vinetur

Italy Unites Five Pilgrimage Routes Around Rome

The project aims to spread visitors beyond crowded landmarks by linking historic walking paths, digital tools and local heritage in Lazio.

Monday, May 25, 2026



Italy is moving to knit together five historic pilgrimage routes into a single tourism and culture system centered on Lazio and Rome, in an effort to spread visitor flows beyond the country’s best-known sites and strengthen travel tied to walking, religion and local heritage.

The project, called Antichi Cammini d’Italia, brings together the Via Francigena, the Way of St. Francis, the Way of St. Benedict, the Romea Strata and the Via Romea Germanica. The routes cross different parts of Italy but converge in Lazio, where organizers say the region becomes the experiential core of the initiative, from Tuscia in the province of Viterbo to the Holy Valley of Rieti, the Aniene Valley and Rome.

Three of the five routes are already certified as Cultural Routes by the Council of Europe: the Via Francigena since 1994, the Via Romea Germanica since 2020 and the Romea Strata since June 17, 2025. The other two, linked to the spiritual legacy of St. Francis and St. Benedict, lead travelers to places central to Franciscan and Benedictine history, including Rieti, Subiaco and Montecassino.

Officials behind the project say it is meant to answer a shift in travel habits toward slower, more authentic and more sustainable trips. They also want to ease pressure on crowded destinations by drawing visitors into lesser-known areas and by encouraging travel outside peak seasons. The target audience includes pilgrims, hikers, cultural travelers, outdoor enthusiasts, wellness seekers, families and visitors looking for closer contact with local communities.

A major part of the initiative is a digital layer built around Italy’s national tourism platform, Italia.it. Along the five routes, 60 smart devices provide free Wi-Fi and Bluetooth Low Energy beacon technology linked to the app. When travelers enter range, they receive push notifications with route information, geolocated maps, points of interest and multimedia content about historical, artistic, religious and landscape sites nearby.

The project has also produced more than 1,000 information sheets on churches, monuments, natural areas, squares, fountains and other landmarks along the routes. Organizers say more than 40% of those sites belong to high-value heritage that has not yet been widely included in international tourism circuits.

To make parts of the project accessible to a broader public, seven bus itineraries have been created for Lazio. Five follow sections of the Via Francigena, the Way of St. Francis, the Way of St. Benedict, the Romea Strata and the Via Romea Germanica in the region. Two others focus on Rome itself: Roma Futura traces 20th-century and

contemporary architecture from Zaha Hadid to Renzo Piano, including Foro Italico, EUR and Fuksas's Nuvola; Chiese del Terzo Millennio highlights new sacred architecture in the capital.

The bus tours are free with registration on Italia.it and include sensory experiences on board, storytelling by performers, tastings of local products and a gift for each participant. The program is aimed not only at tourism professionals but at a wider public.

Promotion is being carried out in Italy and abroad with an eye toward positioning the country more firmly in slow, cultural and sustainable tourism markets. Target countries include Argentina and other parts of Latin America as well as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Britain, Spain, Switzerland and the United States.

The campaign includes press trips for Italian and international journalists so they can experience sections of Lazio firsthand. It also includes influencer campaigns in target markets and a mix of digital and print materials distributed across multiple platforms. The project is financed by the European Union through Next Generation EU under Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan.