

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

MARIA LAURA GASPARINI



## PROFILE

*Tourism researcher and consultant with a solid background in the academic, private and non-profit sectors gained in Europe, Latin America, and Oceania. Extensive field research and capacity building experience with public and private stakeholders and non-profit organizations in the development of sustainable, cultural tourism projects. Main areas of expertise include transnational cultural routes, territorial governance, sustainability monitoring and rural and community-based tourism development.*

## ACADEMIC WORK EXPERIENCE

Nov 2021 –  
October 2024

### PhD Candidate in Economic Geography (thesis under discussion)

*Doctoral programme in Science and Culture of Wellbeing and Lifestyles. Life Quality Sciences Department (QuVi), University of Bologna, Rimini, Italy*

Entitled “Navigating Governance across borders: The role of transnational pilgrimage routes in territorial governance processes”. The primary aim of my research has been to explore how cultural routes contribute to the implementation of territorial governance across various geographical scales and their influence in policymaking in the areas of cultural heritage, tourism and rural development. Conducted within the framework of an EU-funded project involving six pilgrimage routes, the main focus has been on linear (physical) routes, but provided also valuable implications for thematic cultural routes, in terms of the internal governance and external cooperation models of these transnational cultural networks.

Jan 2021 – Nov  
2021

### Research Fellow

*Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST) University of Bologna, Rimini, Italy*

Main research areas: Transnational Cultural Routes and Pilgrimage trails, Rural development, Europeanization, Sustainability, Sustainable tourism indicators. Assisting in research and management of EU-funded projects regarding cultural routes and pilgrimage trails, including:

- ♦ *FAB Routes (Erasmus+ programme): Digital Skills to promote the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.* In charge of developing a Model strategy and innovative training methodology to better integrate cultural routes in the tourism and culture ecosystems at local, regional and transnational level
- ♦ *BEST MED (Interreg Med programme): Enhance Mediterranean governance through an integrated tourism planning and management approach focused on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and other itineraries.* Activities included the preparation of a Diagnosis on the state of the art on collection and management of tourism data; the mapping of relevant stakeholders; the development of the MED S&C Path Model - Sustainable Path & Cultural Routes Model and toolbox, to favour the management of cultural itineraries and paths based on the principles of sustainability (social, economic, environmental)
- ♦  *rurAllure (Horizon 2020 programme): Promotion of rural museums and heritage sites in the vicinity of European pilgrimage routes.* In charge of drafting a policy brief on the state of the art of policies at EU level for the promotion of rural museums and heritage sites, and for the development of rural areas through cultural routes. Establishing a network of institutions to work on the promotion of cultural venues and heritage sites from the rural environments of Europe, nearby main pilgrimage routes. Other activities included mapping points of interests, proposing detours and audio guides to interpret the traversed territories through a digital platform and mobile application, and strengthening the local network of actors at pilot area level (Argenta Municipality, Italy).

Nov 2020 – Dec  
2020

### Research Assistant

*Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST) University of Bologna, Rimini, Italy*

Fixed term contract to support the research project *"Recognition of the experiences and impact of Responsible Tourism, Central America and Latin America"*

- ♦ Bibliographic review of the development of responsible and community tourism in Latin America and in particular in Mexico
- ♦ Mapping of the main stakeholders that make up the ecosystem of responsible and community tourism in Mexico (public and private sectors, national and international NGOs, indigenous rural communities, universities, tourism observatories) and creation of a stakeholder database
- ♦ Identification of collaborative experiences at regional and national level for the development and promotion of community tourism
- ♦ Identification of successful cases and best practices of sustainable and community-based tourism.

