

Via Francisca del Lucomagno and VareseNews, walking together

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It is appropriate to say, VareseNews and the Via Francisca del Lucomagno have covered a lot of distance together. And there are still many goals to be achieved, side by side.

Although 2020 was the year in which proximity tourism was discovered, our newspaper had already decided to invest energy and faith in this idea in 2015, when it became the protagonist of the project that sought to (re) focus attention on the ancient route: a **510 km** pilgrimage that goes from Constance, in Germany, to Pavia, through Varese Province, north to south.

The Via Francisca, in small doses

The project to focus on the Italian section, 135 km in the **provinces of Varese, Milan and Pavia**, currently involves 49 Italian authorities, including Lombardy Region, Varese Province, the Municipalities the path goes through, the Piambello Mountain Community, the Campo dei Fiori and Alto Milanese Parks, and the East Ticino Villoresi Reclamation Consortium. The official protocol **was signed** on Thursday, 21 September 2017, at the Branda Castiglioni Palace, in Castiglione Olona.

Since that moment, there have been dozens of actions aimed at continuously developing the path, and we have taken every opportunity to talk about them, since **the first pilgrims** travelled it, years ago. On

the one hand, the “practical” actions that consolidate the services for the pilgrims passing through continue:

- Placing of signs (there are now more [than a thousand signposts](#) in the Italian section alone).
- Opening of accommodation facilities. One such facility is the Ostello del Pellegrino, in the village of Castiglione Olona. Today, the Ostello del Pellegrino, which is housed in the former elementary school in the hamlet of Gornate Superiore, provides simple hospitality, with **14 beds**, bathrooms and a common area. The cost is covered by free donations, as is the case in many hostels along the historical paths. The hostel is run by volunteers, and since its conception, it has seen the participation of the municipal administration, partners of the Via Francisca, as well as associations, individuals and groups, such as the Civil Protection.

One important milestone was the **presentation of the Via to the Chamber of Deputies** by the honourable **Matteo Bianchi, of the Northern League**, the former Mayor of Morazzone, through which the ancient road passes, who made an speech in Montecitorio, on 24 June 2020. During his speech, he said that, “At a time when tourism needs a vigorous restart, the Via Francisca is certainly a commendable virtuous example.”

There are also many moments that promote the Via, in the media that VareseNews has created over the years:

- Hundreds of articles on the Via, published in the local and national press and in trade magazines.



Places and routes / Lieux et itinéraires / Luoghi e itinerari

The Via Francisca of Lukmanier

Offer yourself a week of stunning Lombard nature on the Via Francisca of Lukmanier along 135 km. This route enters Italy at lake Ceresio in Lavagna Ponte Tresa and, after passing through the province of Varese, runs along the navigli – typical Lombard canals – to finally reach Pavia.

A route for everybody

Easy to walk, it is suitable for everyone. A path for enthusiasts, as well as for those who want to experience the route without having to face organizational or physical challenges. The starting point of the Via is easy to reach thanks to the good railway line that leads to Varese; from there, a bus takes you to Ponte Tresa. With an array of more than 40 accommodation facilities, everyone can choose an accommodation they prefer as well as their own stage schedule. Those who like sharing experiences will find a number of hostels along the route.

The effort of local authorities, private citizens and volun-

teers resulted in a launch of the Via Francisca in 2019 which allowed hundreds of people to walk it entirely during the summer of 2020. Besides this, there are thousands of people who enjoy weekend escapades and one-day walks along the safe trails, looking for a physical activity. The route is perfect for this thanks to the efficient transport network covering the entire area.

Water and nature in the spotlight along the Via
Waterscape is a distinctive characteristic of the Via. After enter-



ing Italy and crossing the bridge over the river Tresa, you are mesmerized by lake Ceresio. The route flanks its banks for a couple of kilometres to the channel of Lavagna, a picturesque village with a few boats and restaurants overlooking the lake.

Along the Via, there are two more natural reservoirs, one in Ghirla and the other in Varese. Then, you walk 18 km along the river Olona, the naviglio grande and the naviglio Bereguardo, until reaching the imposing Ticino and a beautiful covered bridge in Pavia.

Despite the route passes through some of the most anthropized areas in Lombardy, nature is the undisputed queen of the whole Via.

