



LA CONCHA

Newsletter of American Pilgrims on the Camino

www.americanpilgrims.com

December 2014

~ GRANT PROGRAM ~

Now in its sixth year, the American Pilgrims Grant Program funded four projects on the Camino that fulfill our mission "to support the infrastructure of the Camino." Below are photos from some of those projects, which are outlined on page 5.



The new support vehicle used to patrol the high country on the Camino that goes up and over the Pyrenees.



Refurbishing an unused wing of a convent as the first albergue in the city of Martos on the Camino Mozárabe



Hospitaleros and guests at Varião Monastery on the Camino Português



No bunkbeds at this albergue

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From Board Chair Cheryl Grasmoen...

As 2014 comes to an end, I continue to marvel as I look at the numbers that show the increasing interest among Americans in the Camino de Santiago. American Pilgrims on the Camino issued approximately 6,000 credentials. Many of those credential holders arrive in Santiago. The Pilgrims' Office reports that for the first eleven months of the year, more than 11,500 Americans received compostelas, an almost 14 percent increase for all of 2013, making the United States the country with the fifth highest number of arriving pilgrims. This dramatic increase makes our association even more relevant and committed to our mission.

The increased traffic on the Camino has resulted in stresses on the albergues, the communities, and of course the Pilgrims' Office in Santiago. More than 30 of our members contributed their time and resources to serve as volunteers in the Amigos Welcome Service this season, as they handed out drinks, managed the line, and lent an ear.

Four American Pilgrims grants went to projects abroad this summer, two in Spain and for the first time, our support also extended into Portugal and France. Read more in this issue about how these grants support pilgrims and the Camino.

The many returning pilgrims as well as those who aspire to walk are finding support in the 26 Chapters that have been formed to share information, inspire, support pilgrims, and simply have a good time. All of us can look forward to another top-quality Gathering in Menlo Park, California, beginning March 12, 2015. Watch for more information and registration on our website.

Our more than 6,000 Facebook friends continue to be a great source of information and encouragement. Our website is packed full of

useful information and will soon be even better and more user friendly. Your Board of Directors remains true to our mission, working closely with our Spanish partners in developing more ways to support the Camino and our members. ♦

¡Buen Camino!

Cheryl



Cheryl and her Amigos team. L to R, Bill Manderfeld, Annette Argall, Daniel De Kay, Cheryl Grasmoen.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

La Concha Turns 5!

First issue published in November 2009

Gathering 2015—Ever Ancient, **ever new**



The grounds at Vallombrosa

The 18th Annual Gathering of Pilgrims will come to Northern California for the first time next spring, when pilgrims have the opportunity to join together at the Vallombrosa Center, a retreat center in Menlo Park, March 12 – 15, 2015. The Gathering theme, ***Ever Ancient, Ever New***, will explore the Camino's legendary places and people and give us new perspectives on the Camino today.

The agenda begins with the Thursday evening (March 12) opening reception, which, with a bow to the Camino Portugués, will focus on Portuguese fare, accompanied by fado music. A sampling of the speakers and topics from the Friday and Saturday program includes: Maryjane Dunn speaking about origins and legends of the Camino; Lee Sandstead, aka the “world’s most fired-up art historian,” telling us about the anatomy of ancient Camino churches; Emilio Escudero showing us sites that are among the hidden treasures of the Camino; Rob Nickerson updating us on

technology being used on the modern Camino; and Bill Edwards offering a session on a medieval precursor of the pilgrim’s credential.

National Geographic photographer Michael George will offer a photography workshop (pre-registration required), and practical sessions on packing gear, first aid, and volunteering on the Camino will offer opportunities for Q&A. Camino Cabaret and Camino 5 X 5 storytelling will give the entertainers and raconteurs among us an opportunity to shine. A Shell Ceremony will once again launch first-time pilgrims on their way. There will be time to spend with friends, either on your own or through the scheduled guided walks and receptions hosted by the Northern California and Portlandia Chapters.

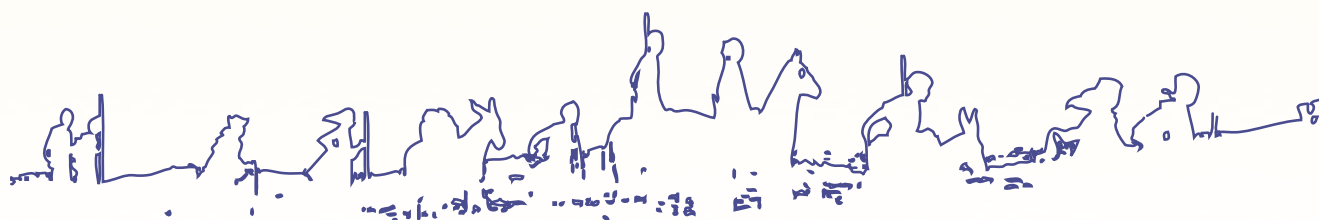
Attendees arriving by plane can fly into either San Francisco or San Jose airports. Public transportation is available from both airports.

Registration information will be posted on the American Pilgrims website in December.

Gathering Chair Carlos Mentley and the American Pilgrims board of directors cordially invite you to the Gathering. It will be fun and a great opportunity to meet new friends and renew acquaintances with old ones. Don’t miss it! ♦



A quiet spot for reflection.



News from Santiago: Xacobeo & the Pilgrims' Office



Xacobeo

The Xacobeo has designated the paths of the Camino Inglés as an official Camino route, affording it protections given by law to Camino routes. Historical documents dating from the twelfth century show that the ports of Ferrol and A Coruña on the north coast of Galicia were points where thousands of English and Scandinavian pilgrims who arrived by ship disembarked in order to continue their pilgrimage over land to Santiago. The Camino Inglés is one of the less-traveled routes, with only 2 percent of pilgrims who receive compostelas arriving on this route.

