



# LA CONCHA

Newsletter of American Pilgrims on the Camino

www.americanpilgrims.com

October 2011

## Many Caminos, Many Signs



*Intersection-Via Francigena and the Chemin Saint-Jacques near Reims, France  
Photo by Martha Lopez, Sacramento CA*



*Hospitality at KM 97.5, Camino Francés  
Photo by Mike Dunican, Lake Stevens WA*



*Stone Marker  
in Galicia  
Photo by Roy Draggoo,  
Wenatchee WA*



*Sidewalk marker, Aire Sur L'Adour,  
France, Chemin Le Puy  
Photo by Dayton Hypes, London ON  
Canada*



*Camino Graffiti  
Photo by Celia Dollmeyer, Columbus IN*

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## Dear Fellow Pilgrims,

One of the important services that American Pilgrims provides is to develop, maintain, and distribute the Pilgrim Credential, the traveler's "passport" into the wondrous community of the Camino. American Pilgrims distributed 1,174 credentials in 2009 and 1,598 in 2010. This year, in just eight months, we have distributed 1,626, an increase of 30 percent over 2009. The phenomenon of the Camino is growing, with more people discovering the Camino each year.

American Pilgrims on the Camino, as an all-volunteer non-profit association, is growing in stride with the discovery. For American Pilgrims, it is starting to mean too many tasks for our incredibly dedicated volunteers. We are seeking additional volunteers for key tasks: newsletter production, credential management, and marketing among them. Please consider lending your talent to American Pilgrims.

Growth also means crowds on the most popular route, the Camino Francés. Spanish authorities have repeatedly asked our organization to help make people aware of the many other routes of the Camino and

promote the choice of one of the lesser-known routes. We encourage all pilgrims, new and returning, to consider routes other than the Camino Francés. I had the good fortune last year to sample the beautiful Primitivo on foot, and this year I will explore the Vía de la Plata by mountain bike. I will do so with the full knowledge that the Camino changes lives, regardless of the route taken.

The Camino has changed my life. After my first Camino with my wife Maureen in 2003, I was called to give back by serving on the American Pilgrims Board of Directors. I was later unexpectedly asked to lead.

With the support of the Board and all of you, I have enjoyed the opportunity of a lifetime. My three years as Chair of the Board have allowed me more opportunity to grow than even the past several years of my very satisfying professional career.

And it was a simple credential – designed, produced, and distributed by volunteers;



approved by the Santiago Cathedral authorities; paid for by dues and donations – that opened the doors to make it all possible.

My term as Chair expires at the end of this year. We will announce the new Chair in early 2012, and we anticipate continued growth and success for American Pilgrims under our new leadership. I have truly enjoyed the great privilege of serving you, and I thank all of you for your encouragement and support. ♦

*Jim Eychaner*  
Board Chair

## Film "The Way" Now in Theatres

The Martin Sheen/Emilio Estevez film, "The Way," opened on October 7 in theatres around the country. Filmed on the Camino, it is a story about a father and son and their journey on the Camino de Santiago. For more information and to see where it is playing in a theatre near you, please visit: <http://theway-themovie.com>.



## Southern California Chapter News

On August 21, the newly established SoCal Chapter of American Pilgrims on the Camino held its inaugural event in Santa Monica CA. We met at the Bar Pintxo, where they serve authentically delicious Spanish tapas and wines.

In the true spirit of the Camino, the 26 in attendance were warmly welcomed. Several who came were preparing to leave soon for one of the Camino routes, or planning a pilgrimage in Spain or Portugal this year.

We were delighted to have two American Pilgrims Board members, Daniel De Kay and Herbert Medina, present to share with the group.

It was a wonderful first event; and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves getting to meet new people and share their Camino experiences. We welcomed one new person eager for the opportunity to begin her journey. Those leaving soon were delighted to listen and gather additional information for their upcoming Camino.

Anita, Marla, and Randy introduced themselves and gathered ideas for upcoming events. Many thanks to Grant Spangler and Randy Bernard for assisting with this first event!

For a complete look at the most recent event, check out the [slideshow!](#) ♦

*Anita Baroldi & Marla KeeSee*  
Co-Coordinaors



## Puget Sound Chapter News

The Puget Sound Chapter has been busy on the Camino, with six members volunteering as hospitaleros this season and many more walking—from Le Puy, on the Vía de la Plata, the Caminos Portugués, Aragonés, del Norte, and, of course, Francés. What a wealth of information we will have to share with others!

On the home front, we now have walks called Second Sunday Strolls each month. These are “no RSVP required” and always held in the same place, from Ballard Locks to Discovery Park. Having a get together which requires no additional planning makes it easy for pilgrims to meet. Each month brings a different combination of old and new faces. It is designed to be three or six miles and is a great way to stay in shape for the next Camino.

