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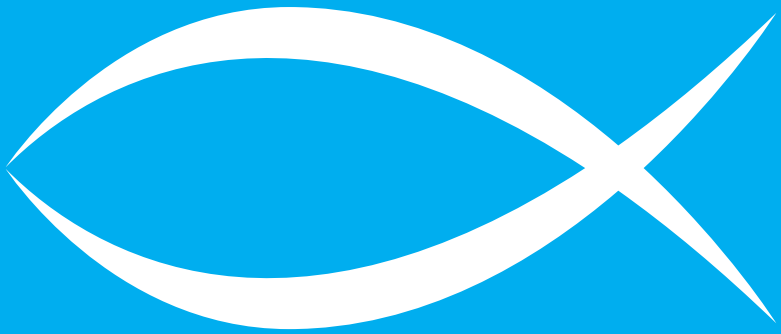

THE HEAVENLY WAY

on foot from Aquileia to Monte Lussari

FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

Aquileia, Patriarchal Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta

What is the Heavenly Way

On foot from Aquileia to Monte Lussari

The Heavenly Way is a pilgrimage founded through the initiative of a group of people belonging to different associations and united by being pilgrims, men and women who set out physically to achieve a spiritual goal.

It is a Way that links three different villages and consists of many paths that originate in particularly significant places for the history and tradition of faith in our lands:

– one in Italy: Aquileia, where for the first time the Gospel was proclaimed and from where missionaries took the Christian message into the heart of Europe.
– one in Slovenia: Brezje, near Kranj, the most important place of prayer to the Mother of God in Slovenia.
– one in Austria: Maria Saal, above Klagenfurt, a beautiful church dating back to about the eighth century, a place of great importance for the history of Carinthia and the cultural and religious identity of Central Europe.

The three paths, starting from their respective places of origin, come together at Camporosso, and then climb up Monte Lussari, reaching its summit 1760 metres above sea level.

The Italian branch

Friuli Venezia Giulia recounts itself

From the sea came Mark, the evangelist, according to legend, and from the sea the Way begins. From water to land, from far to near. Now, here.

Each stage is a vertebra. Following the Way means building up a small spine of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Soldering part to part: waves, lower, sand, brackish earth. Wind, in the distance a seagull (a cocâl) that screeches.

Terra firma, floating among the waves: Grado.

Dam, rocks – sails in the port, quiet – the basilica scented of incense and Christ in his colour almond. Scent of fried fish through the narrow streets, stone steps, basil at the windows.

You leave the island, tied with gossamer to the terra firma, and skim the beginning of this little journey in Friuli. You rise up beating your wings to a rhythm, you follow the wing and see rising, from the azure mist of the lagoon, the outline of the island of Barbana.

But you're already further on, in that beautiful city that was conquered by the Romans and then destroyed by Attila and by the inexorable passage of time: Aquileia.

It is all to be discovered, even

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in the fragment of a mosaic. You cross the countryside: you enter the plain. The flat plain, interspersed with fields, lines of trees and roads. A gurgle of springs and fountains. Villages, many villages, which all look the same, but change: in their language, different sounds of Friuli.

Scent of polenta, once, today: bread, salami and good wine in every tavern (a spray displayed outside: the fresher the leaves are, the younger the wine).

From the second day the outline of the landscape ripples: hills, soft, as the wine is sweet from those generous grapes. The Cormonese hills, caskets of vineyards. And we

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go in towards Castelmonte: Mary's mountain. The hills are soft signs on the horizon and the villages are smaller, some scattered cottages. First taste of little woods, still kept under control by man.

Entering the Natisone Valleys: a change of language, culture and landscape. Wildness advancing. You go back down to the ducal city, Cividale del Friuli, bejewelled with the emerald water of the Natisone. Enjoy Forum Iulii: it is the last historic town area that you will encounter, for there will follow woods and more woods.

From there you go back towards hills interspersed with a few small localities, suspended amid leaves and paths.

And so on until you cross lands that head to the Val di Resia.

Another world, another language, another culture. Enchanted places where the water fairies (agane in Friuli and Krivapete in the Natisone Valleys) become foxes, as in Japan. Then a wrench.

From the woods to the road, the main artery to the North. The noises are so strong, after days of rustling and secrets songs. All around, a rising of rocks and outlines, the mountains stand out: stronger, more rugged. The last stretch before reaching the destination, Lussari.

