

Traveling Light on the Camino de Santiago

"Some Practicalities for Planning your Journey"

by Myrna J Aavedal, Seattle, WA, 2017

The following notes were compiled as a result of my experiences on the Camino to assist future travelers in their preparation for their own adventures.

Some of the topics included are: * traveling solo or not * sending ahead any items you want to eliminate from your pack but do not want to discard completely; * evaluating and buying footwear, backpacks, sleeping bags, trekking poles, and other gear; * suggested reading references: * securing your pack if you are checking it on airplane; * references about travel logistics, * sources for other practical information, and * a suggested pre-departure experiment. You may want to print a few of the pages of this document for the references it contains. This is fairly long article.(15 pages), you may want to print some or all of it or to read it more than once.

Following is a summary of my background:

- I am a member of American Pilgrims on the Camino, (APOC) and its Puget Sound Chapter, and I have walked the *Camino Frances*, the *Caminho Português*, and have served as a volunteer *hospitalera*. You may contact me at aavedal@aol.com.
- I currently work part time at the REI store in Seattle, WA (Recreational Equipment, Inc., REI.com), so some of my suggestions and references relate to products found there. Specific products change over time and may not always be available. Of course, there are several other sources for gear that may also meet of your needs.
- I occasionally do presentations about the Camino at REI and other locations. These notes were developed to accompany those talks. The opinions and suggestions are based mostly on my own experiences. If you ask ten other pilgrims what they recommend, you may get ten different opinions.

Planning Your Trip

Traveling light on the Camino Means Traveling "**Un-encumbered**".

Un-Encumbered means not only the weight of the gear that you carry on your back, but the "baggage" that weighs you down personally, psychologically, or logistically.

If you want to walk the Camino the **first thing to do** is to decide to do it. I mean, **really decide, and set a date**. It is so empowering and motivating to make the decision and then work toward departure.

The **second thing to do** is consider your time constraints.

- Think through all the possible things you want to do before and after the journey and how much time the journey itself might take (adding in a day or so of rest days or possible sick days) and come up with a time frame.
- If you have solid or severe time constraints, start your journey at a location closer to Santiago. You can do as some people do and walk the Camino in multiple stages. Your experiences may be different from walking it all at one time, but nevertheless they will be rewarding.
- In my experience, the pilgrimage itself is an experience of a life time. Let it happen. Do the Camino on the Camino's time frame not yours.
- Are you planning on traveling before or after walking the Camino? There is much more of Spain and see and enjoy.
- You may need to have access to other clothes, travel reference material, etc. after you finish the Camino. Plan how to deal with it.
- Or, you may need to lighten your pack while on your journey, but you don't want to abandon important objects.

Following are a few options for dealing with "stuff" you do not want to carry on the Camino: Do Not consider this if the items are of high value or are irreplaceable. There are risks to anything. However, I have been successful using these options for ordinary stuff.

1 Before you leave home, or while you are on the Camino, mail things addressed to yourself to the Post office in Santiago. For example I mailed travel literature about Madrid etc. to myself because I only needed it after I finished the Camino.

Following is an example of how to address a package to yourself in Santiago. You can also check with the local Post office in Spain.

Your name as it appears on your Passport

Your estimated arrival date(Ligada como 7 de Octubre 2017)

Note: the above means "Arrival about Oct 7, 2017"

LISTA De CORREOS • 15780 Santiago de Compostela • A Coruña
Santiago de Compostela, • SPAIN

Verify this information at: <http://www.americanpilgrims.org/camino/faqs.html#correos>

By the way, as long as you are in a post office, buy a generous supply of Postage stamps for mailing cards to friends. As with most places in the world, it is very easy to buy postcards, but more difficult to buy postage stamps. Unique or commemorative stamps are an inexpensive and low volume souvenir. The staff at the albergue will usually post them for you.

2. Make reservations at a reputable hotel in Santiago or another planned destination. Personally arrange with them to receive packages for you and hold until your arrival or to store your belongings that you are not taking on the Camino.

3. Another reliable site I used is Ivar Rekve's "Luggage storage in Santiago de Compostela" (<https://www.caminodesantiago.me/luggage-storage-in-santiago-de-compostela/>). His site explains his service.

Money & Expenses

- ATM's are readily available. I take at least two different ATM cards in case one does not work (one from a bank, one from a credit union). Withdraw enough for several days at a time. I have also learned to take two credit cards, in case one does not work. Make your ATM transaction during the hours the bank is open so if there is any problem you can immediately speak to the bank staff/
- Be sure to notify your financial institutions when and where you will be traveling, so your credit and debit card will be accepted.
- Buy and use an under-your-clothes money belt. There is a Rick Steve's model and there is a good nylon one from Eagle Creek. The money belt is where you will guard your bank cards, U.S. cash, extra Euros, Passport, and any other emergency or vital info. Do not take it off until you shower, and then watch it closely. Also, keep a copy of your passport ID page and any other vital information in a different location than your passport.
- Consider carrying a small day use wallet in a waist pack. In that wallet carry only the cash you may spend that day or only as much you can "afford to lose".
- Money estimates are so variable, it depends how much you want to spend on food and drink. To save some money consider eating picnic lunches or dinners of things you buy at the grocery store.
- Most of the time you will use cash on the Camino. You are dealing with small businesses.

