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## Accessibility on the Santiago Ways: the Portuguese Central Way

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# Accessibility on the Santiago Ways: the Portuguese Central Way

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In this article the authors discuss the accessibility of religious architectural heritage, using the case of Santiago de Compostela and one of its routes: the Portuguese Central Way between Porto and Valença. The discussion includes a comparison with results obtained in a study of the itinerary between Tui and Santiago, made by Xunta de Galicia (2015), the only existing study to the best of our knowledge.

The historical and theoretical framework draws on the extant literature and its critical review, related to religious and cultural tourism, with special emphasis on accessible tourism. Accessible Tourism must comprise a set of products and / or services that offer equal opportunity of use to all citizens, regardless their capacity. The use of good practices in leisure and tourism equipment and services is fundamental, so the tourist supply must be reconfigured to ensure the necessary means for the enjoyment and circulation in different public and private spaces. An empirical study was conducted using the official statistics provided by the Pilgrim's Office of Santiago de Compostela, between 2004 and 2017. The results show an exponential increase of pilgrims / religious and cultural tourists during and after the last Holy Year (2010). The statistical and analytical characterisation of the distinct types of accessibilities to the places of worship and to the shelters, allowed a reflection on the existing ones and the need for transformation of the cultural equipment and pilgrims' hostels located in the studied section of the Santiago Way, in order to make accessible religious tourism for all a reality. The results of this study are identical to the results of a similar study conducted in Galicia. However, in Galicia, the study was carried out by official entities and has already led to the elaboration and implementation of a plan to overcome difficulties and problems related to accessibility. In Portugal there is only the result of the research that we have been developing.

**Key Words:** accessibility, religious tourism, accessible tourism, pilgrim hostels, cultural heritage

## Introduction

As in many other countries, Portugal is a destination with temples, cults and religious festivals, but also a point of passage to other places of worship, such as Santiago de Compostela. Religious tourism presents itself as one of the growing segments, as both an economic activity and movement of people, being considered strategic.

When the first pilgrimages began, in the Middle Ages, only devotees came to Santiago, from all social classes. Nowadays, we find all types of pilgrims, whose motivation to visit is highly variable, so that a substantial percentage of walkers do not do it only for religious reasons (43.46%), but religious-cultural (47.39%), cultural (9.15%) or other, according to the

data of 2017 of the **Pilgrim's Office** of Santiago de Compostela.

According to Dias (2010), the most visible relationship between tourism and religion lies in the large number of sacred buildings of significant tourist interest and the intention to visit them. Religious tourism, which

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can be understood as an activity developed by citizens who travel for religious reasons or to participate in religious events, represents an interesting opportunity for the development of tourist activities. According to Robles (2001), this type of tourist is more loyal to the visited destination than the traditional tourist, repeating visits more frequently than others.

In the context of religious tourism this research is focused on accessibility issues that generate a new type of tourism – accessible tourism. In this sense, the foundation of our research, in methodological terms, was accomplished through the identification, collection

and critical review of the few existing works, both regarding religious and cultural tourism and accessible tourism. At the same time the authors undertook a statistical analysis of the official data provided by the **Pilgrim's Office** of Santiago de Compostela in order to characterise pilgrims.

Moreover, primary data were collected. Three different record sheets were elaborated and applied in field work characterising the different types of accessibility to religious architectural heritage, places of worship and hostels. Analysis was undertaken in thirty-four monuments and eleven pilgrim hostels (official and private), after which the statistical and analytical

Figure 1. Route of the Central Way between Porto and Santiago de Compostela.



The Way in Portugal with identification of distances (approximate), orographic profile and location of official pilgrim hostels.

processing of the results was carried out. The accessibility issues of the section of the way between Porto and Valença (about 127 kms) were also studied *in situ*. By comparison, the results of our study were analysed with those related to the Spanish way, as well as the implementation of solutions in Galicia.

### Some Elements On The Central Way

The Way of Santiago earned its place in history books twelve centuries ago when, according to legend, the remains of the apostle St. James or Santiago, were found in what is now the city of Santiago de Compostela (Moreno, 1992).

The several ways of Santiago are followed by pilgrims who have been travelling to Santiago de Compostela since the 9<sup>th</sup> century. These ways spread throughout Europe and connect to various Spanish ones, the most recognized being the French Way, which absorbs most of the ways coming from the European continent and goes to Santiago by crossing the northeast of Spain. There are other trails, also well-known, from Portugal, southern Spain and northern Europe by sea (Moreno, 1986).

The Way of Santiago developed substantially in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and later after the Counter-Reformation, in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, in recent decades it has once again gained importance, becoming a primary spiritual and cultural itinerary (Pombo, 2007). Every Holy Year or Jacobean Year, its development exceeds expectations. The Holy Years take place when the day of Santiago (July 25<sup>th</sup>) falls on a Sunday (this happens following a pattern of six, five, six and eleven years), the next year being 2021 (Balasch Blanch and Ruiz Arranz, 2013).

In Portugal, since independence, in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Jacobean pilgrimage has intensified. Most of the Portuguese trails meet in Valença, where the border is crossed to Tui and, from there the trail extends for about 110 kilometres to Santiago de Compostela.

