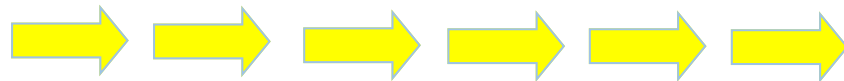




Camino Chronicle



Australian Friends of the Camino

Newsletter No 31, December 2019





CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

[This is an abridged version of 'RISKY BUSINESS', the opening speech presented by our chairman at the AFotC Inaugural Conference. ED]

Making a Camino is a risky business. The risk list COULD be a long one. There is the risk of leaving our home, travelling far to the start of the Camino, wherever that might be, and the risk of not being at home and in control of things while away. The risk of not coping - physically or emotionally, and the risk of being in a strange country with strange people. Yes, the list could be long. These are but a few of the potential problems that might occur, but surely the risk is worth it?

Planning that first meeting on St James Day in 2010, we took a risk that people would attend. Those present took a risk in nominating a committee to investigate the formation of an organisation that would be recognised by the pilgrim authorities in Spain. We were strangers then, with a goal of forming an organisation that would assist pilgrims on their journey. That small group has steadily grown, issuing 1,850 credentials and with a current membership of over 760 members.

When first thinking about making a Camino many thoughts flow through our head. Thoughts about the impracticality or difficulty of such a journey, the huge distance, the possible dangers along the way. Yet, once the decision is made, perhaps even before making a commitment, the Camino starts calling. It is like an invisible thread that just keeps pulling. William Arthur Ward, unknowingly summed this up when he said:

"It's impossible," said pride.

"It's risky," said experience.

"It's pointless," said reason.

"Give it a try," whispered the heart.

Distances are often long and hard, sometimes over tough terrain and perhaps in inclement weather. This means we potentially risk all sorts of injuries, but most pilgrims sail through their Camino with only minor mishaps. What a shame it would be to stay home on the off chance you may injure yourself, or come to harm.

Austin, a friend from my first Camino who, co-incidentally a few years before us, founded a sister organisation, the Canadian Company of Pilgrims, frequently referred to the Camino as a *mobile village*.

Walking, or cycling, in a mobile village is potentially full of risks. In peak season it is a very large village, but in the off season the village is quite small, a village peopled with all sorts of characters. On the one hand, very demanding, "know it all" people, who aren't keen on sharing, who have annoying characteristics, on the other, people who really touch you - the one who gives up a lower bunk for you, who shares food or drink, or helps you solve some problem. Some of these pilgrims you never know by name, but they are the people who pop into your



Camino memories, the people you remember with affection.

I met a young man once who was insistent that he could never visit Australia, even though he would love to. His reasons were that there were too many dangerous creatures - sharks, spiders, and snakes! I, like many of you, have seen a lot of snakes in my time, nearly trodden on a couple, but I have never met anyone bitten by one! How sad that this man's adventure is stopped because of fear - fear of something that probably would never happen. He was not prepared to take a risk.

For some yet to make a Camino there is the fear of failure. Many people assume that failure is not being able to complete what they set out to do, but surely, as in other life adventures, just beginning is a success, and whatever follows is a bonus. It is the friends you make, the sights you see, and the sounds that you hear that will live in your heart, that will send you home with Camino eyes.

The poem in John Brierley's guide book, used by so many of us, and also written by William Arthur Ward should cause us to reflect:

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool,

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental

To reach out to another is to risk involvement,

To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self

To place your ideas and dreams before a crowd is to risk their loss

To love is to risk not being loved in return

To hope is to risk despair

To try is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.

The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.

He may avoid suffering and sorrow,

But he cannot learn, feel, change, grow or live.

Chained by his servitude he is a slave who has forfeited all freedom.

Only a person who risks is free.

¡Buen Camino!

