

LIMES – Older than the Way of St. James

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1 ABSTRACT

Like the ancient Limes, the Way of St. James connects various countries and regions in Europe. For many years, the Way of St. James has been a success in the tourism market. However, the Limes – which is considerably older than the Way of St. James and certainly has the same potential – is much less developed and known as far as tourism is concerned. Only some regions in Europe make use of the Limes as a location factor to promote economic development and to keep up with social challenges. They demonstrate multiple opportunities how the Limes can be valued creatively and how these values (i.e. guided tours, events, exhibits, authentic replicas, illuminations, interactive museums, creativity offers) can be communicated. All regions can profit from these experiences.

The LIMES project strives to interconnect the regions along the Limes and promote sustainable tourism in the regions by innovative services and technologies. Creativity will play a central role in the strategic approach to this project.

2 PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This presentation deals with tourism development of the Roman Limes in Europe. It is based on the assumption that, with the Limes, similar tourism development is possible as was experienced with the Way of St. James in the last decades. My views are based on the experiences and results which have, so far, been achieved by the Limes project which is sponsored by the European Commission. Aspects on sustainability, competitiveness and territorial cohesion will also be discussed.

3 THE WAY OF ST. JAMES – AN EXAMPLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURAL ROUTE

The Way of St. James is one of the most well-known long-distance hiking paths in Europe. For more than 1000 years, pilgrims have walked this path to the tomb of the Apostle St. James in the Spanish City of Santiago de Compostela. Mostly, the Way of St. James is considered to be the main route through Northern Spain, the so-called “Camino Frances”. This route goes from Saint Jean Pied de Port through the Pyrenees, then traverses the north of Spain near Pamplona, Burgos, Leon and Astorga all the way to Santiago. However, it is not only this main route which is referred to as the Way of St. James; also all pilgrims’ paths whose destination is the tomb of the Apostle James in Santiago de Compostela are also referred to by that name. There are Ways of St. James in Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, France, Spain and Portugal. Together, they form a Europe-wide network of main and side routes which connect throughout Europe (ref. figure 1).

It is not just the European dimension which makes the Way of St. James so interesting in the touristic development of the Limes; it is also the successful activities carried out in the past decades in the revitalization of the Way of St. James. The following facts are cited as examples:

- In 1962 the main route, Camino Frances, was officially declared as a historic-artistic ensemble.
- In 1984 the European Council pronounced the Way of St. Frances as a European Cultural Route and declared its protection as a major goal of European cultural policy.
- In 1993 the Camino Frances in Spain and, in 1998, the four main Ways of St. James in France were incorporated into the list of UNESCO world heritage sites.
- In 2005 the transnational cooperation project “European Ways of St. James” was begun. The reactivation of the Way of St. James network was thus expanded to other countries. An internet homepage (www.jakobsweg.net) was established as a central platform in order to facilitate the exchange of communication and information.

These and other activities have resulted in a considerable increase in the number of pilgrims. In the last 10 years, more than 2 million pilgrims (possibly many more) from all continents hiked the Way of St. James

and made use of the multiple services and products along the way, thereby contributing to the economic development of cities and regions.

