

Deliverable 5.1: Ways to Rome – First pilot report

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This document summarizes the motivation, goals and plans of the pilot on the ways to Rome, including a description of the preparations made and the actions conducted in 2021, as well as a breakdown of the actions planned for 2022 and 2023 and estimates for the Key Performance Indicators put forward in Deliverable 2.1 (“Common strategies for pilots”).



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1. Summary of pilot goals

The success in the recovery of the Way of Saint James has led associations and administrations in Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany and Austria to recover some of the medieval itineraries to Rome through their signage, the edition of maps and guides, as well as the adaptation of the accommodation infrastructure. The rurAllure pilot on the Ways to Rome focuses on three major routes, aiming to supplement their ongoing promotion with the added value provided by the vast heritage treasured by the traversed rural areas:

- **Via Romea Germanica** (henceforth, VRG).
- **Via Francigena** (VF).
- **Via Romea Strata** (VRS).

Work Package 5 is the result of the coordinated contribution of six different partners of rurAllure: University of Bologna (UNIBO, WP leader), University of Padua (UNIPD), IUAV University in Venice (IUAV), Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), Fondazione Homo Viator (FHV, managing body of the Via Romea Strata) and European Association of the Via Francigena (AEVF, the international managing body of the Via Francigena cultural route). The Italian and German Associations of Via Romea Germanica have been involved as associated partners, through the collaboration strategy described in Deliverable 2.1 (“Common strategies for pilots”).

In order to maximise the professional and expertise contribution of each partner to the goals set by the project, the actions targeting the three different pilot areas of WP5 have been divided among the six partners as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of work among the WP5 partners.

	UNIBO	UNIPD, IUAV	UAM	AEVF	FHV	VRG ASSO- CIATIONS
Coordination and methodology development	X					
Thermal heritage identification and description		X	X			
Stakeholders' engagement	X			X	X	
Questionnaires and surveys to pilgrims	X			X	X	X
Vendors' engagement	X			X	X	X
Narratives development		X	X			
Communication				X		

The three transnational pilgrimage ways have a different history and development path and are therefore **in totally different phases of their lifecycle**:



- Via Francigena was recognised as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe over 20 years ago and is based on a wide network of public entities.
- The activities of Via Romea Germanica started informally a decade ago and gained the Council of Europe recognition in 2020. Its network is also including NGOs and walkers associations.
- Via Romea Strata was created thanks to a direct involvement of religious bodies and public administrations and is currently developing its certification dossier.

So far, the three routes have commonly pursued similar goals in isolation and this is the reason why the rurAllure network and platform will provide common foundations for facing common challenges, such as signage, safety and security, service standards, but also narratives and experiences for pilgrims and travellers. Spatial planning remains the responsibility of public administrations, therefore the WP5 pilot segments will pay particular attention to both, **stakeholders' engagement** (in order to harmonise their interventions across borders) and **pilgrims' experience**, with the aim of better coordinating accommodation, mobility and services.

The regions crossed by the three pilgrimage trails in Italy are rich in cultural heritage, but in order to promote peer-to-peer coaching and best practices exchanges among the routes and local stakeholders involved in the pilot, specific attention will be paid to thermal heritage, which is attested in various ways, from rituals to architecture, from Antiquity to the current era. As it will be explained in the following sections, water-related heritage is a key asset throughout the entire itineraries of the routes, allowing the development of new narratives and interpretations of the rural environment pilgrims are crossing by walking, biking or horse riding.

To test rural development strategies, slow mobility facilities and stakeholder engagement, as well as new cultural tourism products, the WP5 partners have identified **three different pilot areas (one per pilgrimage route)** where to deliver actions, with the intent of organising before the end of rurAllure an international meeting showcasing the results achieved both individually by each route, but also the actions taken to solve challenges which might be transversal.

2. The ways to Rome: Starting point for the pilot

Prior to reviewing –among others– the history, the territories traversed and their main heritage assets, it is important to highlight that on September 11th, 2021 the **leading representatives of the three routes signed a Memorandum of Understanding in order to join forces and better coordinate the efforts** in terms of promotion, development of service standards and recognition towards the key stakeholders in Rome, whose involvement and role in pilgrimage management once in the Holy land still shows some critical aspects (Figure 1). The memorandum, prepared by the AEVF, embraces collaboration for development of common strategies and actions focused on provision of high-quality experience to pilgrims.

The meeting was attended by the three routes' presidents: Massimo Tedeschi (Via Francigena), Flavio Foietta (Via Romea Germanica) and Don Raimondo Sinibaldi (Via Romea Strata), as well as Vatican religious representatives, including Cardinal Pietro Parolin (Vatican Secretary of State), Monsignor Maurizio Bravi (Holy See observer at the World Tourism Organization – UNWTO– and at the European Institute of Cultural Routes). A special blessing from Cardinal Parolin was given to the attendees of this important meeting that represents a first step towards ever more fruitful and harmonious collaborations between these historical paths, milestones of the European culture.



Figure 1. Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the three routes.

During the event, it was noted that greater synergy between the three roads to Rome will lead to wider promotion of heritage and hidden gems scattered along them. Besides, the necessity of improving the pilgrims' arrival in Rome was highlighted, as it is crucial to respond adequately to the growing flow of walkers and providing them with a high-quality welcome from technical, logistical and spiritual points of view.

History

History of Via Romea Germanica

The Via Romea Germanica was the most important connection between Rome and the Germanic empires for many centuries. Its itinerary represents the most important historical "monument" of Germany from Stade through Austria to Northern Italy and the "eternal city", Rome. It is an international pilgrimage route on the same level as the Via Francigena and the Camino de Santiago, becoming the new reference for all walkers from northern Europe and beyond, who are discovering and appreciating in ever-increasing numbers the beauty and variety of its path from the cultural and natural point of view.

The name of the Cultural Route Via Romea Germanica links together both the historical and cultural context. Concerning the etymology, VIA ROMEA is the way to Rome; "GERMANICA" means that this way goes south from the north with its peoples speaking a Germanic language: Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, Low German, High German, or a German dialect: Frankish, Swabian and Bavarian. The term "German" derives from "Germanic" (as a language group). Thus "Germanica" means from the "Germanic North".

From the historical point of view, the Route of the Via Romea Germanica is the journey described in his *Annales* by Abbot Albert from Stade. Albert was born around the end of the 12th century and in 1232 he became Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of the Holy Virgin Mary of Stade, an important Hansa port situated in the estuary of the river Elbe, in Germany. Here he engaged in the writing of some theological works, and the so-called *Annales*, a Chronicle in Latin of the most important ecclesiastical and political events to his days. A chapter in this work is a fictional dialogue between two monks (Tirri and Firri), regarding the best pilgrimage routes to Rome. In this dialogue, told as a story, as it was customary in the Middle Ages, the abbot



suggests various routes with precise information on places and distances to be covered, on the conditions of roads, and the length of the various stages in German miles. The proposed trip was called by Abt Albert as the “Melior Via” for Northern travellers to Rome. The original manuscript is preserved in the Herzog August Library of Wolfenbüttel in Germany. The Via Romea Germanica was therefore an historical communication path which contributed to the cultural unity of Europe during the centuries.

History of Via Francigena

The Via Francigena is an ancient pilgrimage route whose first references date back to the 7th century. The route served as a principal connection between Northern and Southern Europe and allowed transportation of goods, commerce and trade, armies, pilgrims and facilitated travel. The word Francigena in Latin means “originated from France”, which in Medieval times meant the area of current France, the Rhein Valley and the Netherlands.

The route connected Canterbury to Rome and continued along the more ancient Roman routes to the harbours of the Mediterranean Sea in Italian Apulia, on the tip of the heel of the Italian peninsula. The Via contributed greatly to the spread of ideas, techniques, religious beliefs, goods in Europe, as well as facilitated urbanisation, since towns and villages were founded along the way as stopovers and trading centres.

History of Via Romea Strata

The Romea Strata since the 4th century has been one of the most important road arteries to lead pilgrims from Eastern Europe to Jerusalem, and in the following centuries to Rome and Santiago de Compostela. This road has been known since 1600 BC, as a commercial route for the transport of amber, a fossil resin that was extracted on the areas bordering the Baltic Sea and transported to Alexandria in Egypt by the will of the pharaohs, by land at the port of Metaponto in Basilicata and then by sea to Egypt. Along this way, also the Veneto Region was involved. In fact, the site of Frattesina near Rovigo was one of the most important emporia of the Late Bronze age in the Mediterranean area, where the amber was worked and sold to local and Greek merchants.

During the Roman age, the segment of the Romea Strata from Aquileia to Adria (and over) coincided with the Via Annia, the consular road dated in 153 BC. This road was largely used in order to link Rome to Aquileia and vice versa, reaching some important ancient towns, among which in the Veneto Region the site of Altinum (where now there is the National Archaeological Museum and an archaeological area open to public), as well as minor sites, like the Euganean Area with the thermal sites known as “Aquae Patavinae”.

Later, the Romea Strata was used for the transport of salt and minerals from Poland to Italy and finally with the Roman Empire it was assumed as an artery of communication, of trade but also of military campaigns. It is only with the edict of Constantine of 313 AD, which opens up to religious freedom, that the Romea Strata becomes a pilgrimage route to the Holy Land.

The Romea Strata was crossed by many illustrious personalities: scientists and astronomers such as Copernicus and Galileo Galileo. It is also important in fostering inter-religious ecumenical dialogue between Protestants (numerous throughout Northern Europe), Jews (who are an important presence both in Lithuania and in Poland) and the Catholic world.

In Italy, the Romea Strata follows the ancient system of roads that led from northeast of Italy to Rome. It involves five Italian regions, for over 1300 km. The route is divided into ten sections, whose names recall the territories and ancient routes travelled. It represents a real crossroads of transit for pilgrims coming from Austria and the East through Aquileia (in Friuli Venezia



Giulia) who continue towards Jerusalem, towards Rome through Postumia way and towards Santiago proceeding on the Emilia way. It therefore constitutes a sort of “religious time machine” that strengthens the faith, through a real geography of salvation.

A seminar on “The pilgrimage routes to Rome, Santiago and Jerusalem through the North-East of Italy” held in Vicenza in March 2013, brought out the historical basis for the study of these ancient routes, providing a methodology for the realization of the project.

Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders of Via Romea Germanica

The Via Romea Germanica was officially inaugurated in December 2018 in Bolzano with the creation of the eponymous European Association. The headquarters of the [European Association Via Romea Germanica](#) (EAVRG) are seated at the Tourism Board (office open to the public) of the city of Bolzano (Bozen) as the project is supported by the city council and the city administration. Staff will be at the disposal of the public for any information related to the Via and its itinerary. Brochures, official guides, maps and a series of touristic products organising the journey in different steps are available at the headquarters in different languages. This is the managing association for the route that piloted its recognition as a [Cultural Route of the Council of Europe](#) in 2020. Furthermore, the EAVRG has a second operational seat located in the municipality of Santa Sofia, with 3 offices where it is possible to receive all information and promotional materials. The seat of Santa Sofia is also the seat of the Italian VRG Association.

Thanks to the EAVRG, the Via Romea Germanica is today a cultural and sustainable tourism project revitalising a historical route at the benefit to everyone who likes to discover history and enjoy nature and slowly rediscover local identities and local heritage for cultural, tourism, sport or spiritual purpose. Fiorella Dallari, a former staff member of the University of Bologna is part of the Scientific Committee of the Association.

The project actively involves more than 50 European municipalities (public bodies) which are member of the VRG Associations and their tourism offices but also natural parks (public), territorial bodies as regions and provinces, public/private consortiums as Local Action Groups (recognised by Leader or Interreg programmes), local walkers associations and cultural associations, etc. operating all together to valorise this part of European heritage.

- Currently 41 Italian municipalities plus 4 public bodies are effective Members of the VRG (the full list can be found at <http://www.viaromeagermanica.com/en/>).
- In Germany, thanks to the Romweg Association, the EAVRG gathers 25 members: 16 municipalities, local tourism offices and public service companies (the full list can be found at <http://www.viaromea.de/en/association/>).
- In Austria, the Jerusalemweg/Jerusalem Way is mainly an association of individual pilgrims, nevertheless some municipalities have expressed their intent to formally enter the EAVRG and the agreement is ongoing (the VRG crosses 7 Austrian municipalities, namely Scharmits, Innsbruck, Seefeld, Patsch, Gries, Matrei, Zirl).

Key stakeholders of Via Francigena

Via Francigena is managed by the [European Association of the Via Francigena](#) (AEVF, a rurAllure partner), certified “Carrier Network of the Via Francigena cultural route” by the Council of Europe in 2007. This is a non-profit organisation created in 2001 that currently represents 200 entities (including municipalities, provinces and regions), 80 non-profit organisations in England, France, Switzerland and Italy and more than 400 private stakeholders



in hospitality and tourism sectors. The complete list can be found at <https://www.viefrancigene.org/en/ordinary-members/>.

The AEVF has a bottom-up approach that fosters the relationships between the actors involved in the enhancement of the route, connecting all institutions from the local to the European level. It actively works on protection and enhancement of the whole European stretch and promotion of the European values of intercultural dialogue, understanding and highlighting of common to Europe heritage.

Since 2017, AEVF has been equipped with a limited liability operative structure (Ltd): **Francigena Service S.r.l.**, with the aim to flank the institutional activity with activities and services of an entrepreneurial nature in regard to the suppliers of the Via Francigena and those who operate within the territories crossed by or in the network of the Via Francigena ways.

Key stakeholders of Via Romea Strata

In Italy, the initiative of Via Romea Strata was conceived and promoted by the **Homo Viator Foundation** of Vicenza (a rurAllure partner) which is currently the owner and coordinator of the project at national level. The network that supports the Foundation in developing the itinerary involves regions, municipalities, universities, dioceses and several associations and experts on rediscovery of ancient pilgrimage routes.

At the European level, the Romea Strata is managed by **European Association Romea Strata (AERS)**. The AERS was founded in 2018 by the 30 founding members coming from the states crossed by the route: Poland, Czech Republic, Austria and Italy. The members work together to promote this great pilgrimage route and to create awareness of its historical context, the places of faith and spirituality located along the itinerary, the cultural and religious heritage that characterizes it, and the beauty of the natural landscape through which it winds its way. AERS currently has over 50 members: LAGs, municipalities, associations of walkers, dioceses, foundations, universities and tourism organisations. The complete list can be found at <https://www.romeastrata.org/aers/>.

Geographical coverage

Figure 2 shows a map of the three routes:

- The official Via Romea Germanica comprises a linear path across 2.200 km: 1.092 km in Germany, 83 km in Austria and 1.046 through six Italian regions; it crosses a total of 119 municipalities.
- The Via Francigena stretches 2.240,5 km from Canterbury (United Kingdom) to Rome and 900 km from Rome to Santa Maria di Leuca along the Via Francigena of the South. It crosses 657 municipalities and 17 regions in 5 countries (United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Italy, and the Vatican City State).
- The Romea Strata stretches 4.044 km from Tallinn (Estonia) to Rome, crossing 7 countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria and Italy. In Italy there are 1.400 km of paths (main route and other branches) that cross more than 200 municipalities in 6 regions.



Figure 2. The system of the three ways to Rome.

Relationship with other routes

Via Romea Germanica's relationship with other routes

The Via Romea Germanica is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe since 2020 and aims to support awareness raising about cultural and spiritual heritage, sacred and religious values. After crossing Central Europe and North Italy passing through the Brenner, connects to the Via Francigena in Montefiascone to reach the final destination in Rome. The same happens with the Romea Strata in its Venetian part, and other pilgrimage routes such as that of Sant'Antonio and Atrium. Since 2015 a joint pilgrimage has also been organized with St. Olav's ways.

The Stade itinerary describes two alternative routes for the outward journey (see Figure 3): one entering France, and following the footsteps of Via Francigena, and another running along the Rhine valley, which crosses several branches of the Way of Saint James. The VRG intends therefore to complete the map of European pilgrimage routes with a missing tile in the puzzle of the "Cammini" of Europe.



Figure 3. Diagram map by Herbert Kruger from a study of Albert's guide to the itineraries to Rome.

Via Francigena's relationship with other routes

As a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, the AEVF keeps contact with other cultural routes, especially on benchmarking and exchange of best practices. It maintains working relations with relevant pilgrimage and cultural routes (Via del Volto Santo, Abbot's Way, Via degli Dei, Materano route).

The AEVF also has cooperation agreements with the French Hiking Federation (FR), the Association Via Francigena France (FR) and the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome (UK). The AEVF works with local associations for route animation, maintenance and the conservation of the route and has gathered them under the Trails Angels and Friends Associations networks.

Via Romea Strata's relationship with other routes

The Romea Strata has numerous relationships with other pilgrimage routes:

- In the Baltic republics, the itinerary follows the regional Ways of St. James.
- In Austria, the itinerary overlaps with different local pilgrimages (Jakobsweg, Martinusweg, Via Sacra, Mariazeller Gründerweg, Hemma Pilgerweg Route, Marienpilgerweg). For this reason, the association that represents them (ARGE Pilgern in Kärnten) is a member of the AERS.
- There is also an agreement with the European Cultural Route of Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius as it has a common segment in the Czech Republic.
- In Italy, the Romea Strata grafted onto the Via Francigena to reach Rome at San Miniato, and it has also an agreement with the Way of Saint Anthony.



Key locations and cultural assets

Key locations and cultural assets of Via Romea Germanica

The Via Romea Germanica was born as an intercultural and interreligious project linking together two main European cultural identities: The Germanic identity in the North and Central Europe and the Italic identity in the South. Concerning religions, the Via Romea Germanica has fully involved the Catholic belief (Italy, Germany and Austria) and the Lutheran faith (Germany). These long-lasting exchanges have been stated from the early beginning of the Romweg Association. One of the key locations is Bolzano, and the choice of it as the seat of the EAVRG is more than symbolic as it endorses the meeting of the “two Europes” (Centre-North and South) so that a “European Nation” can be developed.

Important tangible heritage located near the paths of Romea Germanica include cathedrals, churches, shrines, monasteries, hospitals, hostels, historical centers, cultural districts, archaeological sites (WHS, National Heritage) and other cultural assets (museums, libraries, old academies, open archives and so on). Intangible heritage is not less rich, including rituals, oral traditions, religious festivals, patronal feasts, urban pilgrimages and others. Pilgrims can appreciate the cultural landscapes (rural and urban) of Lower Saxony plains, the Turingia Forest, the Alps, along the Po Delta, Comacchio Wetlands (WHS), Ravenna’s Littoral Pinewoods (WHS), the Apennine Hills and Mountains (Casentino Forests National Park), the Tuscan Hills (WHS), the Umbrian Plain, the Lakes of Central Italy, and the Agro Romano unto Rome, with the Basilica of Saint Peter and Saint Paul (WHS).

Many are the reference points that show a millenary religious, artistic and cultural history in an overall buffering area of 54.600 km² in Germany, 4.150 km² in Austria and 52.300 km² in Italy, studded with exceptional thermal heritage sites.

Key locations and cultural assets of Via Francigena

The Via Francigena boasts a wealth of natural tourist attractions and a rich and diverse cultural heritage, especially in architecture: cathedrals, churches, museums, historic bridges, hospitals, hostels, vernacular buildings and rural architecture. Beautiful landscapes vary from country to country, including vineyards and fields, rural areas, forests, etc. From Rome, the route continues to the harbours of Apulia, in the south of Italy, to provide a travel opportunity to reach Jerusalem via Greece, the Balkans and Turkey.

Some samples:

- In the United Kingdom, the Via starts in Canterbury, goes to Shepherdswell and continues to Dover, passing through Canterbury Historic Centre and Cathedral (a UNESCO World Heritage site), the Canterbury Roman Museum, Blean Woods National Nature Reserve and Wood Art Trail, Dover cliffs, etc.
- In France, the Via crosses the regions of Hauts-de-France, Grand-Est and Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, among others passing by Calais Historic centre, Arras Grand Place and its Cathedral, Cathedral of Reims, Fortifications of Vauban and Besançon Citadel (UNESCO World Heritage).
- In Switzerland, across the Cantons Vaud and Valais, the Via passes by Romainmôtier, one of most picturesque villages of Switzerland, Lausanne architecture and landscapes, avalanche-protection traditions (UNESCO Intangible Heritage) and use of Saint Bernard dogs to rescue people, St. Maurice Abbey (founded in 515, the monastery never stopped serving as a religious centre and a refuge) and its treasury.



- In Italy, across 10 regions, pilgrims can enjoy several UNESCO World Heritage sites: Ivrea, a historic industrial city; the historical centres of Lucca and Siena; Val d'Orcia cultural landscapes; the City of Rome and Vatican City, etc. Pizza and the Mediterranean Diet are examples of UNESCO intangible heritage encountered along the Via Francigena.

Key locations and cultural assets of Via Romea Strata

The Romea Strata goes through numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites, as well as several candidate sites. In Italy there is Venice and its lagoon, the city of Vicenza and the Palladian villas in the Veneto Region, Padua and its Botanical Garden, the Scrovegni Chapel and the 14th century frescoes; Modena, the Aquileia Archaeological Area and the Patriarchal Basilica or the city of Verona. Also to mention the Dolomites Mountains, the pile-dwelling sites of Laghetto della Costa in Arquà Petrarca and Tombola in Cerea; the Medici villas and gardens in Tuscany (Villa di Cerreto Guidi in Cerreto Guidi and Villa La Magia in Quarrata); the Venetian Defense Works, such as the City-Fortress of Palmanova; and the Lombard Heritage related sites.

Concerning UNESCO MAB sites it is worth mentioning Miramare, the Po delta park, the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines and the Ledrensi and Judicaria Alps (23 km between Riva del Garda and Rovereto).

Current status of development and promotion

Current status of Via Romea Germanica

The Via Romea Germanica is managed since 2018 by the European Association Via Romea Germanica in collaboration with three national associations working together since 2008 and with the support of the German Landers, the Tyrolean Bundesland, and the Italian Regions. Municipalities and districts collaborate in increasing numbers, stimulated by the economic and cultural opportunities they expect to benefit from the project.

