



Babette and I have just returned from a further visit to Italy to review the route proposed by the Italian Ministry of Culture and to discuss the sharing of information on the route with Alberto Conte who has been responsible for the definition of the route under contract to the ministry.

I thought the group might be interested in the results of both activities.

Alberto (who is a member of this group) has reviewed this note and is in agreement with its contents.

Babette and I physically examined the route between Ivrea and Luni and then, with Alberto, made a virtual tour of the entire route comparing the routes in our 2008 guide with that which has been published by Alberto.

Overall the route is a great improvement over all previous routes that we have examined. It also benefits from being recommended and owned by the local communities or local branches of hiking groups such as the CAI.

The route succeeds in continuing to reduce the amount of the journey needed on the busy SS and SP roads and where this is unavoidable Alberto has made excellent and very specific recommendations to the ministry and the communities for additional safety measures.

Of course the route improvements come at the cost of some additional distance and sometimes more strenuous hiking.

We have provided all the GPS data on "our" route to Alberto who will discuss with a number of communes the opportunity to adopt some of our more direct, less strenuous and bike and horse specific options - particularly in the Aosta valley.

The signing activity is being undertaken at a community level and the examples that we saw were excellent. However at this time a number of communities have yet to undertake the work and so the signs can abruptly stop at a community frontier. It is hoped that outstanding work will be completed in the early part of next year, but this will depend on the local situation.

Pilgrims should not plan to depend on the signs alone as there is already evidence of erosion/vandalism of installed signs. Alberto would welcome feed-back on specific locations where signs have been damaged in order to instigate corrective action.

It should also be noted that while the ministry signs are the default design, the signing standards do vary from community to community eg in the Aosta valley the existing yellow footpath signs are supplemented with a pilgrim logo; in the area around Fidenza the community uses a small format sign with the pilgrim and stars of Europe and from Aulla to Luni the red and white CAI signs are dominant.

We have received provisional agreement from the Ministry for permission to publish the "official"

route in our 2009 guide. We hope to formalize this in the next few weeks. In the 2009 edition we intend to exclusively adopt the official route where there is clear advantage for all groups (hikers, bikers and horse-riders). We will provide the official route and alternatives where we judge the official route too challenging for one or more group.

Overall the work undertaken by the Ministry can only be seen as an excellent step forwards in the maturity and safety of the route. They and InterAria should be congratulated on a first-class project.

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