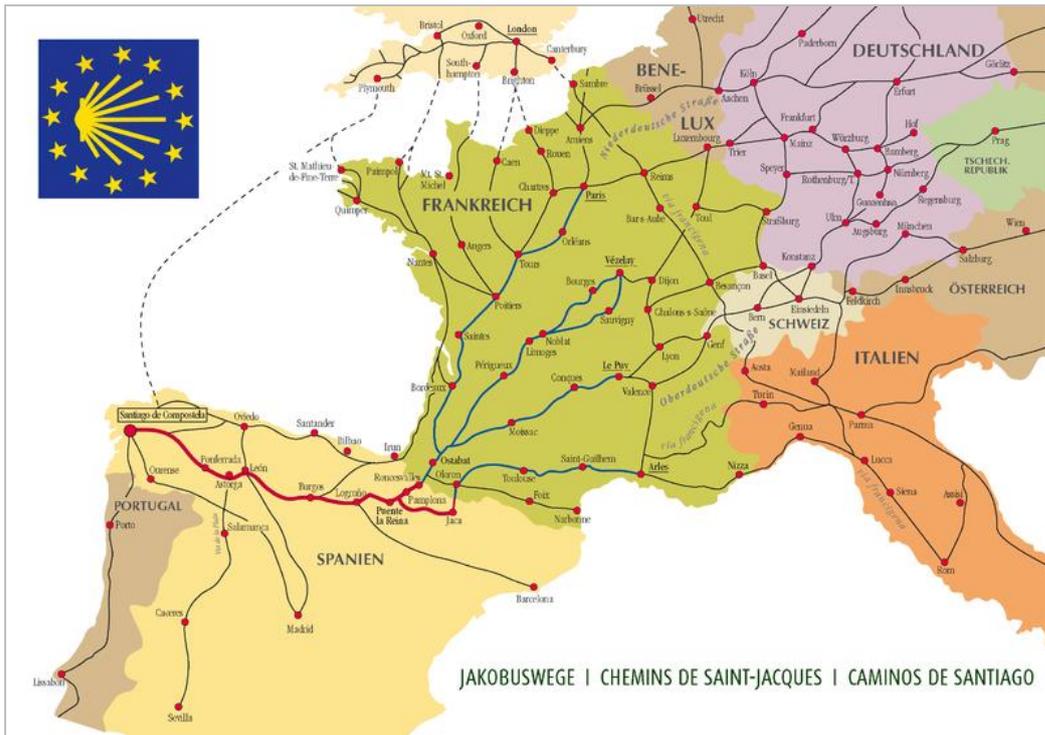


Fig. 1: Ways of St. James in Europe (Source Wikipedia)

4 THE LIMES IN EUROPE

4.1 The Limes Route

Unlike the net-like formation of the Way of St. James, the Limes has a linear shape. At the time of the largest expansion of the Roman Empire under Emperor Trajan (99 till 117 A.D.) the Limes ran from the Atlantic coast in the north of England through Central Europe to the Black Sea, from there to the Red Sea and through Northern Africa to the Atlantic coast. In Europe alone, the Limes was more than 3,500 kilometers long. It was secured in its entirety by a chain of watchtowers as well as small and large castles. Rivers like the Rhine and the Danube as well as mountains formed natural borders. In places where there were no such natural barriers, the Romans secured the borders of their empire with palisades and walls. The Roman border facilities served as a military “early warning system” and were supposed to ensure control of the daily traffic of people and goods with neighboring tribes. The economy was booming along the Limes. The land was cultivated. Roads and cities were built.

Today, the Limes passes through 10 European countries (Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria) – see figure 2.

4.2 Requirements for the Touristic Development of the Limes

Compared to the Way of St. James, tourism development of the Roman Limes is in its infancy. There are, however, some countries which have initiated regional selective attempts at development. But there are also countries where there are no attempts whatsoever to utilize the Limes for tourism development. In the past years, cooperation at European level was essentially limited to the specialized area of archeology and tourism was not considered.

Why is it that the Roman Limes, which is 1000 years older, could experience the same successful touristic development as the Way of St. James?

Let me first describe the natural and cultural potentials.

In many places, original structures of the Limes (walls and trenches, ruins of watchtowers or castles) still exist and can be experienced as such (Schaffranski 2010, www.vici.org, Vujovic 2008). Measures have been

taken to utilize some sections for tourism. The spectrum of measures taken is so large, that only a few examples are cited here:

- Reconstruction of Limes-related facilities, e.g. castles (The minor castle in Pohl, Saalburg), watchtowers, hot springs and building.
- Performance of Limes-related events (Roman markets, game and sports competitions, illuminations, theater performances, etc.)
- Expansion of gastronomic services along the Limes by including Roman food and drink.
- Improvement of information services, e.g. by building museums and information centers, training tour guides/Limes Cicerones, erecting information boards.



• Fig. 2: The route of the Roman Limes at the time of its greatest expansion around 117 A.D. (Source: LVermGeo Rheinland-Pfalz. GDKE)

Development of hiking and bicycling paths along the Limes.

The Limes sections or locations which experienced tourism development (e.g. Hadrian's Wall in Great Britain, Xanten, the Limes Castles in Pohl and Saalburg in Germany, Carnuntum in Austria) demonstrate that tourism development along the Limes can be promoted significantly by these measures. The deciding factors for success are creativity, cooperation and the focus on a target audience.

Along the Limes in Europe there are many more natural and cultural sights which have not been cohesively compiled and evaluated. It is especially notable that along the Limes there are 20 UNESCO world heritage sites which make the Limes a special cultural route.

Further aspects for initializing opportunities for tourism development are as follows:

- The increasing importance of culture tourism even in rural areas (Drda-Kuehn 2010).
- The inclusion or intended inclusion of the Limes in the UNESCO world heritage site list (so far, the following sections of the Limes in Europe have been included in the world heritage list: Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Walls in Great Britain, the Upper Germanic-Rhaetian Limes in Germany).
- The successful beginnings of touristic marketing of the Limes in several sections of the Limes.
- Eastern and Western Europe are growing together.

For the successful utilization of these development opportunities it is vital that the regions along the Limes cooperate more comprehensively in the future.

5 PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ALONG THE LIMES WITH THE EUROPEAN “LIMES” PROJECT

It is a central goal of LIMES (abbreviation for: Large Scale Innovative and Mobile European Services for Culture Tourism in Rural Areas) to promote culture tourism in the rural regions along the Roman Limes. The major points are as follows

- Economic development of the test regions in Bulgaria, Austria and Germany with innovative services and mobile technologies as a pilot project.
- Promote cooperation at various levels.
- Develop a prototype LIMES App for the 3 partner countries, thus creating the technical basis for the expansion of the information system to all 10 countries along the Limes.