The Xacobeo website, <http://www.xacobeo.es/en>, is a wealth of information about the multiple Camino routes within Galicia. The link given is to the English-language version. ♦

Pilgrims' Office

For the first time in a single month, Americans represent the second highest number of arriving pilgrims. In October 2014, Spanish pilgrims represented 38% of the 23,205 pilgrims who earned their compostelas, and Americans represented 13.5%, ahead of Germany, France, and Italy. ♦



Our 2014 Amigos Volunteers

Wanda Alexander
Thomas Andreotta
Annette Argall
Joanne Baker
Patricia Bekken
Anne Born
Mila Caceres
Anne Cornett
Jean Davis
Daniel De Kay
Henny de Knecht

Ari de Oliveira
Martha Dysart
Cheryl Grasmoe
Nancy Harlan
Brad Harper
Chere Harper
Bob Holm
Marsha Holm
Janice Le Pouvoir
Lynn Liptak
Bill Manderfeld

Yosmar Martinez
Mary Marwitz
Karen Montieth
Mike Oliphant
Cherie Pagett
Laurie Reynolds
Walter Scherer
Julie Scott
Adriana Tovar
Karen Wark

Your Dollars at Work

Albergues and Camino Associations Benefit from Grant Program

This year, American Pilgrims funded projects in Spain, France, and Portugal as part of our annual competitive Grant Program, now in its sixth year. As we have seen in past years, a relatively small amount of funds can make a huge difference to organizations that serve pilgrims. American Pilgrims and the hard-working volunteers who manage these projects – not to mention the pilgrims they serve – are grateful to you, our members, for making these grants possible through your membership dues and donations.

2014 grantees are:

Asociación de Amigos del Camino de Santiago de Astorga y Comarca, Astorga, Spain - \$5,000 - for upgrades to the dining room and internal walls in the albergue. The Astorga albergue serves more than 22,000 pilgrims annually.

Asociación Jacobea de Jaén, Jaén, Spain - \$6,000 – to refurbish an unused wing of a convent as the first albergue in the city of Martos on the Camino Mozárabe. Building the infrastructure on lesser-traveled Caminos is a priority as pilgrims increasingly seek routes off the more beaten Camino paths. Our funding was used to construct two new bathrooms, reconfigure walls, and install electrical outlets.

Associação Espaço Jacobeus, Braga, Portugal - \$6,000 – to renovate rooms of the formerly abandoned Varião Monastery on the Camino Português near Vila do Conde. This albergue was opened last year in an area that previously had no other albergue. Our funding will help renovate rooms to accommodate groups of pilgrims and establish a small Camino interpretation center.

Des Amis du Chemin de St Jacques en Pyrénées Atlantiques St. Jean Pied de Port, France - \$6,000 – to purchase a support vehicle to patrol the high country on the Camino over the Pyrenees. Thousands of pilgrims walk this route each year, but fast-changing weather, poor preparation, and sudden injuries can make it treacherous and even life-threatening. Not only does the grantee provide information to pilgrims in St. Jean; its volunteers are now able to search for, rescue, and potentially save the lives of pilgrims in distress on the Camino.

Additionally, a \$1,000 education grant went to the ***Institute for Pilgrim Studies at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia***. The Institute has done much to study and promote the Camino and holds an annual symposium on the subject of pilgrimage. ♦



Artwork on the walls at the albergue in the city of Martos

Chapter News

American Pilgrims Chapters continue to grow throughout the country, now numbering 26. The interactive map on the American Pilgrims website shows where Chapters are located, and you can find a listing of activities in local chapters. If there isn't a chapter near you and you would like to explore the possibility of forming one, contact our Chapter Liaison at chapters@americanpilgrims.com. Two Chapter Coordinators tell about their Chapters' beginnings in the following essays. ♦

Hoosiers on the Camino

David Cook, Indianapolis IN

Prior to my going on the Camino in October 2012, my dentist's receptionist requested that I bring in my photos from Spain when I returned. I was reluctant to do this because I thought she was just being polite. At my next appointment she again asked to see my photos, so I dropped them by the office. As she was looking at them, another employee noticed them and said "Hey, whose pictures are those? I know those places! I was there in 2006!"

When I returned to pick up my pictures, the other employee greeted me with "Buen Camino, David." Meeting this veteran peregrina in my dentist's office was just the beginning of many Caminoesque moments I have had since. After encountering other Hoosier peregrinos (past & future)

afterwards, a group of us decided to join American Pilgrims on the Camino and look into forming a local chapter.

In March 2014 Hoosiers on the Camino (HOTC), Indiana's local chapter, was born. We hosted over 50 people at a local church for our exploratory meeting. We now have 130 email addresses and are encouraged that information of the Camino has spread throughout central Indiana. In September 2014, seven HOTC peregrinos on the Camino in Spain stayed in touch via our HOTC and American Pilgrims Facebook pages. Between 10 to 20 hikers usually attend our events.

HOTC has enjoyed success during our first six months. Meeting with past and future peregrinos for *café con leche* at local bistros or hiking local trails have been the main focus. Several of the HOTC hikes have been easy Saturday morning 8-milers on the historic Central Canal Towpath in Indianapolis, and we also did a more challenging 10-mile hike on Boone County's Farm Heritage Rail-Trail. We look forward to future events (i.e.,

hikes, movies, lectures, potluck dinners) as opportunities to share our Camino experiences with future peregrinos. ♦



The Story Behind the Founding of the Albuquerque Chapter

By Linnea Hendrickson, Albuquerque NM

When my husband was dying of cancer in 2007, I promised myself that when it was all over, I would walk the Camino de Santiago.