The EAVRG has already actively involved the media to draw attention to their European heritage and on the theme of sustainable territorial development. It has established partnerships with tourism organisations to promote cultural tourism and slow tourism as a form of sustainable tourism to improve our quality of life. Tour operators and tourism products for various target groups have been developed in the Italian part of the route. Tourist products have been developed with tour operators such as “Pilgrim crossing borders”, bike tours with Simonetta in collaboration with the Emilia-Romagna region and Castrumcari (a Product club). Following this example, further products are to be developed along the entire route in the future, always maintaining a spiritual and sustainable religious approach.

In spite of its modest numbers, Romea Germanica is today a significant phenomenon in rural areas, in particular in the plains and especially in the German and Italian hilly areas. In many religious places along the way, data of a few thousand (2500/3000 in 2018) were recorded, compared to the few pilgrims who completed the entire route from Stade to Rome.

Current status of Via Francigena

The Via Francigena benefited from the rediscovery and flourishing of the Way of Saint James in the 1970s and 1980s, and so it also began to be studied and reopened to modern pilgrimages as a tool for sustainable development in the territories across the route. In 1994 it was declared a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. AEFV provides full-range services across the route. A wide accommodation offer is available, including pilgrims hostels and private facilities.



The AEVF pilgrim's passport provides advantages and discounts for accommodations and services along the path. AEVF has also developed an app and in collaboration with publishing houses published a few guidebooks.

In 2019, the Via Francigena received about 50.000 walkers, sold about 19.000 pilgrim passports and 15.000 guide books. The AEVF app was downloaded 25.000 times, the website www.viefrancigene.org registered 1 million visits and Francigena's Facebook profile reached 60K followers.

Current status of Via Romea Strata

In Italy, the itinerary of Via Romea Strata has been entirely mapped and traced with GPS. The road signs have been completed with special arrows and bulletin boards along the way. A walking guide and three bike guides have been published by Touring Club. There is also a specific guide which contains cultural and food and wine insights into three areas: Osttirol, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia and Vicenza. The new website about the entire route of Romea Strata (www.romeastrata.org) is online from January 2021. The communication was given to an external agency that manages the Newsletter, the Facebook page and the Instagram account. The Romea Strata has its own personalized credential that the pilgrim can use to collect the stage stamps.

In other countries the itinerary has been identified, mapped and traced with GPS; during the 2022 all the data will be uploaded in the new website.

AERS works in synergy with its Scientific Committee, which comprises university professors, researchers, and experts affiliated to research institutes and universities located along the route. The goal of the Scientific Committee is to study the itinerary from a multidisciplinary point of view, and its work is a driving force for the development of the route.

The "Romea Strata Pilgrimage Promotion Tour" is a pilgrimage event aimed at promoting the Romea Strata. In 2021, 1.000 kms were covered in 43 days, from May 16th to June 28th. This first event started from Velehrad and has finished in Aquileia, crossing the Czech Republic, Austria and Italy. Next year, the event will cover the Italian part that leads from Aquileia to Rome and in 2023 the Northernmost section of the itinerary will be covered, from the Baltic Sea to Velehrad.

Rural surroundings

Rural surroundings of Via Romea Germanica

The Via Romea Germanica crosses 11 regions and mainly develops in rural areas with low and aged population density if compared to the national share, with the exception of the 6 Italian regions. These regions show a good level of development in the context of an agricultural economy mainly oriented at the international market, with high availability of work, especially in the German part.

The VRG develops tourism in the hinterland, in suburban locations, not included in the traditional tourist circuits. Above all, it puts in value agritourism's, farms, cellars, mills and places of production and processing of typical products and handicrafts, which are involved in the development of route's brand too, as a cultural-tourism product. An experiential tourism which develops tourism in a sustainable way after people have visited places as pilgrims and have learned to know and to appreciate these products.

Via Romea Germanica has become an important factor for the rural development in many areas (e.g. South Tyrol) where tourism is poorly developed. New sources of income were opened up:



the dairies, wine cellars and oil mills are visited daily by pilgrims. The number of overnight stays in accommodation and the purchase of local/regional products will make the intensity of use verifiable. The arrival, albeit limited at the moment, of pilgrims and slow tourists represents a significant opportunity for accommodation, shopping and sustainable social wellbeing, especially in the hilly and mountainous areas with a density of 20-30 inhabitants/km².

Rural surroundings of Via Francigena

The Via Francigena crosses 17 regions and 657 municipalities in 5 countries and mostly traverses rural areas and small communities. More than 70% of the AEFV members are small villages and communities of villages, especially in France and Switzerland; in Italy the route crosses small towns and provinces uniting towns and villages.

The communities along the Via Francigena depend on agricultural activities and have a low population with a visible decrease of population because of the internal migration, mostly in the mountainous areas. Pilgrimage along the Via Francigena generates significant economic benefits to local communities in terms of creation of SMEs, provision of services and socio-cultural exchange.

Rural surroundings of Via Romea Strata

Romea Strata crosses in Italy 5 regions, 6 provinces and 186 municipalities. The areas crossed are characterised by multiple cultural, historical and productive traditions.

- In Friuli, for instance, some areas once agriculturally depressed, have seen a great industrial development over the years. Agriculture no longer has the importance of the past, but it is a leading sector, and viticulture has had great development. Cities are mainly dedicated to the tertiary sector. The territories are rich in “cities of art”, museums and shrines.
- In Veneto and Emilia the population is not homogeneously distributed; depopulation of large cities has occurred since the 1980s leading to significant urban development and today the resident population continues to grow due to immigration. These two regions are among the richest in Italy. Today Veneto is the seat of important industrial and tertiary activities. Agricultural activities are still significant, but small family-run businesses prevail, specialising in the food, textile, footwear and furniture sectors. Cooperatives are also widespread.

Nearby heritage missed by (most) pilgrims

Nearby heritage missed along Via Romea Germanica

Within 50 km from the main paths of Romea Germanica, all three countries show an important wealth of highly identifiable territorial characteristics. The following are just some of the sites that provide an insight into culture, traditions, history and lifestyles of territories crossed by a pilgrim along the VRG:

- **Germany:**
 - Ostfalen: a populated cultural landscape between Celle and Braunschweig.
 - Small villages and settlements past historic sites of world history.
 - Bergen-Belsen concentration camp memorial, where among the numerous victims we find the name of Anne Frank.
 - Thüringen: Homeland of Germany history.



- Franconian wine country area of bishops of Würzburg.
- **Austria:**
 - Innsbruck, with its churches and its 26 museums.
- **Italy:**
 - Po Delta Park: included in the WHS list annexed to “Ferrara, city of the Renaissance”, featuring several ducal residences which constitute a unique cultural and natural landscape.
 - The Gran Bosco della Mesola or the Pomposa Abbey (and museum, located in the ancient dormitory of the monks, a masterpiece in the Romanesque and Byzantine style with its characteristic bell tower.
 - The territory of Argenta, with an articulated eco-museum.
 - Veneto Regional Museum of Reclamation and coastal botanical garden.
 - San Basilio cultural tourist centre.
 - Porto Viro park’s visitor centre in the flood plain of Ca’ Pisani.
 - City of Loreo, the ancient “capital of the Delta”, bulwark of the southern borders of the Venetian Duchy, and a land with deep historical roots.
 - City of Adria, the oldest urban settlement in the area which houses the National Etruscan Museum.

Nearby heritage missed along Via Francigena

The following are just a few of the sites that provide an insight into culture, traditions, history and lifestyles of territories crossed by a pilgrim along the Via Francigena:

- **France:**
 - In Calais: Le Phare, a lighthouse from 1818 with a discovery room showcasing the history of lighthouses, beacons and maritime signals and the Museum of Lace and Fashion.
 - In Omer: Saint-Omer Notre-Dame Cathedral (13th-16th century), a fine example of Gothic architecture in the northern provinces of France.
 - In Besançon: Chailluz Forest, a stunning natural site from where quarries provided the chalky mottled stone from which the majority of old buildings in Besançon centre are made of, and their Thermal Baths.
 - In Grand Est Region: Historic wine cellars.
 - In Ornans: Museum of Gustave Courbet, a French realist painter.
- **Switzerland:**
 - Switzerland’s highest vineyard in the Valais region.
 - In Lausanne: Collection de l’Art Brut Museum: Works by more than 1.000 artists outside the mainstream creative community make up the collections.
 - Thermal towns of Yverdon-les-Bains, Lavey-les-Bains, and Saillon.
- **Italy:**



- In Piedmont: Vercelli rice fields and thermal town of Acqui Terme.
- In Lombardy: Thermal towns of Miradolo Terme and San Colombano.
- In Emilia-Romagna: Birthplace of the musician Giuseppe Verdi; thermal town of Salsomaggiore.
- Medesano thermal town of Sant'Andrea Bagni; city of Parma; circle of castles in the province of Parma.
- In Tuscany: Thermal towns of Gambassi Terme and Chianciano Terme; Cooperative Terme e Valle del Lucido, Fivizzano.
- Thermal town of Montecatini Terme (EHTTA Member); Terme di Montepulciano and Terme di Sorano; thermal baths and thermal towns of Equi Terme, Carlo Terme, Cinquale, Bagni di Lucca, Monsummano Terme, San Giuliano Terme, Bagno Vignoni, Bagni San Filippo and San Casciano.
- In Latium: Thermal town of Viterbo, Bagni di Stigliano and thermal baths of Bagni di Tivoli.

Nearby heritage missed along Via Romea Strata

The whole Romea Strata is rich in place of intense spirituality, many linked to the memories of significant saints, such as Sant'Antonio da Padova, San Zeno in Verona, San Giacomo in Pistoia, etc. Linked to Marian spirituality are Monte Berico, Barbana, Castelmonte, Madonna della Corona, etc. Places that are the driving forces of the primitive faith are also present: Aquileia with its extraordinary budding (52 dioceses are born from Aquileia) Concordia Sagittaria, Nonantola, Modena, etc. There is notable presence of the remains of two evangelists: San Marco in the Basilica of Venice and San Luca in Santa Giustina di Padova. In addition, the following places boast a cultural significance that helps to understand the historical value of the itinerary:

- Cercivento: mosaics, murals and frescoes on buildings and streets.
- Majano: Ancient Hospital of San Giovanni in San Tomaso and Pieve di Comerzo.
- Sesto al Reghena: ancient Benedictine abbey of Santa Maria in Sylvis.
- Concordia Sagittaria: Santo Stefano Cathedral with underlying archaeological excavations.
- Quarto d'Altino: Altino National Archaeological Museum.
- Monselice: the seven Roman churches of the Jubilee and the Church of San Giacomo.
- Montagnana: medieval walled city.
- Nonantola: San Silvestro Abbey and museum.
- Fanano: church of San Giacomo and the village of Ospitale, Passo Croce Arcana.
- Pistoia: Cathedral with relic of San Giacomo and San Zeno, Ospedale del Ceppo, Pieve di Sant'Andrea,
- Vinci: Leonardo's birthplace with its museum.
- Fogliano Redipuglia: Military Shrine of the First World War.
- Aquileia: Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta and Baptistery, archaeological museum, Monastero area.



- Rovereto: Opera Campana dei Caduti Foundation, church of San Marco, museum.
- Schio: Museum of industrial archeology.
- Bassano del Grappa: church of San Vito, church of San Donato and museums.

In order to develop the topic of the WP5 rurAllure pilot, it is useful to note that the Romea Strata is not far from some Roman **thermal sites**, that can be considered in the promotion of rural contexts firmly related to the other two routes, the Francigena and the Germanica. In particular, along the Romea Strata there are Roman contexts related to thermalism in:

- **Friuli Venezia Giulia:**
 - Roman thermal sites known as 'Fons Timavi' (Monfalcone), with thermal baths and a residential building (a villa or an 'hotel' for ancient pilgrims).
- **Veneto:**
 - Euganean area with the archaeological sites in Montegrotto Terme; here there are thermal baths, an aristocratic Roman villa and a Museum dedicated to the ancient thermalism in the Roman age.
- **Emilia Romagna:**
 - Montegibbio-Salse di Nirano, with a natural park with geothermal phenomena.
 - Grotte Parlanti, with thermal sites exploited over the centuries.
 - Bagni della Porretta, with thermal places both of Roman and Medieval-Modern ages.
 - San Pietro in Sylvis, with a Roman sacred context and the centuriated area.
 - Grotta del re Tiberio in the Chalk Park, in which there was a shrine dedicated to the mineral sources.
 - Terme di S. Agnese, with an important Roman SPA.
- **Tuscany:**
 - Chianciano Terme area.
 - Bagno Vignoni.
 - Bagni San Filippo.
- **Lazio:**
 - Terme Taurine/Civitavecchia: one of the most important Roman SPA attested in the region, very well preserved and visible.
 - Terme del Bullicame: ruins of Roman baths close to a modern SPA.
 - Terme del Prato: ruins of Roman baths.
 - Terme di Vicarello/'Aquae Apollinares Novae': Roman sacred area and thermal baths.
 - Terme di Stigliano/'Aquae Apollinares Veteres': Roman sacred area and thermal baths in a modern SPA.



- The Bracciano lake with several thermal free areas and the Natural Park of Solfatara.

Current needs and opportunities in cultural and touristic promotion

Current needs and opportunities for Via Romea Germanica

The Scientific Committee of Via Romea Germanica has identified and listed the following thematic lines of interest for the shared exhibitions and guides to be created in the project:

- Places as a religious destination.
- Urban pilgrimages of the spiritual destinations.
- Shared religious rites and identities.
- Sustainable religious and tourist hospitality (in the SDGs approach).
- Relics, saints and sanctuaries of Romea Germanica.
- Sacred music.
- Local communities between awareness and social commitment of the territorial heritage.
- Local sustainable development.
- Romea Germanica Festival.

Current needs and opportunities for Via Francigena

The AEFV is interested in reinforcing the work with thermal heritage along Via Francigena and to develop a network of thermal baths on the route and next to the route on the entire European stretch from Canterbury to Rome and Santa Maria di Leuca. The objectives are:

- To identify thermal heritage along the route and in vicinity of the route.
- To develop an innovative tourism product which would include thermal experience and walking/cycling/horse-riding or by train along the route together with relevant stakeholders.
- To develop a Via Francigena service card for thermal services and heritage.
- To launch a visibility campaign, including press trips and social media promotion. As Via Francigena is rich with gastronomic heritage.

Other important issues for the AEFV, should be:

- Reinforcement of online presence.
- Enhancement and upgrade of the AEFV application.
- Identification of pilgrims' needs and motivations.
- Development of tourist offer focused on pilgrimage/walking and cultural tourism and local discoveries.
- Reinforcing the work with thermal heritage along Via Francigena and creating a network of thermal baths on the route and next to the route on the entire European stretch from Canterbury to Rome and Santa Maria di Leuca.
- Ongoing work for the UNESCO World Heritage candidacy.



From the point of view of **thermal heritage**, the Via Francigena goes through a territory with many opportunities in thermal heritage (cultural, natural and intangible), mainly in the Italian area, including different types of resources, according to distances and opportunities. This is an opportunity to test and analyse different narratives, as well as the situation of this type of heritage, to consider and enrich the possibilities to create new experiences linking tourism and thermalism from different point of views. Specifically, UAM and AEFV will work in the elaboration of new experiences and new resources to approach all types of thermal heritage to people with disabilities, evaluating strengths and weaknesses on different segments as well as testing solutions for new challenges.

Current needs and opportunities for Via Romea Strata

Romea Strata stakeholders have stated that it would be beneficial to have a unique and coherent information system on cultural attractions along with an appropriate use of storytelling to make them attractive to broad publics and proper dissemination in social media. This is especially relevant for the networking of museums and UNESCO sites that can become a strong attraction for a target not yet interested in pilgrimages. There are museums in rural areas that are unknown or not connected. Schools and universities may be involved in the project's activities to raise their awareness and interest, developing future publics.

Specific thematic lines of interest for the shared exhibitions and guides to be created in the project include:

- Commerce roads: amber, salt, iron, wool and silk roads; the Roman roads which became transit routes for goods, ideas and pilgrims; the Polish Post route from 1558.
- The places of welcome: ancient hospitality for pilgrims along the way; Roman, Lombard, Middle Age and contemporary period; monasteries and shrines of importance and significance along the way.
- Notable pilgrims and travel diaries.
- Religious dynamism in Central Europe: Slavism and Pan-Slavism; Hebraism; the protestant evangelical issue; memories of Jerusalem and of Calvaries: paths, places, relics and cities.
- The socio-cultural fabric: shared religious rituals and patronal feasts; craft; sacred music; gastronomy.
- The path of science and knowledge, on the steps of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo.
- Rome, city of St. Peter and Paul, the eternal Christian religious destination between past and future.
- Local communities between awareness and social commitment of religious heritage for gratuity and accessibility in a daily sustainability approach.

Strengths & opportunities

Strengths & opportunities for Via Romea Germanica

- Strong interest and sensitivity for pilgrimage and on opportunities at the tourism level.
- UNESCO and UNESCO MAB sites along the routes.
- Trends in green, wellness, and slow tourism.
- Mapped trails and religious ways around the area.



- Relevant thermal and cultural heritage.
- Contribution to sustainable tourism development and slow tourism niche.
- Involvement of universities and research centres in route's managing associations.
- Deep involvement of consolidated European Associations, with significant geographic coverage and strong stakeholder networks.

Strengths & opportunities for Via Francigena

- Beautiful landscapes.
- Diverse cultural heritage.
- Cuisine and gastronomy.
- High number of thermal sources and heritage along the Tuscan stretch of the Via Francigena.
- Relatively easy route with possibilities of shortening daily walking stretches.
- Relatively well-known route in Italy.
- Strong identity and brand.
- Strong online presence.
- Diverse information sources on the route : sites, blogs, maps, etc.
- Current tourism trends towards open air activities, walking and outdoor tourism.
- Cultural route certification.
- Candidacy to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Strengths & opportunities for Via Romea Strata

- Strong interest and sensitivity on the topic of the pilgrimage and on opportunities at the tourism level.
- UNESCO sites along the route.
- UNESCO MAB sites along the route.
- Trends in green and slow tourism.
- Mapped trails and religious ways around the area.

Weaknesses & threats

Weaknesses & threats for Via Romea Germanica

- Central areas are consistent but rural areas are poor.
- Low presence of low cost or donor accommodation.
- Relatively unknown routes and tourism products.
- Weak promotion of the routes and poor communication to wider public, pilgrims and walkers.
- In some cases, poor organisation at the local level for the maintenance of the itinerary (managed by municipalities).
- Need for better governance and event coordination.



- In some cases, the cost of maintenance of hiking infrastructures.

Weaknesses & threats for Via Francigena

- Due to the international character of the route, managing and governing authority in crossed countries significantly vary in their functions, roles and management.
- Different signage depending on a country.
- Heterogeneous services and accommodation facilities along various stretches of the route.
- In some stretches, lack of affordable accommodations.
- The route is relatively unknown outside of Italy.
- Confusion with other walking routes.
- Association of the route with strictly religious activities and religious pilgrimage.

Weaknesses & threats for Via Romea Strata

- Central areas are consistent but rural areas are poor.
- Low presence of low cost or donor accommodation.
- There is still no organisation at the local level for the maintenance of the itinerary: the AERS is working with groups of municipalities to help them organize the management of the stages.
- No specific guide on the pilgrimage route exists. It is necessary to train the guides.

3. Pilot actions

The following sections describe the actions designed in 2021 for implementation in the territories of influence of Via Romea Germanica, Via Francigena and Via Romea Strata over the upcoming months. The subsections deal with the following aspects:

- Territorial coverage.
- Newly-created actions (not happening without rurAllure).
- Previously-existing activities integrated in the pilot.

Collective estimations for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Complementary Performance Indicators (CPIs) as defined in Deliverable 2.1 (*“Common strategies for pilots”*) are given in the last section.

Pilot actions for Via Romea Germanica

Territorial coverage

Emilia Romagna region launched in 2015 the project [Cammini Emilia Romagna](#), promoting slow tourism through the pilgrimage trails traversing the region. The project is an initiative of Apt Servizi (regional promotional body) in agreement with the Regional Department of Commerce and Tourism, which was in line with the 2016 year-long initiative on walking trails. As shown in Figure 4, there are 20 pilgrimage and historic trails included in this regional atlas of walking routes, including the Via Romea Germanica, which extends for 260 km along the region.



Figure 4. The regional network of walking and pilgrimage paths in Emilia-Romagna.

For the purpose of the pilot on the Via Romea Germanica, six stretches were originally selected, from Polesella to Ravenna, for a total of 120 km. The stretches are shown in Figure 5:

- Polesella–Ferrara (21 km).
- Ferrara–Traghetto (29,2 km).
- Traghetto–Argenta–Campotto (16,4/25,5 km).
- Argenta–Valli di Comacchio (24,4 / 28,2 km).
- Valli di Comacchio–Casalborsetti (26/18,1 km).
- Casalborsetti–Ravenna (20,7 km).



Figure 5. The six stages originally selected for the pilot actions.

As a result of further studies and field visits, UNIBO decided to narrow down the focus of the pilot activities to the stretches Argenta–Valli di Comacchio and Valli di Comacchio–Casalborsetti (Figure 6), with the possibility of extending the activities at a later stage.

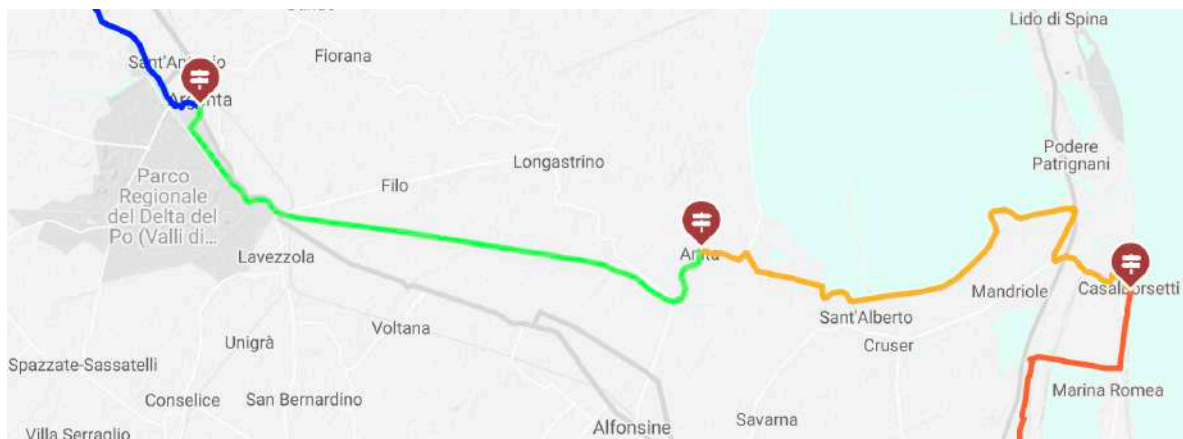


Figure 6. The two stages included in the first 6 months of activity.

