A paper entitled Pilgrimage = Transformation (Gothóni, 1993), based on different studies on religious rites, proposed a similar model of pilgrimage stages while expanding on what happens at the destination and, in particular, at the pilgrimage centre. The destination has a crucially important part to play in the process of transformation.

Transformative pilgrimage can also be an instrument of solidarity building for environmental and political issues, where pilgrimage is a way in which to ‘see for yourself’ and transform tourists’ or pilgrims’ image of a subject through experiencing a place and meeting and talking to the people who live there. This is the idea behind the Alternative Tourism Group in Beit Sahour/Bethlehem, which is promoting pilgrimage for transformation as justice tourism in Palestine through a project supported by the different churches in the Holy Land. This is just as much a political instrument as a spiritual journey, but it is based on real pilgrimage routes, sites and stories.

Religious or not, we all undertake both an outer and an inner journey in life. This is analogous to the pilgrim’s experience – both physically and spiritually/emotionally – along the way, which may lead to a transformation. Many people bear witness to how they embarked on a pilgrimage at a crucial time in their lives and how the experience changed them.

Current research on pilgrimage is multidisciplinary and focuses just as much upon the modern secular journey as upon traditional religious pilgrimage. However, it continues to be the shrines and the routes that used to attract religious pilgrims that are the basis for maintaining an authentic link between historic and today’s pilgrimage, stimulating an awareness of one’s place in the world. **Pilgrimage as transformative tourism is a means of dialogue between people, cultures and spiritualities, and may lead to solidarity, environmental awakening, and a better understanding of the different life conditions in Europe and beyond.**



# Partner Policies and Green Pilgrimage

Policy support for the aforementioned key lessons in partner regions is a prerequisite for their successful implementation. This support is essential in demonstrating a region's commitment to sustainable tourist development, ensuring that all parties are coordinated around the delivery of a specific schedule of works, and that funding organisations can be satisfied that defined projects and ambitions will deliver benefits. This section outlines the relevant policy frameworks within which Green Pilgrimage will be situated, followed by an exploration of the key lessons that each region will seek to incorporate as a result of this project.

## Partner Policy Description

### Kent, UK

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area (which includes Essex, Southend and Thurrock; Kent and Medway; and East Sussex) is a very important regional economy and the second most populous LEP: it has four million residents (corresponding to 7.5% of England's population). It acts in support of the SELEP Strategic Economic Plan and the area represents 6.5% of the total job base in England. The southeast of England is the gateway to mainland Europe (with eight ports (including London), the largest park in Europe, and several airports). The SELEP European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Strategy underlines the prominence of the tourism sector and its increasing growth rate. In particular, its contribution to employment is high, as it generates 95,900 job posts, particularly for young people or employers back into employment, even though they are concentrated in certain locations and resort towns in both rural and coastal areas. However, despite the high rate of employment, the value of each job in the tourism sector continues to be low on average, but the strategy stresses the growing trend of recruiting highly skilled employees. Creative and cultural industries represent a significant sector for the regional economy that is marked by high productivity, although it is mainly linked to the London market. The strategy highlights that despite being characterised by a strong entrepreneurial base, the area has a lower rate of business start-ups than in other parts of the UK. Firms in the strategy area

tend to be smaller than those in the UK (except for larger firms in particular locations such as Harlow, Dartford and Canterbury). The rural economy in the area is especially marked by rural tourism, food and drink production and establishments, and cottage industries.

### Östergötland, Sweden

Östergötland's tourism policy (2016) identifies four main thematic areas for the development of the regional tourism product: Peaceful, Active, Smart and Water. Pilgrimage is included in the Peaceful theme and represents a crosscutting theme of protecting both natural and cultural assets. The overall objective of this policy is to strengthen the regional tourist industry through diversification, as evidenced by increasing the number of visitors, the length of their stay, and the turnover linked to tourism.

The regional tourism policy has been outlined in close partnership with tourism actors and is aimed at the tourism industry as a whole, including companies, associations, municipalities and regional actors. The strategy work has started based on the national strategy for the Swedish tourism industry as well as on the situation assessment carried out in autumn 2015.



### Norfolk, UK

The 2014-2020 France (Channel) England Programme is part of the European Territorial Cooperation goal of EU Cohesion Policy and, thus, aims at contributing to the European Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. This cooperation programme promotes joint actions and policy exchanges among partners from the regions of the north and northwest of France along the Channel, as well as from Finistère to Pas-de-Calais and all of the southernmost counties of the UK from Cornwall to Norfolk. The programme area spans more than 130,000km<sup>2</sup>, and with a population of some 23.7 million people (about 3% of the total EU population), it is one of the most densely populated areas in Europe. Moreover, it is characterised by different regions, from major urban centres to intermediate (semi-urban, semi-rural) or rural regions, some of which are isolated. Besides Walsingham, the policy area includes other pilgrimage routes such as the Via Francigena.



