



# LA CONCHA

newsletter of the american pilgrims on the camino

March 2019

## Service Below the Surface

BY ELAINE HOPKINS

London, UK

On the surface, it's me who's rendering service. Gunter's the pilgrim; I'm the hospitalera. But surfaces can be deceptive. Often, what lies beneath is more telling.

Gunter arrives late in day at the refugio in Rabanal del Camino, run by the English Confraternity of Saint James. He moves slowly. He does not look well. I assign him a bed in the barn, even though pilgrim numbers do not warrant opening the barn. I want him to enjoy a good night's sleep in splendid isolation.

I learn from another German pilgrim that Gunter has terminal cancer, and is walking the Camino one last time – against his doctor's advice and despite his children's opposition. Gunter stays with us for two days on the grounds of ill-health, before moving into the German monastery next door.

We do not share a common language, Gunter and I, unless you count the language common to all humanity: body language. If a picture paints a thousand words, a hug surely paints a million. This is how we communicate, as Gunter sits under the tree beside the church, watching me collect cigarette butts, sweep the courtyard, and go



HOSPITALERA ELAINE HOPKINS ON SWEEPING DUTY.

SEE SERVICE ON PAGE 2

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# Greetings from the Chair

Dear Members,

As I think about our value of Service, the first thing that comes to mind is gratitude for the many skilled volunteers who accomplish the day-to-day work of this organization. So many committed people work together to make American Pilgrims on the Camino the thriving organization it is today. For perspective, we currently have 112 chapter coordinators who volunteer to lead our 50 local chapters. In 2018, those chapters hosted more than 780 events serving approximately 15,000 pilgrims to help them prepare for and complete their pilgrimage as well as to engage with the community of American Pilgrims upon their return.



I'm also grateful for the dedication of our all-volunteer board of directors and supporting volunteers, who spend countless hours behind the scenes every week to contribute to the mission of American Pilgrims. Among many important tasks, this talented team of volunteers annually administers tens of thousands of dollars in grants, which provide direct support to infrastructure projects on the many Camino de Santiago routes.

In addition, the team gathers together hundreds of American Pilgrims and presenters from around the country for our annual Gathering. Team members manage the business and technical infrastructure needed to effectively communicate information about

the Camino to our fellow pilgrims. Before I joined the board of directors, much of this work was transparent to me as an American Pilgrims member. But I've now seen the work of this team up close for the past year or so and it's eye-watering to me to think about how much service goes into making American Pilgrims have a real impact both here and on the Camino.

The many dedicated American Pilgrims who choose to give something back to the Camino by serving fellow pilgrims as hospitaleros, volunteers in Ribadiso or in the Pilgrim's Office in Santiago have my gratitude. These people are our true ambassadors to the Camino. They serve a key role in preserving and extending our relationships along the Camino. Additionally, as we approach the next Holy Year in 2021, two of your board members are participating in meetings in Spain focused on ensuring the infrastructure is ready to support the expected influx of pilgrims.

It should be apparent by now the degree to which American Pilgrims relies on volunteers to make your organization tick. As a board, we are working to engage even more members from our pilgrim community on our national-level committees. If you have talents you'd like to share, I ask that you please keep an eye out as we communicate future opportunities for service. As we move ahead in 2019, please also keep an eye out on our website and membership tools...there are more changes afoot than your newsletter's new look! It's an exciting time to be an American Pilgrim!

Buen Camino,  
**DAVE DONSELAR**  
Board Chair

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## SERVICE FROM PAGE 1

back and forth with the rubbish and recycling. Words are a superfluous, unnecessary encumbrance. I understand, without words, that I can help Gunter by taking his postcards to the postbox at the lower end of the village. I understand too that the cards are another attempt, possibly his last, to explain to his children why he would rather die on the Camino in Spain than in his bed in Germany.

I understand that Gunter has neither certainty nor expectation that he will reach Santiago. His only certainty

is imminent death, a certainty he accepts with such grace I realise I have no concept what that word "grace" truly means.

After a few days, Gunter feels well enough to continue his pilgrimage. We arrange, again without spoken words, to meet early in the morning so I can escort him out of the village. For reasons unknown, it doesn't happen. I never see Gunter again. It hardly matters, for he has touched my soul. He has rendered me a priceless service. Gunter has shown me it is possible to go in peace, even on an uncertain journey with one certain, inevitable end. May I find such grace when my time comes.

# Welcome to this issue of “La Concha”...

We're delighted to share with you the fresh new look of your American Pilgrims on the Camino newsletter. We hope you enjoy it because creating it has been our labor of love.

This issue focuses on our organization's value of Service. We have abundant service to celebrate. You'll find a summary of the work our chapter coordinators around the country perform for their fellow pilgrims in the chair's message in this issue. The 2018 annual compilation of chapter activities is indeed impressive. You'll also read about the Asheville chapter's creation of a Camino in their small city—and be able to walk that path

should you visit there. The Old Pueblo (Tucson) chapter organized a weekend albergue experience for its members. And several members contributed thoughts about how you're living the value of Service in your everyday lives.

This issue also contains a Camino statistics article from our long-serving volunteer webmaster and numbers guru, Gene McCullough. We remind you, too, of the 2019 Gathering, in which some of you will participate at the end of this month. We applaud the wide variety of presenters who appear gratis, in service to participants. If you're not coming to the Gathering, you'll see in the article below that

you still have a chance to participate from home. Check it out.

Finally, as many of you prepare for a 2019 Camino, you'll find several reviews of recent Camino-related books. We appreciate the time these reviewers took to read and think about their value to pilgrims and hope you find their reviews helpful.

Let us know what you think of your new newsletter. Please see the last page of this issue for information about the deadline and theme of the June newsletter. We want to hear from you.

— TEAM “LA CONCHA”

## Gathering 2019 is just around the corner!

The theme of this year's Gathering is “Cultivating Camino Connections.” Nearly 300 pilgrims have registered for the March 28-31, 2019, event at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, NC, just outside Asheville. We have a jam packed [program](#) with some incredible speakers, the always lively raffle and silent auction, and the energetic Camino Cabaret.

You are not attending the Gathering? No worries! For the first time ever, we'll be livestreaming sessions of the Gathering on Facebook. If you're not already a member of the

American Pilgrims on the Camino Facebook group, simply head over to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AmericanPilgrims/> and request to join. Then simply tune in for as many sessions as you wish. It's the perfect opportunity to cultivate all your wonderful Camino Connections.

You can also participate in the Gathering by donating Camino-related items to the raffle and/or silent auction. Please fill out this form ([hyperlink to https://goo.gl/forms/JD976mtHVXLMeQqu2](https://goo.gl/forms/JD976mtHVXLMeQqu2)) and mail the items to the address listed on the form by March 22, 2019. All proceeds

from this lively evening will fund the American Pilgrims grants program. This competitive program assists albergues and Camino associations in Spain, Portugal and France with infrastructure projects.

When you donate to your American Pilgrims raffle and silent auction, you are helping to fund the rehabilitation of albergues, the purchase of new mattresses, the creation of new signage along The Way and other important projects that ultimately assist pilgrims.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

— MAHATMA GANDHI



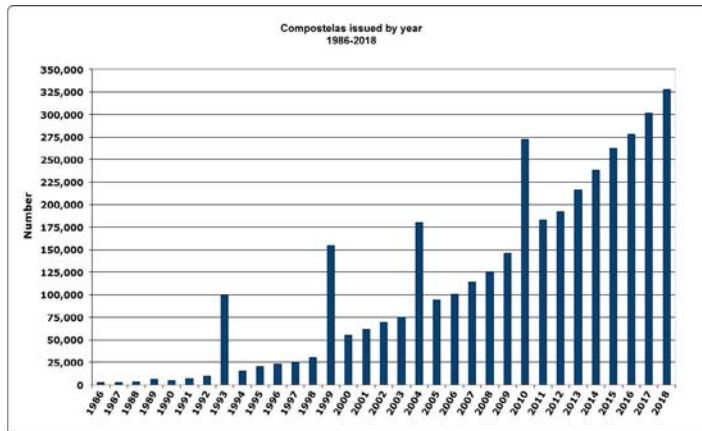
# By the Numbers!

