

INTERNATIONAL VIA FRANCIGENA ASSOCIATION

LETTER TO VF FRIENDS

SUMMER 2008

The *International Via Francigena Association* has welcomed its 1000th member!

The lucky "winner", Lucien, will receive the first of the new *Francigena T-shirts* when they are printed in September.

Francigena accessories will be available in a month at the *Savelli Boutique* on St. Peter's Square; a new addition to our product range is the *Francigena T-shirt – omnes viae Romam perducunt* – made especially for pilgrims.

Eleven years ago, the AIVF could never have foreseen the popularity that the Via Francigena is enjoying today.

The dedication of all our loyal members and friends has **opened the way to new inter-personal and inter-cultural exchanges between pilgrims** from such diverse countries as New Zealand, Estonia and Canada to name a few, with the inhabitants of the European countries crossed by the Via Francigena. Cause for all of us to celebrate!

Our **new website** www.francigena-international.org -produced by **Claudia & Co.** in **2008** - was our major priority this year; we strove to achieve a simple and welcoming presentation of

- the history of the VF and of the AIVF, including its archives
- the VF route taken by Sigeric in the 10th century with details, country by country, from England to the Vatican
- other pilgrims' routes converging on the VF towards Rome or to Jerusalem from Rome.

VISIT THE SITE REGULARLY

The success of the Via Francigena is now assured and can only go from strength to strength in spite of some continuing difficulties.

IMPORTANT INFO: the **VF in France** is undergoing an immense transformation; the administrative districts and the FFRP (French Federation of Hiking) are working on it. In view of this, the AIVF has withdrawn its publications *Topofrancigena* and *Guide-Vademecum A*. Until the new route is ready, why not start your journey at the **55th** stage for Sigeric, **Jougne - Vallorbe** (easily reached by train and from the airport in Geneva)?

In Switzerland the VF is **beautiful and easier:** you have the choice between **Swissmobile VF route Nb 70 – 215 kilometres** or, the route closer to Sigeric's, the **180-kilometre VF Topofrancigena – CH.** But **be careful at Martigny-Croix:** the right bank of the Drance River is more for mountain climbers while on the left bank, via Le Brocard, you will have 300m of busy highway road. The choice is yours.

To compensate for this temporary French closure, the AIVF will be opening the **historic routes from Germany** and the **Netherlands** through **Switzerland**, used by pilgrims, emperors, bishops, popes and merchants to join up with the VF and Rome. These publications will be in the familiar form of the *Guide-Vademecum*, accompanied by the *Dormifrancigena* and the *Topofrancigena-Romamap* sheets; they will be ready as soon as possible (beginning 2009 we hope!), thanks to **Markus** and **Cornelius**. Check the web site for information.

The **VF signposting in Italy** continues to be very confusing. The signposting promised in 2007 by the Ministerium of Cultural Affairs has not been put in place, aside from on a few main roads, or has been put in some wrong place like between Fucecchio and San Gimignano in Tuscany. Between Aosta and Pont St-Martin, there isn't any!

The AIVF remains committed to promoting awareness among institutions and improving its publications.

In spite of a few pilgrims' misadventures, the **Topofrancigena B** is perfectly **valid**; an improvement has been made near Robbio-Piémont. Let your footsteps bring the historic routes to life again! Getting lost a couple of times is just part of a pilgrimage so don't get discouraged and end up following the main roads suggested by some authors of VF guides. Thanks to everyone who sends us their **valuable suggestions and comments**, marked on the map in question if possible, so we can verify and update the documents for future pilgrims.

Testimonium at St Peter's in Rome: 950 VF pilgrims have been registered since July 2001. To avoid the disappointment of refusal, the AIVF has prepared, in collaboration with the Vatican, an information questionnaire which is available at the sacristy at St. Peter's and on our website. It outlines the conditions that must be met to be registered (**compulsory stamp in Acquapendente- 150 km** on foot or **400 km** by bike) on **Sigeric's Via Francigena**.

News from **our partners**:

- The Dutch association, **Pelgrimswegen naar Rome**, with which we share membership and products, is especially interested in the large number of Dutch cycling pilgrims and suggests **ten routes for crossing the Alps** and joining up with the VF again.

- The **Pays de la Leulène** Association -Pas-de-Calais continues to promote the historic VF walking route while awaiting the final decisions of the *Parc Régional d'Opale* and the *Département*. Moreover, the association is working with the town of St. Omer on the cultural initiatives suggested by the International VF Association, in particular a series of "**Chants d'Europe**" concerts by a couple of Swiss musicians at the end of July / beginning of August on the VF in the Pas-de-Calais. We will also suggest an **itinerant theatre / travelling players** with a VF theme to our partners.

- The **Mormant Revivra** Association, thanks to a 9-year partnership with us, has been able to renovate and revive the old Templars' Hospice, restoring Mormant to its **role as a stopover place** for VF pilgrims.

The President's concern for the damaged statue of **Saint Pellegrino on the St-Gothard road** has paid off! Its restoration has aroused a great deal of interest in various **enigmatic and obscure Pilgrim saints**: Roman and Greek from the 1st and 2nd centuries, French from the 4th and 11th centuries, Scottish from the 12th, and Italian from the 17th !! These saints are venerated on the pilgrim or transhumance routes.

To celebrate its 11th year of service to pilgrims, and encouraged by the collaboration of the most eminent medievalists in France and Italy, the AIVF had the idea to produce the world's first scientific monograph on the subject: **San Pellegrino tra Mito e Storia** (Saint Pellegrino between Myth and History). This publication brings together the principal places dedicated to St Pèlerin in France, Switzerland and especially Italy. The **AIVF is the instigator and coordinator** of this publication, which will be presented at the Swiss Institute in Rome in early 2009.

Our new volunteer colleagues:

Lia Negrini for the secretariat and for updating the *Vademecum B* (in 2 or 3 languages, Italian-English-French?) - using many standardized symbols for museums, etc. - and the *Dormifrancigena*; **Hermann Heiter** for German-speaking pilgrims and **Raphael Sola**. Our multi-language pilgrims really appreciate the wonderful work of our **five translators**.

Our coordinators, committed volunteers to the cause of VF pilgrims, **Virginie Brouillard**, **Hubert Moulin**, **Joe Patterson** and **Gert Wich**, are pleased to continue offering you their assistance. **Adelaide Trezzini** is happy to meet you, if in Rome, at the end of your pilgrimage. If **SERIOUS PROBLEM** CALL HER Tel Fax 06 853 02 675- Tel 06 916 50 7710

We appreciate and warmly thank the families that offer lodgings to our pilgrim-friends. This provides an opportunity for enriching exchanges. The **WELCOME** list is regularly updated and available to VF FRIENDS.

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