### Puglia, Italy

The Operational Programme is co-funded by the ERDF for less developed regions and, thus, aims to contribute to the EU 2020 strategy for smart, competitive and inclusive growth and social, territorial and economic cohesion. Moreover, the Puglia Regional OP 2014-2020 contributes to the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR), especially with the Puglia region coordinating Pillar 4 – Sustainable Tourism – in Italy.

Puglia's Regional Plan for Culture (PIIL Cultura, [www.piilculturapuglia.it](http://www.piilculturapuglia.it)) and Regional Strategy for Tourism (called Puglia365) both incorporate integrated sustainable development principles. The PIIL Cultura document focuses on five key themes that the region hopes green pilgrimage can deliver, as follows:

- **'P' for Prodotto (Product)**, because we need to construct and make our cultural product recognisable and unified, focusing on development and empowerment;
- **'I' for Identità (Identity)**, because there is no high-quality cultural product without a sense of identity inspired by the values with which our cultural landscapes are imbued;
- **'I' for Innovazione (Innovation)**, because identity not only constitutes the memory of times past, but also consists of so many diverse 'dossiers of memory'. In this 'glocalised' world, identity is the complex tapestry through which not only the evolution of products but also (and above all) the development of processes can occur;
- **'I' for Impresa (Business)**, because culture and creativity are tools for adding value and, therefore, a chance for a new corporate culture to emerge that will require robust training and professional qualifications to be made available locally;
- **'L' for Lavoro (Work)**, because there is no cultural economy without the creation, by means of creativity, of decent work and stable employment in order to break down the informal economy and curb the brain drain that continues to plague our region.



## Norway

Norway's National Pilgrim Strategy was outlined by the Ministry of Climate and Environment, the former Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in November 2012. Its overarching goal **is to develop pilgrimage routes in the country as a way in which to travel through nature and culture**, characterised by values essential to human existence and allowing for an inner journey. The National Pilgrim Centre has as its mission the development of the National Pilgrim Strategy. Administratively, the strategy acts as a call for the cross-sectoral promotion of walking as a democratic experience accessible to all, calling on sectoral interests to work together in the promotion of leisure, cultural landscapes, green tourism, and the promotion of local produce. Practically speaking, the Directorate for Nature Management and the Norwegian Mapping Authority are in the process of mapping pilgrimage routes in national databases based on information provided by each municipality. Municipalities take responsibility for route maintenance and are encouraged to include routeways within their municipal plans, renew agreements with landowners and enable business development along routes. However, there has been criticism that insufficient guidance has been provided as to how decisions relating to this matter should be made. A future review could benefit from considering specific models for cross-disciplinary working.



## Romania

The ERDF Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020 addresses cultural and natural heritage through Priority Axis 5: Improving urban environment and conservation, protection and sustainable capitalisation of cultural heritage, as well as Investment Priority 5.1: Conservation, protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage.



## Focus of Partner Action Plans



### Kent, UK

Kent's action plan seeks to build on previous sectoral improvements, bringing them into an integrated and coherent offer for pilgrims and tourists.

The plan will seek to encourage local churches to offer walking services, promoting pilgrimage market opportunities and maintaining a close relationship with a wide audience in Kent, all the while working to understand pilgrims on Kent's routes, including collecting data on whom they are and what motivates them. Kent will seek deep investment in the Via Francigena as the county's most prestigious pilgrimage route, the likes of which have witnessed heavy investment in other countries. This investment will be accompanied by the promotion of place-based tourism, which, in other words, comprises a suite of techniques and modes of participation in order to ensure that tourism benefits local people.

Cultural events and an enhanced cultural programme will serve to highlight the county's enviable offer. Likewise, the important role that pilgrimage has played and continues to serve in the use and valorisation of Kent's heritage justifies promotion of the activity of pilgrimage as a cultural asset in itself.

Practical measures include the development of a digital itinerary planner (bringing together not only pilgrimage but also other local and national routes), the encouragement of a pilgrimage welcome centre, assisting churches in producing pilgrim policy plans, supporting the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome, diversifying the concept of 'pilgrimage' without prejudice towards spiritual traditions, and working with local businesses along routes. Furthermore, assistance will be provided in promoting an extension of the North Downs Way to Winchester, raising the profile of this important medieval pilgrimage route.

The plan will seek to strengthen cultural and heritage investment priorities, focusing in particular on ensuring access for all, across a number of strategy areas.



### Östergötland, Sweden

The focus of Östergötland's action plan is upon the governance, management and maintenance of pilgrimage routes. This will seek to include a wider range of actors to participate in strategic discussions for the initiation of expansion projects, which will require ever more efficient cooperation in terms of maintenance, development and communication. The principal output of the action plan will be a commitment to the development of a long-term strategy for cooperation between regional/municipal government and the Diocese/pilgrim centre. This will centre on the concept of a 'pilgrim's welcome', not only within a pilgrim welcome centre but also as a guiding principle for all local actors along the trail.