You come across several parks: the Argentera, five kilometres after entering Lavagna Ponte Tresa and then the Campo dei Fiori with its luxuriant woods, and the RTO, which owes its name to three streams - Rile, Tenore and Olona. Walking or cycling along the Valle Olona cycle path, you will pass through the Medio Olona park and, at the end of that section, the Aho Milanese park; finally, you will reach the Valle del Ticino park, a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere reserve.

UNESCO sites and important attractions

The Via goes past UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Sacro Monte di Varese (Sacred Mount of Varese) and the

Monastero di Toebe (Toebe Monastery). These two sites, along with the Badia di Ganna, the Canonica di Bernate and the Morimondo Abbey, are places of great value for those who are on a journey of faith.

Along the route, there are also important vernacular monuments like mills, ancient trip hammers, mansions and castles. The Via Francisca of Lukmanier is accessible to all because it has few elevation gains and, from Castiglione Olona on, the route runs on a flat terrain.

Besides the towns of Varese and Pavia, there are dozens of villages and small hamlets that will introduce you to another Lombardy, rich in history, art and culture. Almost the entire trail is safe and often winds its way on cycle paths that gave new life to historic infrastructures such as a tramway that linked Varese with

- The special report about the Via Francisca del Lucomagno, in the magazine “Via Francigena”.
- Tour of the 133 municipalities that the Via goes through, described one by one in the pages of the magazine (g.: [the Castelseprio Stage](#)), in August 2019
- Presentation of the Via, during the RAI programme “Geo & Geo”, in October 2019

During “Geo & Geo”, the Via Francisca del Lucomagno

- Presentation of the Via during Glocal, the Festival of Digital Journalism, with a series of meetings on the Via, before an international audience, and with the publication of articles in English, in November 2019
- Presentation of the Via, during the programme “Studio Aperto Mag”, on the television channel Italia Uno, in December 2020

The Via Francisca del Lucomagno, during “Studio Aperto”

- Account of the journey made by a group of pilgrims, led by our editor, Marco Giovannelli, who, in seven days, travelled the entire Italian section, from Lavena Ponte Tresa to Pavia. In this article, there is the [account of the last stage, from Bereguardo to Pavia](#), and below the video of the arrival, in June 2020.

Eighth stage of the Via Francisca, from Bereguardo to Pavia

- Presentation of [the Via Francisca, at “Fa’ la cosa giusta!”](#) (Do the right thing!), the annual trade fair of critical consumption and sustainable lifestyles, when the Via was the focus on four occasions during the “Walk Week”, in November 2020.

One, ten, one hundred walks in Lombardy; are you sure you know them all?

During 2020, as a result of the pandemic, which has led to new developments in proximity tourism, the Via Francisca was chosen by hundreds of walking enthusiasts, as an alternative to more or less distant travelling. VareseNews has never stopped reporting on how the route taken by the Via can be an opportunity (not just a second-best alternative) to discover **Lombardy on long foot**, at a low economic and environmental cost.

And if walking is a way of reducing the economic impact of a holiday on a family budget, it is interesting what it generates for the territories. The birth, development and continuous talking about the Via generate, in the areas it goes through, a real opportunity for developing local economies, family-run businesses and small and medium enterprises. And this is confirmed by the statistics, including those that we have reported in this article, which show **that, in three months, the Via Francisca has generated over €250,000**

And so, the Via Francisca del Lucomagno is moving, and it will always find the space it deserves on VareseNews!

A close look at the route:

– **The entire route, from Constance to Pavia**

<https://view.vzaar.com/11645876/player?videoURL=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.varesenews.it%2F2021%2F03%2F1a-via-francisca-del-lucomagno-varesenews-camminano-insieme%2F1315544%2F&autoplay=false&startMute=false&language=it>

– **The Swiss section of the Via Francisca del Lucomagno**

THE ROUTE

The Via Francisca del Lucomagno is completely mapped out and completely safe. Most of the route is

along paths, country lanes and other minor roads, and almost always surrounded by nature. We have carefully travelled the sections, which you can find [here](#). Our advice is **to print out the routes and download the sections and install them on a mapping system** such as **maps.me**, a free app that works even without an internet connection, that is very precise and complete.

SIGNPOSTING

The signposting is very good, but don't expect to find any signs of the Via Francisca del Lucomagno. Our pilgrim, or the green that distinguishes him, cannot be found anywhere. **The route is indicated by yellow signs and yellow rhombi**, and as far as Canton Graubünden, the word **Wanderweg**, which generically means path, is used. From Graubünden there is a stylised walking man. In order to proceed without getting lost, it is good to have a clear idea of how the trail proceeds, so that you can follow the signs, location by location.