We continue to have potlucks every three or four months. Our third annual Saint James Day event included a Mass at St. James Cathedral which focused on pilgrimage. This fall, our planning group will be arranging activities for the new year: an evening with Jim Green, UW Professor of Anthropology, speaking about pilgrimage, and our first Camino talk at REI scheduled for January 21, 2012. In true Camino fashion, Gene McCullough has generously shared his experience making Camino presentations at Colorado REI stores. ♦

*Martha Crites & Rebecca Andrews*  
Co-Coordinaors

## Northern California Chapter News

On July 23, the NorCal Chapter held a St. James Day walk and tapas feast in San Francisco. Twenty-five pilgrims from all over northern California gathered at historic Mission Dolores and followed yellow arrows over a hill to St. James Church where they were welcomed by the pastor and attended a late afternoon Mass. Following Mass, pilgrims trekked through the Mission District to the Picaro Tapas Restaurant where they made new friends, shared their Camino experiences, and indulged in a wonderful variety of tapas.

The following day, some sixty people attended the California Palace of the Legion of Honor lecture "Pilgrims' Progress: A Journey to Santiago de Compostela" and learned about the Camino de Santiago from a pilgrim/docent. After the lecture, seven pilgrims-to-be met with five veteran pilgrims on the café terrace where experiences were shared and questions answered.

Both days were interesting and rewarding. Thanks to all who participated!

Here are three more opportunities to enjoy the company of your fellow pilgrims:

- Carmichael, Saturday October 29, 2011. Join fellow pilgrims for a walk along the beautiful American River.
- Pleasant Hill, Saturday November 5, 2011. Learn to express your Camino story in the ancient painting tradition of the Mandala.
- San Francisco, Saturday, July 21, 2012. We will hold our second annual St. James Day walk. Mark your calendar and plan to attend.

Details can be found on the chapter [webpage](#). ♦

*Rennie Archibald & Bob Holm*  
Co-Coordinaors



## Save the Date - January Hospitalero Training

The Vallombrosa Retreat Center in Menlo Park, California will be the location of the first Hospitalero Training of 2012. The dates are January 13 to 15. If you are interested, contact [volunteer@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:volunteer@americanpilgrims.com).

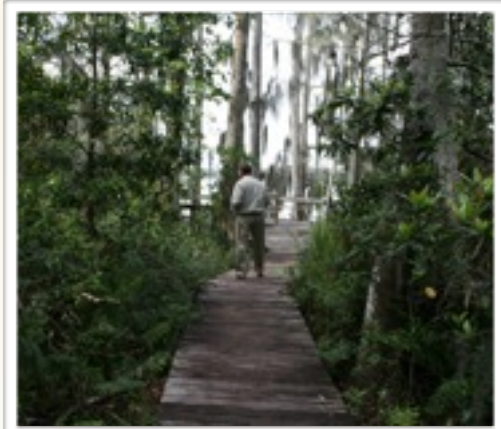
## Save the Date: 15th Annual Gathering of Pilgrims Winter Park, Florida - March 2012

*Roads Less Traveled* is the theme for the Annual Gathering of Pilgrim being held in San Pedro Center in Winter Park, Florida in March 2012. We hope you'll join us in beautiful central Florida to share your Camino experiences.

The Gathering is preceded by our popular Hospitalero Training, March 27-29. An Early Arrivals Reception on Thursday evening, March 29, provides an opportunity for meeting old friends and getting to know new ones. Gathering sessions begin on Friday morning continuing through Saturday evening. Mass, Sunday morning breakfast, and farewells bring the Gathering to a close on April 1. A Spiritual Retreat scheduled for Sunday through Monday noon follows the conclusion of the Gathering. ***These three events offer separate registration.***

Our venue is the modern, secluded San Pedro Center, adjacent to Orlando in Winter Park, Florida with paths reminiscent of the Camino. Situated on a lake and naturally adorned with lush sub-tropical vegetation, the facilities include choices of motel and bunk house- style lodging, comfortable conference rooms, a labyrinth for a mini Camino and a lovely chapel. The center is operated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orlando and provides our gatherers an ideal environment for learning, fellowship, and spiritual moments.

Announcement of program details, registration, and exhibitor guidelines will be emailed to all members and will be posted on our website ([www.americanpilgrims.com](http://www.americanpilgrims.com)) in December. Please check back frequently for updates and direct your questions to [gatherings@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:gatherings@americanpilgrims.com)





## Xacobeo Finds The Way on East Coast



Standing in the cold and pouring rain, chatting with Camino Triguero, Director General and José Suárez of the [Xacobeo](#), we could have been in Galicia – except for the silver AFI (American Film Institute) indicating we were in the DC suburbs.

They had made a spur-of-the moment trip from Santiago to attend the screening of the new Martin Sheen/Emilio Estevez film *The Way*, hosted by George Greenia, professor at the College of William & Mary and long-time member of American Pilgrims on the Camino.

When not popping up in the States, Camino Triguero, who was appointed to her new position even as she was attending our Santa Barbara Gathering earlier this year, has been busy meeting with local authorities throughout Galicia. Her focus has been on planning and celebrating the implementation of grants as large as 180,000 euros to improve the safety of the various Caminos – everywhere from a dangerous railroad crossing in Iria Flavia on the Camino Portugués to the recovery of a portion of the Camino del Norte in Lugo.