BY GENE MCCULLOUGH, WEBMASTER

American Pilgrims on the Camino  
Denver, CO

The Camino year 2018 is now history, so it's time to take a look at the numbers for the year. For the most part, trends that have been in effect for the last several years continued. The big number is 327,378. That's the number of Compostelas that the Oficina de Acogida de Peregrinos in Santiago awarded, up 8.8 percent from 2017.

The number of Compostelas awarded to U.S. passport holders ended at 18,582 or 5.7 percent of the total. This has been about our share since 2016.



Naturally, more Spaniards receive Compostelas than citizens of any other country, followed by Italy, Germany and the United States. This order has been constant since 2015.

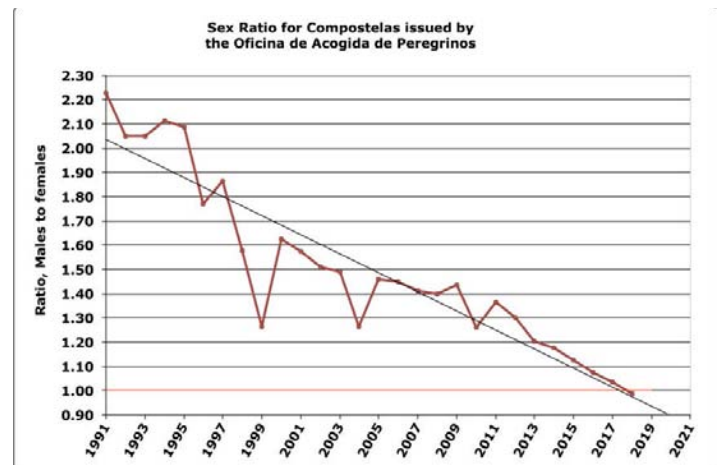
Starts on the Camino Francés crept down to 57 percent of arrivals with the Portugués being the primary route taking up the slack – in 2018 accounting for 21 percent.

If you've been reluctant to walk the Francés because of the continuing increase in traffic on that route, here's

another take. If you remove those persons on the Francés who started in Sarria, you're left with those starting everywhere before Sarria.

And those numbers have been very steady dating back almost a decade! In fact 2015 to 2016, 2016 to 2017 and 2017 to 2018 all showed year-to-year decreases. The downside is that you'll have to stop walking in Sarria! Alternatively you could split off on the Invierno in Ponferrada. Just a thought!

We think the most interesting statistic over the past few years has been the number of males and females receiving Compostelas. The ratio M/F has been on a consistent linear decline since at least 1991, when there were more than two men for every woman. Last year, it was our prediction that parity would be reached in 2018 and it was with the ratio of 0.99. Slightly more women than men received Compostelas in 2018!



If this has piqued your interest about what else we might have collected, check out our statistics page on the [website](http://oficinadelperegrino.com).

Assembled from the statistics page on the Oficina website: [oficinadelperegrino.com](http://oficinadelperegrino.com).

“How wonderful is it that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

– ANNE FRANK

# Chapter Activities

We are adding chapters around the country and now have 50 local groups engaged in the work of gathering pilgrims together, providing information and supporting the Camino. If you are interested in getting involved or forming your own chapter, visit [www.americanpilgrims.org/local-chapters](http://www.americanpilgrims.org/local-chapters). Your chapters committee is eager to help.

Team "La Concha" would love to hear about your chapter's activities. We hope you'll use the newsletter to let your fellow chapter coordinators know the activities you've created for your members. Send your stories and images to [newsletter@americanpilgrims.org](mailto:newsletter@americanpilgrims.org). Gracias!

## Jacksonville Chapter



CHAPTER MEMBERS EXTRAORDINAIRE PAMELA AND TOM EUTSLER (FRONT) LED NEW JACKSONVILLE CHAPTER MEMBERS IN A HIKE AT THE GUANA TOLOMATO MATANZAS NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH PRESERVE.

## Lifetime Members!

We are pleased to welcome these new American Pilgrims on the Camino lifetime members from December 2018 through February 2019. For details about how to become a lifetime member of American Pilgrims, please visit our [Membership Page](#).

Anne Allenworth

David Bourn

Leah Gardner Wilkinson  
Brockway

Matthew Buzby

Suzie Fleming

Merula Furtado

Annette Gacioch

Gerry Gacioch

Sara Gradwohl

Linnea Hendrickson

Lisa LaManna

Carol O'Connell

Valerie Ohanian

Linda Shubert

Marjorie Young

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

– DESMOND TUTU

# Old Pueblo Chapter Stages a Camino Experience



**BY DAVE COMBS**

Chapter Coordinator, Old Pueblo-Tucson, AZ

Kimberly Henderson, a member of the Old Pueblo Chapter in Arizona, walked her first Camino in the fall of 2018. She came home with her heart bursting from the energy, love and memories that all pilgrims remember. Home for Kimberly is a 1912 church she purchased in Clifton, a small mining town in Southeastern Arizona. The church and accompanying house are now enjoying a new life as an Airbnb. Or is that an albergue?

Kimberly used that word when she reached out to our chapter coordinators and offered her home/business to our chapter at no cost for a weekend. Her goal and that of our coordinators was to give our members a mock albergue/ Camino experience within driving distance of home. Kimberly's albergue has lots of bedrooms (single and multi), adequate bathrooms and a spacious social area. It even has a fully stocked gourmet kitchen. Not only that but the San Francisco River is adjacent and has a beautiful 6.9-mile one-way trail along its banks.

Chapter members who intend to walk a Camino always ask about lodging options. Albergues to Paradors; intimacy to isolation; such a wide range! Everyone has their preference, and it can differ from day-to-day while walking. Those who have walked know what this means. But those who intend to walk, how do they decide? If only they could stay in an albergue before they left for their Camino, they might have a



LEFT: LILY BLITZER, SALLY CAMPBELL AND VIRGINIA STANEK ON THE TRAIL.  
TOP: OLD PUEBLO PILGRIMS AT THEIR ARIZONA ALBERGUE.  
DAVE COMBS, PHOTOGRAPHER

better idea!

We structured this experience as a three-day, two-night event. The response was phenomenal. Pilgrims share, and news of our special event spread beyond our announcement. People from other parts of our state who have walked or hope to walk a Camino heard of this fabulous opportunity. The shortest driving distance to this event was 170 miles, but a few drove more than 300 miles to participate.

The first night we had a potluck dinner with everyone pitching in with chopping, dicing and cleaning up. The wine flowed, and so did the café con leche. Saturday morning, some did yoga, and we all shared delicious food from our potluck stash. Later that morning, we began our 13.8-mile roundtrip hike along the river. As we climbed to the turnaround, we were accompanied by three volunteers from the local copper mine: a geologist, a female driver of one of the huge ore trucks, and an engineer. Their knowledge of the surrounding terrain was a huge bonus. A local service organization, "Humanity Served with a Smile," even delivered lunch at the turnaround.

Kimberly provided a catered entrée for dinner on Saturday, and chapter members provided the remainder of the meals, snacks and refreshments via more potluck contributions. By Sunday noon, we had formed our Camino family! We exchanged contact information and conversations quickly turned to doing this again.

Everyone returned home feeling the joy only a Camino experience can provide. Will you join us next time? Or even create your own event?



# Asheville Chapter Creates a Camino

BY MARK COBB  
Asheville, NC

Several years ago at our weekly coffee gathering, members of the Western North Carolina chapter of American Pilgrims on the Camino discussed ways to bring the Camino experience home to Asheville. Serendipitously, a young couple in town were preparing for their upcoming Camino by walking a 16-mile route through local side streets and greenways. They shared their path with our group in the form of a GPS route, and the idea of an Asheville Camino was born. We even had in mind an iconic destination for our walk: the historic Basilica of St. Lawrence, with its famous tiled dome. This church was designed and built by the Spanish architect Rafael Gustavino and is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Many of us pitched in to create the Asheville Camino complete with a map and turn-by-turn directions for this path. We formalized the project with a website ([www.ashevillecamino.org](http://www.ashevillecamino.org)), Facebook page and link to "Explore Asheville," our tourism bureau's website. To complete the experience, we placed some strategic yellow arrows along the way.