### Norfolk, UK

Norfolk has recognised the importance of pilgrims as a distinct yet complementary group of visitors in comparison with regular tourists. Its action plan priorities focus on more accessible and consistent data collection, governance, management and route development, as well as on digital marketing.

Through the development of a longer-distance route between King's Lynn and Walsingham, an integrated approach will be taken which balances top-down and bottom-up approaches to management and maintenance, and with different organisations able to play to their strengths within a coherent framework. Engagement with tourism actors to understand the pilgrimage brand will be key in creating local sustainable experiences on route.

Inspired by the success of digital pilgrimage platforms, Norfolk has identified a priority over the next few years with respect to the integration of new and existing routes into a centralised digital promotion and monitoring system. The county proposes creating a free-to-use online repository accessible through a web application in order to bring together Norfolk's wealth of paths. This will be promoted through a digital app which not only acts as a tourist information resource but also crowdsources user comments to aid in maintenance and improvement of routes.



## Puglia, Italy

A main focus of the Pugliese Action Plan is upon updating regional policies across the board that currently inhibit or otherwise disincentivise sustainable pilgrimage. A policy peer review revealed several obvious weaknesses; the action plan intends to resolve these. Clear opportunities exist, e.g. through the removal of age limits on overnight hostels so as to enable their use by pilgrims. It will be recommended that particular attention be paid within the scope of the Regional Masterplan on Cultural Routes to inscribing the key lessons from the Green Pilgrimage project into policy. Inspired by the example of the Strategic Plan for the Way of St James in Galicia, this document is intended to provide a policy blueprint for sustainable and integrated tourism in the region, and will facilitate the adoption of technical and management standards across the network, whereby ensuring a standardised approach to quality and maintenance. In addition, there will be a commitment to digitalisation and technological improvements so as to bring pilgrimage into the 21st century.

The Regional Masterplan on Cultural Routes will include welcoming policies on pilgrimage, promoting Puglia's diverse heritage through a proactive approach to bringing this to life.

## Norway

The Norwegian Action Plan will prioritise a new management approach based on a changed organisational structure. This will not just rely on the National Pilgrim Centre as the sole delivery vehicle (although this organisation will maintain executive oversight), but rather will include a range of public and private partners to deliver more, with greater value added to the experience.

An enhanced governance programme will seek greater local cooperation from actors in different sectors, allowing them to benefit from and contribute to the overall experience of the trail. This will be carried out within a value-based approach to the management of cultural and religious heritage, through which the different facets of the pilgrimage experience will be supported for their own sake and for the sake of enhanced marketing potential. This should help in making pilgrimage more appealing to a wider number of people.

The importance of enhanced waste management along routes is a particularly important theme, and work with municipal authorities and local interest groups will establish a clear strategy based on Galicia's experiences.

## Romania

The Romanian Action Plan will seek the incorporation of many of the lessons and outcomes of this project, acting particularly within the ambit of the national tourism strategy and forward-planning for the next round of European Regional Development Funding so as to be able to formalise pilgrimage-suitable paths. Such projects will be considered in an integrated manner with improvements in tourist destination management and in a context of a significant boom in visitor numbers, ensuring that monuments and settlements of spiritual importance are not adversely impacted by mass tourism, while not excluding the economic benefits that can arise from sustainable tourism.

# How Key Lessons Inform Implementation of Partner Action Plans and Policies

The Green Pilgrimage project has produced the following list of policy priorities for partners, stakeholders and decision makers:

## 1 Governance

*Partners should establish a Participatory Governance Model for routes.*

Cooperation among local stakeholders is a vital part of project success. Cooperation is essential between local and regional governments, faith organisations, academia, residents, NGOs, and charities.

However, it is essential that the public sector (or the relevant body authorised to act on its behalf) be involved in its statutory capacity, and that a clear division of roles be formalised.

## 2 Engagement

*The promotion of green pilgrimage opportunities should be undertaken through a transparent public engagement process.*

Partners and regional authorities should engage actively with local populations with regard to sustainable tourism and pilgrimage development, framed in terms of the safeguarding of natural and cultural material and immaterial heritage. This will help in the wider dissemination of the principles of sustainable development in practice, and of the advantages and opportunities of more locally rooted and personable forms of touristic consumption. Such an approach should be supported by territorial policies.

## 3 Cultural routes are diverse

*Cross-border cooperation supports rural communities sharing common challenges.*

Historic pathways continue to connect distant places and provide a constitute assets. For this reason, their conservation and enhancement depend on cooperation between actors in different districts, regions and countries. This is particularly important for national or European routes, which require long-term vision and commitment in order to connect them with other thematic routes, as well as ensuring that the long-term benefits can be realised through early commitment to community support.