Your Pilgrim Credential

- Don't forget to order your **Pilgrim Credential at least 2 months before your departure**, some people will call it a "pilgrim-passport") This is where the albergues you stay at will stamp the Credential that you will then present in Santiago to receive your Compostela.
<http://www.americanpilgrims.org/request-a-credential>

Travel Solo or Not

- An important consideration is whether you will embark in this journey solo or with a companion.
- My friend Marcia traveled with a great traveling companion; Martha went with her husband, Jim. Each had a great time.
- I traveled solo; (many of the people you meet will also be solo.) I am sure that I would have had a very different journey if I had travel with a partner. And I would have felt "encumbered".

Here is what I believe are the advantages of approaching this journey solo:

- You have control of your own time: stop when and where you want, and linger where you feel moved to linger.
- See what you want to see. Walk at the pace you want.
- You choose the times you want to be by yourself and the times you mingle with others.
- You can take the time and opportunity to talk with other pilgrims. You will meet some many other fascinating people. I've always found that talking one-on-one with other pilgrims is different than talking with a couple.
- And you have more time to get acquainted with yourself, as well as with other pilgrims and local people.

Notes on Having a fantastic trip

How else can you become encumbered?

You could become encumbered by personal choices such as "taking on the problems of another traveler.

Or encumbered by schedules that are too tight. You don't want to be the person who says, "OMG, my flight leaves in three days and I am still far from Santiago!"

Or encumbered by your "fears". Don't pack your fears and take them with you. What kind of fears?? For example:

e.g. "I've never traveled alone before." Or "How will I know what bus to take?" Or "How will I manage when I don't speak the language?" Or, "I better take the contents of my medicine cabinet in case I get sick." Or "I'll take some ace bandages, just in case, or take another sweater in case I get really cold."

If any of the things you are considering carrying can be described as "**I might need this**", that is the sign that you should NOT take it. If you really need something you can buy it there.

If learning some Spanish before you go is something you want to do, I suggest the Pimsleur method. <http://www.pimsleur.com/>, Even a little Spanish goes a long way. Although I can already manage in Spanish, I used the Pimsleur audio files when I was preparing for Portugal and they were very useful! A private tutor can be very useful too.

Preparation for the Journey

One of my book recommendations was written by Kevin Cobb. (see page for reading references). Cobb was over 50, over weight, out-of-shape, had a stressful job, and his only training was to take one long walk before he left home wearing his brand new hiking boots and carrying his heavy pack. Although that sounds like recipe for disaster, he did make it to Santiago and his account of the journey is inspirational.

However, I suggest **you** take training hikes. Training hikes are essential. On the Camino it is very common to walk 12 (to 18) miles a day with (maybe) a 20 pound pack. To prepare, I recommend that you do the following:

- Take walks around your area with weight in your backpack. Here is a helpful hint for when you are first starting this process. One quart of water weighs 2 pounds. Fill up your pack with several of these. Then, in the early stages of your training, if the pack gets heavy just stop and empty out a quart or two.
- Once you are ready to try something more strenuous try hikes in the mountains. Use your own pack, and carry the amount of weight you plan to take, and use the footwear you expect to use.
- No hills around where you live? Do not overlook your local "Y" or other workout location. Use the stair climber or elliptical trainer.
- If you get some blisters, that is not bad! That will tell you the places on your feet that are the most likely to have problems, and you will then know that those are the places you may have to tape, using a stretchy tape that will conform to the contours of your feet.) You will also learn how to treat your blisters. A brand of stretchy tape that works for me is by "3M: NexCare Absolute waterproof tape it stretches and breathes for hard to tape areas", is flesh colored. I find it at the drug store.