The reasons behind this choice were the **availability of key local stakeholders** to work together along these stretches of the route, in synergy with several existing and planned initiatives in order to attract pilgrims and cycling tourists to the area. Besides, it was considered more feasible to work on a shorter segment but with a deeper engagement with the local stakeholders.

Historical and geographical characteristics of the Via Romea Germanica between the Po and Reno rivers

Monk Albert of Stade made his pilgrimage in 1236. At that time, the course of the Po river had changed radically. The Po is a deltaic river characterised by the formation of several branches and marshy areas (called Valli in Italian) in its final stretch towards the Adriatic Sea.

In the last centuries of the first millennium, one of the most important branches had become the “Volano” branch, which crossed Ferrara and connected it to the sea (coming out at the current Lido di Volano, north of the Valli di Comacchio). Also near Ferrara a second branch called the “Primaro” had been formed, which had become an important communication route because it connected Ferrara to Ravenna. Its name, “Primaro” derives from Padus Primarius, making reference to the importance this river had at least until the end of the 16th century.

However, when Albert of Stade made his journey, the Po had changed its appearance. In fact, in 1152 a disastrous levee breach had occurred near Ficarolo (20 km upstream from Ferrara) which had generated a new branch of the river further north and which was called the “Po Grande di Venezia” and corresponds to the current course of the Po river. The two previous branches gradually began to lose water and became secondary waterways. The Romea Germanica crosses the Po Grande at Polesella and reaches Ferrara. From there, it then takes the route of the Po of Primaro to Casalborsetti (where the Po of Primaro flowed) and then Ravenna, which is a little further south.

The route that pilgrims take today winds through an area that has since changed. In fact, the Po of Primaro no longer exists today except for the stretch from Ferrara to Traghetto (it is called the Dead River). During the 18th century, the Papal State tried to tackle the problem of flooding in the Bologna plain by implementing projects that had long been debated. Thus, between 1745

and 1749, the “Cavo Benedettino” was built, a canal which sought to collect the run-off water from the Reno and make it flow into the Po of Primaro.

The Reno was an important river that had its source in the Apennines and then created an inland delta between Ferrara and Bologna, turning that territory into a large swamp. The water regulation works were completed in the second half of the 18th century when, between 1767 and 1795, using the “Cavo Benedettino”, the Reno river was diverted into the Po of Primaro at San Agostino. In this way the Po of Primaro effectively stopped at Traghetto. While the Reno river became as we know it today, a river that rises in the Apennines and flows into the Adriatic at Casalborgsetti.

This is the reason why, nowadays, the path of the Romea Germanica may seem strange to us in the stretch between Ferrara and Ravenna, but the reason is that it follows the ancient course of the Po of Primaro, which no longer exists. So what we see is a route that follows the Dead River between Ferrara and Traghetto and then the Reno River to the Adriatic Sea.

Actually these segments of the Via Romea Germanica overlap with other existing itineraries, such as the trail 106 from the Italian Alpine Club, and are the object of numerous initiatives planned by the Argenta Municipality, which will be further explain in sections below and that are the base for the joint work University of Bologna planned to develop along the route.

Landscape of the Po Delta and its influence in the social and economic life of the territory

The Po Delta is an enchanting area between land and water at the mouth of Italy’s longest river, the Po. The **Po Delta Park**, which comes to life from the end of the course of the Great River, on the eastern border with the Po Marshes, stretches over a total area of more than 52.000 hectares in the Emilia Romagna region, between the provinces of Ferrara and Ravenna, and of approximately 12.000 hectares in the Veneto region, in the province of Rovigo. In total, it counts 64.000 hectares and it represents one of the most important wetlands in Europe and the largest in Italy, hosting hundreds upon hundreds of animal and vegetable species. ([link](#))



Figure 7. Po Delta river landscape. Source: <https://podelta.eu/en>

This wide plain is a fertile “**Biosphere Reserve**” protected by UNESCO, and it represents an important Italian natural heritage rich in biodiversity. Land, lagoon, river and sea come together,

creating evocative scenarios and offering delightful emotions to all their visitors. It is a destination that allows to get to know many different facets of a territory: nature, art, culture, history and the sea. It is a narration of the millenary history of union between man and nature, constantly and still evolving. The river Po is the absolute protagonist of the formation of the Po Marshes and everything revolves around it, due to the incessant work of transport of sand and earth over thousands of years.

However, beyond the morphology of the territory, the river Po has also profoundly influenced the history of the people living in the area: the continuous changes in the course of the river have forced the inhabitants of the Po Delta Area to change accordingly, and to create new settlements as new river banks were formed, and therefore develop both their economic and social lives. The river Po was, of course, an extraordinary resource first of all for the supply of water, then for fishing, for irrigation and finally as a communication route. Populations always had to adapt to the will of the river, and they suffered both the periods in which there were floods as well as droughts but, in any case, the river has always been strictly linked to the life of people living in the local area.



Figure 8. Po Delta river human landscape. Source: <https://podelta.eu/en>



The intertwined history between populations and the Po river dates back thousands of years and the result of this connection is a captivating territory between land and water, a changing landscape in which woods, pine forests and flooded forests alternate with internal wetlands characterized by either fresh or salty water. Still today, in fact, the Po Delta represents a dynamic environment, in continuous evolution, where nature is free to give man new lands that have emerged or, at least, to recover parts of them.

Because of its important value and presence, the Po Delta Park can boast **two UNESCO awards**. In 1999, in fact, the Ferrara-based part of the Po Delta was included in the list of **World Heritage** sites as an exceptionally-planned cultural landscape that preserves its original form in a remarkable way. In addition to this, in 2015, the territory of the whole Po Delta (also the part stretching into the Veneto area) was recognized with the international qualification as a **Biosphere Reserve** for the conservation and protection of the environment, under the [Man and the Biosphere \(MAB\) Programme](#). Biosphere Reserves are areas of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems where, through appropriate land management, the conservation of the ecosystem and its biodiversity is combined with the sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of local communities. Many public and private bodies in the area strongly believe in the Po Delta Biosphere Reserve, share the objectives and values of the UNESCO MaB programme and have requested and obtained the use of the [“Po Delta Biosphere Supporter”](#) brand.

In addition to this, Italy and other 168 countries are part of the **Ramsar convention**. The main mission of this Convention is the international protection of wetlands through their identification, delimitation, the study of their characteristic aspects and the implementation of programmes for their conservation.

The Convention identifies the most important wetlands by including: “marshes, bogs, fens and ponds, natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with standing or flowing water, fresh, brackish or salt, including coastal waters whose depth at low tide does not exceed 6 m”. They are so important because they are “the most effective carbon sinks on Earth, storing twice as much carbon as all forests”, they limit greenhouse gas emissions, contain excess rainfall, protect against the danger of flooding, provide important food reserves, such as fish or rice, and are a fundamental reservoir of fresh water used for cultivation. ([link](#))

At the moment, of the 2.209 worldwide sites included in the convention, 10 of which are present in the Po Delta Park: Valle Santa, Valle Campotto and Bassarone, Sacca di Bellocchio, Punte Alberete, Valle di Gorino and neighbouring territories, Valle Bertuzzi and neighbouring stretches of water, residual marshes of the Comacchio district (Fattibello, Fosso di Porto, Campo, Lido di Magnavacca and other minor ones), Piallassa della Baiona and neighbouring territories, Ortazzo and neighbouring territories and Saline di Cervia. ([link](#)) ([link](#))



Figure 9. The Po Delta river regional park.

Objectives and motivation for the selected pilot area

Within Emilia-Romagna tourism development strategies, internal rural areas and the Appenines have long been neglected. The coastal shore of the region is the driving force of the tourism led economy, with a very strong specialization in seaside tourism. Along the coast, a mature mass tourism destination, the northern part of the shore (Ferrara and Ravenna provinces) is less developed than the southern one (Rimini province). Nevertheless, within the regional political framework, few investments are tackling the northern area (Po Delta river), which somehow benefitted from its peripherality, allowing local initiatives to focus on alternative forms of tourism, such as bike tourism, agritourism, green tourism, birdwatching, etc. The dispersed settlements of the area and its organization around agriculture and water management, have pushed the administrators to promote it on international bike tourism markets as well as educational and school tourism portals. As already recalled earlier, only recently hiking and pilgrimage have been seen as an option for the area, which is relatively new and off the beaten track.

The segments selected for the pilot well serve the main goals of rurAllure, because the surroundings of the VRG itinerary are rich in significant tangible as well as intangible cultural heritage, which might contribute in letting the pilgrims stay longer to better experience the rural environment. The current number of pilgrims along the VRG is that little (in average 400 pilgrims officially asked for the credentials between 2017 and 2020). For this reason, the main goal of this pilot is **to increase the capability of the VRG in the specific area to attract walking tourists and to make them stay longer.**



As it will be clearer after reading the following chapters on Via Francigena and Via Romea Strata, even if in this area we do not find thermal heritage from Roman times, the water theme is clearly present in this territory, which is testimony of a long relationship between man and water: its management allowed life in this previously swamped area and the VRG itinerary itself wouldn't be the one we know today, without the water reclaiming efforts. The waterscape that walking pilgrims could appreciate and walk along today is an added value and a contribution to the main thermal heritage theme of WP5.

The strategy we will pursue along Via Romea Germanica is to work mainly on the visibility of this trail, since it is not a well consolidated Itinerary and has only been recognized as Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2020. We will therefore invest the first months of the pilot in the following tasks:

- Mapping the relevant stakeholders of pilgrimage, cultural tourism and rural development sectors.
- Selecting the most relevant stakeholders and check the current state of the art concerning cooperation and networking among them.
- Identifying the ongoing projects already set by the local stakeholders.
- Engaging the local stakeholders in forums and participatory activities in order to identify the main gaps and challenges rurAllure could contribute to.
- Co-designing common actions in order to engage them directly in the project and let them benefit from it.

Newly-created actions (not happening without rurAllure)

The activities undertaken during the first six months of the pilot were mainly directed to select the segments along the Via Romea Germanica in which to work, develop the themes for the proposed narratives and establish relationships at local, regional and national level.

Inventory of heritage sites along the selected stretches

The inventory of heritage sites along the selected stretches was performed as part of the module “**Cultural Routes and Tourist Systems**” from the Master in “Valorizzazione turistica e gestione del patrimonio culturale” by Professors Alessia Mariotti and Patrizia Battilani from University of Bologna. The Master takes place in Ravenna, close to the pilot area and is supporting lifelong learning of workers in the fields of cultural heritage and tourism.

Master students were divided into groups and were given the guidelines to prepare an inventory of heritage sites along the six stretches of the Via Romea Germanica previously illustrated (from Polesella to Ravenna). Each group focused on a different type of heritage:

- **Museums:** historic, naturalistic, architectonic, economic activities, also including historic sites such as the Argenta Cap War Cemetery.
- **Religious heritage:** the numerous churches, chapels, shrines and sacred places.
- **Industrial water heritage:** the different water management plants and land reclamation systems comprising almost 2.000 km of artificial canals.
- **Intangible heritage:** festivities, oral traditions, games, typical recipes with local products.
- **Food and wine heritage,** including traditional dishes, food festivals (“Sagre”), products with protected geographical denomination.

Each type of heritage was described through individual templates and its location was assessed in relation to the stretches of the route. Special emphasis was given to the distance and accessibility of these sites with respect to the main road, as well as their attractiveness from a pilgrim's point of view. The purpose was to evaluate the feasibility of connecting these sites to the main route or **creating detours that allows pilgrims to remain longer in the area** to discover the rural surroundings (see Figures 10 and 11). Other aspects analysed included the opening times, prices, booking details, services provided, etc.

Finally, students designed a number of cultural itineraries connecting the different heritage sites and points of interest to lure pilgrims traversing this area. The itineraries proposed thematic detours, for example, to taste the traditional dishes of the area, or discover the historical residences of the Dukes of Este called “Delizie Estensi” (on the UNESCO World Heritage list).

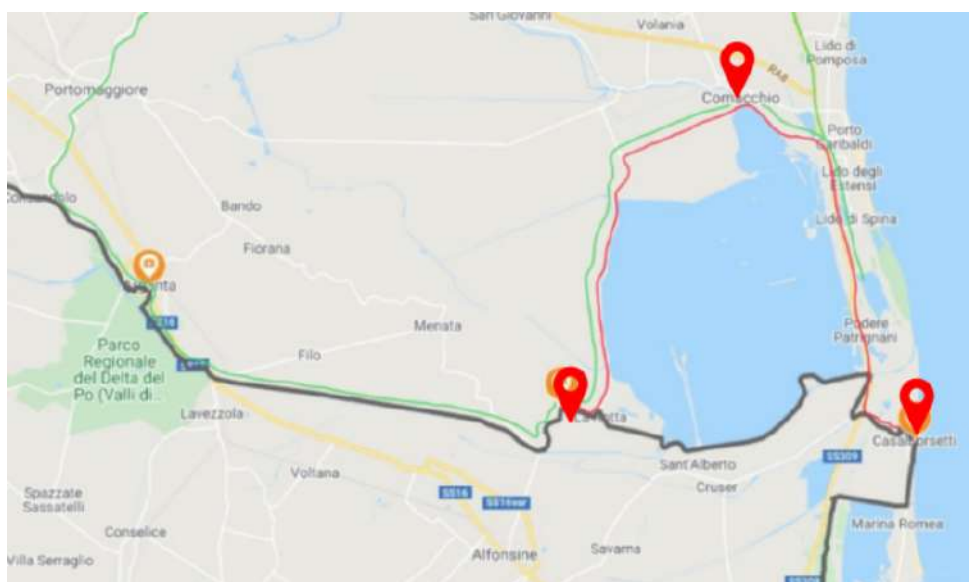


Figure 10. Detour from the stretch Anita–Casalborsetti in order to cross part of the “Strada dei Vini e dei Sapori” (in green on the map).

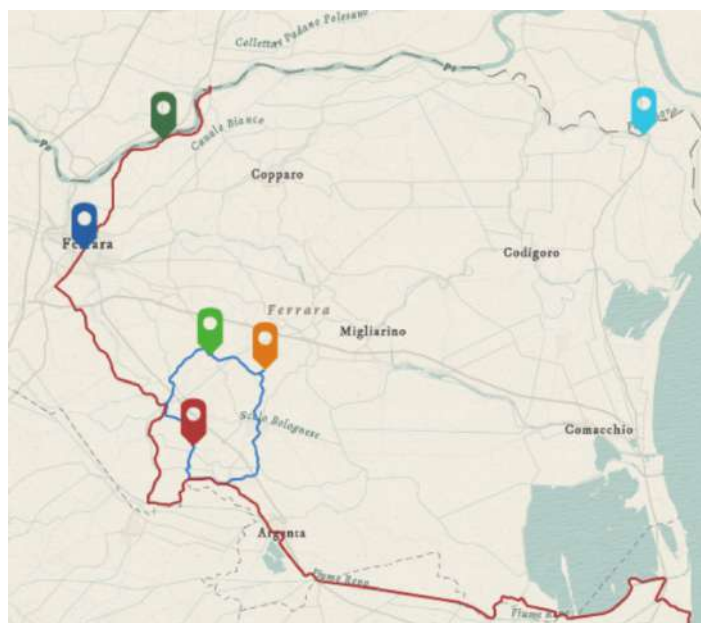


Figure 11. "Ring" detour from the stretch Ferrara–Traghetto to discover the 3 historical residences of the Dukes of Este.

Thanks to the heritage mapping exercise, a total of **175 points of interest (POIs)** have been inserted in the rurAllure IT platform (see Figure 12). The POIs are **both heritage sites and services** such as accommodation and restaurants that can be encountered along the six previously described segments of the Via Romea Germanica in Emilia-Romagna region. The list counts mainly churches, museums, local shops and crafts, Bed & Breakfast, farm and agro, restaurants, castle and historical sites, singular buildings and natural parks.

So far, the POIs have been uploaded manually to the platform, one by one. For each POI the following information has been inserted: name, description, address, photo and website using as a basis the heritage inventory previously described.

It is worth noting that the intangible heritage related to gastronomy, festivals or traditions has not been inserted in the platform, due to the lack of a physical presence or the nature of events during only a certain period of the year. However, this content will be used in order to develop **narratives** for the mobile application.

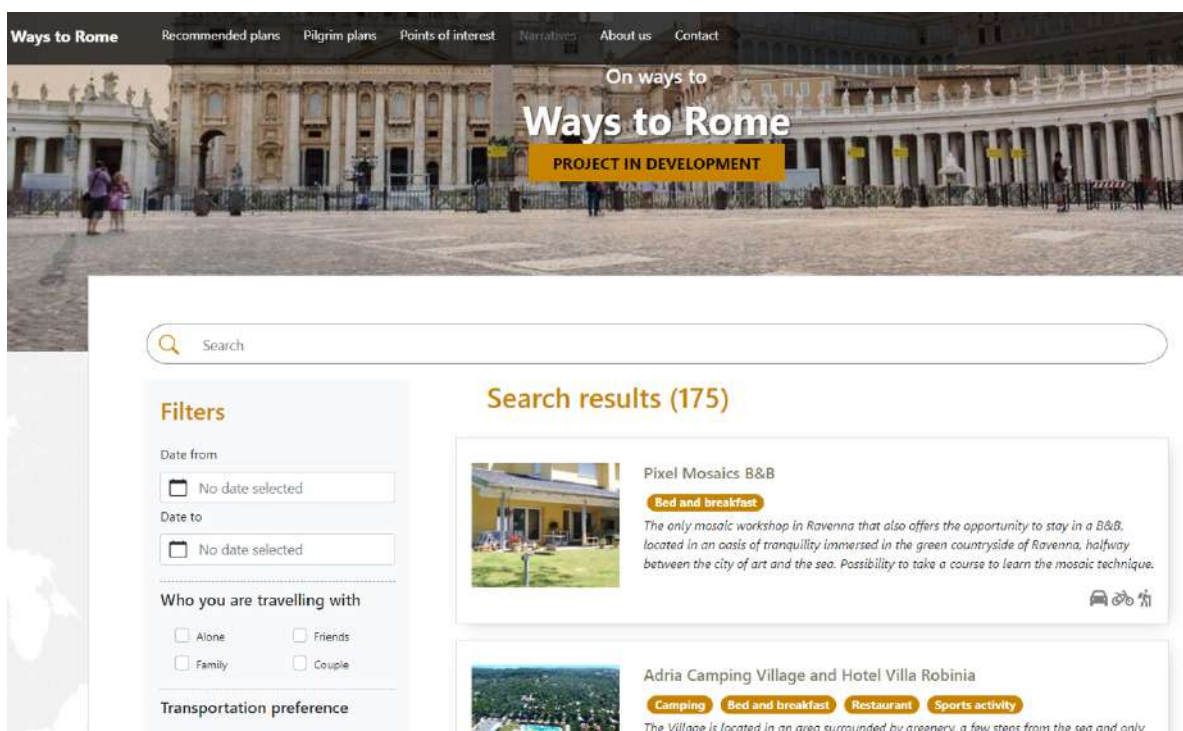


Figure 12. Screenshot of the pilgrims' portal, with a couple of POIs displayed.

A further important action was to analyse the POIs available at two websites: the regional initiative [Cammini Emilia Romagna](#) and the official website of the [Via Romea Germanica](#). Both contain relevant information in terms of heritage sites and services along the Via Romea Germanica, so a comparison was performed that revealed a number of gaps to comply with the rurAllure platform requirements. Mainly the information that can be found in these websites includes GPS coordinates, accommodation, restaurants, bike rental services with their addresses, phone numbers, email and websites (if available). There is no information for some fields expected by the rurAllure IT platform.

In the Via Romea Germanica website, a description of what can be found along the way is given for each stop, as well as the weather conditions. Instead, in the Cammini Emilia Romagna platform, the greatest advantage is that the information is available as open data, giving the possibility to automatically connect this information with other websites. Precisely, the Information retrieval and research data service (IRS) that has been developed by rurAllure partner KIFÜ would make this automatic integration possible. However, the files need to be formatted in order to be compatible with the requirements for automatic upload to the platform, which is planned for 2022. In this way, we will be able to integrate all the POIs of the Via Romea Germanica in the region of Emilia Romagna.

Identifying pilgrim profiles along the segments

In this task, UNIBO followed the instructions coming from WP2 to assist in the drafting of the questionnaires to identify pilgrim's profiles, both for en-route pilgrims and for pilgrims-to-be (the details can be found in Deliverable 2.1, **"Common strategies for pilots"**). Furthermore, we have translated these forms in Italian, as well as the instructions to fill out the questionnaires.



Taking into consideration that the pilot started in June, no surveys have been conducted in person in this first period. However, the online questionnaires for pilgrims-to-be have been disseminated through a number of online channels, such as the Facebook page from the Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism of the University of Bologna (which counts 1.500 followers), the Facebook community group from the Via Romea Germanica (which counts 3.500 followers), besides the personal LinkedIn profiles of the UNIBO team.