Historic pathways across borders – regional or national – require long-term vision and commitment, as well as a connection with other relevant routes; therefore, cooperation between actors is essential to their promotion and coherent management. Cross-border cooperation, be it across districts, regions or countries, enables a focus on polycentric rural development, enabling each community's offer to complement (rather than compete with) the last. This maintains a sense of authenticity, building on traditional immaterial culture while ensuring that the basic needs of visitors and locals alike can be met.

## 4 Rural economic lifeline

*Reversing rural depopulation and consequent social and environmental structural weaknesses.*

Approximately three quarters of Europeans now live in cities, and rural depopulation is an increasing problem across Europe (European Commission 2016). Green Pilgrimage can provide rural rejuvenation, creating a reason for people to remain in rural communities and bringing new markets that are interested in local production and traditions, whereby resulting in their revitalisation. Communities along the Camino have suffered less from population decline than have other rural communities (Xunta de Galicia, 2018).

## 5 Authenticity

*Including the maintenance of vital and living traditions along routeways.*

Green Pilgrimage cares about the communities through which pilgrims pass just as much as it cares about the pilgrims. Cross-border cooperation, be it between districts, regions or countries, enables a focus on polycentric rural development, enabling each community's offer to complement (rather than compete with) the last. This maintains a sense of authenticity, building on traditional immaterial culture while ensuring that the basic needs of visitors and locals alike can be met.

## 6 Territorial planning

*At a regional and local level, territorial planning should include specific reference to ambitions for the conservation and enhancement of walking (and cycling) routes.*

It is vital that local councils are made aware of any projects in their area so that they can coordinate the best approach to making the most of investment so that it maximises public benefit. This will usually require cross-departmental working between planners and those responsible for the countryside/leisure, alongside other stakeholders. It is recommended that long-distance walking routes be taken into consideration in sustainability assessments (undertaken as per European Directive 2001/42/EC, as transposed into national laws) when deciding to allocate sites in local development plans, and that all routes be included in a public register. In this way, the inherent landscape quality of these routes is not compromised by inappropriate development.

## 7 Route management

*Achieving consistent quality standards across a long-distance network.*

Consistency in the implementation of adopted formal quality standards is important, preferably using a recognised international system to build and maintain the reputation of a route. This is likely to attract visitors with experience of other routes and provide symbolic assurances to them in terms of what to expect. This has knock-on effects on route income, the

profile of assets along routes, and the ability of rural communities to thrive. However, it is dependent on adequate consideration in order to ensure the quality of a path, accommodation options along a route, and training stakeholders and volunteers sufficiently to meet expectations.

This has worked particularly well in a centralised system (as in Norway), and in bottom-up innovation in Puglia. However, the agency responsible for maintenance should have a presence as close to the site as possible, be capable of reliable and standardised monitoring and, if not managed wholly by local people, have strong local participation and buy-in.

## 8 Marketing and communications

*The key message is that pilgrimage is for everyone.*

Green Pilgrimage is closely associated with the values of sustainable development, and while its roots are in religious traditions, it aims at social inclusion for pilgrims and host societies alike.

In the context of 138 million Europeans with mobility issues, it is vital that consideration be given to how small adjustments can make a world of difference. While historic environments are not necessarily conducive to accessibility, Santiago de Compostela provides a clear example of how small changes can increase participation notably.

Likewise, the essential nature of pilgrimage as both a spiritual and a physical experience of nature and culture means that it can be used as a community-building activity or as a tool with which to relieve the impacts of social injustice.

Green Pilgrimage is based on the democratic values of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and mutual respect. A warm welcome at a Pilgrimage Welcome Centre, providing practical and pastoral support, awaits the weary traveller.

## 9 Technological opportunities

*The added value of digitalisation should be recognised and future planning for pilgrimage should keep an eye on emerging innovations.*

The rise of digital media presents new opportunities for enhancing the experience of pilgrimage, and we advise Green Pilgrimage projects to pursue opportunities to develop resources which do not disrupt or disturb the spiritual journey of a pilgrim along a route, but rather assist the pilgrim with:

- GPS-based map systems
- comprehensive practical information (e.g. where to eat, sleep, find fresh water, bins, toilets, etc.)
- contextual information (e.g. what to see, heritage, ecology, landscape information, opening hours)
- pastoral and spiritual resources
- accessibility information
- other contextually appropriate information

Digital platforms offer a more flexible means of providing for the diverse needs of pilgrims without introducing heavy infrastructure into the environment, and can be updated more easily, too.

It is important that partner authorities stay abreast of technological innovations that could enhance the visitor experience and ease the burden of monitoring and maintenance.

## 10 Putting the 'green' in Green Pilgrimage

*Invest in advertising and promotion that encourage sustainable choices.*

Advertising and promotion should speak to local identity and authenticity, and should be consolidated under a single, managed and recognisable brand identity.