Foot Care and foot issues:

*The Most Important thing to remember is that you can have the lightest, most durable, most expensive gear for your journey, but **you will have a miserable time if your feet are not well cared for.***

Foot Issues

- If you have any foot issues, like bunions, or ball of foot pain, neuromas, or resistant calluses, strongly consider a consultation with a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM), (i.e. a podiatrist) many months before your journey.
- You may benefit from treatment of the condition or from the use of custom orthotics, or even prescription grade over the counter orthotics, such as "SuperFeet" (brand) orthotics. More about orthotics on this website from the Seattle Foot and Ankle Center: <http://www.footankle.com/conditions/search-condition/>
- Also find lots of Foot/blister information at the web site for "Fixing Your Feet": <http://fixingyourfeet.com/>
- "Happy Feet: Foot Care Advice for Walkers and Travelers" by John Vonhof, Includes a chapter on Blisters including Hot Spots - Prevention - Blister Prevention - Blister Care - Patching a Blister - Taping to Prevent Blisters - Modifying Your Shoes - After Walk Care.
- **Massage your feet:** take some lotion, any kind you like, and massage your feet before you go to bed. They will love it.

Four factors that contribute to Blister formation are Friction, Moisture, Heat, and Systemic Dehydration: **Prevention** is better than treating one they form.

Prevent friction by taping your feet with stretchy tape in locations where you are likely to get a blister. Friction may be due to poor fitting shoes. If you keep having blister, consider buy some different shoes

Prevent Heat build up: and Moisture. In the middle of the day you can remove your shoes and socks, wash and cool your feet and put on clean dry socks. Your feet will thank you for this!!

Keep well hydrated.

Buying Socks

- An article on **How to choose hiking socks:**
- <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/backpacking-socks.html>
- Buy socks first because you need to try on shoes /boots with the socks you will be wearing on the walk.
- NO Cotton Socks. Buy high quality light hiking or running socks. Shop around. I happen to favor Wright brand sock. They are two layer socks. Other brands to consider include REI, Smartwool, Darn Tough, Wigwam, etc.

- Take 3 or 4 pair of socks so that you can have clean socks every day. In the middle of day you can remove your shoes and socks, wash and cool your feet and put on clean dry socks if needed.

Buying Shoes or Hiking boots

- A "Rule of Thumb is to buy shoes that are one-half or one whole size larger than your regular street shoes. Your feet will swell. Trust me.
- Buy shoes at least 6 months before you go. Walk a long time in them. If you have any problems with the first pair, you still have time to try another pair. My first pair did not work out, but the next ones were great.
- You may have an old favorite pair of hiking shoes that you have worn for years; do not use them. Even a pair that shoes that shows a little wear may already be compromised with regard to cushioning or support. A well-worn pair will not stand up to daily wear for 500 miles.
- Low cut hiking shoes? Or hiking boots? Your Call. Whatever works for you.
- Here is a site entitled **How to choose hiking boots and shoes**
- **<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/hiking-boots.html>**

this is article from podiatrist's site

Choosing Footwear a site from Podiatrists:

How to Buy / Evaluate Shoes

<http://www.footankle.com/shoe-therapy/>

Video: How to Evaluate Shoes. There is a video on this web site.

A stable shoe has the following 3 qualities:

1. Stable heel counter, figure 1.

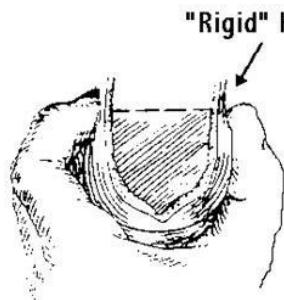


Figure 1 – stable heel counter

2. Difficult to twist, figure 2.



Figure 2 – a stable shoe should be difficult to twist

3. Bends in the front not the middle, figure 3. Stable shoe should bend where the toes bend not in the middle.

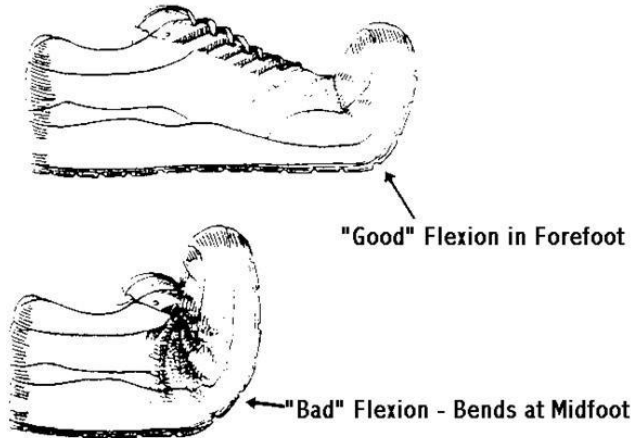


Figure 3 Stable shoe should bend where the toes bend not in the middle.

Shoe Fitting Tips

- Try shoes on at the end of the day.
- Try the shoes on with the thickest socks you might wear with those shoes.
- Measurements should be taken while you are standing.
- Have both feet measured. Most people have one larger foot. Fit to the large one.
- The longest toe should be a finger's breadth from the end of the toe box.
- The counter around the heel should be reasonably snug.
- The forefoot should not be crowded.
- Foot should not budge over the sole.
- Don't worry about the stated "size" of the shoe. Worry about the "fit." It doesn't matter that you wore a size 5 when you were 22 and the clerk is telling you to try a size 9. Only Cinderella always wears the same size shoe. Your foot size will change as you grow older. Also, sizes vary between brands.