And from there, from the top, if you close your eyes, you can see, upside down, the path taken.

The Heavenly Way is Friuli Venezia Giulia recounting itself in the silence of the steps, white spaces between written lines.

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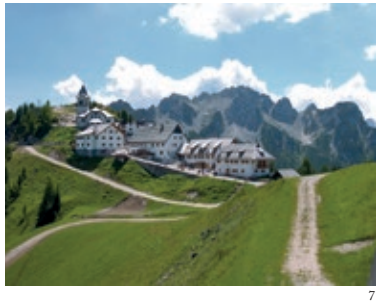

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1. Aquileia, basilica presbytery (south hall)
2. Grado, Sant'Eufemia Basilica
3. Isle of Barbana
4. Shrine of the Blessed Virgin of Castelmonte
5. Cividale del Friuli, River Natisone
6. Val Resia
7. Shrine on Monte Lussari

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1. Spring, buds
2. Summer, fields in flower
3. Autumn, harvest
4. Pilgrims on their way
5. Pilgrims in rainwear

Technical notes on the route and some suggestions

When to go: from late May to September approximately. At what pace: everyone has their own pace. Each person must measure it based on how they feel.
The length of the stages is a choice of each pilgrim.

Some tips:

- in summer the sun beats down hard, so you have to take advantage of the cool morning hours. The classic starting time ranges from 6 to 6:30 am.
- do not make the stages too long; let them finish no later than the early afternoon.

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Recommended equipment: the pilgrim's kit

- **Backpack.** Weight and size according to your own possibilities. Prefer backpacks with external pockets. If you do not use a dromedary cape, a backpack cover for rain becomes indispensable.
- **Cape.** Possibly the "dromedary" type, which also protects the backpack without it raining "in the middle".
- **Sleeping Bag.** Preferable to the sleeping sheet (there are shelters well above 1200 metres).
- **Mattress.** Possibly an inflatable one.
- **Foam mat.** It weighs next to nothing, and often becomes useful for lying down outdoors or for emergency accommodation.
- **Inflatable pillow.** In many places there is no pillow.
- **Dress.** Light things, if possible climbing gear and linen and towels in micro-fibre. Don't forget a hat or cap.
- **Shoes.** Given that you walk along the Way, we recommend hiking boots or hiking shoes, plus a pair of hiking sandals always, for the parts in the plain.
- **Knife.** A multi-purpose one is helpful.
- **Lanyard or string.** 7 or 8 metres can be useful for many purposes.

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Medicinal plants that can be found during the pilgrimage

Owing to the fact that the Heavenly Way takes you up the mountains, there are numerous strips of vegetation that you meet on the route.

The forest area of Friuli Venezia Giulia is extremely rich in species of great arboreal and therapeutic value.

The key element of the mountain plant landscape are the beech woods which are an energetic draining and diuretic element.

There is, however, also the hornbeam, which is the tree for a sore throat accompanied by a cough, the chestnut that is a potent activator of the peripheral circulation, and the ash that combats gout.

Often at the edge of the woods you can see hawthorn bushes (which is used in the form of infusion or decoction as an effective hypnotic sedative and brings down blood pressure), and viburnum, which is a powerful anti-asthmatic.

In more or less sunny meadows it is easy to find juniper, an antiseptic of the airways, a diuretic and a blood thinner; chicory and dandelion, considered to be among the best known liver drainers; fennel, effective against swelling and gastrointestinal disorders; and lemon balm, the natural anxiolytic par excellence.

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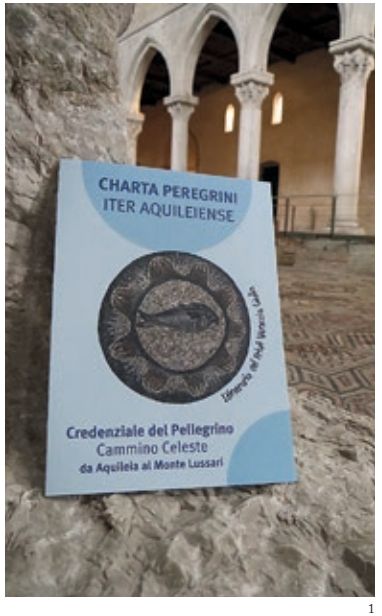
Further, on the edges of the trails, there are yarrow, suitable for menstrual disorders, bramble and its blackberries, which can contain active ingredients that assist therapies against diabetes.