Partner routes have strong branding and brand recognition, and the route symbol should be a prominent and regular (albeit not intrusive) feature of a pilgrimage. Moreover, the symbol should aim to include an element of 'authenticity', speaking to the route in particular. Inappropriate usage should be discouraged with appropriate enforcement measures with which



to prevent a loss of trust. While it is easier for one organisation to take responsibility for a brand/symbol, it can be equally effective if a common agreement on the usage of a symbol is enforced for transregional/national routes.

Local community and outreach events, especially those led by the community, such as those detailed above, are vital vehicles through which to raise awareness and ownership at a local level.

## 11 Knowledge is paramount

*Commit to monitoring wellbeing sustainability and demand profiles.*

Monitoring is essential to success, and indicators based on an overall vision or strategy will allow deploying the right resources in the right places so as to ensure that a route's brand image is maintained and the sustainable principles behind a project are upheld.

While each routeway will be slightly different, quantitative and qualitative monitoring indicators should include economic, social and environmental measures. Monitoring will be undertaken by the organisation responsible for a route; however, monitoring indicators should be consistent with those of the body with statutory responsibility.

The development of specialised tools and technologies with which to monitor sustainability could enhance responsiveness and mitigate the risk of negative impacts of economic activities upon natural and cultural resources. This requires an integrated approach and active participation.

## Policy Learning Transferability

The Green Pilgrimage project has not only involved partners in six regions across five countries, but also drawn on good practice and experience elsewhere in Europe, too.

The history of pilgrimage has much in common across the continent, as does recent experience of long-distance walking; therefore, in spite of differing levels of infrastructure, investment, information and management, Green Pilgrimage has lessons which can be of benefit to any region wishing to explore and exploit the potential of their routes.

The preceding section, which outlines key policy and delivery areas in which action could be beneficial, can be picked up and adapted by other organisations within the public, private and voluntary sectors across Europe that are wishing to establish Green Pilgrimage routes or improve an existing offer.

### Policy Transferability Pilot Study, Kent, UK

This section provides additional evidence and guidance as an extended case study in order to demonstrate an example of transferability. It offers a model for the improvement of Green Pilgrimage delivery for use by Kent County Council (KCC) (as the lead partner of the Green Pilgrimage project), its affiliates, district and parish councils, community groups, and others.

Providing Cultural Context: Long-Distance Walking Routes and the British Experience

- Wales Coast Path generates £16 million of GVA per annum
- Yields £57 for every £1 spent
- South West Coastal Path yields £436 million per annum for regional economy
- Sustains 10,610 FTE jobs
- England's 16 long-distance National Trails bring £533 million of direct expenditure to economy and more than 83 million visitors per annum

Walking has for decades been recognised as the main form of countryside recreation in the UK (Patmore 1972) and its popularity has been

greatly enhanced by the network of long-distance footpaths that cross the country (public rights of way). Implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), with its increased 'right to roam' across open countryside, has only increased opportunities for this leisurely pursuit, along with the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009).

As an island nation, the challenge of coastal management has long been an issue, and a new way of ensuring effective oversight and maintenance of the intersecting activities affecting the country's coastal landscapes was brought in by the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009), which, while addressing issues such as coastal erosion, also obliged the integration of a navigable footpath along the coast.

The Wales Coast Path (WCP), which was opened in 2012, stretches for 1,400km around the coast of Wales. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) manages the path and in 2013 it published a report on the economic impact of expenditure by visitors to the WCP. The report concluded that the WCP generated approximately £16 million (or €18 million) of gross value added to the Welsh economy in 2013, while £1 spent yields £57 back through tourist expenditure in Pembrokeshire alone. The economic value of long-distance walking is part of why the UK Government allocated funding of £5 million per annum for an even more ambitious programme for the completion of an England Coastal Path, which, upon completion in 2020, will be the longest managed and waymarked coastal path in the world.



This project is no mean feat in a context in which the maximum length of existing coastal public rights of way was only 3km. However, with multiparty and cross-sectoral support, the project is on course to meet its objectives, as follows:

- Create a secure, continuous, clearly waymarked, well-managed route
- Establish the National Trail brand and funding
- Attract tourists by spending money, providing an international draw
- Reconnect people with their local coast
- Reduce liability on coastal access land
- Better management of sites
- Provide a unique and straightforward way to deal with coastal change (rollback)

The South West Coastal Path (SWCP) forms part of this wider project, the creation of which has achieved longer tourist visits along with increased visitor expenditure. The SWCP yields £436 million per annum for the regional economy, and is estimated to sustain 10,610 FTE jobs (including in some of the more remote and inaccessible areas) (SWCP, 2014). Trail partnerships have secured further ongoing funding for related social infrastructure while achieving a number of health, well-being and nature objectives. The SWCP is considered a 'cultural corridor' with a wealth of historic, artistic and cultural heritage to explore, being one of England's **16 long-distance National Trails which bring £533 million of direct expenditure to the economy and more than 83 million visitors per annum** (National Trails, 2019).