The Portuguese Way is divided into three major routes: the *Caminho Português da Costa*, *Caminho Português Interior* and the *Caminho Português Central*. In recent years this latter route via Lisbon / Coimbra / Porto / Rates / Barcelos / Ponte de Lima / Paredes de Coura / Valença - the medieval or central way - has gained

**Table 1: Central Way start locations and pilgrim's statistics**

Years	Porto	Rates	Barcelos	Ponte de Lima	Valença	Rest of Portugal	Total from Portugal
<b>2004 – Holy Year</b>	852	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,594	1,566	<b>4,012</b>
<b>2005</b>	740	n.a.	n.a.	323	1,102	622	<b>2,787</b>
<b>2006</b>	1,125	n.a.	n.a.	410	1,336	1,127	<b>3,998</b>
<b>2007</b>	1,763	n.a.	n.a.	375	1,454	1,523	<b>5,553</b>
<b>2008</b>	2,503	n.a.	n.a.	408	1,188	1,764	<b>6,577</b>
<b>2009</b>	3,236	n.a.	n.a.	456	1,686	1,935	<b>8,211</b>
<b>2010 - Holy Year</b>	5,694	n.a.	n.a.	709	3,931	3,359	<b>15,129</b>
<b>2011</b>	6,539	n.a.	n.a.	828	2,815	3,236	<b>14,712</b>
<b>2012</b>	7,641	343	245	901	3,097	3,568	<b>17,749</b>
<b>2013</b>	8,859	635	544	966	4,380	3,201	<b>20,719</b>
<b>2014</b>	10,641	531	542	1,315	4,553	4,151	<b>24,603</b>
<b>2015</b>	13,201	765	609	1,564	5,706	4,562	<b>30,525</b>
<b>2016</b>	17,726	494	738	1,880	6,773	4,499	<b>36,824</b>
<b>2017</b>	22,335	458	721	1,870	6,982	4,811	<b>37,177</b>

Source of data: own elaboration from Pilgrim's Office statistics.



importance as the main Portuguese way and is the most travelled (Gil and Rodrigues, 2000). It is also where the other trails meet, making this route the backbone of the Portuguese Ways of Santiago.

This Central Way is the target of the fieldwork in this research. More precisely, the analysis was conducted from Porto, comprising about 127 kms of trail in Portuguese territory. Figure 1 shows the studied trail, where the approximate distances and the studied hostels are referred to (Silva and Borges, 2018).

This is considered a difficult trail, conditioned by the orography of the territory that crosses, from a south to north direction (part of the Douro Litoral, Minho and Alto-Minho), presenting some difficulty for those travelling on foot.

In terms of accessible information, the roads are marked by yellow arrows (or scallops of several types and supports, as a result of various signalling programs under various financing projects) on the ground, walls, stones, guideposts, trees, roads, granite or cement trail marks, among others. The pilgrims are identified primarily through the iconography of a scallop, among other diverse symbols.

According to the statistics (Table 1), the main starting point of the Way is the city of Porto, which has seen a significant growth in recent years. These data allow us to infer that the increase of tourism in the city of Porto, resulting from several factors, is related to the significant increase in the number of pilgrims and places of accommodation, pilgrim hostels or other facilities associated with the Way, which can be seen in the opening dates of hostels.

The provision of accommodation adapted to the needs of pilgrims has encouraged a substantial number of pilgrims to begin their journey in Porto. Until 2015 there were more pilgrims beginning their journey in Tui, however, since 2016, the number of pilgrims leaving Porto has surpassed those who begin in Tui. Also, Ponte de Lima and Valença have seen the number of pilgrims increase, growing the numbers undertaking pilgrimages on the Central Way.

### **Concepts and realities: accessibility and accessible tourism**

The concept of accessibility is usually characterised by physical and architectural aspects - space accessibility - but, from our point of view, it goes much further, as it

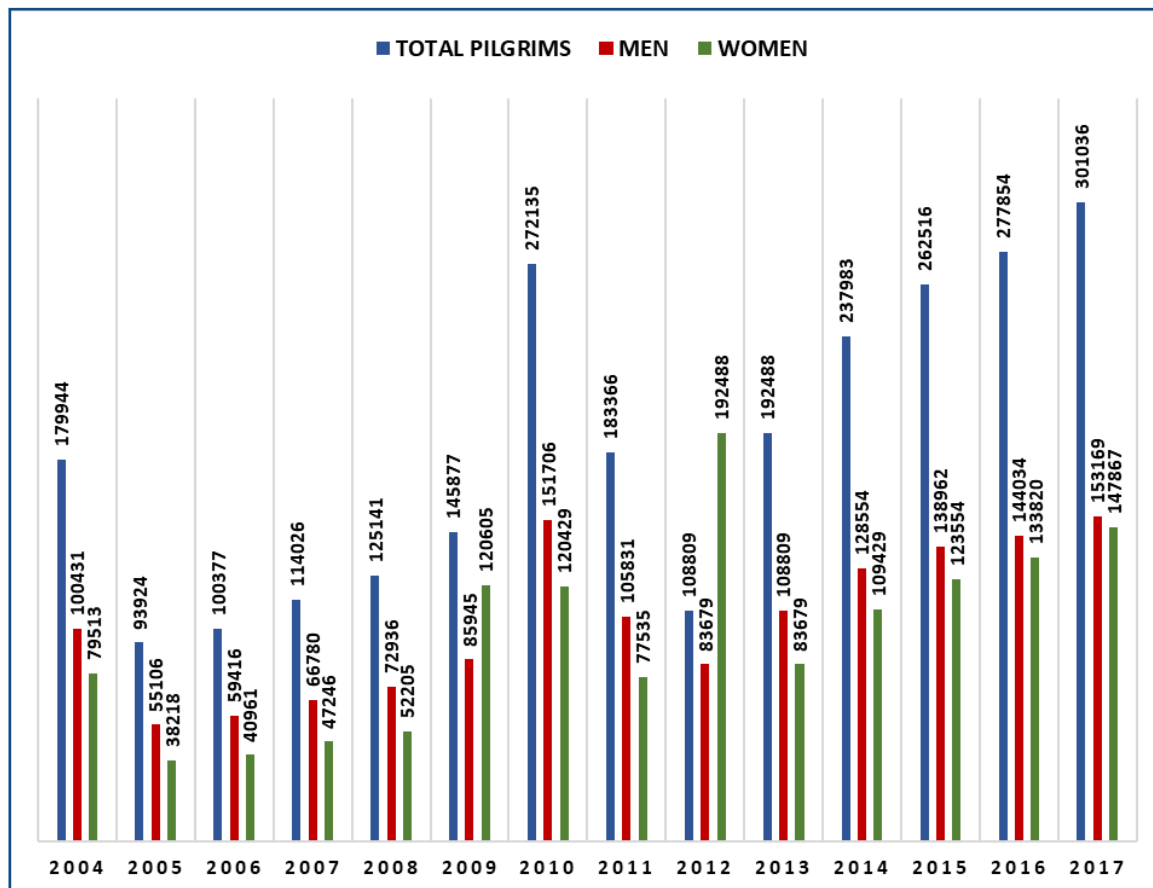
also concerns, above all, the accessibility of information, social, intellectual and emotional components. Therefore, accessibility refers not only to people with disabilities, but concerns all of us, given the diversity and human limitations that characterise us in distinct phases of life, in a temporary or permanent way (Silva, 2015). It means that all people, with or without special needs, must be able to participate in all activities that include the use of products, services or information.

