



## ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE VIA FRANCIGENA (AIVF)

1997 – 2017: 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AIVF

### LETTER TO OUR FRIENDS

**Our Jubilee Year** was dedicated to rediscovering and restoring the *Via Francisca Lukmanier* (VFL) which links **Switzerland to Lombardy**, as decided at our General Assembly of February 22, 2017.

Margot Collins-Fäh (AIVF coordinator) hiked, with a few other pilgrims, **the Emperors' Trail** from Constance to Disentis over four weekends from March to June. Adelaïde Trezzini participated in the inauguration of the trail, with the blessing of the dean of the cathedral of Constance. Between July (22-24) and August (19-20), over 100 people hiked from **Disentis to Ponte Tresa**, thanks to the enthusiasm of Monica Chinotti-Boschetti and Matteo Oleggini. Abbot Vigeli of the Disentis Abbey (of which the Badia of San Gemolo-Valganna was dependant) brought the message and blessed the pilgrims at the departure point, as did Don Angelo of the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Giubiasco (a possession of the monastery of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro in Pavia, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century). The town of Pura-Malcantone was also the property of the same abbey in Pavia. The town and the parish of Ponte Tresa (Switzerland) gave a warm welcome to the group at the end of the Swiss part of the VFL.

A magnificent experience which we hope will be renewed each year to establish the itinerary on the ground! Ferruccio Maruca (Lombardy Region) and Donatella Ballerini (province of Varese) are preparing the following stages to reach Pavia, still in 2017. A record of international efficiency! We still need to work on the marketing within Switzerland... The province website "*Vareseland*" is linked to the web page AIVF *Via Francisca Lukmanier* since 2016.

An association "*Amici della Via Francisca del Lucomagno*" will be entirely dedicated to the promotion of the VFL, already present on Facebook.

**The itinerary of 360 km in Switzerland** mainly follows hiking trails (Wanderweg). The first "pioneers" to leave from Constance are: Beppe (from Varese) and Nadya on August 20<sup>th</sup>, Ueli and Leonor in early September, in the hope that many other pioneers will follow! **Dormifrancisca** is being developed through contact with parishes, campgrounds (bungalows or mobile-homes), farms (agriturismo), guest rooms (*Zimmer frei*), hotels with pilgrim rates. We need to develop in Switzerland a culture of hospitality, not only in the tourism sector but especially among the local population, as economical lodging and pilgrim meals are indispensable to attract a regular flow of long-distance hikers.

TV-Ticino (FALO) chose as the theme of their program of June 29<sup>th</sup> the trails of the Via Francigena and the new Via Francisca del Lucomagno (<http://www.rsi.ch/la1/programmi/informazione/falo/tutti-i-servizi/Sentieri-di-fede-sentieri-di-pietra-9281386.html>). A good opportunity to promote our trails!

For the **125 km of trails in Lombardy, a specific VFL trail marker** has been created and installed in the whole province of Varese, as well as signs "*VFL omnes viae Romam perducunt*" for the itinerary in the urban centers such as Varese. The official inauguration will take place on September 21<sup>st</sup> in Castiglione Olona, in memory of Cardinal Branda Castiglioni who accompanied Pope Martin V on his journey from Constance to Milan in 1418.

The itinerary from Constance via Chur, Bellinzona, Agno and Varese is already "official" on the **AIVF credential and pennant**; we are counting on the support of AIVF to include it in the large European network of "Ways to Rome".

**The historic route of Montelungo is a success**, at least according to the incredible number of people on the trail who stop for a break at the restaurant in Succisa! The president of the Associazione VF Alta Lunigiana (AVFAL), Mattia, alternates his work as a journalist with that of a "neo-farmer" offering local agricultural produce! With the financial support of AIVF, the AVFAL cleared and developed the old Leonardo da Vinci trail; documents mention his stay in the early 1500's, as well as that of the Duchess Marie Louise of Parma, at the Colombera (inhabited until 1937 but a ruin today). From the Cisa Pass, the itinerary is shorter by 1.4 km and it now requires less than 4 hours to arrive in Pontremoli!

In early July, the first group of 7 Italian pilgrims stayed at the Trattoria Ferrari, and we finally had our first feed-back on the new trail: "Beautiful, easy, well-marked and plenty of lodging possibilities". In a word, we've been "promoted", said AVFAL president Mattia! With only 6,000 € (sponsored by AIVF) and lots of will-power, a mountain community in Tuscany lives again!

**The Via Francigena – Lakeside variant** (Monterosi – La Storta) has made great progress, thanks to the commitment of the *Osservatorio per le vie storiche del XV municipio*-Rome, who managed the feat of getting the main "actors" to work together: the presidents of the regional parks of Veio (see free *app Veio Park*) and Bracciano-Martignano, the new association "Terre Comuni" (Campagnano-Cesano-Canale Monterano with transversal itineraries), to define the itinerary in accord with AIVF (determine the historical paths still adapted to today's pilgrims, with our experience since 2004!). Thanks to the indispensable help of local experts, it will follow the prehistoric path *Veiente*, miraculously preserved from the Baccano Valley to Cesano, Veio and Isola Farnese! The huge problems due to drought and the partial drying-up of the Bracciano Lake have delayed the technical project (sponsored by AIVF), which must be submitted for validation to the Lazio Region. Other projects are being studied to complete the VF through the *Insugherata Park*, in order to arrive in the center of Rome exclusively through parks, from Monterosi: mirage or miracle?