The influential Lonely Planet series of travel guides lists England, in the UK, as the second best tourism destination in the world for 2020, specifically addressing its rich and diverse offer (including castles, cathedrals, villages and countryside accessible by foot/bike). There are clear opportunities to capitalise on a project increase in visitor interest through the promotion of Green Pilgrimage routes that show our assets off to their maximum.

## Pilgrimage as a Modern Heritage Activity

The histories of medieval pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela have occupied a primary place of scholarly investigation for several decades now, forming part of the broader interest in modern tourism, conservation, and interfaith sectors. In the UK, however, the notion of pilgrimage is almost inseparable from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, which charts the journey of a band of medieval pilgrims between London and Canterbury Cathedral to visit the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, through the allegorical tales that they tell in order to pass the time. The bulk of this 66-mile journey runs through Kent, and the North Downs Way – also known as the Pilgrims' Way, running between Winchester and Canterbury – marks another important ancient routeway, providing landscapes that in many cases have been unchanged since the medieval period.

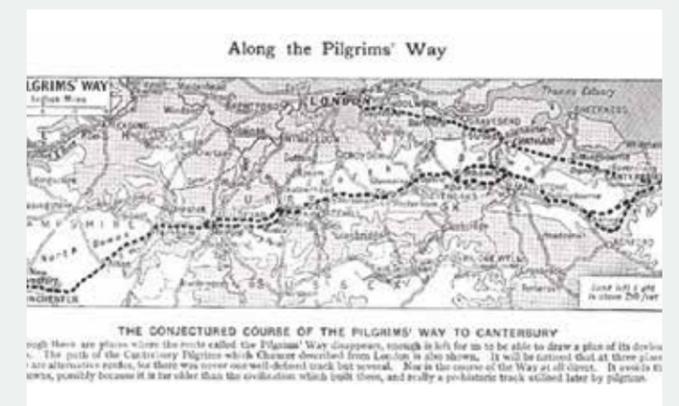


Figure 24: Conjectured course of the Pilgrims' Way to Canterbury

Pilgrimage routes in Kent form part of the rich tapestry of heritage routes permeating the county, which include Roman roads, drovers' paths, and sunken routeways. Kent's settlement pattern is fundamentally linked to the types of movements and the connections made along these ancient routeways, e.g. through the seasonal migration of North and East Kent farmers to the Weald (Everitt, 1986). These heritage routes continue to connect their travellers with the immense variety of cultural and natural assets that define the county. However, there is an immense opportunity to enhance their use in order to benefit local communities through sustainable tourism, while ensuring that the fundamental value of these routes is not lost.

## Applying Key Lessons in Kent

Building on the lessons identified during the Green Pilgrimage programme, the following table proposes means and rationales for the implementation of the main recommendations in Kent.

Key Lesson	Suggested Modes of Implementation
<b>1</b> Governance	<p>In Kent, existing partnerships and governance arrangements are well established with a clear division of roles and responsibilities. Management of National Trails is the formal responsibility of Natural England but is integrated into the Kent Downs and High Weald AONB units. These units are formally part of Kent County Council (KCC) and receive financial contributions from district councils.</p> <p>To take pilgrimage forward, new governance models need to be established that bring together governments, churches, faiths, academia, grassroots organisations, and residents in shared pilgrimage growth strategies.</p>
<b>2</b> Engagement	<p>An agreed engagement strategy bringing together best practice of events, communication, and promotion of pilgrimage (including a shared and consistent message between partners). Residents, churches, governments, NGOs and academia should all be in broad agreement.</p>
<b>3</b> Cultural Routes Are Diverse	<p>Cross-regional and international engagement of partners and communities is vital. Kent's existing cooperation with the Nord-Pas de Calais region is a clear advantage in providing logical continuity to the Via Francigena route, ensuring a distinctive yet complementary cultural offer and standardised quality along it.</p>
<b>4</b> Rural Economic Lifeline	<p>Given the demonstrable impact of pilgrimage upon rural tourism, there is an opportunity for parish council involvement by way of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC), as well as business support and guidance for rural start-ups and scale-ups from the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.</p> <p>However, this should be situated within a coordinated focus on destination quality and maintaining a sense of place. Community centres and village halls could accommodate local welcome centres during high season, and local people and organisations could assist in monitoring visitor numbers.</p>
<b>5</b> Authenticity	<p>Authenticity stems from two components. The first component is located in local (involvement in) governance so that people who live locally hold agency in promoting community narratives. The second is evidential and requires a technically led (value-based) assessment of material and immaterial heritage, which takes into account natural heritage. In many Kent districts, heritage strategies have been adopted. The valuable information contained therein is a useful resource.</p>
<b>6</b> Territorial Planning	<p>The territorial and land use planning system in each country has a fundamental role to play in ensuring that development that does not conserve and enhance natural and heritage assets is not located close to pilgrimage routes. In Kent, KCC is responsible for minerals and waste planning, while districts are responsible for most other development</p> <p>To this end, there is already a recognition that public rights of way and their settings should be protected; the maintenance of these is a fundamental determining factor in the majority of local Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs). Upon the UK's exit from the European Union, an equivalent screening process should retain such protections.</p>