*Janet Leitch, Chair AFotC,
presenting the opening address
at the Conference*



*Above: Delicious Santiago tart
served at the Conference.
Cover photo: Happy Conference
attendees at Nunyara*





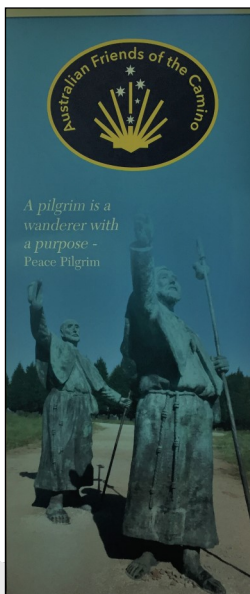
AFotC INAUGURAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE—REPORT

The Adelaide hills were truly alive with the sound of music - and so much more - at the first national conference convened by Australian Friends of the Camino from 11-13 October at the Nunyara Conference Centre.

The weekend brought together over 100 pilgrims from across Australia and overseas for a program of inspirational presentations, workshop discussions, book and travel displays, a sing-along (in Galician!), a music performance, story-telling and lots of laughter and sharing of Camino memories. With sangria, *vino tinto*, hearty meals (and a few Spanish treats), participants joined together to share an action-packed weekend of “all-things-Camino”. Definitely the next best thing to being back on the Camino ... without the blisters!

Titled *El Camino: The Way Ahead*, the conference explored what Australian Friends of the Camino, Groups around Australia and individual pilgrims can do to preserve and enhance the spirit of the Camino while recognizing the growing popularity of all the Camino paths and the challenges that may arise with ever-increasing numbers walking The Way.

In officially opening proceedings with a traditional Welcome to Country, Janet Leitch, AFotC Chair, then spoke of the value of taking risks, and the richness that flows from pushing one's own boundaries in order to fully experience all that the Camino offers (see pages 2-3). The importance of the ‘journey within’ was also highlighted by Cameron West and Isobel Thomas in a presentation on spirituality and their own experiences along the Way. Cam and Isobel spoke of the deep friendships made, the opportunities to give and to receive, the time for reflection and sharing of ideas... the true concept of pilgrimage.



Left: Janet Leitch introducing musicians, Jessie Vintila and Dan Mullins (also right)

Inspirational, thought-provoking and thoroughly wonderful keynote speakers, Senor Isaías Calvo de la Uz from Galicia, Spain and John Brierley (*pictured on previous page*), guidebook writer and spiritual mentor, both spoke of the truly unique nature of the Camino as a means of bringing together, in peace and without judgement, people from every country of the world, all faiths, cultures and ideologies, every language, age and level of ability.

Isaías outlined the plans being undertaken by the Galician government in preparation for Holy Year 2021, when over 1 million people are expected to walk into Santiago de Compostela. And John spoke of the Camino as a ‘journey of awakening’, a path of enquiry and self-discovery. He stressed the importance of ‘bringing the Camino home’ and living its values in our everyday lives as our world continues to face profound political, social and environmental crises. In concluding his address, John invited representatives of all Australian Camino Friends Groups to come together to light a candle as a symbol of our Camino family and a reminder of our shared humanity.

Other speakers shared their knowledge and love of Spanish art and architecture, food, wine, and photography on the Camino. A special session was programmed to provide opportunity for representatives from all groups around Australia to share information about their activities, while another session enabled travel companies to talk about the values that underpin their guided or self-guided tours. All speakers spoke with passion and commitment about ensuring that the Camino remains a journey with special meaning for everyone.

Below: Shell biscuits!
Right: Workshop group





While a number of pilgrims-to-be joined a session on practical tips for beginners, approximately 80 experienced pilgrims participated in a structured workshop to explore the challenges and opportunities that the Camino may face in the coming decade, and to identify strategies that AFotC and Australian groups can take to continue to foster, coordinate and resource the promotion, awareness and facilitation of the Camino for the next 10 years. Working in groups of 8-10, participants came up with long lists of amazing, thoughtful and creative responses which were then shared in a follow-up plenary session.



Robyn and Ken Greene, talking about their Bendigo group

After full days of listening, thinking and discussing, the evening programs provided fun and relaxation, with a singing workshop on Friday facilitated by Jessie Vintila of travel company, *Sing the Camino*. Within an hour, Jessie had everyone singing - in harmony, and in Galician! On Saturday evening, singer/songwriter/performer and podcaster, Dan Mullins entertained everyone with a great list of songs from the 50s, 60s and 70s, as well as some of his own compositions. Nunyara rocked!