The Asheville Camino has become an integral part of our chapter. We host monthly guided walks on the route, with attendance ranging from 10 to more than 30 people. We break for café con leche in the morning followed by lunch at noon. Twice we have hosted other American Pilgrims' chapters for weekend visits, including the Camino walk, a tapas pilgrim meal and lodging in our downtown hostel, Sweet Peas. We believe this nicely reproduces a day on the Camino in Spain. Our chapter extends a warm welcome to anyone wishing to join us on the Asheville Camino!

Building on the success and popularity of the Asheville Camino, we have now developed a second route through North Asheville: the Asheville Camino del Norte. This 10-mile loop passes by the historic Grove Park Inn and scenic Beaver Lake. We will be hosting a guided walk on this path at 9 a.m. Thursday, March 28, departing from the Asheville Visitor Center. We welcome anyone in town for the 2019 Gathering of Pilgrims to come sample our local Camino.



TOP: WAYMARK ALONG THE ASHEVILLE CAMINO.

BOTTOM: PILGRIMS ENJOY CAFÉ CON LECHE ALONG THE ASHEVILLE CAMINO.

MARK COBB, PHOTOGRAPHER

# Sharing the Camino Light through Service



MT. TAM CHAPTER HIKE, 2017.  
LAURIE FERRIS, PHOTOGRAPHER

**BY LAURIE FERRIS**  
Oakland, CA

The notion of walking the Camino first came at a time in my life when I was looking for a more meaningful way to travel and feeling the desire to serve. I became consumed with researching, training, packing, repacking, blogging, and chatting with pilgrims. This happened a few years before I turned 50—and to some of my friends and family, it appeared I was going through a midlife crisis! Perhaps I was, but I couldn't have picked a healthier addiction, because the Camino ultimately led to a variety of ways that I could serve.

Little did I know that when the Camino called, I'd become so involved. My first Camino, in 2016, inevitably led to two more Caminos over the following years. To keep the Camino connection here at home, I signed up for several odd jobs to help our Northern California chapter, such as cleaning up the email list, managing the Camino library, documenting events, and moderating the Facebook group. This kept me busy, but my wheels were turning on more creative ways to engage our community.

I organized Camino presentation events and conducted online chapter surveys to gather valuable feedback from our members. I created a NorCal chapter logo and stamp, and that idea paved the way to new T-shirts. I do this kind of stuff at work, but find it much more fun to apply it to a hobby I am passionate about. However, all of this takes time, and I was burning the candle at both ends (a common trap when volunteering for a nonprofit!). My dilemma: Could I keep the Camino flame alive without burning out? My new approach was to *let go*—a lesson I learned from the Camino. I began to let go of some activities and say “no” to other opportunities.

I may stumble, but I am finding my niche as someone who can turn ideas into action, collaborate with different tribes of pilgrims, and share love for the Camino on a variety of platforms. When I hear pilgrims say, “Thanks for all you do,” that encourages me. I feel that if I can help prepare someone, like some pilgrims helped me, I am giving back to the Camino in some small way. To share the light of the Camino is a blessing. As we say at UC Berkeley, *Fiat Lux* (let there be light)!



# My Long Journey Toward Service

BY GRACE BUNEMANN

Raleigh, NC

**FEAR.** “Well, Grace, you’ve got about 10 micro-clots in each lung,” said Dr. Taylor, my emergency department physician. The impact of her words washed over me, crushing me with their weight as it dawned on me what Dr. Taylor was saying. Just 36 hours before, I had returned from the most amazing summer of my life, ready to begin the path I had planned for myself. But for the last 24 hours, I had been feeling physically terrible. And with the utterance of a single sentence, my life had completely flipped upside down.

**CALM.** Six weeks earlier, just hours before my May 2017 flight to Spain to walk the Camino de Santiago, I had completed and mailed the paperwork for my Peace Corps service. After so much indecision, I finally had a plan for my future. Everything seemed to come together perfectly – I had just graduated college, confirmed my Peace Corps assignment, and was now headed to Spain to fulfill a dream I’d had for more than six years.

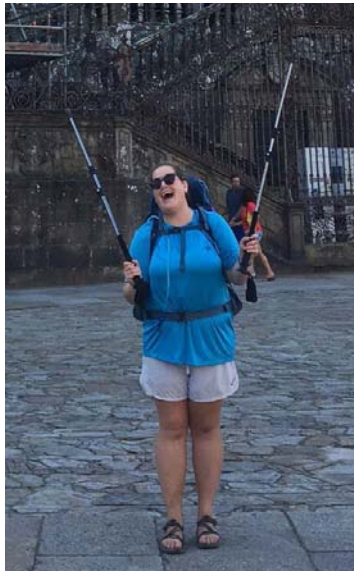
**TREPIDATION.** Purposely, this trip was leaps and bounds outside of my carefully crafted comfort zone. Could I make it 500-plus miles across Spain? Would my body carry me? Did I pack all that I needed? Would I be lonely? Questions like these plagued me in flight. My plan to have no plan was beginning to take its toll. But as many pilgrims say, the Camino will provide – and how perfectly it did. The Camino brought me a sense of joy and tranquility I had never quite experienced before. The people I met during my hike renewed my faith in humanity – whether in a shared meal, with a smile and a “Buen Camino,” or a new friend who carried my forgotten shirt for three days until he saw me again. And, I am still in awe of how easily international friendships can be formed by simply talking while walking. Those 30 days were the most incredible of my life. New friendships, new experiences, new understandings, new thought processes.

**DISTRESS.** Fast-forward six weeks and just back from Spain, I found myself sitting alone in the hospital with no idea what to do. My parents were out of the country, my sisters hundreds of miles away, and I lay in a hospital bed alone receiving lifesaving care for a

pulmonary condition that would end my Peace Corps service before I had even started it. All my careful planning was for nothing; I had no idea what my future held.

**SERENITY.** Practice what you preach, Grace! Everything happens for a reason, known or unknown. Once I was discharged and regained some semblance of my normal life, I began to focus on getting healthy and letting the rest fall into place. Little did I know how quickly it would. Support from family and friends plus a good sense of humor can do wonders. Perspective is key, and my new Camino outlook let me see things in a whole new light.

**CLARITY.** For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a physician, and thought that was something I would pursue after the Peace Corps. But now there would be no Peace Corps for me, and I would have to adjust my plan. My own recent health experiences confirmed my passion to serve others through a career in medicine. I want to be for someone who Dr. Taylor was for me. Before, during and after my hospitalization, I frequently turned to Rachel Naomi Remen’s article “Helping, Fixing, or Serving?”, where she explains that these three acts represent three different ways of seeing life. “When we serve,” she writes, “we don’t serve with our strength; we serve with ourselves, and we draw from all our experiences.” Being the patient had been an incredibly humbling experience for me, and I now understand more clearly what a career in medicine would mean for me.



Hiking across an entire country is a long journey – there are times of great uncertainty and doubt mixed with the best and happiest feelings. The path to a medical career is also a long journey; my experiences have taught me that life often places in our path the exact obstacles we need to encounter to learn and grow, and perhaps adjust our course. Now, I am ready to continue my Camino journey, as I return to school this autumn on the path to medicine.

*Editor’s note: Find Rachel Naomi Remen’s article “Helping, Fixing, or Serving?” at <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/honors/docs/communityengagement/HelpingFixingServing.pdf>*

# Camino de Limpieza



BY KARIN KISER

San Diego, CA

Empty water bottles. Food wrappers. Endless tissues. When I first walked the Camino, I was disheartened by the amount of trash. I ruminated for days over how people could walk an ancient path and leave anything but footprints behind.

The trash called out to me again on my second Camino. Nearly every tree I approached was surrounded by tissues and human waste. It defied explanation. Particularly along the Camino Francés, it's rare to travel 10 kilometers without passing a bar or café.

Did I take action then? Sadly, no. The last thing I wanted to do while fully loaded with backpack and poles was stop and collect rubbish. Bending down with a full pack seemed a Herculean task, so my cleanup efforts were limited to areas where I was already resting sans rucksack. It was something – but I wasn't satisfied.