<b>7</b> Route Management	<p>Existing management of National Trails in Kent is comprehensive and quality-led. Nevertheless, in the context of ever-deeper cuts in public spending, there is a greater need for partnership working with the private sector in order to continue to achieve and maintain such internationally renowned quality standards. In this context, trail managers must act as project managers, coordinating partners and interests.</p>
<b>8</b> Marketing and Communications	<p>Pilgrimage in Kent is an ancient tradition that is deeply culturally rooted in the county. However, associations are sometimes (incorrectly) made between pilgrimage, High-Church Anglicanism, and a moneyed clientele. Pilgrimage is, in fact, for everyone, regardless of your age, religious inclination, profession, income or even level of activity.</p>
<b>9</b> Technological Opportunities	<p>National Trail data and KCC's public rights of way map are already available online in user-friendly interfaces and apps. The easy availability of route data is highly important at all stages of a pilgrim's journey, yet in many sections there is immense potential to provide additional information on local heritage sites and other assets meriting a stop or detour. Local communities and groups should be encouraged, via open access to data, to be creative when it comes to the digital dissemination of pilgrimage opportunities.</p>
<b>10</b> Putting the 'Green' in Green Pilgrimage	<p>Kent's image as the 'Garden of England' means that the county's rural tourist product is already well established. As part of Visit Kent's promotional activities, and in line with emerging ecotourism endeavours, the concept of Green Pilgrimage should be promoted. In addition to this, high-quality routeways should be highlighted and environmental credentials of pilgrims should be encouraged. Visit Kent is also the best placed to assist in monitoring certain indicators.</p>
<b>11</b> Knowledge Is Paramount	<p>Given the potential of Green Pilgrimage as a sustainably balanced economic opportunity, monitoring is essential in order to be able to understand when and where resources should be used. A common characteristic of successful routes is the broad scope of monitoring activities, as well as investment decisions based thereupon. Visit Kent can collate general data, while visitor numbers along the route could comprise person counters and counts at welcome centres. This data should be analysed centrally by KCC or project coordinators.</p>

## Why Should Kent Apply These Lessons? Summary of Tourism in Kent

- Tourism is worth **£3.86 billion** to Kent economy
- Kent received **65 million** domestic and international visitors in 2017
- **£3,091 million** is spent annually by tourists visiting the county
- Tourism supports **76,852 jobs** either directly or indirectly
- But tourism is in decline locally – there was a **1% decrease in the volume of trips and expenditure** and a **2% decrease in overnight stays** between 2015 and 2017
- **Tourism in the wider southeast, and in England as a whole, is increasing**
- **The sector in Kent must diversify**

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy and has grown more quickly than global trade for the past six decades, according to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019). Europe remains by far the most visited continent, with a 5% annual growth and 710 million overnight stays in 2018. Tourism in Europe accounts for 10% of the total gross domestic product (GDP) and 12% of jobs, equating to 13 million workers (Ratcliff, 2017). The UK retained the 10th position in the world in 2018 for international tourist arrivals (36 million); meanwhile, the country received \$52 billion in tourism receipts (up to 2%).