Look for more news on our website as we continue collaborating with our friends in Galicia. ♦



*Lanzada Calatayud, from the University of Santiago de Compostela, Camino Triguero and José Suárez from the Xacobeo*

## Get The Word Out

*By Mary Jane Miller  
Houston TX*

In November 2010, my husband Chuck and I decided to walk the Camino Francés. Our plan was to start in St. Jean on May 3, 2011. Chuck is an accomplished long distance hiker, but it would be my first hike. I came up with the idea, because I don't like to camp out. I play tennis, swim, and work out, so I felt I would be OK. Chuck is 70, and I'm 66.

I started training in February. As I hiked longer and longer each day, finally with my full pack, I got lots of interested looks. We live in Houston, so hiking in the heat with a pack isn't a common sight. People began stopping me, saying, "What are you training for?" When I told them they were always interested. I found that most people here had never heard of the Camino, and they wanted to hear all about it. All my friends were excited for me and kept up with my progress.

When we got home after successfully completing the whole walk, everybody wanted to hear about it. We have made two presentations of our pictures and experiences so far, with several planned for the fall. Our audiences really love to see and hear all about it. Several people

have told us they would like to take the walk for themselves. I urge everyone in the U.S. to do what you can to get the word out. It's an experience of a lifetime, and more Americans should know about it. ♦



*Mary Jane and Chuck Miller  
at the Spanish Gate, St. Jean Pied-de-Port.  
Photo by their taxi driver.*

## The Total Camino Experience

By Karen Hypes  
London ON Canada

Our Camino this spring had three stages and mindsets. We started off as the quintessential pilgrims travelling new paths, enjoying new towns and scenery, and wondering about directions and accommodations as we walked from Moissac in France to St. Jean Pied de Port, finishing up the last half of our Camino Le Chemin Le Puy.

After 12 days and 330 kms, we arrived in St. Jean Pied de Port with the traditional sense of relief and satisfaction of completing this pilgrimage and then expecting to re-walk the start of the Camino Francés (second stage of this trip) with a bit of confidence and perhaps complacency. As we met more and more new pilgrims excited and eager to head out on their first pilgrimage, our complacency was quickly replaced with a sense of expectation and excitement as we got caught up in their energy and eagerness. To us it was like experiencing Christmas through the eyes of a child, all new and wonderful again.



Dayton Hypes stirring pasta for 35, Estella  
Photo by Karen Hypes

Approaching Estella, we mentally prepared ourselves to switch gears from pilgrim to hospitalero, the third stage of our trip. Walking a Camino can be very egocentric and introspective. The focus is on you, your gear, your boots, your clothes, your pack. It is about your health and well-being: your feet, your legs, shoulders and back.

Whether you walk alone or with someone you spend so much time inside your head, with just your own thoughts...but...when you make the transition to being a hospitalero the focus turns outward and it's all about others -- *them*.

The needs and well-being of your pilgrim guests come first. It is your mission to greet them with a whole lot of "nice," assess their well-being, assign them a bunk, let them know where they can clean up and do their laundry, where a close-by *tienda* is, what time evening Mass is, feed and clean up after them. You have to be all things to all people: a cook, a tour guide, a medic, a listener and even as you send them on their way with a *Buen Camino*, a mother with her gentle reminder ensuring her charges haven't left anything behind, like the gentleman whom we had to remind "Have you got your teeth?"

We served as hospitaleros at Albergue San Miguel in Estella for 18 days: pilgrims - 521, nationalities - 35, meals - 34... special moments - UNLIMITED. ♦

### My Camino As Haiku

Cold Camino night:  
Other pilgrims are sleeping.  
I wait for the dawn.

\*\*\*

Yesterday, it rained.  
Today, leaving Pamplona,  
Spring is resplendent.

By Suzanne Cikowski  
San Luis Obispo CA

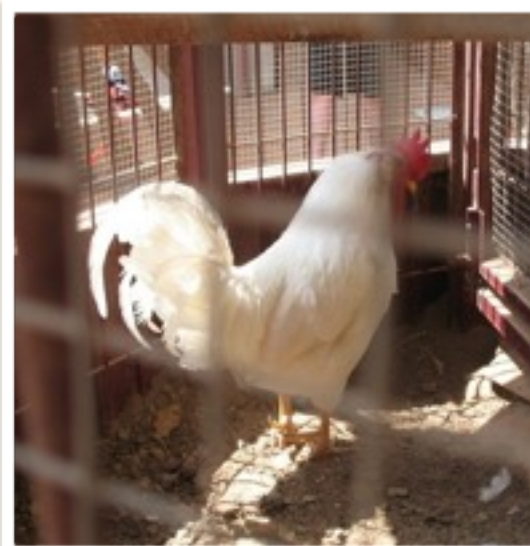
## Surviving The Camino

By James Green  
Seattle WA

Walking the Camino is one of the great adventures open to almost everyone. If you can walk, you can do it. I made my way to Santiago as a pilgrim in 2006, healthy and refreshed. I recently returned to volunteer for two weeks as an hospitalero in a large albergue in Santo Domingo de la Calzada in the Rioja region. In the latter role, I saw another side of life on the Camino; and I offer several tips to first-time peregrinos that I hope will be useful.