Then came my third Camino. Time for action. I served as a hospitalera in Galicia and began picking

up trash in earnest. Not wanting to add to the waste, I converted the albergue's disposable pillowcases into dual-purpose makeshift garbage bags. During the two weeks I served, I assumed responsibility for the 3 kilometers on either side of the albergue and rounded up a dozen bags of waste. Success!

The experience was not without surprises. More than one passing pilgrim snapped a photo of me collecting trash. Another pilgrim, upon seeing me in a ditch on the opposite side of the path, picked up a can from his side – while wearing his backpack – and approached me with a huge smile as he deposited it in my repurposed pillowcase. It was, in a moment, equal parts touching and humbling. It inspired me to continue.

I scrapped my plan of walking the less-populated Camino del Norte during my remaining five weeks in Spain. Instead, I returned to Roncesvalles to resume my cleanup effort. I devised a three-day strategy. Day One: walk all day with my backpack and get lodging for three consecutive nights. Day Two: leave the pack in the room and walk back, collecting trash in the direction I had just traversed the day before. Day Three: walk ahead, clearing the path I would walk tomorrow. Then repeat. Obviously, I wasn't able to cover the entire Camino Francés in five weeks with this strategy, but I certainly put a dent in the Roncesvalles-Pamplona, Burgos-Sahagún and Ponferrada-La Faba sections. I collected 65 bags of trash on my Camino de Limpieza.

Collecting trash isn't the only way to serve the Camino. My transformation into an eco-peregrina was in four stages. Each one makes a difference:

- **Stage # 1: Leave the Camino as you found it.**
- **Stage # 2: Make it a bit better.**
- **Stage # 3: Make it way better.**
- **Stage # 4: Inspire others to help.**

Stage Four is where you come in. I'll be on the Camino again this year, trash bags in tow. Care to join me?

*Karin is the author of "Your Inner Camino" and "After the Camino." Part of the books' proceeds go toward Camino maintenance efforts.*



# The Service of Hospitaleros

American Pilgrims on the Camino has established a strong volunteer presence along the Camino. We work closely with the Spanish Federation of Associations of Friends of the Camino to provide hospitaleros in the 18 donativo albergues the Federation assists. In addition, many of our hospitalero volunteers have also served in private, municipal and parochial albergues not connected with the Federation. Hospitalero opportunities also exist in France, Portugal and Italy.

We offer our members hospitalero training several times a year in locations around the country. The Black Mountain hospitalero training session, which is scheduled just before this year's Gathering, is full. Additional opportunities for hospitalero training will be in June 2019 in Seattle, WA, and in Colorado Springs, CO, in September 2019. Check our website for details: [americanpilgrims.org](http://americanpilgrims.org).

## For the love of cycling, and the Camino, these guys are at your service

If you're considering making the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage by bicycle, you have a community of nearly 500 experienced cyclists willing to offer advice.

American Pilgrims on the Camino sponsors a Facebook group devoted to cycling the Camino. The two hardworking moderators, James Eychaner and Bruce Yost, are avid cyclists themselves. They keep conversations civil and filter blatant advertisements from the group so these don't get in the way of the information you seek and provide.

Route selection, bicycle rental and transport to and from the Camino are common conversation threads.

"I was a bicycle tourist before I heard of the Camino," James said. "I thought the route would make a splendid tour, and it exceeded my expectations. I bicycled the Camino Francés with my wife and later cycled the Via de la Plata solo."

James has also walked parts of the Camino Primitivo and the Camino Francés.

"Cycling takes more preparation and is logistically more challenging in



JAMES EYCHANER ON THE VIA DE LA PLATA IN 2011, JUST SOUTH OF SALAMANCA WITH HIS FRIEND, JACQUES, ON HIS BACK.

terms of gear," he said.

The Facebook group requires responses to three questions before you can be added. This is to ensure that only those who are

inherently interested in cycling the Camino are admitted. To join, go to [facebook.com/groups/CyclingAmericanPilgrims/](https://facebook.com/groups/CyclingAmericanPilgrims/).

# Answering a call to serve, my Camino continues

BY THOMAS A. LABUZIENSKI

South Bend, IN

Upon entering the Praza do Obradoiro in front of the Cathedral de Santiago de Compostela, I had tears running down my face. I felt a profound mix of emotions: joy, confidence, appreciation, sadness, accomplishment and disappointment. For nearly two weeks after my return home, those feelings continued. "Now what?" I kept asking myself.

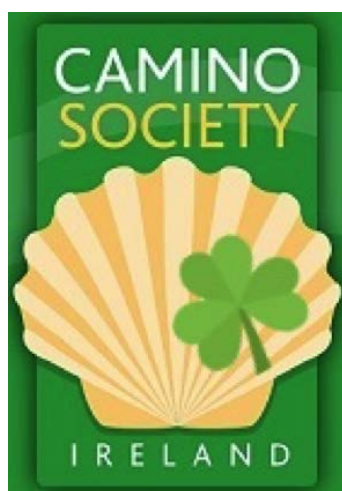
The answer came to me one Sunday in church as I found myself thinking about how I could share the Camino experience with others and serve them the way so many people along the Way were of service to me. I saw a vision of myself teaching a Camino class, meeting with fellow pilgrims, mentoring and encouraging new pilgrims.

I soon started teaching Camino and hiking classes in my home town. I joined the American Pilgrims on the Camino. Along with an inspiring and motivated fellow pilgrim named Chuck, we started a local chapter of the American Pilgrims, and our chapter now

gathers monthly. I attended the national Gathering of American Pilgrims last April in California. I now serve on the American Pilgrims board of directors, and know my membership and donation dollars are wisely used to serve those on the Camino de Santiago. I also look forward to the opportunity someday to spend my two weeks of vacation as a hospitalero in direct service to pilgrims.

The values that guide American Pilgrims on the Camino are Community, Service, Gratitude and Simplicity. Through the act of service – helping or doing work for others – I have found I am able to live all of these values. Service embraces gratitude as it is a very real way to help pay back the Camino for all it has done for me. Service connects the Camino community by listening to and sharing powerful personal experiences. Service fosters simplicity by finding uncomplicated ways to do good.

Those tears I shed upon reaching Santiago have turned to joy, as I now know we never really finish our Camino. In following a call to serve my pilgrim community, my Camino continues.



"SHAMROCKS AND SHELLS," THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMINO SOCIETY OF IRELAND, HAS MADE THE TRANSITION FROM A PAPER TO A WEB PUBLICATION. IN THE SPIRIT OF CONNECTING WITH THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF PILGRIMS, WE OFFER YOU THE NEWSLETTER WEBSITE [WWW.SHAMROCKSANDSHELLS.COM](http://WWW.SHAMROCKSANDSHELLS.COM). ON THE SITE YOU'LL FIND THE SOCIETY'S SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER ALONG WITH OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT ITS CAMINO ACTIVITIES. DAVID SMITH IS THE NEWSLETTER'S EDITOR.





# Cathedral Access and Masses in 2019



PLAZA DE LAS PLATERÍAS FROM THE ROOF OF THE CATHEDRAL, DURING A MUSEUM TOUR.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNE BORN, BRONX, NY

The scaffolding on the outside of the Cathedral of Santiago has come down, but the restoration work continues inside. As of Jan. 28, 2019, Masses moved to other venues in the city for the next year.

The daily Pilgrim Mass at noon is being celebrated in the Church of San Francisco. Other Masses during the day are being celebrated in churches throughout the city. See the Cathedral's website for a complete schedule: <http://catedraldesantiago.es/catedral/>

From March 1 – Nov. 20, 2019, Holy Mass in English will be celebrated at 9:30 a.m. Monday – Saturday in the chapel of the Pilgrim's Office, Centro Internacional de Acogida al Peregrino, Rúa das Carretas, 33, 15705 Santiago de Compostela.

Important Masses linked to a feast day, such as St. James' Day, will be held at the historic church of San Martín Pinário, considered a national monument.

[americanpilgrims.org](http://americanpilgrims.org)

Normal daily Masses (7:30 a.m., 9 a.m., 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. on weekdays, 6 p.m. on Saturdays, and 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Sundays) will be at the church of Santa María Salomé on Rua Nova.

The 11 a.m. mass at the Corticela Chapel, a parish within the Cathedral, will continue as normal.

Confessions in English will be heard from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Monday – Saturday at the Church of San Francisco.