Accessibility presupposes, in this broad concept, elements as varied as: clarity in access information (signage, for example); physical and architectural aspects with different adaptations; various levels of information and several ways of communicating, based on several aspects such as cognitive and intellectual aspects, and; distinct phases of life of each type of public (Silva and Borges, 2018). It is therefore imperative to investigate and to survey all types of barriers that can be in place - sensorial, intellectual, as well as physical, so that solutions can be identified with full responses to improve inclusive tourism; making it a reality in which people can live independently, being able to access the physical environment, transportation, information and communication (including information technologies, communication and systems) in an equal way, and other facilities and services provided to the public in both urban and rural areas (Takayama Declaration, 2009).

Accessible Tourism, Universal Tourism, Inclusive Tourism or Barrier-Free Tourism can also be defined as tourism and travel accessible to all people, disabled or not, who may present temporary or permanent limitations concerning mobility, hearing, sight, cognitive, intellectual or psychosocial limitations (Takayama Declaration, 2009). It includes *all people including those travelling with children in prams, people with disabilities and seniors* (Darcy and Dickson, 2009: 34).

Accessible Tourism is a broad concept. It is a type of sustainable management associated with a way of thinking, planning and managing a specific destination, region or place. An accessible destination should allow all visitors, without exception, to enjoy and use equipment and services, without restrictions or constraints, in an equitable way. According to the European Commission, the goal of Accessible Tourism is to make access easier so that everyone can enjoy the experiences.

Figure 2 - Statistics of pilgrims from Pilgrim's Office between 2004 and 2017.



As mentioned by the UNWTO (2016) and as a conclusion of different definitions, we can say that the concept of Accessible Tourism has evolved from

*the idea of accommodation or adaptation so that people with disabilities can participate in tourism towards a concept of quality tourism for all, understanding that accessibility is an important part of that quality.*