THE STAGES

In terms of difficulty, the stages are all medium, less so for the distance, than for the slopes, because, with the exception of the first stage, in all of them, the climb is about 500 metres on continuous ups and downs, although there are no demanding climbs. For the stages, we also followed the division found on the [Outdooractive](#) website, with a couple of variations, because the third stage would have been too long and very, very demanding. Here are the stages and their distances.

Stage 1: Constance – Amriswil 21 km [the diary](#)

Stage 2: Amriswil – St. Gallen 19 km [the diary](#)

Stage 3: St. Gallen – Altstätten 21 km [the diary](#)

Stage 4: Altstätten – Sennwald 21 km [the diary](#)

Stage 5: Sennwald – Schaan 21 km [the diary](#)

Stage 6: Schaan – Maienfeld 24 km [the diary](#)

Stage 7: Maienfeld – Chur 24 km [the diary](#)



In this [travel article and diary](#), we reported on the 150-kilometre walk, from Lake Constance to Chur, in August 2019.

The Italian section of the Via Francisca del Lucomagno

Everyone can walk the path as they see fit. We recommend dividing it into eight stages. In each of these stages, there are several reception facilities, all of which [can be found here](#). We will indicate some of them directly in the individual stages, because they are the ones where the group stayed, in June. We will also indicate the prices (which were valid in June 2020), with the agreement for pilgrims.

In each stage, there are points of interest. Some of these are noteworthy, and our advice is not to skip them.

FIRST STAGE: LAVENA PONTE TRESA – GANNA

14.2 km, with a 363 m difference in altitude.

The stage is mostly on cycle paths, and goes through a number of small villages. The stage ends at the Abbey in Ganna.



For sleeping:

Albergo Tre Risotti (ask for Sergio), less than 1 km from the Abbey, Tel. 0332-719720. Twenty beds, with a possible overnight package, pilgrim supper, plus breakfast, for €40. Sheets and towels are included.

Alternatively, accommodation is provided by the nuns at the *Hermitage of "Santa Maria Bambina"*, in Ghirla (3 km before Ganna), 8 beds, for €20 per night, with breakfast.

The diary of the stage – All of the accommodation facilities.

SECOND STAGE: GANNA – SACRO MONTE DI VARESE



13.5 km, with a 552 m difference in altitude.

The stage is entirely within the Campo dei Fiori Park, and is mostly along paths.

For sleeping:

Hotel Sacro Monte (ask for Mario), Tel. 0332-229655. Nineteen beds, with a possible overnight package, pilgrim supper and breakfast, for €40. Sheets and towels are included.

Points of interest: The chapels along the climb up to Santa Maria del Monte, the Pogliaghi Museum and the Crypt.

The diary of the stage – All of the accommodation facilities.

THIRD STAGE: SACRO MONTE DI VARESE – CASTIGLIONE OLONA



21 km, with a 223 m difference in altitude.

The stage goes through the town of Varese, Gazzada Schianno and Morazzone, and enters the village of Castiglione Olona, in the Caronno Corbellaro plain. From here, we suggest a variation, to go directly to Gornate Superiore (1 km exactly), where the hostel is located.

For sleeping:

Ostello pellegrino di Castiglione Olona (ask for Mario), Tel. 338-6690735. Fourteen beds, with a voluntary contribution, starting at €10. Sheets are included. You can have an evening meal in the nearby trattoria “Piccolo Stelvio”; the pilgrim menu costs €10 (closed on Mondays, but it can open for groups).

Points of interest: Estensi Gardens, in Varese, and the Branda Palace and Collegiate Church, in Castiglione Olona.

The diary of the stage – All of the accommodation facilities.

FOURTH STAGE: CASTIGLIONE OLONA – BUSTO ARSIZIO



24.5 km, with a 44 m difference in altitude.

The stage is almost entirely in the Olona Valley, where there is a cycle path surrounded by greenery. At the end of the cycle path, it is 3 km to Castellanza, and from here, 2.5 km off the track to get to the pilgrim reception.