The Cathedral itself remains open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m, accessible to the faithful, pilgrims and visitors alike. It's possible to embrace the statue of St. James and to descend to the apostolic crypt.

Visits to the Portico de la Gloria will continue.

The only Cathedral door that is open is the Porta das Platerías, which serves as both entrance and exit.

# Camino Preparation for the next Holy Year in 2021

BY YOSMAR MARTINEZ

American Pilgrims board member

This past February, the Association of the Municipalities of the Camino de Santiago invited American Pilgrims on the Camino to participate in a two-day meeting in Carrión de los Condes. Twenty-five representatives from 14 different international associations convened to discuss ways to improve the Camino in the lead up to the next Holy Year in 2021. It was a true working meeting. Each representative was asked to speak on one of the following six topics:

- Traditional hospitality: hospitaleros and albergues
- The Compostela Requirements and Overcrowding of the Camino
- Environment, Landscape and Nature
- Tourism and Pilgrimage
- Heritage of the Way
- Waymarking, Awareness and Multiplication of Routes

The Association of Municipalities will publish all the conclusions from this incredibly productive meeting. In the meantime, here are a few developments:

All the municipalities along the Camino Francés are working together to have consistent signage from one region to the next by Holy Year 2021. They are basing their efforts on signage guidelines issued by Xunta de Galicia a couple of years ago:

The shell is only an indicator that you are on the Camino; it is not directional.

Only the yellow arrow serves as a directional indicator.

At certain points, pilgrims will see yellow arrows accompanied by yellow walkers or cyclists, indicating the best path for each type of pilgrim.

Some signs will contain white arrows to indicate services (albergues, bus stations, health center, etc.) along with distances from the Camino.



ON THE CAMINO FRANCÉS, MAY 2013.

BARBARA ZANG, WORCESTER, MA, PHOTOGRAPHER

The Association of Municipalities of the Camino is testing appCamino, which helps pilgrims keep track of their distances while on the Camino, store photos to the cloud, find their way back to the Camino, find services such as albergues, health centers, and post offices, and report crime. The app also sends notifications to pilgrims along the way for issues that pilgrims should be aware of such as snowfall, flooding, etc.

A representative from the Guardia Civil also shared its own app, AlertCOPS, which utilizes geotracking. This allows pilgrims to send alerts with images or videos to the nearest emergency center, chat directly with a support agent or receive security news and notifications sent by public security services yielding faster and more efficient attention to pilgrims. Pilgrims will also be able to share their position with friends and family and with the public security center that provides this service. This is a particularly useful feature when a group of pilgrims is walking at different paces or in the event a pilgrim gets lost or hurt in a remote area. The app is accessible for the hearing impaired.

Both apps are available in Spanish, English, French and German. AlertCOPS is also available in Italian, Russian and Basque. Both apps are available in iOS and Android.



## BOOK REVIEWS

# Blisters, Blessings and a Great Read

**BLISTERS AND BLESSINGS: IN PURSUIT OF THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA'S HEADLESS SAINT**  
**BY JEAN GOULDEN**  
**KALYX DAWN 2018**  
**130 PAGES**

**REVIEWED BY KATHLEEN O'BRIEN CUNNINGHAM**  
 Bainbridge Island, WA

When my husband and I were preparing for our Camino (beginning in Le Puy in 2011), we were hungry for anything, and I mean *anything*, Camino. At the time, there were very few books in English about the Camino (including translations), and as we were anxious about the "details" we focused on resources (books and websites) that offered long lists of "must haves." Those included night lamps, water purifiers, bedrolls and other gear we would, frankly, never end up needing, ever. They did include some great tips, and we availed ourselves of these to the pleasure of reduced blisters, dehydration and bedbug bites.

By the time we concluded our Camino in 2016, along with hundreds of thousands of others, we began to see lots more personal stories, including video blogs, full-length movies and books. "Blisters and Blessings" is one of these. In some ways, the book offers more to pilgrims who are currently walking the Camino (although most of us would not think of carrying anything beyond our map/guides!) or those who have completed it, more than to novices preparing for The Way.

The book is a quick read (I did it in a sitting) and offers a treasure chest of memories. With just a phrase, the book transports the delighted pilgrim reader back to the trail, the albergue, the café and the Cathedral. How can you not relate to looking for shade anywhere you can find it? (Corn stalks when desperate!) Or being confused because apparently you were supposed to buy a meal ticket the night before, and without it you can't grab one of those beautiful croissants on the breakfast bar in O Cebreiro! And because Goulden was walking the path with her partner, her book brought back times



when my husband and I were challenged as a team. I appreciated her honest reflections in this regard.

In addition to walking down memory lane, I appreciated the bits of history (and pre-history) integrated into the journey at appropriate stations along the route. Goulden has done her homework here. She also offers a bit of the mystical, with a series of "postcards" to friends and a chapter written from the perspective of the Cathedral of Santiago offering light to those who enter and pray. Finally, I appreciated how the author tied the three-legged journey to what was happening in her life and the world in general. It's a great read!

## BOOK REVIEWS

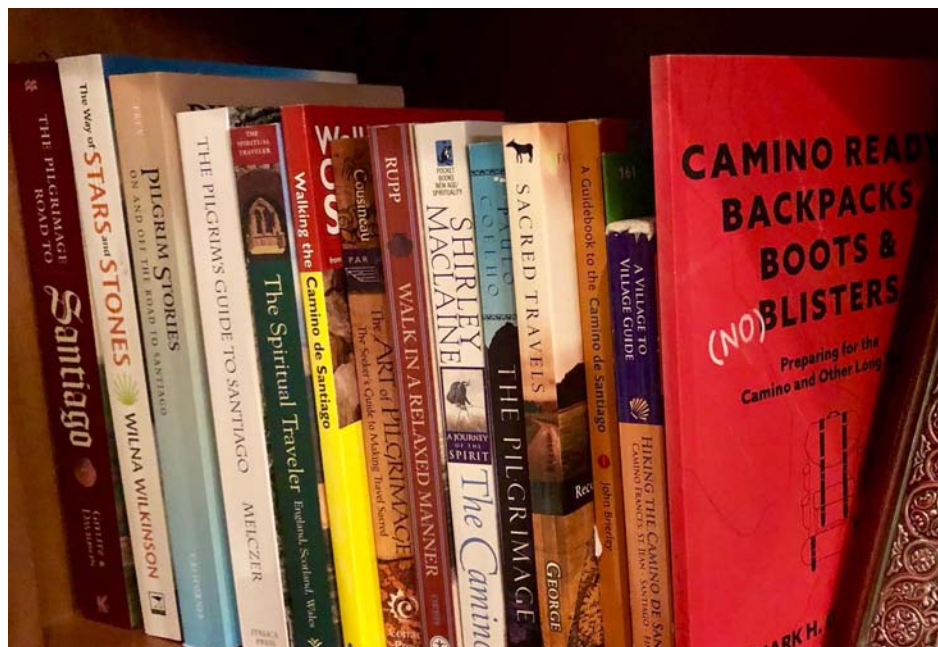
# An Essential Pilgrim's Handbook

**"CAMINO READY. BACKPACKS,  
BOOTS & (NO) BLISTERS:  
PREPARING FOR THE CAMINO AND  
OTHER LONG TREKS"**

**BY MARK H. O'SULLIVAN**

**CREATESPACE INDEPENDENT  
PUBLISHING 2018 (SECOND EDITION)**

**83 PAGES, COLOR PHOTOS**



**REVIEWED BY ANN LOAR**

Lewes, DE

Whether you are planning your first pilgrimage, have walked the Camino once, or have hiked it multiple times, you will discover indispensable planning and equipment advice in Mark O'Sullivan's latest edition of "Camino Ready. Backpacks, Boots & (no) Blisters." Using expertise gained while walking a number of Camino routes and gleaned from fellow pilgrims, O'Sullivan provides fundamental and unique ideas in nine well-organized chapters that can make your pilgrimage as pain-free and pleasurable as possible.

O'Sullivan's chapters include advice on footwear and blister prevention, clothing, physical prep, backpacks and weight, water and poles. While he shares in Chapter One what works best for him regarding footwear and blisters, O'Sullivan strongly advises the reader to explore a variety of boots, shoes and blister prevention to find what works best for each person's foot shape and physiology.