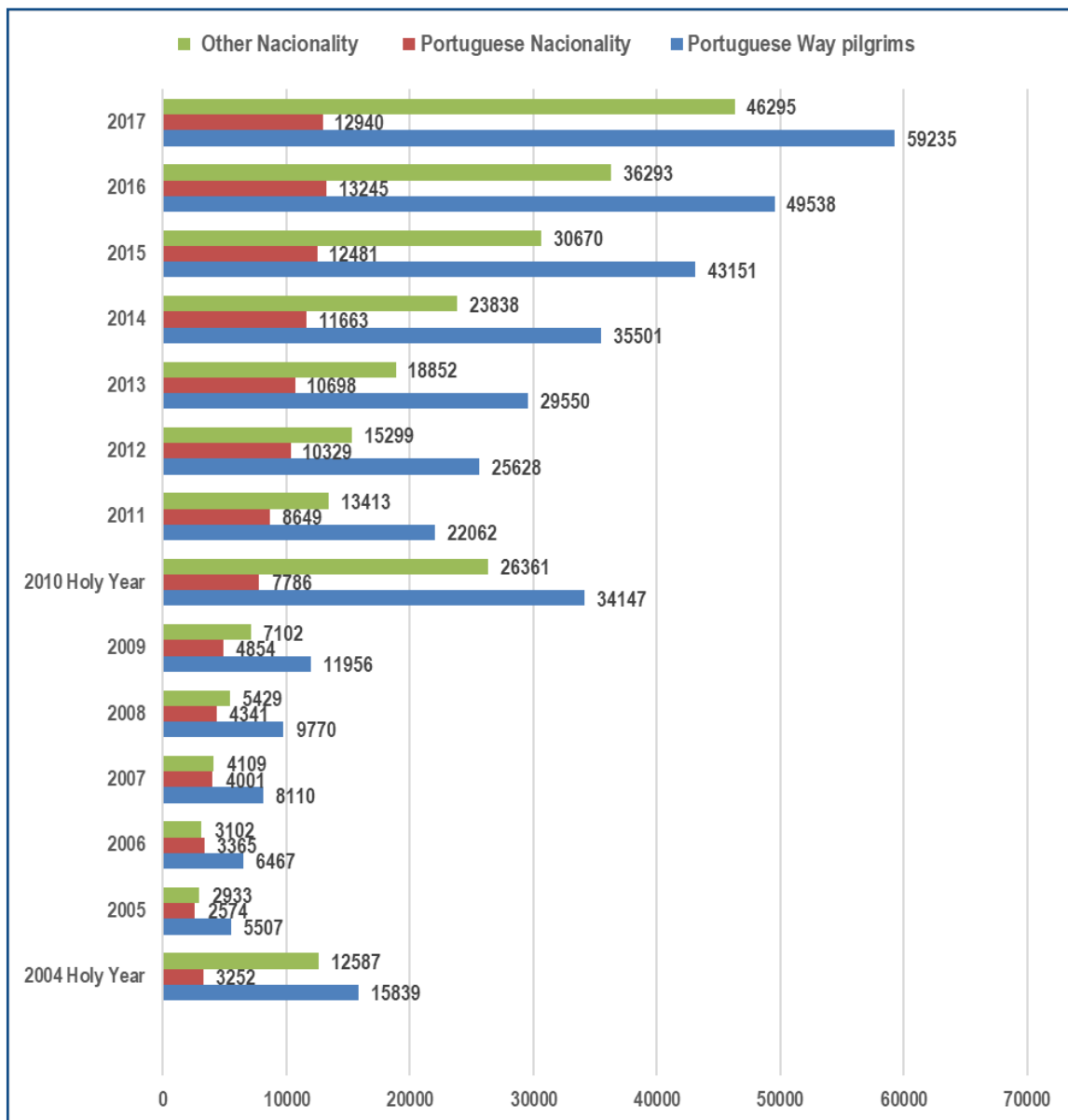
This area of investigation is very recent, with very little research produced and published, despite interest in the subject. Manuals (Ambrose; Garcia; Papamichail and Veitch, 2017) and guides of good practices (Mineiro, 2017) have recently been published by the cultural heritage entities or Turismo de Portugal (*Guide to Good Practices in Hotel Accessibility*, 2012; *Manual on Management of Accessible Tourist Destinations*, 2016; *Guide to Good Practices of Accessibility: Inclusive Communication in Museums, Palaces and Monuments*, 2017). These industry guidelines provide concrete advice to support tourism managers working on the issue of accessibility and inclusion in the development and management strategies of their destinations, adding a new competitive dimension to their offer.

However, in Portugal, there is no strategic planning in the sense of adapting and valuing the architectural heritage related to the Santiago Way and its transformation into an accessible itinerary as in Galicia. One of the major problems in Portugal is the absence of an official and over-arching management entity regarding the routes to Santiago.

In the Spanish plan named *Master and Strategic Plan of the Way of St. James in Galicia 2015-2021* one of the priority actions is to integrate methods and criteria of accessibility in the treatment of the Santiago Way, in both access to its heritage and in supporting the pilgrim who wishes to undertake the Way, by providing an adapted space for all participants.

Planning and implementing more accessible tourism is not only a social responsibility, but also a way to increase the competitiveness of tourism in Europe. It is a fact that accessible tourism contributes to the social, environmental and economic sustainability of destinations, and has a positive impact on the local community. Regarding Portugal, our main markets like the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Spain have more than 10 million people with special

**Figure 3. Data from Portuguese nationality pilgrims vs. total values of the Portuguese Way.**



Source of data: Authors' elaboration from Pilgrim's Office statistics.