Nevertheless, we have gathered some preliminary information from secondary data sources regarding the profile of modern pilgrims, thanks to a survey performed in Italy in October 2020, undertaken by [Terre di Mezzo](#), a well-known editor of tour guides. In what follows, we highlight a few key points on the pilgrim's profile from this survey, which got 3.301 responses:

- 73% had already done at least one other walking route in the last 2 years.
- 54% had started to walk in 2020 and for 13% it was their very first experience.
- In terms of motivation, 43% was in search of physical or psychophysical wellbeing, 28% because they have already planned the trip for that year, 22% to be outdoors after the confinement due to lockdown.
- With regards to how far from home walkers have walked, 15% of respondents remained in their own region, 38% in a region nearby by, 42% went to regions further away and only 5% decided to perform a walking trip abroad.
- 46% of walkers are less than 50 years old, 70% are employed, and 22% are retired.
- As part of the people who started to walk for the first time, there are many under 30 years old and 22.9% are between 31-40 years old, 21.4% between 41-50, 21.9% between 51-60 and finally those over 61 years old are 10.5%.
- Their level of study is quite high, with 51% having a Bachelor degree and 41% a high school diploma.
- 92.5% have done the route on foot, 7.1% by bike.
- 60% has traversed the entire route (all segments) while 70% has walked for a maximum of 10 days.
- 56% are men and 44% are women.
- 33% travel on their own (solo traveller), 35% in two, 8% in 3, 8% in 4, and the rest in larger groups from 5 to 30 people.
- 76% request the pilgrims' credential.
- 69% uses a paper version of a tour guide, while 43.7% uses the GPS coordinates from the cell phone and 28.7% uses an app.
- In Italy, the average daily expenditure is 30 euros, while 47% affirmed to have spent between 30 and 50 euros a day.
- With regards to the type of accommodation, 42% prefer a Bed & Breakfast structure, 21% a hostel and 16% in a religious structure.
- In terms of meals expenses, most have a take-away lunch (84.6%) but for dinner 56% chose a restaurant.

- Most hikers and pilgrims do not hire additional services (85%); however there is a rise in the demand for services such as luggage transportation (11%) and the assistance of a tour guide (7%).
- In terms of seasonality, the chart of Figure 13 illustrates the busiest month on the trails, comparing 2020 and 2019.

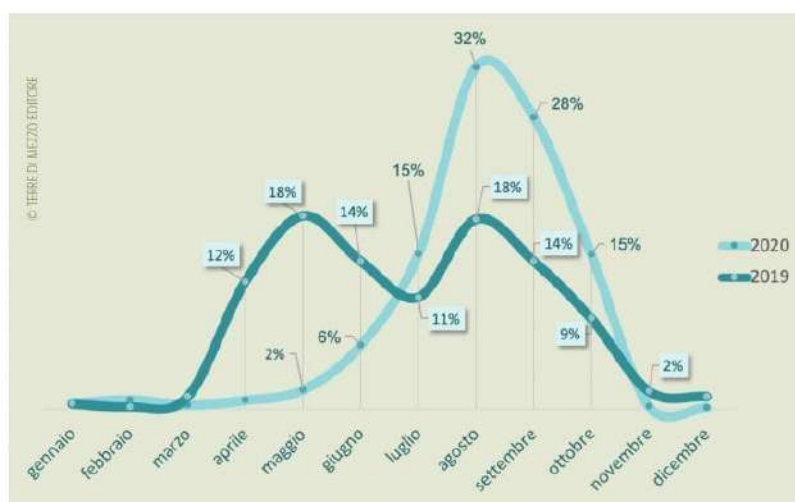


Figure 13. Distribution of pilgrims along the year. Source: Terre di Mezzo survey.

This information provides interesting insights that will be confronted with the primary data collected for the pilgrims interested in the Via Romea Germanica.

Site visit to the Municipality of Argenta

At the beginning of November, the UNIBO team (Professor Alessia Mariotti, Professor Patrizia Battilani and Maria Laura Gasparini) conducted a **site visit to the Municipality of Argenta** and its rural surroundings, in order to establish first contact with the relevant stakeholders to involve in the rurAllure pilot.

The activities performed during this full day visit included the guided tour to the Land Reclamation Museum, the Ecomuseum which comprises the Civic Museum, the naturalistic museum and the Land reclamation museum (Figure 14), among other intangible heritage of the municipality and 13 other districts around Argenta. During the visit, a number of interesting contents for narratives were discussed, related to the management of water in this area, which comprises 2000 km of canals that provide water for agriculture, as well as avoiding flooding along several municipalities. In particular, the issue of climate change adaptation was highlighted as an opportunity to raise awareness among tourists and pilgrims through the narratives.

Informal interviews were coordinated with the responsible company that manages the Ecomuseum (Soelia Spa), the tourist information office and the Municipal Counsellor in charge of Tourism and Park Authority, Youth Policies, Sport, European Planning and Educational Policies. These meetings were extremely useful as the Municipality is already undertaking a number of actions to promote walking and cycling tourism around the municipality and more in general in the entire Po Delta regional park.



Figure 14. Site visit at the Idrovora di Saiarino plant (Land reclamation museum).

There are many synergies with past and present projects such as the Primaro Storytrekking, the “Anello dei Borgia” cycle route and an Action plan to further develop cycling infrastructure along the same stretches of the Via Romea Germanica the University of Bologna intends to work. Moreover, the Eco-museum has worked extensively with the local community in the construction of “community maps” in order to discuss the present and future vision of the community for their territory. All of these existing initiatives are detailed in the following section and constitute the basis for the work University of Bologna would like to complement and enhance throughout our pilot actions.

During the meeting with the Municipal Counsellor, a number of challenges emerged that the municipality would like to address together with rurAllure pilot team, such as the fact that Argenta is a municipality that has not originally focused on tourism development, therefore it is



necessary to work on creating a tourism culture among stakeholders and inhabitants, to see the value of pilgrims and slow tourism, and offer services for them to remain and discover the richness of this territory.

Governance is one of those key issues, because of the number of actors involved in managing the different assets that constitute the tourism destination, therefore this is another dimension they would be willing to assess with us.

Since rurAllure is part of a Coordination and Support Action, these activities are in line with the work UNIBO team would like to perform as part of the pilot along the Via Romea Germanica and we have found "fertile land" to perform these activities with the support of the relevant stakeholders.

Creation of a narrative

The selected section of the Romea Germanica allows for the development of a narrative focusing on the theme of **climate change from the point of view of water management**. Indeed, the spread of heatwaves and drought episodes increases the importance of water management systems and calls for their enlargement as well as the realization of new ones. From this point of view the articulated and complex system characterizing the Delta Po and in particular the area around Argenta can be extremely interesting, a sort of best practice to share. The current conformation of that territory is the result of past natural events (the breaking of the Po river bank near Ficarolo in the 12th century and many more circumscribed floods that changed the course of other minor rivers) and the constant human intervention to avoid flood and drought.

Today, this water management system is based on a dense network of canals and drainage systems that allow, in the event of heavy rainfall, to drain the water towards the sea and reduce the risk of flooding. Furthermore, in the dry season, this system supplies water to farmers. Since 1909 this complex system has been managed by the Rhine reclamation consortium (which is also responsible for the entire province of Bologna), which over the course of the last century carried out a great transformation of this territory. Between 1917 and 1925, through the work of 5.000 people 860 km of canals were dug, the drainage basins of Campotto, Bassarone and Vallesanta and the water pumping plants of Saiarino and Vallesanta were built, still in perfect working order.

The Rhine reclamation consortium is member of the European Union of Water Management Associations (EUWMA) which represents public, local and regional water management organizations from nine EU member states: Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom and the Netherlands. EUWMA members are public institutions with legal powers.

EUWMA was established in 1996 with the primary aim to increase cooperation between European Water Management Associations, so as to provide relevant information, position papers and policy documents to national governments, the European Commission, the European Parliament and other relevant institutions. In addition, EUWMA promotes the exchange of knowledge and best practices between members. In its view, EU water legislation can only be successful if water is managed at regional level because water challenges vary in different river basins and consequently solutions should be tailored to local conditions.

The Land Reclamation Museum, the Marsh Museum and the Oasis of Argenta Marshes can be the reference points for a narrative focusing on water management and its role in a context of climate change.



Fieldwork with the students from the Master's Degree in Tourism Economics and Management from University of Bologna

Every year, the International Master's Degree students in Tourism Economics and Management (TEAM) of the University of Bologna have the opportunity to choose a two-modules integrated teaching activity called Innovation in cultural tourism. The teaching activity first introduces the theoretical frameworks (New cultural tourism products) and secondly engages the students in a more practical activity where to test research methods and analysis (Local development and cultural routes) during a field trip. The leading theme for the academic year is defined at the beginning of the course in September and this year the first teaching activity focused on the presentation of the rurAllure project, its goals and aims and the preparatory analysis needed to define the pilot activities suitable for the selected area of Argenta.

Prior to the visit, the students received background knowledge on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, pilgrimage trails and local development. Furthermore, thanks to and Erasmus teaching staff mobility, the students have had the opportunity to follow three seminars held by Professor Maja Turnsek, University of Maribor. The three seminars focused on destination image, storytelling and film-induced tourism. For each of the seminars and prior to the field trip, the students received an assignment with the aim of letting them get a better overview about these aspects in relation to the specific case study. The results of their achievements will be available starting from the end of January 2022.

The fieldwork (Figure 15) was an opportunity to further familiarize with the pilot area, its landscape and its key stakeholders. The itinerary consisted on:

- The guided tour of the Land Reclamation Museum (Museo della Bonifica), a living museum since it is a water management plant.
- A walk-shop through a small stretch of the Via Romea Germanica along the riverbanks and around the city centre in order to recognise the landscape, the status of the paths (Figure 16), the signage available (Figure 17), the services for pilgrims/ tourists, etc.
- Finally, the visit to the Marsh Museum (Museo delle Valli), which comprises both the historic and naturalistic aspects of the Po Delta area. This last visit (Figure 18) was presented by Dr. Nerina Baldi who introduced students to the concept of Ecomuseum and its importance as a tool for the local community to reflect on their heritage (past and present) and discusses a common vision for the future of its community.

The fieldwork gave the tourism students the possibility to reflect on a model of tourism adapted to the need and also the challenges of this territory, which were exposed by the Municipal Councillor during the visit to the Land Reclamation Museums. The questions raised, the direct observation in the field and the presentation of concepts such as Eco-museum and Community maps sparked ideas among students who will work on their final assignment (expected for January 2022) in which they will present their reflections and suggestions for a tourism model that have as pillars walking and cycling mobilities.



Figure 15. Pictures from the field trip with TEAM Master's degree students.



Figure 16. Via Romea Germanica path in Argenta.



Figure 17. Signage along the Via Romea Germanica in Argenta.



Figure 18. Students' workshop in Museo delle Valli.

Partnerships developed and stakeholders involved

From June to September, the main activity has been to conduct multiple meetings and interviews with stakeholders at the regional level in order to test their availability and willingness to join the project and actively contribute to it. Below a summary of the achievements:

- **Agreements signed with VRG.** The first objective was to ensure the possibility of the Via Romea Germanica to be an active partner of the project and among the first beneficiaries of its outcomes. For this reason, three online meetings have been organised in order to get in contact with Liviana Zanetti, the President of the **Italian Association** of the VRG. Liviana Zanetti has a wide experience in tourism and was one of the ideators of the APT servizi project of the walking routes Atlas in Emilia-Romagna. Thanks to her, Unibo was able to get in touch also with Thomas Dams, the President of the **German Association** of



the Via Romea Germanica. Both of them signed the Associated Partnership agreements with rurAllure.

VRG will be involved for communication purposes and also during joint actions for training and engagement of inhabitants and local actors along the two stretches identified. To be notes: the Municipality of Argenta is currently not yet a member of the VRG. Thanks to rurAllure, we foresee their integration as a full member in the VRG Italian association.

- **APT Servizi and Cammini E-R.** Two meetings were set with Monica Valeri, the head of service within the regional DMO dealing with religious tourism and pilgrimage trails. APT Servizi develops and maintains the Atlas of the Cammini E-R portal on an open data basis. Furthermore, they organize twice a year an event called “Monasteri aperti”, allowing during two weekends the visit of hidden treasures and monasteries dispersed in the region along the pilgrimage trails. The signature is still pending, and we will check in the coming weeks whether it will be completed or not. Nevertheless, APT Servizi is strongly committed with VRG, so that their help in cross marketing and dissemination activities with rurAllure will be active in any case.
- **GAL Delta 2000.** The Local Action Group Delta 2000 is the one covering the whole Po Delta river area in Emilia-Romagna, including the pilot area, which is, as explained, one of the “doors” to the regional park. We have had two online meetings with Mauro Conficoni, the president of the GAL and also AD of a relevant environmental education company (Cooperativa Atlantide), managing the visitors centres and naturalistic or eco-museums facilities in the area. GAL Delta 2000 confirmed their willingness to be informed about the project activities and were available at first to institutionalise their participation in the project as AP. The signature is still pending, and we will check in the coming weeks whether it will be completed or not. As for the future actions of the pilot, the formal involvement of GAL Delta 2000 could contribute in terms of increasing the dissemination of the pilot results along other stretches of the VRG.
- **Argenta municipality stakeholders.** Thanks to the fieldwork with students and to the site visit, we were able to set the basis for further relationships and cooperation with: Argenta Municipality, Soelia SpA (the managing body of [the local museums system](#)), the Consorzio della Bonifica Renana (the management body of the Idrovora di Saiarino, the seat of the Museo della Bonifica). After the two in-persons meetings during November, we will have a virtual meeting on December 21st to further engage these relevant partners in the next pilot activities.
- **Cooperation with Liceo Linguistico “G.Cesare-M.Valgimigli” Rimini.** Among the gaps and challenges highlighted during the two field visits in Argenta, the research team was able to detect a specific accessibility issue, possibly undermining the effectiveness of rurAllure project on the area. The current visitors’ and heritage interpretation services are mainly in Italian, lowering the possibility for the two steps of the VRG to become attractive for an international public. For this reason and following an informal and verbal agreement with the Museo delle Valli, we have set a meeting with a Spanish language professor, Barbara Rossi, at the G. Cesare-M. Valgimigli highschool in Rimini. Three- and four-year students have to include within their curricula a practical experience in order to acquire transversal skills. To participate and contribute to rurAllure by developing contents in English, German and Spanish would be a win-win situation for both students and the local stakeholders. We have set a further meeting in January 2022 to define the

details and terms of this cooperation between the high school and the university within the framework of rurAllure.

- **International project “Reconnecting with your culture”.** Thanks to the initiative of Professor Fiorella Dallari from UNIBO, an important relationship has been established with the International project “Reconnecting with your culture”, led by Professor Olimpia Niglio, vice-president of the International Commission ICOMOS-PRERICO (International Scientific Committee on Places of Religion and Rituals). Through a pedagogical programme, the project invites young people, from kindergarten to high school, to reconnect with their culture and surroundings. By undertaking exploratory journeys in their own communities, young people document their experience in a variety of ways (mapping, drawings, taking field notes) and then share their findings with their peers and community. This way, they commit to spreading the awareness about the fact that they are the heirs of the heritage of their territory, of that wealth which accompanies them every day and lives with them (Living Heritage).

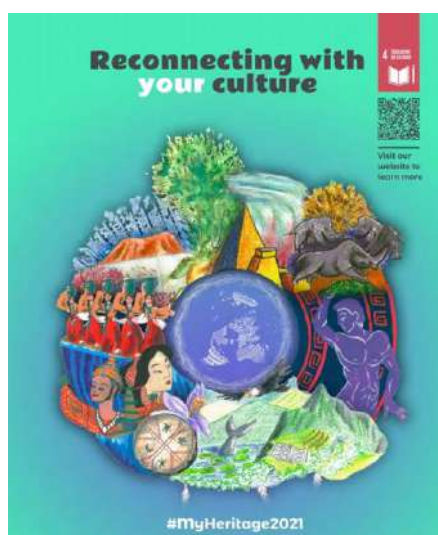


Figure 19. A publication from the “Reconnecting with your culture” project.

In particular, within the rurAllure pilot for WP5, the project **"Piccoli Romei in Cammino"** was born with the collaboration of the Departments of Life Quality Sciences, Education Sciences, the International Centre for the Didactics of History and Heritage (DiPaSt) and the Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST) of the University of Bologna. This project seeks to prepare children and young people for the journey of life, accompanied by teachers, parents, grandparents and friends to rediscover their cultural and religious heritage near and far along the ancient routes of pilgrimage and culture. The aim is also to give life to an innovative tourist practice, sustainable in everyday life, as a new vision of lifestyle, where our children live their territory in an active way and in community with the patronage of the Romee Maggiori (Vie Francigene, Via Romea Germanica and Romea Strata) together with the Cammini di San Martino.



Figure 20. The logo of “Piccoli Romei”.

- **Agreements with stakeholders outside the pilot area.** Thanks to several networking activities (detailed below) we can mention additional partnerships outside the selected pilot area, through the involvement of new associate partners, that will be able to act as ambassadors for the visibility of the rurAllure project. In this line, an Associated Partner Agreement was signed with the cooperative [Kòrai – Territorio, Sviluppo e Cultura](#) and the [Itinerarium Rosaliae Association](#). These two third-sector organisations jointly devoted to the development and promotion of the naturalistic-cultural-religious route **Itinerarium Rosaliae** share several objectives with rurAllure and agreed to collaborate with the project, participating in joint activities, providing feedback and supporting the dissemination of the project, while benefitting from being included in rurAllure platform, website and social media communications.

Dissemination activities

- **Workshop on the Saint Michael’s Ways.** During October 4th-5th, 2021, an event was organized at Venaus, Piemonte Region (Italy) by local action group [GAL Escartons e Valli Valdesi](#) in the framework of the transnational cooperation project [“Federare i siti dedicati a San Michele in Europa”](#), involving project partners, local tour operators and other key stakeholders to reflect on the opportunities linked to the Saint Michael’s Ways at the European level.

The project, led by the LAG Pays du Velay (France) and partnered with LAGs from Piedmont (Italy) and Catalonia (Spain) aim at promoting and enhancing the routes and cultural heritage linked to Saint Michael through common actions including strengthening the network of sites and stakeholders, a joint marketing strategy and the development of tourist itineraries. One of the goals at the end of the project is presenting the nomination to the Council of Europe as European Cultural Route.

The objective of the 2-day workshop was to share experiences, good practices and work on common actions to further develop a European network around the Saint Michael’s sites. In this sense, Maria Laura Gasparini on behalf of CAST and University of Bologna, shared their experience with cultural routes and pilgrimage trails in the working group **“Instruments for network development”**.

An interesting aspect of the workshop was the organisation of two moments of walking along a stretch of the path, using these moments as so called “walk-shops” (Figure 21), where participants have the chance to put themselves in the shoes of a walker, identifying issues and opportunities for development.



This event represented an important opportunity for introducing rurAllure to key regional and national stakeholders, as well as networking in view of establishing synergies among projects for the promotion of walking tourism. Notably, the networking activities resulted in the incorporation of an Associate Partner (Itinerarium Rosaliae) from Sicily, Italy and the strengthening of the relationship with European stakeholders such as the European Network of Sites and Paths of St Michelle.

Figure 21. Pictures of the workshop on the Saint Michael's Ways in Venaus.

- **Participation in GAL Emilia Romagna “Progetto Cammini”.** On October 7th in Castrocaro Terme (Forlì-Cesena, Emilia-Romagna region) the official launch of the “Progetto Cammini” took place. This project is the outcome of a cooperation among all the LAGs of the ER. Based on the pilgrimage paths already existing in the ER and mapped by APT Servizi, the 6 LAG of Emilia-Romagna will contribute to the infrastructure, empowerment and

promotion activities devoted to itineraries and routes in order to ensure efficient services and involvement the local population. The role of the LAG is strategic, as an instrument of connection between the different actors, especially after the provinces have been almost cancelled. On the other hand, the LAGs are small in terms of staff seize, which might limit the impact of their activity on the targeted areas. This, together with the key issue of governance across the administrative borders crossed by the walking routes and pilgrimage trails, has led the LAG to take a common action.

In consideration of the common goals between the LAG cooperation project and rurAllure, Professor Alessia Mariotti was invited to present rurAllure during the three-hours conference resulting in a local TV program (full video available [here](#)).



Figure 22. Professor Mariotti at the meeting in Castrocaro Terme.

- **Conferenza Napoli for Policy Brief.** During the 11th edition of the scientific conference organised by the Società di Studi Geografici, titled “Oltre la Globalizzazione” and held in Naples on December 10th, Maria Laura Gasparini and Alessia Mariotti will present the rurAllure project giving an emphasis on the policy aspects related to the promotion of pilgrimage trails throughout Europe. The conference will take place partially online and there will be both the publication of proceedings in Italian and the book of abstracts.
- **Cultural Routes workshop.** The Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism of the Bologna University, partner of rurAllure, is member of the NCRS (Universities Network of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Studies). Within the framework of the activities carried out by the network, a first academic workshop, resuming the research developed around the cultural routes of the Council of Europe has been organised and will take place on December 9th. Patrizia Battilani, Maria Laura Gasparini and Alessia Mariotti will participate in the workshop with published papers and articles, but also with a short introduction (by Alessia Mariotti) resuming the aims and objectives of rurAllure.



Figure 23. Leaflet of the online workshop organized by the CoE.

Previously-existing activities integrated in the pilot

The initiatives enumerated in this section have been identified as part of the meetings with the Municipality of Argenta since they are all related to the activities planned for the Via Romea Germanica pilot. They are briefly introduced here and will be the basis for the planned actions presented in Section 4 (“Calendar and resources”).

Many of the initiatives of interest are related to **the Primaro Route**. This is a project that dates back to the early 1990s, led by a vision of enhancement and organisation of a route along the Po di Primaro from Ferrara to the sea, with the creation of river gardens, docks, navigable stretches in the same way as the French canals of Burgundy or the Loire, so that visitors can travel dozens of kilometres immersed in nature on foot, on horseback, by bicycle and in some stretches even by canoe. The “Sentiero Primaro” (Primaro Path) was established in 2009. Little by little, it has become part of the heart of the community, especially in the Argentinian section, as a popular destination for walking or cycling. It is now a CAI (Italian Alpine Club) registered path, which for the most part overlaps with the Municipality of Argenta, the Municipality of Alfonsine and the FE40 Ferrara–Comacchio cycle path. It can be tackled all year round and can be done using mountain bikes, city bikes or gravel bikes. The surface consists of asphalt, beaten earth and gravel (Figure 24). The route is totally flat and runs almost entirely on protected tracks where motorised traffic is not allowed. The bike maps for each route are available for download [here](#).

The Primaro Route is consistent with the pilot because it is also largely overlapping the Via Romea Germanica, in particular at its official stages 68 (Traghetto–Argenta–Campotto), 69 (Argenta–Valli di Comacchio) and 70 (Valli di Comacchio–Casalborsetti). It deviates considerably in stage 67 between Ferrara and S. Egidio.

In order to make the path more accessible, the section, thanks to the commitment of volunteer members and the support of the Regional Group, published in 2017 a map of the route on a scale of 1:100,000, distributed free of charge in tourist offices and museums. Subsequently, posters bearing the map itself were installed at three key points along the route to help users find their way around the area. More details can be found [here](#) and [here](#).