First, you should consider injuries. In my albergue, a physical therapist, working on a donativo basis, appeared every afternoon at 4. I was astonished at the number of peregrinos who needed his care. His observation was that many who attempt the Camino are not up to its physical demands nor have they trained sufficiently. Many had shoes that did not fit well, were not properly broken in, or they were carrying packs far too

to use. You risk injury if you do not know your real capabilities, and when to stop.



*A "holy chicken," Santo Domingo de la Calzada  
Photo by James Green*



*Afternoon at the albergue  
Photo by James Green*

heavy. Some attempted more kilometers than they could handle. My first suggestion, then, is to start early and easy and lengthen your training walks, carrying your pack, until you have several 12-mile walks under your belt. Walk in the shoes you intend

Second, a lost or damaged debit card provokes a true financial emergency. Tell your bank in advance that you will be using ATMs in Spain -- they are all along the way. Family members should know your card numbers and have a plan for helping you if there is a problem. One poor fellow was stalled for three days until his problems with his bank in Brazil were resolved.

Third, whatever your noble intentions, there are always the few bad apples who do not share them. Theft in the albergues is rare but it does happen, usually because someone is careless. Keep money, credit cards and your passport with you - while you are sleeping and when you go to shower.

These suggestions should not discourage anyone from the pleasures of the Camino. Most everyone has an amazing experience and meets wonderful people. But thoughtful preparation is critical. That, and a bit of mindfulness, guarantees a *Buen Camino*. ♦



## Camino Footsteps Reflections on a Journey to Santiago de Compostela

By Kim Wells & Malcolm Wells

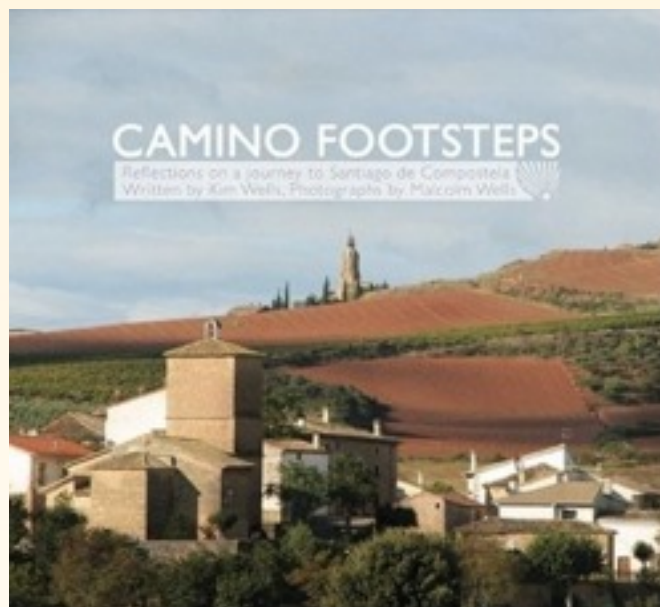
Reviewed by Lynn Talbot, Roanoke VA

This joint effort – Kim Wells as author and Malcolm Wells as photographer – has produced a small but lively description of their experiences on the Camino in 2006. Some may take exception to the title of the book, as it is only a partial journey (they begin in St. Jean Pied de Port, then take a bus from Logroño to Pedrafita near O Cebreiro, with stops in Burgos and León). The Wellses, seasoned trekkers in Southeast Asia and New Zealand, only walk portions, but they nevertheless experience the transformative spirit of the Camino. As they conclude: “Our stay in Santiago de Compostela was a reflective end to a wonderful walk. It gave us time to consider what the walk meant to us and the ways in which it will remain within us and be part of our continuing journey” (162).

Kim provides the expected daily account of their walk, sprinkling in historical information, poetic descriptions: “The soil is dark and rich, all is damp, and moisture clings tenaciously to the foliage” (106), and advice to future pilgrims: “pack earplugs” (33). Their first albergue experience (at the gite at Orisson) convinces them that they need seek alternate accommodations in the future and so they stay in small hotels and pensions. Yet they still feel the spirit of connection and companionship experienced by those who stay in albergues.

The descriptions of the cathedrals encountered along the Camino – Burgos, León, and especially Santiago – are highly detailed and lyrically expressed. One feels as if he is strolling through these edifices with the author. In the cathedral in Santiago, Kim remarks: “A soft, misty light pervades this space and all who enter there appear very small and insignificant. It is quiet and peaceful” (152). They obviously visited after the the noonday Pilgrim’s Mass and the departure of the tour groups.

Malcolm’s extraordinary photographs, which detail the beauty of the Way, are what raise this book above the ordinary Camino journal. From panoramic shots of the countryside to close-ups of roof tiles and paving stones to locals



completing daily chores to pilgrims on leafy paths, Malcolm captures the essence of the pilgrim experience. Even though large sections of the Camino are not included – aside from one shot taken from the bus of “the bleak, inhospitable meseta” (85) – this book provides an outstanding visual record of the Camino.

*Camino Footsteps*, in spite of the shortcomings detailed above, offers an attractive view of the pilgrimage experience, both in text and photos. ♦

*Camino Footsteps. Reflections on a Journey to Santiago de Compostela,*  
Kim Wells & Malcolm Wells, Freemantle Press, North  
Freemantle WA, 2010.