Don't buy a shoe if it feels too tight. It will NOT stretch to fit your foot

Consider buying a water proof pair of shoes/boots (such as with a Gore-tex lining - abbreviated "GTX"). There are other reliable water proof layers in addition to GTX. Shoes with waterproof lining will be hotter. But, if you anticipate much rain, completely wet shoes that have no time to dry overnight will be miserable and may lead to blisters.

No specific recommendation as styles change yearly. Evaluate light weight hiking boots, ankle height boots, or low cut trail walking or running shoes to see which you prefer.

Dry any wet shoes promptly; stuff them with dry newspaper and change the paper as needed. Change into your sandals as soon as you can.

Backpacks

You want to carry as little as possible, but you still have to adapt to your particular needs and wants. The Volume and weight of the pack you choose depends on the season you plan to walk;

Article advice on backpack: some parts are not relevant to the pack for the Camino, but still has useful info.

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/backpack.html>

Article on fitting and adjusting your pack.

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/backpacks-adjusting-fit.html>

- Walkers often use bags from 35 Liters to 40 to 50 liter (or larger sometimes for Big guys).
- A 50 liter pack is a common recommendation, but, like everything else: "It depends". Are you a 6', 190 lb. man, or at 5'3" 115 lb. woman?
- Small people may do better with a small pack.
- My preference is for a pack with sufficient room that I can everything inside with room for my daily purchase of lunch food items.
- If your pack is so small that you have to pack everything in "just so" each morning, that can become a pain after two days! **You need a little wiggle room, so you can rearrange as needed.**
- A more important concern is the amount of weight you carry. Decide on the weight and volume you plan to carry and find a pack to fit your "stuff".

Deciding what size pack and what items to take is an iterative process; if your first choice does not fit, start leaving out unnecessary things, or try a pack with more volume.

Buying your Backpack:

- At REI (or any quality outfitter/backpack store) the staff will first **measure your torso length to select the appropriate size for you. I suggest a pack that has shoulder straps that are adjustable to various torso lengths. You will better be able to customize the fit to Your Torso**
- When fitting a backpack, be sure the salesperson **explains the various smaller points of adjustment, including the load-leveling straps and the sternum strap so you will know how to get the most out of your pack.**
- Once you know how a pack can be adjusted for comfort and efficiency, you will be surprised at how many other people you will see who are using packs that are poorly or inconveniently adjusted.
- Tell the sales person you are walking the Camino, (e.g.40 days of walking, in contrast to a week's hiking trip).
- At the store you will be able to try on packs with weight by using the store's selection of sand bags of specific weights.
- There are different styles and shapes for you to choose from. You may have to weigh the benefits of a very light weight pack in comparison to one that may be a little more comfortable by having a little more padding (e.g. on hip belt) but may weigh a bit more.
- You should have a **rain cover**. Some packs have a built-in rain cover. but if yours does not, I recommend the smallest and lightest effective rain cover which is made by Sea to Summit (ultra sil).
- You can also use a silicon spary to increase the water reisitance of your pack
- Everyone who has walked 500 miles with a pack, is an expert on "their" pack, so talk with some of our veteran walkers about their packs.

At REI and other outdoor stores, the selection of packs changes over time and with the seasons. If you are going in spring or summer, ask when the new spring selection will come in and you will then have more to choose from.

A small "Accessory" daypack: You may want a small day pack which is very light weight and foldable. When you are on the plane and your back pack is in checked luggage you need to carry a few essentials in the cabin with you. Also, when you are walking around in a city, or otherwise not carrying your large back pack, **you may find it handy to have a small bag to carry a guide book, rain jacket, etc.** An example of a very small very light weight back is Sea-to-Summit Ultra Sil day pack (2.4 oz.) but seach for something small (15 to 18 Liters ??).

Sleeping Bag

- I once used a 40-degree bag and found it too warm (in early Sept), in part because when you are in a room with 12 or more people, and doors and windows are closed, it can get

pretty warm. It seemed to me that the Europeans always closed the windows that I had opened and also closed the bedroom door.

- On the next trip I used a bag rated to 45 to 55 degrees which was better. I suggest if you are traveling during seasons when you may need a bag, consider one of the light weight ones described below.
- In the heat of mid-summer, you may not even need a bag. Many but not all, of the Albergues have blankets. Many have pillows. Just take a travel sheet or a sleeping bag liner. If you get cold, put on your warm layer (sweater or jacket).