My time to go came rather suddenly in April 2010, with little time to prepare. I found Ivar's Santiago Forum, looked at the American Pilgrims website, and contacted the Confraternity of St. James, but I didn't know any other recent pilgrims from New Mexico. Then someone in my cancer caregivers writing group said she knew someone who had walked the Camino – Luana Duggan. Luana and I corresponded briefly before I walked, and then just days after I returned, my head and heart still full of the experience, she invited me to an informal gathering of others in the Albuquerque area who had walked. Suddenly I had a Camino family at home.

I had had no idea that there were so many local pilgrims! I learned that some of them had even hosted a national gathering of pilgrims years earlier. It was a joy to find others who had shared the Camino experience – others who understood! I felt strongly that forming a chapter would help others connect with each other and was sure that there were many other local pilgrims, if we could only find each other.

In March 2014, I volunteered to help at the Albuquerque showing of *Walking the Camino: Six Ways to Santiago*, where I

distributed flyers and collected signatures. The line to get in stretched down the street, and people had to be turned away. In May a group of about fifteen old and new pilgrims (including some first contacted through the film showing) met, and all present agreed that becoming a chapter of American Pilgrims would be a good thing.

Luana Duggan and I agreed to serve as co-coordinators. Luana and I worked on the chapter formation throughout the summer, finally signing the chapter agreement in mid August. We now have over 90 names on our mailing list, and more people seem to find us every day through American Pilgrims.

How helpful it would have been had I known others who had walked before I set out alone! That is why I proposed that we form an Albuquerque Chapter, which also includes people from Santa Fe and other New Mexico locations. We held our first official event with over 25 people in attendance on September 14, a lovely afternoon potluck in Luana's beautiful garden. The Albuquerque Chapter of American Pilgrims is now truly on Its Way. ♦

*Albuquerque Chapter Co-coordinators,
Linnea and Luana*



Packing Lists

By Thayer Woodcock, Nyack NY

The original pilgrims of the Camino de Santiago began their journey by walking out from their home with only the clothes on their backs. Today's pilgrimage seems more likely to begin with an orgy of acquisition.

In the cyberspace subculture of Camino pilgrims, there is obsessive interest and strongly held opinion on minute details of packing lists. Without a second thought, one can be sucked into a black hole discussion thread concerning the relative merits of wool versus synthetic socks.

As my departure nears, my interest in the gear discussion has waned, and I've been mulling over the other things I'll be carrying, the ones whose weight is less easy to measure in grams.

Some have physical weight, but it is hardly a measure of their presence:

- An engraved silver key fob – a gift shared between my late parents on their 50th anniversary.
- A scarf gifted to me by Luisa, daughter of the Salvadoran family that played an integral role in the adoption of our children.
- A walking stick carved by someone who in a long-ago lifetime I believed I would spend my life with, and who took his own life last year.

Then there are the things with no physical weight, and thus that are much heavier:

- The doubt about whether I can make it, whether my tricky ankle will give out, whether I'll stay healthy.
- The guilt about taking the time, money, and effort over something so personal, so selfish, so impractical.
- The prayers and hopes for loved ones who are sick, caring for those who are sick, searching for healing or change.



*Departure from Newark airport -
L to R Jonathan, Bruce, Thayer & James Woodcock*

Finally, blessedly, there is what I think of as negative weight, that which will make the pack rest easier on my back:

- The love and confidence of my family, who have been unstinting in their support.
- The generous wishes of those who send their prayers and love with me, who have entrusted to me an array of tiny items to accompany me to Santiago and return with whatever they receive from the walk.
- The awareness and gratitude for the sheer blessedness of my life, of being able to set out on this adventure, of being born lucky enough to have so many choices and opportunities.

As I leave, my carry weight comes in at a little under 13 pounds. It is my hope that as I walk, the negative weight will only grow, bolstered by the experiences I'll have, the fellow pilgrims I'll come to know, the glories I'll encounter. ♦

Who Runs the Albergue?

By George Greenia, Williamsburg VA

Ever wonder who runs the albergues and sets their house rules? Besides the whims of the more or less patient hospitaleros currently in charge in any given shelter? There are some common sense conventions that spread by word of mouth and become best practices labeled as “rules,” but an awful lot depends on who launched a given pilgrim shelter in the first place.

There are five sorts of albergue and a lot of variety in the rules they follow. Pilgrim shelters are established by local parishes, various Friends of the Camino groups, private enterprise, municipal authorities, and finally refuges run by a given Spanish province or Autonomous Region. ♦

Editor's Note: To read George Greenia's full article with an explanation of the various types of albergue and how they work, please click [here](#).

Camino as Classroom

By Douglas Challenger, Pelham MA

I walked my first Camino in the summer of 2007. On that trip, I got to see the good, the bad and the ugly about myself. The people I met and walked with were my accomplices in that journey of self-recognition. In the years afterwards, as I reflected on the profound experience that entailed, I began to think of how walking the Camino could be of benefit to young college students just starting out in life. What might it be like, I wondered, to provide such a learning opportunity for students

at my university in the midst of their undergraduate education before they left school for the “real world?”

That question led me to create a semester-long, walk/study abroad program focused on the Camino that I have now led, along with my wife Laurie, on two occasions in 2011 and 2013. We are currently planning a third trip for the fall of 2015. ♦

Editor's Note: Please click [here](#) to read more about these trips and their impact on the student pilgrims.



