

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE VIA FRANCIGENA (AIVF)

LETTER TO FRIENDS

SUMMER 2009

Thanks to your help AIVF can continue to promote pilgrim routes to Rome

The most important event of the year took place in Strasburg on October 2, 2008, when for the first time representatives of 18 different cultural routes met to discuss projects and problems.

AIVF has proposed to AEVF (European Assoc. Vie Francigene – Fidenza) to cooperate in the publishing of single VF route map "Topofrancigena B (Italy)".

On April 1, 2009, the same proposal was presented to MIBAC (Ministry of Cultural Heritage) responsible for the *Roadbook VF*. Mainly, we wish to add three historical alternative routes: Ivrea-Santheia, Abbadia San Salvatore, and the valley of Baccano on the outskirts of Rome.

Reliability of Map "Topofrancigena B 2007: Mr Bastian Keckeis -CH, hiking guide, has checked about 90% of the suggested itineraries. His useful comments on the advantages and shortcomings of the maps were discussed with our President who immediately made available the UPDATES for the pilgrims. TOPO proved to be, perfectly reliable **for about 80%** and is also appreciated for its graphic presentation which makes it very practical.

Leaving Ivrea, Bastian judges the route to Bollengo hellish, while TOPO suggests the old route Ivrea-Vercelli South of Lake Viverone (Santheia's town-administration recently published information about this historical route as a new local pilgrim hostel has been inaugurated).

Bastian warmly recommends to reserve Danilo's taxi-boat across the river Po 24 hours in advance, the bridge to Piacenza being closed for repair. AIVF has already agreed with his choice to use the Topo alternative route marked by**** from Piacenza (similar to the MIBAC route), since Fiorenzuola offers now enough accommodations. Bastian also suggests to take the ***** alternative route to Fidenza. In Tuscany, do not miss the easy (?) climb up to Campiglia and **Abbadia S. Salvatore** where don Amedeo will welcome you to his abbey more than a 1000 years old! It's also a way to avoid the many dogs on the opposite mountain of Radicofani.

The VF signposting of the Italian ministry has much improved, ..but the other 10 symbols are still there and can be confusing. So be very careful! Our stickers have often been added in order **to reassure the pilgrims that they are** on the right path. Before starting on the VF, compare the different itineraries suggested in other guides and follow the **Topofrancigena** updates.

The VF in Switzerland: the trail (No. 70, well marked) proposed and published in 2008 by Swissmobile in cooperation with Viastoria – follows the route of **Topofrancigena A** (GB-F-CH published in 2004 thanks to the precious help of Léonard Closuit, Théo Lattion, Georges Bochatay, René Berthod for the Valais and Jacques Gasau for Canton Vaud) entering Switzerland through the Jura's north gate touching Yverdon and La Sarraz. This itinerary is in fact **20% longer** than the historical south gate route touching Jougne. Ancient Romans and medieval pilgrims knew that the straightest way is also the shortest! It is a pity that in their bibliography, Viastoria and Coop forgot to mention our VF publications and the AIVF website, where interested hikers can **obtain** the most concrete information on the possibilities of walking along the VF. Bastian confirms the well known question at the **Martigny-Croix's** bridge: the **right riverside of the Dranse**, after the *Parcours-Vita*, is dangerous (foto:http://www.francigena-international.org/newsite/index.php?lang=en&id_page=3_2_1&id_layout=4&bloc=3) and is for good climbers only, while on the **left riverside**, you have to walk **300 m along the** busy highway road to reach Bovernier. The choice is yours.

Publications: The book "*San Pellegrino tra Mito e Storia – Luoghi di culto in Europa*" (St. Pilgrim between Myth and History) has been published as scheduled! This very first monograph on the subject with its 18 scientific contributions and 160 pictures that show, amongst others, the iconography of the nine different saints named «Peregrinus-Pilgrim», the churches located on ancient roman roads (Auxerre and Bouhy) and on *via francisca*, lombards and francigena, far down to the South of Italy was made possible thanks to a very great financial effort of AIVF. A book presentation has been held in Rome and in Lugano. We personally offered a copy to Pope Benedict XVI. (He chose the St. James shell for his coat of arms.). Further presentations

are scheduled in Viterbo (Latium) and Aulla (Tuscany). St Pilgrim of Auxerre-France, being the most important, a conference in Paris would be interesting. After finishing the book, four months were necessary to publish the second edition of the leaflet DORMIFRANCIGENA B (listing 225 accommodations in Italy) in July 2009. AIVF concentrates all its efforts on supplying pilgrims with reliable documents.