Trekking Poles

An article about how to choose Trekking poles:

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/trekking-poles-hiking-staffs.html>

- You will see many pictures of people using trekking poles. That may lead you to believe that you must have them. Not so.
- Although they can be of aid to someone who has knee problems when they are going downhill, remember that they have weight and take up space.
- Some suggest that they interfere with your natural gait. So it is up to individual preference.
- Try them around your home territory. Do not take them if you do not love them. If you do get some, find the most compact, lightest poles. I like the Black Diamond Distance FL-Z pole. Size 105 cm to 125 cm will be good for a range of heights. They are adjustable height, unlike some other folding poles. Or, skip poles entirely. Improper use of poles could even affect your gait and lead to sore legs or hips.

One of Our Local Authors, Jean-Christie Ashmore, has written a book called "Camino de Santiago: To Walk Far, Carry Less". It has many helpful suggestions. See section on references at the end.

Clothing

This is not a packing list, but just some practical suggestions of clothing **I** like to take.

- Two long sleeve (no wrinkle) shirts/blouses (I tend to sun burn); or short sleeve or tees, your call.
- Two pair of light weight, easy dry pants (or 1 pants 1 shorts).
- Two sets underwear. ExOfficio (brand) underwear is the best in my opinion.
- Three or four pair of socks. Remember, put on clean socks every day.
- One thin tee shirt e.g. of burnout fabric. When I wore a black tee with the black pants it even looked "dressy" for dinner in town.
- Pair the tee with thin shorts (e.g. men's boxer shorts), and a top to wear when you wash the rest of your clothes.
- One light weight, but warm jacket for warmth when needed if you anticipate any cool nights. Note, you could use it to sleep in if you were too cold.
- An example of a good choice for a jacket would be one insulated with the synthetic insulation "Pimaloft"; it is very compressible.
- Rain jacket: It will rain at some on your journey. Another option is a rain poncho. You can buy one when you need it. A drawback to the poncho, in my opinion, is it may flop around in the wind and can be difficult to put over your back.
- An article about How to choose rain jacket:
- <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/rainwear.html>
- There are many types of jackets, or many fabrics. Read the article
- If don't have just the right thing in your personal inventory? Try thrift shops. I bought a no-iron long sleeve blouse in a thrift shop.
- Look for the lightest weight alternative to each item.

Packing

- Sometimes I roll up everything and put things in a plastic bread sack. Or I use a very thin light weight container like Eagle Creek pack-it "specter cubes". Or Sea to Summit stuff sacks
- Do not use heavy duty packing containers. Things fit better in several small sacks than in one large one
- By the way, you can put the jacket in a long narrow bag and use it as a pillow.
- Spread out all the items you might like to take on your bed. Then pack your backpack.
- Then, take it all out and re-evaluate then repack leaving out some things. I packed and re-packed a dozen times, until I had it as lean as possible but still had what I considered essential.
- If you have time ask a veteran walker to look over your packed backpack.

Weigh everything!

- Most people aim for 20 pounds or less. Smaller people carry less. If Martha says her pack weighs 14 pounds, not to worry; your pack may be heavier when you start and lighten up along the way. And, you can mail things ahead. Again, it depends" on your stature and strength.
- Don't have scale that weighs in ounces or know someone who does? Go to the supermarket (yes, really) when they are not busy and ask the manager if you can weigh a few things on the produce scale. Make note of weight of each item, it will help you decide what to leave out.

Washing

- You will wash something (e.g. a shirt) every day, usually as soon as you check in to the Albergue. You might sometimes delay the wash for a day, but if you put it off for 2 days you may regret it.
- "Test wash" everything at home a couple of times. Hand wash in cold water, squeeze out in the towel you plan to take with you and hang on whatever is handy, making a mental note of how long it took to dry.
- At the albergue, sometimes you just drape your clothes over a rod, other times there is a clothes line.
- Take 2 to 4 large safety pins or a couple of clothespins to secure your wash, and of course some of your favorite detergent in 3 oz container(s). Every place will have somewhere to hang stuff, even if only on the foot of your bed. Many places have clothes pins on the line.

Miscellaneous Items

Following are some of the small, but important things you may want to carry with you. Your selection of what is "necessary" to you will be different than what is "necessary" to another person. Trust your own judgment. For me, my favorite shampoo and cream to massage my feet are "necessary".

If you find you are carrying something you don't need, leave it at the Albergue, someone else may need it. If it is valuable, you can send it on ahead to Santiago. Or conversely, if you need something, ask at the Albergue if someone left any "such & such". Travelers leave or forget stuff all the time.

Glasses: If you wear Glasses, take a spare pair. Accidents happen. It happened to me! Boy, did I have a "goose egg" and a black eye too. Also carry a copy of your eyewear prescription.

Water Supply:

Consider how you want to carry water.

I love my CamelBak, however it is not for everyone.