Students in their “Camino Classroom”

Opening the Schoolhouse Window

By Bill Arney and Joseph Stewart, Friday Harbor WA

Profe Quinín Freire of the Escuela de Educación Infantil de Carracedo is a brilliant teacher. When he spots pilgrims on the Camino Portugués passing his school in Caldas de Reis, Spain, he opens his window and calls, “Children, children! Pilgrims to Santiago! Come greet the pilgrims!” And a gaggle of very small children crowd the window and wave and shout their greetings and good wishes. Then *profe* Quinín weaves his spell on us passersby. In perfect English: “Won’t you come in and meet our children? They would like to meet you, perhaps have their picture taken with you.” Who could resist?

EEI Carracedo’s Facebook page says, “There are two ways to know the world: traveling or meeting the travelers.” Quinín reaches out his

window to bring travelers from all over the world into his classroom. We were lucky to pass that window last March on our way from Porto to Santiago and we were happy to be taken inside.

Quinín’s classroom is lively and he tries to keep the peace while he tells us travelers our part in his young students’ lesson of coming to know their world. He gathers everyone for a picture and then asks us, please, to send them a picture once we arrive in Santiago. “You wouldn’t believe how excited the children are when we open our e-mails each morning.” After Quinín shows his students the pictures from Santiago, he calls up pictures of each pilgrim’s home town. He finds maps, they talk about the

country from which the pilgrims have come, the language(s) spoken there, what it might be like to live there. (In our case, he showed the students an aerial view of the ferry entering Friday Harbor on San Juan Island in the far northwest corner of Washington State.) And they might try saying “Buen Camino” in the pilgrims’ language. You know a teacher is brilliant if he teaches so well by simply opening a schoolhouse window.

Check out “EEI Carracedo” on Facebook or visit centros.edu.xunta.es/eeicaracedo ♦



*Escuela de Educación Infantil de Carracedo, Caldas de Reis, Spain.
Back row: Bill Arney and his 15-year-old son Joseph Stewart.
Front rows: Children of EEI Carracedo.
Photo by Quinín Freire*

Camino Olvidado

By Laurie Reynolds, Champaign IL

Some maintain that the Camino Olvidado was the most popular till the Codex stole its thunder in the twelfth century. I don't know about that, but I am always attracted to untraveled Caminos, so this route from Bilbao to Ponferrada was my choice for 2014.

There are several reasons to walk the Camino Olvidado: beautiful mountains and villages; not much asphalt; it's "off the beaten track;" it's generally very well marked; and the people are very helpful. BUT – be prepared for little pilgrim infrastructure (two albergues in 450 km) and no pilgrims. Stages must be planned carefully to coincide with accommodation.

The beautiful village of Fasgar (year round population: 8), in the province of León, is at the end of the highway and at the start of the hike over the mountains to Colinas de Campo de Martín Moro Toledano (year round population: 20). These two villages are connected by a 14 km foot path over the mountains or 75 km around the mountains on a road.

I arrived in Fasgar around 2 pm, with instructions to find Rosi. After walking through this beautiful place, I saw what looked like a bar. I went in, and before I could say anything, a woman asked, "Are you Laurie?" It was Rosi. Rosi, her husband, and their daughter moved back home to Fasgar after years in the rat race. They

live in their centuries-old family home and have become nearly self-sufficient. They sell potatoes, grow all their own produce, raise a pig every year to slaughter, have a few sheep, and do some seasonal work as available (Rosi runs the municipal social club as a bar in the summer, when several hundred people return to Fasgar). My time with Rosi and her family was a precious gift. I got to see their gardens, the smoker room where they make sausage and chorizo, celebrate their daughter's third birthday at the bar with the townspeople, eat at their table. It was surely the highlight of this Camino.

The next day's walk over the mountains was just fabulous through the Campo de Santiago, where Santiago purportedly returned to life to help defeat Almanzor and his Moorish troops, up and down with high peaks in the distance and valleys spread out in front of you. This is an A+ Camino. ♦



Rosi and Laurie in Fasgar

Editor's Note: The Camino Olvidado connects the Camino del Norte at Bilbao to the Camino Francés at Ponferrada.



The walk between Fasgar and Colinas

Hospitalero Happenings

Los Gatos, California was the location where 23 new American Pilgrims hospitaleros were trained in November and are now ready for duty on the Camino. Congratulations to the new hospitaleros and a shout out to their trainers, Daniel De Kay and Franc and Jeanette Chacon. Good work, everybody! If Chapters are interested in sponsoring a training course in your area, contact us at hospitalerotraining@americanpilgrims.com for more information. ¡Ultreia! ♦



Twenty-three enthusiastic new Hospitaleros

More Training Coming Up

Hospitalero training is scheduled for March 10 – 12, 2015 in Menlo Park, California immediately prior to the National Gathering of Pilgrims. A notice will go out to all members when registration is open.

March 2015

Hospitalero Training March 10-12 Tuesday - Thursday													
M	9	T	10	W	11	Th	12	F	13	Sat	14	Sun	15

The hospitalero training team is also looking into the possibility of trainings in the southeastern & southwestern parts of the country. If you are interested, please contact hospitalerotraining@americanpilgrims.com.

Hospitaleros on the Camino

In addition to the hospitaleros listed in the last issue, the following people have also served in 2014:

Chris and Esther Slater

Miraz August 27 – September 11

Robin Brodsky

Grañón September 1 – 15

Thank you to all the 2014 hospitaleros for their care of thousands of their fellow pilgrims!

We need YOU!

