



# GOOD PRACTICE

## The Portuguese St James Way (De)marketing strategies





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- One of the most iconic pilgrimage routes in Europe.
- The French Way challenges: **overcrowding** and **environmental impact**.



### Objectives of the practice

- Development of the Portuguese Ways of Santiago;
- Redistribution of Pilgrim Flows in the Galician Territory;
- Reducing Regional Asymmetries and Creating New Opportunities.



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- Certification means ensuring safety, signage and cleanliness of the paths.

Caminho Francês	Caminho de Fisterra-Muxía	Via da Prata	Caminho Inglês	Caminho Primitivo
Caminho do Norte	Rota do Mar de Arousa e Rio Ulla	Caminho de Inverno	Caminho Português	Caminho Português da Costa

- These itineraries were recognized for their historical and cultural importance, guaranteeing safety conditions and support equipment for pilgrims traveling the Camino de Santiago in Portuguese territory.



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- Portuguese Way of the Interior (already certified);
- Portuguese Coast Path (already certified);
- Portuguese Way of Central Santiago - Primitive Way (in process);
- Minhoto Ribeiro Path (in process);
- Torres Portuguese Way (in process).



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- St James Way is a mix of culture and tourism and part of a broader context of mass cultural and religious tourism. This route plays a crucial role for the small villages and towns;
- In some areas, the high number of pilgrims puts pressure on local resources;
- Some communities have implemented sustainable initiatives;
- The Camino that covers the most populated area is the Portuguese Coastal Way. It passes through the most populous city in Galicia, Vigo, and the capital of the province, Pontevedra.



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- **The Xacobeo 2021 Strategic Plan** was a guide to organize and evaluate actions during the Holy Year 2021, it was based on values such as hospitality, integration, innovation, decentralization and tradition.
- **The St James Way Master Plan (2022-2027)** is a continuation of the previous plan, which covered the period 2015-2021.

Plan Estratégico  
del Xacobeo 2021



Plan Director de los  
Caminos de Santiago en la  
Comunidad Autónoma de Galicia  
2022 - 2027





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- **2015-2021: 67 million** euros were invested, **19% more** than the budget planned in 2015. Specific promotional actions are planned, aimed at making the Portuguese areas more dynamic.
- **Conservation and maintenance: 33.2 million** euros have been invested.
- **Enhancement of all the pilgrimage routes:** through travelling exhibitions on the different routes of the Camino de Santiago, to promote the culture of the different routes.
- **2022-2027:** involves **governance** and the **development of inter-administrative** and **public-private co-operation** between the entities linked along the Ways.
- The **Portuguese Coastal Way** is one of the most valued in landscape terms;
- The **Portuguese Way** has the attraction of taking in two countries in a very short pilgrimage time.



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### Indicators

- Evolution of the number of pilgrims (2022-2024), according to Oficina do Peregrino:

Caminhos de Santiago	2022	2023	2024
French Way	226.863	219.796	236.379
Portuguese Way	93.195	88.730	95.453
Portuguese Coastal Way	30.607	52.754	74.758

Evolution of the number of pilgrims (2022 vs 2023)	Growth rate (2022 vs 2023)	Evolution of the number of pilgrims (2023 vs 2024)	Growth rate (2023 vs 2024)
-7.067	-3%	16.583	8%
-4.465	-4%	6.723	8%
22.147	72%	22.004	42%





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- The economic impact of the Camino in Galicia is **more than 280 million euros per year**, especially benefiting the hotel and restaurant sectors.
- Many families that previously depended on agriculture found new opportunities, establishing small businesses aimed at pilgrims.
- Culturally, Camino de Santiago generates enormous impacts, as the **“constant flow of tourists revitalizes interest in local history and traditions, leading to the restoration and preservation of churches and monuments along the route”**.



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### Budget / investments

- It was possible to have access to the budget of the Portuguese Coastal Way and Central, as they are certified and TPNP is the managing entity. Of the rest, Caminho do Interior is managed by the Federation and the others are still in the process of creating content, not yet assessing the investment of the municipalities.
- However, trying to estimate investments in the Portuguese Ways to Santiago in recent years, and considering the different sources (regional budgets and cooperation projects - specifically POCTEP) for the two countries they pass through, **the estimated amount for the 3-year total is 7 million euros.**



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### Relevance for polycentric

- Focus on **developing, positioning and promoting the Portuguese Way of Saint James** as an alternative way of attracting pilgrim tourists to the French Way and **redistributing the tourist flows associated with this tourism product.**
- This strategy has helped to **mitigate the negative impacts** of the exponential growth in tourism related to the St James Way by creating a **new ‘centrality’** which, given its own identity, is capable of asserting itself as an alternative to the traditional route (the French Way).
- The Portuguese Way combines heritage, culture, narrative and quality of hospitality which has provided a window of opportunity for the Portuguese tourism sector as well as for the Galician territories crossed by these routes.
- The **Portuguese route** is seen by the Galician authorities as a **way of spreading (creating new tourist permeability and centrality) tourist flows throughout Galicia.**



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### Benefits from polycentric tourism

- **Decentralises Tourism:** instead of overloading a single itinerary (the French Way), flows are redirected to different locations in Galician territory, redirecting the influx of pilgrims towards the Portuguese border to the detriment of the French border, promoting more balanced and sustainable growth.
- **Valorising Less Explored Territories:** Polycentric tourism seeks to integrate less visited areas, allowing smaller towns associated with the different Caminos to receive greater attention and investment, allowing their economy and infrastructures to be enriched.
- **Taking advantage of mass tourism flows and reducing their impact:** Focusing on several tourist centres reduces the negative effects of overcrowding, such as environmental degradation, cultural wear and tear and local discontent, favouring a more harmonious relationship between visitors and local communities.