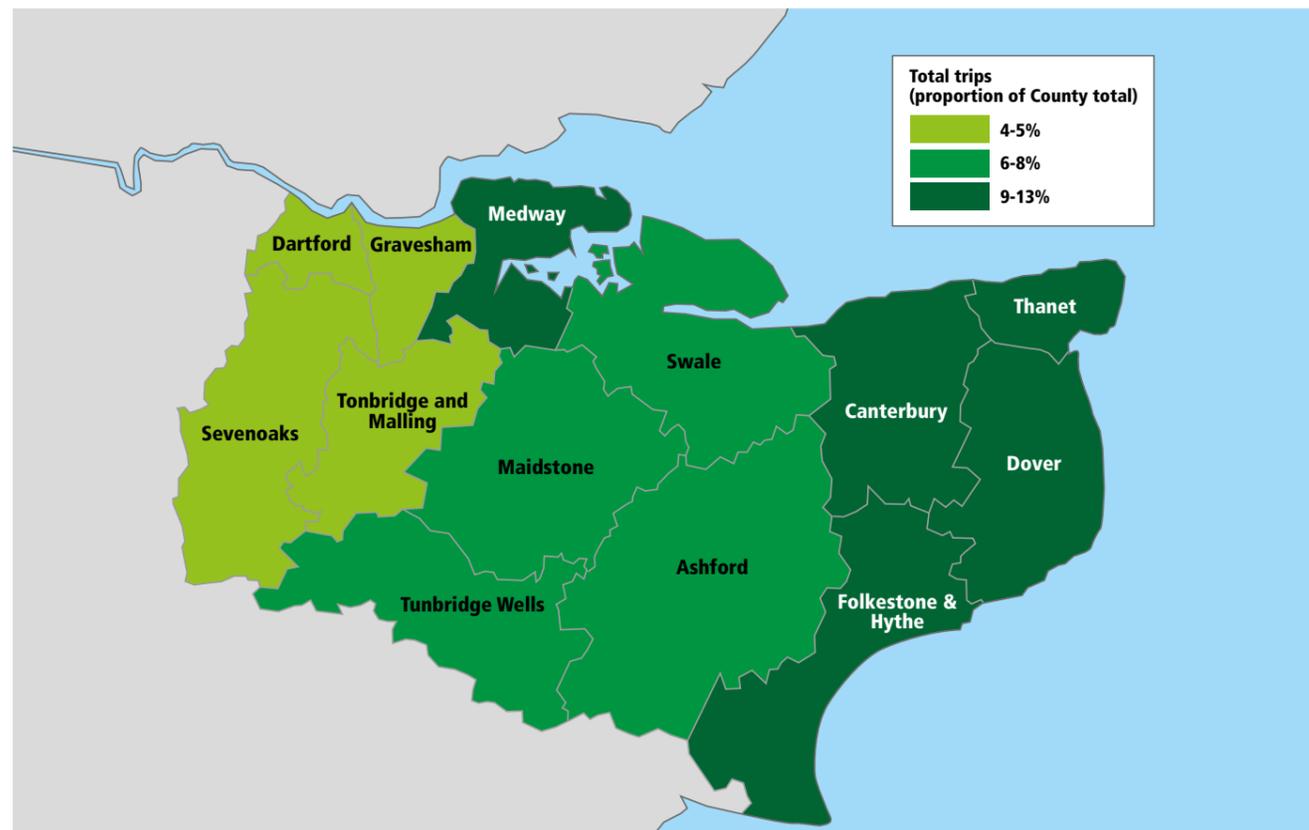


Figure 25: Total volume of trips in Kent (Visit Kent, 2018)

Tourism is worth £3.86 billion to the Kent economy, and the county received 65 million domestic and international visitors in 2017. Of these, 60.1 million visits were day trips. A total of £3,091 million was spent by tourists visiting the county; meanwhile, it was calculated that tourism supports 76,852 jobs either directly or indirectly (Visit Kent, 2018). However, these impressive figures obscure the mixed picture of tourism in Kent. In the context of an overall increase in domestic tourism in the wider southeast of England, Kent experienced a 1% decrease in the volume of trips between 2015 and 2017, while overnight stays were reduced by 2% and expenditure was also reduced by 1%. While this is better than the 2013–2015 results, it is reflective of a need to diversify and promote the local tourist offer. Meanwhile, while overseas visits to Kent increased by 4%, nights per trip by 11% and expenditure also by 4% between 2015 and 2017, these increases are substantially lower than the 2013–2015 results, as well as those for the wider southeast (Visit Kent, 2016).

There is a clear need not only to provide a means of diversifying the county's tourist offer, but also to achieve more of a spatial balance in order to attract tourists to branch out to other locations beyond coastal East Kent. There is convincing evidence that Green Pilgrimage can deliver balanced development across the county, delivering new opportunities and dynamism to the rural area in particular. Pilgrimage can serve to diversify the local tourism offer while, at the same time, re-establishing an ancient and locally relevant cultural practice so as to meet the needs of tourists seeking something that is authentically different.

## Conclusion

Pilgrimage as a cultural route is a growth opportunity for regional development based on heritage, nature, sustainability, tourism, and community development. Some regions have already dedicated significant regional investment to pilgrimage. Tuscany's regional authority made investments totalling €16 million for the development of the Via Francigena as a cultural route in 2009 and have since witnessed a €3 return on every €2 invested. The Galician Regional Government has invested €56.1 million in the St. James Way pilgrimage route, with a return on investment expected to be €650 million.

Pilgrimage development needs increased market research, monitoring, and grounding in authentic regional heritage. Italian and Spanish evidence shows that investment brings significant returns that evenly spread benefits across regional economies disproportionately when compared to conventional tourism offers. Spanish research shows that each pilgrim has the equivalent economic impact to that of 2.3 domestic visitors, with a higher average stay and expenditure and a preference for local produce, and that each euro spent by a pilgrim provides an extra 11% to additional output and 18% to additional employment.

This report documents the learning and achievements of the Green Pilgrimage project financed by the European Regional Development Fund Interreg Europe programme.

This report offers guidance to Green Pilgrimage partners with respect to implementing their pilgrimage action plans.

This report offers guidance to stakeholders and regional development policymakers with regard to utilising the power of pilgrimage to develop a sustainable tourism product of the future that is embedded in a shared heritage.

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

United Nations World Tourism Organisation

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