



THE CULTURAL ROUTE VIA REGIA



Gate Marientor in Naumburg, Germany

Opposite: The memorial "Point Alpha" in Rasdorf (Germany) reminds the division of Europe and of the road Via Regia during more than 50 years after the Second World War.

Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Ukraine

Incorporated into the programme:
May 2004

Formally awarded certification as a "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe":
2006

The route Via Regia is the oldest and longest road link between Eastern and Western Europe. It goes through Spain, France, Germany, Poland to Ukraine.

As far back as the Stone Age, proofs exist that the Via Regia corridor, which is situated south of the ice cap and north of the middle mountains zone, was the favorite passage region of the migrating tribes.

During the last 2000 years, on this way, merchants, soldiers, kings, pilgrims, migrants, and different kinds of travellers, have marked the character of the road and the European history. Until now, the meaning of this traffic space, today known as A4 and E40, remains particular and international.



After more than 50 years of divided Europe, the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and Poland's entry into the European Union in 2004 made it possible again to travel and to experience the overall European course of the road Via Regia. From this moment on, several initiatives have been created. They have aimed at revitalizing the Via Regia as a symbol of common European work.



Castle in Luc'k (Ukraine)

The renovation of the Via Regia/ A4/ E40 is essential for Poland. This is the most important road link between Germany and the regions of demographic concentration in the South of Poland. It should be extended up to the Ukrainian border in order to simplify the transports to Ukraine and to the South of Russia.





In the 6th century, the Merovingian Franks, coming from the South of today's Picardie, conquered the kingdom of Thuringia and, during the following centuries, they stabilised the ways of the future Via Regia.



In the first half of the 13th century, the warriors of the Golden Horde went from Kiev (Ukraine) to Legnica (Poland), through the Via Regia corridor, where a German-Polish army of knights confronted them.



Magnificent medieval city halls, like the one in Wroclaw (Poland), give evidence of the great wealth to which the situation of the cities on the East-West oriented Via Regia had contributed.



Since the Middle Ages, trade fairs and markets are the most important impulse for the development of the trade in Europe. They contributed considerably to the rise of the East-West road Via Regia.



Anna Yaroslavna, daughter of the grand- duke of the Kievan Rus, Yaroslav the Wise, married in 1051 the French king, Henry 1st, and she is still respected in France as "Anne de Kiev, Reine de France". She can be considered as a particularly important and symbolic figure for the character of the Via Regia. In 2005, the Ukrainian State offered a statue of the queen to the city of Senlis where Anna probably spent the last decades of her life.

With the development of pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Jacob the Older in Santiago de Compostela (Spain), the road Via Regia became, from the Middle Ages onwards, one of the principal ways for the catholic pilgrims from Eastern Europe to Spain.



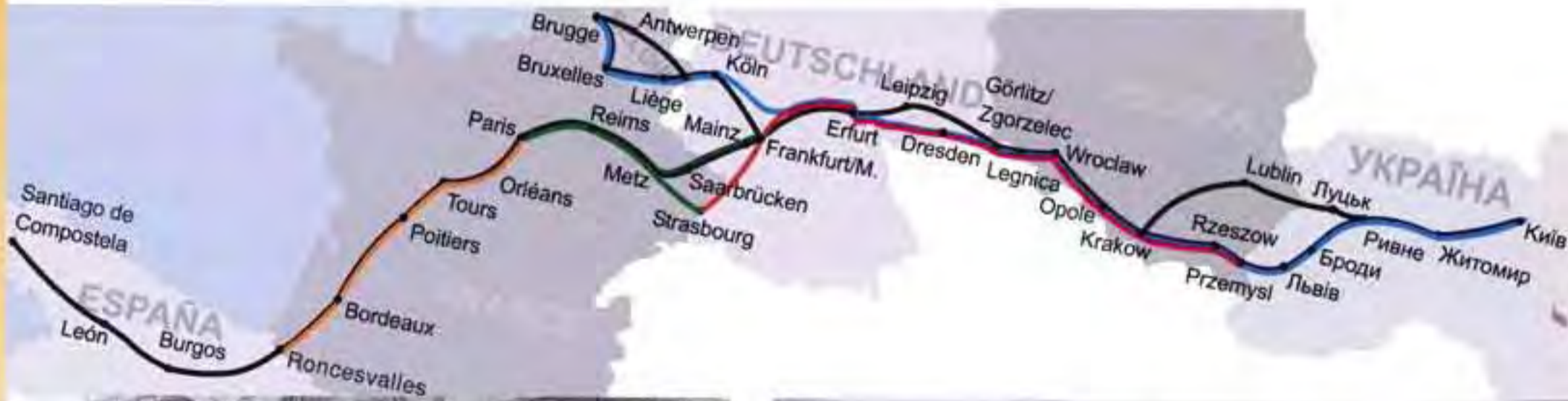
THE CULTURAL ROUTE VIA REGIA



CONTACT:

Via Regia - Kultur für Europa e.V.
(Via Regia - Culture for Europe)
European Center for Culture
and Information in Thuringia
Johannesstrasse 17a
D - 99084 Erfurt

Tel: 0049 (0)361 24 10 80
Fax: 0049 (0)361 24 10 820
Email: info@via-regia.org
Web: www.via-regia.org



Jewish life is connected with the Via Regia road since its origins. In the 10th century, Jewish merchants are already said to have followed the road on the way to Eastern Europe. In Erfurt, parts of the oldest synagogue that has been preserved in Germany are even from the 11th century.



At the end of the Second World War, millions of refugees, either escaping or being deported – Germans, Poles and above all Ukrainians – fled from the East to the West on the Via Regia road.