

Infrastructures for Tourism: Panoramic and Monumental Italy Through the “Green Cycling Path Route” (*Via Verde Viabile*)

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Key words: Access to land, capacity building, land distribution, land management, land readjustment, spatial planning, urban renewal.

SUMMARY

The cultural heritage is an organic group (of artworks, monuments, museums, houses, landscapes, historical centres, customs and traditions) strictly bound to the territory it was generated by. In its entirety it makes up the backbone of civil society and of the traditions of the citizens who were born there.

In Italy the cultural, artistic, historical, archaeological assets etc. are scattered copiously throughout the territory.

This immense heritage represents a resource and wealth in relation to the cultural and economical interests because of the appeal they have for researchers and tourists all over the world.

Every year, millions of tourists visit many Italian sites and travel an efficient, capillary network of infrastructures (motorways, railways, hotels, etc.) bringing considerable economic benefits to the territory.

Thus the conditions that make the historical-environmental heritage constantly visitable and receptive put the development requirements into close correlation with the need to safeguard them from degradation factors.

The regulations are normally specified in urban programmes for the governing and development of the territories by:

- Valorisation (activity aimed to improve the preservation of the cultural and environmental assets and increase the exploitation of same).
- Promotion (activity aimed at spreading the knowledge about and supporting the valorisation of the assets).
- Management (activity that, through the organisation of human and material resources, is aimed at ensuring the exploitation of the cultural and landscape assets, contributing to the safeguarding and valorisation of the territory).

Therefore, the management of the territory cannot be limited to the safeguarding and enhancement of museum, architectural or archaeological wealth, but must extend to the production of self-supporting economical effects.

The elements of this system can be identified as the following:

- Recovery and maintenance of the artistic-historical heritage of castles, villas, historical town centres, etc.
- Use of the landscape as an economical resource with the creation of cultural parks or cultural, tourist itineraries linked to literary, historical or artistic traditions;
- Development of the hotel management and tourism industries;
- Recovery of traditional arts and crafts and local cuisine and reproposal of same.

In order to express their full value, the cultural assets must be promoted and made accessible to the public by a promotion and tourist hospitality network.

Travel by traditional transportation means causes disturbance to the sound balance of the environment and often impairs full enjoyment of natural areas, the view of the landscape and other attractions compatible only with slow travelling times and the possibility to stop in the most picturesque places.

Among other developments in the connection between tourist areas and large homogeneous territorial environments, rich with monumental, panoramic, and artistic references, Italy is providing a special ecological infrastructure: the “green route” (“via verde”).

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This is a special project of landscaping works and infrastructures aimed at building a pedestrian, cycling and equestrian route in order to connect the panoramic and monumental areas which will be specially planned and equipped for tourist hospitality.

The project entails the building of a cycle route network extending for approximately **16,500 km** (of which about 1,800 km of already existing cycling paths). The scheme is basically a network of itineraries going from north to south crossed by east to west (coast to coast) trails.

The cycle route network is part of the “EuroVelo” project, the European cycle route network, that is a project of the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) and its mission includes:

- To ensure that bicycle use achieves its fullest potential so as to bring about sustainable mobility and public well-being and economic development via sustainable tourism;
- To change attitudes, policies and budget allocations at the European level.

In line with this mission the aim of the ECF EuroVelo project is to promote and coordinate the creation and operation of a complete European cycle route network, the EuroVelo network, crossing and uniting the whole European continent. This is the truly sustainable Trans-European Transport Network.

The cultural tourism offer is suitable for all kinds of tourists. Even though they are cycling paths, it is not necessary to be athletes or cycle lovers, and you don't have to have your own bicycle to be able to take advantage of them. The itineraries are designed for anyone who wants to experience cycling, even over very small distances, using rented bikes according to the city-bike system which is already in use with great success in the most important European cities.

The Italian routes are selected to ensure, in full safety and comfort conditions, excursions through territories featuring different kinds of natural landscape: coastlines, rural, fluvial, mountain, graced with natural, landscaped, monumental and ecological beauties. The cycle routes through historical town centres make it possible for cyclists to visit monuments (such as the Coliseum in Rome, the Cathedral in Milan, Palazzo Pitti in Florence, etc.), as well as Italy's most evocative panoramic sites (the Gulf of Naples, the Lagoon of Venice, etc.).

The itineraries are carried out using as many territorial resources as possible (secondary roads and natural channels, river banks, abandoned railways, parks, etc.) to minimize costs and impact on the environment.

The network covers the entire national territory, including numerous cities of great historical importance, and passes through characteristic natural and landscaped beauties etc. for an ideal, healthy route in the “green” outdoors.

The project which involves roles and responsibilities for the local authorities for the building and management of the “Green Route” system also has the objective of disciplining the development of the economic and building activities related to tourism.

The definition of specific urban planning regulations ensures that the construction operations will not compromise the landscape and its resources.

This presentation will describe the network of Italy’s green routes and will illustrate a research project concerning territory management for the realisation of a “Coastal route with Overflows into the sea” (“Via Costiera con i Trabocchi nel mare”), in the Abruzzo region.

The *Via Verde* project along the *Costa dei Trabocchi* is a cycleway-footpath, with a length of about 70 km, to be created along a part of the Adriatic railway line which was put out of service in 2005.

This project provides the opportunity for an ambitious improvement of the Adriatic coastline, especially along the portion of the Abruzzo coastline known as the *Costa dei Trabocchi* (literally, the coastline of the *trabocchi*, which are wonderful, environmentally-sustainable fishing piers and huts on stilts built out into the sea).

The *Via Verde* easily connects a system of Regional Nature Reserves with towns of particular importance in terms of their history, architecture and landscape (Ortona, San Vito Chietino, Rocca San Giovanni, Fossacesia, Torino Di Sangro, Casalbordino, Vasto and San Salvo). The *Via Verde* is also perfectly linked with regional and national motorways, harbours and airports.

The project also includes the development of a comb-shaped structure of “green” routes, with its spine running along the sea and the teeth climbing up the valleys towards the Apennine mountain range. The route is rich with tourist accommodation facilities and restaurants.

This “gentle-green” coastal cycleway-footpath infrastructure will also favour integration and development inland, gently climbing from the sea up to the mountains.

The technical features of the *Via Verde* ensure that it fits in with the surrounding landscape and that it is easy to recognise the original railway infrastructure, which was constructed, at its time, to link together the most important towns along the coastline.

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