



VIA FRANCIGENA, ROAD TO ROME 2021 - Ambassador

Autore: Joanne Roan _ Joanne's Long Walks

Blog: <https://joanneslongwalk.blogspot.com/>

Link all'articolo: <https://joanneslongwalk.blogspot.com/2021/10/via-francigena-nel-sud-day-37-tricase.html>

Via Francigena nel Sud - Day 37: Tricase - Santa Maria di Leuca

19 October 2021

How to describe in a few words the **final stage** of an 870 km walk, in 37 days, from Rome, where I left off my walk from home along the Via Francigena in 2015, to Santa Maria di Leuca, at the southernmost tip of the heel of Italy?



Our group grew larger and larger along the way. On the previous evening people I had met and made friends with along the way began to reappear, and in the morning there were even more of them: members of the Gruppo dei Dodici who had accompanied us through Lazio, bloggers and photographers who had covered various parts of the route, walkers who had reluctantly

left the group earlier but promised to return for the final stage. It was a strange and surreal feeling, seeing all these people again, in a different time and place, out of the context of their home regions... As if we had all died and gone to heaven, and been reunited there with all our long-lost friends!

At Gagliano del Capo the group grew even larger. After taking a break for a picnic in the park, scurrying for shelter under the arcades of the town hall when it began to rain, we set off for the final seven kilometres in the company of the group that had arrived from Otranto on a **historic vintage train** provided by the Italian national railways, a partner in the Road to Rome project, especially for the occasion. The group included the Italian minister for tourism



VIA FRANCIGENA, ROAD TO ROME 2021 - Ambassador

and representatives of the British, French, Swiss and Italian Via Francigena associations. They all walked the final kilometres with us, in their fine clothes and under their umbrellas; as did the students from local high school Liceo Statale Girolamo Comi, getting wet in their jeans and sweatshirts, as well as a multi-national company of young actors in period costumes.



This colourful and highly various group arrived at the **lighthouse and sanctuary of Santa Maria de Finibus Terrae** together, singing, clapping and rejoicing.

We all crowded into the **Basilica** to shelter from the rain and receive the welcome of the **Minister for Tourism** and the **Bishop**, then we lined up to receive the **final stamp** on our pilgrim credentials.





VIA FRANCIGENA, ROAD TO ROME 2021 - Ambassador

The rain stopped in time for the afternoon programme of events, including speakers from the associations of the Via Francigena in England, France, Switzerland and Italy, the city of Canterbury, the president of the region of Puglia, the Italian national agency for tourism, the French Fédération Grand Randonnée, and Frank Damiano representing all of us bloggers who participated in various stages of the Road to Rome. It was dark by the time Luca Bruschi of the [European Association of the Via Francigena](#) concluded the session, mentioning the collective diary initiative of the [Ragazze in Gamba](#) in which I have participated since I started in Rome.



The programme continued with a theatrical performance by a French/Italian company of young actors centering around fictional adventures of the Archbishop Sigeric on the Via Francigena. And the evening ended with a seafood dinner and entertainment provided by our favourite pizzica dancer, whom we first encountered in Brindisi, and her band!





VIA FRANCIGENA, ROAD TO ROME 2021 - Ambassador

The **three participants who walked all the way from Calais to Santa Maria di Leuca** were presented with a cut-out figure of the yellow pilgrim that symbolises the Via Francigena, while the staff and we bloggers received a souvenir necklace made by an artisan from Gambassi Terme using stones from the Via Francigena and the five of us who had walked the farthest - Myra, Alessio and Massimo from Calais, Alfredo and I from Rome - were awarded our **testimonium**. The dinner concluded with a special Road to Rome cake, and guess which piece I got? The one with Santa Maria di Leuca on it!





VIA FRANCIGENA, ROAD TO ROME 2021 - Ambassador

JOANNE ROAN _ Joanne's Long Walks



Born in England, grew up in Canada, I have lived in Italy for more than half of my life now, in Liguria and Tuscany. In September of 2015 I set off to walk from one to the other. And I enjoyed it so much I continued on to Rome along the Via Francigena pilgrimage route! In October 2016 I set off from Chiavari on foot again, but in the opposite direction, on a L-O-O-O-N-G walk across France and Spain to Santiago de Compostela, which I completed in sections over four years.

In 2020 I set off from Chiavari again, towards Assisi, getting as far as Florence before autumn weather and covid restrictions sent me home; in the spring of 2021 I walked the rest of the way from Florence to Assisi.

My plan for the end of summer/autumn of 2021 is to join "The Road to Rome" for the "Road from Rome" portion: heading south from Rome towards the tip of the heel of Italy!

I record my walking experiences in daily entries on my blog "Joanne's Long Walks" at janneslongwalk.blogspot.com.