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**Archaeology  
& Pilgrimage**

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# Archaeology & Pilgrimage

edited by

Maddalena Bassani, Maria Bergamo,  
and Silvia González Soutelo



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Engramma

Castello 6634 | 30122 Venezia

[edizioni@engramma.it](mailto:edizioni@engramma.it)

*redazione*

Centro studi classicA luav

San Polo 2468 | 30125 Venezia

+39 041 257 14 61

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# Thermal heritage on the ways to Rome

## The role of knowledge for enriching tourism experiences along three Italian pilgrimage ways

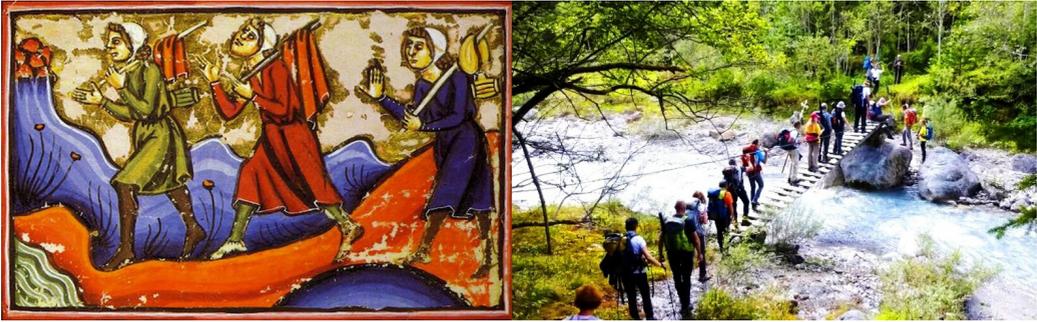
Alessia Mariotti\*



### Introduction to the research context and the main players of the Italian Pilot

As already described by Martin Lopez Nores in this journal issue, the aim of the rurAllure project is ambitious: to support rural development through networking and experience exchanges among small heritage sites along European pilgrimage routes. Based on the different development phases of each pilgrimage way involved in the project, multiple themes and related actions have been selected. The themes (literary heritage along St. James Way, ethnographic heritage along St. Olav, natural heritage along Maria Ut, and thermal heritage along the ways to Rome) have been used as analytics to develop studies from historical, archaeological, cultural, sociological, and economic perspectives with the aim of understanding and exploiting the opportunities linked to the promotion of rural heritage as an added value to enrich the experiences of pilgrims on the road.

The great success of the St. James Way in Galicia has pushed grassroots organizations and administrations across Europe to develop recovery actions of several mainly Medieval itineraries. A great infrastructure development effort has been made to rediscover walkable paths



1 | Ancient and modern Pilgrims.

far from the dangers of nowadays heavy traffic roads, to provide guides and signage for pilgrims and hikers, and to ensure water supply and accommodation services along these newly established tourism products. Tourism is certainly not solely a global industry. It is by definition first and foremost a human activity. In its modern forms, it has been persistently shaped by distinctive patterns of consumption deriving from specific lifestyles and cultures in return. The possibility of practicing any form of tourism has been strictly dependent on 3 key factors: first the availability of time to spare, then a certain level of affluence, and third the freedom to move, more or less freely, across borders. Over the past 30 years, tourism consumption patterns have evolved. Consumer choices have changed mainly based on time and wealth, but recently the pandemic has pushed forward the growth in consumption of some specific products and pilgrimage is surely one of them. Due to high levels of uncertainty, people have traveled close to home; due to mounting economic difficulties unpopular or obsolete peripheral destinations located in rural areas have experienced a steep increase in tourism demand; forgotten family holiday homes have been rediscovered thus bringing back parts of the population from larger urban centers to rural areas and small villages (generating issues, on the other hand, with overcrowding and deficiencies of essential services). With people forced to practice proximity tourism, there has been a rediscovery of an often overlooked and unmanaged natural and cultural heritage (the one outside historical city centers) whose role as a contributor to social and cultural capital, as well as to informal education, is still regrettably underestimated and untapped. Nevertheless, the demand for popularizing outdoor activities across space, including for example hiking and cycling along established pilgrimage and long-run walking routes and trails, more than ever highlights the crucial managerial role played by cooperation and networking. Concerted and participatory regional efforts are therefore required, providing services for polarized, smaller groups with higher added value and revenue impacts within a complex tourism value chain.