So much feedback has been received since. Many people commented on the Camino 'magic' and the joy that flowed throughout the weekend. This would not have been possible without the enthusiasm, generosity of spirit and amazing participation of everyone involved - the keynote speakers, all presenters, performers, attendees, Nunyara staff and the conference committee.

Here's just a sample of [and extracts from] some of the emails received in the days after the weekend..... It seems there will have to be another one!

-Bravo to you all for putting on a great conference. I'm back at the farm, still warm from the afterglow of the whole occasion and the wonderful people I met. Thank you for asking me to be one of the presenters but what was really nourishing was to be with the pilgrim family and to have the chance to pause and reflect and to give thanks for the magic that is the Camino. (Dee, SA)



-Honestly, the weekend was magic! (Dan, NSW)
-The conference was fantastic and I enjoyed it tremendously. There was such a positive atmosphere and the whole weekend was very informative and fun. (Ursula, SA)
-It was an uplifting session to hear John Brierley author of many Camino guidebooks speak and chat with afterwards about the powerful journey of Camino and connection to self, spirituality and a growing global family of

Left: Various group members at the candle blessing.



pilgrims. (Lisa, SA)

- There was such a wonderful energy right from the beginning and I'm sure I'm not the only attendee still on a high and driving their loved ones crazy with the "when I was at the conference ..." refrain. (Julie-Ann, NSW)
- Our heads (and hearts!) are still full of the weekend's amazing conference and then last night one of the Bendigo group hosted a dinner for 9 with John at their home which was just really lovely. So much warmth and laughter, with excited planning for Caminos to come... This inaugural event will be an almost impossible act to follow although some details like the Santiago tartlets and shell biscuits should become a real tradition! (Ines, Vic)
- My thanks to all involved in creating such a wonderful weekend. So enjoyable! It was so well organised and just flowed. And the extra care and attention to detail - such as the beautiful shell soaps in the bathroom was exceptional. (Beverley, Vic)
- A wonderful conference. Truly inspiring, not to mention extremely enjoyable, with a great cross-section of speakers and topics. (Mary-Lou, NSW)
- Congratulations on the successful conference.... From the general energy and enthusiasm of the delegates it looks as if this will roll out again in the near future. (Max, SA)
- There were great stories and insights shared on what the Camino means to people and tales of kindness from 'Camino Angels' who had helped people along their journeys on the Way...(Dave, Vic)
- The passion and dedication of the organisers, presenters and all the participants was abundantly evident and truly reflected the spirit of the Camino. I learnt a lot and came away full of inspiration, wishing I could have stayed longer... (Sue, Vic)

Margaret Gadd (SA)

Certificates of Achievement were awarded to [bottom from left] Susan Morris, for services with the Facebook page & participation in 'Camino Skies', Alan Pearce, for services with Pilgrim Chaplaincy and pilgrim office, & Alison Bell for editing the Newsletter.

At the recent AGM Margaret Gadd (right) was recognised for her service as convenor of the Conference committee and Rex Ranger (far right) for his constant fine tuning of the membership records.





THE PINT-SIZED PILGRIM

In 1999 I walked my first Camino and fell madly in love twice. First with the Dutchman who is now my husband, then with the country itself. And Spain has been the third person in our relationship ever since.

Now, some 20 years after that first time, I decided to share my love of the Camino and Spain with my eldest grandchild who was just shy of turning eight. Lucas is the eldest of four boys, energetic and curious, and with a sponge-like capacity to take in the world around him. The idea struck me while walking the Camino Aragonés when I was struggling with short daily distances and lots of rest stops. "A child could do better than this!" I berated myself angrily, at which point I had one of those "Aha!" moments and the idea of an 'abuela-Camino' was born.

Having convinced his parents to lend me their precious firstborn for three weeks, I also let them put the idea to him in case he felt uncomfortable refusing me. He was eager but sensibly cautious, asking how he would understand what people were saying and whether his closest brother in age wouldn't feel left out. Once reassured on these two points, he took to the planning with gusto and over the next few months we assembled all his gear, principally a junior 18L Osprey and some quality runners which came as early birthday presents.

He undertook several 10km hikes around home and one long bush walk with me while staying with his 5 year old brother Max. To keep Max busy, my husband Rob made up a picnic of salad rolls which they then took up the bush and set up as a roadside stall. I wish I'd taken a photo of the look on Lucas' face as we rounded the corner and saw lunch waiting for us! There are now lots of these impromptu roadside refreshment stalls along the CF, now duly called 'Max Cafés'.

The day of departure came around and I wondered about that 27-hour flight with an active 7 year old. Luckily we both slept quite a bit on the outward journey, which was just as well as we got straight onto a bus to Logroño, then another to Estella, our starting point. From the moment we arrived at Barajas, my fellow pilgrim's head was on turbo-swivel as he took in his new surroundings. An inaugural *bocadillo* and Colacao tided him over till we arrived in Estella where I'd booked a recovery night in a *hostal* where we ate dinner, showered and collapsed into bed to sleep for 13 hours.

We moved into the *albergue municipal* for our official first night of walking and right from the start, Lucas showed his true colours, getting into conversations with anyone who was interested, which many people were as he was the only child pilgrim we saw in two weeks of walking. People talked to him openly and he responded in kind. On that first night



Cruz de los Valientes



he had the idea of getting daily *sellos* in his journal, so I said "OK, go and ask the *hospitalero*!" He hesitated, then went and asked: "Sello, por favor," which was his first foray into Spanish.



Korean fan

My plan was to average 12-15kms a day which is very do-able on the CF nowadays and this section had the added advantage of passing lots of places of family historical interest, such as where his Mum had her 21st birthday with us while we were *hospitaleros* in Navarrete in 2001 and where Rob and I met in 1999. For anybody interested, our itinerary was Estella, Villamayor de Monjardin, Los Arcos, Torres del Rio, Viana, Logroño, Navarrete, Nájera, Cirueña, Grañón, Belorado, Villafranca Montes de Oca, Agés, Orbaneja, Burgos.

Something I noticed was that generally speaking, men were more interested in engaging with Lucas than women. Given that statistically there are more women on the Camino than men these days, I wondered whether the women were all too busy getting away from family responsibilities to want to chat to a 7 year old? Coming from an all-boy family I think Lucas felt the need for male company at times but when he found it in the form of two lovely young men - Liam from the UK and Matt from Canada - who played Connect 4 with him in the *albergue* and taught him how to tie self-tightening shoelaces - he was really saddened when we had to part company as I was simply unable to keep up with two fit 20-somethings. It was an exact repeat of partings I've had many times on my Caminos and almost always for the same reason - my inability to keep up!

We talked - my, how we talked! It really is a rare and special privilege to have had the chance to see the wonder that is the Camino through such fresh eyes. We talked about the little birds that often seemed to be showing us the way, hopping ahead for a few metres at a time, which led to the story of St Francis of Assisi who walked to Santiago barefoot and coincidentally, whose picture we found on a holy card lying on the pavement the following day! We looked at the grape vines, trees and plants, checking out the wonderfully large fig leaves which I commented were once used to cover the private parts of statues in the 'olden days'. Sometime later in a bar we were sitting beneath a couple of cherubic statuettes when he glanced up and observed that they could use some fig leaves! A couple of heavy rain showers brought out an array of slugs, snails and sundry other mini-beasts, all requiring close examination.



All so old

Lucas kept a journal which he wrote whenever there was waiting time. Among his writing and illustrations (many involving food and eating noises)



there are the entries that other people wrote - Irish Mick who wrote the Celtic blessing in phonetic Gaelic for him, Italian Sergio who wrote to his 'piccolo amico' while we waited for our shared machine-load of washing...

Then there was Austrian Andrea who had a magic electrical insect bite zapper we were grateful for, Leah who shared a lot of her picnic dinner when I'd badly misjudged his hunger level one night, Raoul from Barcelona who joked that he'd kidnap him for a million-euro ransom... it got to the point when, sitting on a rock at the top of a hill for a break, a gorgeous, leggy French girl appeared with a delighted cry of: "Lucas!" We established that we'd never met but that her friend had told her to look out for the cute, blonde mini-pilgrim walking with his grandmother. Fame at last!



Journal writing, Belorado

Growing up in a secular world, Lucas was fascinated by churches and all their details. "What are these buildings for?" He asked to go to a Mass, which I said would require a siesta as it wasn't till 8pm, so he climbed into his bunk and slept. At Mass, he loved giving the sign of peace, gravely shaking hands with the surrounding congregation members, then asked me why everyone was lining up afterwards. Defeated by trying to explain the mysteries of the transubstantiation of the body and blood of Christ on the spot, I whispered they were going up to get "a biscuit and a sip of wine". "Do even kids get the wine?" he asked, wide-eyed.

Arriving in Viana just in time for the running of the cows (still fairly terrifying) with all the brass bands, gigantic dancing figures and everyone dressed in red and white, we jostled along in the crowd and Lucas asked if we could have an ice-cream cone. I gave him 5€ and said "Go for it... A few minutes later he returned, triumphant, with two ice-creams AND the right change!

The first 2-3 days we found the final couple of kilometres were hard on tired legs, but then we discovered Bi-Frutas, those vitamin-enriched fruit drinks in a box

that we decided were excellent for eliminating whingeing. In a later skype call home, his Dad put in an order for the recipe!

I've been told I run children on a fairly long leash but whenever I felt a twinge of worry about a height, narrowness or other possible danger, I'd just ask him: "What's my main job in life right now?" "Getting me home in one piece - or Mum will kill you!"



Chilling



I always carry a few tiny brass kangaroo pins to give people who have been particularly helpful to me. Lucas loved this idea and sometimes asked me whether someone's kindness merited a pin. He loves all symbolism, proudly wearing a yellow arrow badge on his jacket and a shell on his pack "so that people will know I'm a pilgrim from the front and the back."

One of the many lovely surprises about travelling with Lucas was his thirst for stories. We all need stories. They teach us about our place in the world and possible alternatives. He wanted to hear all about my childhood, my years at boarding school (which he calls 'boring school'), family history stories like that of his birth (of course!) when I was promoted to the rank of grandmother, and any legends or stories of old like that of the chickens of Santo Domingo. He learnt that legend off by heart until he could tell it to people who didn't know it. Then we received the exciting news of the birth of another cousin called Hugo James - Hugo from the boy in the Santo Domingo legend and James for St James - the new baby was surely named after Lucas's Camino?



Korean fan

Being so blonde in Spain involved a fair bit of cheek-pinching by other *abuelas* and many instances of spontaneous generosity. In one bar we stayed in, pasta was not on the menu. Seeing his face fall, the barmaid at once said she would make him some specially. In that same bar, he went to do the Sudoku in the local paper and was given a gift biro... the charmed life of the pint-sized pilgrim. "They all love me here, Nin!" And indeed they did.

Arriving in Burgos, we had already had the sense of counting down the days left of walking. A long visit to the Museum of Human Evolution was on the list and did not disappoint. The waxwork figures of Neolithic man through the ages, comparing evolving brain size with the introduction of meat to the diet, was an interesting observation. After that, it was souvenir buying, including a chess set bought with birthday money after learning how to play in an *albergue*, and a slap-up lunch with Rob who drove over from his Moratinos house-sitting gig to celebrate with us.

Some elements of the Camino are universal. I watched Lucas make friends and learn from them, then lose them. I watched him learn to take responsibility for the simple chores of life, like laundry. I saw him reach out to help - mainly to me - when I missed signage anywhere. Whether you're 7 or 70 - it's a great leveller.

To anyone considering a Camino with a child, I would offer: Choose your child well (old enough to carry own gear as well as do the walking); Be familiar with where you plan to walk; Tailor your Camino (ours was 14 days of 12-15kms) on the CF; Keep a journal each (for use in idle times as well as the end result); Include lots of breaks at interest points along the way. Relax and enjoy the great company!

Ines Jewell (VIC)



A DAY OF CELEBRATION ON THE VIA DE FRANCESCO

The morning of Sunday 23 June 2019, the 22nd day of our pilgrimage from Dovadola, Italy to Rome, began in the Italian medieval hill town of Poggio Bustone. As my husband David and I left the village at 8am to walk the 18km to Rieti, the local people were preparing for a religious fiesta to be held later that day.

After six kms we reached the village of Cantalice, had a coffee in the bar and then ascended the stairway behind the village to the piazza and fountain in front of the church of San Felice (St Felix).

We were met there by a gathering of people beginning their celebration of San Felice and were given cake and juice. The street leading off the piazza was decorated with patterns and religious images made with flowers. A young couple from Rome who were visiting his mother's village for the celebration chatted to us for an hour or two as they waited for the service and the procession which would follow. We set off again when the service began, but it had been a real privilege to be there and share in the excitement and anticipation as the procession participants dressed in their simple costumes.

Arriving in Rieti about 4 pm, the streets around the church were closed to traffic in advance of the city's preparation for the Festival of Saint Antonio da Padua (St Anthony of Padua). Although not the patron saint of Rieti, the city has a strong affinity with Saint Antonio. On the closed streets, groups of people were making the beautiful floral images called *infiorate* (see below and next page).

We checked into the lovely old Grande Albergo Quattro Stagioni, showered, did our washing and rested. About 5:30pm we were awakened from our siesta by a brass band playing in the piazza. We quickly rushed out to listen to the band playing outside the church, then followed the local people into the beautiful Duomo of Rieti for the mass. The church was packed, and the mass was wonderful, very formal with a choir, an organ and lots of incense.



More beautiful infiorate

The procession carrying the statue of the saint emerged from the church led by children dressed in white with baskets of flowers, strewing the flowers onto the street. The procession was followed by the congregation spilling out of the church. David and I followed the procession along the people-lined streets. The followers must be very careful to make two lines, either side of the *infiorate*, so as not to walk over the flower pictures, which can only be trampled by the Saint. The procession walked about 3 km through the old town, acknowledging the other churches and sanctuaries along the way. As the following crowds fell away, and we found ourselves closer to the front, we were very humbled by the sight of the town's people paying their respects to the Saint as the procession passed by. The procession returned to the church and the festival continued with a band and food vans on the piazza, and fireworks later in the night.

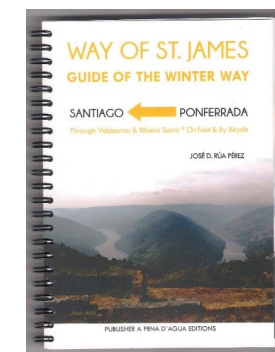
Meredith and David Parker (SA)

CAMINO INVIERNO— at last, an English guidebook!

A guidebook in English to this road less travelled is now available from <https://www.mapiberia.com/producto/way-of-st-james-guide-of-the-winter-way/10121>

The Camino Invierno or Winter Road takes the pilgrim to Santiago from Ponferrada and is approx. 260k long.

It is a beautiful, scenic and peaceful alternative path to the busy Sarria-Santiago final leg of the Camino Frances. It is also sometimes known as the Camino Real (alluding to the gold mines along this Roman trade route). It is mainly referred to as the Winter Way because it was more passable in winter time, being further south—hence also known as the Camino de Sur. Monforte de Lemas is at the 110k mark and boasts a parador! There is less infrastructure along this route making some knowledge of the Spanish language beneficial. This Camino is highly recommended!





SAHAGUN ... AND BEYOND?

Deb and I left Madrid from the Church of Santiago in Sol on 8 March. A cold and windy morning, soon bloomed into one of those beautiful post-winter days in Spain. Destination was Tre Cantos, and the famed community centre accommodation. As it was our first Camino, we had decided to start with short journeys of around 20kms or less. [Yes, Johnnie Walker, the police do lock you in and throw you out at 6am. And it is genuinely in the basement inside the council offices.] We met Pedro from Portugal and Simona from Romania there.



Rosa, Deb and Andrew at Manzenares

Next stop was Colmenar Viejo, now a total of 35 kilometres from Madrid. The recommended accommodation by Johnnie proved to be terrible. I do not recommend a stay at Hostal Chabeli. The room stunk of cigarettes to the point where we needed to wash everything at the next stop. Loud noises and partying by locals all night. We have discovered that in this part of Spain, the locals like to let doors slam.

It's hard to tell when things begin to go awry. Deb's left foot was a bit tender even before we started in Madrid. Now it was starting to be painful to walk. We stayed with Ray and Rosa, as suggested, in Manzenares el Real. Rosa, a school-teacher, is lovely and they provided us with great travel information about the path ahead. The next section to Cercedilla is described as an easy walk of 19 kilometres. Possibly so if you do not turn right in Mataelpino and follow the path there. It was ridiculously difficult and totally unnecessary - go through the town. It is here that Deb's foot has started to hurt. We have the Sierra de Guadarrama in front of us. There was no albergue accommodation in Cercedilla at this time of the year so a *hostal* it was.

Do not get off the Roman road to Puerto de la Fuenfria. There is a marker (yellow arrow) near the top pointing to the left. This will take you up into the mountain and add 6 kilometres to your trip before you decide to return to the road. This is a tough steep climb over a broken 4-kilometre rocky road with an altitude of

1800 metres at the summit. The gentle path down into Segovia is 23 kilometres through amazing black pines and the odd ruins. The last 10 kilometres are a bit daunting though. You can see Segovia, but it is not close. The yellow arrows and way markers have become my newest best friend.



Segovia (*left*) is so beautiful we stayed an extra day; hopefully to rest Deb's foot. The Roman aqueduct is 1500 years old



and was still in service until the 1960s. The Cathedral and Castle Alcazar are a must. We stayed at Don Jaime at €35 between us with breakfast thrown in. Another discovery was that 'Spain is not flat'. Chinese movie makers were filming a western in Plaza Mayor - hilarious.

Out on to the Meseta. About 213 kilometres to go - all on the windy, cold virtually treeless, rolling plains.

Anyone who says you don't need poles to walk any of the Caminos is an idiot. A bit of YouTube instruction and a bit more practice to get it right, and the benefits are amazing.

The plan to stay in Ane proved to be folly. Not only does the albergue not open until 15 April, but the whole town seemed to be deserted. Had to continue to Santa Maria la Real de Nieva, a total of 38 kilometres for the day as we got off the trail somehow. First real taste of albergue life in Albergue de Peregrines. 6 beds but the place to ourselves. Javier Gonzala was an excellent host here.

Nava de la Asuncion has a free council albergue, but it was impossible to find someone with keys to the place. Stayed in Santa Christo, a privately run *albergue* of over 200 beds in dorms of 10. €15 each but nearly new, very clean accommodation. Observations: local beer has changed from Mahou to Galicia. You can buy a brand-new house here for €150,000.

Passing through historic Coca (steep downhill and uphill then pines) our next planned stop was Villeguillo: a village with no English. With Deb's Spanish we managed a tapas dinner in the only open bar. They also hold the keys to the albergue. 10 beds, 2 showers and an excellent kitchen greet you there. €5 each.

Johnnie Walker describes a Route A and Route B at this point. Valviadero is described as a ghost town but three families live there. The church, hotel and most buildings are in ruins. The path/road to this village is absolutely terrible - take care. Should



Meseta



have taken Route B but wanted to look at the ghost town.

Alcazaren is typical of the villages on the Meseta. *Tiendas* (shops) shut 12 noon until 4.00pm. No food in the bars until 8.00pm. Albergue here was free, very clean but very basic. It is the Pilgrim way to leave money for your 'free' accommodation. We left €10. Here we met our new fellow walker, Henke, from the Netherlands. He had a plethora of Camino stories that he imparted on us with gusto. I got the feeling he was glad of the company.



Krajal de Campos

We have crossed the Rio Eresma for the last time on our way to Puente Duero. The albergue here is a converted barn. 7 beds only - run by volunteer hospitaleros. Lovely lady in charge, but told you which bed you would be sleeping in. Henke cooked pasta for everyone. Red wine of course.