Do not take a CamelBak unless you have experience using it and you know you like it. However, since I use a CamelBak, I take a pint water bottle also so I can easily fill the Camel without removing it from the pack. This means I have a pint water bottle at hand when I am not carrying my pack, such as when I am walking around in the city.

If you don't use a CamelBak style hydration system, you probably want to carry two quart bottles. You may have to stop and remove your pack whenever you want to get out your water bottle for a drink. That can significantly reduce the amount of water you consume, which could be a health hazard.

Headlamp:

Article: **How to choose headlamp**

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/headlamp.html>

In my opinion a headlamp is much better than a handheld flashlight. Many times you need both hand to do something. The head lamp keeps your hands free.

You do not need one that is super bright (although one friend cleverly uses a cellphone as a flashlight).

It is convenient if you have to pack in a semi dark room when you are rising before the lights are turned on. You can also use the light for safety.

Old buildings have irregular floor heights. For instance, there may be an unexpected step up in to bathroom or a step down into the shower. A 14th Century building that has been retrofit with electricity and plumbing probably still has uneven floors and risky stairs. Also, wear your sandals when you walk anywhere. Don't risk a stubbed or broken toe, a cut foot, or a bug bite.

Waist Pack: I wear one to carry my coin purse and other essentials, including my Pilgrim Credential. May be good place to carry a camera

Camera: I purposely choose a camera that uses replaceable batteries, because many of the older Albergues do not have many electrical outlets for recharging things.

The modern Albergues have plenty of electrical outlets. So you may never have a problem finding an outlet.

Note, if do want to recharge an electronic device, **you need only an adapter plug, not a voltage converter. Electronics are designed to work on both voltages.**

Journal: I used the Moleskine Journal brand. It is an efficient style and is compact with many pages. Look for journals in major bookstores or travel stores; there are other suitable brands as well.

Keeping a journal is a matter of personal preference, but I highly encourage it. You will treasure it long after you've returned home. I used the 5"X8" one for my journal and kept the small one in my waist pack for notes during the day. Leave heavy spiral notebooks at home.

Bandana, Scissors and Ear Plugs:

- Many of us believe that "Macks" Ear Plugs are the best! They are available at many drugstores.
- If you really need scissors, take the small children's style with blunt ends. It is easier to cut the tape for your feet with a scissors than with a knife.

Everything you carry should serve more than one purpose.

For instance, you may not need a bandana, but remember a **bandana** is not "just" a bandana. It can be: A neck scarf; A wash cloth; A hand towel; A handkerchief, A sun shade for the back of your neck, A napkin, A table cloth, A container to wrap something in, A way of marking or identifying your backpack, And other possibilities limited only by your imagination

Toiletry

- Small plastic bottles from drugstores or from “Storables” are useful for shampoo, detergent, etc. They can be re-filled or be left behind when you are finished with them
- My personal preference is to use a face cloth,. Or try the reusable house hold cleaning cloths called “handi wipes” cut to the size you need. Or get my favorite a “baby” wash cloth like the type sold at Walmart or other baby departments.
- I used to say I had a “love-hate” relationship with my towel; it was so small and it was very light weight but it was not effective to dry myself. In the end it worked OK for me. Your skin dries pretty fast anyway. And, you feel so good after a shower you don’t really care! Look for the travel or camping towels at REI or else where.

Knife, Spoon, Folding Cup:

- I need a knife when I travel, not just because I am a veteran backpacker, but because I need to slice the bread and cheese, fruits and vegetables for a picnic lunch. An example is the Gerber with a blade is only 2.5 inches. which weighs 1.5 oz.
- Of course, the **knife can only be carried in checked luggage**, but I check my backpack. If you cannot carry one, you can probably buy one there, maybe in a Euro store.
- The spoon, (or a Spork – the spoon/fork combination) at REI of course, is good for all the yogurt and ice cream I consume (or use sturdy plastic utensil).
- When buying food in a can look for pop tops. However Not all cans have pop tops There is a small metal object called a “GI can opener” Found at at REI, it is very, very tiny but it works. . I believe it is made by Coghlan’s.
- A non-breakable folding cup is also a “must have” for me. (e.g. taking medications, partaking of wine, etc.), Coghlan’s (brand) Fold-A-Cup, item #8309, may have to be ordered directly from the company, or try a general Sporting Goods Store. It is not available at REI.
- Speaking of eating, I always carry some food with me. It could be something simple from a grocery store like bread, cheese, fruit, or something else. Don’t let yourself become too hungry.

Other items to consider:

Skin cream; consider taking an all-purpose thick cream to use on your feet. hands etc. Your feet will welcome a massage with lotion.

Women:, consider taking some taking some panty liners. It is a great way to extend the life of a pair of panties, such as on your 24 hour plane rides or any time you know you have to go a long time between washing clothes. Just change the panty liner as needed. I recommend the individually wrapped Carefree body shape extra longs, or other brands. Use very thin ones. Try them for several days at home to see if you like them before you decide to take some. You won’t need more than a few.