It is within this specific framework of changing tourism consumption patterns that rurAllure has focused its activities on creating meaningful contents for pilgrims, based on the rich thermal heritage that is available along three transnational pilgrimage ways crossing Italy: Via Francigena, Via Romea Strata, and Via Romea Germanica, the latter being an associate part-

ner to the project. These three transnational pilgrimage ways have different histories and development paths and are therefore in different phases of their lifecycle: Via Francigena has been recognized as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe over 20 years ago and is based on a wide network of public entities (municipalities and regions); Via Romea Germanica activities started informally a decade ago and gained the recognition of the Council of Europe in 2020, its network is also including NGOs and walkers associations; Via Romea Strata has been developed thanks to the direct involvement of religious bodies and public administrations and is in the process of developing its certification dossier for the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe label. In order for readers to better understand the context, we will shortly recall the main features of each pilgrimage way involved in the pilot activities in Italy.

The Via Francigena is an ancient pilgrimage route whose first references date back to the VII century. The route served as a principal connection between Northern and Southern Europe and allowed transportation of goods, trade, armies, and 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 harbors of the Mediterranean Sea in Italian Apulia, on the tip of the heel of the Italian peninsula. The route greatly contributed to the spread of ideas, techniques, religious beliefs, and goods in Europe, as well as facilitated urbanization – towns, and villages were founded along the way as stopovers and trading centers. It 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) and mostly traverses rural areas and small communities. More than 70% of the EAVF (European Association of the Via Francigena, a rurAllure partner) 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 Via Francigena benefited from the rediscovery and flourishing of the Way of St. 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 and in 1994 it was declared a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. Via Francigena is managed by the EAVF. This is a non-profit organization created in 2001, which currently represents 200 entities, including municipalities, provinces, and regions. A wide accommodation offer is available, including pilgrims’ hostels and private facilities. The EAVF pilgrim’s passport provides advantages and discounts for accommodations and services along the path. The communities along the Via Francigena depend on agricultural activities and have a visible decrease in population because of internal migration, mostly in the mountainous areas. Pilgrimage along the Via Francigena generates significant economic benefits to local communities in terms of the creation of SMEs, provision of services, and socio-cultural exchange.

Since the IV century AD the Romea Strata 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. The route has been known since the XVI century BC, as a commercial path for the transport of amber, that was extracted on the areas bordering the Baltic Sea and transported to southern Mediterranean region (Cellarosi *et alii* 2016). Later, with the Roman Empire, the itinerary nowadays identified with the Romea Strata was used for transport of salt and minerals, thus becoming an artery of communication, trade but also of military campaigns. It is only with the edict of Constantine of 313 AD, opening to religious freedom, that the Romea Strata becomes a pilgrimage route to the Holy Land. Nowadays the Romea Strata is also important in fostering inter-religious ecumenical dialogue between Protestants (the main religion throughout Northern Europe), Jews, who are an important presence both in Vilnius (Lithuania) and in Poland, and the Catholic world. In Italy, the Romea Strata follows the ancient system of roads that led from northeast Italy to Rome. It involves five Italian regions, for over 1300 km. It is a crossroad of transit for pilgrims coming from Austria and the East through Aquileia (in Friuli Venezia Giulia) who continue later towards Jerusalem, or Rome through the Postumia way or towards Santiago proceeding on the Emilia way.

The revitalizing initiative of this pilgrimage trail was conceived and promoted by the Homo Viator Foundation of Vicenza (Italy) which is currently the owner and coordinator of the project at the national level. The network that supports the Foundation in developing the itinerary involves regions, municipalities, universities, dioceses, and several associations and experts on the rediscovery of ancient pilgrimage routes. At a European level, the Via Romea Strata is managed by the European Association Romea Strata (AERS). AERS was founded in 2018 by 30 founding members coming from the countries crossed by the route: Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, and Italy. The members work together to promote pilgrimage along the 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. AERS has currently over 50 members: LAGs (Local Activities Groups), municipalities, associations of walkers, dioceses, foundations, Universities, and tourism organizations.