## Heaven on Earth in the Cathedral of León: The “Dream of Light” Restoration Project

By *Celia Tonkinson Dollmeyer*  
*Columbus IN*



*León Cathedral façade*

*Photo by Celia Dollmeyer, Columbus IN*



*Stained glass window, León Cathedral*

*Photo by Annette Argall, Baltimore MD*

If you are on the Camino Francés passing through León, don't miss the special, limited-time opportunity to climb up to the platform (*la plataforma*) for a bird's-eye view of the interior of the cathedral and its kaleidoscope of color.

As part of a series of educational activities offered in conjunction with the current restoration project, visitors can climb a metal structure that leads into the west end of the central nave of the cathedral to a platform 46 feet above the cathedral floor near the lower edge of the central rose window. This large platform is parallel to one from which restoration specialists perform their magic, allowing light to once again stream unobstructed through the 737 stained glass windows dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Up to 20 visitors at a time gain an unprecedented view of the seemingly fragile walls of light that make up the interior of the gothic cathedral at the level of the triforium and clerestory. After allowing visitors several minutes to simply take in the splendor and view the close-up photographs of stained glass displayed along the edges of the platform, the guide gives a brief introduction and then projects a 4-minute video that explains in general terms the process of stained glass restoration.

Although I believe explanations are only offered in Spanish, language is no barrier to taking in the magnificence of the cathedral and to understanding why León's cathedral is known as the *Pulchra Leonina*, the most beautiful in Spain in terms of elegance and luminosity.

No reservations are required, unless you bring with you 9 or more of your pilgrim friends! Bring along those binoculars that have been weighing down your backpack. Although few pilgrims are awake late enough, night visits to the platform are offered at 11:30pm Fridays and Saturdays by reservation only. For more information (only in Spanish), including hours the tour is given, visit the website: [www.catedraldeleon.org/proyectocultural](http://www.catedraldeleon.org/proyectocultural). The 3-euro fee goes toward cathedral preservation. ♦

There is no moment of delight in any pilgrimage like the beginning of it.

Charles Dudley Warner





## Camino Journal

By Carlos Mentley  
Donalds SC

Camino journals are a wonderful thing. Even years later, they bring back the joys and frustrations of the trail. In the winter of 2002-03, I walked my first Camino with a group of eleven students, starting in Roncesvalles after Christmas. Even though I had a map and guidebook, I soon found out that we really had no idea of what we were getting ourselves into. Without my journal from that Camino, I would most likely not remember my introduction to Galicia.

Wednesday, 22 January 2003

Triacastela to Portomarin.

Get up, pack, dress, and head down to yesterday's restaurant for breakfast in the rain. I stopped at the church for a moment, but it was not open.

What followed seems straight out of the Twilight Zone. The Camino went from asphalt road to path to stone to dirt covered with leaves on an uphill that lasted half the morning. I was almost as wet from the inside as out. The rain made it very hard to look at anything except the ground right in front of where I was going to step.

Oh, I was not liking Galicia, not at all. First, approaching O Cebreiro, it tried to freeze me. That night, to snow us in. The next morning, to blow us off the side of the mountain; then to ruin our knees and ankles with brutal descents. Today, maybe one of us would trip and break an ankle or suffer a heart attack on one of the uphill slopes.

I don't remember where or when, but Michael, Suzanne and I came to a spot bordered by stone walls, completely flooded for more than 50 feet. Michael tried the left side, Suzanne the right, and I waited to see who had the better time of it. I had just opted for Michael's side when Suzanne uttered first one expletive and then another, and all of a sudden she was just wading through water halfway up to her knees, her boots completely inundated.



*Snowy Camino*  
Photo by Carlos Mentley

Michael and I just barely managed to keep our feet dry.

From there it only got worse. Not once, not twice, but three times we had to leave the path because it was under running torrents of water; we had to backtrack to find a spot to climb over into a nearby field, try to keep from sinking in too badly, and find how to get back on the Camino. I confess that what I was thinking was not pretty.

Of course, things got better. Halfway through the next day the sun emerged and stayed with us all the way to Santiago. The next winter there was no snow, no rain, and a wonderful stop in Samos. But every time I open that journal, I am reminded that Galicia in the winter can be as much a challenge as any part of the Camino. ♦

*Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content.*

-- Helen Keller

## ¡Buen Provecho! Tortilla Española

*Recipe provided by Chef Santos Telles  
La Paella Restaurant, Los Angeles  
Submitted by Robert Holm, Alameda CA*

Another version of a classic Spanish dish long enjoyed in the Holm household...

3 tablespoons olive oil  
3 cups chopped onions  
1½ teaspoons chopped fresh thyme  
2 pounds russet potatoes, peeled and  
sliced into ¼ inch rounds  
¼ cup water  
8 large eggs  
½ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoons pepper  
Nonstick vegetable oil spray  
Chopped fresh parsley



*Photo by Carlos Mentley, Donalds SC*

Heat oil in large nonstick ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and thyme. Sauté until onions are translucent (about five minutes). Mix in potatoes and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Add ¼ cup of water. Reduce heat to medium; cover and simmer until potatoes are tender (about 20 minutes) stirring occasionally. Uncover and continue simmering to allow any excess water to evaporate. Cool.

