

ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY ON THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

OVERVIEW

The **Camino de Santiago** is an important cultural and spiritual route, yet **accessibility barriers** prevent individuals with disabilities from fully participating. The INCASA project identifies critical gaps and proposes targeted policy actions to ensure inclusivity. This brief outlines the challenges, benefits, and key recommendations for improving accessibility, aiming to guide policymakers, municipalities, and stakeholders in making the Camino a truly inclusive experience.

FINDINGS

Infrastructure along the Camino **remains largely inaccessible to individuals with disabilities**, with trails, rest stops, and accommodations lacking necessary adaptations. Transportation options are limited, making it difficult for pilgrims with mobility challenges to navigate the route. Additionally, service providers often lack awareness and training, leading to exclusionary practices that discourage participation. Data from the INCASA project and other accessibility studies indicate that these barriers significantly impact participation rates among individuals with disabilities.

POLICY TAKEAWAYS

- Investing in accessible infrastructure ensures equal participation and strengthens the Camino's global reputation as an inclusive cultural site.
- Training for service providers leads to better accommodation and a more welcoming environment for all pilgrims.
- Expanding transportation options increases mobility and enhances the overall pilgrimage experience for individuals with disabilities.
- Comprehensive digital and printed information resources improve pre-travel planning and accessibility awareness.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Improve Infrastructure and Accessibility Standards

Municipalities must **upgrade key infrastructure** to ensure **accessible pathways**, rest areas, and lodging. Trails should be adapted to different mobility needs, including wheelchair users, and marked with standardized signage for individuals with visual or cognitive impairments. Public rest stops must feature adapted restroom facilities, and accommodations should comply with universal accessibility standards. Investing in these improvements will enhance the Camino's reputation as an inclusive cultural heritage site.

2 Enhance Training for Service Providers

Local businesses, hospitality staff, and transportation providers should **undergo disability awareness training to improve service quality**. Training should cover appropriate communication methods, emergency response for individuals with disabilities, and best practices in providing inclusive accommodations. Governments and tourism agencies must collaborate with disability organizations to develop certification programs that recognize businesses committed to accessibility standards. Raising awareness among service providers fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment for all pilgrims.

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3 Expand Accessible Transportation Options

Reliable and **accessible transportation** is essential for individuals with disabilities to participate in the pilgrimage. Municipalities should integrate wheelchair-accessible transport options along the Camino and ensure clear, **real-time accessibility information**. Subsidized transportation services should be available for pilgrims requiring specialized assistance. Additionally, transport providers should collaborate with local governments to maintain designated drop-off and pick-up points at key sections of the route, enabling inclusive participation without limiting personal mobility.

4 Develop Comprehensive Information Resources

A centralized **digital platform** should provide detailed accessibility information for the Camino de Santiago. This resource must include an interactive map with adapted accommodations, medical facilities, accessible rest areas, and emergency contacts. Additionally, **printed guides** should be made available in key locations to assist individuals without internet access. Pre-travel support services should also be established, offering personalized accessibility recommendations and facilitating informed decision-making for prospective pilgrims with disabilities.

METHODOLOGY

The INCASA project gathered insights from individuals with disabilities, disability advocacy organizations, and service providers along the Camino de Santiago. Through surveys, site visits, and expert consultations, the research identified key accessibility barriers and formulated actionable recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

By prioritizing accessibility, policymakers can transform the Camino de Santiago into an inclusive pilgrimage experience. These changes will not only uphold human rights but also generate economic benefits and foster greater social cohesion. Immediate action is needed to remove barriers and ensure that all individuals, regardless of ability, can fully participate in this historic journey.

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