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, an additional opportunity for all walkers from northern Europe and beyond. From a historical point of view, the itinerary of the Via Romea Germanica is the journey described in his *Annales* by Abbot Albert from Stade (Maeck 2001). He was a man of literature and wrote mainly on religious themes. Among his writings, there 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 travelers to Rome. The Stade itinerary describes two alternative routes for the outward journey: one entering France, and following the footsteps

of Via Francigena, and another running along the Rhine valley. All this confirms the fact that the Via Romea, like the Via Francigena and the Way of St. James, consisted of a network of routes. Nowadays the 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, crossing a total of 119 municipalities. It is managed by a confederation of national associations and its transnational seat is in Germany.

Even though generally competing on the pilgrimage and walking tourism market, in September 2021 the three routes signed a memorandum of understanding 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. Along with the difficulties in getting church authorities formally involved, the main weakness of the organizational model of these routes is the fragmented and factual management of independent not-for-profit organizations, while spatial planning (relevant for walking infrastructures and signage) remains the responsibility of public administrations, thus adding complexity in the coordination of bodies with different competencies. The regions crossed by the three pilgrimage trails in Italy are rich in cultural heritage, but to promote peer-to-peer coaching and best practices exchanges among the routes and local stakeholders involved in the pilot, specific attention has been paid to thermal and water-related heritage, which is attested in various ways, from rituals to architecture, from antiquity to the current era. The new contents developed thanks to the project on thermal heritage and water management (some of the main results could be found throughout this special issue) will supplement the routes' ongoing promotion with the added value provided by the vast heritage treasured by the traversed rural areas. As will be better explained in the following pages, water-related heritage is a key asset throughout the 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, thus enriching their experience.

### **Summary of main activities for each area involved in the pilot**

As any European funded project, rurAllure is organized around nearly autonomous, even though co-related, numbered sections called work packages. Each work package has specific objectives and a list of tasks to be fulfilled by the partners. In the specific case of this project, a total of four project sections (work packages: WPs) have been devoted to test pilot actions in selected stretches of the targeted pilgrimage ways.

Work Package/WP 5 is the result of the coordinated contribution of six different partners of rurAllure: University of Bologna/UNIBO (WP leader), University of Padua/UNIPD, Università Iuav di Venezia/Iuav, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid/UAM, Fondazione Homo Viator/FHV (managing body of the Via Romea Strata), EAVF (the international managing body of the Via Francigena cultural route). To maximize the professional and expertise contribution of each partner to the goals set by rurAllure (produce new narratives for pilgrims, support networking of institutions, and populate the platform with new attractive contents to promote rural



2 | The three roads to Rome (Source: AEVF, EAVRG, FHV 2021).

areas along pilgrimage trails), the responsibility for actions have been divided among the six partners also based on the specific geographical area of the three routes targeted. Hence, to test rural development strategies, slow mobility facilities, and stakeholder engagement, as well as new cultural tourism products development, the WP5 partners have identified three different pilot areas where to deliver actions, one per pilgrimage way: the Euganean Hills and Montegrotto Terme along the Via Romea Strata, Bagno Vignoni, and Gambassi Terme along the Via Francigena and the Municipality of Argenta along the Via Romea Germanica. Based on the expertise and role of each partner within the project, the working tasks were distributed as follows: coordination of work package actions to reach the goals set by the project deliverables was under the responsibility of UNIBO; UNIPD and luav have led the narratives and contents development of the pilots along the Via Romea Strata; UAM has given knowledge support for the development of accessible tourism contents along the Via Francigena; UNIBO has organized stakeholders networking and narratives development along Via Romea Germanica; Fondazione Homo Viator and Via Francigena have worked as facilitators for the

cooperation and networking activities involving both, tourists and local stakeholders in the selected areas.

