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# LA CONCHA

Newsletter of American Pilgrims on the Camino  
September 2016

## Backstage on the Camino

by Lynn Talbot, Blacksburg VA

As pilgrims, we leave our albergue every morning, setting out for another day of walking. We are on the trail until we arrive at our next albergue. So what happens between the time we leave one albergue and arrive at the next? What happens “backstage?” Unless you have served as an hospitalero, you probably don’t know all that goes on during those hours we are hiking.

This past May while on the Camino, I developed tendinitis and couldn’t walk without severe pain. Normally, I would have headed home to recuperate, but this time, I was leading a group of students and couldn’t leave them. So each day I had to make my way to that day’s destination. And I found out exactly what happens “backstage.”

Most albergues would let me stay at least a few hours, usually in the common area. As the last pilgrim walked out the door, cleaning – at high speed – began. In some cases, the

owners of private albergues did their own cleaning. In others, local men and women had been hired to help with the work. Beds were straightened, blankets folded, pillows placed in the proper position. Floors were swept, bathrooms scrubbed, and impressive amounts of trash were gathered. A lot of cleaning had to be accomplished in just a few hours.

Luggage transport has become an integral part of the Camino. In some sections, there are now three, four, or even five competing companies that carry backpacks and suitcases for pilgrims. I had the opportunity to ride with several of these transport services and observed the challenges they face. The work is hard and speed matters. Pilgrims can make the work more challenging: in towns with multiple albergues, some pilgrims don’t include the name of the albergue on the luggage envelope and the driver has to guess. Other pilgrims

call, complaining their backpack hasn’t been delivered, long before the driver has completed the route.

Pilgrim transport is usually by taxi and the occasional bus. Some drivers interact little with their passengers, even those who

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### Member Writings & Photos Throughout!

speak Spanish. Others become impromptu tour guides, pointing out the sights, even stopping to allow pilgrims to take photos.

In retrospect, getting hurt isn’t what I wanted, but I appreciate knowing more about the Camino than just the trail. I saw how pilgrims help provide a livelihood for many people along the Camino. And I met memorable people – hospitaleros, luggage transport and taxi drivers, and other injured pilgrims – who made this Camino a little more bearable. ♦



*Luis, who runs a taxi service from Rabanal to Molinaseca, and Tomás from Manjarín, 2016*

## Message From the Chair

Dear Friends,

Numbers—It's easy to get into the numbers game with the Camino. More than 200,000 pilgrims received Compostelas through August of this year. Almost 18,000 of them were Americans. Almost \$50,000 in grants were made by us this year to support the Camino. About 100 of us were trained this year to serve as hospitaleros. More than 2,000 people are now members of our organization. We have 40 chapters throughout the U.S. There are lots more numbers. Numbers about new albergues opened, routes being renovated, and so on.

But maybe the most important number is the number 1. Each one of us represents the uniqueness of a Camino experience and its impact on a life. Many philosophers have posed the question "What does it mean to be human?" We pilgrims know that the Camino has given us the opportunity to ponder the question and sometimes approach answers to that great mystery. As each pilgrim travels the long miles of the Camino routes, he or she connects with, listens to, helps and is helped by hundreds of others and returns home to remember and reflect on the pain

in our feet, the sun on our heads, uncertainties in our mind and joy in our hearts – a human experience like no other.

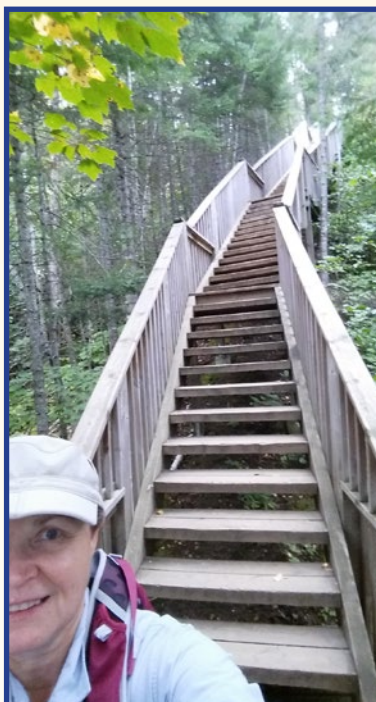
As I near the end of my time as Chair of the Board of Directors of this unique and diverse organization, I reflect upon the extraordinary gift offered to us in the form of the Camino. Numbers

are interesting but the stories that each of us shares in *La Concha*, at Gatherings and Chapter events, and wherever we meet each other are the breath of our organization. Your involvement and support are the lifeblood. Thank you for being a member of American Pilgrims on the Camino. ♦

¡Buen Camino!

*Cheryl Grasmoe*

Chair, Board of Directors



*Cheryl takes on the stairs for her training routine.*

## Camino Stats

Everything indicates that 2016 will be another record-breaking year in the pilgrim world. This has happened in the last five years, but 2016 is somewhat different. For the first time, there may be more pilgrims arriving in Santiago than in the 2010 holy year. If the current 4% growth rate remains steady, we can expect over 273,000 to register at the Pilgrims' office—0.4% more than in 2010. It's also quite interesting

that the presence of Americans is outpacing the overall growth rate. So far this year, we have seen an increase of 11%. If this trend holds, more than 15,000 Americans will register. ♦

✪ The presence of Americans on the Camino is outpacing the overall growth rate. ✪



## News from the Xacobeo

Our friends at the Xacobeo, the department of the Galician government that is devoted to promotion of the Camino, report:

1. The new Pilgrim Center in Rúa das Carretas, is in full operation, issuing Compostelas and providing information on the Camino and Galicia. The Center is a joint effort of the Government of Galicia and the Cathedral of Santiago.

2. The Cathedral of Santiago, the Department of Tourism of Galicia and the University of Santiago are forming a collaborative academic effort focusing on the Camino de Santiago and pilgrimage.

3. New, improved signage on the portion of the Camino Francés in Galicia has been completed and the project will be extended to the Caminos del Norte, Primitivo, and Inglés in 2017.

4. New Xunta albergues in Fonsagrada on the Camino Primitivo and in Padron near Tui are near completion. A new albergue is planned for Ourense, on the Camino Sanabrés. And another will be built in Poulo - Friol on the Camino del Norte on the 40 km stage from Baamonde to Sobrado dos Monxes, which has lacked a public shelter. ♦

## Exhibits to Visit

### **The Light of the Calixtinus. The Codex of Santiago.**

In Santiago until November 3

Organized by the Tourism Department of Galicia and the Xacobeo in collaboration with the University of Santiago, this exhibit covers the history of the Codex Calixtinus and the Camino de Santiago from the 12th century to modern day. It will take place at the Church of the University located at the Praza de Mazarelos. The exhibit is part of a series of activities that support the application of the Codex Calixtinus to be included in the UNESCO Memory of the World registry.

The Exhibit is open from 11 am to 2 pm and from 4 pm to 8:30 pm. Closed on Sundays and Wednesdays. Entrance is free.

### **The Camino de Santiago - Its Monuments, Culture, Nature, and Other Curiosities**

In Almeria, on the Camino Mozárabe, until October 31

Organized by the Association of Friends of the Camino de Santiago of Almeria, this exhibit is the culmination of a photography contest. It will display winning photos during the month of October in the Exhibition Hall of Alcazaba of Almeria.

Entrance is free. ♦



## Godspeed on your Journey now

by Kathy Gower, San Francisco CA

A Camino pioneer and a co-founder of American Pilgrims on the Camino finished his personal journey this August. Nick Setka died peacefully in California of esophageal cancer. He was 65.

I met Nick Setka in 1999 after my first Camino. I was looking for pilgrims to interview for my dissertation on incorporating the pilgrimage into our everyday lives. Nick was one of the first people to respond. We met at St. James Church, San Francisco, along with Lin Galea and Zita Macy and as many as 30 others (including his future wife, Joan), to talk about our pilgrimages. Nick, Lin, Zita, and I met up regularly after to walk and talk, and eventually with another California pilgrim Edie Bennett, formed a non-profit group called American Pilgrims on the Camino.

Nick made the Santiago trek in 1998. He started on a bicycle in St. Jean Pied de Port, but finished on foot.

He discovered mindfulness as he pedaled, he said, the trail decided where he should go, and he felt a deep connection to everything around him. There was no past, no future – just right where he was, right then.

Along the road in El Bierzo, tragedy struck in the form of a hit-and-run truck.