Jul 2020 – Aug  
2020

#### Research Assistant

*Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST) University of Bologna, Rimini, Italy*

Fixed term contract for the research project *"Sustainable Tourism Indicators and policy-making processes - ETIS"*

- ♦ The main result achieved was the submission of an academic article for publication in the special edition on the theme "Sustainable Tourism Indicators" of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism
- ♦ Identification of an emblematic international case study and carrying out semi-structured interviews with the main stakeholders at local, national and European level
- ♦ Complete bibliographic review on sustainable tourism indicators, in particular the ETIS (European Tourism Indicator System) and other systems for monitoring and managing data in tourism (official statistics, big data, sustainability indicators, tourism observatories)
- ♦ Comparative analysis of the different European projects and international initiatives on the evaluation of sustainability and governance of destinations. Capitalization of the most important results of these initiatives
- ♦ Preparation of forms for data collection through interviews, bibliographic research and analysis of good practices
- ♦ Construction of a set of other European destinations that have implemented ETIS to develop benchmarking activities
- ♦ Development of an online questionnaire to evaluate the implementation of ETIS in twelve European destinations.

Jan 2017 – Jun  
2017

#### Communication & Research Assistant

*Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST) University of Bologna, Rimini, Italy*

Internship that comprised a variety of research and project management tasks, including:

- ♦ Research and management of European projects related to the development of cultural and sustainable tourism
- ♦ Monitor call for applications for upcoming EU-funded programmes and assist in the preparation of documents for the application process
- ♦ Assistance in the organisation of the intensive course "Economics for Tourism Development", part of the ERASMUS+ Project HERITAG (Higher Education Interdisciplinary Reform in Tourism management and Applied Geo-information curricula), aimed at the integration of geographic information technologies (GIS) applied to the documentation of cultural heritage, tourism management and entrepreneurship
- ♦ Implementation of the Center's communication strategy and involvement of the main stakeholders and decision makers
- ♦ Organisation of the events hosted by the Center: ITACA Festival of Responsible Tourism Rimini, Green Destinations International Event, IATE Conference (International Association for Tourism Economics), Euro Enviro Workshop. Identification of speakers, preparation of the programme, logistics, sending of newsletters and promotional materials
- ♦ Collaboration in the creation of the tourism section of the Report "Reviving the Economy of the Mediterranean Sea", published by WWF Med in 2017 in collaboration with CAST, developing case studies on the regeneration of coastal mass tourism destinations through sustainable tourism actions.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AWARDS

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### Feb – July 2024 Pre-doctoral Visiting Researcher

*Geography Department and IDEGA (Instituto de Estudios y Desarrollo de Galicia), University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain*

- ♦ Activities included: Desk research, fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, preparation of a joint academic publication with members of the Territorial Analysis (ANTE) research group, delivering lectures and attending seminars and training courses.

### Jan – October 2023 Carlos V European Award

European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation, Spain

Beneficiary of a research and mobility grant on European studies, addressed to researchers working on their doctoral thesis on topics such as culture, heritage, history and memory for the promotion of European values, integration and peace, including a special emphasis on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme.

### Nov 2021 – October 2024

#### PhD Candidate in Economic Geography - GEOG-01/B (thesis under discussion)

*Doctoral programme in Science and Culture of Wellbeing and Lifestyles. Life Quality Sciences Department (QuVi), University of Bologna, Rimini Campus, Italy*

- ♦ Thesis entitled: *“Navigating Governance across borders: The role of transnational pilgrimage routes in territorial governance processes”*
- ♦ Desk research, extensive fieldwork employing qualitative methodologies, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and organisation of focus groups (both online and in-presence).
- ♦ Delivering lectures, tutorship of two Masters’ students internship for thesis, attending training courses and presenting preliminary findings of my research in national and international congresses and events.
- ♦ Assisting in the management of the H2020 project *rurAllure* at local level (pilot area) and transnational level (in coordination with project’s partners).