At the end of the second year of project development, WP5 partners were able to complete nearly 10 actions engaging pilgrims and tourists, 15 actions and events targeting stakeholders, to create 5 blocks of narratives transformed into podcasts and available for tourists, and create 7 featured trips and related quality Points of Interest (POIs) descriptions for the project platform. This relevant number of activities was possible thanks to the willingness of all involved partners in coordinating and exchanging experiences in multiple and subsequent meetings, allowing the partnership to keep track of the results and difficulties encountered by everyone, thus increasing mutual help and understanding between practical partners (the managing bodies of pilgrimage ways) academic ones (the universities). As a result, the coordination of actions and the balance in activities targeting the project goals has been improved. Altogether the partners involved in WP5 have developed a massive amount of work testing approaches and proposing methodologies also usable by other project partners. The constant sharing of pilot results and updates has led to two internal seminars: one devoted to sharing a possible methodology for the marketing and communication analysis to be performed to integrate the pilot results in the already existing actions at the local level, the second one open to the whole consortium about universal design. The greater synergy between the three roads to Rome has led to a wider promotion of heritage and hidden gems scattered along them as well as to adequate responses to the growing flow of walkers, providing them with a high-quality welcome from technical, logistical, and spiritual points of view. Before *ruAllure*, the three routes have commonly pursued similar goals in isolation, while the project and work performed in each pilot area have set common foundations for facing common challenges, such as signage, safety and security, service standards, but also narratives and experiences for pilgrims and travelers. Spatial planning remains the responsibility of public administrations, therefore the WP5 pilot segments have paid particular attention to both, stakeholders' engagement (to harmonize their interventions across borders) and pilgrim's experience, with the aim of better-coordinating accommodation, mobility, and services.

### **Main pilot results**

To give a glimpse of the different types of actions produced within the pilot and targeting specifically thermal and water-related heritage, we will shortly summarise here some selected examples (one/two per route), with (when applicable) its operational effect on the *ruAllure* app on the ways to Rome. While writing this article some activities are still ongoing and will be concluded before the end of the project in December 2023. Furthermore, because of space constraints, if possible we will refer to external websites and links where the reader will find full references to the given action or its result (in the large majority of cases, the narratives).

Thanks to the expertise provided by *luav*, UNIPD, and UAM partners, specialized in thermal heritage, a targeted event promoting this specific aspect of the areas crossed by the Via

Francigena in Tuscany has been organized. The format of the event, called I Love Francigena Thermal, was replicated from previous hiking events organized by EAVF, but with a specific focus on the rich thermal heritage available just few steps away from the main Francigena path. This was exactly one of the main points raised by rurAllure: these pilgrimage paths should be transformed from passers-by to proper crossroads allowing the pilgrims to discover what lies in the surrounding of the main stops. This first thermal-themed edition, adapted to the objectives of rurAllure's WP5 was preceded by an institutional roundtable discussion in Florence with all event partners (stakeholders and local authorities) to maximize the connection among local authorities and associations, as well as residents. The themed hike included a two-day walking along the Francigena itinerary from San Quirico to Castiglione d'Orcia and from San Gimignano to Gambassi Terme. The first hike followed the official Via Francigena route, while in the second a 2,5 km detour to visit the Bollori Natural Park was added to the official route. This detour is included as a featured trip in the rurAllure platform, thus allowing pilgrims to appreciate the thermal heritage of the region they are crossing. The involvement of local stakeholders and local guides sharing their knowledge about the geological features of the area has later led to the development, thanks to the expertise provided by UAM, of a specific event aiming at enhancing the expertise on the universal design of tourism enterprises. An accessibility workshop was conducted for the visually impaired with a special focus on the enhancement of sensory skills to experience the Via Francigena and its thermal heritage. Following the philosophy of "nothing for us, without us" people with different disabilities were invited to be active creators of content and not mere receivers. This workshop aimed to integrate and develop experiences and content for all kinds of people based on the design of inclusive dissemination materials and gather feedback from end-users with visual impairment on preliminary accessible designs of materials and narratives of the thermal heritage of Bagno Vignoni. The participants of the workshop, the Siena section of the Italian visually impaired association, were provided with urban maps and 3D models of the topography designed by the UAM team and the Italian geologist Riccardo Rocca, which allowed the participants to understand the geographic formation and geological composition of this area, including differences in height and indications in Braille; a street map and geological section drawn at the Geology and Geochemistry department of UAM and printed in relief by Ilunion UAM, including text in Braille. The workshop was not a merely guided tour, but an itinerant and active laboratory, where the attendants were able to give feedback on the materials and ideas for their improvement, such as: generating bigger-size 3D models; clarifying captions and legends in 3D printed tactile material. The event was highly praised by the local authorities and provided a great impulse to the development of accessible tourism along the selected stretch of the route. Data and feedback collected on the models and materials created are meant to facilitate access for the visually impaired to the thermal and geological heritage along the Via Francigena and cultural heritage in general.