“It was a big semi, going around a lazy curve, and by the time he hit me he couldn’t have felt me,” Nick said. Someone stopped and pulled him and what remained of his bike from the roadside ditch. Nick grabbed what was left of scallop shell, his credential and passport, and spent the next few days in a hospital, then an albergue.

He took a bus back to where the accident happened. His bicycle and luggage were still there. With a broken collarbone and massive bruises, he set out on foot, walking his ruined bike carrying the half-scallop shell that remained, considering (most likely, only briefly) if he

should give up and go home.

In Villafranca del Bierzo, near the Puerta del Perdón, he found half of a scallop shell and it fit his missing one. His journey shifted focus then, Nick said.

“I was one of those people who would always ‘take care of it,’ he said, “and suddenly I was the vulnerable one, the one needing care. And it really was okay.”

“I trod the road with the belief that the journey held the meaning of the Camino, not the destination,” he told me. “The Camino, like life, has a beginning and an end if you want to make Compostela the end. It’s what happens in between -- that is what living is.” Thanks, Nick. ♦



Nick  
photo by James Freebury

### A True Pilgrim

by Frank Stevens, Ashland NH

I heard Nick Setka died. I met Nick in Portomarin in 1998. I was walking the Camino and he was pushing a bicycle up the steep hill into town. He couldn’t ride because of a broken collarbone. A truck had blown him off the road somewhere near Villafranca. I only knew him for a week, but I can say this: Nick was a true pilgrim. He pushed that bike all the way to Santiago. ♦



# The “Church Lady” of Cajarc

by Gene Cheltenham, Los Angeles CA

In April 2016 I set off to walk 950 miles from Le Puy en Velay in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. I only managed 850 miles, but that’s another story. The most important thing for me each day was avoiding sleeping with the cows which meant finding a bed every night.

One day, after 20 miles, I ended up in the little town of Cajarc. The walk was the typical up and downhill on rocky, slippery paths. My feet couldn’t take any more walking. I needed a bed. First, I found that the Tourist Office was closed. Next, I saw that the all hotels were closed. Finally, all the albergues were full. This ain’t good. This might be the night that I do sleep with the cows.

Describing my plight, a fellow pilgrim said that I should go to the town church, and there would be someone who could help. I made my way to the church, but I couldn’t find a living soul. However, behind the church I heard a woman on her cell phone. She might be the “Church Lady.” I waited patiently for her to end her conversation. Ten minutes...fifteen minutes...she is still chatting. My

backpack isn’t getting lighter.

A cheery “Bonjour, madam” from me got her attention. I tried to explain my situation using my rudimentary French. No luck. She couldn’t understand me, and I couldn’t understand her. Time for Google Translate. I typed in “Madam, can you help me find a room?”. The app replied in flawless French. A nod of her head, and we’re off. At the back door of a two story house she told me that she’d forgotten the key. Ten minutes later she returned. She unlocked the kitchen door, and we were inside. The house had a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room. All mine. The kitchen had fruit, bread, cheese, milk, jams, coffee and tea. I was to help myself. Wow! This was great!

After a long, hot shower, some cheese and bread plus a little wine (I travel prepared), I crawled under the covers for a warm night’s rest. At 7:30 in the morning she was knocking at the kitchen door with fresh bread. After breakfast she pointed out the trail, and I was off for my next day’s adventure. Thank you, “Church Lady;” I’ll never forget you. ♦



Gene climbing the long hills up to Cajarc.



Gene and the Church Lady of Cajarc.





# Just a Few Words about the Camino Francés

by Darlene P. Grant, Ellensburg WA



Well, just picture yourself putting one foot in front of the other with your few belongings in a backpack on your back. You're on new ground surrounded by picturesque scenery and fabulous ancient architecture, praying the rosary with gratitude for your life, friends, acquaintances.

You know God is urging you onward on this path and in life. St. Teresa is with you when you spot that first rose of the day, every day, in a garden along the way. You read daily meditations with much of the day to think and breathe and be at peace!



*Randy Grant and Darlene P. Grant at home in Ellensburg WA October 9, 2015.  
This photo by Susan Johnson. Altar and rose photos by Randy Grant.*

Visiting the most beautiful churches along the way in every hamlet, village and city with plazas and the town built around and centered on the Church was so meaningful. My first thoughts, after kneeling down in church, were "I'm home!" (Thousands and thousands of miles from where I live, but those are the words that came to me.) Having the privilege of attending Holy Mass every night at 7:00 pm, prior to dinner, and a good priest enthusiastically celebrating



*St. James Church altar, Santiago de Compostela, November 28, 2015.*

the Mass, even though in Spanish, was such a blessing. I soon realized I was in a Roman Catholic country, and it was absolutely "Awesome!"

## Tips for future pilgrims:

1. Expect nothing.
2. Enjoy every blessing along the way!
3. Take one or two buffs with you for wearing around your neck, head, face (dry or wet) in all types of weather.
4. Take an S hook to hang on the shower door for your clothes to hang on.
5. Enjoy the silence as much as possible. ♦

# Ultreia

by Roy W. Howard, North Potomac MD

The poet Wendell Berry said, “Always in the big woods when you leave familiar ground and step into a new place there will be ... a little nagging of dread. It is the ancient fear of the Unknown, and it is your first bond with the wilderness you are going into. What you are doing is exploring. You are undertaking the first experience, not of the place, but of yourself in that place.” The first day I crossed the mountains, walking through snow and rain in bitter cold, the Camino became an exploration of self-understanding. The freedom is exhilarating. The sense of the Unknown remains with me, along with the company of pilgrims who became my Camino family.



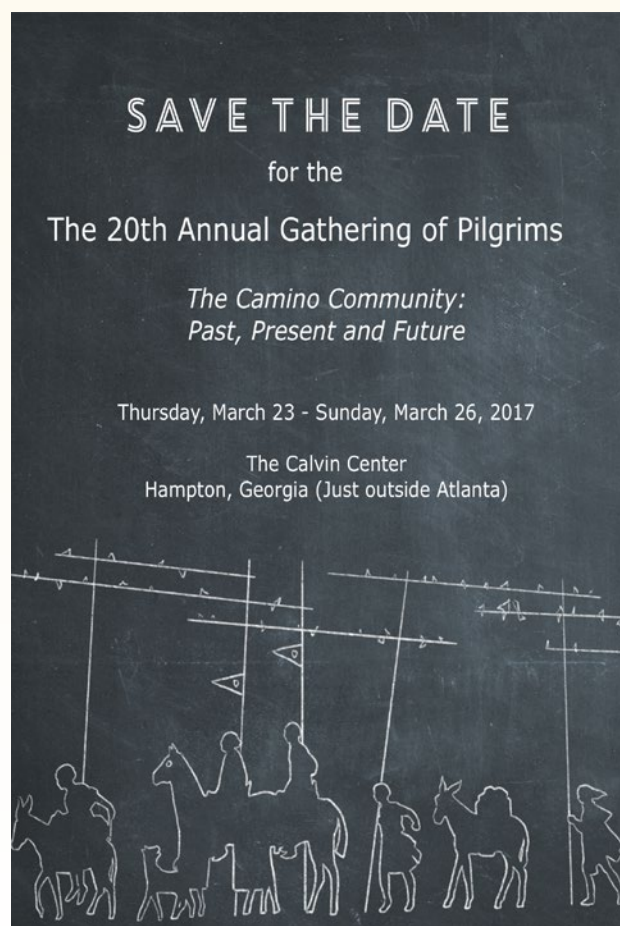
Each day at dawn  
I rise from my bed,  
place my belongings  
in a backpack and  
walk out the door.  
The Camino winds  
through wide valleys  
and small villages,  
among vineyards  
and the grasslands  
of the high plains.  
It crosses the  
mountains of Galicia

before descending to Santiago. The spring flowers are breathtaking. Songbirds are abundant, including the ubiquitous call of the cuckoo. Most days I didn't know what I would eat, where I would sleep or whom I would meet. It was a sense of being on the edge of fear and faith. Daily I pray, “I will receive this day with gratitude and an open heart.” Sharing simple meals with bread and wine, engaging in slow honest conversations that frequently reached rare spiritual depth, tending the pains of another — the Camino is a profound experience of conviviality. The pilgrims greet each other with “buen camino,” meaning “enjoy your walk.” The response is “Ultreia” a word of encouragement that means “forward always; keep going [into God.]”