If you served and were not recognized or if you have a story about your hospitalero experience, please let us know at newsletter@americanpilgrims.com

Amigos Welcome 200,000 Pilgrims

Once again this year, American Pilgrims joined with Camino associations from Canada, England, Ireland, and the Netherlands to support the Amigos Welcome Service in the Pilgrims' Office in Santiago. The 54 Amigos volunteers in

blue t-shirts included 32 Americans, each Amigo serving for a two-week period. Between May 1 – October 16, they welcomed 200,000 pilgrims. Onsite program coordinator John Rafferty reports that evaluations show that the vast

majority of Amigos enjoyed the overall experience and that 7 out of 10 say they would definitely serve again. The essays that follow give first-person insights from two American Pilgrims Amigos. ♦

You Get from the Camino Just What You Put into It

By Walt Scherer, Loomis CA

Throughout the weekend of my hospitalero training, presented by Franc and Jeanette Chacon in February 2014, I didn't realize at the time that two phrases running through my mind would become my mantra for the Camino. "Everyone walks their own Camino," and "You get from the Camino just what you put into it."

After graduating from the training, I didn't feel like diving head first into the pool of hospitaleros, so I decided instead to join the Camino volunteer pool as an Amigo in the Amigos Welcome Service in Santiago de Compostela. I was joined by team members Annie Cornett from Sweden, Anne Fitzpatrick from Ireland, Wanda Alexander from Louisiana, and Yosmar Martinez from Florida. Our team leader, Jim McNicholas, was from Ireland.

Throughout our two weeks of serving the arriving pilgrims, we worked in teams of two for five-hour shifts. We managed the line, brought water to those who were thirsty, answered every question that we could, and when we couldn't, directed pilgrims to where they could find their answer. Each day brought its own rewards. Inevitably, every day someone would reveal to me that somebody in line had taken shortcuts along the route or somehow violated one of the many unwritten rules of the Camino. Whenever this happened, I would share with them those two truisms from my hospitalero training. Nodding their head in the universal language of agreement, they would signal how true these two simple phrases summarized the demands and rewards of the Camino, as well as the principal lesson that we should not judge each other.



Team leader Jim McNicholas greets pilgrims as they await their compostelas.

After our brief terms of service at the Pilgrims' Office, each of us headed out to explore the Camino that drew at our hearts. The Camino Portugués drew three of our team, while Wanda and I headed off to explore the Camino Primitivo. Throughout the previous two weeks, everyone who arrived by way of this route said that it was, "*muy duro, pero muy tranquilo*." It was indeed the most difficult Camino. All of the way up each long uphill climb and all the way down, the phrase turned over in my mind... "You get from the Camino what you put into it." The previous two weeks of giving through the Amigos program was more than rewarded in my Camino. ♦

Amigos Welcome Service - The Taste of Magic

By Brad Harper, Williamsburg VA

My wife Chere and I served as Amigos the first two weeks of June this year. We found the work demanding at times, yet very fulfilling. Like the Camino itself, your experience is very much affected by those with whom you share it, so I can only share what my experience was like.

Duties varied: selling tubos, managing the lines, answering questions. One of us, the one with good handwriting, even filled out Compostelas. We had an excellent orientation as to what was located where, including the new Consigna office just down the street that stores backpacks and bikes, has a laundry service, and will even ship bikes back home.

We were comfortably lodged in a house with our own bedroom (and bathroom with shower!), a common kitchen, washing machine, and a patio in back with ample clotheslines to dry your laundry. It is a little less than 1 kilometer walk to the office. You can pack light. We had get-togethers with the Dutch Amigos a couple of nights, and Mr. Rafferty who oversees the Amigos Service is quite a generous host.

Two highlights come to mind. One day, three Shinto priests arrived in traditional garb.

Wonderful to look at, but apparently their sparse attire did not have room for soap! Our last Friday we were invited to attend the evening Mass and sit inside the rail, just next to the botafumiero as it swung past us. I could see the flames at the bottom of the large container and thought, "I've come a long way from Oklahoma." We were embraced, shared laughs, and helped people who were tired and emotional. I have a lovely pewter religious coin from a Korean pilgrim who just wanted to know where to leave his pack for Mass. As he did not understand my directions, I walked him there. He bowed, took off his pack, and gave me this coin that he had carried so far. That is but one of many

such instances where I was repaid so richly for what I deemed to be so little. I have physical limitations such that walking long distances is at least currently not possible. So I breathe in the magic through these moments with others. I will ask to come back, but I would not deny others a taste of that magic as well. Think about it. ♦



Inside the rail view of tiraboleiros,, who make the botafumeiro fly.
By Bill Manderfeld, Portland OR



Shinto priests complete their Camino

The Last One

By Marie G. Coleman, Nashua NH

As the afternoon heat won out over my aching limbs, I hobbled into the tranquil village of Mañeru. My earlier hope of walking on to Lorca vanished as each step grew more painful. This time on the Camino, I vowed not to rush, to keep my own pace. I promised to be as aloof as a cat. I pledged to take breaks when needed, no matter how good the conversation.

Even on the Camino, time exists. One needs to be in an albergue by a set time. Many hospitaleros lock the doors at night. In the morning, one needs to be out usually by eight. Hospitaleros need time to prepare for the next wave of pilgrims. I was often the last one to leave each morning. Always walking forward magnifies the importance of remaining present to each moment and mindful of all belongings. The forward motion propels a pilgrim not merely through space but time as well.

I enjoyed my own designation as *the last one* realizing that when I'm left to my own devices, I'm blissfully happy. Since I was the last to leave each albergue, I was the last to start on the Camino.

This provided a rare opportunity: to meet pilgrims who had clocked hours before the sun rose. They were sweaty and laughing by eight-thirty, having marked off miles along the way that I walked the morning before. I was a spectator to their race with time. God must surely love that early 40K crowd. I do admire them, but I didn't want any part of that club.

I never thought much about it until the morning I woke up in Mañeru. This brilliant stone-inspired village is linked with the Knights Templar and the Order of St. John. The Church of St. Peter's and cemetery rest upon a hill, offering a view of the future or perhaps a flashback to a past life.

