



Pilgrimage is a privilege, not a right ; the pilgrim is grateful and gives thanks!

**Pilgrim hostels (OR-O VF) are only open to long-distance pilgrims
on their way to Rome (or Canterbury)**

by the ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA VIA FRANCIGENA (AIVF)

To reserve by SMS:

"Sono un pellegrino /una pellegrina.....Posso dormire da voi la notte del 5.6.2018 in una stanza singola / stanza doppia / in dormitorio. Quale è il prezzo per favore? Grazie, Nom... prénom..."

The VIA FRANCIGENA (VF) IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW!

GUIDES

Guidebooks cannot be updated constantly; there are too many changes, improvements or problems concerning routes and lodging. Printed guidebooks are very useful for preparing your pilgrimage or as a support.

To avoid getting lost or making a wrong turn, to have detailed information on prices and exact location, to reserve by phone or e-mail with a simple click, download onto your smartphone or iPhone the **APP Dormi Topofrancigena** which is being used more and more (see the AIVF website). The price of the APPs is that of a guidebook, with the difference that the updates are free for the customer. In addition, you will find **marked in red 9 alternate historic routes, with itineraries which are shorter and easier** (AIVF takes care to check them every year). Don't miss out!

STAGES – TRAIL MARKINGS

The official VF available on the website of AEVF (Associazione Europea delle Vie Francigene) is well-marked. The upkeep of the trails and the clean-up of the roadsides is not so great, especially in the spring and summer; it's a real problem. AIVF can inform AEVF of problems with bridges, detours or missing trail markings.

There are still some old VF trail markers. **The AIVF historic variants** – that from the Cisa Pass to Pontremoli and that of S. Antimo – are marked. For the other variants, follow closely the APP (Italy is not in the Sahara Desert; you can always get back to the Via).

In the Piedmont area, the trail is marked in both directions (to and from Rome).

The historic route that goes through two beautiful regional parks **from Monterosi to La Storta** will be open in the spring of 2019. AIVF and other local organizations have been working on this for a long time. Shortly after La Storta, the itinerary enters the Parco dell'Insugherata and leads to the Monte Mario. From there, walk along the busy Via Trionfale (be careful of traffic), passing by the town of San Lazzaro to arrive at the Vatican (follow the red VF on the APP). AIVF is committed to always show the best itinerary.

Plan your stages according to the time you have available and your physical condition: **from 15 to 35 km per day, so a total of 35 to 60 days from the Great St. Bernard Pass to Rome**. The preparation for the pilgrimage on the Via Francigena requires detailed planning: where to sleep, what to visit, where to plan a rest day? If you want to stay a few days in Rome and eventually attend a papal audience on Wednesday... count that in when you plan your return flight.

Frequent questions and answers

How much should my backpack weigh?

As light as possible, about 10 kg + 1 to 1.5 liters of water. Some recommend that your pack weigh 10% of your body weight.

RECOMMENDATIONS (what to bring with you)

- In the rice fields of the Po Valley and along the rivers (for ex. In the Piedmont region): a strong insect repellent, sunscreen, maybe anti-tick vaccine.
- **Compass or smartphone (APPs)** to be able to get your bearings in the thick fog of the Po Valley or in the mountains.

- **Bring enough water and food.** Not always available on the way, especially in August, vacation time in Italy as in France. Many restaurants and stores are closed.
- In times of rain or after thundershowers, **trails and fords are not practicable:** foresee an alternative route on roads! In very hot weather: leave at dawn!
- Clothing: DON'T enter churches in shorts! In church: appropriate clothing, long pants.
- Always walk on the **left side** of the road and respect the obligation to wear a **reflective vest!**

LODGING

- **Travel with a dog or other animal:** ask if this is possible and under what conditions when you make your reservation! It's best to have confirmation by e-mail that this is authorized.
- **Is it required to reserve? How long in advance?**
Today in Italy there are lots of places to stay on the VF; pilgrim hostels and religious communities accept ONLY pilgrim with a recognized credential. Information about this is available on the APPs or on our *Dormifrancigena* list of lodging possibilities. Reserve 2 or 3 days in advance, much earlier in high tourist season.
- **DON'T forget to cancel, if you change your mind.** Also warn them if you are arriving much later than planned.
- **In religious communities, is hospitality available to both men and women, or can that change according to what type of community it is?** With few exceptions – mentioned in the APPs or the *Dormifrancigena* – both men and women are welcome. The AIVF "Ami/E" (friends) card and credential allow pilgrim discounts in many places.
- **Is it necessary to have a sleeping bag and pad?** Where it is specifically mentioned in the APP or *Dormifrancigena*. Bring a silk sack or liner, it's more hygienic.

Other questions and answers

Is it safe for a woman to hike alone?

AIVF has never received any news of problems of this sort.

I've seen that there is also an Associazione Europea delle Vie Francigene (AEVF). What is the difference between AEVF and AIVF? What association should I belong to?

AEVF was founded in 2001 and has offices in Fidenza and Piacenza. The goal of AEVF is the development of tourism along the Via Francigena. Its members are the towns, cities, provinces, regions, public and private entities in Italy. In Switzerland, the region Chablais-Valais; in France, for ex. the town of Champlitte).

AIVF was founded in Switzerland in 1997. Its goals are primarily to help its own members ("AMIS"/friends) to prepare their pilgrimage and to develop the historic routes more adapted to their needs. So the two organizations complete each other, they are not rivals!

AIVF is not as visible along the VF – but pilgrims with the AIVF credential and AMIS card have been welcome since 2001!

By paying your credential with **AIVF, you support our volunteer work in favor of the pilgrims.**

Be very careful in crowded tourist sites or other public places, especially in big cities. Too many pilgrims are victims of thieves!

AIVF condemns and is saddened by the behavior of too many demanding "tourist pilgrims" who take advantage of others, with no respect for true pilgrims or for the religious communities.

November 1, 2018