The project includes our partners from Bulgaria, Austria and Germany. The other 7 European countries, which are located along the Limes, are represented in an Advisory Board.

Promoting sustainable tourism is an ambitious goal of the LIMES project. Sustainable development certainly is the key for the competitiveness of tourist destinations. This means that economic, social, cultural and ecological goals must be coordinated. It is emphasized as EU policy by the Commission’s 2010 communication “Agenda for sustainable and competitive European tourism”. It proposes various principles to achieve the goal of competitive and sustainable tourism (e.g. development with a suitable rhythm, i.e. by considering the specific character of the destination – including all interest groups – utilization and Europe-wide dissemination of available knowledge).

Not all these principles can be considered and implemented in the promotion of sustainable tourism along the Limes in this European LIMES project, which is limited to two years. The focal point of LIMES is the impetus for a joint and coordinated touristic utilization of the Limes by the countries along the Limes. This is expressed in the activities which have, so far, been initiated and which are described as follows.

5.1 Awareness Development

Awareness of the opportunities to promote tourism development by smart phone and tablet mobile services hardly exists, even in tourist organizations and enterprises. That is why it became necessary to develop awareness. In addition, it was our goal to make people aware that a Europe-wide touristic development of the Limes presents opportunities which do not occur in regional development and which should be utilized accordingly.

At the same time, the goal of these activities was to energize development forces at regional level, to mobilize potential and to promote cooperation.

Various events were hosted in the test regions along the Limes. In our own LIMES newsletters, newsletters and journals of other organizations as well as media releases information was provided about the LIMES Project and the development opportunities it provided.

In summary, it can be said that, based on our activities, the interest to use new technologies for the promotion of tourism, to cooperate on a European level and to learn from each other has obviously grown significantly.

5.2 Cooperation on Various Levels

Measures to promote cooperation were used for the entire European level, the regional level as well as for the cooperation between regional actors, organizations and enterprises.

In order to improve cooperation at European level, the LIMES Project partners participated in and contributed to a series of international events in Europe. The cooperation between the partners from Bulgaria, Austria and Germany is close. The Advisory Board, which contains representatives from the other 7 countries along the Limes, is regularly informed about the progress and results of the project. The European cooperation has made LIMES known internationally and has provided many impulses for tourism development in the regions.

At the regional level, measures were taken to improve cooperation between regional community administrations, tourism organizations, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce and

industry, as well as other organizations with a view towards tourism development of the Limes region. In Rheinland-Pfalz these activities were geared toward concrete projects, e.g. developing a market strategy for the Limes region, improving the sign-posting of the Limes hiking path and implementing an organization for the development of the Limes region. The willingness for cooperation in this rural area is very high. It is the basis for improving competitiveness and cohesion in the Limes region.

A high value was put on the cooperation between regional actors, organizations and enterprises. In Rheinland-Pfalz, information events and workshops were held in cooperation with the chamber of industry and commerce. In addition, the actors were directly approached via a so-called Limes tour. This resulted in co-operations within established projects.

5.3 Development of Innovative Services

It is well-known that the life cycle of offers and the change in tourism expectations, which are a factor of societal changes, make it necessary for the competing destinations to continually develop innovative services. This is a challenge for all regions along the Limes. Competition between the regions along the Limes can be favorable for development.

In Rheinland-Pfalz we were successful in developing innovative services in cooperation with businesses, tourist organizations and citizens. In 2013, 90 private hosts will offer 26 new tourist services with 70 events within the “Kreativreisen Limes” program. This will result in revenue of approximately 50,000 Euro for the service providers. The events are aggressively marketed, to include Facebook and internet home pages.

In addition, E-bike tours along the Limes are offered for the first time in the 2013 season. We were able to get 4 service providers to offer a total of 12 interesting E-bike tours.

5.4 Developing a LIMES App

The LIMES App, which is intended as a prototype within the framework of the LIMES project, is very important for tourism development and competitiveness of the regions along the Limes. For the first time, the entire Limes in Europe is the focus of tourist development. In addition to information about the Limes, the App will contain important information on tourist services along the Limes, to include the innovative services which were developed jointly by the regions. Initially, the App will only apply to the test regions, but all regions and countries along the Limes will be included in the future.

6 CONCLUSION

Europe is one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the world. Accordingly, tourism is an important economic factor in Europe. It contributes significantly to economic growth and job creation.

Like the Way of St. James, the Limes can become an outstanding European destination. The conditions for the development of sustainable and competitive cultural tourism along the Limes exist. We must now use and combine the potentials. Tourism trends have to be acted upon in a creative and anticipatory manner.

In all European countries along the Limes there is a willingness for tourism development of the Limes and to utilize new technologies in the process. The development of the LIMES App within the framework of the European LIMES Project makes an important contribution to develop and market the European Limes as a whole. The formation of a Limes Alliance is sought for the development of the Limes as a European cultural route.

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