Preheat broiler.

Beat eggs in large bowl; add potato mixture and blend.

Clean and dry skillet; spray with nonstick spray. Heat over medium-high heat. Add potato-egg mixture; cook five minutes flattening top if potatoes are uneven. Cook three minutes pulling in sides of tortilla to let uncooked egg run to sides. Cover and cook until almost set (about three minutes).

Uncover and move skillet to broiler. Broil until top is brown (about three minutes).

Slide spatula around edges and under tortilla to loosen. Place large plate atop skillet and invert tortilla onto plate. Sprinkle with parsley. ♦

## Vía de la Plata Travel Blog

*By Marcia Shaver  
Redmond WA*

I had the great privilege to walk the Vía de la Plata in the spring of this year. It is an amazingly beautiful and varied walk, punctuated by interesting cities. It is such a different experience from the Camino Francés that it is hard to even compare the two! I am doing a travelogue style blog of the journey with photos, distances, accommodations for anyone who is interested in learning more about this less traveled Camino. I would love for you to join me at [www.theartistsjourney.wordpress.com](http://www.theartistsjourney.wordpress.com)



## Camino Signs

There is no end to the variety of yellow arrows on the Camino. Whether their maker is well-known or unknown, they have the same purpose: to guide pilgrims.



*On the Camino Aragonés between Sangüesa  
and Foz de Lombier  
Photo by Carol Fontein, Arlington VA*



*A welcome sign on the southern (hot!)  
part of the Via de la Plata between  
Guillena and Castilblanco de los Arroyos  
Photo by Marcia Shaver, Redmond WA*



*On the Via de la Plata  
Photo by Roy Draggoo, Seattle WA*



*Photo by Emilio Escudero, Berkeley CA*



*Photo by Emilio Escudero, Berkeley CA*



## Tip Board

### What is Your Foreign Transaction Fee?

*By Randy Bernard  
Norwalk CA*

Early pilgrims carried gold coins to pay for goods and services, but contemporary pilgrims have other options. In the 21st century ATMs, debit and debit cards let people get money almost anywhere 24 hours a day.

You can find many ATMs on the Camino today. A pilgrim may carry a debit card and use the ATM so the money is withdrawn directly from your bank. If you use your credit card at the ATM, however, it is considered a cash advance, and the interest charge starts immediately. In the past few years bankers said: we will charge a 'foreign transaction fee' of 2 or 3% for exchanging foreign currencies into US dollars, so we can make more money! And most of them do.

However, a few card issuers said: NO, let's help the pilgrims and not charge a foreign transaction fee! [CardHub.com](http://CardHub.com) can help you find these cards, of which Capital One is one of the best known. Other cards, such as Citi Premier, American Express Platinum, and Chase Sapphire do not have foreign transaction fees, but there is a fee to obtain these cards, along with pre-qualification requirements.

Fees vary, and it is a good idea to call your bank before you go to find out your fee. Even more important is to let them know you are going to Europe, so they know it is really you using the card. Otherwise, they may halt its use, believing that someone is using it fraudulently. ♦

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### How to Learn Spanish Quickly on the Camino

*By Leslie Woodford  
Savannah GA*

Want to improve your Camino Spanish? You may have wondered, "How can I learn Spanish quickly?" Here are four shortcuts that will get you the facility that you need in the short term while laying a foundation for continued language progress.

First, **Focus your Study.** The quickest way to communicating with ease is to focus your study on what you most need to learn. Do you need to buy groceries, interact with hospitaleros, or chat with locals? A British friend loved football (soccer), but he didn't enjoy the unpredictable British weather, and hated attending games in cold, wet weather. He pursued his love of football in Spain, attending matches in the temperate Spanish climate, learning the teams, and following his favorites there. His first Spanish goals centered on football. Ascertain the vocabulary related to your interest and build from there.

Next, **Start Talking.** Find a fluent friend to mentor you in your language study and create Spanish language practice that meets your immediate needs. Create a dialog that you can use to talk about what is most important in your language learning. Practice, practice, practice with your mentor until you can say the dialog smoothly.

Next, **Keep Practicing.** Learning a language requires practice. Take your dialog out into the community. You meet many people on the Camino, so practice your dialog with as many people as you can. The more time you spend practicing the language, the faster you will acquire fluency.

Finally, **Give Yourself a Break.** Have you ever tried to build your muscles? Sometimes, the best way to move forward is to take a short rest. It is the same with language learning. Occasionally, step back from your studies, but only for a day or two so as not to lose your momentum. Concepts that you've learned will cement themselves in your brain. And when you return to your study, you'll feel refreshed, ready to focus on learning Spanish. ♦

*Leslie Woodford is a life-long language enthusiast. She provides her tips and insights on <http://www.yourlanguageguide.com>, a "how to learn any language" website.*





## Of Bears and Pilgrims

Dogs and or even a faithful donkey are sometimes seen walking alongside their pilgrim humans on the Camino. Some American Pilgrims have a special relationship with other furry friends without whom they wouldn't dream of going to the Camino.