Bed Bugs: I knew you were going to ask about them. So here is what CDC has to say:

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/faqs.html>. Also see APOC web site FAQs

They may be nuisance but they do not carry disease. If an albergue finds it has bugs, they close and then fumigate.

Reading References:

Books that I liked: For an extensive list consult the American Pilgrims web site

Fast Talk Spanish: by Lonely Planet: If you do not already know Spanish now, this very small book (3" X 5") is the most you will ever need

Codd, Kevin A. (2008) To the Field of Stars: A Pilgrim's Journey to Santiago de Compostela. Seeking to take stock of his life, Catholic priest Kevin Codd set out in July 2003 on a pilgrimage that would change his life. To the Field of Stars tells the story of his unusual spiritual and physical journey. The author shares tales of other pilgrims, his own changes of perspective and his challenges and triumphs along the way. **Very good**. Available from Amazon (gets 4.5 stars from readers) or other book sellers. Also available in Kindle format.

Robert Ward - All The Good Pilgrims: Tales Of The Camino De Santiago

Stories from the author's five Camino journey. The author (a Canadian) talks to everyone and you follow a cast of characters across Spain, rather than just the author. This one may be hard to find but worth it. Publisher: Thomas Allen (2007) ASIN: B001M5GCQI Is available via Amazon

Kurt Koontz (2013) A Million Steps: He was well prepared for his 490 mile walking trip on the historic Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route in Spain. He was fit and strong. He had a good guidebook and all the right equipment. But all that, however helpful, did not begin to encompass the grandeur of his external or internal adventure.

There many ways to experience the Camino:

Some people walk, others bicycle, some walk only the last 100 Km, others take a guided tour. Be generous in your approach toward others, no matter what way they choose to do the Camino, and talk with everyone. It is a great experience any way you do it, and you meet so many interesting people who will expand your horizons.

Another word to keep in mid during your pilgrimage:

Remember: *Tourists demand, Pilgrims accept, and are grateful.*

A Pre Trip Experiment

A suggestion that just might work for you:

A pre-Camino experiment to try: **Live like a pilgrim for a few days**

- Identify two days in your life that you have some flexibility.
- Pack your pack with everything you are taking on the Camino.
- Wear the clothes you expect to use when walking.
- Carry your pack. Take a 10 mile walk/hike, e.g. Walk for 5 hours
- Live a whole day without using anything that is not in your pack, including water that you drink outside of your meals. Eat regular meals and the beverages that go with them.
- Seriously: Live like a Pilgrim for 2 Days.
- At end of day one, wash out your shirt and socks or whatever else, squeeze out as much water possible using your Camino towel. Hang to dry. Put them on again in the AM.
- When you go to bed at night, of course, don't have to use your sleeping bag (but you could), but use only the things you will wear to bed on the Camino. Only set an alarm if you plan to take an alarm clock.
- In AM check you clothing, is it dry, put it on again. If socks still wet put in plastic sack and hang out the following night.
- Then do it all again the next day. OR Not.
- Ok, maybe you learn a lot the first day, but you get the idea!

Other Ideas

If you decide to check your backpack on the plane.

How to secure a backpack for checking on the airplane.

Important:

- Before starting remind yourself of what each strap contributes to the proper fit of the pack. You should know this so that you can re-adjust everything to the proper fit for you.
- If you do not remember what the salesperson told you when you purchased the pack, take your pack to any backpack store and **ask the sales person to show you how to adjust the pack to fit you, and to clearly tell you what each strap contributes to the fit.**
- This is free service; people who sell packs want you know how to use the product.
- If you cannot visit a store, call the customer service department of the pack manufacturer. There is not a question they have not heard before.
- They, too, want you have a comfortable fitting pack.
- Take notes and/or take pictures so you can better remember.
- An improperly fitting pack will be uncomfortable and may cause back strain.

Web sites to help you: how to fit a pack, and how to pack a backpack:

<http://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/backpacks-adjusting-fit.html>

<http://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/loading-backpack.html>

I have checked my pack each time I have gone to Europe. **I found the following method worked well for me. To secure the Backpack for checking:**

- Lay it down with straps facing up.
- Extend the buckles on hip belt as far as it will go.
- Cross the hip belt. The ends are now on a diagonal angles upward. Wrap then under the shoulder straps.
- Tighten the shoulder straps as far as then can be tightened.
- Now draw the hip belt ends around (under) the shoulder straps pulling them as close together as possible. Buckle the ends of the hip belt.
- Now draw the ends of the hip belt as tight as they will go.
- At this point the hip belt is now tightly holding the shoulder straps together. The shoulder straps are tight together and the hip belt is tight too.
- Close the sternum strap as tightly as it will go too.
- Snug up all other straps that can be tightened.
- Roll up long straps and secure with rubber bands.