The chapter I found most intriguing was Chapter Two, "Walking as a 'System'." O'Sullivan talks about the actual mechanics of walking, step length, posture, where and how to center your weight as you walk, consideration of a hiker's pre-Camino physical condition, and the importance of water and recovery time in

this "system." I've adopted his method in my daily life and have discovered physical improvements even off the trail.

Chapter Four, "Your 'Getting Fit' Plan and Program," outlines how to physically prepare for the hike. His 12-week training schedule covers activity, frequency, distance and related comments for each week – for example, how much weight to carry, suggestions on trail/ground surface and varying elevation, and when to trim toenails (yep – that's in there!). So impressed with his schedule, I now have it in my calendar as I prepare for walking the Way of St. Francis this fall, despite it being my fifth pilgrimage and my ninth long hike.

The chapter on blisters is comprehensive and focuses on a multitude of causes, prevention and treatment. When writing about water, O'Sullivan evaluates the benefits of carrying bladders versus bottles. He also addresses the pilgrim's voiding of water and the importance of packing out toileting trash. A final chapter and two appendices present a variety of tips, including information about phones, Wi-Fi, apps and other resources, safety and security, albergues and bed bugs.

Though my Camino-related library overflows its shelf in my home, I've made space for O'Sullivan's essential guide.



## BOOK REVIEWS

# Camino Pilgrim Guides

"ST. JAMES WAY – A PILGRIM WAY FROM READING TO SOUTHAMPTON"

"CAMINO FRANCÉS – SAINT-JEAN-PIED-DE-PORT TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA"

"CAMINO PORTUGUÉS CENTRAL – PORTO TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA VIA CENTRAL ROUTE"

"CAMINO PORTUGUÉS DE LA COSTA – PORTO TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA VIA COASTAL, SEASIDE AND SPIRITUAL ROUTES"

"CAMINO INGLÉS – FERROL OR A CORUÑA TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA"

CONFRATERNITY OF ST. JAMES, UK

2018/19

PAPERBACK, VARIOUS LENGTHS

REVIEWED BY STEVEN G. RINDAHL

Cibolo, TX

It seems many reviews of guidebooks will make reference or comparison to the Brierley guide as a commonly known point of reference. Therefore, I must begin this review by stating that I do not have, and have never used, the Brierley guide. I have walked the Camino twice using information available online, asking other experienced pilgrims for tips, and just showing up and seeing what happens. I do have the Brierley maps-only book, which I use for distance and elevation. With that information, I can provide you with a comparison of the value of the included maps and elevation charts in the CSJ guidebooks.

These guidebooks are quite compact, measuring 4 5/8" x 6 3/8", and all are under 3/8" thick. These will easily fit in a Ziplock bag for dry storage in your pack. The pages are plain paper rather than glossy. This makes them easier to read by eliminating any glare off the page from the sun. However, this also makes them less resistant to damage from dirt and sweat.

The maps and elevation charts are drawn right to left rather than left to right. I found this confusing at first, and it took a while before I could read them at anything close to comfortably but never naturally. The elevation charts are of similar size to those found in the Brierley map book. Some of the information

is different and/or not included, creating a "cleaner" chart. Personal preference will determine which you find superior. The maps, on the other hand, are significantly smaller and largely devoid of any information other than the course of the path. These maps, being so small, did not seem to provide any added value over simply walking and watching for arrows.

Regarding other information, these books provide the essentials. The first few pages contain the key for reading the guide's information. Even without it, the guidebooks seem intuitive. In the listings for albergues, you have PR for Private, W for Washer, D for Dryer, etc. Prices and phone numbers are provided as well as for some, but not all, a quick comment as to the quality. There is also brief information as to what other amenities can be found in the villages. Additionally, the guides include listings for the local churches and the Mass times.

These seem to be good books if you only want the basic information. If you want more information about the locations, sights, places to visit, etc., then you will want a more robust guidebook. If you want quality maps, then you will either want a different guidebook or will need to supplement these with a separate map book. Personally, already owning a map book I like, I would happily add one of these guidebooks for the information they contain about albergues and Mass times.

“If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito.”

– BETTY REESE

## BOOK REVIEWS

# A Nice Gift for Spiritual Walkers

**SPIRITUAL AND WALKING GUIDE: LEÓN TO SANTIAGO**  
**STACEY WITTIG**  
**SPIRITUAL AND WALKING GUIDES**  
**2016 (SECOND EDITION)**  
**104 PAGES**

**REVIEWED BY LAURIE FERRIS**  
 Oakland, CA

Arizona-based freelance travel writer Stacey Wittig thought of everything when writing this guidebook covering the last major section of the Camino Francés. It not only includes daily prayers for reflection, but also has details on where to sleep and contains daily walking

distances. Even though I have walked different Camino routes, I enjoyed reading this book cover to cover for the practical tips on lodging and pilgrim etiquette. For example, when writing about waking up early to be alone and meditate, she reminds the reader to respect the sleeping pilgrims and abide by the earliest arise time set by individual albergues. She also shares tales of interesting people she met along the way.

This book would make a nice gift for someone who enjoys reading Bible scriptures and wants to deepen their spirituality on the Camino. Blank pages are included between sections that can be used as a travel journal or sketchbook, capturing moments of inspiration.

## Roy Uprichard's Camino Duology

**"RESTLESS HEARTS: WALKING THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO"**  
**ROY UPRICHARD**  
**2016**  
**PAPERBACK, 226P**

**REVIEWED BY STEVEN G. RINDAHL**  
 Cibolo, TX

This tale should be on your reading list whether you are a veteran pilgrim, planning your first walk or have never even heard of Santiago. Regardless of where you fall in that list, you will enjoy this book for the author's keen insight regarding the interplay of national identity, personal and collective conflict, the effects of faith and of the lack of faith.

Uprichard draws from a deep well of experience and education to entertain and inform his readers. As a result, the reader is treated to a review of the region's history and its many intersections with morals and social mores. Additionally, he examines the different ways faith influences a pilgrimage, even as he explores his own faith journey.

Adding further interest is how Uprichard made his Camino. Having walked the last 100 kilometers in his first go, he decides to make another pilgrimage starting in St. Jean Pied de Port. He does this walk in three stages, each of which are in three different seasons and with different companions (including

periods on his own). The dynamics of changing weather, regions and companions all elicit different reflections, and none disappoint.

Treat yourself. Get a copy of this book and settle in with un café poco or un vino tinto for a literary pilgrimage sure to pique your desire to walk across Spain.

**STONE & WATER: WALKING THE SPIRITUAL VARIANT OF THE CAMINO PORTUGUÉS**  
**ROY UPRICHARD**  
**2ND REVISED EDITION, 2018**  
**PAPERBACK, 146P**

This book is a wonderful follow-up to the terrific "Restless Hearts: Walking the Camino de Santiago." After having undergone a rather dramatic spiritual renewal on his first Camino, Uprichard is the returning pilgrim who is now expanding and enhancing his rekindled faith. This time, Uprichard travels the Stone and Water route of the Camino Portugués also known as the *Variante Espiritual*.

Like his earlier volume, "Stone & Water" invites the reader to share in the experience and exploration at whatever depth is preferred. You may simply engage in the appreciation for the tranquil pathway of the *Variante Espiritual* or you may, like Uprichard, connect with the "carpenter's son" and learn from his itinerant



# CAMINO – I'M FEELING YOU

BY JOE GINORIO

Frederick, MD

*Eds. Note: Member Joe Ginorio wrote this folk song in 2018 to remember his Camino, help you remember yours and inspire those of you who are thinking about walking a Camino.*

To listen, [click here](#).