The value of the cooperation between practical and academic partners is even more evident in the case of Via Romea Strata. UNIPD and Luav research team members have indeed widely



3 | Events on the Francigena Route; 3D printing and braille map for Bagno Vignoni along the Via Francigena (photo by Miguel Gómez Heras).

explored the cultural heritage in the areas of Montegrotto Terme and the more in general the area covered by the Local Action Group (LAG) Patavino, one of the main stakeholders ensuring activities and promotion as well as signage along the Via Romea Strata itinerary. The large amount of available knowledge and materials developed in previous projects has allowed the academic partners to focus on narratives development related to thermal heritage and of possible interest for pilgrims crossing the area. The Museum dedicated to ancient thermal heritage recently established in Montegrotto itself, where people can discover the history of the thermae and the related phenomena in the Euganean area, is the outcome of several research activities carried out by UNIPD and luav staff. Starting from these research activities and to enhance the cultural promotion actions, the staff of UNIPD and luav, in collaboration with the staff of the Romea Strata, have developed some examples of templates to describe archaeological and natural sites, with suggestions on the type of dataset (text and images) that have been later included in the platform. The template for narratives developed by luav and UNIPD have set the basis for the inclusion and adaptation of the already available contents in the rurAllure platform. The style used for narratives creation as well as the specific themes chosen for the six narratives created (Life at Baths, Divine Waters, Thermalism and Hydrogeo, Ancient literary, Pipes and Stove, Ancient and modern pilgrims), are meant to attract pilgrims to know more about the area, also thanks to the related featured plans (Thermal & Archeo Tour). The idea is to avoid simplification, but at the same time to ensure the pilgrims and walking tourists with easy-to-access information about the places they are crossing. Even though the conceptual scheme behind the narratives is a 'well-educated' one, the narratives are thought to be read separately and linked to the general theme of 'thermalism' aiming at linking the POIs already proposed in the Euganean area, within the specific theme of the narratives, thus encouraging the discovery of the 'cultural proposal' that the storytelling is offering.

As far as the Via Romea Germanica pilot area (the municipality of Argenta), is concerned, the focus was on the relationship between humankind and water. This century-long endeavor has shaped the landscape of the area and the infrastructures on which the pilgrims are walking. Within the municipality of Argenta, the Via Romea Germanica path follows the itinerary of the



4 | Arquà Petrarca along the Via Romea Strata (photo by Aleksandra Grbic); the Eugean Hills; an ancient Roman relief in the Museum of Thermalism at Montegrotto Terme (CC).

so-called Po di Primaro, over the Reno riverbanks and along the Argenta marshes, a complex system of artificial basins, channels, and land reclaiming infrastructures. The UNIBO research team has focused on enhancing the relationship among the academy and local stakeholders to co-create narratives on the history of this water-related land also involving master's degree students in a mutual interaction with local experts and tourism professionals. As a result, six podcasts have been developed, covering different aspects of the Po Delta area and the Argenta Municipality. Some focus on the historical facts, some more on the naturalistic aspects, but the common element is water and its management in a territory that was previously a marsh. The transformation of this territory by humans over the centuries has allowed economic activities and settlements in this area. The landscape has greatly changed due to this constant land reclamation work, but this work has also allowed the formation of artificial lakes (the water that is kept as a reserve by the water-pumping plants) that made it possible for birds and wild animals to re-settle. Hence, the narratives tell the story of the territory in creative ways and from different points of view. One perspective is that of university students and how they perceived the landscapes; another is that of local stakeholders (people from the Marsh Museum, a tour guide, a photographer and ex-worker from the Renana water pumping plant, etc.), who interacted with students during the study visit. Moreover, the storytellers in the Master's students podcasts vary from local inhabitants to non-human actors, such as a kingfisher, the water, the land, and the city of Argenta itself which shares its story. Hence, they all offer visitors different points of view on the territory, so that they can appreciate all the transformations it has undergone, and they can have an idea of how the entire Padana Plain (today quite an industrialized area) used to be centuries ago. The aim also is to raise awareness among visitors on the effect of climate change and the risks for this territory that has always dealt with water excess/ water scarcity, effects that are being more extreme lately due to climate change. The final goal with the narratives is, of course, to motivate these pilgrims, cyclists, and tourists, to stay longer in this area, to step out of the main path and discover Argenta and its waterways, therefore the stories prompt visitor's curiosity to visit the Marsh Museum, the Land Reclamation Museum and so on, spreading the benefits of pilgrimage along wider rural areas.