In some cases that is all you may need to do. But, if necessary you may want to take a piece of nylon cord, or strong string to finish off securing everything snugly. Refrain from using duct tape, as it will leave a sticky residue.

Be sure to have clear, easy to read luggage tags. Make a mental note of the brand of backpack, color, and size just in case you ever have to describe it if it is ever lost by the airline. Take a picture of it!

Obviously There is no way to "lock" a backpack.

Trust your wrapping to 1) protect it from machines and baggage handlers, or from the casual pilferer. Pilferers probably know not to go after poor pilgrim's backpacks

Using a pack bag / duffel bag is not recommended. It is probably overkill and then you have to do something with the bag. I learn that on my first trip, so that's why I learned to secure it and not use a duffel.

To use the pack once you arrive.

- Loosen all the straps that you tied up.

- Refer to your notes, pictures, and your memory to visualize how you re-adjust the pack to your specific frame.
- Make your adjustments. If not quite right, tweak them as needed.
- Periodically while on the Camino re-evaluate the position of all the straps, and adjust as needed.
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Resources

Guidebooks:

This guide is often used as it probably is the most up to date: **A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino de Santiago: St. Jean - Roncesvalles - Santiago (Camino Guides) Paperback – January 10, 2017** by [John Brierley](#) because of its size it does NOT list all albergues

If you do want an updated list of ALL the Albergues go to <https://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/resources/%E2%80%9Call%E2%80%9D-albergues-on-the-camino-frances-in-one-pdf.10/>

Philosophy of a Pilgrimage:

Phil Cousineau's classic book on the subject, **The Art of Pilgrimage**, can help focus your journey to bring you that sense of renewal that we so often seek in our travels.

Seattle Authors

Camino de Santiago: To Walk Far, Carry Less

Jean-Christie Ashmore

Devoted entirely to the subject of what to wear and what to carry on a Camino pilgrimage.

Available in book stores, or on line e.g. Amazon, (even in Kindle format)

The Artist's Journey: The Perfumed Pilgrim tackles the Camino de Santiago

Marcia Shaver

This inspiring journal that reflects the adventurous spirit of the author will make you want to take up a journey of your own

Movies:

The Way. <http://www.theway-themovie.com/#>

Walking the Camino – Six Ways to Santiago: <http://www.caminodocumentary.org/>

Other Resources to Consider:

American Pilgrims on the Camino:

Please consider Joining the organization. **It is the only group in the US that supports the Camino.**

Note: If you have not done so already, please see their extensive list of FAQs. I'm sure you will find many topics of interest. Also, see their list of Practicalities; read re travel logistics, how to find out about the Weather, etc.

<http://www.americanpilgrims.com/camino/faqs.html>

American Pilgrims on the Camino has many local chapters around the USA

The Puget Sound Chapter of American Pilgrims

http://www.americanpilgrims.ORG/about/local_puget_sound.html

If you are not already receiving announcement of local events, ask to be put on our email list for announcements. Send message to:

PugetSound@americanpilgrims.org

Go here to learn of all the local events, including our St James Day event in July. If you live in Seattle, participate in the "Second Sunday Strolls" which are sponsored by the local chapter. Walk and talk with other prospective pilgrims and with others who have walked the Camino. There are also, monthly coffee chats.

There is almost an "overload" of information about the Camino on the Internet. However, avail yourself of information you can find on the FAQ of several Camino web sites, e.g. The Canadian Company of Pilgrims web site: <http://www.santiago.ca/>;
The British group the Confraternity of Saint James: <http://www.csj.org.uk/index.htm>.
The web site Camino forums: <http://www.caminoforums.com/> is a site for interchange of information from individuals from around the world.

Travel in Europe

Are you new to traveling in Europe? Need to learn some "travel skills"?

Need to know what transportation routes there are for trains, planes, and buses, and their schedules?

You can find an extensive list of links to

- **European air & train & bus routes and train schedules**
- Practicalities of traveling, esp. in Europe
- **European travel skills,**
- Even find a good travel agent, etc. at
- <http://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/trip-planning/favorite-links>

A really Great Map of Spain that includes a dotted line for the Camino Frances –

is from Rick Steves Travel store: **Rick Steves Spain & Portugal Planning Map \$8.95**

<http://travelstore.ricksteves.com/catalog/index.cfm?fuseaction=product&theParentId=9&id=210>

It is also sold at various travel stores. **It is on waterproof, tear-resistant paper, is small and light weight. Take it with you to see where you are on the Camino. It also makes an excellent way to show the folks back home where you went!**

Buen Camino!

Myrna