



I think I have already shared with some of you that writing and publishing these guides has been like giving birth i.e. lots of hard work and cravings for strange food while chained to the computer for months on end climaxing with the final crises and pain as you make that delivery happen. This is followed by a too brief period of pride and chest-beating before the next one is on its way.

Well, maybe there is still some mileage in the analogy. As parents we now have an adolescent that has left the care of home and is somewhere out there in the big world. We hope it is fine and that it will write home sometime, but all we can do is to comfort ourselves with "we did our best to bring them up the right way".

Currently there are a number of groups using the guide en route from Canterbury and from the Swiss/Italian border. The earliest to leave was Maria Cunha who left London on April 24. We have received positive feed-back on layout and usability, but still wait for the first route change suggestion - please don't be shy.

We have created a space on our web-site http://www.pilgrimagepublications.com/via_francigena.htm to allow unedited blog/experience sharing and we would welcome including a link to your blog whether you are planning, en route or back home reflecting on a prior journey.

We will of course notify you all by Email of any major issues en route as and when we hear of them.

We have spent the last month in trying to extend our network of information sources for changes and improvements to the VF route including the French chapter of the AIVF, the newly established Association Via Francigena - France, a Dutch society for pilgrimage to Rome and we are hopeful of being confirmed as a "friend" of the European Association of the via Francigena in the very near future.

I know a number of you plan to start your journey in Switzerland during July or will be passing through at that time and may be able to participate in a group pilgrim event at the summit of the Col Grand Saint Bernard. The attachment describes the event which is organised in part by Danilo Parisi the "gaurdo" from the Po ferry crossing. Travelling the VF can be a solitary experience and this may be one of the best opportunities to meet people of similar interest face to face. We are going to try to be there.

Our next child is a guide to the Chemin Anglais - the route from Winchester to le Mont Saint Michel and thence to St Jean d'Angely and la via Turonensis (voie de Tours) one of the four most travelled routes on the St James Way. Over the next few weeks we will be surveying the route to the south of le Mont Saint Michel and completing the guide for publication in late summer.

The research for this guide has revealed a possible route from le Mont St Michel via Lyon and Mont-Genève into the via Francigena network, while we have also unearthed some activity in Germany to waymark the route from Stade (near Hamburg) over the Brenner Pass and on towards Rome.

We would welcome any information you may have on either route.

Best wishes

Paul Chinn and Babette Gallard