The next life or the next day's walk . . . a splendid scene in any case. As I sipped the last dregs of my coffee, pilgrims walked by me one by one. As I tied my boots, a pack of pilgrims stopped, while others carried on, like souls entering and exiting this world, in rhythm and unique as the vineyards, dotted with olive trees that I crossed later that day. First or last, doesn't matter. ♦

Camino Signs

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

On the Português Camino, blue arrows point toward Fatima, and the yellow arrows toward Santiago



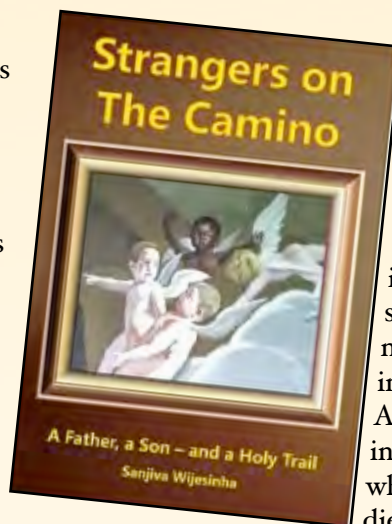
Both photos taken near San Pedro de Rubiães, Portugal by Mike Dunican, Lake Stevens WA

Book Review: Strangers on the Camino: A Father, a Son – and a Holy Trail

Reviewed by Annette Argall, Baltimore MD

Strangers on the Camino, Sanjiva Wijesinha's first-person account of his Camino journey, will resonate with veteran pilgrims, who will recognize familiar places and experiences. New pilgrims will glimpse what it is like to walk the Camino. The narrative flows easily and makes you feel like you are walking with the author.

What makes this book stand out from other first-person Camino narratives is the author's perspective through the lens of a different cultural and religious tradition as well as the insights he gains while walking with his adult son.



This observation makes the author stop, reflect, and realize that sometimes, strangers speak the truth we have not seen.

The stories offer memorable Camino vignettes. In Navarra, Shivantha helps a pilgrim so intoxicated he can barely stand; several weeks later in Galicia, the now-sober man returns the kindness in a different but important way. Another time, Sanjiva and Shivantha invite to dinner a Canadian pilgrim whose companion, his father-in-law, died suddenly on the Camino. In Sri

Lankan culture, “no one grieves alone,” and they embrace the pilgrim in this tradition. The list of Camino Lessons that the author develops over the course of his journey includes many familiar and perhaps some new ones for pilgrim readers.

As with all Caminos, several themes come up: living in the present, taking your time and not rushing, simplicity, sharing. The main theme of the book, which the author articulates several times, is this: “We have been discovering along the Camino a host of other travelers who are quite unlike us in age, origin, and interests – but so much like us in so many ways. In fact, I am constantly reminded of the fact that there is much more that unites folk than divides us.” Like many others, this Camino truth has applications on and off the Camino. ♦

Strangers on the Camino:

A Father, a Son - and a Holy Trail

By Sanjiva Wijesinha

Published September 2014

Originally from Sri Lanka, these two pilgrims now live half a world apart, the father a medical doctor in Melbourne, Australia, and the son, a lawyer and actor, in New York City. One of the author's revelations is summed up in what many of us would call a Camino moment. A German pilgrim, upon seeing the son carrying the father's pack for him one day, tells the father, “You have a very good friend.” When the father replies that the man is not a friend but his son, the German replies, “Your son is a very good friend for you.”



Monjardín By Nancy Fee, San Francisco CA

Eat Dirt

By Kathy Kennerly, Ponferrada, Spain.

Now before you get your dust up, let me explain. In Spain particularly and other parts of our globe, that's just what we humans do: we eat dirt. A group of Africans eat soil, clay, and chalk to cleanse their intestines. Folks in Georgia USA are known to eat red clay. There are a number of motives as to why people participate in geophagy (eating soil, clay, or chalk) and pica, an eating disorder involving the craving of non-food items. While that explains the behavior as to anthropology and psychology, here's how I think about eating dirt.

After walking my first *etapa* of the Camino Francés through La Rioja wine region, I just couldn't bring myself to wash the red soil from my hikers. There they sat when everything else was unpacked, washed, and stowed away... infused with the fine red dust from Logroño to Santo Domingo de la Calzada. Miles of memories in them, most of which were vineyards that stretched as far as the eye could see. I just couldn't part with that luscious red dust so full of what I had come to love as Spain. In a word, it was *terruño*.

In Spanish, *terruño* is synonymous for French *terroir*. It is pure magic... geography, geology, and climate coupled with specific plant genetics that are expressed in agricultural products of a given region. It is the effect that local environments have



Good enough to eat!

on the production of food. Wine, coffee, chocolate, hops, tomatoes, and tea are among those products we know first by where they are grown. *Terruño* is the notion that plants take nutrition from the soil, air, water, and physical surroundings by developing roots, leaves, and their fruit for us to enjoy as food and drink. So in my mind, when we eat the *pimientos de Padrón* and drink the Rioja Tempranillo, we are eating the dirt that sired them.