Woke up this morning - another day – Will it be like the others, just can't say  
Slipped on my hiking boots and, pulled my backpack on  
Oh, I'm feeling you  
Felt the cool morning - breeze on my face, café con leche is a sweet embrace,  
Now the road looks long and winding, thank God - it's not a race  
Oh, I'm feeling you

And I know it's a long time gone, since we've made this connection  
but I feel it's not foregone, that we know this affection  
Step by step – our journey's all our own

If you get weary along the road - Worry not Camino friends will lighten the load  
Our journey together is our - next episode  
Oh, I'm feeling you

Ancient trees sing their magic song - Hear their voices say that - we all belong  
Let go those heavy loads you carried way too long  
Oh, I'm feeling you

And I know it's a long time gone, since we've made this connection  
but I feel it's not foregone, that we know this affection  
Step by step – ever deeper - Step by step – our journey's all our own

Day after day our journey has to say - We are a special gift to all, in every way  
Love for each other is - the only song to play  
Oh, I'm feeling you

And I know it's a long time gone, since we've made this connection  
but I feel it's not foregone, that we know this affection  
Step by step – ever deeper - Step by step – ever-sweeter  
Step by step – our journey's all our own - our journey brings us HOME



## DUOLOGY FROM PAGE 1

teachings of divine grace and mercy. The writing style allows you to enter into these aspects as deeply (or not) as you wish.

Finally, there is Uprichard's demonstrated ability to weave together history, myth and his experiences all

while describing a little-known section of the Camino. The reader gets to walk along with Uprichard enjoying nature, local villages and the few other pilgrims he encounters. As someone who had never considered Portuguese routes, I am now more than a little tempted to walk the *Variante Espiritual*.

# Finisterre: A New Beginning at the End of the Earth

BY LINDA THORNTON

Georgetown, TX

Finisterre is Latin for “end of the earth.” Back when the world was still thought of as flat, this was considered its end. Like Muxía, this town has a population of about 5,000 and is also a fishing port, but there is something so much more charming and robust about this city. It has a thriving city center and streets that meander up and down the hills along the ocean.

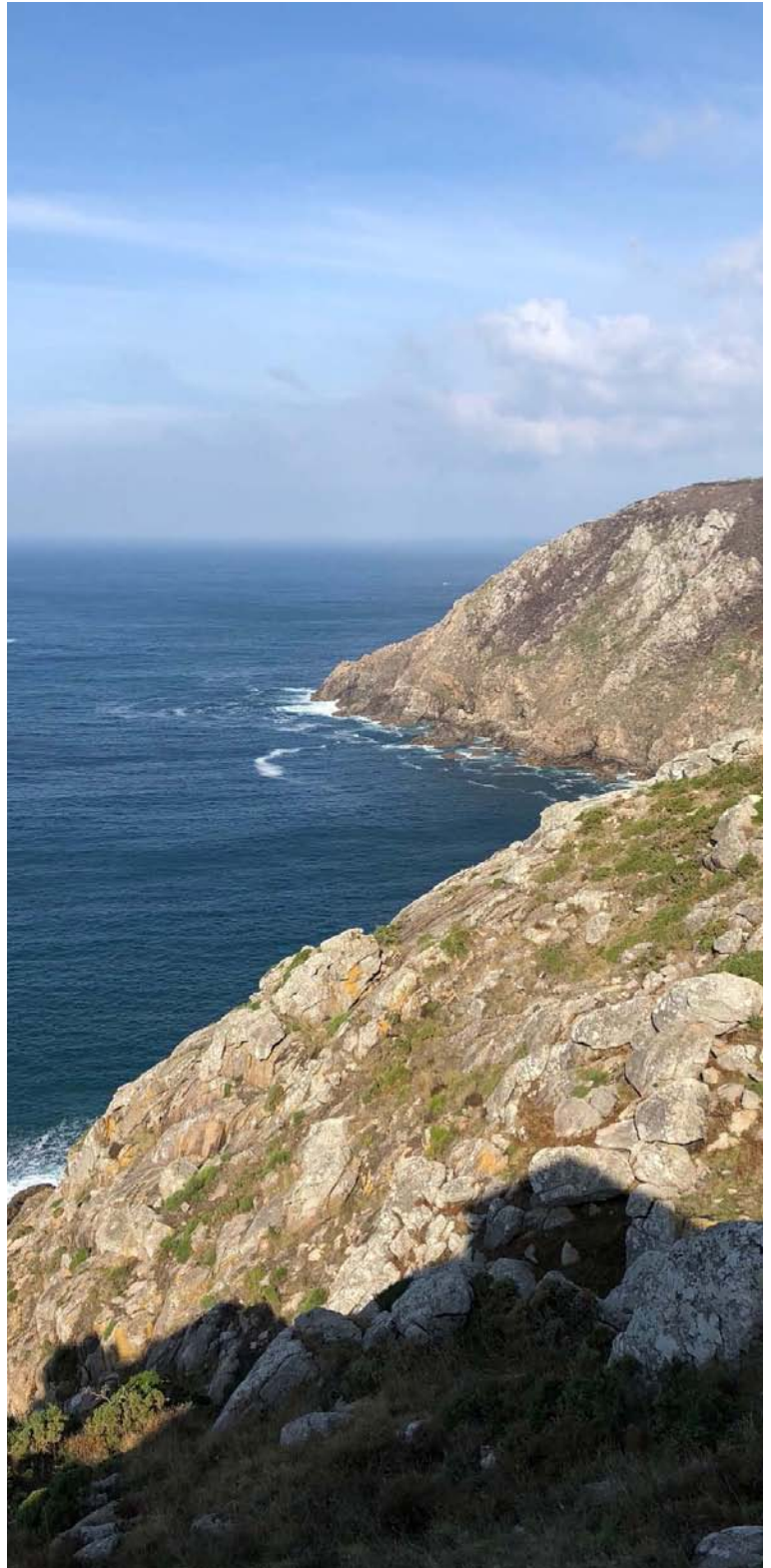
We head to the lighthouse, the area’s beacon since 1853, and pause at a bronze boot statue. Perched on a rock, it’s a symbol to all pilgrims of the end of their journey. While we are initially surprised at the number of tour buses and pilgrims here, we find an unexpected silence as we climb up to the boulders at the ocean’s edge. Unlike the rough seas of Muxía, here the ocean is tranquil, lapping at the sun-dappled rocks, lulling us into stillness and leaving us speechless.

I situate myself on a flat rock and sit cross-legged with my eyes closed and my hands in prayer at my heart. Out of nowhere, I hear the sound of a flute; a young man has chosen this spot to play for tips. His melody harmonizes with the sound of the waves, and I experience such peace. For a moment, I feel as if I am outside my body and wonder if this is what practicing meditation correctly feels like. The word “peace” keeps coming to mind, and I tell myself that I don’t want to forget this feeling when I go back to my busy life.

Eyes now open, I feel energized, yet so serene.

It’s been a long day. As we head back to our hotel, I notice two older pilgrims walking toward us. The one who looks like Santa Claus (except he’s wearing sandals and shorts) stops in front of me and hands me something. I hesitate and shake my head no, but he insists and says, “Yes, for you.”

He walks on, and I look down to see what he has given me. It is a card with a hand-drawn picture of a dove in royal blue paint. Across the bottom is the word again. “Peace, Paz.”



ON THE ROCKS AT CAPE FINISTERRE.  
LINDA THORNTON, PHOTOGRAPHER.



# The Camino: Rite of Retirement Passage



PILGRIMS BEGINNING THE 'SEPARATION' STAGE OF THEIR WALK INTO RETIREMENT. PILGRIM'S OFFICE IN ST. JEAN PIED-DE-PORT, APRIL 2011  
ADAM WELLS, PHOTOGRAPHER

**BY LOU FLESSNER**  
Lawrence, KS  
**AND ADAM WELLS**  
London, UK

For many, letting go of a lifelong career and moving into the freedom of retirement is a more difficult transition than expected. Many experience shock, abrupt awakening, even panic. Not a few wonder if the best years of life are now behind, leaving little new ahead. Unlike childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, society today lacks structured patterns to guide retirees through this new landscape.

To provide a roadmap for transitioning between life stages, traditional cultures performed rites of passage. These "journeys" reoriented individuals for the new responsibilities and challenges of their next life stage.

Rites of passage have provided liminal space between the old life and the new in three distinct phases:

**Separation:** detachment from an earlier stable state, the old life.

**Transformation:** a transition time of ambiguity and vulnerability.

**Reintegration:** acceptance of new status/rights/obligations of a new stable state.

The Camino Francés offers liminal space for pilgrims transitioning from adulthood into elderhood.