Figure 24. Cycling tourism in the Po Delta river.

Obviously there is still a lot of work to be done and in fact, the promotion of the route is constantly being planned by the Municipality of Argenta and here we list some initiatives:

- **FAR Gravel:** annual cycling event largely centred on the Primaro route. ([link](#))
- **Primaro Action Plan** project with the Polytechnic of Milan ([link](#)) and **Visit Ferrara** territorial promotion plan ([link](#)).
- **Primaro Storytrekking:** a storytelling project and more from San Nicolò to Casalborsetti. This route can be done on foot, by bicycle, or even by imagination from home. The stages described in the Storytrekking podcasts are ideal stages describing points of historical interest and are on the Primaro route or reachable by small detours. ([link](#))



Figure 25. Primaro storytrekking leaflet.



- Project **“A nest for Biodiversity”**, for the mitigation of environmental detractors along the Primaro Route (financed, ongoing). The project envisages a series of interventions on some strategic areas along the cycle-pedestrian path that runs along the Po di Primaro from Consandolo to Argenta ([link](#)) ([link](#)). Those interventions are:
 - Creation of green corridors with planting interventions, which will replace, after appropriate removal, dry trees.
 - Redevelopment and safety of the section of the unpaved cycle path, currently characterised by two ramps with an excessive difference in height.
 - Illustrative signage.
 - Land Art installations made of wooden material recovered from the removal of dry trees.
- Project **“The Consandolo hub in the Primaro-Reno system”**. The planned interventions of this project are partly on the top of the Primaro Route and partly in the town centre of Consandolo and in the Po Delta Park, in the proximity of the Argenta Marsh Museum. The logical thread that leads back to the unity of each action is to promote the use of the Primaro Route, by giving adequate visibility to what a similar corridor has to offer in the network of national, regional and supra-regional cycle routes and intermodal connections, without at the same time altering the important environmental value that the corridor maintains, also from a naturalistic point of view, within the Natura 2000 Network. ([link](#))
- **“Between landscape and architecture”**. This is a proposal for the enhancement of a tourist-cultural itinerary in the area of Station 6 “Campotto di Argenta” of the Po Delta Regional Park. The most important point is the construction of a cycle-pedestrian footbridge over the Idice river that allows to reach Vallesanta without having to face the very dangerous stretch connecting the Museo delle Valli to Campotto and at the same time to reach the hamlet and its hostel through a low traffic road. ([link](#))
- Proposal for the enhancement and restoration of the **Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine della Celletta** (Figure 26) and the surrounding green area. The property, declared to be of cultural interest, located in the immediate vicinity of the Campotto Marshes, is a landmark in the Argentinian territory, a tourist attraction and orientation point. ([link](#))
- The project dedicated to the enhancement of the **Delizia Estense of Benvignante** (Figure 27) pursues the improvement of the stretch of municipal white road, which connects with the Percorso Primaro in about 2.5 km. ([link](#))
- **Cycle routes within the Argenta marshes**. The Argenta oasis marshes ring is a route of about 21 km that encircles the Cassa del Bassarone, the Cassa di Campotto, the Bosco del Traversante and the Valle Santa along embankments, bridges and short stretches of road. Since 1988 these environments have become part of the “Campotto di Argenta” station of the Po Delta Park. ([link](#))
- **Community maps**. The local communities are able to draw what is important for them and what they wish to preserve in order to pass it to future generations. Notable examples in the area are the community maps of Benvignante (Figure 28) and Campotto (Figure 29).



Figure 26. La Celletta Chapel.



Figure 27. Benvignante.



Figure 28. Community map of Benvignante.



Figure 29. Community map of Campotto.

Other interesting projects and activities in the same area include the following:

- **“On the trails of the Etruscans”**: a 500-km cycle tourism itinerary that touches the most significant sites of the Etruscan civilisation in the Po Delta area and Northern Tuscany, enriched by the variety of museums and the quality of the historical findings and artefacts in Emilia-Romagna. The route runs from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian Sea through the places of this ancient civilisation. The route starts from the sites of the Etruscan city of Spina, on the Po River delta, and goes as far as Populonia, in the municipality of Piombino (another great Etruscan metropolis). This first section would be a connection between Ravenna and Comacchio along the future Adriatic cycle route. Conceived by the Bologna CAI cycle-hiking group, the itinerary has been included in the Tourer.it network, the portal run by the Regional Secretariat of the Ministry of Culture for Emilia-Romagna and dedicated to all those who love to travel in a slow and sustainable way to discover the region’s cultural heritage.
- **La “Via del Ferro”**. The “Iron route” project stems from very recent historical-anthropological discoveries (revolutionary and in the process of being ascertained) and from the bold proposal to retrace the footsteps of the Etruscans in a spectacular and unprecedented “sea/land trekking expedition”. Gianfranco Bracci has researched and identified a consecutive series of paths, embankments, mule tracks, unpaved roads and short stretches of little-used asphalt, useful to form a 20-day trek that joins the Island of Elba and Pisa in Tuscany with Spina (Comacchio) in Emilia Romagna, following the tracks of the oldest paved road in Europe: the Etruscan iron road dating back to the 6th and 5th centuries BC. ([link](#))
- **Vie Storiche – La Via Romea Germanica**. This is an event planned for May 7th and 8th, in two days by bike (to be fully defined in January 2022).

Finally, the following initiatives are not strictly located in the Argenta Municipality, but are part of the wider Po Delta Park destination:

- **Tourism 4 all project from GAL Delta 2000**. The ambitious aim of the Tourism 4 All project is to develop and promote a wide cross-border network of tourist destinations



with accessible natural and cultural heritage, starting from park areas through urban and city areas including beaches, in order to overcome the seasonality of beach tourism and promote social inclusion. The project foresees actions to improve accessibility in ten natural areas and cultural heritage sites also with concrete pilot actions. Among those, DELTA 2000 works to promote the tourism potential of the Emilia-Romagna Delta, and the aim is to identify the area as a real tourist destination by using a bottom-up approach, and create “The Po Delta: Treasure to be revealed to the world”. ([link](#))

- **Delta Po Park.** On 13 January 2021, the Po Delta Biosphere Reserve and the two Po Delta Regional Parks (Veneto and Emilia-Romagna) obtained the **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (CETS)**, an important recognition that EUROPARC (European Association of Protected Areas) awards to the territories most committed to reducing the environmental impacts related to tourism and pursuing sustainable development. For many years the management has been characterized by an intense planning activity, in cooperation with bodies and realities from all over Europe, in order to find important European funds to finance its objectives. Important results have been achieved in particular in the last five years. There are currently 5 European projects active: Life Perdix, Interreg Italy - Croatia, Interreg Central Europe Delta Lady, Life LIFEEL and Life Transfer. In addition, the Po Delta Park organises various events to attract interested parties, such as horse riding excursions. ([link](#))
- **Monasteri aperti Emilia-Romagna.** The “Open monasteries” initiative includes two weekends, between the end of September and October, dedicated to the discovery of monasteries, parishes, abbeys and millenary places of faith along the pilgrimage routes with activities, unique experiences and guided tours. It is an opportunity to visit unique places, try new experiences and enjoy guided tours at night, in-depth talks with experts and teachers of art history as well as meetings with monks, friars and other religious figures. In 2021 the third edition of the event was held, promoted in collaboration with the Bishops’ Conference of Emilia Romagna. The National Office for the Pastoral Care of Tourism, Sport and Leisure of the Italian Episcopal Conference has granted the initiative its patronage. Among the routes of interest to the event there is the Via Romea Germanica.
- **I love Cammini Emilia-Romagna:** a calendar of guided walks, suitable for everyone, along the 18 paths and historic routes that cross the region, from Piacenza to Rimini. There are many appointments (and they are constantly being updated) from July to October.
- **Bike itineraries in the area of Argenta and Delta.** One-day tours are organised by bike, boat, bus and train, to discover the most unique characteristics of the territory of Ferrara. Between nature, culture, food and wine, each tour has a different itinerary and is full of surprises. Two itineraries concern the municipality of Argenta: “Cycling in the Argenta marshes oasis” which is a circular route, with departure and return to Ferrara and a visit to the Argenta Marsh Museum. The second itinerary, “Cycling to discover Argenta”, includes departure and return to Ferrara as well, and a bike ride to Argenta, with a guided tour of the town and a visit to the Land Reclamation Museum of Argenta.



Figure 30. Bike itineraries in Ferrara. Source: <https://www.ferraraterraacqua.it/it/ferrara/scopri-il-territorio/itinerari-e-visite/visite-guidate/in-bici-nel-ferrarese>

- **Delta a pedali: Atlantide Cooperative.** The [Atlantide cooperative](#) is involved in environmental communication and education projects for schools, awareness-raising and dissemination initiatives for companies, programmes for the enhancement of territories and cultural heritage and for the management of theme parks. Thanks to their projects and active commitment, they contribute to the growth of sustainable tourism and a new environmental culture.

With their project “Delta a pedali” (“Delta on wheels”, Figure 31), it is possible to enjoy a bicycle itinerary to discover the Po Delta Park and the Apennines, for those who love nature and want to experience the taste of a slow journey. There are many routes available for families, individuals or groups to take by bike, to be tackled at your own pace, building a holiday of variable length, from a week to a long weekend. There are many services to choose from, from bike and e-bike hire to the cycle guide that accompanies you on your journey, to experience and discover the Po Delta and the Apennines, the nature, history and gastronomy of one of Italy's most magical environments.



Figure 31. “Delta a pedali”. Source: <http://www.atlantide.net/amaparco/delta-a-pedali/>

Pilot actions for Via Francigena

Territorial coverage

The activities undertaken from M6 to M12 by the Via Francigena pilot were focused on identifying and creating an inventory of the most representative thermal sites all along the route. The aim of this proposal was to **analyse several options to be integrated as points of alternative interest close to the official paths** so as to enrich and make more attractive some of the surrounding rural areas.

To this aim, UAM prepared **an inventory of thermal sites in France, Switzerland and Italy**, with data from previous studies and other sources, such as the French National Geological Survey (<http://infoterre.brgm.fr/viewer/>), catalogues and specialised bibliography, websites (e.g., www.isprambiente.gov.it, www.siviaggia.it and www.nclx.io/fonti-termali-italia), books and articles (Figure 32). These sites will be added to the rurAllure website during 2022, in the section described in Deliverable 8.2 (*"Inventory of rural sites and stakeholders"*).

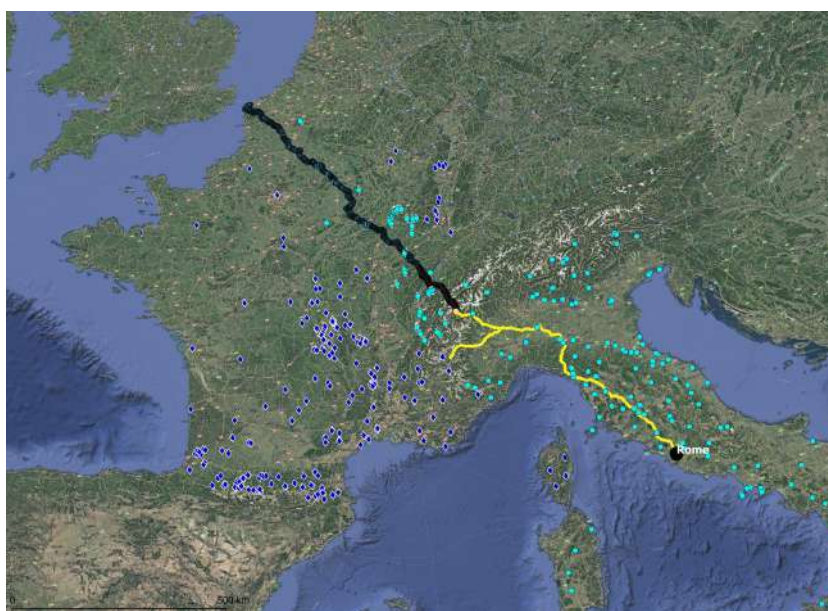


Figure 32. Inventory of thermal and mineral water springs in France, Switzerland and Italy.

Having elaborated the inventory, the UAM team worked to analyse the main sites in order to identify the potential rural areas to be considered in association to the route:

- **In France**, there are not many choices within reasonable distance from Via Francigena (see the buffer zones of 50 km and 100 km in Figure 33).

Directly on the route lies only the UNESCO city of **Besançon-les-Bains**, and close to it is the town of **Miserey-Salines**. In this area, the importance of thermalism and the use of salted mineral waters is not well known by visitors, even if the thermal industry in the 19th century was exceptional, resulting in numerous monumental sites and causing the city's name to officially include "les-Bains". The industry decayed during the 20th century, but the area remains of interest for the pilot, to make pilgrims aware of the industrial and natural landscapes, especially in relation to the exploitation of saline waters.

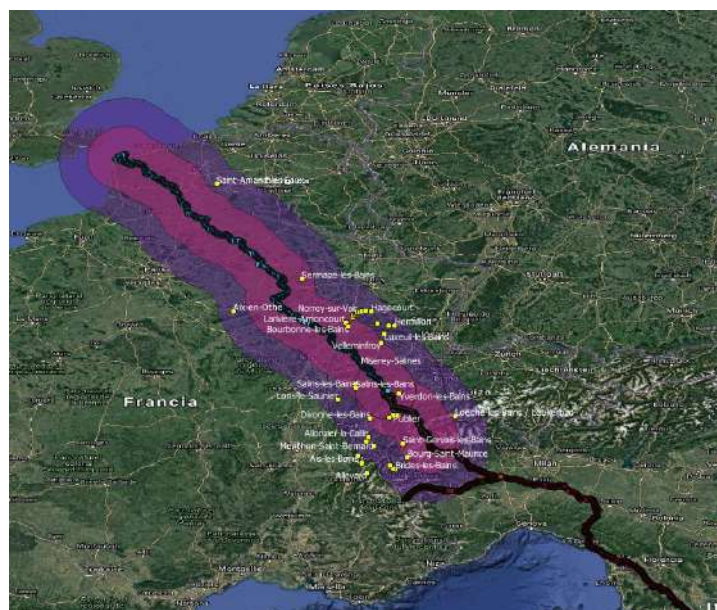


Figure 33. The Via Francigena route in France and Switzerland, indicating buffers of locations within 50 km and 100 km, and the most significant thermal sites therein.



Figure 34. Publicity about the thermal town of Besançon-les-Bains. Source: [France TV info](#)

All the other small towns and sites of interest in the inventory were found to be **located further than 30 km away from the Via Francigena**. Thus, despite the importance of some of them for the French and European thermal heritage (e.g., Plombières-les-Bains, Luxeuil-les-Bains, Bourbonne-les-Bains, etc.), they were considered too distant for the pilot and, therefore, left for future investigation.

Notwithstanding, UAM proposed some **alternative circular routes for short 1-day breaks**. These detours were envisioned for pilgrims particularly interested in thermal heritage and to enrich the influence of Via Francigena further away from its immediate surroundings, allowing municipalities or thermal spas not-so-far-away from Via Francigena to attract pilgrims as well as new visitors. They would be ideally travelled on a rented car or in some cases, using public transport.

For example, one circular route was proposed to include a rural area with a long but declining tradition of thermalism, with some very important historical sites and iconic branding. The visit was proposed from the VF stage 24, from Langres, including Vittel, Bains-les-Bains, Plombières-les-Bains, Luxeuil-les-Bains and back to Bourbonne-les-Bains (Figure 35).



Figure 35. A proposed circular route to detour from Langres into an area that includes some of the most traditional thermal towns in France.

- In Switzerland, UAM first looked at the area around the Neuchâtel Lake, as it was the closest thermal area to the Via Francigena in the country. The traditional thermal town of **Yverdon-les-Bains** raised particular interest. Previously known as just “Yverdon”, it changed its name in 1981 to enhance the importance of its thermal heritage by including “les-Bains”. It was a strategic point to some routes since Antiquity, as testified by ancient maps (like the Tabula Peutinger) and archaeological remains (including Roman sites from Orbe-Boscéaz to Avenches).

Yverdon-les-Bains takes part of an alternative route, partly coincident with a historical and recognized (but not official) derivation of the Via Francigena, crossing from Saint-Croix to Orbe. This route would allow to connect the VF with a very rich cultural heritage existing in the rural area all around the lake. Firstly, in the town itself, there are notable sights such as the preserved Roman camp, the old town, the lake beach, the prehistoric UNESCO WHS of Grève de Clendy and the identified palafitte (pile dwellings) structures, etc. Moreover, there are interesting nearby sites like [La Tène](#) (UNESCO site), [the Roman city of Avenches](#) or the [Orbe-Boscéaz Roman villa mosaics](#) (see Figure 36).

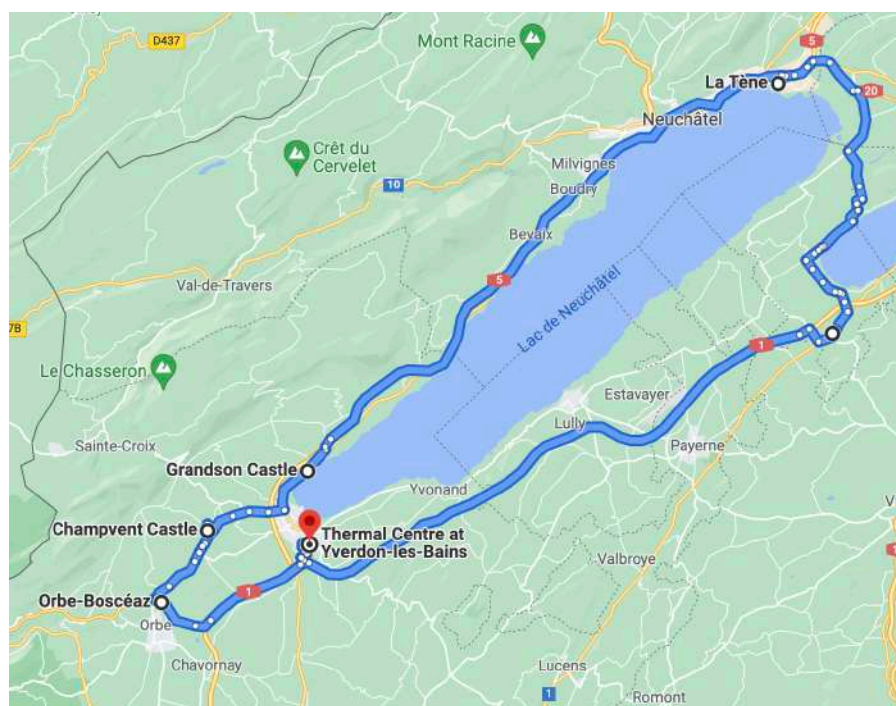


Figure 36. A proposed circular route around the Neuchâtel Lake.

The UAM team considered some other options in Switzerland, including some alternative routes to combine traditional and modern thermal sites, plus exceptional natural parks:

- Thermalism around the Léman Lake (Figure 37): Lausanne, Divone-les-Bains, Évian-les-Bains, Thonon-les-Bains, Lausanne.
- Thermalism around Mont-Blanc (Figure 38): Martigny, Saint Gervais-les-Bains (Mont Blanc), Bromines, Aix-les-Bains.
- Mont-Blanc: Saint Gervais-les-Bains.
- Loeche-les-Bains / Leukerbad: 60 thermal springs (8 in use).

However, **significant difficulties were detected for the development of these proposals**, namely:

- The distance to the Via Francigena pathway (all locations were more than 30 km away).
- The difficulty for reaching the sites across steep mountainous terrains.
- Possible impracticalities for visitors due to getting deep into a non-EU country.

These issues would most likely be problematic to motivate visitors embarked in a pilgrimage trip, so the options were, as in the case of suggested alternative routes in France, **left for investigation in the future**.

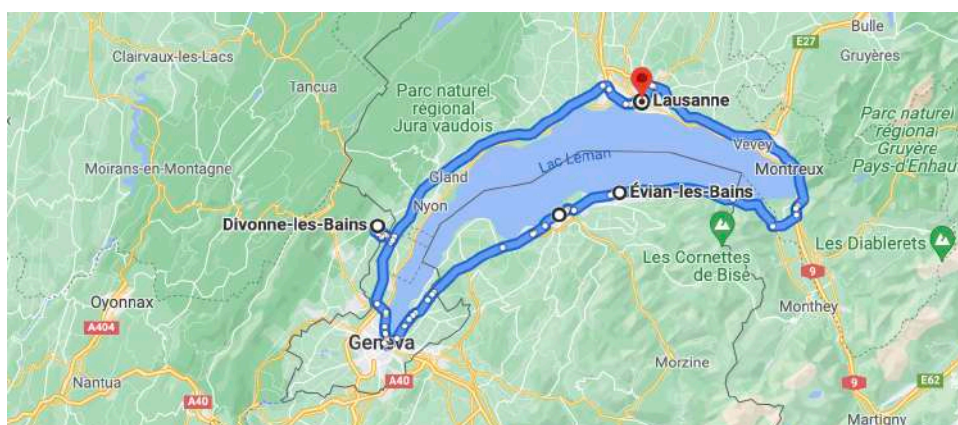


Figure 37. A proposed circular route around the Léman Lake.

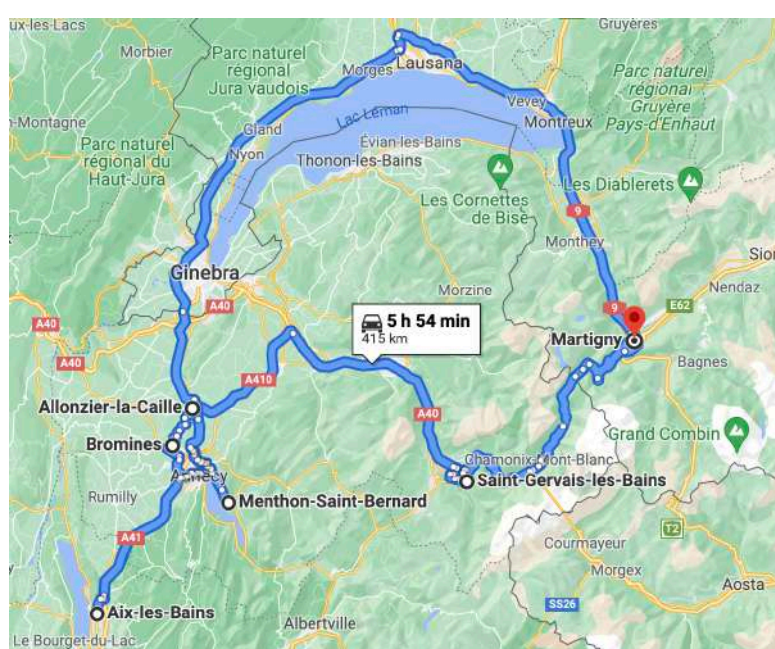


Figure 38. A proposed route of thermalism around Mont-Blanc.