I reached Santiago de Compostela in 31 days, celebrating with my Camino family. Two days later, I walked on to Finisterre, the village on the coast known as the end of the world. Here the original pilgrims faced the ocean where the world ends and the unknown begins.

There is a saying: *The Camino begins when the Camino ends.* I wanted a way to mark this experience into my body reminding me of gratitude, freedom and faith. This is why I have a tattoo. It's a shell, a symbol of baptism and of the Camino, with the word *Ultreia* above it. My spirit is marked with the Camino. Now my body is. I'm grateful. ♦

## 2017 Gathering



Graphic by Luis Javier Martinez, @Luigipanda



# Tastes of the Camino by Yosmar Monique Martínez

reviewed by Kathy Kennerly, Ponferrada Spain

*Tastes of the Camino*, written by Yosmar Monique Martínez, is a Spanish food cookbook for both the novice and the experienced chef. Yosmar guides the reader across various regions of Spain with her authentic and authoritative delivery of exquisite Iberian plates, served up with generous helpings of memories shared with Camino friends and families.

Whole-page photos allow the reader to visually feast on mellijones and Caldo Gallego. The fragrances of fresh cinnamon and vanilla virtually leap from the page. Yosmar's use of a rhythmic organization of discussion, photo, ingredients list, then preparation instruction, take on the cadence of walking, etapa by etapa, to Santiago. One step at a time. One savory, artful dish at a time. Small details enrich the read: the red grosgrain page marker, the small pilgrim icons denoting serving size of each recipe and the spine that lays flat make this cookbook enjoyable and easy to use. *Tastes of the Camino* contains 30 authentic recipes. Recipes were peer-tested, and instructions for preparation

were tailored to make clear each step necessary for successful execution. From beginner to practiced chef, authentic Spanish dishes can be prepared with ease and presented beautifully to the most discerning palates.



The stunning pictures in the book led me to try these recipes, which are easy to follow. Cooking them made my whole house smell wonderful, which brought the Camino to me, right here in my kitchen! ~Liz Walsh

Armchair pilgrims and caminantes alike will enjoy the flavors and memories this beautiful book evokes. It is a work of art from the heart. ¡Buen Provecho! ♦



Photos and exacting recipe directions help cooks recreate the tastes of the Camino that they grew to love in Spain. Artful layout and appealing photos of the prepared food assist the reader to recreate the authentic recipes."

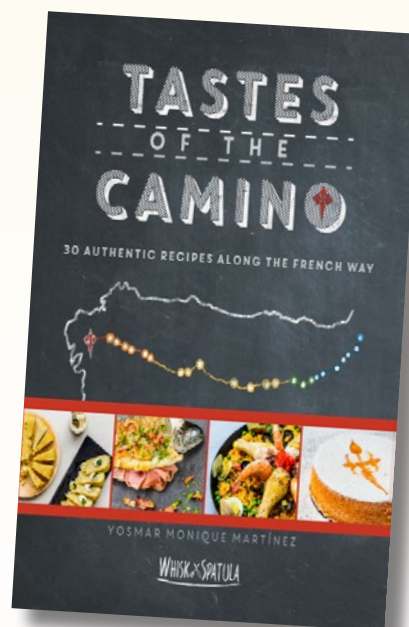
~Stacey Wittig

## Tastes of the Camino

by Yosmar Monique Martinez

Whisk and Spatula LLC; July 17, 2016

152 pages



cover illustration by  
Luis Javier Martinez @Luigipanda



# Preparation for the Camino

by Janet Meskin, Los Angeles CA

"One thing I ask from G-d; one thing do I seek - that I  
May stay in the divine presence all the days of my life,  
Envision divine delight, and contemplate G-d's presence."  
Psalms 27:4

Part II: And the end of all our exploring T.S.Eliot

After 1 year of Camino preparation involving a

Number of REI shopping visits for clothes, shoes,  
backpack/items et al; then

Doctor visits, physical therapists, chiropractors,  
orthopedics all to heal a leg injury; not  
to mention

The training walks to build up endurance and strength;  
leaving Los Angeles seemed  
doubtful.

However it was the journal work and active imagination  
which

Ebbled and flowed through the sentient body mixed with

Emotional highs and lows that provided the volume of  
spiritual work for self-growth;

all inspired from shin splints that  
wouldn't go away from breaking in

New Teva sandals that cut into the  
right ankle, that was the nemesis.

Damn.

One day I'm going to Spain and the  
next day not.

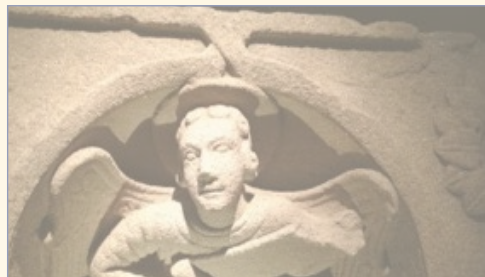
Funny how life creates hurdles and  
we find we're stronger than we know

A truth I later revisit on the Camino.

Like those before me hundreds of years ago, I intuit the  
energy of sacred devotion

Longing to join the rhythm and pace to a contemplative  
place

Of serene solitude and open to what pleasures await me



Stone Angel in Santiago de Compostela.

'Ultreial!' in ancient Galician - "Be strong, keep going,  
reach beyond" encourages this

Rite of passage into the next stage of life as a retired  
single senior -

Expansion describes my state of being; open to all who  
will walk into my life.

XI letters in Telesphorus, Greek demigod of healing who  
roams the dark

Places of this cosmos and glows

Like a star, pointing the way to the gates of the sun and  
to the land of dreams.

Oh Telesphorus is me as the 4th body with Polar Bear,  
Dolphin, Blackbird as guides

Revelation sinks in with a force  
greater than myself

Instantly connecting...the truth is  
my pilgrimage has already begun

Not even having left California,  
the inner journeys were already  
walking

Grounding integral for the  
transformative process. ♦



Drawing from an inner journey before my  
pilgrimage began.

**Editor's Note:** This is the 2nd of a four part essay/poem written in  
acrostic form. Part I can be read in July 2016 issue. A poem in acrostic  
form uses the letters in a phrase, such as the T.S. Eliot quote above, to  
begin each line of the poem.

## Third Annual Lake Tahoe Campout- Reconnecting Pilgrims to the Camino

*by David Jennings, Kings Beach CA*

The third annual Lake Tahoe Pilgrim Campout was held in July to celebrate the feast day of St. James. The camaraderie of the participants – with camping, community meals, social time, and challenging hikes in the natural beauty of Lake Tahoe and the surrounding Sierras --- was very reminiscent of days on the actual Camino. This year the Saturday evening Pilgrim's Mass and blessing were celebrated by Father Arias at the campsite



*Father Arias and the pilgrims gather around the fire.*

followed by the now legendary paella dinner. The weekend event was not sponsored by American Pilgrims or any specific chapters, but was a grand celebration of the camaraderie and values all pilgrims share and what an opportunity to get together

in a beautiful place. It renewed the experience of past Caminos and is motivation for future ones. Ultreya! ♦



*Pilgrims at the Falls.*

# Paella for



# ALL!



# Hospitalera Voluntaria

by Deborah Hammond, Tacoma WA

I walked the Camino Francés in the spring of 2015 and don't think I will ever get off that road. The Camino gets into your blood, it gets under your skin. Arrival in Santiago is the beginning of a journey of perpetual pilgrimage. My journey continued this summer with two weeks of service at Albergue Santa María in the small town of Carrion de los Condes, close to the mid-point of the Camino Francés.

An extraordinary experience it was. A community of Augustinian Sisters who rotate from their convent near Avila, runs the inn, assisted by volunteer hospitaleros who stay for a few days to several weeks, helping to maintain the inn and sharing the monastic life of group meals, morning and evening prayers, and simple accommodation. The Sisters' mission is service to the pilgrims, transforming strangers into guests, and creating an atmosphere where pilgrims can experience divine love. Even for a nonbeliever like me, the result was a profound spiritual experience of community, love, and open-heartedness.

To enhance each pilgrim's experience, the work of maintaining the albergue was emphasized with careful attention to small details. The workday began at nine with cleaning – all surfaces wiped, swept, mopped. When doors opened to pilgrims at noon, the inn was impeccably clean. Glasses of cold beverages and fruit snacks were in the



*Augustinian Sisters and hospitaleros at Santa María*



*Hospitaleras at the front desk: Marta, Deborah, Patricia, Carolina, and Gema.*

lobby.

