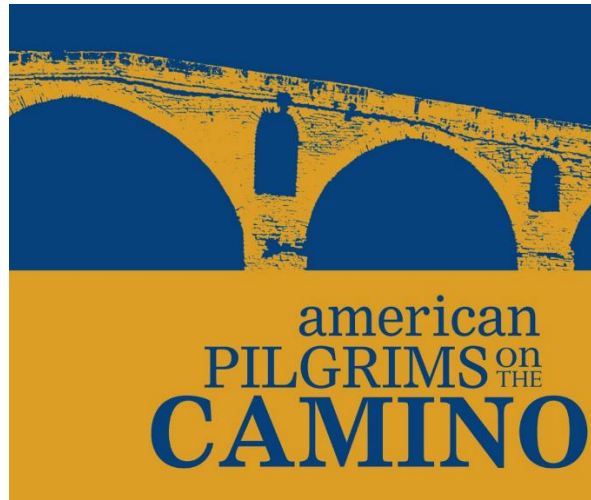


Returning Home: The Journey Continues

A Pilgrim's Workbook

By Cheryl Grasmoen



At its heart, the journey of each life is a pilgrimage through unforeseen and sacred places that enlarge and enrich the soul.

- John O'Donohue

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American Pilgrims on the Camino is a 501(c)(3) organization registered in California.

Updated Fall 2024

You have returned from the Camino! Walking or biking the Camino is a lifetime accomplishment in anyone's estimation. Months or perhaps years of preparation and many resources were invested in your experience. No matter what you experienced, the time was unique and very personal.

Few of us think, "Been there. Done that." Instead, we return home with the desire to find a way forward that preserves the extraordinary experience of the Camino.

There are many ways to go forward. Each way is as individual to the pilgrim as was the Camino itself. This workbook may help you create your own way. We invite you to continue your journey upon your return home.

Buen Camino from American Pilgrims on the Camino

This handbook invites you to enter into a process of discernment, intention and practice.

- Discernment – what were the most important discoveries from my Camino?
- Intention – will I commit the time and effort to integrate what I discovered into my life?
- Practice – what will I do regularly and faithfully to make these discoveries a part of my life?

It's time to go deeply into yourself and reflect upon what you learned – to identify your values and to confront old habits and patterns that stand in your way of redesigning your life to align with what you value.

To use this handbook, reflect upon your unique Camino experience; check those things that you wish were still present in your life. Then go to the indicated page, read the quotes for a bit of inspiration and some suggestions, then craft your plan. Remember these are just suggestions. These experiences were expressed by dozens of your fellow pilgrims in videos, posts, blogs, books and journals. You may have others!

- Journalling
- Hospitality
- Spiritual practices
- Reflection
- Daily habits
- Physical concerns (taking care of myself)
- Considerations of those at home
- Considerations of those I meet

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The Feeling of Improved Physical Condition

To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.

- Buddha

I miss...	I will explore...
the feeling of improved physical condition	prioritizing and scheduling regular exercise in my daily routine
	joining a gym
	getting a trainer and a physical assessment
	finding a group activity that interests me such as tennis, hiking, pickleball, or swimming
	participating in local group events such as bike tours, cross country skiing, or hiking
	changing my daily routine to take the stairs, walk more, or park at the edge of the lots
	limiting my time on the internet and in front of the TV
	taking a walk after my main meal
	journaling my daily activity and nutrition
	using a pedometer and setting a daily goal
	assessing my diet and following Michael Pollan’s advice: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”
	Other ideas . . .

Community and Shared Identity

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

- Dorothy Day

In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity.

- Erik Erikson

I miss...	I will explore...
community – a shared group identity	joining or starting a local chapter of American Pilgrims
	finding a hiking or walking club
	becoming a regular participant in one of the American Pilgrims on the Camino Facebook groups
	becoming an hospitalero or Ribadiso volunteer and joining that international community
	becoming active in like-minded communities not related to the Camino, such as advocacy groups and charitable giving circles
	joining a musical or theater group
	Other ideas . . .

A Sense of Accomplishment

Man is always more than he can know of himself; consequently, his accomplishments, time and again, will come as a surprise to him.

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I miss...	I will explore...
a sense of accomplishment	starting a regular practice of identifying a project, a task or a goal that is challenging for me and doing it
	finishing something that I once started
	taking a class in a subject of interest or need
	developing more structure in my day by regularly setting goals and objectives in writing and recording my progress
	developing expertise in something of interest, e.g., a Master Gardener or a docent at an art museum
	breaking a long project into multiple steps
	working on a project for a set time each day
	Other ideas . . .

Solitude and Time with Myself

In order to understand the world, one has to turn away from it on occasion.

- Albert Camus

Solitude itself is a way of waiting for the inaudible and the invisible to make itself felt.

- May Sarton

I miss...	I will explore...
solitude and time with myself	signing up for a mindfulness course online or in my community
	scheduling a regular time for meditation
	taking regular walks by myself
	staking out a private place in my home for regular use for reading, writing, making art, meditating
	taking yoga or tai chi lessons
	learning about the practice of walking a labyrinth and finding one in my community
	learning about the benefits of the Japanese practice of "forest bathing" – <i>shinrin-yoku</i>
	Other ideas . . .

Immersion in Nature

It would be well, perhaps, if we were to spend more of our days and nights without any obstruction between us and the celestial bodies, if the poet did not speak so much from under a roof, or the saint dwell there so long. Birds do not sing in caves, nor do doves cherish their innocence in dovecotes.

- Henry David Thoreau

*There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but Nature more.*

- George Gordon Byron

I miss...	I will explore...
immersion in nature	joining nature walks through Audubon, local park activities or researching and visiting local natural settings on my own
	taking a class at the local nature centers
	learning to kayak, canoe, cross country ski, bike, swim
	gardening at home or in a community garden
	learning about astronomy and star constellations
	Seeking out volunteering opportunities in area parks
	restricting the amount of time spent on my electronics
	Learning about the benefits of the Japanese practice of "forest bathing" – <i>shinrin-yoku</i>
	Other ideas . . .

Learning New Things

I don't know who I am. And I don't think people ever will know who they are. We have to be humble enough to learn to live with this mysterious question. Who am I? So, I am a mystery to myself. I am someone who is in this pilgrimage from the moment that I was born to the day to come that I'm going to die. And this is something that I can't avoid, whether I like it or not, or — I'm going to die. So, what I have to do is to honor this pilgrimage through life. And so I am this pilgrim — if I can somehow answer your question — who's constantly amazed by this journey. Who is learning a new thing every single day. But who's not accumulating knowledge, because then it becomes a very heavy burden in your back. I am this person who is proud to be a pilgrim, and who's trying to honor his journey."

- Paulo Coelho

I miss...	I will explore...
learning new things	taking classes offered in my community
	going to a city nearby, researching its history and exploring it on foot
	selecting a topic of casual interest and diving into it
	making a list of five things that I thought about on the Camino that I wanted to know more about and researching them (e.g., history of the Templars)
	becoming familiar with my family history through genealogical research
	learning to play a musical instrument
	learning to be more proficient with technology
	studying Spanish
	Other ideas . . .

A Sense of Bravery and Expanding Personal Boundaries

Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

- Theodore Roosevelt

I miss...	I will explore...
a sense of bravery and expanding personal boundaries	thinking of something that intimidates me (e.g., solo travel, public speaking, water sports, foreign language) and taking it on
	learning a new skill (e.g., sign language, simple mechanics, a musical instrument)
	identifying those things that I will regret someday not doing and picking one to accomplish now
	becoming involved in local government or community affairs
	Other ideas . . .

A Sense of Freedom

You know it's alright. Living and lovin' every day and night

Thanking the Lord for the music in me

Peace of mind and feeling free

- Charlie Daniels

I miss...	I will explore...
a sense of freedom	reserving blocks of time to put on my Camino backpack, fill my water bottle, take a sack of Manchego, bread, and fruit and walk where I've not gone before
	spending less time taking care of my possessions, answering emails, reading Facebook and saying "yes" too often
	finding the means to change a job that is unfulfilling and destructive of spirit
	ending relationships that drag me down
	attempting to restore a lost or neglected relationship
	Other ideas . . .

Spiritual Growth

There was a time when I had all the answers. My real growth began when I discovered that the questions to which I had the answers were not the important questions.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

I miss...	I will explore...
spiritual growth	becoming involved in a church, temple, synagogue or other group experience
	studying the works of spiritual writers (e.g., Fr. Rohr, Thich Nhat Hanh)
	finding a spiritual mentor
	beginning a practice in meditation or prayer
	setting a regular time for thinking and reflection
	Other ideas . . .

The Excitement of Dreaming about and Planning my Camino

Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.

- Gloria Steinem

I miss...	I will explore...
the excitement of dreaming about and planning my Camino	starting to save for my next Camino or other major trip and begin a file of places I'd love to visit
	finding opportunities in the USA – Pacific Coastal Trail, Appalachian Trail, Superior Hiking Trail and hundreds more
	organizing a small group to hike on a regular basis
	serving as a mentor for first time pilgrim
	answering questions of first time pilgrims on APOC Facebook group
	Other ideas . . .

Connecting with a Global Community

*I live my life in widening circles
That reach out across the world.*

- Rainer Maria Rilke

My life belongs to the world. I will do what I can.

- James Dickey

I miss...	I will explore...
connecting with a global community	tutoring immigrants and refugees in my community
	helping with refugee resettlement in my community
	hosting international guests to a local university
	mentoring international college students
	learning a foreign language and joining a study group
	starting an ethnic cooking club with friends
	volunteering at a cultural center
	attending university presentations on international events
	staying connected with my international Camino friends via email, WhatsApp or Facebook
	training to be an hospitalero and serving
	Other ideas . . .

Engagement in Story Telling – my own and those of Others

You're never going to kill storytelling, because it's built into the human plan. We come with it.

- Margaret Atwood

Storytelling is the essential human activity. The harder the situation, the more essential it is.

- Tim O'Brien

I miss...	I will explore...
engagement in story telling – my own and those of others	writing for La Concha
	volunteering to speak at the local library, high school, or community education venue about the Camino or other unique experiences
	starting a Camino book club by finding at least one other pilgrim in my area and discussing a Camino book each session
	Other ideas . . .

Living a Simpler Life

Life is not complex. We are complex. Life is simple, and the simple thing is the right thing.

- Oscar Wilde

Voluntary simplicity means going fewer places in one day rather than more, seeing less so I can see more, doing less so I can do more, acquiring less so I can have more.

- John Kabat-Zinn

I miss...	I will explore...
living a simpler life	sorting through and discarding clothes, electronics, books and magazines and household items that I don't use
	saying "no" to requests that aren't a priority or important to me
	making time every day for myself
	cutting back on time spent online or watching TV
	cancelling magazine subscriptions that just end up in piles unread
	donating most of my books to a library sale
	Other ideas . . .

Connecting with Others beyond the Trivial

Wise men speak because they have something to say; Fools because they have to say something.

- Plato

I miss...	I will explore...
connecting with others beyond the trivial	listening more than talking in conversations
	finding openings in conversations to go deeper
	opening up to others
	reinvesting in my existing relationships and getting to know them on a deeper level
	mentoring someone
	Other ideas . . .

Discernment

If you want to identify me, ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I am living for, in detail, ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully for the thing I want to live for.

What can we gain by sailing to the moon if we are not able to cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves? This is the most important of all voyages of discovery, and without it, all the rest are not only useless, but disastrous.

- Thomas Merton

The question of what it means to lead a good life is always there - it's large and nagging in the background - but there's a lot of specificity in terms of how you approach it. You approach that question based on what you're doing now, what you've learned, what you've done that interests you, and what you've done that you will definitely not do again. I don't think that questioning what you're doing at any time should paralyze you. It can help you refine your path while staying open to possibility. I absolutely think of it as a companion to having your feet on the ground and walking forward.

- Krista Tippett

I miss...	I will explore...
moments of discernment and self-knowledge	starting a regular practice of meditation or prayer
	joining a retreat – guided or not
	entering therapy
	asking friends for suggestions of readings that raise and explore big questions
	journaling about what I learned about myself on the Camino experience and who I am now
	trying my hand at illustrated journaling
	Other ideas . . .

Being a Camino Angel

I was able on occasion to be a Camino angel to others. The needs of other pilgrims can be visible to us as we share the Camino walk with them, so it is for us pilgrims to be angels to one another as best we can, so that all of us may complete our Caminos with our needs fulfilled, and that sense of blessing and satisfaction that comes from accepting and offering help when needed.

- Anonymous Canadian pilgrim

I miss...	I will explore...
being a Camino angel	volunteering at local charities that help the needy
	reaching out to friends and acquaintances who seem to need support of some kind
	using my gifts to benefit others (e.g., musical, gardening, driving, tutoring)
	finding opportunities to commit random acts of kindness
	speaking up in defense of others who need a voice
	supporting other pilgrims as they prepare for the Camino or upon their return
	Other ideas . . .

Conclusion – Walking Forward

The Camino may have given you something different than what you expected. Can you identify those small and great epiphanies on your Camino? Can you distill them into values and intentions that you can integrate into your life? If so, you have returned home with something far more meaningful than the Compostela that you carried home in your backpack. You have experienced the gift of pilgrimage.

Now the challenge is to incorporate those moments of discernment into your ordinary life. Perhaps these worksheets will provide a catalyst.

As you walked your own Camino, you will design your own journey forward. In the words of the poet David Whyte, “The greatest danger is that we will wake up some day and find we have not lived our own life, but someone else’s.” Seize this opportunity to walk forward on your own path.

Ultreya!

*All seek a bridge from their old lives to something new
Something that does not end at the last scallop shell
Something that shapes the heart long after the pilgrim reaches the end of the Camino*
- Richard Ray