**and...**



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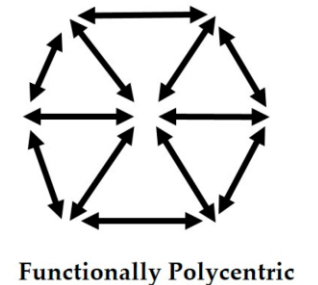
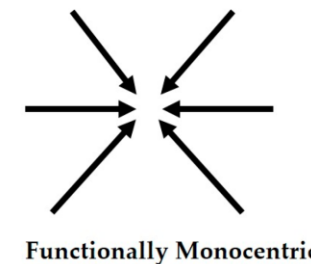
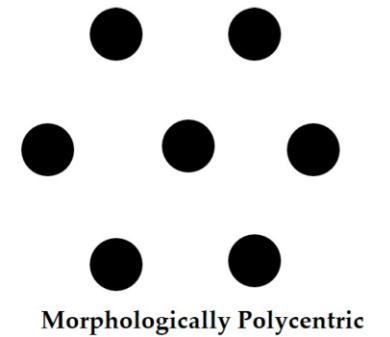
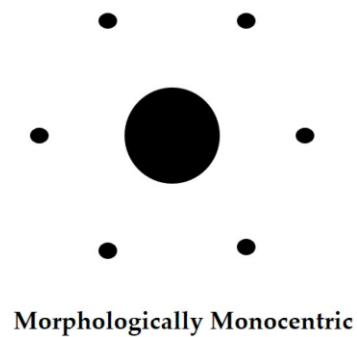
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### Benefits from polycentric tourism

- **Creating destination networks:** Demand and co-operation between different localities strengthens networking for a joint and homogeneous response to the tourist travelling through them.
- **Governance/joint work:** companies, municipalities, pilgrim associations, regions and countries have done a unique job of working together.
- **Leveraging the global visibility established by the French Way,** which was at risk, from a different perspective. In other words, the Portuguese Way has benefited from the groundwork already laid by the French Way.





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### Transferability potential

- **Xacobeo methodology** (a specific St James Way governance body);
- **Certification methodology**, as it can be applied to other realities (that assures the “quality and readiness” of the tourism product and of its resources: accommodation, signage, historical value, etc.);
- **Networking methodology between local authorities** (cross-border cooperation);
- **Dedicated promotion** (e.g. at Sá Carneiro airport tourism office);
- **Strategic priorities** (St James Way almost a “crosscutting issue” which is included in different strategic and planning documents not only in Galicia but also in Portugal and at the cross-border level: RIS 4, regional and national strategic tourism plans, cooperation programmes, Iberian summits);
- **Funding priorities** (the same way, the St James Way development is funded by different calls launch by different bodies: Turismo de Portugal, CCDR-N, Interreg, etc.);
- **Master Plan for the Caminhos de Santiago** (that is designed for the Holy year celebration (which includes measures and activities aiming at distributing he pilgrims between the different St James routes);



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### Additional information

- Although in general, the Portuguese ways fostering strategy, contributes to the redistribution of tourist flows in Galician territory, it continues to contribute to the massification of the point of arrival (Santiago de Compostela) and this good practice doesn't respond to this increasingly pronounced problem. In other words, the good practice **presented here is not a solution for the Santiago de Compostela over tourism problem.**
- In fact, the city is planning to introduce a tourist tax for 2025. The income generated by this tax should be used to promote sustainable tourism. Although this measure is still in the process of being discussed and approved, it was also mentioned in 2023 to combat overcrowding, as “the city receives more than 300,000 tourists and pilgrims every year” and “we want a Santiago from which there is no need to flee due to uncontrolled tourism. We aspire to enjoy a rich and prosperous tourist sector, but also a comfortable and breathable city”.



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### More information at

The itineraries

<https://www.caminodesantiago.gal/pt/planifique/os-itinerarios>

<https://asantiagovoy.travel/pt/caminho-de-santiago>

Certification of the Santiago Ways

<https://business.turismodeportugal.pt/pt/Conhecer/programas-iniciativas/caminhos-da-fe/Paginas/certificado-caminho-portugues-santiago-central-porto-norte.aspx>

Publituris (2023) <https://www.publituris.pt/2023/01/16/turismo-do-porto-e-norte-quer-ter-5-caminhos-de-santiago-certificados-ate-final-do-ano>

Oficina do Peregrino <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/en/statistics-2/>

Plano de Ação Xacobeo 20-21 <https://xacobeo2021.caminodesantiago.gal/pt/institucional/plan-estrategico-do-xacobeo-2021>

Plan Director de los Caminhos de Santiago (2022-2027)

[https://www.turismo.gal/osdam/filestore/8/0/2/8/0\\_f27a74e87537cb1/80280\\_3281445b30ed41f.pdf](https://www.turismo.gal/osdam/filestore/8/0/2/8/0_f27a74e87537cb1/80280_3281445b30ed41f.pdf)