

VIA PODENSIS IN LE PUY-EN-VELAY (FRANCE)

The Via Podiensis which starts from le Puy-en-Velay is one of the four main routes (it was described as early as the twelfth century) to join the Spanish sanctuary of Santiago de Compostela. From the whole Christendom, pilgrims came to venerate the relics of the apostle of Christ who was martyred in 44 AD in Palestine, whose corpse was miraculously brought to the land of Galicia.

Since the fifth century, le Puy has already been a Marian sanctuary which was highly frequented and whose fame and message spread all over Europe. In the tenth century, the bishop Gothescalc, known as the first pilgrim to Santiago created closer links with le Puy. In 962, to reinforce this idea, a chapel dedicated to Saint-Michel was built on the volcanic rock in Aiguilhe. Through the following centuries, the influence of le Puy has been increasing attracting millions of pilgrims who come to pray the statue of the Black Virgin. Then some of them would start a pilgrimage of 1600 km during several months towards Santiago. It is precisely this dual migration which still represents today a specificity of the sanctuary and the route of le Puy-en-Velay.



Since December 1998, the Cathedral of Notre-Dame du Puy, the Hôtel-Dieu (general hospital) of the town as well as several parts of the route between le Puy and Ostabat are registered in the World heritage of the Unesco. With the last jubilee years (when the 25 of July falls on a Sunday) there has been some revival of the route. It also corresponds to the needs of some persons who don't walk anymore for religious reasons but because they want to make a break and take time to think. The town had to adapt the delivery of information and for the welcome of pilgrims.