Two or three hospitaleros, or two volunteers and a sister, welcomed the pilgrims, writing registration information, stamping credentials, taking payment, assigning rooms, and explaining the layout of the albergue and evening activities at the inn and the parish church. Special attention was paid to addressing each pilgrim by name, trying to pronounce the name correctly, speaking the pilgrim's language whenever possible, and accompanying the pilgrim to the upstairs dormitory to assign a bed.

Communal dinner was available to all pilgrims without extra charge – the Sisters prepared a main dish, pilgrims were encouraged to bring food or beverage to share. Hospitaleros gathered the shared food and prepared salads, appetizer plates, desserts; we set the tables, poured wine, and served individual dishes. There was musical grace before and after dinner. Volunteers, Sisters, and pilgrims all cooperated in kitchen cleanup. The workday ended around 10:30, time for pilgrims' lights out. It was long hours of hard work carried out with great joy.

I am hoping to be back on the Camino, and back to working as a hospitalera, in years to come. My advice to fellow pilgrims – just do it! Buen Camino! ♦

**How could we have  
discovered great  
lands, if we dare not  
travel?"**

**-Lailah Gifty Akita**



## Chapter News

American Pilgrims membership continues to grow throughout our 40 chapters around the country. The 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, visit the local chapters page on the website <http://www.americanpilgrims.org/local-chapters> and complete the online Chapter Formation Application. ♦

### SoCal Chapter

The SoCal Chapter has had 17 events so far this year and still going. We have had 10 walk/hikes including one where people could sell, trade, or buy Camino items; 2 potlucks, and 5 Q&As.

Our biggest news is that we have added a fourth Co-Coordinator: Geoff Davies (seen in the photo) from Ventura County. He brings a wealth of Camino knowledge and passion to our Chapter and we are delighted to have



him. He is one of the chapter's primary hike leaders, and our IT person. Please welcome Geoff!!

Kurt Buckley from our SoCal Chapter is walking 2000 miles from Poland to Santiago. His blog is <http://walkpuravida.com/>

*Co-coordinators: Anita Baroldi, Marla Keese, Kurt Buckley & Geoff Davies*

### NorCal Chapter

Northern California chapter coordinators have been busy planning Camino training hikes and special pilgrim events in the San Francisco Bay Area. They included sixteen-mile hike from Richmond to Oakland, a tapas and paella lunch at Esperpento restaurant, a hike around Lake Merritt and a hike around Angel Island, as well as the events in the photos. ♦

*Co-coordinators: Rennie Archibald & Guy Joaquin*



*After our Lake Merritt walk, brunch at a restaurant aptly named Camino. photo by Laurie Ferris*



*A 7.5 mile hike in Redwood Park. photo by Guy Joaquin*



*Twenty-five pilgrims at Muir Beach nine-mile hike, organized by Sierra Club hike leader Dick Duker. photo by Laurie Ferris*

## Jacksonville Chapter

Recent Jacksonville Chapter activities included “Walking the Camino Francés 101” presentations at REI, a hike in the historic Congresswoman Tillie Fowler Westside Regional Park, a walk and lunch aboard the 75-year-old Naval Air Station Jacksonville, a scallop shell ceremony at Jax Beach, and its annual summer beach walk and picnic at Hannah Park in August. ♦



*Nearly 100-degree temperature did not deter the exuberant Jacksonville Chapter.*



*Tom, Pamm, K.C., Joann and Bob pose in front of Joann's Mini Cooper with its new European Buen Camino plate*

*Co-coordinators: Miriam Gallet & David Dufresne*

## Orlando Chapter

Forty-four brave members of the Orlando Chapter of American Pilgrims on the Camino along with two members from the Jacksonville Chapter gathered along the shores of the Atlantic Ocean at New Smyrna Beach, FL in August. The event kicked off with a beach walk at high tide.

The walk was followed by a meaningful and very emotional outdoor “concha” ceremony awarding scallop shells and certificates to 18 members about to depart on their pilgrimages. A semicircle of veterans embraced the first-timers as they received their first shell. This joyous ceremony which included a special Pilgrims Blessing was presided over by chapter co-coordinators Rick Baldwin and Casey Blanton, with Miriam Gallet, Joann Mason, and Lyzette San Germain assisting.

Back at the beach house, attention turned to those pilgrims who are just setting out this year and early next year. Three break-out sessions, each with six first-time pilgrims and two veterans, focused on Camino particulars.



The night ended with an elaborate dinner featuring Spanish delicacies prepared and brought by the peregrino/as themselves (morcilla, paella Valenciana, pan caliente, pulpo, deviled eggs, flan — all accompanied by vino tinto de Rioja)!

When the curtain fell on that Saturday night, a new family of tired but energized pilgrims and pilgrims-to-be headed out the door to climb mountains, slay dragons, and walk the Camino de Santiago. ♦

*Co-coordinators: Richard Baldwin & Casey Blanton*





# Paris to the Pyrenees: A Skeptic Walks the Way of Saint James

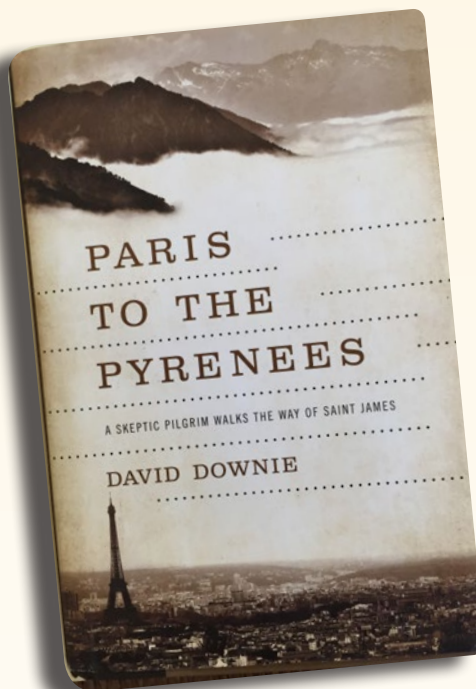
by David Downie with photographs by Alison Harris

*reviewed by Genette Foster, Pasadena CA*

This is an engaging account of a pilgrimage on a route less taken. It is enhanced by dozens of evocative photographs and by a rich narrative that pulls the reader into the multi-layered history of the region through which the pilgrims trek.

On Easter Sunday, the author and his photographer wife set out to walk from the medieval pilgrimage site of Vezelay in Burgundy France to Pamplona, Spain. They planned to follow the 2,000-year old Via Agrippa and pre-Roman, Gallic footpaths which underlie the Way of Saint James. Their first day's walk brought them to Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay and Les Fontaines-Salées: an Iron Age site, later a sacred Celtic settlement, and then, Roman baths. The town's Gothic church, Notre-Dame de Saint-Père, is built on a Merovingian (5th – 8th c.) chapel and a Carolingian (8th-9th c.) monastery for women, all atop the ancient Roman village of Vezeliacum. This is our introduction to what Downie calls "France's layer-cake civilization." Following their defeat by Julius Caesar in 58 BC, Emperor Augustus forcibly removed the Gallic Aedui from their fortress city of Bibracte to his new town Augustodunum (Autun). Aedui leaders Vercingétorix and Dumnorix are still revered in this part of Burgundy, the Morvan.

Autun's Cathedral was built as a pilgrimage church to house the relics of Saint Lazarus. In 1766, the sculpted head of Christ on the tympanum was hacked off and discarded but survived in a local collection. Downie's description of an evening spent with the 87-year old canon of St. Lazare who found the broken off head of Christ in 1948 is one of the most delightful passages in this book. "When I saw it I said, 'That's the head! Sculpted like the rest of the tympanum by Giselbertus in 1130!!' And without further ado I climbed up and snatched it, hid it under my vestments and rushed to the cathedral. There I mounted a ladder nine meters high, climbing with the sculpture in my hands, to see if it was indeed the pilfered head of Christ. The ladder shook. I almost fell. The weight was tremendous [45 pounds]."



## Paris to the Pyrenees: A Skeptic Pilgrim Walks the Way of Saint James

by David Downie

Pegasus Books – hardcover 2013, paperback 2014  
317 pages

Downie and Harris are longtime residents of Paris; their fluency in French allows lively conversations with innkeepers, restaurateurs, shopkeepers, and local residents. They had planned carefully and identified where they would spend each night. As they walked, they met off-road vehicles, kayak races, wedding parties, and big dogs, but no other pilgrims. Their route from Beaune to Mâcon passed through some of the best wine country in France. At Mâcon, a back injury forced a strategic retreat to Paris for several months of physiotherapy and rest. They resumed their pilgrimage in Le Puy-en-Velay and crossed the Pyrenees to Roncesvalles. "The only thing all pilgrims have in common is an interior necessity—I must go; I don't know why..." ♦



## Now I Know How to Walk the Camino (of Life)

by Martha O'Hehir, Annapolis MD

Let God use your weaknesses to speak to you. He will bring the answers to your questions. Be listening, because you never know who or what will hold the answer.

Be kind to your fellow pilgrims. Your generous love means so much to them.

Always be ready to be surprised by life. The trail will be muddier, the path rockier, the way steeper. Accept it all with grace, and God will send you the grace to conquer every challenge.

Enjoy the happiness of recognizing another pilgrim. Share your tips. Listen to their wisdom.

Be careful not to pass by the "Hospitals of the Soul." Let yourself be stopped by the simple, beautiful and artistic hospitality of a soul who has been led by God. Don't be in such a hurry that you miss the subtle invitation to incredible spiritual loveliness and charity.

Exchange words of gratitude and contact information as soon as you perceive a special soul. You will part ways, and maybe never see them again. Thank them right away, before they disappear.

Accept that pilgrims come and go. Do not be afraid to walk alone or to let go of cherished amigos. The imprint of their soul will ever be with you and you will embrace in heaven.

Do not worry that you wasted your Camino with unwise choices. Seeing your mistakes for what they are is also a grace... the grace of Metanoia\* and courage to face the future in a new way. Nothing is wasted. Compost your manure.

There are countless gems and diamonds that lie off the beaten path, the advertised "goods." Have an open and seeking mind and heart. Be curious and

quick to find the good in secret places.

Be careful of cities that offer expansive cement paths and restless, loud distractions—these irritate your soul.

Some people need to talk, and they may interrupt your quiet. Some people need to be quiet, thinking deeply and alone, when you need to talk. Assist each one, listening to the first, and giving space to the second. God will supply patience and love enough.

God will supply comfort and grace in every circumstance.

Walk on the earth whenever you can. Walking grounds you, gives you space and time to think; it allows you to feel your dependence on God and your feelings and intuitions. When your feet hurt, stop and rest. When you feel tired, end your work. When you feel sad, cry. Embrace your feelings: all of them, and God will speak to your mind and heart.

Realize that not everyone on the Camino is of the Camino. Discernment is needed. Be open to all, but do not easily trust your fellow pilgrims. And yet, forgive them when they hurt you. Much evil is committed blindly, not with malice, but by people who do not fully know or trust God yet. They are attracted to The Way, but they do not practice it. They bring the ways of the world—the Law of the Jungle—with them, and sometimes they don't even know it. Greet them all with, "Buen Camino!" and wish each one, "Ultreya!"

\*Metanoia means a change of heart, a spiritual transformation.

☞ "As a general rule of biology, migratory species are less 'aggressive' than sedentary ones. The migration itself, like the pilgrimage, is the hard journey: a 'leveller' on which the 'fit' survive and stragglers fall by the wayside. The journey thus pre-empts the need for hierarchies and shows of dominance." ☞

-Bruce Chatwin

# Bom Camino: A Ponte de Lima Jazz Serenade

by Laurie Ferris, Oakland CA

A light rain was falling when I arrived in Ponte de Lima after my train and bus rides from Lisbon.



Approaching the beautiful arched bridge built by the Romans in 1125, I heard jazz playing. I wondered where the sound could be coming from because the small village seemed rather quiet and empty of people. The music became louder as I got closer to a street light on the bridge, and I realized the jazz was coming from speakers concealed inside the lamppost! I was mesmerized by the beauty and the feeling of that moment—crossing a bridge and being serenaded by jazz. It was as if the Camino had rolled out a welcome mat and said, “Come here child; we’ve been expecting you. You are exactly where you need to be.”

I crossed the bridge and a big pilgrim statue greeted me with “Bom Caminho.”



The municipal albergue on the north side of the bridge was just perfect. A friendly hospitalera checked me in and issued my first albergue stamp. She gave me a tour of the facilities, and I selected a lower bunk in a room with twelve beds.

Too giddy with excitement to settle down, I went to the albergue’s dining area, where I found five amiable Italians drinking a bottle of wine. They insisted I have a glass with them. How could I refuse?

Bruno said he had just mixed a delicious spaghetti carbonara that he cooked for the group’s



communal dinner. He lamented that he couldn’t find the right cheese in Portugal for his specialty. I can speak some Italian, so we all chatted and finished the wine until it was time to say *buona notte*. I slept like a baby!

I learned on that first morning, pilgrim lifestyle is early to bed, early to rise. Even though I had earplugs on, I heard the rustling of plastic a few bunks over. By the time I got dressed, the bigger dorm room with the Italians was empty. The only sign of life was a girl in the bunkbed between mine and the window. We were the last to leave the albergue and together made it through the steep climb over Alto da Portela to Rubiaes. It was a great start to my short Camino—a Bom Caminho indeed!

You can read more about my journey on my blog [caminoprovides.com](http://caminoprovides.com). ♦

# Inspired Journeys: Travel Writers in Search of the Muse

## Brian Bouldrey - Editor

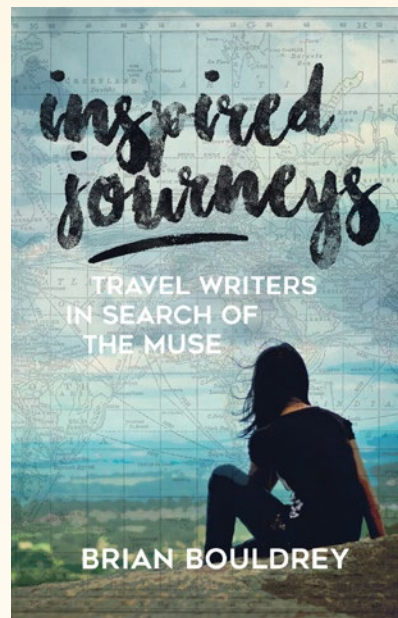
*reviewed by Stacey Wittig, Munds Park AZ*

*Inspired Journeys* is a diverse collection of essays by real travelers who move the reader through both time and place. Much of travel writing is simply about place or what to do once you arrive. But as we pilgrims know, often the real stories lie within the journey rather than the destination. Editor Brian Bouldrey, a Santiago pilgrim himself, understands this well and has compiled seventeen stories of pilgrimage to places as divergent as Varanasi, India; Ross Island, Antarctica; El Centro, California; and Santiago, Spain. These tales are told by American writers and mirror both their inward and outward journeys, a theme that the editor describes as “telling the way within.”

The name Brian Bouldrey may be familiar to many American Pilgrims on Camino members as he was the lauded keynote speaker at our 2016 conference last April. This year the annual gathering was also themed “Telling the Way Within” and included a pre-conference travel writing workshop presented by this editor/writer, who teaches creative writing at Northwestern University.

Bouldrey admits that he casts a wide net around his definition of pilgrimage by including stories of both spiritual and secular pilgrimages. While introducing us to the stories, he explains that each author addresses what pilgrimage is and that he orders the anthology to give the definitions “encouragement, space and incrementally growing meaning.”

While some writers share journeys to religious shrines as in Sharman Apt Russell’s “Buen Camino” and Russell Scott Valentino’s “An Accidental Pilgrimage,” others move along Laura Ingalls Wilder’s prairie (Kimberly Meyer) or the Grimms’ fairy-tale road (Raphael Kadushin.) Though some stories read like raw, black-and-white documentary film footage of the writer’s experiences, others like my favorite essay “The Terriblest Poet” (Brian Bouldrey), and Kadushin’s “Driving the Fairy Tale Road” feel like they were shot for the big screen in panoramic Technicolor.



### **Inspired Journeys: Travel Writers in Search of the Muse**

Edited by Brian Bouldrey

Available November 22, 2016

280 pages

After reading these essays that are not just about place, but about the inward journey and outward movement of getting to that place, you’re sure to find several that will move you as well. The engaging 280-page book will be released on November 22, 2016. ♦

Brian Bouldrey has written eight books, including *Honorable Bandit: A Walk Across Corsica*, and edited six anthologies, including *Traveling Souls: Contemporary Pilgrimage Stories*.

Stacey Wittig is author of two books including the recently-released, *Spiritual and Walking Guide: Lourdes to San Jean Pied de Port*, a guide for both the inward and outward journey.



# Preserving Tradition on the Vía de la Plata at Albergue Fuenterroble de Salvatierra

by Terry Williams, Ponte Verdra Beach FL

It's a scorching day in late August 2016. My wife Carol and I are volunteering as hospitaleros at the parochial albergue of Fuenterroble de Salvatierra, located in a rural setting south of Salamanca best known for its Iberian meat products and fighting bulls.

Father Blas, who has the albergue under his stewardship, has worked tirelessly over the last two decades to preserve a Camino tradition of walking the Camino with burros pulling antique carts. He and a group of sixty-some pilgrims were returning from one of these pilgrimages the same day that we arrived, and the place was awash with excitement.

Over the next two weeks we had a cultural immersion unlike any we have experienced in over thirty years of living abroad. Aside from the typical hospitalero tasks that we expected, we had the opportunity to participate in many new and unexpected activities, like walking a burro from Fuenterroble to its pasture six kilometers distant; retrieving an antique cart from Carrascal del Obispo for restoration in Fuenterroble; attending daily Mass and religious festivals in surrounding villages; visiting many of Father Blas's eight parishes, as well as a home for senior citizens that he founded; and meeting patients in a separate facility for the mentally ill. We especially enjoyed working side-by-side with several wonderful Spanish volunteers who are stewards of the Camino in the truest sense of the word. We even had lunch with the Queen's uncle one day!

Father Blas's generosity and the tradition of offering affordable lodging in parroquial donativos may not be a sustainable tradition over time. This

rural gem used to offer a community dinner which was paid for with donations, but had to stop because the low level of giving made it difficult for the albergue to meet its

expenses. It's a shame, because the communal meal offered an opportunity for pilgrims to engage with Father Blas who is a beloved and charismatic figure. Based upon our two-week experience and comments from Spanish volunteers working at the albergue, even lodging donations appear insufficient to cover operating costs.

During our stay we were housed in the America's House, a lovely two-room addition to the albergue built with a grant from American Pilgrims on the Camino. Following our two-week stay, we are off to walk the Camino Portugués. If you are looking for a fulfilling cultural experience, consider volunteering as a hospitalero for the experience of a lifetime. Buen Camino! ♦



*Father Blas with two of his burros near Casa Franca in August 2016.*



*Terry and Carol Williams (middle) with pilgrims at Albergue Fuenterroble Salvatierra.*

## Hospitaleros Extraordinaires

*The American Pilgrims on the Camino awarded the Michael Wyatt Hospitalero Service Grant to Dick and Jane Carter. Here is what the Carters had to say about their experience:*

Dick and I are delighted that we were awarded the Michael Wyatt Hospitalero Service Grant! We served this summer as hospitaleros at Santa Maria Albergue in Carrion de Los Condes. The Puget Sound Chapter of American Pilgrims has had a partnership with this albergue since 2013. We help them financially with their infrastructure and we also supply hospitaleros.

This was our 4th time serving with the Sisters in Carrion. We served there this year from the latter part of June through the first part of July. This year was special



*Jane Carter singing at the evening encuentro.*

because our daughter Elizabeth joined us, both for the short walk from Burgos to Carrion and also as a volunteer at the albergue.

We love the Sisters! Our time of service in Carrion is filled with much joy and love as we pray, work, and welcome pilgrims together as one family. One of our



*Hospitaleros with the Sisters in front of Santa Maria Church.*

favorite times of the day is the musical encuentro. Every evening the pilgrims, hospitaleros, and Sisters all gather together. Everyone introduces themselves and tells where they are from and why they are walking the Camino. Then we sing songs from all over the world. When the Sisters ask people to offer a song from their own country, we hear songs from Korea, Hungary, Italy, and so many other parts of the world.

Music is truly the universal language! Dick and I usually contribute songs that are typical of our country, and it is a great joy to sing and play the guitar for the pilgrims at the encuentro. Santa Maria is a very special place on the Camino, and we hope to return for many more years.

*Congratulations, Dick and Jane Carter. ♦*

## Camino Thoughts

*by Mary Williams, Napa CA*

I've realized something from my experience on the Camino. As Americans, we tend to stress over looking at a task as a job that needs to be done now, today, this afternoon ... to the point of completion. In Spain, people seemed to be far more relaxed, cleaning a little bit at a time, gardening ... little bit at a time. Taking time to socialize, siesta, eat, drink a mid-morning coffee con leche. I can't tell you how many times I've put off eating or even stopping to take care of necessities because I felt I had to finish whatever I started to the exclusion of other things, or how often I totally put off a task because I couldn't finish it in the time I had allocated.



*Mary and Ron Williams relaxing Spanish style, Camino Francés, 2016*

There has been a cultural shift in my head & heart... time to live with more peace & less stress. ♦



## Hospitalero Happenings

American Pilgrims continues to be a strong volunteer presence along the Camino. We work closely with the Spanish Federation of Associations of Friends of the Camino to provide hospitaleros in the seventeen donativo albergues the Federation assists. Many of our hospitalero volunteers have served in 18 private, municipal, and parochial albergues also that are not connected with the Federation. Hospitalero opportunities also exist in France, Portugal, and Italy. ♦

On Sunday, August 21st, American Pilgrims welcomed twenty more hospitaleros into the ever-growing family of volunteers. These include Cathy Anderson, Phil and Gail Pincus, Donna DeLuca, Frank Rodriguez, Esteban Farrell, David Bollin, Nancy Curren, Linda Fernandez, Lori Elgin, Jan Davis, Michael Blankschen, Christina Donka, Dario Silva, Denise Leonardi, David Lutes, Dale Nienow, George Esmet, Andrea Prentice, Robin Lieberman. Some folks were local Portlandians, others came from as far away as New York and Philadelphia. Trainers for this course were Rennie Archibald, Franc Chacon and Daniel De Kay. The course was full of fun, touching and powerful stories, great food (including fresh scones for Sunday breakfast!) and superb weather. Thank you Portland, thank you volunteers!

Upcoming Hospitalero training courses include November 18-20 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, February 3-5 in Los Gatos, California, and March 21-23 in Hampton, Georgia. If you are interested in volunteering as an hospitalero please see the American Pilgrims website for further information on these courses. If you have specific questions regarding volunteering please feel free to contact hospitaleros@americanpilgrims.org. ♦

### Upcoming Hospitalero Trainings

**November 18-20, 2016 in Colorado Springs Colorado**

**February 3-5, 2017 in Los Gatos, California**

**March 21-23, 2017 in Hampton, Georgia**

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## Contributors

- |                   |                   |                     |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| ♦ Jennie Benjamin | ♦ Deborah Hammond | ♦ Dick Schulze      |
| ♦ Anne Born       | ♦ Roy W. Howard   | ♦ Julie Scott       |
| ♦ Gene Cheltenham | ♦ David Jennings  | ♦ Frank Stevens     |
| ♦ Laurie Ferris   | ♦ Kathy Kennerly  | ♦ Lynn Talbot       |
| ♦ Lydia Filgueras | ♦ Sandy Lenthall  | ♦ Liz Walsh         |
| ♦ Genette Foster  | ♦ Janet Meskin    | ♦ Mary Williams     |
| ♦ Kathy Gower     | ♦ Martha O'Hehir  | ♦ Terry Williams    |
| ♦ Darlene Grant   | ♦ Larry O'Heron   | ♦ Stephanie Winslow |
| ♦ Randy Grant     | ♦ Andre Montero   | ♦ Stacey Wittig     |



## The Ribadiso Albergue in photos

*by Anne Born, New York, NY & Stephanie Winslow,  
Overland Park KS*

These photos were taken while Stephanie Winslow and I were serving as hospitaleras at Ribadiso on the Camino Francés in August 2016. ♦



*Hiking shoes in repose. photo by Anne Born*



*Anne with pilgrims. photo by Stephanie Winslow,*



*The pilgrim shuffle.  
photo by Anne Born*

# All that You Can Leave Behind

*by Jennie Benjamin, Co-Coordinator Austin Chapter, Austin TX*

More important than what you'll bring on a Camino, might be what you'll leave behind.

By now most of you have heard a "pack weight" lecture and have likely trimmed the items which will go on your Camino with careful attention... and possibly slightly obsessively.

Did you cut down your toothbrush yet? On my first Camino, I did.

The standard Camino pack list is filled with items like: backpack, pilgrim's credential, quick dry shirt, underwear and towel, passport, socks, nail clippers and whatever-version-of soap you've decided is lightweight and practical. Likely you've poured over the list several times.

Those lists begin to address the physical needs, but leave the mind and spirit sorely lacking. We travel, we quest, we become pilgrims to experience the new, to wonder, to feel amazed and inspired.

In order to do that successfully, it helps to drop some of our figurative baggage before we walk out the door.

Here's a quick list of things I like to take with me, and things I do well to leave behind.

## Pack it!

Quick dry undies (I'm a big fan)  
Flexibility (mental and emotional)  
Big questions  
Curiosity  
Persistence  
Intention  
Reverence  
Confidence  
Compassion (inward and outward)  
Sense of Adventure

## Ditch that stuff!

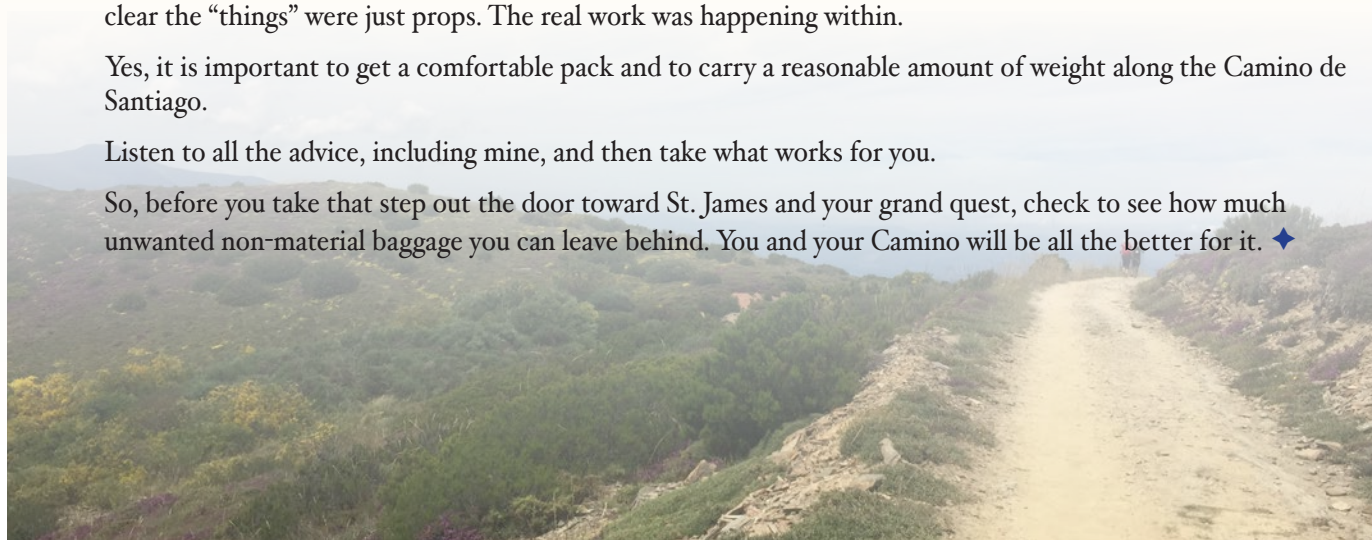
Heavy hiking boots (they can weigh you down)  
Blame  
Death grip on your mobile device  
Death grip on your opinions  
Tired, old stories that make you feel small  
Expectations  
Rigidity  
Negative self-talk  
Apathy  
Unfounded fear

Before my first Camino in the summer of 2012, I heard so much advice about the physical needs for the pilgrimage. At times all that information felt overwhelming. After a week or so on The Way it became crystal clear the "things" were just props. The real work was happening within.

Yes, it is important to get a comfortable pack and to carry a reasonable amount of weight along the Camino de Santiago.

Listen to all the advice, including mine, and then take what works for you.

So, before you take that step out the door toward St. James and your grand quest, check to see how much unwanted non-material baggage you can leave behind. You and your Camino will be all the better for it. ♦



*"Left Behind"*

*On the way to El Acebo after leaving Cruz de Ferro*



## My First Leg

by Larry O'Heron, Rochester NY

My camino is along the Vía de la Plata which starts in Sevilla in the south of Spain and heads north. With a full-time job, I am one of those peregrinos doing the Camino de Santiago in phases. My first phase happened in April of 2014. I'd like to share some special moments.

The first moment occurred as I left the industrialized portion of the Vía leading out of Sevilla. I came to the point where the Vía heads out along a miles-long graded, dirt path. The marking was more than the traditional yellow arrow "Flecha Amarillo." It also included a yellow "X" for which way to NOT walk. With the Camino already under foot, I realized how appropriate it was for my life. Sometimes I had gone left, and sometimes I had gone right, but the decisions were made, and it was only left for me to continue ahead.

The next day, fellow pilgrims and I passed alongside fruit pickers in an orange grove. Riding high in their trucks, as they slowly passed, I requested



*On the road to Guillena, Andalucia*



permission to take a picture. They acceded to my request, and then left us with more than a dozen oranges. Being hot and thirsty, we immediately opened an orange apiece and felt the cool juices of the fruit run over our fingers as we sipped the sweet contents. To this day, I remember no finer tasting oranges in my life.

On my last day and alone at this point, I was in the town of Fuente de Cantos (Fountain of Songs) on Palm Sunday. In Sevilla there are hundreds of thousands of people lined up for the religious processions commemorating the Passion of the Christ. Yet here was I in a town of hundreds. In the town church, as the Nazarenos (religious clubs) dressed in their ceremonial garb, I walked up to the float, touched its cool wood exterior and gazed into the eyes of Mary and Jesus, something just not possible in Seville. Surrounded by the town's marching brass band, by the Nazarenos, and local parade watchers, I was moved to elation for my camino and how it brought me to this small pueblo on such a great day.

As I write this, I am preparing for my third leg through Castile y Leon and into Galicia. I thank God, the fortunes, the fates, and all deities out there for such a marvelous experience. ♦



*Fuente de Cantos, Extremadura  
April 2014*





# One Step at a Time

by Sandy Lenthall, Williamsburg VA

On the eve of St. James Day, a lovely red flower from a dear friend, neighbor and fellow pilgrim, George Greenia, decorates my and Ron's table. Another dear friend and fellow pilgrim, Kathy Roach, sent a "gift" by email wishing me a Happy St. James Day and remembering that it was I who had encouraged her to walk The Way. My thoughts turned to the article in the February 1994 issue of the *Smithsonian* magazine, which so affected me by planting the seed to "do this someday." The power of sharing something in writing is strong, and perhaps I can express how my life has been changed by walking El Camino de Santiago.

My first experience, I was 58 years old and in good health. Carrying a 30-pound backpack and using a red plaid umbrella as a walking stick, it was probably a good thing that I chose October to walk from Leon to Santiago when there were few others on The Way. Jim Stelljes from Seattle, WA was sitting at a café and told me that he had heard there was an American walking with a red umbrella. (expressed with a chuckle, of course.) Actually, I thought it was quite smart, in that it was strong enough to help up and down the rocky uneven paths and would keep me dry if it rained.

Arriving in Leon was mystical and magical. At

the Cathedral Mass, I was so overwhelmed with gratitude and thanksgiving, it should have been obvious that this was the first of many more walks.

Next came Pamplona to Burgos. Then hooking the two pieces together by walking the middle section, but always hearing "crossing the Pyrenees" and counting the years as my aging continued. Ok, next was Le Puy, after spending a marvelous week at Taizé in France (remember the music?). I crossed the Big Mountains and walked on. A few years went by, then I walked O Porto, Portugal to Santiago. For my 70th birthday, I walked Leon to Santiago with our daughter, Allison, to celebrate.

My feet were itching and my head searching for my next Camino opportunity. I was the pilgrim, but it was my husband Ron's idea to invite the people who were always calling at dinnertime to talk about the Camino to come together for a week here in Williamsburg to meet and share. "What should it be called? *The Gathering*," he suggested.