- Finally, **in Italy**, an evaluation of the areas surrounding the Via Francigena revealed an enormous wealth and variety of thermal resources (natural and cultural) in the regions of Tuscany and Lazio, evidencing the potential of these regions as segments of interest for the study and implementation of the WP5 pilot (see the buffer zone of 30 km in Figure 39).

From among the many possibilities, after careful research and brainstorming, AEFV and UAM decided **to put the initial focus of the pilot in the area of Bagno Vignoni** in Val d'Orcia (Tuscany region), which is propitious due to a presence of diverse thermal heritage (according to their significance, singularity, interest and history) and facilities in the area, interest of local stakeholders and favourable attitude of the regional authorities towards the Via Francigena.

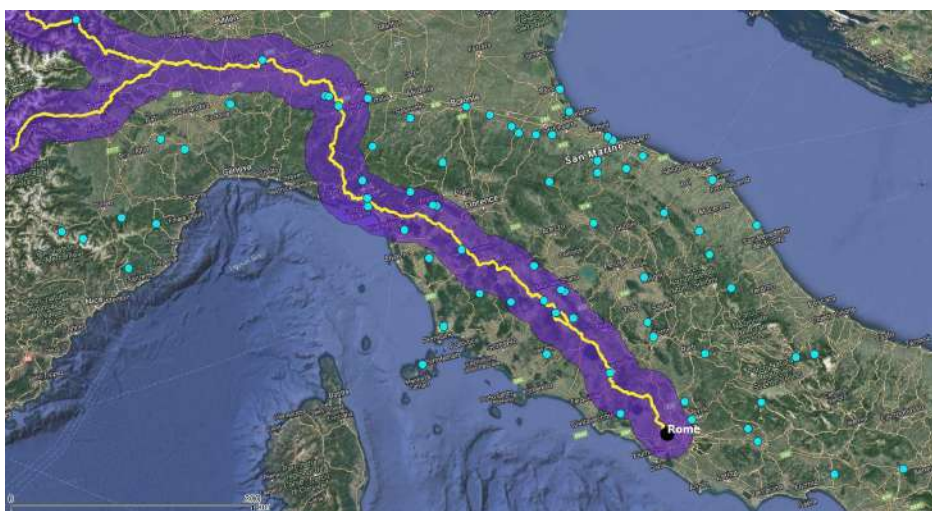


Figure 39. The Via Francigena route in Italy, indicating buffers of locations within 30 km, and the most significant thermal sites therein.

Consequently, in the last months of 2021, AEVF and UAM have been investigating the territory of the Val d’Orcia (considered UNESCO landscape), specifically around the Via Francigena segment between Bagno Vignoni itself and San Casciano dei Bagni (Figure 40). They have selected a first set of thermal sites (spas, volcanic area, geological sites, etc.) and drafted different activities, alternative routes and narratives to lure pilgrims to invest time in discovering the surrounding rural areas once they have reached Bagno Vignoni on their trip. The activities will **involve at least 10 municipalities of the province, whereas only 4 are traversed by the VF.**

The option of **widening the pilot focus in 2022** to include the Lazio province will be considered, with particular attention to the areas Viterbo and Vicarello.

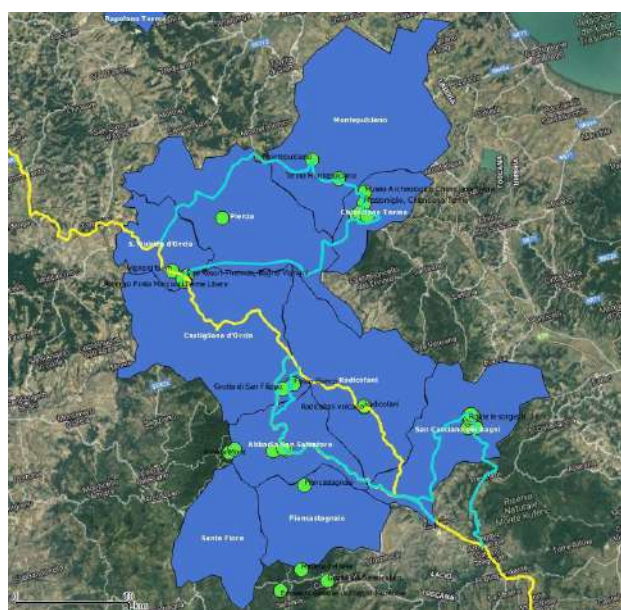


Figure 40. Map of the selected Via Francigena segment in Tuscany, including the first set of thermal sites that will be included in the featured trips and narratives.



Newly-created actions (not happening without rurAllure)

An inventory of the heritage sites along the Via Francigena and in its vicinity

In parallel with the investigation of sites related to thermal heritage in the vicinity of Via Francigena carried out by UAM, AEVF created an inventory of heritage sites in general. The identification of the cultural heritage sites along the entire Via Francigena has taken place since September 2021. As of November 2021, the inventory counts 1173 POIs:

- 250 sites in France (from Calais to Ornans).
- 923 sites in Italy (from Valle d'Aosta to Lazio). Among these, 18 sites lie within the pilot area in the Tuscany region.

The ongoing work to identify the sites in Switzerland and southern Italy will be finished by December 2021. The inventory is prepared in the format of an Excel file in two languages (French and English/Italian and English). The inventory was sent to the AEVF members and stakeholders for their feedback.

The experience acquired by the AEVF team during the “Road to Rome 2021. *Start again!*” event (see next section) was important in the preparation of the inventory, as it allowed them to retrace the entire Via Francigena and get familiar with less-travelled areas along the route (some of which are more distant from the main itinerary), thanks to the local stakeholders and associations.

“Road to Rome 2021. Start again!”

“Road to Rome 2021. Start again!” was a 4-month relay march –on foot and by bicycle– over 3.200 km along the Via Francigena, between June and October 2021. It was organised by the AEVF together with its network of partners and friends, aiming to promote sustainable travel along the Via Francigena, promote the route as a destination and relaunch travel after the pandemic. It was also focused on supporting the VF candidacy to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The team, which consisted of the AEVF staff, journalists, bloggers, walkers and representatives of local authorities departed on June 16th from Canterbury (km zero of the Via Francigena), crossed the English Channel, walked in France, Switzerland and Italy and arrived in Rome on September 10th. It continued then to Santa Maria di Leuca along the Via Francigena of the South, where it arrived on October 18th 2021.

The initiative intended to raise awareness of ministries and local authorities of the four countries crossed (United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Italy), regions and religious institutions. The event also made it possible to check the state of the route, fixing any shortcomings and proposing improvements, and to promote regional sections.

The march crossed 16 regions and 637 municipalities in England, France, Switzerland and Italy along 119 walking stages (of which 113 on the official route and 6 along the variants). 10 official events along the main stages took place during the initiative, including **round tables and conferences** aboard historic trains, which involved a total of 200 people from public and private institutions including the Italian Minister of Culture, Dario Franceschini, and the Director of Italian Nation Tourism Agency, Giovanni Bastianelli. The event was featured by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the World Tourism Organisation.



Figure 41. Institutional welcome by the Council of Europe Secretary General, Marija Pejcinovic Buric.

Road to Rome was a choral event that involved people from all over Europe, including pilgrims, walkers and hikers, partners and collaborators, expressing the true essence of the Via Francigena: journeys on foot, cultural and natural discoveries, shared experiences and exchanges.

An average of 20 pilgrims per day met in each stage in the sections in England, France, Switzerland (about 800 in total) and 40 in the Italian sections (about 2.800), with a considerable increase in Apulia (where 50 pilgrims were registered per day on average) and in the final stages (up to 100 pilgrims per day on average), for **a total of about 3.500 pilgrims** encountered on the Via Francigena during its entire journey. **An estimate of about 10.000 people met during institutional events or visits organized at the half or end of the stage**, considering an average of 50 people in the stages in France and Switzerland and 80 in Italy.

This initiative allowed a close look at the route, personal encounters with local authorities and associations and the verification of the itinerary. An added value for the rurAllure is that the team was able to identify cultural and natural heritage along and in the vicinity of the route, take photos and videos, which supported the **preparation of the inventory of nearby heritage sites** and provided materials that will be uploaded to the rurAllure IT platform.

The following thermal sites were visited by the AEFV team during the initiative:

- Gambassi Terme.
- Bagno Vignoni.
- Bagni di San Filippo.
- Viterbo.
- Telesse Terme.
- Torre Canne.

The following areas in the vicinity of thermal sites were visited, too:

- Besançon-les-Bain.
- Yverdon-les-Bains.
- Salsomaggiore Terme.

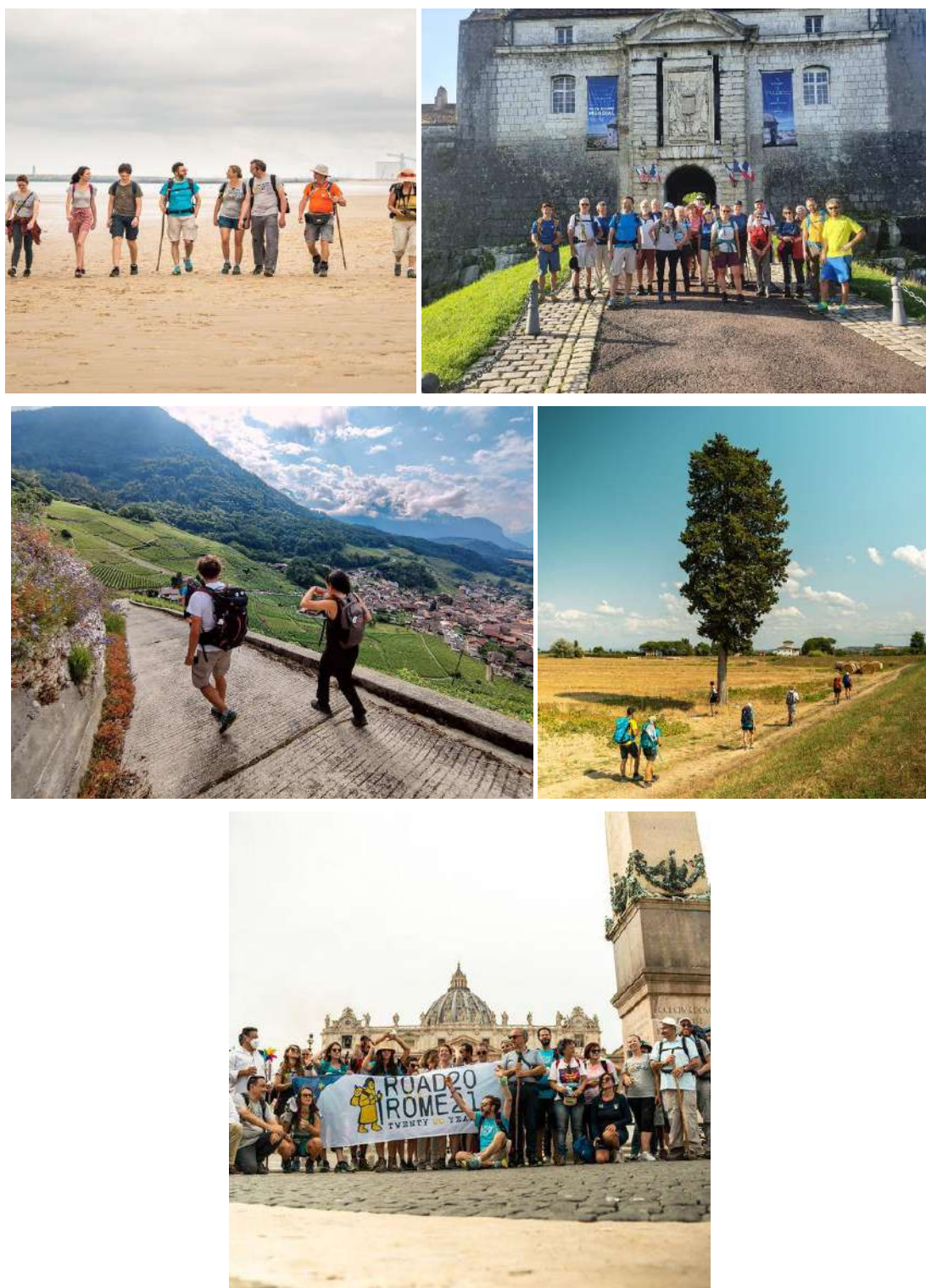


Figure 42. Some pictures from the “Via Francigena. Road to Rome 2021. Start again!” initiative: first day of the walk in Calais, France; arrival to Besançon-les-Bains; Walk in Switzerland; walk in Tuscany; arrival to Rome.



The AEFV rurAllure team joined the walk in Tuscany to conduct the first site inspection of the areas of Bagno Vignoni, Bagni San Filippo and the surroundings for the rurAllure pilot study. The team members walked with the group in the Italian regions of Campania and Apulia and **distributed the questionnaire for en-route pilgrims** designed within WP2 among the pilgrims.

Study visit to Bagno Vignoni and Bagni San Filippo

As the “Road to Rome 2021. Start again!” trip advanced through the Tuscany region, the AEFV team made a study visit to two highly-relevant sites between August 28th and 30th:

- Bagno Vignoni is part of the municipality of San Quirico d’Orcia and is crossed by the Via Francigena (leg San Quirico d’Orcia–Radicofani).
- Bagni San Filippo is part of the Municipality of Castiglione d’Orcia and it can be reached with a detour of 3-5 km from Via Francigena, in correspondence of San Quirico d’Orcia–Radicofani leg.

Both places are included in the UNESCO site of cultural landscapes of Val d’Orcia.

The objectives of the visit included a **first inspection of the thermal heritage and the routes of and around the Via Francigena in the area**, a **first encounter with local stakeholders** (municipalities, tourism offices and management of the thermal facilities) and **video recording and photographing** the area for production of a promotional video and having a stock of a photo archive. It was an important opportunity for networking, to promote the route and to check its condition and signage.

The following are some highlights from the visit:

- Bagni San Filippo is a thermal town and its thermal springs were already known from the times of the Etruscans and Romans.
- The natural thermal area of Bagno Vignoni is free access. Around the site there are tourist services, such as bars and restaurants, accommodation facilities and public transport services. Currently, it does not have any private spa facilities. There is a closed thermal establishment (its reopening is expected) and the construction of a new plant is also planned, but the works are stalled.
- The main attraction of the town is the “Fosso Bianco”, the thermal site where the visit was concentrated. Fosso Bianco is a stream that flows in the woods at the foot of the village. Several hot water springs flow into it in a succession of pools where it is possible to bathe all year round and admire the particular limestone formations. The most famous is the huge white limestone formation known as “Balena Bianca” (White Whale).
- The area can be reached from the town via **a suggestive pedestrian path** surrounded by the greenery of the woods. Access is free but now it is limited due to COVID-19 restrictions (about 200 people maximum).
- One of the greatest potentials of Bagni San Filippo for pilgrimage and tourism –in addition to its excellent location for visiting southern Tuscany– is the **presence of possible shortcuts of the Via Francigena** that pass through private lands, and that could represent an opportunity to connect this site to pilgrims.
- Grotta di San Filippo can also be reached on foot with a 15-minute walk. There is a small oratory in a cave carved out of a large block of travertine, in the shape of a closed vault. The cave and the town take their name from San Filippo Benizi, who in the 13th century – according to tradition– took refuge in these places. It is said that the cardinal Ottaviano



degli Ubaldini proposed the election to the papacy of Filippo Benzi but the saint refused this honour and responsibility, left Viterbo and hid on Mount Amiata. It is said that Philip, as Moses, hit with his stick a rock from where, miraculously, a source of healing waters started to flow that later became the Baths of St. Philip. It was the sign that the saint left his gratitude to the people of the place who had welcomed and supported him during his stay. The place is a part of the cultural heritage of the area not well known to tourists, whereas it is very interesting from a historical and anthropological point of view.

- In Bagno Vignoni, the archaeological and thermal site “Parco naturale dei Mulini” is reachable from the town centre with a walk of a few minutes. This is a protected natural area and was one of the main milling poles in the territory of Siena. The protected area was defined in 1997, after the system of mills was abandoned in the 50s despite having been one of the main production centres in the area. These infrastructures of notable economic value worked all year round thanks to the continuous supply of thermal waters, which guaranteed their operation even in summer, when the other mills in the area were stopped because of the rivers dry.
- The area is now an archaeological and thermal site with free access, which is distributed on the side of a hill on top of which lies the village of Bagno Vignoni. The jet of thermal water that in the past fed the mills and that falls from the top to the bottom forms a thermal pool in which it is possible to bathe.
- The ancient village of Bagno Vignoni, which has only 30 inhabitants, includes three hotels/resorts with spa. At the centre of the village there is “Piazza delle Sorgenti”, a rectangular basin, of 16th century origin, which contains a source of hot and steaming thermal water coming out of the underground stratum of volcanic origin. Since the time of the Etruscans and then the Romans –as evidenced by the numerous archaeological findings– the baths of Bagno Vignoni were frequented by famous people, such as Pope Pius II, Catherine of Siena, Lorenzo de Medici and many artists. The waters that flow out of the thermal pool head towards the steep escarpment of the Natural Park of the Mills.
- Thanks to the Municipality and the Tourist Office of San Quirico D’Orcia, the AEFV team was put in contact with the Director of Albergo Le Terme in Bagno Vignoni, who allowed us to visit the structure. This is a family-run hotel with a spa managed by the Banchetti family for four generations now. It is located in the central square of Bagno Vignoni, in front of the large pool, in a 15th century building designed by architect Rossellino and used as a summer residence by Pope Pius II Piccolomini.

All in all, Bagno Vignoni and Bagni San Filippo were found to be an excellent case study for the WP5 pilot, due to their location along the Via Francigena or in its vicinity (within a radius of 5-15 km) and their combination of thermal heritage with historical, cultural, religious, archaeological, architectural, natural and former industrial heritage. Hospitality in hotels with spas in Bagno Vignoni is consolidated, well-structured and high-quality.

These facts represent **an opportunity for rurAllure**, which could promote the creation of a network of stakeholders at the local level. Accordingly, the Tourist Office of San Quirico D’Orcia and Albergo Le Terme were requested to send information on the presence of pilgrims in these places, and it was decided to keep in touch to exchange material, information, statistics and results.

A news article was posted on the rurAllure website on September 1st, 2021 documenting the visit.



Figure 43. Pictures from the study visit to Bagni San Filippo.



Figure 44. The AEVF team during the study visit to Bagno Vignoni.

Dissemination actions

During the period September–November 2021, the **questionnaire for pilgrims-to-be** designed within WP2 to characterize pilgrims' interests and motivations (see Deliverable 2.1, “*Common strategies for pilots*”) was disseminated online via the EAVF channels:

- In the newsletter sent to all members and friends associations.
- On the website, with a dedicated article created in 3 languages. ([link](#))
- Through the social media channels: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter.
- In English, French and Italian pilgrims' groups (60 groups in total).

- Via networks of pilgrims met during the Road to Rome 2021 event.
- Through bloggers and influencers who participated in the Road to Rome event.

In addition, a **rurAllure** page was created on the **AEFV** website in 3 languages (English, French and Italian) and is in constant update. The **AEFV** also shares relevant **rurAllure** news and articles on its website and social media. A **newsletter** informing the **AEFV** members and stakeholders about the participation in **rurAllure** in general and **WP5** in particular was sent over in January 2021. A specialised edition of the newsletter entirely dedicated to **rurAllure** is foreseen, too, that will include the description of the project, goals, activities and development. Prepared in 3 languages, it will be sent to all **AEFV** members (200) and friends associations (70) by mid-December 2021.

The **rurAllure** thermal pilot will be featured in the **biannual magazine “Via Francigena and the European Cultural Routes”**, an **AEFV** in-house publication, to be published in December 2021 (Figure 45). The magazine is available in English, French and Italian, both online and in print with a coverage of 2.000 copies.



Figure 45. The “Via Francigena and the European Cultural Routes” magazine.

Other activities

- Dissemination of the pilot goals by UAM in conferences and seminars like International MIAS seminars (Madrid and online), **international fair Termatalia** (Ourense and online to South America), Inclusive Dissemination (Alcalá de Henares), etc.
- Participation in the 360-hour course **“International Specialist in Thermalism and Spa”** (Figure 47), organized by the Faculty of Education Science and Social Work of the University of Vigo (Spain) in December 2021, with the collaboration of Instituto Politécnico de Bragança (Portugal) and thermal tourism stakeholders from the Galicia-North of Portugal Euro-region.



Figure 46. Pictures of dissemination activities about the rurAllure pilot on thermal heritage.

Especialista Internacional en Termalismo e SPA

Especialista
ÁMBITO: CIENCIAS CÓDIGO: E1052101

Inicio e fin	Modalidade	Duración	Campus
📅 23/09/2021 – 29/07/2022	📍 Semipresencial	🕒 360 horas	📍 Ourense

Figure 47. Poster and registration site of the course “International specialist in thermalism and spa”.

- Contact with potential stakeholders specialised in thermalism in other countries, like the [Galician Association of Thermal spas](#), the [European Historic Thermal Towns Association \(EHHTA\)](#), Tribuna Termal magazine, journalists, etc.
- First drafts of articles for scientific and non-scientific publications. For example, in the next months for the Geological Spanish Society, and other journals about archaeology, thermal heritage and geoheritage.
- Archaeology and geology have been specifically considered to recreate and explain the territory around Bagno Vignoni and Bagni San Filippo, creating new narratives according to the main aspect linked to thermalism. These narratives will be completed and discussed with local vendors and actors and will be tested during the next months.
- Preparation of a dossier about the state-of-the-art about museums related to thermalism, to analyse the different ways used to get information about thermal mineral water and thermal spas (in progress, to be finished by the end of 2021).
- Preparation of a dossier about good practices and new ideas in Museums and Cultural institutions to lure the public (in progress, to be concluded by March-April 2022).



- Critical revision of accessibility to thermal heritage along Via Francigena. This assessment has allowed identifying a deep shortfall in databases of cognitively and sensory accessible resources. It is very unlikely that a visitor with special cognitive or sensory needs will embark on a pilgrimage trip and visit nearby heritage sites if he/she does not know beforehand that there will be resources to do so.
- A work-in-progress paper on the design of accessible narratives for thermal heritage in the Val d'Orcia sector of Via Francigena has been drafted by UAM and will be improved during next months with new experiences, highlighting the need of using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in creating the narratives for the pilots of rurAllure.
- Discussion about different types of narratives to be developed in the next months.

Previously-existing activities integrated in the pilot

The thermal inventory in France, Italy and Switzerland was possible according to previous research done by UAM all over the EU countries, integrating in the rurAllure project all the data from different national and official web pages in each territory, as well as different webs (touristic, commercial and non-commercial sites) and bibliography about different aspects linked to thermal heritage to consider many thermal sites to be considered.

The region selected to this pilot is very rich in heritage (above all, in old towns and villas, but mainly in landscape) and one of the best-known in Italy. There are many interesting websites (e.g., [Visit Tuscany](#)) offering different options to discover and enjoy this region. Nevertheless, it is not always easy for pilgrims or visitors to recognize or find those options. The pilot will try to seek solutions to the current weaknesses.

So far, the target audiences for all these places were mainly pilgrims on the Via Francigena. We will try to develop new activities to integrate also local and foreign visitors and vendors. We will be specifically attentive to pilgrims and visitors with special needs (hearing, visual or intellectual disability, as well as reduced mobility) to be integrated into our narratives and activities proposing different tools.

Pilot actions for Via Romea Strata

Territorial coverage

As has been highlighted, the path of the Romea Strata follows part of the ancient route of the Roman consular road known as Via Annia reaching places rich in archaeological traces and highly-suggestive historical and cultural memories. Starting from the extensive census of ancient thermo-mineral sites close to the Via Annia and in general in Italy made by the staff of UNIPD and IUAV (Figure 48), in the first six months of WP5 the study and analysis actions undertaken for the Romea Strata concerned in particular the North-Eastern sector of the route, in order to identify some areas of particular cultural interest.

Initially, we selected two areas:

- **The Via Annia segment from Camposampiero and Borgoricco to Monselice passing through Padua (45 km).** Our focus is pointed towards the rural area of the Roman centuriation around Borgoricco with its archaeological Museum, and to the thermal site of Abano-Montegrotto Terme. In this area there are also those UNESCO sites: Padua's Botanical Garden, Padova Urbs Picta (Giotto, the Scrovegni Chapel and the 14th century fresco cycles), the pile-dwelling sites - Arquà Petrarca.
- **The Via Postumia segment from Verona to San Bonifacio (32 km),** where there is the thermal site of "Terme di Giunone" in Caldiero municipality.



Figure 48. Map of the most important ancient thermo-mineral sites in Italy, developed by UNIPD and IUAV.

However, since Terme di Giunone is a modern thermal site (unlike the other mapped archaeological sites) and we do not have a strong collaboration with municipalities in that area, it was decided to focus the pilot activities in the area of the Abano-Montegrotto Terme and Borgoricco (Figure 49).



Figure 49. The area of the thermal site of Abano-Montegrotto Terme.

Newly-created actions (not happening without rurAllure)

Preliminary study of the territory

From 2010 to 2015, the staff of UNIPD and IUAV worked on a census of all the ancient thermos-mineral sites in Italy (~170 places), publishing multiple articles and proceedings of national and international conferences. Starting from all the dataset so collected, for the rurAllure project we decided to test both the possibility to provide multiple forms related to the singular archaeological sites and their history, and to image the structure of the storytelling that will be developed in the next months of rurAllure, aiming to reveal the thermal heritage to the Romea Strata pilgrims.

We focused in particular on the Euganean thermal complex, nowadays divided up among various municipalities, in particular Montegrotto and Abano Terme. It was one single entity depending in the Roman age from the nearby “municipium Patavii”: in fact, ancient literary sources defined it “Patavinorum Aquae” or “Patavini Fontes”. Its history, the evolution of the landscape, the diverse aspects of thermalism throughout the millennia cannot but be treated unitarily. The hydric basin is one, and the morphological diversity of the territory explains the different forms of settlement and exploitation of the resources between Montegrotto and Abano: mostly a different depth of the water basin and consequently a more or less spontaneous outpour of the springs in Antiquity have determined various types of occupation of the area. In particular, the exploitation of the thermal waters in Montegrotto Terme has crossed the millennia. In fact, from a sacred place, at least since the Iron Age, organised around a small boiling lake on whose shores the worshippers deposited their offerings to the water god, in the Roman age it became a thermal resort where the water resource easily combined religious, social and economic elements, as the substantial documentation in the area testifies. Over the centuries, the sources have been exploited until now, with multiple hotels for tourists.

In this sense, we collected substantial data in order to develop the narratives and to propose the structure of the storytelling dedicated to the focus area.



Figure 50. View of natural thermal sources in the Euganean area.

In order to better understand the **policy context** of the area, UNIPD and IUAV conducted interviews with two representatives of Promoturismo FVG, the operational arm of the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region in the field of tourism. This institution has also received the task of coordinating the topic of walks in the region and is a member of the European Association Romea Strata. We would have liked to involve the Veneto region –in particular, the Tourism Department– in order to provide new collaboration with institutional stakeholders as well as private ones. In fact, although the Region has established a register of regional ways, there is no real commitment on this issue and there is no suitable interlocutor with whom to interface. It is the only region crossed by the Romea Strata with which the AERS has no reference points with respect to the topics of pilgrimage ways and the enhancement of the heritage. UNIPD and IUAV will actively pursue contacts in the next months with authorities for tourism in Veneto Region.

Site visit to recognise the field area of Borgoricco

Within the framework of the teaching activities planned for the students of the course of Ancient Topography (Jacopo Turchetto) of the first level degree in Archaeology at the University of Padova, a series of initiatives, linked to the project tasks, were carried out in the **Municipality of Borgoricco** (North-East of Padova). There, indeed, the rural landscape still preserves and maintains the characters of the ancient agrarian organisation (centuriation) given in the 1st century BC by the Romans, who created a grid of equidistant and orthogonal roads which made all the area appear as a widespread chessboard.

In the first weeks of December, the students had the possibility to join in a number of activities, all planned with the specific aim of surveying the centurial area and deepening the knowledge of its main features.

A guided tour of the **Museum of Roman Centuriation** was organised, during which the students could better understand the cultural value of the agrarian organisation set by the Romans and its role in the definition of the layout of the modern landscape.

Students experienced a walking tour along the roads defining the borders of the ancient land parcel known as centuria, and appreciated the modular pattern of the land division by measuring the distances between one road and the other (corresponding to 20 Roman actus, about 710 m), by using a manual measuring wheel together with the app MyTracks for itinerary mapping.

To enhance the understanding on how the ancient Roman land surveying techniques functioned, the groma, i.e. the main tool used by the gromatici (Roman surveyors), has been recreated and applied in the real field in Borgoricco. Here the students planted the groma in the ground (Figure 51) and started to define the main axes of the hypothetical centuriation by disposing a series of wooden poles along two orthogonal lines.



Figure 51. Field survey activities with students in the area of Borgoricco.

To verify the accuracy of the work sketched on the field, an unmanned aerial vehicle was used to take an aerial overview of the study area. The photographs taken were then elaborated through a specific photogrammetric software, which combined all of them into a photomosaic, allowing to view the two alignments.

Alongside with students' activities, other initiatives were taken to develop a structured dialogue with the various local bodies. Informal conversations with the Municipality of Borgoricco and the Museum of Roman Centuriation have already been kicked off, in order to start the planning of proper walking and cycling tourist itineraries, aimed at enhancing local cultural heritage.

A targeted GIS platform was developed to collect and manage all the data available in terms of archaeological finds and points of interest.

All these activities have produced promising results and could be useful to stimulate the interest of both local communities and stakeholders. This will certainly represent a crucial starting point for the creation of the narratives which will be developed during the second year of the project.

Distribution of WP2 questionnaires

We disseminated the questionnaires designed within WP2 (see Deliverable 2.1, "*Common strategies for pilots*") by various means:

- Monthly through 3 newsletters (Romea Strata, the European Association and the pilgrimages office of FHV's diocese).



- With continuous posts on the various social pages of the entities that FHV coordinates.
- By email to volunteers who collaborate with FHV and to pilgrims who requested the credential.

Meeting with the network of IATs and info points

An online meeting with the network of IATs (Tourist Information and Reception) and info points located along the Romea Strata (about 60 offices distributed in 5 regions) was organised to inform them of the contents of the rurAllure project and to ask for their collaboration in the promotion and compilation of the WP2 questionnaires.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this first contact was not enough to reach all the offices and establish a collaboration. Other presentation meetings will be organized next year to develop the network and coordination between the info points.

Meetings with Local Action Groups

In order to enhance the cooperation between the local tourism operators and the governance of the Romea Strata, the staff of Fondazione Homo-Viator (FHV) have started to set up a network of tourist offices along the Italian way in order also to improve the promotion of the itinerary and the services offered to pilgrims. In the same way, the Foundation had also started a working group between the LAGs (Local Action Groups) affected by the Italian stretch of the Romea Strata. All these networks will be useful for the rurAllure proposals.

During 2021, we had 2 meetings with Local Action Groups (GAL): 8 LAGs are involved in Romea Strata in Italy, but 2 should be affected by the project: LAG Patavino (Montegrotto) and the other one in Verona. We will understand the type of support in the next meetings. The LAG from Padua is already working on models for the promotion of thermal and rural tourism products. Thermalism is part of the “Before Venice” theme, and they have also made dedicated videos and podcasts. The Abano area is not a municipality included in the area of their project and therefore through rurAllure we can implement the activity. Early next year we will discuss how to use their existing experience in favour of rurAllure and vice versa. The goal is to collaborate on the creation of tourism proposals and also promote them through their institutional channels

Development of the POI list for the area of interest

We have checked all POIs in the segments of interest and all the data available, ending up with 145 POIs. We have realized that the majority of the POIs are religious ones, distributed along the route. More accommodation services, museums, archaeological sites and cultural heritage contexts will be sought in the upcoming months, as we are collecting data on our internal database and further developing it.

In order to offer a dataset for internal wider discussion, at the beginning of the WP5 activities, we collected information related to specific archaeological contexts strictly related to the Via Romea Strata. The upload of the POIs will be completed during 2022. The main challenge lies in the collection of pictures of the POIs, both in terms of finding beautiful and suitable photos for a promotional site and in terms of rights of use. FHV has no proprietary photos and it is very difficult to find them.

Previously-existing activities integrated in the pilot

As we already highlighted, the staff of UNIPD and IUAV have been carrying out many studies dedicated to the landscape and the thermalism in Antiquity. In fact, since 2010 to nowadays five research projects have been carried out by the staff of UNIPD and IUAV about ancient

thermalism in the Roman Empire. In particular, the first project titled *“Aquae patavinae”* was dedicated to the restoration and the enhancement of the Roman archaeological areas in the Montegrotto Terme city (in particular the Roman Villa in Via Neroniana, the Via Scavi thermal site and the Hotel Terme Neroniane thermal context). To enlarge the perspective, a second project titled *“Il termalismo in età romana fra conoscenza e valorizzazione”* was dedicated to collecting and analysing data related to the Roman settlements at the thermal sources in the Italian peninsula and the islands: it filed in a complex database all the thermos-mineral aspects, as well as the archaeological, historical, epigraphical, literary and iconographical documents pertaining to about 170 ancient sites. Furthermore, two PhD theses discussed in UNIPD (by Cecilia Zanetti and Matteo Marcato) and a research fellowship carried out in UNIPD (by Maddalena Bassani) have collected in the same way information related to the archaeological sites close to thermal springs (see Figure 52), which will be made available to the rurAllure IT platform.



Figure 52. Maps of the thermo-mineral sites collected in the PhD theses carried out in the Department of Archaeology of UNIPD by C. Zanetti and M. Marcato.

From 2016 to 2019, the UNIPD and IUAV staff involved in the rurAllure project also participated in the H2020 project CrossCult (*“Empowering reuse of digital cultural heritage in context-aware crosscuts of European history”*), which included a pilot experiment related to thermalism in four European archaeological sites. In that project, it was very important to develop some useful storytelling to draw people’s attention to specific aspects of cultural heritage in a simple way, which will be useful expertise for the creation of narratives for pilgrims in rurAllure, shifting from the few hours spent in a museum visit to potentially longer explanations and wealthier content over several consecutive journey of pilgrimage. This way, some ideas on narrative templates were created (see Figure 53), that can represent the starting point for the creation of the narratives to be offered by the rurAllure IT platform during the second year of the project.

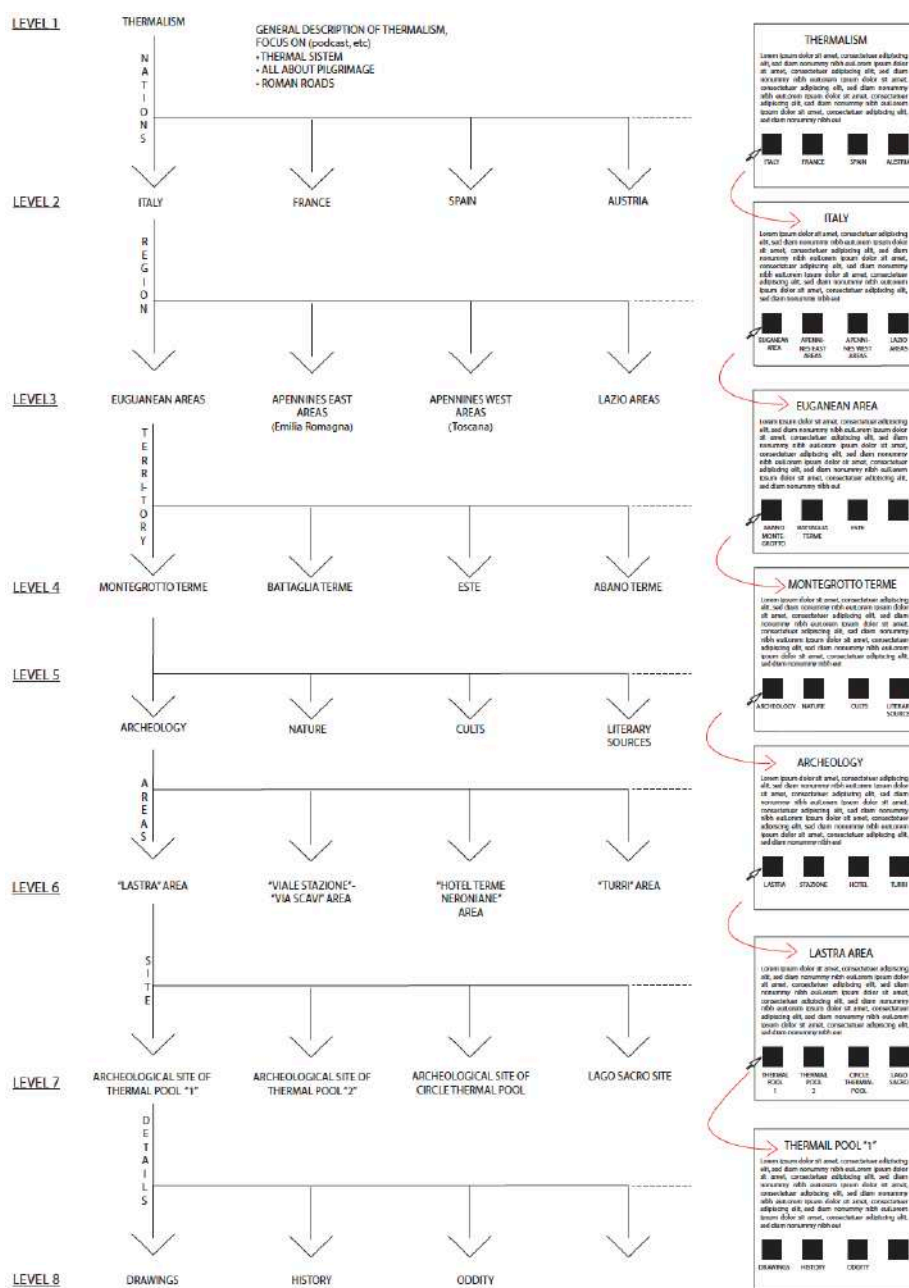


Figure 53. A possible hierarchical structure for storytelling about thermalism.

Parallely, the staff of UNIPD and IUAV have contributed to setting up of museums that, as shown in Figure 54, fall within a buffer area of 5 km from Via Romea Strata and **Via Romea del Santo** (a Northern branch of the Via Romea Strata) and, therefore, may be developed into first-level POIs for pilgrims during the next months.

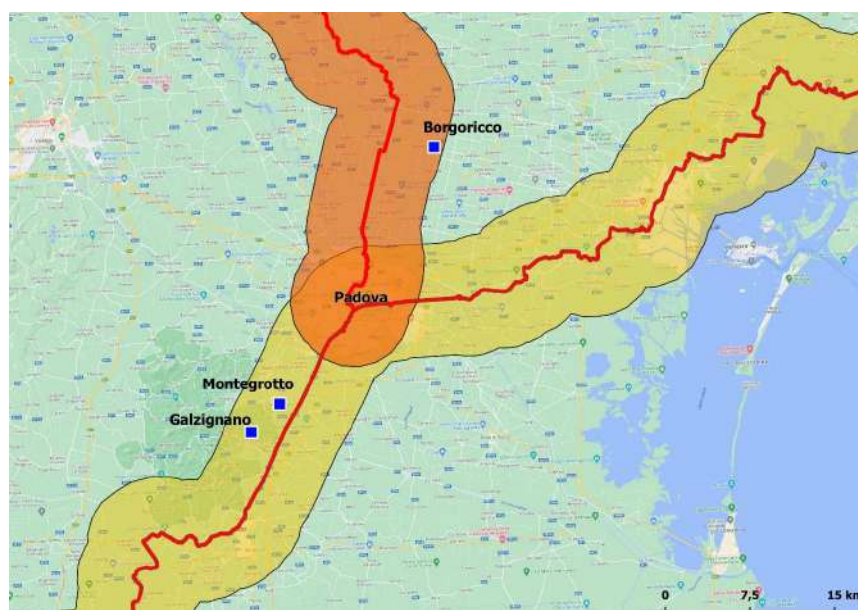


Figure 54. The museums of Borgoricco, Montegrotto and Galzignano withing a 5 km buffer area around Via Romea Strata and its variant Via del Santo.

- The first museum is **Museo del Termalismo Antico e del Territorio in Montegrotto Terme** (Figure 55), where people can discover the history of the thermalism and the phenomena in the Euganean area. The core theme of the Museum especially concerns the continuity of the exploitation of this resource: thermalism, explored in all its sides, from hydro-geology to the interaction with human communities in the various historical phases, more or less affected by religious, cult, health, economic, social and political aspects. Thus, a constantly changing thermal landscape emerges, along with an ever evolving relationship with people, who always find in it a fundamental element of one's physical and spiritual existence.
- The second museum UNIPD has been collaborating with for many years lies within the Municipality of Borgoricco: the **Museum of Roman Centuriation**. This museum (Figure 56) is a unicum in Italy and could well represent a hub of attraction for cycling or foot tourism. By taking advantage of the cycle path network already established in that flat territory, pilgrims could be diverted to Borgoricco in order to experience that landscape with its peculiar characters.
- Finally, the **Euganean Hills Museum** in Galzignano Terme is the place where stories and artistic, scientific and cultural evidences of the Euganean Hills are preserved. The villages of Galzignano and Valsanzibio are part of a unique place, rich of antiquities, monasteries, Venetian villas, immersed in a luxuriant and rare nature. This small but innovative museum was inaugurated in 2009 and is organised in easily-understandable and captivating thematic sections, divided between archaeology and naturalistic part.

The museum (Figure 57) has a proper Educational Office dedicated to promoting love for nature and culture, in connection with the Agenda 2030 and with the activities of the Euganean Hills Natural Park. It also promotes connections, networks and cultural events in line with the strategy and the goals of the Museum itself and the Cultural Centre of Galzignano, composed by the Library and the Auditorium too.



Figure 55. Views of the Museo del Termalismo Antico e del Territorio in Montegrotto Terme: outside and room dedicated to the history and the archaeological artefacts from the Villa at Via Neroniana.



Figure 56. Views of the Borgoricco Museum.



Figure 57. Views of the Euganean Hills Museum in Galzignano Terme.

Finally, it is worth noting that UNIPD has a long tradition of research in the field of landscape studies and promotion, testified both by its chair of Ancient Topography (which always focussed on ancient territorial issues specifically regarding the Venetia et Histria region) and, more recently, through the activation of the **Master's degree in Tourism 4.0**.

Target KPIs and strategies

This section contains estimations for the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the Complementary Performance Indicators (CPIs) that require contributions from the rurAllure pilots, as explained in Deliverable 2.1 (*“Common strategies for pilots”*).

KPI3: Involvement of pilgrims and local stakeholders in pilot actions

KPI3.1: Number of local stakeholders (museums, heritage sites, cultural/touristic companies, small businesses, ...) involved in pilot actions

- The pilot along Via Romea Germanica will involve, at least, 10 museums, 10 heritage sites, 10 cultural/touristic companies and 20 small businesses. It will also try to secure at least 3 additional Associated Partners: APT Servizi (tourism promotion agency of Emilia Romagna region), the Consorzio della Bonifica Renana (Land Reclamation company) and Atlantide Cooperative.
- The Via Francigena pilot will involve more than 10 local stakeholders (museums, heritage sites, municipalities) and 10 service providers (e.g., accommodation, baggage transport, guides or tour operators). Thanks to AEFV activities, many public stakeholders have been contacted, such as Tuscan local authorities, municipalities concerned by the pilot and AEFV members and partners. For other territories, UAM too has contacted important thermal stakeholders, like Balnearios de Galicia and EHTTA (European Historical thermal Towns Association).
- The pilot along Via Romea Strata will work with a minimum of 10 museums and heritage sites, 10 other stakeholders (Veneto Region with its district, Local Action Groups and municipalities), and 10 service providers (e.g. accommodation, baggage transport, guides and tour operators) in the focus area and beyond.