As you walk across Spain, you will note the counterplay of tradition, culture, and *terruño* and how this magical combination of elements conspires to divine the best of Albariños, Tempranillos, pimientos de Padrón, olives in many guises and tomatoes so plentiful that a *Tomatina* is held every year in August to celebrate the excessively abundant crop. Tons of fresh tomatoes are smashed on the locals and tourists and all that stands in the way. Here, they don't just eat dirt, they wear it, too! ♦

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. ♦

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| ♦ Dolly Anagnostis | ♦ Mike Dunican | ♦ Kathy Kennerly |
| ♦ Annette Argall | ♦ Kenneth Elkin | ♦ Bill Manderfeld |
| ♦ Bill Arney | ♦ Nancy Fee | ♦ Laurie Reynolds |
| ♦ Richard Baldwin | ♦ Quín Freire | ♦ Walt Scherer |
| ♦ Susan (Trixy) Barnes | ♦ George Greenia | ♦ Joseph Stewart |
| ♦ Douglas Challenger | ♦ Brad Harper | ♦ Frank Verdú |
| ♦ Marie G. Coleman | ♦ Linnea Hendrickson | ♦ Faith Walter |
| ♦ David Cook | ♦ Patricia Johnston | ♦ Thayer Woodcock |

Camino Lessons

By Dolly Anagnostis, Saco ME

The last day of my Camino in September 2013 was some of the worst weather I encountered for the whole 500-mile journey. As I came walking down that final hill into Santiago, the rain drove itself into everything - the landscape, my shoes, my face. It even pinged off the statue to all pilgrims that stands on the top of that final hill. The cold, the wind, the rain felt like they were one with me. It is the first time that I was content in the rain, feeling no separation between the rain and myself.

When I look at my Camino pictures and talk about that pilgrimage, it still gives me chills; however, remembering the weather is not the reason. It was the unstoppable force of the human spirit. It was stepping away from my routine life. It was learning how to be brutally honest with myself and others. It was confronting my own fears. While it was exhilarating to walk into Santiago, believe it or

not skipping to, "We're off to see the wizard, the wonderful wizard of Oz," as soon as we had been to the Cathedral and blessed by the Mass, there was also the reality of returning home. Santiago is in and of itself a place of transition.

I left my Camino family and returned to my Saco, Maine family. Both had huge pulls. I stopped washing clothes by hand and looked forward to my washer and dryer. I could stop walking, yet it seemed inconceivable that I would drive.

I could burn the two outfits of clothes I had worn for 6 weeks and wear outfits that were color coordinated. No more communal showers and bathrooms; my own was waiting for me. Toilet paper was soft and abundant, no more sticking napkins in my bra to use when toilet paper was unavailable. The list goes on. Although I had not looked forward to giving up conveniences, I found it was a blessing. It simplified my life, something I hope I can continue to do.

The whole Camino is a transition. I found most people there seeking something, some not even sure what it was. By its fluid nature, its beauty, peregrinos' openness, the natural rhythms of walking and being part of nature unfolding, lessons budded within me. I returned home, richer in spirit, humbler in attitude, and grateful. ♦



*My Camino family:
John from Cork Ireland; Allison and Erik
from Florida; Dolly; and Gail from New
Zealand.*

Noah's Sixteenth Birthday

Pastor Kenneth Elkin, Williamsport PA

It was a beautiful morning, and Noah's sixteenth birthday. The two of us had charged ahead as usual and were now sitting beside the trail near the old monastery of Obona on the Camino Primitivo, waiting for Noah's parents to catch up.

Three strangers approached and began to sing "Happy Birthday" to Noah in three languages simultaneously. They had passed his parents a bit earlier and in conversation, learned about the

happy day and decided to help him celebrate. Being 16, he professed mortification at the attention but endured it. The three went on, and we did not see them thereafter, but what a nice gift they gave Noah.

Ah, to be 16, and to be serenaded trilingually while walking with friend and family on a glorious June day in Spain! What a memory! ♦

Pilgrim House

By Faith Walter, Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Hello from Santiago! Anne, Jeremiah, Danielle, Gale, Nate, and I are so pleased to share that we opened the Pilgrim House Welcome Center at Rua Nova, 19 in Santiago in July. Pilgrim House is a dedicated place where pilgrims can further the conversations, community, and reflection they have experienced on the Camino.

We have a living room and a kitchenette where pilgrims gather. Come by anytime, especially on Monday and Thursday afternoons when we have Pilgrim Meet-Ups. If instead you need time alone, sit in our reflection room and patio where you can think, journal, and process your Camino. Stay tuned for regular prayer times as well.

We also offer services to help meet practical needs, such as printing boarding passes, laundry, and backpack storage.



So come on by once you reach Santiago. We'd all love to meet you and celebrate your accomplishment with you! We leave you with a quote that says it so well:

"Pilgrims often journey to the ends of the earth in search of holy ground, only to find that they have never walked on anything else." - Scott Russell Sanders.

Find us at www.pilgrimshousesantiago.com/pilgrim or www.facebook.com/terranovapilgrimhouse. ♦

Lake Tahoe Pilgrim Get-Together

Members of the Northern California Chapter got together for a weekend of hiking and Camino camaraderie at Lake Tahoe last July. As you see from this photo, their paths traversed some mighty fine landscapes. ♦

Pilgrim Weekend at Lake Tahoe
By David Jennings, Kings Beach CA



Thoughts From the Camino

By Richard Baldwin (age 68), Winter Park FL

The four of us arrived into the big plaza in front of the church at Santiago de Compostela this afternoon. We began 13 days ago on bikes in Roncesvalles. The trip has been good but strenuous.

Here are several 'fresh-off-the-trail' observations:

- The university students and other young people have now gone back to school and back to work. The Camino is currently crowded with seniors.
- Seniors bring a wholly different flavor to the Camino adventure. They meet everyone, talk a lot, party hard, but go to bed early.
- Their walks are shorter, probably in the range of 12 to 20 km per day, depending on their age and physical condition. Estimated there are 95 walkers for every bicyclist. We saw no horsemen. There are some loners of course, but

the seniors tend to walk in couples and small groups.

- My estimate is that 80 or 90% of these grey-haired peregrinos send their *mochilas* ahead by taxi and make confirmed reservations for the next night's place to stay.
- This year the weather was near perfect. Rain was minimal, evenings were cool, and daytimes were sunny and pleasant. This is a great time of year to make the trip.
- The Camino is increasingly popular. The visitors are from everywhere. The average age is rising. The satisfaction rating remains near 100%.