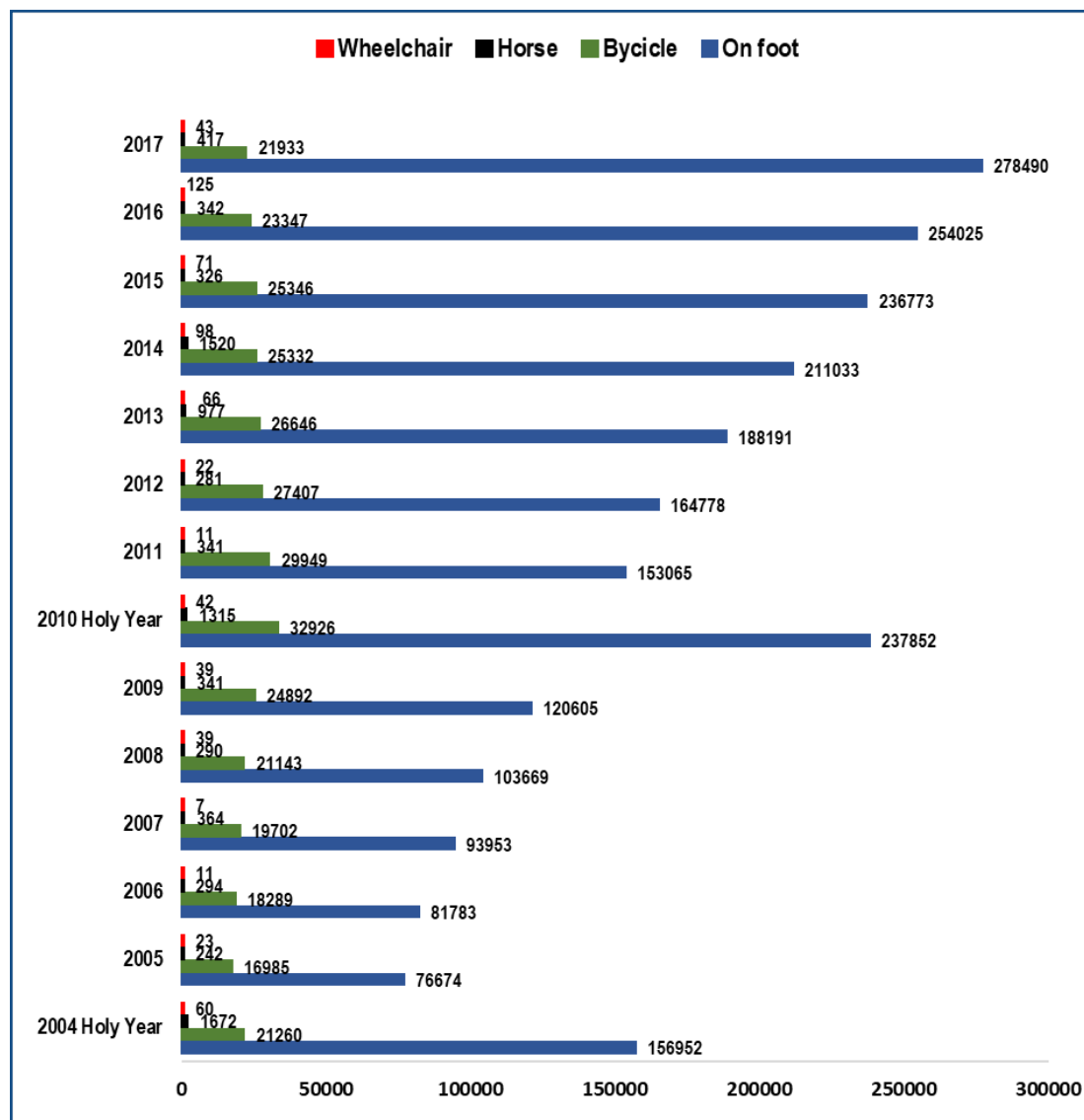
accessibility needs. Turismo de Portugal's effort is reflected in the new program *All for All - Portuguese tourism (Turismo Acessível)*, a Platform and Mobile Application (Android and iOS) for information and dissemination of the Accessible Tourism Offer in Portugal - based on an existing product which is also in the process of improvement, *Tur4All Spain*.

Tourism as an economic, social and cultural factor is becoming increasingly relevant, which obliges us to offer more and better accessibility options, to facilitate tourism with all and for all, even if we consider that total accessibility is utopian and unattainable.

### Statistical analysis of pilgrims on the Central Way

Among the scarce statistical data available and disseminated regularly on pilgrims on the Way of Santiago, stand out the monthly published data of the **Pilgrim's Office** in Santiago de Compostela. There have only been official statistics since the Holy Year, of 2004, so the processing and analysis of the data we carried out is for fourteen years (between 2004 and 2017). These figures only reflect the pilgrims who travelled to the **Pilgrim's Office** to receive the *Compostela*, and it is believed that this represents only about a one-third of the total. However, there are no reliable statistics for the thousands of tourists and

Figure 4. Means of travel of the Santiago Way.



Source of data: Authors' elaboration from Pilgrim's Office statistics.

visitors, pilgrims or not, who travel to Santiago annually by motorised means of transport (bus, car, plane, train) and who, of course, have different needs in terms of accessibility.

When commemorating a Holy Year, the number of pilgrims registered at the **Pilgrim's Office** surpass all expectations, as shown in Figure 2, especially in 2004 and 2010. However, this growth has been even more significant in recent years, with 2016 exceeding those registered in the Holy Years.

In general, there is a substantial increase in the number of pilgrims, of all nationalities, led by the Spanish. Since 2017, Portugal represents the fourth largest market of pilgrims, having exceeded France. Ireland

has also experienced exponential growth, overtaking the United Kingdom as sixth largest market.

Regarding the Portuguese Way to Santiago, as seen in Figure 3 the number of pilgrims grew and in fact doubled between 2011 and 2017. In fact, 2011 is the turning point in the growth of Portuguese who participate in the pilgrimage. As a matter of fact, according to the statistics of the **Pilgrim's Office**, in 2011 the Portuguese Way was undertaken by about 22 thousand pilgrims, a number that in 2017 exceeded 59 thousand pilgrims.

While the 2018 statistical data are not yet complete, we can already see that the first 10 months of the year exceeded the 2017 figures regarding the pilgrims who made the Portuguese Way to Santiago. Thus, the



Central Way, until late October 2018 had been undertaken by 66,002 pilgrims, adding those who travel the Coastal Way (13,489) makes a total of 79,491. This compares with a total of 59.235 pilgrims in 2017 and, this is not the final annual statistical data but the first ten months, thus, the Portuguese Way had a growth of at least 20,000 pilgrims, during 2018.

From the analysis of Figure 4 we observe that the most used forms of travel are on foot or by bicycle; yet, there is some evidence for the use of a wheelchair. However, there is no information about which means of travel used in each of the Ways.

### **Accessibility to religious architectural heritage and pilgrim hostels**

Through intensive research and trips to places along a section of the Central Way to Santiago, between Porto and Valença, thirty-four places of worship and eleven hostels were studied, in terms of accessibility and characterisation of buildings, as well as rehabilitation processes.