5 | Example of journey plan along the Via Germanica in the rurAllure website; Hydraulic drainage pumps in the Land Reclamation Museum of Argenta; view over the Argenta marshes (CC).

### Concluding remarks

In recent years, multidisciplinary research has nearly been banned from Italian universities due to national rules for the evaluation of research quality. Individual researchers are evaluated based on their publications in monodisciplinary academic journals. This has progressively led to narrowing research efforts on crosscutting themes or fields of study such as heritage-based tourism. Luckily enough, European projects have maintained their multidisciplinary perspective, allowing, as in the case of rurAllure, academic exchanges among experts in different disciplines, thus enhancing knowledge transfer and impact on civil society. Being a coordination and support action, rurAllure focuses on the cooperation between experts in many different academic fields for the benefit of the cultural tourism sector as a tool for rural development. In work package 5 of the project, the academic knowledge around archaeology, thermal heritage, and tourism has been coupled with the need of using it for the wider public, of pilgrims and walking tourists. Pilgrimage and walking tourism are an increasing phenomenon, testifying of the changing patterns of holiday consumption, but some general characteristics of the average pilgrim/walking tourist are like the ones the pilgrims had in the past: well-educated people, in their middle age and with average to a high salary. This specific profile calls for meaningful contents and experiences opening opportunities for regions to expand their cultural offerings also through cultural digital contents. Content production implies investing in research, which might be expensive for local authorities or DMOs. Therefore the added value of European projects also resides in the contribution their transversal multidisciplinary approach can give to civil society, supporting the outreach of up-to-date academic knowledge and leading, as in the case of rurAllure's WP5, three pilgrimage routes heading to Rome, supported by three Italian universities and a Spanish one, to join forces to test and experiment new meaningful contents on thermal and water-related heritage to enrich the educational potential of walking tourism.

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\*Even though the structure and argumentation of this paper are the responsibility of Alessia Mariotti, part of the descriptive contents here included have been taken from the deliverables D5.1 (rurAllure project 2020), D5.2 (rurAllure project 2021a), and D2.8 (rurAllure project 2021b and 2022) of the rurAllure project. For this reason, Alessia Mariotti, acting as work package leader is a “rapporteur” and editor of a collective effort made by (in alphabetical order): Maddalena Bassani, Patrizia Battilani, Maria Bergamo, Elena Dubinina, Maria Laura Gasparini, Viola Gaudiano, Silvia González Soutelo, Miguel Gómez Heras, Aleksandra Grbic, Andrea Meleri, Simona Spinola, Jacopo Turchetto, and Paola Zanovello.

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## Abstract

Pilgrimage is nowadays gaining in popularity as a new form of slow tourism, combining outdoor exercises with spiritual and cultural experiences along established transnational and transregional itineraries. Pilgrimage ways have great potential as territorial development tools, enabling new economic activities and enterprises mainly in peripheral rural areas. Within the rurAllure H2020 project aiming at the promotion of rural museums and heritage sites in the vicinity of European pilgrimage routes, three pilgrimage routes leading to Rome, supported by three Italian universities and a Spanish one, have joined forces to test and experiment new meaningful contents on thermal and water-related heritage to enrich the educational potential of walking tourism. After a short research context introduction, the present contribution summarises the activities carried out in each pilot area, while in the conclusions we will underline the main takeaways as well as potential further research lines that have emerged from the cooperation between experts in archaeology and thermal heritage, tourism and the civil society here represented by municipalities, the managing bodies of the pilgrimage trails and the pilgrims themselves.

*keywords* | Thermal Heritage; Pilgrimage; Tourism; Argenta Marshes.

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