The human and financial resources are not sufficient to allow AIVF to realize as quickly as-desired its important projects such as the completion of the historical itinerary Basel - Vevey and the «**Guide médiéval de la Via Francigena en Valais**»: what editor and rédacteur would be interested in reorganizing 170 pages of text and 300 pictures?

A special event desired by AIVF: the «**peregrinus pilgrimage**» (expression by Franco Cardini, outstanding historian) to **San Pellegrino's church** in Giornico (St-Gottard route in canton Ticino-Switzerland) has been moved from May 16 to August 30. Our friends Lia Negrini and Hermann Heiter (of the St James Swiss confraternity-TI), will each lead a 3 hours walk, one leaving from Biasca-South and the other from Faido-North to-attend religious service. After Holy Mass, a rich snack will be offered by the parish. We hope that it will also be an opportunity for many of you to get to know Giornico, so rich of history and medieval monuments (call the Museum of Leventina Tel. +41(0)91 864 25 22 for information).

On the website www.francigena-international.org we mention all religious and turistic-cultural events and guided tours along the entire European itinerary. Keep us informed and VISIT THE SITE REGULARLY

The pilgrims-AMIS are a font of enriching experiences for us: Liudmila from St. Petersburg went training in Siberia before departing from Aosta and Karen from Israel asked us about the departing point for pilgrims from Lausanne. The Notre-Dame cathedral of course! AIVF is in favor of such an ecumenic itinerary connecting the Anglican cathedral of Canterbury with the protestant one of Lausanne with St-Peter's in Rome.

As to the **Testimonium**: more than **1300 VF** pilgrims have received it and are registered at the Basilica. the stamp of Acquapendente (150km from Rome), is highly recommended, Be aware that there is another *Testimonium* since 2007 available from the *Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi- ORP*. (shop on Pio XII square).

The associations VF in Europe: our «daughters AIVF» are growing up and becoming independent and-friends, the natural evolution of a growing interest in Europe: Gert Wich and François Louviot-respectively are presidents of the **Pelgrimswegen naar Rome** association in the Netherlands and of the **Assoc. VF-France**; our best wishes to Francois for the difficult task of improving sections of the **800 km VF-France**; let's hope that the historical routes of the Leulène, from Blessonville-Mormant and Besançon-Nods -Aubonne will be included; it will take a few years. We'll let you know.

Our General Assembly was held in St-Maurice-CH (Sigeric's stage in Switzerland) at the beginning of July having a guest, Mr. Arnaud Devilliers (president of the Ass. «Mormant revivra» our partner), while the main Event Via Francigena was organised by the abbey prior and by the AEFV who presented the VF route from Besançon to Ivrea by Swissmobile.

Our Committee is very grateful to Mr. **Bernard Couchepin**,-former vice-president, who «baptised» AIVF in 1997 and assisted it during 10 years. We have today the pleasure to welcome Mr. **Jean-Claude Joseph** (ambassador of Switzerland at the Council of Europe 2001-7). He has always shown a very special interest in the Cultural Routes program.

Our devoted **coordinators**, **Virginie Brouillard** (she gives information to about 150-200 pilgrims a year), **Hubert Moulin** and **Joe Patterson**, welcome **Eva Sherpa-DE** (pilgrim in 2007, she is fond of the VF and of Rome, she is the contact for the ever increasing number of German speaking pilgrims. **Adelaide Trezzini**, when in Rome, is happy to meet the pilgrims-AMIS. IN CASE OF A SERIOUS PROBLEM CALL HER immediately at the following numbers Tel. +39 06 853 02 675 or +39 06 916 50 7710 info@francigena-international.org.

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