The selection of places of worship (churches, monasteries and chapels) was based on an assessment of their relevance in terms of visits, taking into account different motivations, namely heritage, cultural, religious or pilgrimage. We highlight churches that had their foundation in medieval times, of Romanesque style, built by devotion and spiritual needs of the populations, but also as welcoming centres and shelters of the pilgrims who had already travelled towards Santiago de Compostela, according to table 2A and B. Advancing in time and in aesthetic taste we mainly studied Rural Baroque churches, typical of the Baroque Rural, and some recent churches of neoclassical taste. Among the few contemporary churches found along the way, we focused on the one from the Padrão da Légua in Senhora da Hora in Matosinhos, dating from 1968, which replaces the old one from the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Nossa Senhora da Hora Chapel), which still exists. The consideration of churches from different periods aims to understand if accessibility issues have improved when comparing churches from different periods, a fact that has not yet been proven.

The accessibility survey was very broad, since this research considers varied perspectives of accessible tourism, as mentioned above. The diagnostic sheets considered a great diversity of elements for exploring the accessibility of places of worship, both internally and externally. It is a very complete and detailed tool and therefore its treatment implies a careful and time-

consuming analysis. The tables we present below are a summary of the field work results.

Regarding physical accessibility, giving priority to the interior of the temples, all elements such as pavement, handrails, types of stairs, ramps, elevators, doors, and existing standards were analysed in terms of regulatory measures. Information provision is also analysed under the most diverse prisms and the ways in which it is presented to the public: in paper, multimedia, braille, audio, visual or tactile.

In terms of external physical accessibility and parking spaces for people with special needs, these exist only in the Romanesque Church of Cedofeita, in Porto. In terms of access inside the sites, gaps are not marked in any of them and ramps only exist in nine out of the thirty-four studied, being examples of recent improvement solutions. However, sometimes we found frequent ramps in churchyards or even in the external accesses of hostels, but often followed by a flight of stairs, especially in the last case. In the main access doors, the existence of ramps is not usual, sometimes they can only be found on lateral doors.

Adapted doors and corridors, with adjusted dimensions, for example for the passage of a wheelchair, and other accesses of regulatory width also have a very low occurrence. Regarding adequate natural or artificial lighting, there is a concern for sufficient lighting in at least nineteen churches.

Regarding internal and / or external information on the sites or the provision of timetables, this element shows better results, especially in the centres of the cities or towns. Most include historical elements on the religious architectural heritage of the place or even a building plan, as is the case in Matriz of Valença. However, the existence of orientation plans or other types of guidance are very deficient.

Typically, the written information is readable and comprehensible, but the characters are small in size and difficult to read. No importance has been given to audio information, audio guides or Braille, either, for the visually impaired or the amblyopic. Only the Clérigos Church, in Porto, has multimedia facilitators and adapted bathrooms.

Exhibition sites associated with the pilgrimage are an attractive element for all types of public, however, these only exist in some churches in the city of Porto and in the Main Church of Barcelos. There is an auditorium in the recently built Padrão da Légua

Table 2A : Accessibility of places of worship between Porto and Valença

Place Of Worship	Parking	Access Interior					Information Interior And Exterior							Adapted Toilet	Exhibition Location And / Or Store	
	Parking Places People With Special Needs	Marked Gaps	Ramps	Adapted Doors And Adjusted Dimensions	Corridors And Other Accesses With Regulatory Width	Sufficient Lighting	Local Information	Timetable	Signage Guidance	Orientation Plants	Writing Readable/Understandable	Audio Information	Braille			Multimedia
Sé Catedral do Porto	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y
Igreja da Misericórdia do Porto	N	N	N	N	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y
Igreja dos Clérigos, Porto	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Igreja Carmelitas Descalços, Porto	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja da Venerável Ordem Terceira do Carmo, Porto	N	N	N	N	-	Y	Y	Y	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Românica de S. Martinho de Cedofeita, Porto	Y	N	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Capela da Ramada Alta, Porto	N	N	N	N	-	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja do Sagrado Coração de Jesus do Carvalhido, Porto	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja do Padrão da Légua, Sª Hora, Matosinhos	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Mosteiro de Leça do Bailio, Matosinhos	N	N	N	N	-	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Mosteiro de S. Salvador de Vairão, Vila do Conde	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Românica de São Pedro de Rates, Póvoa de Varzim	N	N	Y	N	-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Capela de Santo António, Rates	N	N	N	N	-	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Paroquial de Barcelinhos	N	N	Y	N	-	Y	N	Y	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	N
Capela de Nª Sª da Ponte, Barcelinhos	N	N	N	N	-	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Matriz de Barcelos	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Templo do Senhor Bom Jesus da Cruz, Barcelos	N	N	N	N	-	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Igreja de Nª Sª do Terço de Barcelos	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Table 2B : Accessibility of places of worship between Porto and Valença

Place Of Worship	Parking	Access Interior					Information Interior And Exterior							Adapted Toilets	Exhibition Location And / Or Store	
	Parking Places People With Special Needs	Marked Gaps	Ramps	Adapted Doors And Adjusted Dimensions	Corridors And Other Accesses With Regulatory Width	Sufficient Lighting	Local Information	Timetable	Signage Guidance	Orientation Plants	Writing Readable/ Understandable	Audio Information	Braille			Multimedia
Igreja de Santo António Franciscanos Capuchinhos, Barcelos	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Paroquial de Vila Boa	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja de S. Pedro de Fins de Tamel	N	N	Y	N	-	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja e Torre de Manhente, Tamel	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Matriz de Ponte de Lima	N	N	N	N	-	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Santo António da Torre Velha, Além da Ponte, Arcozelo	N	N	Y	N	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Capela Anjo da Guarda, Além da Ponte, Arcozelo	N	N	N	-	-	-	Y	N	-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Capela São Sebastião, Labruja, Ponte de Lima	N	N	N	N	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Capela Nª Sª das Neves, Labruja, Ponte de Lima	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	-	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Românica de Rubiães, Paredes de Coura	N	N	N	N	-	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Capela de S. Bento da Porta Aberta, Cossourado, Paredes de Coura	N	N	N	N	-	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Capela de São Gabriel o Padroeiro, Fontoura, Valença	N	N	N	Y	-	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Capela do Senhor dos Aflitos, Fontoura	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Matriz de Fontoura	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja Matriz de Valença	N	N	N	N	-	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Igreja de Santa Maria dos Anjos, Valença	N	N	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Church, in Senhora da Hora, in Matosinhos and shops in the Cathedral of Porto, in the Church of the Clérigos and in the Monastery of Leça do Bailio.