## **Stage 1: Separation (St Jean Pied-de-Port - Burgos):**

'Loss', 'confusion' and 'looking for new direction' are common retirement challenges. The income, daily routine, identity, community and meaning that are provided by employment are lost and must be released to fully transition into retirement.

## **Stage 2: Transformation: (Burgos - León)**

An effective death to the old and birth into the new involves both loss and gain. Old self-concepts and behaviors are abandoned for ones that can better serve a new life. Work identity, status and power are traded for independence and the freedom to live more from the heart. Greater income is exchanged for greater awareness. Loss of time with colleagues offers more with friends, family and the wider community.

## **Stage 3: Reintegration: (León – Santiago de Compostela)**

Elders have traditionally held a crucial, honored role in the human family. For those willing to outgrow adulthood, the Camino can, in our own day, provide a conscious journey into elderhood. New strengths, abilities and wisdom can be "lived into." Being an elder can be rich, real, deep and meaningful. Conscious elders can follow a new calling, moving beyond ego to become more authentic and engaged. The Camino, as a rite of passage, can make the final developmental stage the pinnacle of a life's pilgrimage.

# A Story of Hope for the Discouraged Pilgrim

BY KEN PESEK

Fort Garland, CO

Some Camino stories are for those who have walked it and wish to relive an experience of a lifetime. This one is for those convinced they might never be able to walk it.

My interest in walking the Camino sparked when I took a Spanish literature and culture class in 1996. Later, my desire to walk was stoked by my wife's encouragement, seeing the movie "The Way," and hearing other pilgrims' stories. But chronic back pain, unsuccessful surgeries and treatments, and various other physical and financial hardships dampened my Camino flame.

About a year and a half ago, my wife and I retired to the mountains in southern Colorado. The combination of access to a swimming pool, walking at 9,000 feet, and the beauty of nature slowly healed what my doctor had described as an 80-year-old back in a 60-year-old body. A Camino now seemed possible.

We booked our flight to Madrid for the end of August 2018, and began gathering equipment and other resources. By June 2018 we started seriously training on the mountain roads of the Sangre de Cristos, the southernmost subrange of the Rocky Mountains. Within a few weeks our training halted when a wildfire forced us to evacuate our home and the area. After two fretful weeks, we received word that our home was somehow spared, and we would continue with our Camino plans.

Our training abbreviated, we began walking the Camino Francés from Roncesvalles on Aug. 30, 2018. Eighteen days in, I developed tendinitis. My wife continued walking while I would take a taxi or bus to the next town. After 10 days, I rejoined the walk from Trabadelo, and we arrived in Santiago Oct. 3.



A DOCTOR EVALUATES KEN PESEK AT A CLINIC.  
KAREN PESEK, PHOTOGRAPHER

I share my story to offer hope to those who may think they are too old, too weak or too poor to walk the Camino. I walked over 300 miles with my backpack – surprising myself and my doctor, who said I am a poster child for recovery. Maybe Camino miracles really can happen.

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“To give real service you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity.”

– DOUGLAS ADAMS



# Camino – A Daily Celebration!

BY DAVID JENNINGS

Lake Tahoe, NV

On the Camino, regardless of which route you choose, each day provides a reason for celebration: the miles walked, the friends and angels encountered, the history and natural wonders, and the ups and downs of the day's experience. Each day builds upon the next.

Along the way, you may endure the monotony of the long, flat, Meseta area, the fear of the danger of a mountain passage or the ugliness of the industrial approaches to the larger cities. These times are just part of the mix.

Into this mix, you have those tranquillo natural scenes highlighted by historic works of man, a scene made for a photo op or a journal entry.



CAMINO PORTUGUÉS (COASTAL ROUTE), OCTOBER 2016  
DAVID JENNINGS, PHOTOGRAPHER

Also, stirred into the mix is stopping for lunch, and the stop turns into a reunion of pilgrim friends made in earlier days. A stop that rejuvenates body and soul.



Then adding to the mix a dash of camaraderie, sharing the way with a multicultural band of like-minded pilgrims. This band has no social rankings, no political, cultural, religious discrimination. All are covered by the one title: pilgrim.



LE PUY, FRANCE (VIA GEBENNENSIS), OCTOBER 2014  
DAVID JENNINGS, PHOTOGRAPHER

What a wonderful mixture it becomes. Meeting the challenges, and the interaction with fellow pilgrims, with locals, and more importantly with your own inner-person, makes it a journey of discovery. Day to day on the Camino is a life changing experience for many.

Be aware though, that once walked, the "Way," may call you back. *Ultreia!*

LEFT: CAMINO FRANCÉS, MAY 2012  
DAVID JENNINGS, PHOTOGRAPHER

# Thoughts on Service and Community



**BY ALISON T. SMITH**

Mount Pleasant, SC

*Editor's Note: The writer is a college professor who has taken students on short segments of the Camino and is now thinking about how to mindfully engage students in service along the Camino.*

When considering a service project, we usually focus on the task and where it will be performed. But these are less important than the frame of mind we bring to the project. Why we are choosing to serve? If we fail to explore our motives, we may inadvertently put the project in jeopardy. At times, perhaps on an unconscious level, our actions may be motivated by a yearning for self-aggrandizement. While this is a natural response, it can be overcome through proper preparation to serve with a dose of self-awareness.

Service is fundamentally about serving in community, the broader human community of which we all are part and the smaller community in which the service assignment will unfold. It is essential that we remain ever mindful that we are serving alongside others and learning from them instead of helping them.

Service is not a one-way street; there will always be an exchange, and participants on both ends of the exchange will be richer for it. In addition to the inherent reward of being part of a community, the volunteer will also gain in cultural and perhaps linguistic knowledge. Each opportunity to learn from people of diverse backgrounds enriches our perspective and allows us to view situations via a multiplicity of lenses. This newly gained outlook is itself an ample reward for our service.

In working with college student groups, I have encountered directors of student programs who are actively thinking about the message they send to potential volunteers. Some have decided to forego the nomenclature "service learning" and are reinventing their mission as "community engaged learning." This reframes how students understand their role from the start. When we are serving outside of the context of a college or a faith group, it is perhaps even more important for us to consider ourselves as being engaged in a community rather than as acting individually.

In the end, this may be what it is all about—finding our place in the human community and living our lives in such a way that the world, and we, are better for it.



*The mission of American Pilgrims on the Camino is to foster the enduring tradition of the Camino by supporting its infrastructure, by gathering pilgrims together, and by providing information and encouragement to past and future pilgrims.*

### DO YOU HAVE CAMINO IMPRESSIONS TO SHARE?

With every issue we are delighted anew by the quality, variety and abundance of submissions – and especially by the fact that so many are from first-time contributors. Your enthusiasm for the Camino and for “La Concha” as a medium for sharing that enthusiasm keeps us going.

The theme for the June issue is our organization’s value of Simplicity. So, please tell us, in 400 words or fewer, how you practice this value in your daily life, in your community, in your chapter? The submission deadline is May 28, 2019.

We welcome poems, photographs, essays and more. We ask that you follow these simple submission guidelines:

\*Be an American Pilgrims on the Camino member.

\*Include your city/state of residence.

\*Keep to the 400-word limit and submit to newsletter@

americanpilgrims.org as a Word document. We will review a longer, tightly written submission of no more than 800 words.

\*Include photographs or illustrations as jpegs. Please don’t embed these in the Word document; send them separately. And send captions with these.

For more detailed guidelines, please visit Newsletter on the American Pilgrims website.

We also welcome your help. If you have editing, photography or design skills you’d like to contribute to your organization, we want to hear from you at newsletter@americanpilgrims.org.

We welcome your questions, comments, and submissions at newsletter@americanpilgrims.org. ¡Buen Camino!

¡Buen Camino!

Erin Cooper, Sara Steig Gradwohl, Elaine Hopkins, Amy Horton, Beth Jusino,  
Zita Macy, Catherine Magyera and Barbara Zang

MARCH 2019 TEAM “LA CONCHA”

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### American Pilgrims on the Camino

120 State Avenue NE #303 • Olympia, WA 98501-1131  
Fax: 1 650 989-4057 • www.americanpilgrims.org

American Pilgrims on the Camino is registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization.