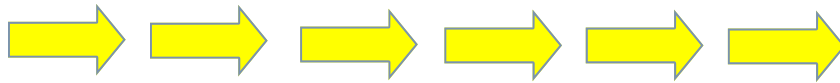


Camino Chronicle



Australian Friends of the Camino

Newsletter No 5, July 2013



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Alison's request for triggers of your memories of the Camino has caused me to reflect on mine. The other day, while flicking through recorded television programmes I had not been able to view as yet, I was reminded of some of the things that people say about the Camino, which trigger my memories. I will come back to what I heard shortly.

Often people say that *the Camino calls to them*. The Camino doesn't dial us up, or yell across the street, and say "Come and walk me" and yet for me, and many people that I talk to, there is this irresistible pull. In 2005, when the plans for my first Camino fell into disarray because my sister could no longer travel with me, I was incapable of being philosophical and choosing to do something else. The Camino, along with all its stories, had lodged in my imagination and, though very nervous, I was unable to stay away. I liken it to an invisible thread pulling me ever onwards. So often others tell similar stories.

Thus began my amazing journey. A nervous traveller, I found the Camino, a safe adventure - challenging, exhilarating, and inspiring. As I walked I heard another oft-quoted phrase - *it is not the destination, but the journey that is important*. Given that we pilgrims are all headed to a very specific destination, and that the vast majority of us all enthusiastically collect *sellos* along the way in order to obtain the Compostela, there is some dichotomy in this statement. Yes, the destination is important but so too is how we prepare our mind and body to make the journey and how we respond to the journey.

Returning to the television programmes I alluded to earlier, it was a phrase in an advert I saw which reminded me starkly of the Camino. Two young children were talking and one said to the other, "*Dad says it's not about the destination, but the passengers you travel with*". How true of the Camino!

My friend Austin, whom I met one day out of Toulouse on my first Camino, refers to it as a 'mobile village'. How true. If we think of the Camino in that way and the 'passengers' as the residents of the village, for me, it goes some way to explaining the pull of the Camino. The simple life, only having to worry about where and what we are to eat, and where we will rest, is part of the pull, but it is also the people we travel with. How they care for us, and we them, in times of need, how we put aside differences so that we can live in harmony, and how we look out for and support each other are the just some of the things that make the Camino special.

Many of our members are on the Camino now, or about to depart, and my wish for them is that the journey is accompanied by wonderful sights and sounds, and that they travel with some wonderful passengers in their 'mobile village'. I hope that each one arrives at journey's end with a wonderful *peregrino* family.

Buen Camino.

Janet Leitch OAM (SA)

*Cover photo: Cross in the mist, Montserrat,
Catalan Camino (see article pp.9-12)*



PILGRIM CULTURAL EVENT AT THE CERVANTES INSTITUTE, SYDNEY, NSW

The Cervantes Institute in Sydney hosted a well-attended cultural and film afternoon on 27 April, jointly organized by Sandra Collier from *Pilgrims in Sydney* and Maria Margariños Casal, Librarian at the Institute, accompanied by an impressive collection of Camino de Santiago books. After Maria's welcome speech, Sandra updated on general *Pilgrims in Sydney* matters. In April there were 6 first-time and 3 returning pilgrims walking in Spain (including 82 year-old David). As well, 3 of the group will soon be volunteers on the Camino. A film was then shown which included scenes of albergues familiar to many in the group. Everyone enjoyed the viewing in a most interactive way and exclamations of "I was there!" "I stayed there!" "I met that hospitalero!" "I have that stamp" were greeted with much laughter from the audience.

Afternoon tea provided everyone with a chance to discuss the film and to catch up on all things Camino - everything from the unusually cold spring in Northern Spain to the best hiking sandals now that the northern hemisphere summer is shortly to be upon us. Information booklets on the various Camino routes were available to take home and Maria answered questions, provided assistance with bus and train timetables applicable to pilgrims and discussed in greater detail the various resources of the Institute and its Spanish courses. The afternoon concluded at 5.30pm. Our thanks go to Sandra, Maria and the Institute for a particularly enjoyable event.

Maria and Sandra



Jenny Heesh (NSW)

Pilgrims in Sydney contacts:

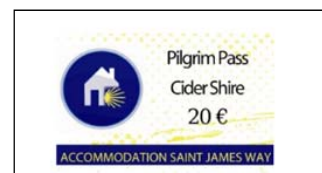
Julie: pilgrimjulie@hotmail.com

Sandra: pilgrimsandra@hotmail.com

Monthly meetings: for details see the Notices section of www.afotc.org

THE CIDER SHIRE PILGRIMS PASS

Future pilgrims on the Camino del Norte might be interested in this offer of accommodation (between Ribadesella and Gijon). 20€ per person includes a welcome gift as well as transport to and from The Way.



http://www.lacomarcadelasidra.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=666-alojamiento-



LOST TANGO IN PARIS OR... WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR BACKPACK DOES NOT ARRIVE!

Books read, hundreds of questions answered, training done and my backpack prepared with such precision and sub-10kg efficiency... the day had arrived. I was as ready as anyone could possibly be to fly to Paris with my El Camino pilgrim friend Jenny. We couldn't have been more excited. Goodbye to our husbands, we were ready to board.

Our scheduled arrival in Paris gave us plenty of time to connect with the train to Bayonne. Within minutes, it seemed, Jenny had collected her backpack from the carousel. *Mine won't be long*, I thought, we had plenty of time and I'm always up for a bit of people-watching at baggage carousels, particularly in Paris. However, when the carousel emptied and Jenny and I were the only ones left standing, my heart sank.

Within 15 minutes it was confirmed, my backpack was missing, and no-one, but no-one, knew where it was. "There's not even any record of it leaving Australia", the attendant said. "Come back in the morning", was all she could offer. Apart from my 'flight clothes' (fortunately including my beloved walking boots) and my purse, I had virtually nothing for my so eagerly-anticipated El Camino adventure, let alone an unexpected night or two in Paris waiting for my gear to arrive.

Two days later, still no bag. Three consecutive early morning visits to the airport revealed nothing; the mystery deepened. All the airline was prepared to do was give me an over-sized T-shirt and a toothbrush! Accommodation, food and replacement gear were my, or my insurer's, problem they claimed. (By the way, after returning home, I discovered that our accommodation and food while waiting in Paris was *not* covered by travel insurance!)

Teary, disappointed and angry, but determined not to let this monumental airline stuff-up affect my Camino, Jenny and I went shopping. All I needed was the bare essentials I thought, 5kg max. I hopefully imagined that my pack would catch up

*Gaynor wearing her 5kg day pack
(and a jumper around her waist)
plus sun hat she bought along the way,
after discarding her warm hat and gloves
as the weather got warmer*





Gaynor and her 5kg pack, looking for a place to sleep

with me in the next few days. We planned to set off the following morning.

After a night at St-Jean-Pied-de-Port we were ready to register at the pilgrim office and buy my scallop shell. My Camino had started, and all I needed to carry was 5kgs, a blessing in disguise I thought, trying to put a positive twist on recent events.

The language barrier and our moving every day made it difficult for us to know the latest regarding my bag. Almost two weeks later, arriving in Najera, Jenny's mobile phone received a message to say 'Phone the airport'. Happily, they had found my bag but were not too sure where to send it. It then occurred to me that neither would I know where to send it because we were arranging our stages and accommodation as we went. Also, I was a bit nervous about having it sent somewhere that might be insecure; I had a second credit card and some personal valuables in the pack.

Surprisingly, by this stage I was doing quite well with my 5kg pack. Washing stuff every night was proving workable. I was certainly appreciating the lighter load. A passing trekker from Norway had given me a beautiful fleece (to lighten her load), and an Aussie from Victoria gave me her sandals. So I agreed with the airline that they would send my just-under-10kg pack to Santiago de Compostela, to the hotel we'd booked for a treat at the end of our Camino. I went on to complete my magnificent 6-week Camino with a 5kg pack, without any difficulty or inconvenience.

I like to occasionally share my 'LOST Tango in Paris' experience with prospective Camino trekkers because I feel it helps demonstrate how little you really need in the way of clothes and accessories. Although it was wonderful to dive into my original pack and have a change of clothes at the end of the walk, I didn't actually need all the stuff I'd packed in Australia. We saw numerous folk in trouble with the weight they were carrying, some with aches, pains and blisters that were seriously delaying their progress and, worst of all, impacting on the sense of wonder, excitement and achievement that comes from doing the Camino with a clear mind and healthy body.

Trek light.

Gaynor Alder (SA)



EDITOR'S NOTE:

We asked Gaynor to tell us what her 5kg pack contained: here is her answer.

"Believing my pack would at some stage join me, I shopped very small, as follows:

- *day pack*
- *walking stick*
- *wind-proof jacket with hood*
- *walking pants - zip-off for shorts*
- *pair of socks*
- *long-sleeved black T-shirt - I cut the sleeves short as the days got warmer*
- *set of underwear*
- *small chamois wipe*
- *deodorant, sunscreen and shampoo (shampoo washed me and my clothes)*
- *warm hat and gloves - discarded for a sunhat as the days got warmer.*

Fortunately, when we got off the plane in Paris I was wearing my walking boots, a pair of walking pants, a long-sleeved shirt and a beautiful blue scarf that became my best friend. The over-sized white T-shirt the airline gave me I used as my bed shirt.

To be honest, all I missed was the option of a change of clothes and underwear, which would no doubt be necessary in the colder, harder-to-dry seasons. A change is not essential in summer, as long as you don't mind washing all your stuff just before you go to bed. Next time, I'd probably limit myself to 8kgs."

Jenny and Gaynor on the night before the last leg into Santiago de Compostela (with 'muy grande cervezas'!)





MY INTRODUCTION TO THE CAMINO

In 1992, as my husband and I drove across Northern Spain, we were mystified by the sight of people with crooks walking across rolling green fields.

Several years later, whilst travelling through Condom, SW France, we met our first pilgrim, heading to Santiago de Compostela. I was in awe of what Crystal from Switzerland had to tell us, so vowed to learn more once at home again.

At that stage, the only walking I did was a monthly 2-hour walk with friends, followed by a delicious barbeque and good red wine.

The years passed with thoughts of the Camino in the deep recesses of my mind.

One Sunday morning in 2006, whilst listening to 'Australia All Over' I heard a woman phoning from the Bibbulmun Track in WA (*see page 18*). She was celebrating her 80th birthday accompanied by her 60 year old daughter, walking the 1,000km track from Kalumunda to Albany. As we were on our way to our monthly walk, I suggested to the group that perhaps we, since we were only in sixties, could plan to do the Bibbulmun. I had only one taker - Gaynor.

She and I proceeded to buy our good walking boots, etc and joined a bushwalking group to learn to walk 20kms! After six months training we arrived at Kalumunda, in the rain... rain which continued non-stop for two weeks by which time Gaynor had also injured her back and we were forced to abandon our trek.

Eighteen months later, we returned to complete our mission. On the track we met a delightful gentleman who had done the Camino several times using different starting points. He enjoyed it, particularly to practise his French. He assured us that we would have no problems walking the Camino Francés.

Eventually, back in Adelaide, we immersed ourselves in reading as many books as we could about the Camino. We also attempted a short Spanish course at WEA, with minimal results. One of the most instructive sessions was Janet's day meeting at WEA (*see note below*) which we attended with our husbands.

30 April 30, 2011, found us in St-Jean-Pied-de-Port on the first of our 37-day journey to Santiago de Compostela. What a truly wonderful experience we had - our memories and friendships will last forever.

Jenny Sparrow (SA)

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Our Chairman, Janet, teaches adult education classes for the WEA several times a year. Her 'El Camino' course is a day-long course, explaining the history of, and practicalities of making, a Camino.

FROM THE EDITOR

We welcome your articles and photos for the newsletter. Please email to the editor at bell.alison*optusnet.com.au (replace * with @ to avoid spam).



ULTREIA! THE PILGRIM'S SONG

This rousing *chant* (aka *Ultreia!* ~ *Onwards and upwards!*) makes a great marching song and is recognisable throughout the soundtrack of the film *Within The Way Without* (featuring *Winter pilgrim*, Rob Jorritsma. Also see pp.16-19).

Chant des Pèlerins de Compostelle
J. Claude Bénazet

Tous les ma - tins nous pre-nons le che - min tous les ma -
tins nous al-lons plus loin . Jour a - près jour la rou - te nous ap -
Ref.
pel - le c'est la voix de Com - pos - telle . UI - tre - -
ia UI - tre - - ia E -
sus e - ia . De - us, ad - ju - va nos !

2. Chemin de terre et chemin de foi,
voie millénaire de l'Europe,
la voie lactée de Charlemagne,
c'est le chemin de tous les jacquets.

3. Et tout là-bas au bout du continent,
messire Jacques nous attend,
depuis toujours son sourire fixe
le soleil qui meurt au Finistère.

*With thanks to
Ines Jewell (Vic)*



MONTSERRAT AND THE CATALAN CAMINO

It's often said that the Camino begins at one's own front door... that the first step to making a pilgrimage is taking the decision to do it.

However, for me, the moment of actually setting foot on an ancient pilgrimage path marked the real beginning of my understanding of the Camino experience. The first stamp in my credencial, dated 19 May 2012, is definitely as much treasured as the one which I received six weeks later when I walked into the Pilgrims' Office in Santiago de Compostela.

My pilgrim's passport was stamped for the first time at the Basilica of Montserrat, near Barcelona, in Catalonia. I feel that this was where *my* Camino started - on a 25 kilometre walk with my son along the Catalan Camino, or Way of St Jaume. (A few days later, I took the train to Pamplona to walk the Camino Francés.)

Catalan Camino marker



Top: Montserrat

Bottom: Above Montserrat Basilica



In April/May 2012, Ben and I were living in the Spanish village of Odena, near Igualada, a small city about 1 ½ hours west of Barcelona. I had arranged a 5-week home exchange to enjoy a taste of Spanish culture and practise my basic language skills, before setting out to walk to Santiago. It was quite special to share this experience with Ben. But of course we learned very quickly that in this part of Spain, the people are fiercely proud of their Catalonian culture, and the language they speak is Catalan - not Spanish!



From the balcony of our village house we could see the great saw-toothed mountain of Montserrat in the distance. Part of the Pyrenees, this unique geological structure of strangely-shaped crags was formed more than 25 million years ago. With its Benedictine monastery dating from



the 11th century, and a magnificent basilica cradled among the rocks, Montserrat is both a holy pilgrimage shrine for Catholics from around the world, and - inevitably these days - a popular day trip for tourists from Barcelona. Its museums and art treasures, spectacular views, hermitage caves, walking trails, rack railway and cable cars provide something of interest for everyone.



Mist at Montserrat

Ben and I had made our first trip up the mountain, quite by chance, on one of the two key Spanish pilgrimage days of the year, 27 April, when crowds of the faithful flock to see the Basilica's Black Madonna and receive a blessing. Being neither Spanish nor Catholic, we hadn't realised the day's significance until we drove up the mountain and found ourselves surrounded by dozens of tourist buses. But Montserrat is big and there's plenty of space to walk around - and there was even an added bonus on that day. Entry to the magnificent monastery Museum was free! So, in addition to enjoying the physical beauty and wonder of the whole place, we were able to feast on the extensive art collection, icons and antiquities in the monastery collection.

More importantly, however, we also learned during that visit that pilgrims on the path to Santiago de Compostela are welcome to stay free for one night in the monastery, if they have a pilgrim passport. We immediately made plans for a return trip by train so that we could stay on the mountain overnight and walk back down to Igualada along the Catalan Camino, or *Way of St Jaume*.

The Catalan Camino links with the Jacobean routes. It follows a path from Barcelona, passing through Montserrat to reach Lleida in Aragon, before joining the Camino Francés at Logrono. Its history is shrouded in myth and legend. Some believe Montserrat to be the site of the Holy Grail, and St Peter is said to have visited the mountain only fifty years after the birth of Christ. There are also claims that St James preached along this Way in Barcelona, Lleida and Saragossa. Whatever the truth, Montserrat is a surreal and beautiful place where pilgrims still come to worship and venerate the Black Madonna, a 12th century statue of Mary and Jesus which is kept in the great Basilica.

Ben and I made our second trip up the mountain on 19 May by train, just a few days before he returned to Australia. This train ride is a thrill in itself. The little rack railway clings to the side of the massive rocks as it hauls itself up. And the views in all directions are stunning. Most special of all though, was being able to stay on the mountain after all the tourists had gone for the day. Although neither of us regards oneself as religious, we both felt an intense sense of peace and spirituality in this beautiful place in the early evening twilight. With the bells of



the monastery ringing and mist swirling around the silhouetted rocks and holy crosses, we knew this was an experience we'd never forget.

The room we were allocated in the visitors' hostel at the monastery was more basic than any of the albergues I stayed in subsequently on the Camino Francés. But a bunk bed and blanket, wooden table and chairs were all we needed. There was also a communal bathroom and simple kitchen which we had to ourselves as there wasn't another soul around all night.

To obtain permission to stay at the monastery, pilgrims need to visit the administration centre during the day, have their passport stamped and pick up a key. We were asked to drop the key back to the tourist hotel on the mountain next morning. We could have stayed overnight at this up-market and expensive hotel, of course, but we were much happier to be in the monastery hostel, feeling that we were in the presence of monks and fellow-pilgrims from days gone by.

Ben and I walked together for only one day on the Catalan Camino, but we had a strong sense of following in the footsteps of the first recorded Catalan pilgrim, the Abbot Cesari of Montserrat, who made his journey to Santiago in 1059. The whole experience of staying on the mountain, and walking down, proved to be one of the highlights of our time together in Spain. For me, it was also a great

*Top: Church of Santa Cecilia
Bottom: View from Santa Cecilia*



introduction to the life of a modern-day pilgrim, and a good preparation for my walk on the Camino Francés.

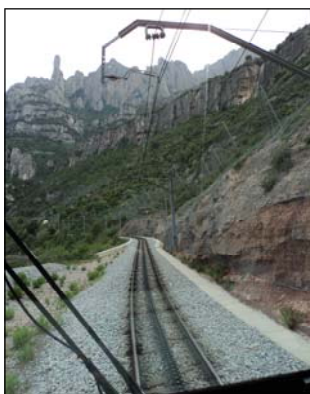
The start of the Catalan Way is close to the bus park, café and other facilities on the mountain. We had no difficulty finding it, or in following the path down the mountain for the rest of the day.

It begins as a quiet, leafy path wandering past many little shrines and plaques decorated with scriptures and holy art, but it soon emerges onto the road and follows the road-side for several kilometres. With very little traffic early in the morning we found it quite safe, and we could revel in the superb views over the surrounding countryside. The route was well way-marked with the familiar scallop symbol and golden arrows, or sometimes simple dots of gold paint on trees and rocks.



The first point of interest along the Way is the little church of Santa Cecilia, part of a former monastery dating from 900AD. Looted and ravaged many times over the past millennia (including during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s), this simple Romanesque church has now been eclipsed by the big monastery at Montserrat, but it remains a peaceful little place.

Much of the remainder of the walk down the mountain is on rocky paths, though forests and farms, but it also passes through the small towns of Sant Pau de la Guardia and Castelloli before reaching Igualada. We found a very welcome rural inn and restaurant about halfway down, popular with other walkers and mountain-bike riders.



The small city of Igualada is an industrial centre now sadly feeling the effects of the economic crisis in Spain. The outskirts are not particularly attractive, but there is a pilgrim hostel in the old part of town, along with several churches, cobbled plazas and a wide range of shops, bars and restaurants. Ben and I came to know it well during our 5 weeks living in nearby Odena - though we were fortunate to have the luxury of our own village house to return to at the end of our day's walk on the pilgrim path.

Top: To Sant Pau de la Guardia
Bottom: The rack railway

My message to any fellow pilgrims visiting Barcelona is to take the time to visit Montserrat. It's an easy day-trip by local train and mountain railway. The tourist offices can provide maps and directions. But, if possible, why not take the opportunity to stay overnight at the monastery, have your credencial stamped, and walk down the mountain the next day? From Igualada, it is very easy to take a bus or train for the return journey to Barcelona - or you may want to continue on the path all the way to Santiago...

The Way down the mountain

An excellent guide book to the Catalan Camino can be downloaded from the internet http://www.gencat.cat/diue/doc/doc_26922631_1.pdf It provides a wealth of information about Montserrat and the Way of St Jaume.

'Buen Camino' to anyone who walks the Catalan path!

Margaret Gadd (SA)





SANTIAGO DAY 2013



You are warmly invited to celebrate St James Day 2013 with us. As usual we will provide the Caldo Gallego, but please bring a plate/drink to share. Please join us on Saturday, 27 July, from 7pm onwards.

Rob and Inés

13 Roberts Street, Maldon, Victoria

RSVP: 03 5475 2505 / 0421 909 835



St James Day – Pilgrim Gathering

**Rosefield Uniting Church Hall,
2 Carlton Street, Highgate (Adelaide)
Saturday, 27 July, 2013 - 5.30 for 6.00pm**

To mark St James Day, the Adelaide Friends of the Camino will show the film
Within The Way Without.

This is the film featuring Rob Jorritsma
(who addressed our April meeting — also see article on pages 16-19).
It follows the path of three pilgrims – a Spring, a Summer and a Winter Pilgrim (Rob) .

The film will be shown after tea (starting at approximately 7.00 / 7.30pm)
and there will be opportunities to chat with other pilgrims as well.

***Please bring: a plate of food to share for a light tea, a gold coin donation,
your photos, and any friends you may wish to inspire!***

If able, to please RSVP to info@afotc.org



CAMINO FLASHBACKS

Having spent quite a lot of time walking in Spain, there are lots of sights, sounds, smells and tastes that remind me of the Camino. There are also lots of lost-in-translation moments and words and phrases that take me right back too.



Flashes of yellow - but I could read what it said from 50 paces!

A rooster crowing at dawn when I'm out on my morning walk will always take me back, and likewise the slightest flash of 'Camino yellow' - whether it's a paint blob, a flower, or a sign of some sort. Also when out walking, those long shadows cast in front of me always remind me of the universal Camino 'shadow photo' that every pilgrim has in their collection.

The tastes of *flan* or almond *tarta* or roasted red capsicums are all memory-joggers. And whenever there appears to be a choice which actually boils down to only one of two things, I'm reminded of those *menus de peregrino* offerings for *postre* - *yoghurt o frutas!*



'Google translations' will also do it, reminding me of signs like the one in Carrión de los Condes that read 'Please don't eat into the dormitories'. Then there was 'This hostage dies at 21:30' (on an *horario* about closing times: see photo), an even grimmer mistranslation that I felt guilty for not correcting at the time.

Other phrases are 'the words of Satan' which someone once told me are 'this might be useful' when packing a backpack: if it only *might* be useful, it should be left out!

'Giving something back' - that justification for so many people to return as *hospitaleros voluntarios* after completing their own Caminos - also takes me back, even when it applies to something else altogether.



Wistful references to having to return to 'normal life' post- Camino are also frequent. I usually amend it to 'what passes for normal life' or 'what we laughingly call normal life'.

Above all is that echo of the 'attitude of gratitude' that was summarised in the refugio sign: *'Tourists demand. Pilgrims are grateful'*.

And of course, there's always the unexpected kindness of strangers. I weep easily at that.

Ines Jewell (Vic)



Left: Granon albergue
Below: The universal shadow picture



More flashes of yellow... anywhere and everywhere!





THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PILGRIMAGE AND A LONG WALK? Talk [abridged] given to AFotC meeting, Adelaide, 6 April, 2013

Quite a few of you know about the background of Ines and I, but for those of you who don't, we met on the Camino in 1999 and after a few months she left Australia to come and live in the Netherlands. After a year there, we decided to leave and move to Spain where we would settle down to run a pilgrim hostel. We worked for the whole of the 2001 season taking care of pilgrims.

In November 2001 we decided to have a break in Australia visiting Ines's family and soon it became clear Ines did not want to go back. That was quite a significant moment - it meant that the dream we had of having our own pilgrim hostel was lost. We both had enormous feelings of homesickness... we wanted to live in Spain.

So what we did was look for ways to bring something of the Camino to Australia. I came across a very interesting walk from Robe to Bendigo, following the trail of the Chinese gold-seekers in the 1850s, about the same length as the Camino Francés. Also we started celebrating St James' Day where, apart from food and drink and good company, we always had some sort of talk on a Camino-related topic.

I then won a teaching position at the Castlemaine Steiner School and finally a committee was formed to formalise the Robe-Bendigo walk, The Golden Trail. However we just did not have the same enthusiasm or passion as when we talk about the Camino de Santiago. We were part of it, but if it didn't succeed, who really cared?

In 2007, I volunteered to walk The Golden Trail it on my own. A Melbourne filmmaker was to make a documentary of it, but because of lack of funding it didn't happen. Which was a pity, because I was very interested in this big question: Could I have similar experiences that I had on the Camino while walking from Robe to Bendigo, that is, on a long-distance hike as opposed to an officially-recognised pilgrimage?

A few years ago Elizabeth Best (author with Colin Bowles of *The Year We Seized The Day*) was interviewed on ABC radio and asked "Couldn't you have had the same experiences walking across the

The real 'Winter Pilgrim' - Rob on the Camino with Ines in January 2001. Many of these experiences were recreated in 2003, along with many others, in all seasons of the year, to make the film 'Within The Way Without' in 2003.





The inner journey needs sustenance. At the Navarrete refugio (where Rob and Ines worked) the evening meal time was often a time of reflection and gratitude, sometimes rowdy and raucous, occasionally even angry and painful - just like life in what we laughingly call the 'real world'!

Nullarbor Plain?" And the funny thing was, Elizabeth did not answer the question. What she did was start to explain why she did the Camino.

What is a pilgrimage? And a pilgrim? 'Pilgrim' (Latin *peregrinos* and *per agora*) means 'going through a field, through a land'. There is the notion of a destination - you are not just wandering around, you are going somewhere specific. And when you talk about a pilgrimage, you talk about a shrine. So if you look at the pilgrim road, there is a shrine at the end, there is a more or less fixed path and there is a religious context.

When you look at the pilgrim road on the one hand and at a hiking track, like the Heysen Trail or the Bibbulmun Track (*see Editor's note, page 19*) on the other, they're essentially the same. There's a track, you walk, you carry your stuff, you meet other people. The differences are only that one has a shrine at the end, there's a more or less fixed trail and there's a religious context.

So what other differences are there? Then you get much more personal... to what *happens* to someone on the way, the continuum between outer experiences and inner experiences. What makes someone make the decision to go on a walk or on a pilgrimage? On a pilgrimage you are recognised as someone on a mission. On the third day after I left home in 1999 to walk to Santiago, in a small village in the south of the Netherlands I was asked: "Are you on a mission?" Apparently there was something visible there that I was not just someone walking with a backpack. The outer and inner journey, 'the way within and the way without', to paraphrase the title of the film I was fortunate to be a part of.

Doing the Camino over 3 ½ months, I had a lot of outer experiences. Beautiful landscapes, aching knees and feet, a bottle of wine, watching soccer games on TV. A pilgrim but with lots of outward experiences. Earlier, I had been for a walking tour through the high mountains of the French Alsace, and I really pushed myself physically because I wanted the physical exercise. At the same time I had moments of inner reflection. Both ends of the continuum are always present. But I do think it's fair to say that people on a long-distance *hike* tend to focus on the outer experience, looking at nature, being in the environment - whereas on a *pilgrimage* they are generally more interested in the inner journey. But I think someone doing the Heysen Trail or Bibbulmun Track will also have inner experiences.



Unlike many beautiful wilderness long-distance walks where the inner journey takes place in nature, traditional pilgrimages are often dotted with small, roadside shrines along the way like this tiny chapel in Galicia in the deep snow of the 2001 Camino.

Another interesting aspect is the impact a long hike has on your life afterwards - one can go back to those experiences and it's sort of like looking at a photo album. It's beautiful and I can get back the feeling of real enjoyment. But it was back then, you passed it and that's where it stays. Whereas with a pilgrimage you could almost say that the real pilgrimage starts *after* you've done it. The walking is just the introductory part of it then you have to deal with your experiences in your life afterwards. A pilgrimage has the capacity to change the actual fabric of your

existence and for me, there's a very clear-cut line before and after the Camino. Everything has changed. Have I changed as a person? I haven't, but at the same time I have changed everything from that moment on.

When you start your Camino, you fill out a form and tick a box(es) about your reason for doing the pilgrimage: sporting, cultural, religious or spiritual. And when you apply for your Compostela in Santiago, they ask you the same question: *Why did you do it?* I think in both cases I ticked 'spiritual' - because I didn't really know and I don't think it really matters - you could probably tick all the boxes and still be perfectly truthful. Interestingly, they do make the distinction between 'religion' and 'spirituality'.

I think there is no real distinction and it's two ways of expressing the same thing. The original meaning of religion (Latin *religere*) means *to reconnect*. For me religion means reconnecting with the world we come from, which we can call the spirit world or the world of God. When I started walking in Holland, I had no religious reasons in mind at all.

The 'tangible shrine' or Tree of Jesse in Santiago Cathedral, showing the imprint where pilgrims over the ages have literally touched the stone of the shrine which has been their goal for so many weeks (or months!)





I was brought up a Catholic but I'm not a practising Catholic. But doing the Camino there was a very strong sense of religiosity, of trying to reconnect with a spirit being or the world of God. Although it was all largely subconscious - I wasn't really thinking about it - it just happened to me and I started going into all the churches that I came across.

Being a pilgrim in medieval times was not just about going on an adventurous journey - it was a choice of a change of life. And you had a 50% chance of not coming back from Santiago. You could say it's the same decision made to become a monk - a pilgrim is a monk without the monastery when he's on the road. And can a track be a sanctuary? A refuge and a sacred place at the same time? For that to be true you need to recognise the sacredness of the place and at the same time you need to respond to the vocation of being a pilgrim, not only for that time, but from then on.

Another distinction between a hike and a pilgrimage is the notion of pilgrim hospitality. In the refugios run by *hospitaleros voluntarios*, payment is strictly on a donation basis. It is a human relationship, not an economic one. In our experience, many people find this very moving, even disconcerting.

So, to conclude, if I was asked if I could have the same experiences crossing the Nullarbor or walking from Robe to Bendigo, I would have said yes, if I found a sacred place on that road and I responded to the vocation of being a pilgrim. So where's the shrine then? I believe that it can live in your heart and your soul, accompanying you on every step. But it would certainly be a much more solitary road, with no public recognition of what you are doing and no dedicated infrastructure to help you on your way.

Rob Jorritsma (Vic)

NOTE: the full text of this talk is on our website www.afotc.org

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Bibbulmun Track in WA stretches nearly 1000km from Kalamunda (on the outskirts of Perth) to Albany on the south coast. Also see Jenny Sparrow's article on page 7 of this newsletter.



AFotC Chairman Janet with Rob at the Adelaide meeting



FROM THE COUCH TO THE CAMINO

The decision to walk the Camino really goes back to a choice I made some four or five years ago, which stemmed from a catch-up with someone I hadn't seen for around 16 years. I had coffee with a young woman who had been the girlfriend of my youngest son in their mid teens and spent a lot of time in our home and rapidly became part of the family. She was kind enough to say that I had been an influence in her life and that she remembered two things in particular. The one relevant to this story being my suggestion she always trust and follow her instincts/intuition.

I was surprised. I didn't realise that I had held that view all those years ago. This made me wonder how much I was following that advice myself and I committed to, not only following my instincts, but trusting them 100 per cent even if it seemed odd to do so. Tackling the Camino came from that commitment.

I had never heard of the Camino until I inadvertently selected a movie called *The Way*, having received a copy long before it was released in Australia. As I watched, I found myself thinking "*I wonder if I could do that*" and by the end of the movie resolving to do so. Now, this came as an awful shock to me as I have spent my entire life, including childhood, avoiding any physical exertion. I was 60 years old. I was an entrenched couch-sitter...

That was in November 2011.

And so began the training.

Oh, how well I remember the exhaustion after my first 'long' walk on 3rd December, 2011. I headed off, out the front door, over the first hill I could see and onwards. I completed a 12k loop through Echunga (a small town in the Adelaide Hills) and back to my doorstep. When I arrived home I sat (ie collapsed) on my front veranda thinking I might just die there. I survived that expedition; in fact was called to repeat it the very next day in an attempt to retrieve a set of keys lost *en route* during my maiden voyage. Less gruelling this time, but unfortunately the keys were never seen again.

After that I set myself ever-expanding goals - 15, 20, 25k - and eventually walked 31k on 5th May 2012. Achieving each of these was thrilling. The time between these set goals was peppered with as many small

Day 1: Lesley and her brother Peter outside the Pilgrims Office at St-Jean-Pied-de-Port





hikes as time would allow along with countless trips up and down Mt Lofty (*see Editor's note*). Oh how I loathed (and still loathe) that climb. I learnt to respect it as my fitness improved. The next test was to ensure that I could walk around 25k daily over consecutive days and my first challenge was to walk the 105k to Cape Jervis. I did this in two stages walking to Myponga in three days, then in August completing it in another three days walking and camping with my seasoned hiker friend and key support person, Lara. Lara was my hare and I her tortoise. Thanks Lara.



Atop Mt Mastelares with German Rita and Heike

I scanned the internet for tips on footwear, avoiding blisters, the 'right' equipment, what to take, what not to take, how to get there. It was an intense time of researching, testing out various theories, comparing and purchasing. It was full steam ahead. I had a moment's pause when I set my expensive, newly-purchased, pristine rucksack on The Couch in my lounge room. I stared at it and tried to ignore the little voice in my head that was saying "*Are you kidding, you've lost your mind, silly idea, who do you think you are, blah blah blah*". I drowned out that voice with a reaffirmation of my '*trust your intuition 100%*'.

I found a Camino website that showed hundreds of photos of each stage of the trail and I peered at them trying to ascertain the steepness of ascents and my ability to conquer them! "*Yep, yep you can do it. Geez I wonder???*" Close website, go to bed, still those nagging self-doubts.

Somewhere in the planning stage I mentioned to my California-based brother, my plan to attempt the Camino. His response was "No sister of mine is going to walk Spain on her own. I'm coming too". Everything in my being was resistant to the idea of walking with someone else as I knew it was a very personal journey I was about to take and I was aware I was challenging myself in a very real way. At first my brother's plan was that he cycle the Camino as I walked it and I felt that this might be a workable way of combining his urge to come and mine to walk alone. It would also accommodate my inability to say no!! In the end he planned to walk with me and I planned to be gracious. Neither came to pass. We parted company at Najera and Peter left the Camino around Day 10 after losing a lot of weight and having a bout of gastroenteritis.

I arrived in, and left, SJPDP on the 6th Sept 2012. I arrived in Santiago on the 39th day having had one rest day in Burgos. What an adventure.



On the road between Santa Domingo and Belorado, with Annett and Rafael from Germany, my greatest supporters

My body amazed me. I would often sit in the albergue and watch as my fellow pilgrims tended to their feet. I saw bloodied and bruised, tortured-looking feet—feet with big, black, sore toes and toes that had lost toe nails. Yikes! I would take off my two pairs of socks (I swear by the two pairs of socks to prevent blisters) and my half size larger than normal Birkenstock hiking boots and look at my feet and wonder how they managed to appear exactly as they did on the day I left. My body did everything I asked of it. I experienced no problems whatsoever and still scratch my head in wonder at that.

My mind was another matter. On about the 21st day of walking I heard my negative nagging voice saying “*You can’t do this, it’s too hard*”. I just stopped walking as I heard it and laughed. I had to remind myself—“*Of course you can do it, you have done it every day for the last 21. What more proof do you need. You mightn’t love it but you can do it*”. And I did.

I had ‘a moment’ at around Day 32, lying on a bunk contemplating, and it occurred to me that I might just manage to walk the entire 800k. It was a feeling of panic and fear at who I would be after completing it. One thing was certain, I wasn’t going to be the same...

Someone asked me when I landed back in Australia if I would do it again. My immediate automatic response was “No way, once was enough”. However I think walking the Camino is a bit like childbirth, you quickly forget the pain and I am definitely drawn back to do all or part of it again. It is with me every day. I suspect the Camino never leaves you.

The impact of the Camino continues. Someone recently asked what I had learnt and of course, there are so many things, but self-respect sums it up. I renewed my faith in my fellow man/woman. My cynicism shrunk. I witnessed humanity performing at it’s best. I glimpsed how it could be if we let go of age, sex, race barriers. I saw and received extraordinary kindness. I learnt to accept graciously the large and small kindnesses that came my way. I came to understand that it wasn’t a statement about my innate weakness that prompted such wonderful support and as one Canadian woman said, “It’s just what we do for each other”.

I learnt:-

- to be gracious
- that descending a hill is so much harder than climbing one



- you can walk two hours past the point of exhaustion and survive
- human beings have a keen desire to communicate and will find ways to do so even without common language
- everything in Spain is at the top of a hill
- my research and preparation skills are second to none
- that being a novice can be an advantage
- that expectations can be exceeded
- that solitude is at the back of the pack
- that yellow arrows are magnificent
- that the body wants to move and doesn't need the promise of chocolate everyday to do so
- that you can manage on one coffee a day
- that naming my rucksack 'Molly' is OK and missing her company is OK too
- that my Spanish is very adequate except in Gonza...
- that an idea can become reality
- that I love, and now treasure, my slow, sip-your-coffee-and-savour-each-mouthful start to a day
- that the afternoon sun in Spain is to be avoided and the wisdom of an afternoon siesta is apparent
- I'm strong and disciplined and capable
- to trust intuition and instinct 100% and it will lead you through your self-imposed limits
- stuff I'm not even aware of yet
- that doing something that astonishes YOURSELF is wonderfully fine.

Buen Camino!

Lesley Scott (SA)

PS. My travel blog address for those interested is lesleys.tumblr.com

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Cape Jervis, the southern start of the Heysen Trail, is on the coast, south of Adelaide, and is where one can look across to Kangaroo Island, Myponga being a small village near the sea partway. The Mt Lofty walking trail, a 7.8k round trip, is very popular with locals and a good test for fitness. An equivalent site near Melbourne is the 1,000 steps Kokoda Track Memorial Walk in the Dandenongs.

Day 40, Fisterre





UN CRUCIGRAMA SOBRE EL CAMINO FRANCÉS – LA SOLUCIÓN

P	O	N	F	E	R	R	A	D	A		E	L
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Sue Burrows (SA)

EDITOR'S NOTE:

*We hope you enjoyed Sue's crossword.
She promises more in the future!*

*Clockwise from top left: El Cid, Burgos;
Don Elias Valina Sampedro (1929-1989);
Spanish baroque interior iglesia, Los Arcos;
Castillo de los Templarios, Ponferrada*