Pilgrim hostels are fundamental for the pilgrims that go to Santiago, as they provide support in terms of rest and conviviality, at very low prices or even for free (donation is recommended). Pilgrims must have a credential (pilgrim's credentials where they collect stamps along the way); in addition to proof of

travelling on the Way, the credential gives access to official pilgrim hostels. The *Pilgrim's Credential* also allows one to request a *Compostela* at the **Pilgrim's Office**.

The evaluation of accessibility was also carried out at official hostels (see Table 3), which are usually municipal, although hostellers are in most cases voluntary service providers, often as members of

Table 3: Pilgrim Hostels accessibility

Pilgrim Hostels	Initial Function	Parking	Access Interior				Information Interior And Exterior							Adapted Toilet	Rooms For People With Special Needs	
		Parking Places People With Special Needs	Marked Gaps	Ramps	Adapted Doors And Adjusted Dimensions	Corridors And Other Accesses With Regulatory Width	Local Information	Timetable	Signage Guidance	Orientation Plants	Writing Readable/Understandable	Audio Information	Braille			Multimedia
Albergue de Peregrinos do Porto	Old building	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Albergue do Peregrino N <sup>a</sup> S <sup>a</sup> do Rosário de Vilar, Porto	Seminar	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Albergue do Mosteiro de Vairão, Vila do Conde Official pilgrim hostel	Monastery dependencies – College of Nuns	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Albergue de Peregrinos de Rates, Póvoa de Varzim Official pilgrim hostel	Old farm house	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Albergue Cidade de Barcelos	Old building, in the historic centre	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Albergue de Peregrinos “Recoleta”, Tamel, Barcelos Official pilgrim hostel	Hermitage and other functions	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Albergue Residência Senhor do Galo, Barcelos	Historic building	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Albergue Amigos da Montanha	Historic building	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Albergue de Peregrinos Ponte de Lima Official pilgrim hostel	Casa do Arnado, 19 <sup>th</sup> century building	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
Albergue do Peregrino de Rubiães, Paredes de Coura Official pilgrim hostel	Centennial Elementary School	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Albergue de Peregrinos São Teotónio, Valença Official pilgrim hostel	Housing building of judges of the judicial district	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N

associations. We also undertook investigation at a number of private ones.

All the pilgrim hostels (refuges) studied and referred to in Table 3 are buildings which have been rehabilitated and transformed / adapted to their current function, except for the Pilgrims' Hostel in the Seminary of Vilar. These rehabilitation projects were an important

contribution to the safeguarding and preservation of distinct types of architectural heritage and the memory of other times, creating a new dynamic in the places and in the populations where they are located. However, they are not constructions from scratch and so many issues of accessibility and information were left aside.

As in the study of accessibility to places of worship, in our research / fieldwork in relation to hostels, we compiled the data analysed in previously records.

Between 2004, the year of opening of the first official Portuguese pilgrim hostel (the hostel of S. Pedro de Rates), and 2006 there were only three official pilgrim hostels and after 2010 another three more opened. In Porto there is still no official public hostel and a reception centre for pilgrims has recently been inaugurated in an adaptation and rehabilitation of the Chapel of Nossa Senhora das Verdades, near the Cathedral of Porto.

Most pilgrim hostels do not have any physical accessibility modifications. To avoid constraints, they choose to allocate a room on the ground floor, for example, for blind people with guide dogs or other types of disability, as is the case of São Pedro de Rates Hostel.

Since there is only a small percentage of pilgrims with reduced mobility or with some type of disability, pilgrim hostels do not invest in issues related to physical or information accessibility. Exceptions were found in some elements (WC or an adapted room for example) in the hostels of Ponte de Lima and Rubiães, both of which also stand out for offering health technicians prepared to give the necessary support for recovery after the daily journey.

In addition to the mentioned hostels, only six of which are considered official, the others being private, there are many others of different typology that have proliferated in recent years, including Rural Tourism facilities, resulting from the socioeconomic dynamics generated by the thousands of pilgrims from the Central Way in several areas, especially Alto-Minho. Also, several restaurants also show a great dynamism and offer a pilgrim menu, as is done in several places in Spain.

Making a comparison with the case of Galicia we find that the *Tourism accessibility plan of Galicia* includes a special chapter on the Santiago Way. They even consider that the way constitutes one of the main promotional resources of the region. Thus, the aforementioned strategic *Plan of the Santiago Way 2015-2021*, following the *Tourism Accessibility Plan of Galicia* (executive document), in a section called *Accessible Santiago Way*, has, as a priority action, the creation of a tourism offer that suits the needs of all the pilgrims focused on accessible alternative itineraries, monuments and historic heritage establishments, public

and private pilgrim hostels, signage and information. In that study, a total of 1,141 kilometres of the Way were studied, involving 221 pilgrim hostels (69 public and 152 private) and 118 places of tourist interest, mainly related to historical heritage. The authors also analysed signage of the 7 most travelled ways, the available information for pilgrims, as well as the welcome offered by public and private professionals.

