

**International Conference on Religious Tourism:
Fostering sustainable socio-economic development in host communities
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Session 2: Religious heritage and tourism routes – promoting cross border cooperation

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Bio:

Ms. Maria Nava Castro has a BA in Spanish language and literature from the Complutense University of Madrid. She has several Masters on Tourism Studies; Emigration; Economic Development Agents and Programme Management; SME Management and Administration and Intervention and Social Services Management.

In the last 16 years she has held positions of responsibility in various institutions of Galicia. In 1998 she was deputy in the Parliament of Galicia and then held various positions in the Galician municipality of Pontearreas becoming mayor.

During several alternate years she also served as head of the European Centre for Rural Information and Animation of Carrefour in Galicia.

In 2008 she was deputy in the Congress of Deputies and she was appointed Director General of Trade in May 2009. She served in this position until January 2013 when she was appointed Director of Tourism of Galicia.

Abstract:

St. James, the Greater chose the lands of ancient Spain to evangelize. After being decapitated in the year 44, his disciples recovered his body and translated it by sea to the “end of the Earth”. Once there, and according to tradition, the remains of the Apostle were buried at Monte Liberum Donum.

After the miraculous discovering of the tomb of the Apostle St. James by a hermit, King Alfonso II ordered the construction of a small church. Before the end of IX century, Alfonso III commissioned the construction of a larger basilica, worthy of the phenomenon that was beginning to move the European faithful. Thus, this religious itinerary has evolved through a solid historical and cultural basis which has enabled its maintenance over centuries and with a gradual growth of pilgrims which increase exponentially in Holy Years.

This route, with many important declarations, (First European Cultural Itinerary, World Heritage route, etc.) contributes to raise awareness on cultural and natural heritage as well as on traditions of the territories where it passes through.

In this way, it generates culture and has become an important pole of economic dynamism with a positive effect in territorial balance, job creation and income generation.

For all these reasons, each year, public administrations work together in maintaining, preserving and promoting this Way, seeking its sustainability.