

## Len's 44th letter from the Via

Date:26/08/17

Location

Altopascio

KM's to  
Rome

519

Steps Today

30,433

Another hot day was forecast so we opted for an early start. As we were leaving our Hotel we had a chat with a Scotsman who, on finding out what we were doing, encouraged us to do some walks in Scotland. He gave us two warnings though, plan for rain and midges. I asked him if Scotland was going to leave the United Kingdom because of Brexit. He didn't think so because of the economic cost to Scotland with oil prices being down, but he said there was a strong Nationalistic movement in Scotland and he wouldn't be surprised if Scotland did exit, would that be called Scexit or perhaps Scoexit sounds better. We must be careful of all this flag waving that is going on now as flags are bits of coloured cloth that governments use first to shrink-wrap people's brains and then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the dead.

He was kind enough to take a starting photo of the walkers, this is Carol's first official day on the Via since her arrival. It will be good to have somebody on the track with me again to share the delights and to stimulate some conversation.



The walk out of Lucca is not particularly interesting as we had to walk through a large suburban area outside the walls before we get to any countryside. Add to this the industrial zone that followed and Carol was starting to wonder about her decision to join the walk. We did enjoy a walk through about three kilometres of forest before we hit the outskirts of Altopascio, which is a greatly improved village on a second viewing.

There are some major restoration works underway on a beautiful old church which has included some significant archaeological finds buried under the church. I often wonder about the ethics of digging up skeletons especially as our culture places such great importance on the burial process, there does seem to be some inconsistency in digging up previous generations relics. I too am also inconsistent as I find it is always interesting to look at what has been buried with the skeletons unearthed. On an earlier trip of ours to Hallstatt in Austria it was fascinating to see what had been buried with my people, the Celts.

I did pass this renovators opportunity, needs lots of work but access good and nice views over the forest, and the Via Francigena right at the doorstep for possible commercial exploitation.



### Travelling Bookclub:

For those struggling with 'Portrait of a lady' by Henry James, as I am, Claire has suggested a book by Umberto Eco, who was born near Pavia in Alessandria, The book is a collection of his essays called 'How to Travel with Salmon.' Umberto Eco is one of my favourite authors so I will be reading Claire's suggestion. If looking for something lighter when lacking the mental capacity for James or Eco, I would suggest The Birth of Venus by Sarah

Dunant. It, like Portrait of a lady, has a feisty character. She was part of the Florence upper class during the renaissance period, who like James's central character is railing against the system. I admit I have been dipping into the book when unable to muster the mental strength to read James. It is not pulp fiction but a much lighter read than Henry James.