Marlena Lambert and Little Bear became fast friends in 1994. Little Bear's first camino was in 2010, when he accompanied Marlena as co-guide with a group from the Westminster College of Salt Lake City, where Marlena teaches. Marlena carried him instead of a sleeping bag; he weighs about the same. She reports that Little Bear often travels with her to other places too, and that he loves chocolate (!!).

Brunswick has been with Daniel De Kay for over 20 years and has travelled all over the world with him. Last year he accompanied Daniel from Le Puy to Finisterre, and this fall, he is in Bercianos with Daniel as they volunteer as hospitaleros.

So, we're wondering if other American Pilgrims have been joined by furry friends on the Camino?♦



*Marlena with  
Little Bear*



*Daniel with  
Brunswick*

## Step by Step: Walking to Santiago

*By Suzanne Rivers  
Sacramento CA*

Step by step I'm walking.  
Step by step I go.  
Step by step I'm walking  
To Santiago.

The Camino is unfolding  
Which way to go?  
Searching for a yellow arrow  
To Santiago.

A road becomes a pathway,  
the pathway, a trail.  
Searching for a yellow arrow,  
at times to no avail.

A path, so they say,  
That follows the Milky Way  
Where the heavenly spirit shines,  
Magnified by ley lines.

Step by step I'm walking  
Step by step I go.  
Step by step I'm walking  
To Santiago.

My blistered feet are aching,  
My sore knees shaking.  
I stagger as I go.  
Can I walk to Santiago?

In a refugio I am resting  
Pilgrims hear me protesting.  
Their message is clear:  
There is no quitting here!

Slowly, I continue walking  
Step by step I go.  
Where centuries are fading,  
Bending time as I go.

White, tile-roofed houses  
fade to medieval squares.  
A Roman road descends,  
A Saracen castle up there.

Alone, I am walking  
In forest and by streams,  
Up hills and through fields,  
Is this a dream?

Visions of ancient pilgrims,  
Bandits roamed the way.  
How could they endure?  
Faint whispers seem to say:

Step by step we're walking,  
Step by step we go.  
Step by step we're walking  
To Santiago.

A first century pilgrim,  
So they say.  
Watches over everyone  
Who walks this Way.

He was one of twelve.  
From Judea he came.  
In Spain, he is Santiago.  
This Camino bears his name.

Step by step I'm walking,  
Step by step I go.  
Does he know I'm arriving  
In Santiago?

Here spirits are rising,  
Mine soars in the air.  
I go to thank Santiago  
With a hug and a prayer.

I ask: is this the end?  
Or, where time bends?  
Do I begin again and again?  
Whispering as I go:

Step by step we're walking.  
Step by step we go  
Step by step we're walking  
To Santiago.

## Association News

### Meet Your Board

Over the next few issues, we will be featuring brief bios of various Board members. Enjoy getting to know a bit more about them.

#### Herbert Medina

In his fourth year on the Board, Herbert heads our successful Grants Program, and his bilingual ability has served American Pilgrims well. A math professor at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles for almost 20 years, his passions are cycling, hiking (of course), and working to increase access to higher education for those groups historically underrepresented.

Herbert has been on the Camino nine times: five walking the Francés and Primitivo; three times biking the Camino Francés, Vía de la Plata, and Camino del Norte; and once as an hospitalero in Ponferrada.

Among his favorite Camino moments are sharing meals with Camino companions at gîte d'etapes walking from Le Puy to St. Jean Pied de Port. He still remembers a surprise meal brought to him in 2003 at the albergue Guacelmo in Rabanal del Camino by a Spaniard he'd met earlier on the Camino. The Spaniard had left the Camino in León, but called to locate their group so he and his wife could bring them dinner – a glorious meal!

#### Annette Argall

Annette serves as Board Secretary, is dedicated to Membership concerns, and a member of Team La Concha. Her deep and abiding love of Spain began as a young woman when she lived a year in Madrid. While her current day job finds her developing and writing grant funding proposals for an historical museum, she's had an eclectic professional life: economic development, international business, writing, and communications, all of which contribute to her value to American Pilgrims.

Her interests are many and varied: Annette speaks Spanish and Portuguese and is trying to learn Arabic. Leisure(?) time finds her cooking, gardening, writing, reading travel literature, or furthering interfaith understanding.

Lest we forget the Camino, she has walked

on the Camino Francés four times since 2005, and has served as an hospitalera in Villamayor de Monjardín.

She treasures the times she's met an "angel" of the Camino, such as when she arrived at the Alto de Perdón without food and her energy spent and she met three: a French father and son and their Spanish friend who invited her to share their sumptuous lunch. ♦



*What are the chances that two of our Board members would bump into each other (literally) in the Plaza de Obradoiro? They are undoubtedly dedicated and have "feet on" experience!*

*Photo by Lynn Talbot, Blacksburg VA*

Forums Suspended - Visit Us on Facebook

The forums on [www.americanpilgrims.com](http://www.americanpilgrims.com) have been suspended. Please visit us on Facebook, [American Pilgrims on the Camino](#).