The results showed that there is no Way that is totally suitable for people with reduced mobility, since at all stages it would be necessary to help them to continue the itinerary. Moreover, it is not just about physical accessibility, but also about visually impaired people, or people with hearing or intellectual problems.

The biggest problems related to accessibility are centred on the condition / quality of the pavement and safety. In the case of the Portuguese Way, all the sections studied were considered inadequate for accessibility, with 23 being marked as containing significant barriers to accessibility.

Concerning the 221 Spanish shelters, the degree of accessibility is deficient, with only 17 of the studied shelters being completely accessible in physical terms. In the case of sensorial (people with sight or hearing disabilities), there is still a need to make important improvements in the pilgrim hostel network, especially in vertical accesses, in general (with excessive slopes) and in the bathrooms, where there is a severe lack of adaptation. After the suggestions arising from the study, in 2016, 172 hostels have continued without making the necessary adjustments.

In the case of tourist attractions, mainly churches, monuments and convents, they found that the problems are mainly in information and communication, in external spaces and in accesses, which limits or prevents the opportunities to appreciate monuments and other elements of tourist interest, because visitors are unable to access the areas of interest. In this case, and contrary to hostels where there is always public support staff, in about 60% of the places of tourist interest there is no one to explain the contents or provide information. As with hostels, there is a lack of training of professionals for visitors with disabilities or other types of needs.

Accessibility has also been analysed regarding web pages and APPs that also demonstrate serious failures, for example, in terms of languages, audio descriptions, and other aspects.



As far as the signage is concerned, a varied signalling has been noted, which varies according to each stage, but in no case is the signage adequate for the blind. A revision has been made to the *Manual of tourist signalling of Galicia*, in an attempt to establish a unified system.

The operational plan of this study provides for the implementation of a series of measures aimed at raising awareness, training and improving all weaknesses identified, in order to improve the welcoming of pilgrims and to ensure the satisfaction of their needs both physical and spiritual, with the provision of full accessibility.

### Conclusion

The focus of this paper was based on accessible religious tourism, as well as the consideration of historical-cultural elements, in a synthetic space, the geographical route the Santiago Way. To do this, the work analysed the statistical data of the **Pilgrim's Office** between 2004 and 2017, which demonstrates an exponential increase of pilgrims / religious and cultural tourists in the studied Portuguese section of the Way (as well as in the Spanish part) that allows travellers to reach Santiago de Compostela.

After surveying the status of accessibility in places of worship and places of lodging we note the existence of a good identification of the Way with images that the pilgrims can easily interpret, yet these can be very diversified. Hostellers are helpful and concerned about the good stay of pilgrims, in some cases, offering rooms on the lower floor, if they do not have the appropriate setup for people with reduced mobility or certain types of disability.

However, there are several elements that lead us to conclude that there is no accessibility at many levels. Concerning the accessibility of information and communication for people with visual and auditory disabilities, there is a total absence of *braille* texts and / or audio devices.

Often the research noted signs which are damaged or not readable from certain distances. Also, the information in timetables is not clear or does not exist making impossible to gain any information about many of the sites.

Regarding the lack of physical accessibility in the interior, this is clear in irregular routes where there is insufficient width of passageways for wheelchair

access, and many obstacles, namely very steep steps, which do not allow the movement of persons with reduced mobility, or other impairments. There is also a shortage of adapted bathrooms and the lighting of places of worship is poor.

Outside the churches and chapels there is, in some cases, attempts at building ramps, but the absence of parking places reserved for people with reduced mobility or other disabilities is a constant.

Thus, we conclude that there has been no importance placed on the various issues of accessibility to places of worship on the Central Way to Santiago, between Porto and Valença, despite the thousands of pilgrims and cultural / religious tourists who attend these places that are characterised by religious heritage. If we analyse other types of heritage or other type of facility the situation is similar.

In recent years there has been some evolution in the provision of service, in terms of accessibility to heritage and support services for pilgrims located along the Portuguese Central Way to Santiago de Compostela.

We know that the Way increasingly impacts on the tourist industry of the counties it passes through, attracting increasing attention by the municipalities to improve the 'product', both through initiatives and actions of logistical support, and through the dissemination and reinforcement of historical, geographic, heritage and tourism information to pilgrims.

The evolution of lodging has been an important impact, as evidenced in the existence of official and, above all, private hostels that have grown in number, creating an economic and social impact on the populations. The study of the architectural rehabilitation of various historical and architectural spaces that were abandoned and in ruins, now adapted for lodging, has had a significant impact on the populations of this rural world along the way and, of course, on the maintenance and survival of this heritage. Unfortunately, in the various rehabilitation processes, the several adaptations necessary to transform them into accessible facilities were not implemented.

Comparing the research results on the Portuguese Way with those in Galicia, the findings are identical. However, in Galicia, the study was carried out by official authorities, who completed the research and are

moving to have its findings implemented. In Portugal, so far, there is only the result of the research that we have been developing.

As a final reflection we must suggest that accessibility should be strategically considered at an intermunicipal level with a logic of creating accessible Routes / Itineraries that integrate several types of accessible heritage. It is necessary to create accessibility conditions at various levels: in the distinct types of heritage assets and in their surroundings; creating *Design for All*; in means of transportation; in all types of information and communication, including information technology (info accessibility) and; in all aspects of the tourism and hospitality industries.

The strengthening of relationships between different institutional partners and the link with tour operators for the implementation of accessible tourist information in parallel with the dissemination of heritage resources of the regions is fundamental.

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