Reflecting, after multiple visits now, the Camino de Santiago remains a unique and satisfying experience, even when you are a little longer in the tooth. ♦

I was slower than a turtle but finished my Camino July 18, started at St. Jean May 31. It took me 49 days - only two days off and walked it all. I did the Camino to give thanks for my great mom who passed away February 15. I wore her photo on the back of my pack.

This is a photo of Esmeralda from Holland. I met her July 7 as I crossed into Galicia. Over breakfast at a cafe she told me that she was walking from Finisterre to Jerusalem, overland, and planned to take 10 months. I wonder if others met her later and can comment on her progress. She is one of many pilgrims I have in my thoughts and prayers since I got home. As with all my travels, my first best memories are of the people I met on my way. ♦

Editors note: [American Pilgrims on the Camino Facebook page](#) is a great place to keep in touch with the people you meet on your Camino. Check us out on Facebook.

Pilgrims Along the Way

By Patricia Johnston, Villa Rica GA



Pilgrimage Makes Us Better

By Frank Verdú, Oribuela, Spain

In September, I combined attending the International Tourism and Pilgrimage Congress for three days with the experience of living in Santiago for those days. This time was full of meaning and a unique life experience.

Each day, early in the morning and each evening right after the Congress, I walked through the streets of Santiago, went into the Cathedral and visited other Santiago locations, always in solitude and gratitude. These were moments to enjoy and relax, to reflect, while in the on and off presence of the rain. I was in a special place, a sacred city, and time stopped.

If the Congress was a time to listen, learn, explore, and be enriched by the many contributions of experts in tourism and pilgrimage, on the streets of Santiago I had that pilgrim feeling again, of being just an individual with a question: why I am here?

In 2010 and 2012, I was a pilgrim in Santiago. Each time I went with a mix of motivations, found meaning and some answers to questions, but now the question is: Am I a pilgrim this time, or I am only attending a Congress? Answer: I am a pilgrim.

Why? The counterpart to the teachings at the Congress was the reality found outside in Santiago, and, remarkably, my bearing witness to pilgrims' relating their Camino experiences. The

magic took place after the evening Pilgrim Mass. At the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in the Cathedral, some pilgrims gathered to pray and share their feelings, emotions and teachings from the Camino. It was nothing short of amazing: pilgrims crying tears of joy, expressing feelings and experiences of brotherly love, life-changing



experiences, and especially conversions.

What I witnessed is hard to explain but for me it had an answer. Pilgrimages are needed for people, cultures and traditions to meet, to bring us back together, to respect and love nature, to overcome our wants and emotions, to find out that we have few needs and so many things in common, to share, and especially to love each other. Pilgrimage makes us better. ♦



Welcome, New Members!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who joined American Pilgrims on the Camino from July 2014 through October of this year. We look forward to meeting all of you at future Gatherings and events. ♦

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| ♦ Christopher Adams | ♦ Nilda & Emile De Boyrie | ♦ Elizabeth Holmes |
| ♦ Tom Adler | ♦ Michelle Delore | ♦ Anne Hottle |
| ♦ Neve & Steve Agbayani | ♦ Danielle Desvallons | ♦ Tom Hyden |
| ♦ Susan Amato | ♦ Jim, Juliette & Sean Dolle | ♦ Phillip Iriarte |
| ♦ Colleen Annes | ♦ David & Connie Drews | ♦ Shelli Israelsen |
| ♦ Vincent Ayd | ♦ Barbro Drott Huth | ♦ Elizabeth & James Jackson |
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| ♦ Marit Barca | ♦ Eva Dulnik | ♦ Paula Jager |
| ♦ Barbara Bates | ♦ Tammi & Michael Dunaway | ♦ Ellen & Peter Kadeli |
| ♦ Bill Batty | ♦ Diana & Martin Durkin | ♦ Gjon & Elizabeth Kadeli |
| ♦ David Baughman | ♦ William & Jennifer Earner | ♦ Maria Kareh |
| ♦ Mick Beede | ♦ Tibi Ellis | ♦ Dr Noah Kersey |
| ♦ Douglas Beumer | ♦ Maria Gabriela Escalante | ♦ Valerie Khachadourian |
| ♦ Tammy Blaskowsky | ♦ Ann Fessenden | ♦ Emily Kremer |
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| ♦ Sydney Bridges | ♦ Linda Fitts | ♦ Leah Lee |
| ♦ Colette Brion | ♦ Ellen Freeman | ♦ Donna Lombardi |
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| | | ♦ Ann Marie & Roger Morin |

New Members! continued

- | | | |
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| | ♦ Marti Steussy | |

American Pilgrims on the Camino says Goodbye to Board Members

Michael Burriss joined the board earlier this year and leaves us to pursue new responsibilities associated with his new position as a teacher in the public school system. Bill Edwards has served on the board for the last five years and has decided to invest his energy in earning his Ph.D. Bill served on communications, marketing and chapter teams.

We wish them both luck in their new pursuits and thank them for their work. ♦



Through the Tunnel
By Nancy Fee, San Francisco CA



*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!

So, please keep telling us, in **400 words or fewer**, about *your* Camino. Consider a photo, a poem, or a new found understanding of an idea – a pilgrim's perspective. We have refined our

guidelines, so please visit [Newsletter](#) on our website for suggestions and our new guidelines.

The submission deadline for the next issue is January 19, 2015. We welcome your questions, comments, and submissions at newsletter@americanpilgrims.com.

iBuen Camino!

*Cherie Pagett, Annette Argall,
Zita Macy, & Mona Spargo*
Team La Concha

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