## Welcome, New Members!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who joined American Pilgrims on the Camino from July through September 2011. We look forward to meeting you at future Gatherings and events.

- |                    |                      |                    |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| ◆Belma Ancajas     | ◆Laurie Gallo        | ◆Stephen Revering  |
| ◆Troy Beecham      | ◆Tina Garcia         | ◆Andres Romero     |
| ◆Michael Bennett   | ◆Linda Gravatt       | ◆Richard Rowe      |
| ◆Anna Marie Brown- | ◆Ledia Hernandez     | ◆Cheryl Rowe       |
| Mitchell           | ◆Mary M Honer        | ◆Joseph Roy        |
| ◆Brian Buxton      | ◆Margie King         | ◆Merry Roy         |
| ◆Patricia Cazel    | ◆Frank Lenowitz      | ◆Mona Spargo       |
| ◆Fred Chavez       | ◆Maria Martinho      | ◆Jim Spargo        |
| ◆Jamie Cignetti    | ◆Gregor McElvogue    | ◆Patrick Steele    |
| ◆Denise Cornwall   | ◆Alison McMahan      | ◆Karen Stomberg    |
| ◆Joseph Cornwall   | ◆Cecilia Oldre       | ◆Bruce N Teague    |
| ◆Michelle Courtney | ◆Sharon O'Reilly     | ◆Miguel Valero     |
| ◆Jacques De Melo   | ◆Charles Pereira     | ◆Teresa Valero     |
| ◆Katherine Duane   | ◆Rosie Perez         | ◆Stuart Williamson |
| ◆Richard Duane     | ◆Jack Dixon Prentice | ◆Dianna Zerban     |
| ◆Bill Gallagher    | ◆Philip Price        |                    |

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## Contributors

A special thank you to all the writers, photographers, and artists who contributed to this edition of La Concha. Your talents are much appreciated.

- |                   |                  |                   |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| ◆Rebecca Andrews  | ◆Mike Dunican    | ◆Marlena Lambert  |
| ◆Rennie Archibald | ◆Emilio Escudero | ◆Martha Lopez     |
| ◆Anita Baroldi    | ◆Jim Eychaner    | ◆Carlos Mentley   |
| ◆Randy Bernard    | ◆Carol Fontein   | ◆Mary Jane Miller |
| ◆Suzanne Cikowski | ◆James Green     | ◆Suzanne Rivers   |
| ◆Martha Crites    | ◆Robert Holm     | ◆Marcia Shaver    |
| ◆Daniel De Kay    | ◆Dayton Hypes    | ◆Lynn Talbot      |
| ◆Celia Dollmeyer  | ◆Karen Hypes     | ◆Leslie Woodford  |
| ◆Roy Draggoo      | ◆Marla Keese     |                   |

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## Thank You, Heather Knight!

La Concha wishes to give special thanks to volunteer and multi-tasker extraordinaire Heather Knight, who did the heavy lifting on the formatting for this issue of La Concha while she held down a job, completed another major volunteer commitment, and prepared to leave for Spain, where she is serving as an hospitalera in Santo Domingo de la Calzada. Heather, we couldn't have done it without you!



*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.*

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## Do You Have Camino Stories or Events to Share?

We would be pleased to report on Camino-related activities in your part of the country. Tell us about your plans, and we'll try to announce them in *La Concha*.

In addition to announcements and news, please tell us in 400 words or less about a part of the Camino you would like to share with your fellow pilgrims. Consider a photo, a poem, or a new found understanding of an idea – a pilgrim's perspective. Visit [Newsletter](#) on our website for suggestions and guidelines.

Submission deadline for the next issue is January 9, 2012. We welcome your questions, comments, and submissions at

[newsletter@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:newsletter@americanpilgrims.com). You can also submit to the street address provided below.

¡Buen Camino!

Your Newsletter Team -

*Cherie Pagett, Annette Argall,  
Heather Knight, Zita Macy*

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## Board of Directors 2011

Jim Eychaner, Chair  
Cherie Pagett, Vice Chair  
Annette Argall, Secretary  
Ann Howley, Treasurer  
Daniel De Kay, Camino Support

Bill Edwards, Communications  
Marlena Lambert, Volunteers  
Herbert Medina, Grants  
Carlos Mentley, Gathering 2012

[membership@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:membership@americanpilgrims.com)  
[newsletter@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:newsletter@americanpilgrims.com)  
[grants@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:grants@americanpilgrims.com)  
[volunteer@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:volunteer@americanpilgrims.com)  
[hospitaleros@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:hospitaleros@americanpilgrims.com)  
[gatherings@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:gatherings@americanpilgrims.com)

Cherie & Annette  
Cherie & Annette  
Herbert  
Marlena  
Daniel  
Carlos & Marlena

## Other Key Personnel

Association Manager: Zita Macy  
Credentials Distribution: Rosann McCullough

Webmaster: Gene McCullough

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American Pilgrims on the Camino  
1514 Channing Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94303  
Fax: 650-989-4057  
[www.americanpilgrims.com](http://www.americanpilgrims.com)

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