**The 3 APPs *DorMi Topo Francigena*** (Grand St-Bernard – Piacenza, Piacenza – San Gimignano, San Gimignano – Rome), which can be downloaded to smartphone, tablet, iPhone and iPad, have been well received, with positive feedback from the users. The APPs require updates in 2017 which must be done by specialized engineers as quickly as possible. These APPs make it much easier to hike the VF, leaving the pilgrim the choice between the official VF and the historical variants. They provide GPS localization for lodging (exact information is a priority for AIVF) and making reservations is extremely simple. AIVF has no doubt: the APPs are the way of the future!

In addition to our AIVF website in 2016, our faithful and competent webmaster **Andrea Biello** has created a new **online SHOP**, necessary to satisfy the new iPhone technologies.

## ITINERARIES 2017-2018

### ***From France to Grand St-Bernard (GSB)***

The VF itinerary GR 145, defined by the FFRP (French Hiking Federation), is not particularly adapted to the requirements of long-distance pilgrims. It lengthens the trail by dozens of km, at least 100 in all, except for the section in the Doubs, from Cussey-sur-l'Ognon, where it partially follows the itinerary of our Topo A (which is why our 2004 TOPO A Canterbury-Pontarlier is still in demand!). From Besançon, an historical route (Mamirolle–Nods–Aubonne–Pontarlier–Jougne, proposed since 2002) should soon be published in a new *Topoguide*. Once it is approved, and with the addition of the historic VF from Jougne to Orbe and Lausanne, it will become, God willing, our APP IV *Dormi Topo Francigena from Besançon to Grand St-Bernard*, with all the advantages, in km and in cost! It is frustrating for AIVF to see the majority of pilgrims in the Canton of Vaud, just following SwissMobile VF 70 simply to save time on the Swiss part of the VF. It will be a relief when the APP allows them to reach Lausanne in 2 days from Jougne, hiking only 53 km, or 56 in passing via Romainmôtier (see details on our web page VF-CH).

AIVF is not just limited to itineraries, culture and science are also in its DNA! On May 2, 2017, a study day was organised with the **Besso Foundation of Rome** around the theme: "*La Via Francigena attraverso the Agro Veientano - Archeologia, Arte e Paesaggio tra Valorizzazione e Sviluppato*". It was a great success with scientific representatives from the Ministry of Culture, the Lazio Region, the City of Rome, the University of Sapienza-Roma and Florence, etc. Such research in collaboration with AIVF **must** continue to better understand the territory **north of Veio**, which has been studied too little!

### ***In Italy***

**Hospitality in the hostels and religious houses is at risk**, because of very bad behavior on the part of individual pilgrims or groups. This service is **based exclusively on volunteers**, and comes at a HIGH COST (time offered, irregular hours, effort, selflessness, hospitality to all sorts of pilgrims). All this deserves, IN ALL CASES, an honest donation. Some so-called pilgrims, rather tourists aiming at zero cost, with absurd demands of pilgrim hospitality, are ruining the whole spirit of pilgrimage on the Via Francigena: THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE and discourages even the most committed volunteers! Reserving and NOT showing up represents another big problem, which deprives other pilgrims of lodging; it remains indispensable to inform the host, who responds to requests based on space available.

## FRIENDS AND ORGANIZATION

At the General Assembly of AIVF in February 2017, as usual in Bern, the original statutes of 1997 were amended and a **new AIVF Constitution** was written and adopted. The Board and the General Assembly welcomed several new members: **Michel Bonenfant, Antonio Tripoli, Jeff Berkheiser and Matteo Oleggini**.

AIVF is proud to count **2,450 AMIS-friends** in its database as of September 1, 2017.

On behalf of all the pilgrims, AIVF expresses its sincere gratitude to the volunteers, coordinators and translators (**Margot, Michel, Jeff, Giancarlo** and **Antonio**) who allow AIVF to pursue its activity in the most efficient way possible.

*If you have a PROBLEM, call us. We will do everything possible to help you.*

**Adelaide Trezzini**, our President (+39 06 85302675 or +41(0)967 39 69) is happy to meet our pilgrim FRIENDS when in **Rome** or in **Ticino** [info@francigena-international.org](mailto:info@francigena-international.org).

**Switzerland:** Jeff Berkheiser Saillon-Valais mobile +41(0)77 460 22 29 [jeff.berkheiser@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.berkheiser@gmail.com)

**Please contact us by e-mail : that way you are sure to receive an answer**