For sleeping:

Stoà Youth Centre (ask for Roberta), Tel. 340-3369612. Fifteen beds, with a voluntary contribution, starting at €10. Sheets are included. There are restaurants nearby, but the hostel has a well-equipped kitchen.

Points of interest: Monastery of Torba.

The diary of the stage – All of the accommodation facilities.

FIFTH STAGE: BUSTO ARSIZIO – CASTELLETTO DI CUGGIONO



20 km, with a 0 km difference in altitude.

This stage makes a variation of 2.5 km to return to the route, in the middle of the Alto Milanese Park. The first section, of a few kilometres, is surrounded by nature, and then, from Buscate, it is on asphalt, as far as Castelletto.

For sleeping:

La scala di Giacobbe (ask for Franco), Tel. 340-3369612. Twenty two beds, with a contribution of €22, which includes night and breakfast. There are restaurants nearby, but the hostel has a well-equipped kitchen.

Points of interest: Villa Annoni, in Cuggiono.

The diary of the stage – All of the accommodation facilities.

SIXTH STAGE: CASTELLETTO DI CUGGIONO – MORIMONDO



21.5 km, with a 0 m difference in altitude.

The stage runs all along the Naviglio Grande Canal, and the first section of the Bereguardo Canal. It goes through a number of villages, where you can find bars and shops. In the correct order, there is Bernate Ticino, Boffalora sopra Ticino, Robecco sul Naviglio, Cassinetta di Lugagnana and Abbiategrasso. The end of the stage is in Caselle, 2 km before Morimondo.

For sleeping:

Trattoria Caselle (ask for Nadia), Tel. 02-9407335. Ten beds, with a possible overnight package, pilgrim supper and breakfast, for €35. Sheets and towels are included.

Points of interest: Archinto Palace, in Robecco.

The diary of the stage – All of the accommodation facilities.

SEVENTH STAGE: MORIMONDO – BEREGUARDO



16 km, with a 0 m difference in altitude

The stage runs all along the Bereguardo Canal. From Caselle, you return to the tow path and then make a variation of one kilometre to Morimondo, an authentic masterpiece along the way. From here to Bereguardo, you will not encounter anything. There are no refreshment points or drinking fountains.

For sleeping:

Trattoria La Pesa, Tel. 02-9407335. Ten beds, with a possible overnight package, pilgrim supper and breakfast, for €35. Sheets and towels are included.

The diary of the stage – All of the accommodation facilities.

EIGHTH STOP: BEREGUARDO – PAVIA



16 km, with a 0 m difference in altitude.

The stage goes through the Pavia countryside. It goes through Sanvarese and Torre d'Isola, where there are a number of bars and shops. The last 3 km are along the River Ticino, and you go straight to the covered bridge. From there, it is just 1.5 km to get to the Basilica of "San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro", which is the endpoint of the walk, where you will receive the Testimonium.

Points of interest: the town centre, the Cathedral, the Basilica of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro

The diary of the stage.

- **Stamps and the Testimonium**

Along the route, there are many places that have an official stamp of the Via Francisca. Also, at the end of the walk, you can receive the Testimonium from the Prior of the Augustinian Fathers, in the sacristy, a few metres from the tomb of St. Augustine, one of the Fathers of the Catholic Church.

- **The prices for walking along the Via Francisca del Lucomagno**

The prices vary depending on the choices each traveller makes. Our suggestion includes a mixture of pilgrim-style accommodations. For two suppers (Busto Arsizio and Castelletto di Cuggiono), it is

possible to cook in the hostels. Excluding lunches, which are normally packed lunches, the approximate price is a little over €200. The prices for entering the museums and for the trips should also be added.

- **Information on the Via Francisca del Lucomagno**

The Via Francisca del Lucomagno uses all of the information tools, for anyone who wants learn about it and walk along it.

The guide is produced by Terre di mezzo; the guide was written by **Alberto Conte** and **Marco Giovanelli**.

The app is available for **IOS** and **Android** platforms.

You can also visit the **website**, the **Facebook page**, the **Instagram** profile and **YouTube** for videos.

AND TODAY, THERE IS VARESENEWS

And today? Our journey continues, together with all of you. We have grown a lot over these years, but we have always maintained a strong bond with the territories and the community, and we will continue to do so. This is why we have launched the membership campaign. It is a choice of responsibility, so that the newspaper can remain free of charge, as it has been until now, and improve, with the usual attention to our readers.

And now it's your turn; subscribe.

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