KPI3.2: Number of events/materials organised/created for stakeholders' awareness and training

- 1 workshop on Universal Design for Learning (directed to rurAllure partners): 20 participants



- The partners working on Via Romea Germanica will organise the following activities:
 - 3 focus groups to co-create narratives directed to local stakeholders (involving around 75 participants).
 - At least 1 training session to small business to use the rurAllure IT platform (~30 participants).
 - Presentations of the project at Master students of Wellness, Sports and Health and Tourism Economics and Management (~30 students).
 - 2 presentations of rurAllure to high school students (~25 students).
 - Fieldworks to evaluate the routes and detours in terms of physical effort, state of infrastructure, etc. (~15 students).
 - 1 cultural walk organized as part of the initiative “Piccoli Romei in Cammino” (~25 students)
- The pilots on Via Francigena and Via Romea Strata seek to organise 8 events with a total coverage of 200 people each.

KPI3.3: Number of pilgrims and tourists involved in pilot actions

- For Via Romea Germanica, the pilot aims to reach 1000 pilgrims in online actions through social media, the online community of the route and the use of the rurAllure app. In offline actions, it will approach at least 100 pilgrims along the selected segments with questionnaires, proposals of detours to discover heritage sites and information at key reception points.
- The Via Francigena and Via Romea Strata pilots seek to reach 200 people each, by online and offline actions.

CPI1: Number of POIs uploaded to the platform

- For Via Romea Germanica: 500 POIs.
- For Via Francigena: 1173 POIs.
- For Via Romea Strata: 120 POIs.

CPI2: Number of featured itineraries and narratives created for specific topics and segments

- For Via Romea Germanica, 4-5 featured itineraries connecting the several sites related to water management will be created along the selected segments, with the possibility of extending to others in 2023. These will be couple with 10 narratives on the relationship between man and water related to climate change.
- For Via Francigena, 5 featured detours will be created to different thermal towns in the vicinity of the route:
 - To Montepulciano Terme and Chianciano Terme.
 - To Rapolano Terme and Geological Parks.
 - From Bagno Vignoni to Abbadia di San Salvatore (recovering an alternative route).
 - To Monte Amiata, crossing Bagno di San Filippo (recovering the via Abbatenga)



- To discover new sites: Casciano dei Bagni and the recently-discovered archaeological sites.
- For Via Romea Strata, 4 narratives will be developed during 2022. The first drafts have been created, and in the beginning of 2021 we are going to develop specific storytelling with homogeneous types of data focusing on geological, historical, archaeological topics through images, captivating texts and videos.

CPI3: Number and type of newly-created actions for pilgrims

For the whole of WP5, a total of 18 new activities are planned, including the design of new routes for pilgrims, new facilities, training sessions with tourism agents, organised walks, and cultural programmes.

CPI4: Number and type of previously-existing activities integrated in the pilots

- At least 12 existing initiatives will be integrated and further enhanced by the activities of the pilot on Via Romea Germanica, including the cycling and walking tours along the stretch (Primaro Story Trekking), Eco-museum activities (building of community maps and participation of local inhabitants), walking and cycling excursions already available in the area, refurbishment of heritage sites and repurpose as pilgrim's lodging, etc.
- For Via Francigena, the identification of previously-existing activities to integrate in the pilot activities will be made during 2022, in collaboration with all types of stakeholders.
- For Via Romea Strata, 10 existing initiatives will be included, with the aim of furtherly enhancing the participation of students, general public and stakeholders in the activities planned by the Borgoricco Museum of Roman Centuriation and in on-the-field researches UNIPD has been carrying out in the last years; integrating local cycling and walking tours in the Borgoricco municipality and around the Montegrotto thermal area; strengthening the activities of the Museums of the ancient Thermalism in Montegrotto and of Galzignano Terme.

Furthermore, the Pilgrimage Promotion Tour of the Via Romea Strata will take place along the main route from Aquileia to Rome during Summer 2022. 45 days of walking will be the perfect opportunity to integrate different activities and dissemination of rurAllure, as well as the general assembly of the European Association Romea Strata.

CPI5: Media impact

- The pilot on Via Romea Germanica pursues, at least:
 - 2 scientific publications on pilgrimage, including outcomes of the pilot actions.
 - Participation in 2 international conferences such as the International Geographic Union's Centennial Congress and the UNESCO/UNITWIN network conference.
 - Publication of informative pieces regarding rurAllure and the pilot action in specialized online platforms, such as Travindy.
- The pilot on Via Francigena, in turn, sets the following goals:
 - 20 publications (online and offline).
 - 20 social media publications.
 - 28 newsletters (AEVF and rurAllure).



- Finally, on Via Romea Strata, the plan is to achieve the following:
 - 10 publications (online and offline).
 - 20 social media publications.
 - 25 newsletters (AERS and rurAllure).

4. Calendar and resources

The following subsections describe specific activities planned for implementation during 2022 and 2023 along Via Romea Germanica, Via Francigena and Via Romea Strata, in addition to a number of common actions at the pilot level, such as:

- Supporting WP2 in the distribution of questionnaires to profile pilgrims en route and pilgrims-to-be.
- Planning regular fieldwork activities in the pilot areas, plus further research and observation actions.
- Engaging with new actors and local and regional stakeholders.
- Analysing current marketing and branding strategies of the pilot areas to align pilot actions.
- Uploading and curating the POIs on the rurAllure platform.
- Developing featured trips and accompanying narratives.
- Organising targeted actions for pilgrims.
- Completing the revisions of good practices and good examples of adaptability and inspiring strategies to lure visitors.
- Disseminating the first results and experiences.
- Increasing the brainstorming about possible actions involving the three routes.
- Measuring results and analysing feedback.
- Cross-border dissemination activities (conferences, publications, etc).

Planned actions for Via Romea Germanica

In line with the preparatory work performed for the Via Romea Germanica pilot during the first six months, in what follows the planned activities for 2022 are described, as well as possible activities that could be developed during 2023.

To begin with, the work that has been started to add POIs to the rurAllure IT platform will be intensified in 2022, following these steps:

- The POIs available to the **Cammini Emilia Romagna** initiative will be automatically imported to the rurAllure platform. The region has mapped POIs along the 260 km of the Via Romea Germanica, which will be uploaded by using the Information retrieval and research data service described in Deliverable 3.2 ("*rurAllure platform - beta version*").
- The POIs from Cammini Emilia Romagna will be further checked, in order to make sure that the services are still available and open for visitors.



- Next, the POI identification strategy will focus on the pilot area level, in order to engage vendors and service providers to start using the platform to advertise their services to pilgrims.
- In parallel, we will strive to continue adding POIs all along the Via Romea Germanica, from Germany, Austria and other Italian regions, in order to make possible the planning of trips all along the route. In particular, some stakeholders at Italian level have already been identified, such as the platform [Ospitalità Religiosa](#), which brings together more than 1000 accommodation providers that cater for pilgrims in Italy.

While during the first months the **identification of the pilgrims' profiles** was undertaken mainly online and targeted to the planning phase of the journey, from 2022 the activities will focus on analysing the profile of pilgrims en route, i.e. those who are already walking along the Via Romea Germanica. The distribution of the printed questionnaires will follow two strategies:

- Placing the questionnaires in key reception points, such as the tourist information offices, the pilgrims' hostels, etc.
- Intercepting pilgrims along certain stretches of the route in the pilot area to ask the questions directly. This task will be organized with the collaboration of tourism students from University of Bologna.

It is worth noting that the general template for the questionnaires created within WP2 and documented in Deliverable 2.1 ("*Common strategies for pilots*") will have to be adapted to make it relevant for the type of heritage in the segment and the type of tourism offer/narratives co-created. Thus, the questionnaire will be useful both for identifying the pilgrims' profiles as well as knowing their feedback and evaluation on the proposed narratives along the pilot area.

In relation to the **involvement of relevant stakeholders**, the UNIBO team will regularly visit the pilot area, including walking the selected stretches to complement the desk research done so far, perform semi-structured and informal interviews with key stakeholders and inhabitants, and undertake direct observation. The purpose of the interviews will be to gain understanding about pilgrimage and trail's development, both at Italian level as well as international level. This will broaden the perspective in order to place our local actions into the wider European and global context. One of the UNIBO team members (Maria Laura Gasparini) is developing her PhD thesis in the framework of the rurAllure project, therefore the pilot actions will be driven by the theoretical and methodological approach developed by her PhD proposal.

In **securing new associated partners**, special attention will be devoted to the Municipality of Argenta, which is playing a crucial role in the pilot area. APT Servizi and GAL Delta 2000 have been contacted, too, and the signature of agreements with them is pending. Through them we might be able to also include sub-regional public bodies such as Destinazione Romagna (the local DMC), as well as other services of the regional administration. Other actors that have been identified and will be contacted for possible involvement in the pilot activities include the Po Delta Interregional Park, the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) in Argenta, the Atlantide Cooperative, FIAB Onlus (Federazione Italiana Ambiente e Bicicletta), Consorzio Visit Ferrara and Consorzio della Bonifica Renana.

Another goal is to **align with the marketing and communication development** for the area. For this task a thorough analysis of the current marketing and branding strategy of the Po Delta area will be performed, building on existing documents like:



- The “Strategic and Operative Plan for 2019-2021 for the Tourism in the Po Delta” drafted by local action group GAL Delta 2000.
- The “Action Plan Delta 2000 - Po Delta Area” developed in the framework of the Interreg Europe project [Rural Growth](#), which runs from 2016 to the end of 2020.

A preliminary analysis of these documents revealed that the promotional strategy is focused on the natural aspects, since the Po Delta is a wetland of international importance, one of the most important Italian areas for birding recently recognized in the MAB UNESCO list. Therefore, one of the pillars to support the development of this rural area is precisely the supply of natural, slow and sustainable tourism, with a model that contributes to the creation of new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, making use of new technologies and innovative services.

At a first glimpse, the priorities of the Po Delta destination are very much in line with the promotion of slow, experiential tourist experiences, related to the use of walking and cycling trails. Among the objectives of the action plan are the mapping of existing walking and cycling trails, the improvement of infrastructure and the inter modality across means of transport, aimed at supporting slow tourism and removing accessibility barriers. Through further analysis of online and printed documents, as well as through interviews with key stakeholders, the pilot activities will build from the existing and planned priorities of the destination, in order to maximize benefits and avoid duplication of efforts.

The tourist development requires the **empowerment of local stakeholders** and the shape of a hospitality culture. To the aim we will design and realize a **capacity building** in collaboration with the Municipality of Argenta. The stakeholders and, in general, the residents interested in being part of the project will be involved in seminars and teamwork aiming at stimulating the collaborations, the knowledge of their territory and the acquisition of basic marketing concepts. The results of the questionnaires for pilgrims will be discussed in order to get suggestions for further actions.

The following are some ideas to **connect students from kindergarten to University**:

- **Piccoli Romei in Cammino.** The relationship that has been started in 2021 with the international project “Reconnecting with your Culture” will be further enhanced during 2022 and 2023, in order to organise itineraries with local schools implementing the methodological programme of the project to the context of ancient pilgrimage routes to Rome. Formal agreement will be developed with the interested schools and students together with their teachers will choose the type of heritage to focus on during their walking explorations.
- **Project with Language High School.** Thanks to Maria Laura Gasparini, the UNIBO research group has opened up a formal cooperation with the G. Cesare-M. Valgimigli high school in Rimini. Three- and four-year language students have to include within their curricula a practical experience in order to acquire transversal skills. To do this, they have an amount of 80 hours to be spent on a specific project. With their Spanish language professor, we will set up a detailed project allowing them to be actively involved in rurAllure and in the pilot. The students will be first offered a set of two lectures in order to acquire the baseline knowledge on the project, its aims and scope as well as on pilgrimage and religious tourism. They will later be included in a field trip activity along the selected segments of the VRG, in order to acquire the specific knowledge about the heritage available and its interpretation. With their professors and thanks to constant contacts with local museums, they will help in translating part of the



information material already available. During the first semester of the year 2022-2023, they will also be involved in developing contents in different languages for other media (social networks, newsletters, podcasts). The link between translation, wording and heritage interpretation will be assured by their professors in cooperation with Bologna University. A detailed program of actions and timing for this project will be defined in the second half of January 2022.

- **Project with “Wellness: sport and health” Master’s degree students.** Rimini Campus teaching programs do not only involve tourism studies, but also sport sciences. The role of physical preparedness as well as the evaluation of physical performances are among the key aspects for tourists and visitors planning to travel along pilgrimage trails. Furthermore, the pilot area of the Via Romea Germanica is characterised by a dispersed settlement, where cultural tourism attractions as well as pilgrim’s accommodation facilities are not close to the main path. This has been detected as one of the reasons why only rarely pilgrims stay in Argenta, while they rather prefer to walk two stretches at a time in order to find proper and cheap accommodation in Anita. The pilgrim’s hostel in Argenta is in the peripheral settlement of Campotto, some 6-8 km away from the main itinerary. In order to stay in Argenta for one night, the pilgrims should know the area and the possibility to re-join the main path from another itinerary. They also should be able to evaluate their strengths and efforts to do so. In order to provide the local hostel with the physical effort evaluation and promote the detour with overnight to pilgrims, Professor Alessia Mariotti will organise, together with Professors Samuele Marcora (Sport Sciences) and Marco Malaguti (Nutrition) a walking workshop for the students attending the Master’s degree “Wellness: sport and health”. It will take place in Spring 2022 and involve ~15 students of “Geography of Sport and Tourism”.

Finally, a number of **dissemination activities** at local and regional level have been ongoing right from the beginning of the pilot in June 2021. These dissemination activities will be intensified once the pilot activities are giving their first results, in order to share the experiences, best practices and lessons learned in the process. Some of the planned dissemination activities will include:

- Participation in Academic Conferences and workshops to present the scientific output stemming from rurAllure findings, such as the Policy Brief developed for Deliverable 2.8 (which will be further enhanced and transformed into an academic paper on pilgrimage routes).
- One of these academic conferences has already been confirmed and consist of the organisation of a [Special Session at the International Geographic Union’s Centennial Congress](#) (Paris, 18-22 July 2022). The special session is on “Tourism and routing: exploring the economic, cultural and political dimensions of walking routes” and welcomes papers addressing critical perspectives on walking routes as a place making strategy (Figure 58).



Figure 58. The announcement of the IGU Special session on “Tourism and routing: exploring the economic, cultural and political dimensions of walking routes”.

- Workshops and dissemination activities directed to the tourism stakeholders.
- International conference in Rome planned for 2023 inviting key personalities. This event will also be in line with the preparations being made for the celebrations of the Holy Year in 2025 in Rome.

Planned actions for Via Francigena

In line with the preparatory work performed by AEFV and UAM, the following are some activities planned for 2022 and 2023 in relation to Via Francigena:

- **Video production (February-March 2022).** A video will be created to promote the thermal heritage in the vicinity of the Via Francigena in the area of Bagno Vignoni and Bagni San Filippo. The video will be used online, on the website and social media, and will be distributed among local and national stakeholders.
- Presentation of the project updates at the **AEVF General Assembly** (April 27th 2022 in Canterbury, UK).
- **Meeting with stakeholders specialized in thermalism in Tuscany** (Spring-Summer 2022).
- Meeting with private and public sectors of the area of San Quirico, Bagno Vignoni, San Casciano dei Bagni, Abbadia San Salvatore and Castiglione for a **focus group** on the sub-pilot, development of strategies and common actions.
- **Capacity building workshop.** As a side event during the AEFV General Assembly in Viterbo, Italy in October 2022, an event will be organized to raise awareness of the stakeholders about the project and to build their capacities to prepare tourist packages based on the combination of thermal heritage sites and walking experience along the Via Francigena.
- Launch and leverage of the **Thermal Via Francigena project** in Tuscany, connecting thermal heritage site, thermal baths, relevant private and public stakeholders into a network, developing special offers in thermal sites and facilities for pilgrims who travel with a pilgrim passport.



- A **workshop/seminar about thermal heritage** will be proposed in Tuscany, considering the new discoveries in San Casciano dei Bagni as one of the most interesting sites to be promoted in rurAllure. It will also consider other activities/heritage associated with these sites proposed by local actors.
- Contact associations and organisations already identified for their **good practices in accessible tourism** in the area of influence of Via Francigena or in the context of EU-funded projects (C'era l'Acca Società Cooperativa Social, Free Wheels onlus, Fondazione Dolomiti UNESCO).
- Complete the **descriptions and narratives** drafted during 2021, visiting the sites proposed by UAM, with an interdisciplinary team. During the next months, rurAllure team will work analysing and describing aspects associated with sustainable tourism, according to the most fragile heritage.
- Harness the inventory of heritage sites to promote contact with new stakeholders.
- **Assessment by means of different indices** (Educative Potential (PEU), Geotourism-development potential (PGU) and Geosite Assessment Model (GAM)) of different travertine deposits –on the Via Francigena or nearby– as geological points of interest underrepresented on the Italian Geosites Database and relevant to the thermal heritage narrative. A proposal may be presented to recognise these deposits by ISPRA as a measure of protection.
- **Enhance the focus** of the pilot to the Lazio region, considering the areas of Viterbo and Vicarello and deepening the description of thermal heritage (especially the archaeological and geological features) to revalue and recognize the rich thermal tradition in the rural areas.
- Propose an **international conference on thermal heritage** in Madrid to establish future research recommendations from the lessons learnt in the project.
- Consider **extending the inventory of thermal sites** (cultural and natural heritage) to **other routes** than Via Francigena: not only WP5 ones (Via Romea Strata and Via Romea Germanica) but also those of WP4 (the Way of Saint James) and WP7 (the Ways of Mary), which relate to numerous and notable sites of thermal interest.

Specific attention will be devoted to taking into account people with disabilities in the design of activities related to heritage, as the only way to reach a truly sustainable tourism industry. To begin with, **accessible narratives** will be designed, including easy-to-read texts, explanations with pictograms, audio descriptions, sensory materials and sign language guides. Trials will be conducted with relevant focus groups to validate them before their launch to the general public. In 2023, we will propose good practices for a sustainable tourism model that considers the needs of a diversity of publics.

Planned actions for Via Romea Strata

During the second year of the project, the staff of UNIPD and IUAV, in collaboration with the partners involved in the WP5 tasks, will propose an in-depth analysis of the most important cultural and/or natural thermal sites located along the three routes, in order to check the state of the areas, their accessibility and the presence of relevant associations/institutions who can contribute to guarantee a wider enhancement of the sites for public. Other planned actions include the following:



- Participation in the International Workshop on Roman Thermalism organised by the Bern University on February 18th and 19th, 2022.
- Meetings to engage with specialized stakeholders and create a network among the Romea Strata tourist offices of the areas covered by the project.
- Preparing a first proposal of narratives on the basis of the current drafts, previous studies on the territory and interviews conducted.
- Preparing different detour proposals for the pilgrims related to the segments and the narratives, formulating tourist proposals to prolong the stays in the area for 2, 3 and 5 days.
- Creating a network among the UNESCO sites of the areas covered by the project. Along the Romea Strata there are 4 UNESCO MAB sites and 15 UNESCO sites, counting also Padova Urbs Picta, just recognised in August. The Ways to Rome could enhance the thermal heritage pilot with UNESCO Heritage, starting from the official information already available and co-operating with local stakeholders (offices of the UNESCO headquarters in Italy). With the help of LAGs we are going to organize a meeting with the offices dedicated to the UNESCO sites to present the rurAllure project and share its goals and activities. We can create an inventory of all those sites that will be available to collaborate and upload their data on the rurAllure platform. We can create a specific narrative for this topic or integrate it in the other narratives. At the end we are going to set up some tour proposals including also the other heritage of the rural areas already selected.

5. Conclusion

The pilot on “Thermal heritage and others on the Ways to Rome” has devoted the first 6 months focusing on preparatory actions and feasibility studies. The main challenge has been to coordinate data gathering and responsibilities for single tasks assigned to partners. Namely, as a common decision, the partners involved in the pilot have decided to first identify the most suitable stretches on which to concentrate the pilot activities. For this reason, prior developed information on thermal heritage has been selected and properly organized in a dataset made available by UAM, UNIPD and IUAV. The accessibility criterion has been the one leading the decisions in terms of stretches selection for Via Francigena and Via Romea Strata, while for Via Romea Germanica, the pilot selection criterion has mainly concerned the availability of water related heritage in the Po Delta, among the less tourism developed area in the region.

Proper actions on site will start from 2022 onwards, bearing in mind the very different starting point in terms of services development and pilgrims flows characterizing not only the single sections selected for the pilot, but the three roads themselves.

In this respect, thermal heritage as a driver is the most suitable for both Via Francigena and Via Romea Strata, but it also opens up for other types of heritage to be promoted, in particular along the Via Romea Germanica, where water is a strong landmark. These first six month have been crucial to identify the challenges for each selected pilot area, highlighting the common issues (signage, standardization of accommodation services, resident’s involvement, governance along the routes, etc.) and the many different potentials for reaching specific targets of the public. These three pilgrimage routes, following their individual organization level and capability of providing standardized services, might be able to attract different pilgrims or visitors’ profiles: an expert pilgrim could be attracted by new experiences along the Via Romea Germanica, while



pilgrims at their first walking holiday experience may need to feel more secure in terms of services available and choose Via Francigena. Those interested in culture and with strong religious motivations could go for the Via Romea Strata, where the number of visitors is increasing in the pilot section area also thanks to proximity tourism and the current boom of outdoor activities as a consequence of the pandemic.

For sure, the three routes will join forces and learn from each other's experience also in order to be prepared for cooperation in 2025, when the jubilee year will for sure challenge the carrying capacity of a number of religious heritage infrastructures.

Furthermore, the transversal contribution of the pilot to the whole rurAllure project is the strong focus on new narratives development, enhancing the potentials of tourism as a powerful educational instrument. This requires high quality contents based on new research results in the fields of history and archaeology.

The actions foreseen for 2022 and drafted for 2023 are based on the need to target three main challenges: mobility in peripheral areas; coordination with local stakeholders and the average small size of businesses along the routes.



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