### Sep 2015 – Mar 2018

#### Master’s Degree in Tourism Economics and Management – LM-56

University of Bologna, Faculty of Economics, Management and Statistics, Rimini Campus

- ♦ Graduation mark 110/110 (CUM LAUDE)
- ♦ Thesis entitled: *“Sustainable tourism indicators as policy-making tools: Lessons from ETIS implementation at destination level”* (awarded as one of the three best Master’s theses of the TEaM programme 2015-2018). Available on Research Gate. DOI: 10.13140 / RG.2.2.15192.14085
- ♦ Main subjects studied: Economics of tourism, sustainable tourism, management, marketing, finance, design of cultural tourism products, local development and Cultural Routes
- ♦ Field research in Trieste on the initiative of the University of Bologna and the start-up Sea Ways to contribute to the development of new cultural products for nautical tourism: interviews with key stakeholders, design and administration of questionnaires to tourists and residents, analysis of results and development of new cultural itineraries.

### Oct 2017 – Nov 2017

#### Scholarship for Thesis Research abroad

University programme aimed at research for thesis abroad. My chosen destination was Zuid Limburg, Netherlands

- ♦ Semi-structured interviews with 18 key players involved in the implementation of a system of sustainable tourism indicators in the region
- ♦ Conducting online interviews with other key actors and policymakers at national and European level
- ♦ Direct observation in the field
- ♦ Bibliographic desk research at the University of Maastricht.

### Nov 2011 - May 2012

#### Diploma of Business

Shafston College, Brisbane, Australia

- ♦ Main subjects studied: Business management, marketing, human resource management, sustainability.

- Mar 2006 - Nov 2009** **Bachelor's Degree in Tourism**  
National University of Lanús, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- ♦ Graduation mark 8.29 (out of 10)
  - ♦ Specialisation in tourism planning
  - ♦ Thesis: Development of a business plan for an ecotourism resort in Colon, E.R., Argentina
  - ♦ Main subjects studied: strategic planning, cultural tourism, tourism policy, ecotourism, marketing, management.
- Mar 2003 - Dec 2005** **Major in Tourism and Travel Services Management**  
Vocational Education Center N°1, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- ♦ Graduation mark 9.25 (out of 10)
  - ♦ Specialisation in the management of travel agencies
  - ♦ Main subjects studied: business management, accounting, human resources, geography, marketing, tourism product design, law, Portuguese language.
- Professional Certificates** **Training School in Geography**  
Italian Association of Geographers (Trento, Italy); 2024
- ♦ Training course for young researchers in geography, including epistemological and methodological foundations. Theme of this edition: New Frontiers in Political Geography.
- XV International Jacobean Lessons**  
Cátedra Universitaria del Camino de Santiago y de las peregrinaciones, University of Santiago de Compostela; 2024
- ♦ Summer course on pilgrimage routes and the St. James Way: from the history to the contemporary features of the Jacobean phenomenon.
- GIS Course (Full Immersion)**  
Italian Geographical Society (Online); 2023
- ♦ Full immersion, basic training course on Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and the use of the suite ESRI Italia (Arcgis Pro) including the creation of cartograms, thematic maps, story maps, etc.
- School of Research Methods: Qualitative approaches**  
British Academy of Management, Italian Societies of Marketing and Management (Siena, Italy); 2023
- ♦ Training course on qualitative research methodologies, including ethnography, netnography and grounded theory.
- Training School in Geography**  
Italian Association of Geographers (Santa Cesarea Terme, Italy); 2022
- ♦ Training course for young researchers in geography, including epistemological and methodological foundations. Theme of this edition: Narratives.
- Introduction to Regenerative Tourism**  
Global Initiative of Regenerative Tourism (online); 2021
- ♦ Principles of regenerative development, design of regenerative tourism experiences.
- Travelife Auditor-Advisor Training Course**, Travelife (online); 2021
- ♦ Introduction to the Travelife criteria for tour operators, coaching and auditing techniques to grant the sustainability certification.
- Co-operative Entrepreneurship in Education**  
You coope, Santander International Entrepreneurship Centre (CISE) and Bantani Education (online); 2021
- ♦ Principles to introduce co-operative entrepreneurial learning in secondary and higher education courses, including the cooperative model, the EntreComp (European Entrepreneurship Competence) framework, methodologies and techniques to implement this approach in classroom.