In the cool clearings it is easy to find strawberries, a refreshing fruit and gynaecological remedy of modern plant therapy.

Then going up you can locate mountain indicators like gentian, a widely known species favouring appetite and digestion; and, in the presence of red spruce, blueberries and raspberries, the former a remedy for various things, especially for the gastrointestinal system and for eyesight, the latter extremely interesting for its ancient uses (thirst quencher, diuretic, bringer of vitamin C) and more modern ones (related to the gynaecological sphere).

In the mountain grasslands, finally there are lady's mantle, cumin and trollius, centuries-old folk medicine remedies.

1. Conifer Wood
2. *Crataegus monogyna* (hawthorn)
3. *Vaccinium myrtillus* (bilberry)



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The Credential

As for the Santiago Way and other paths, for the Heavenly Way too a credential has been provided.

The Credential is the document whose primary function is to attest that the traveller is a pilgrim and not a hiker or a tourist.

It is an important document: "delivering the credential" in practice means "ensuring, at least morally, that the person who uses it is a real pilgrim", and will know how to behave, from all points of view. It is a minimum guarantee for anyone who has expressed his or her willingness to give hospitality to pilgrims.

In this connection, as for other paths, the use of some of the accommodations and facilities may not be available to those who are deprived of this document.

The credential also has another purpose: to certify that the Way was actually taken. In the case of the Heavenly Way there is no "Compostela", at least not yet; but

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the credential can be used in the same way, having stamps put on it, in the halting places and elsewhere.

The credential can be picked up in Aquileia (at Andrea Ghiretti's Souvenir Aquileia shop, Via Patriarca Popone 2, +39 0431 919045, souvenir.aquileia@libero.it) or at the souvenir shop at the Basilica and, in case of necessity, also at Aiello del Friuli at the Navarca Club (circolonavarca@libero.it).

In can also be downloaded from the website www.camminoceleste.eu at the page Accommodation and useful info.

The credential is given to pilgrims after they fill in a special form, to sign and hand over to the employee. And with a recommendation to read this sheet carefully.

The delivery modalities, however, may change in the future, so watch for the info that you will find on www.camminoceleste.eu.

"Records of pilgrims" have also been prepared, which have been distributed at hospitality points.

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1. The Pilgrim's Credential
2. Souvenir Aquileia
3. Souvenir at the Basilica
4. Aquileia, mosaic (north hall)

The Slovenian branch and the Austrian branch of the Heavenly Way

Three peoples, one faith

The Slovenian branch of the Way starts from the popular shrine of Mary of Succour in Brezje, about 45 km north of Ljubljana.

Mostly along tracks and cycle paths, in about 80 km you climb from about 500 metres above sea level at the departure place to the Rateče Pass (Fusine) at 850 metres, and subsequently go down to Tarvisio and from there reach the trailhead of the Pilgrim and make the final climb to Monte Lussari. It's a simple route, not very tiring, suitable for walkers/pilgrims of all ages in good physical condition.

The Austrian branch of the Heavenly Way takes pilgrims from Maria Saal to Monte Lussari through Klagenfurt, Maria Worth, Arnoldstein and Coccau.

Maria Saal is twinned with Aquileia and the two towns are also joined by a pilgrimage route on foot, a tested route, alive.

This is one more reason to consider the two branches of the Heavenly Way as "a single way," or rather part of a great journey that ties all the holy places.

The Slovenian and Austrian branches of the Heavenly Way are not yet equipped to be taken in an organized way. All updates on the evolution of their state are available, however, on the site of the Heavenly Way: www.camminoceleste.eu.

Tarvisio, sanctuary on Monte Lussari

The Heavenly Way joins Aquileia, the titular place of a glorious patriarchate with a thousand-year history, to Monte Lussari, in the heart of the Julian Alps, on top of which a Marian Shrine was built; about 200 kilometres long, it takes about ten days to go along, mainly on tracks, country lanes and mountain trails.

The Way allows the hiker to enjoy the enchanting landscape of Friuli Venezia Giulia in all its transformations, from the sea to the mountains.

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