Several months ago, my beloved died so that I am in the process of putting together another phase of my life. As I walk today, as I walked most of the times as a lone pilgrim, it will be one step at a time. That's the way to get to Santiago. ♦



Never during its pilgrimage is the human spirit completely adrift & alone.  
-Huston Smith

# The Camino — A Journey of the Second World War

by Andre Montero, Brooklyn NY

During the Second World War, approximately 30,000 Jews and 6,000 American and British airmen who had been shot down during combat escaped the Nazis and the death camps by walking from France into Northern Spain. Once in Spain, they made their way to Gibraltar, Lisbon, Madrid or to the northern or western Spanish coastal cities where found harbor on Allied ships. Some even made it all the way to Vigo, a seaport near Santiago de Compostela where they found harbor. The locals rowed them out to British ships waiting off shore. In reading about these escapes I realized that the trail that they walked may have included part of the Camino de Santiago. There are a limited number of passable routes through those rugged mountains and the main ones are incorporated into the Camino.

The most famous trail called the [Chemin de La Liberté](#) or The Freedom Trail was not part of the Camino. It is a very arduous route through the Pyrenees that gave the refugees their best chance of avoiding detection.

Those too weak or too old to use this trail very likely used some of the easier passages that are used by peregrinos going from Europe to the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. Once in Spain, the Camino Norte could be used to get to the northern coastal towns and the Camino Francés to those on the western coast.

It is impossible to know with certainty how many refugees, if any, were able to use part or all of the Camino to escape the horrors of the Holocaust and the Second World War but it seems likely, because of the geography, that it did play at least a small role. It is a nice thought that this ancient religious path may have had a part in saving the lives of those who would have been tortured and killed because of their religion. It would be very interesting to hear if any readers had family members or know personal stories of individuals who escaped the Nazis by walking part of the Camino. ♦



I was recently in the beautiful lakeside village of Tata, Hungary and stopped in my tracks when I saw this Camino sign. I learned that there are several Camino paths through Hungary, which explains why I met so many Hungarians on the Camino in Spain.

photo by Julie Scott, San Jose CA





## Welcome, New Members!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who joined American Pilgrims on the Camino from June through August 2016. We look forward to meeting all of you at future Gatherings and events.

- |                                 |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ◆ Thomas Allabastro             | ◆ Anais Garvanian               | ◆ Alfred Langer               |
| ◆ Dr. Madelyn & Carlos Alvarino | ◆ Timothy Geckle                | ◆ June Leahy                  |
| ◆ Lynn Anamasi                  | ◆ Tim & Sandra Gose             | ◆ Tara Lindhart               |
| ◆ Ron Arruda                    | ◆ Dawn & John Griffin           | ◆ William Livingston          |
| ◆ Laurel Barnhill               | ◆ Jim Guerra                    | ◆ Diane Livingston            |
| ◆ Charlotte Berry               | ◆ Rod Gutierrez                 | ◆ Stephen Livingston          |
| ◆ Carolyn Blasdel               | ◆ Blythe Harris                 | ◆ Helena C Losin              |
| ◆ David Bollin                  | ◆ Tina Harris                   | ◆ Nancy Love                  |
| ◆ Kathy Bonaccorsi              | ◆ Thomas Hartman                | ◆ William & Karen Lowe        |
| ◆ John & Inga Brannon           | ◆ Alice Harvey                  | ◆ Michele Lucas               |
| ◆ Pam Brechwald                 | ◆ Debra & Kurt Hastings         | ◆ Priscilla Malin             |
| ◆ Anna Brown-Mitchell           | ◆ Margaret Haugen               | ◆ Damien Marcotte             |
| ◆ Alexis Bryan                  | ◆ Mike Head                     | ◆ Linda Mathews               |
| ◆ Kevin Bryant                  | ◆ Teresa & Mike Heath           | ◆ Julie & John Maute          |
| ◆ Jean Byhardt                  | ◆ Sheridan Christian Tully Sun  | ◆ Daniel McCabe               |
| ◆ Karen Cabral                  | ◆ Hedley                        | ◆ Eileen McCauley             |
| ◆ Mark & Dianne Cancian         | ◆ Pamela Hess                   | ◆ Marianne & Doug McClenaghan |
| ◆ Pascale Carayon               | ◆ Lisa Hettler-Smith            | ◆ Lauri McKenna               |
| ◆ Bob Carrothers                | ◆ Rebecca Hinebaugh             | ◆ Dean McMillan               |
| ◆ Betsy Christ                  | ◆ Warren Hioki                  | ◆ Michelle Mechem             |
| ◆ Peggy Cobey                   | ◆ Brenda Holcomb                | ◆ Melissa Medford             |
| ◆ Tom & Juanita Coddington      | ◆ Kimberly Honore               | ◆ Michael Michell             |
| ◆ Elizabeth Cole                | ◆ Peter Hoonakker               | ◆ Zae Miller                  |
| ◆ Andrea (Rina) Cook            | ◆ Timothy Hopkins               | ◆ Wanda Miller                |
| ◆ Liliana M. Cuello             | ◆ Susan Hoyt                    | ◆ Lynne Milot                 |
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## Skateboard on My Back

by Dick Schulze, Truckee CA



*Just the essentials.*

I walked the Camino with skateboard on my back. I had the sense that God was urging me to take it along. I never planned to use it on the trail and never did. The trail is too uneven for skateboarding and anyway I can't balance on it while carrying my pack. I had in mind to use it for R&R in the evenings after each day's journey. Typical skateboarder – can't or won't follow instructions – backpack was

4 kg over the recommended limit of 10, not counting the day's liter or two of drinking water.

Two mornings later – cheerful as could be with skateboard on my back I'm departing Roncesvalles. But that evening, after the long steep descent down the mountains to Zubiri, every bone and muscle from toes to hips was in agony. I was so discouraged I nearly quit. But then as I skated along the sidewalk energy seemed to surge into me through the skateboard. All thought of quitting vanished, never to return.

Days later, I taught a young lady from England how to skateboard. She had never been on one but her boyfriend skates, and she wanted to



*Me on the board!*

learn to do it with him. She learned fast. When the lesson ended she could hardly wait to get home and show him what she could do.

I'm convinced God had his reasons for urging me to take the skateboard. Maybe, He knew it would help overcome my discouragement after Day 2; maybe it was to share the joys of skateboarding with the English girl; or maybe it was just to be a conversation piece, which it certainly was. I heard stories about the extreme snowboarder (I am a professional snowboard instructor) walking the Camino with his skateboard. It was truly an experience of a lifetime! ◆



## ¡Buen Provecho!

No doubt the potato is a huge component of Spanish cuisine. Not every potato ends up in a tortilla or fries! Try this tapa from Castilla y León called Patatas a la Importancia in which the humble potato is elevated to the star of the plate.

Thickly sliced potatoes are dipped in egg and fried until browned. Then, after removing the potatoes to a tray, a savory gravy is made in the same pan. The potatoes are returned to the sauce



to finish cooking. It's a simple dish with great flavors.

The sauce is broth based. The most common seems to be chicken broth, which gives a nice golden color. White wine is a nice addition to the broth, but can be omitted. We made a thick sauce because that's the way our favorite restaurant serves it, but we've been served patatas a la importancia in a lighter, more broth like sauce. ♦

### From the kitchen of Lydia Filgueras, Delmar MD Patatas a la Importancia

- 2 large potatoes sliced into long, thick pieces (peel if thick skinned)
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water
- 1/4 cup chopped onions
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 - 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 2 cups chicken, vegetable or beef broth
- salt and pepper to taste
- olive oil for frying

#### Directions

- Set up a breading station with the egg and flour.
- Cover the bottom of a large Dutch oven or skillet with oil and heat.
- Dip the sliced potatoes into the flour, then the egg. Reserve the leftover flour.
- Fry the potatoes for 1 - 2 minutes on each side until golden brown. Remove to a plate.
- Sauté the onions and garlic in the remaining oil until softened. Add the leftover flour and cook for a couple minutes
- Add the broth, white wine, parsley, salt and pepper. Allow to thicken slightly before returning the potatoes to the sauce.
- Simmer for another 20 - 30 minutes until the potatoes are cooked through.

To serve, spoon some of the broth onto a plate, then arrange the patatas a la importancia on top of the broth. Garnish with more fresh parsley and serve with crusty bread. They're filling on their own, but go well with a salad for a light meal. ¡Buen provecho!

Originally published on [Lydia's Flexitarian Kitchen](#).





*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, November 15, 2016. We welcome your questions, comments, and submissions at [newsletter@americanpilgrims.org](mailto:newsletter@americanpilgrims.org).

¡Buen Camino!

*Maureen Field, Peg Hall, Steve Lytch, Zita Macy  
Mona Spargo & Jessica Swan  
September 2016 Team La Concha*

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