### PM4R-Agile (Agile Project Management for Social Impact Projects)

Inter-American Development Bank, United States (online); 2020

- ♦ Programme focused on the implementation of Agile methodologies in the management of social impact projects for NGOs and civil society organisations. Based on the PM4R (Project Management for Results), Scrum and PMI-ACP methodology of the Inter-American Development Bank.
- ♦ Principles of the Agile methodology, tools, roles, steps to implement the methodology focused on results, development and implementation of an Agile action plan.

### Systems Practice

Acumen Academy, The Omidyar Group, United States (online); 2020

- ♦ Application of system thinking processes for social innovation and systemic change in complex environments
- ♦ Identification of problems, definition of the intermediate and final goal, mapping of the system to identify main leverage points, development of the intervention strategy.

[Inclusive Mindset](#), Linked in Learning certification (online); 2020

[Green Destinations Auditor-Advisor Training Course](#), Green Destinations (online); 2017

[Responsible Tourism Training Course](#), AITR – Italian Association of Responsible Tourism, Pisa, 2016

[Wordpress Course](#), CESCOT – Center for Development, Commerce and Tourism, Rimini, 2016

### Scientific Publications

- ♦ Gasparini, M.L.; Mariotti, A. (forthcoming, 2025). *Negotiating between slow mobility and heritagisation: Multi-stakeholder's perceptions, uses and perspective views over heritage landscape*. Accepted for publication in upcoming Special Issue from the Journal Bolletino Società Geografica Italiana.
- ♦ Gasparini, M.L. (forthcoming, 2025). *European Cultural Routes: Between sustainable local development and transnational cooperation tools*. Chapter in: Culture, Heritage, History and Memory for the promotion of European values, integration and peace. European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation. Peter Lang.
- ♦ Gasparini, M.L. (2024). *Transnational Pilgrimage Routes as Enablers of Rural Regeneration. Evidence from the H2020 Project rurAllure*. GEOTEMA Journal, Volume 75, p.50-56.
- ♦ Gasparini, M.L. (2024). *Itinerarios Culturales Transnacionales: Nuevos instrumentos para medir su sostenibilidad y mejorar su gobernanza*. Article in: Repensando los destinos turísticos en tiempos de cambio global. Ferrandis-Martínez, Zomoza-Gallego & Sánchez-Cabrera (Eds.). Universitat de Valencia, pp. 816 – 836. ISBN: 978-84-9133-737-9. Conference proceedings from the XIX Coloquio Internacional de Geografía del Turismo AGE-UGI, Cullera, Spain, 6-8 June 2024.
- ♦ Gasparini, M.L.; Cortés Vázquez, J.A. (2024). *Towards a European governance framework for pilgrimage routes: Challenges, opportunities and recommendations*. International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage, Volume 12, Issue 2, pp.13-25.
- ♦ Gasparini, M.L.; Mariotti, A. (2024). *Multi-stakeholder governance for religious tourism and pilgrimage routes in Europe*. Chapter in: A Research Agenda for Religious Tourism. Shinde, K. & Cheer, J. (Eds.). Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 39-55. ISBN 9781803928739.
- ♦ Gasparini, M.L.; Tirado-Ballesteros, J.G.; Lopez, L.; Lois-González, R.C. (2024). *La gouvernance des itinéraires culturels transnationaux et le rôle des organisations de gestion: une analyse comparative entre le Chemin de Saint-Jacques et la Via Francigena*. Chapter in: Actes du Colloque "Les chemins de Compostelle, itinéraire culturel européen et patrimoine mondial: Histoire, enjeux et perspectives". Alcantara, C. & Rucquoi, A. (Eds.). University of Toulouse Press, pp.105-121. ISBN 978-2-36170-296-0.
- ♦ Gasparini, M.L. (2024). *Review of: The Politics of Religious Tourism*, edited by Dino Bozonelos and Polyxeni Moira, International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage, Volume 12, Issue 1 pp. 168 – 170.
- ♦ Bagnaresi, D., Battilani, P., Gasparini, M.L., Mariotti, A. (2024). *Addressing Over and Under Tourism Along*