By Simancas we left the last vestiges of the pines. To get into Peneafior de Hornija you must traverse a ravine to a steep climb into the walled village. The yellow arrows here are confusing and the albergue hard to find. All tiendas were shut as usual so had to dine out again. We have been carrying food since the start as the shopping is unreliable. Motto: Get food and water and local wine when and where you can.

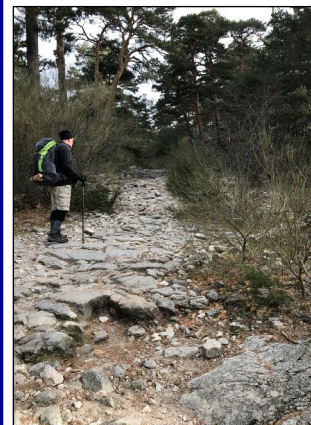
Got food stores at Castromonte for the day ahead. Stayed an extra day in Medina de Rioseca. Albergue was a working convent, the Convento de Santa Clara. Normally closed this time of the year, they opened for us with no hot water and no heating. I cooked a meal for the first time since leaving Madrid. Medina is big enough for a traffic light. Beautiful place but not a city. Lots of Supermercados though. Yay! Here Henke caught up with us. New travellers, Jose' from Tenerife, Maria from Madrid, and Victoria from Segovia. This is the first real 'sharing' of space for us.



Canal de Castilla

The Camino can make you or break you. Deb has now been walking with a swollen foot for over a week. Maria is tending to her at night. We will make Sahagun in a few days. Then we will see.

We have followed the Canal de Castilla all morning on our way to Tamariz, then our first bit of



Roman Road

highway to Cuenca de Campos. The *albergue* here is fantastic. 30 beds over 4 rooms, with a great kitchen. Jose' is going to cook a Spanish meal for us tonight. 5 *peregrinos* together. No Victoria.

The community *albergue* in Santavas de Campos was closed for renovations and not due to open until mid-April. Maria contacted the village mayor and got them to open it for 5 Caminos with nowhere else to stay. Once again, no hot water and limited lighting, but out of the cold. We all ate at the local (and only) bar. The mayor's son drove to back to Medina for frozen pizzas for us. The locals chipped in with breads, eggs, fruit and veg. The generosity of these villagers will stay with me always.

Grahal de Campos is no longer on the Camino Madrid but is an absolute must. Only 1 kilometre from the path. Turn right at the bridge. A beautiful town with 2 identical castles. There is a story behind the second castle. Has to do with royalty and jealousy.

Sahagun at last. It is much nicer than Johnnie Walker gives it credit for. Our walking group split up at this time to follow different pursuits. Stayed at the Albergue Peregrine. Very clean with lots of hot showers, a washing machine and dryer. We are now at the end of the Camino Madrid. There are lots of pilgrims now as Sahagun is on the Camino Frances. Compostela's all round from the museum here to recognise the 320+ kilometres from Madrid. It is the 23 March 2019. For us, it is the end of the Camino Madrid.

Here is also decision time. Do we continue, with Deb now barely mobile, or call it quits and go to Portugal as we had planned to do after Muxia?
(To be continued next issue)

Andrew Porteous (QLD)

Fuencarral, the start



Penefor de Hornija





LIFE LESSONS FROM THE CAMINO: A PILGRIMAGE OF THE HEART

The inner life or the inner universe:

The infinite potential for change within a human being is a life long pilgrimage to being human.

A distant trek is nothing more than a series of small steps:

When one is present, the moment is in each step, the degree of difficulty is measured in comparison to the single step, not in comparison to the thousands of steps it takes to complete the trek. Live one moment as a whole of time and the whole of time becomes that moment.



When money becomes the ends rather than the means to an end, life's meaning is distorted:

When space becomes our focus and end, time (our life) is lost or spent in pursuit of things of space. Space is the means and time is the ends. Money is the means to an end, which is life (time). When time or life becomes our focus, then we use things of space to buy time so as to enjoy life. We make money to spend time, we don't spend time to make money. We make money to live life, not we live life to make money.

Don't micro manage your pilgrimage rather macro manage your trip

To micro manage your journey is to eliminate the surprise life has reserved for you. Spontaneity can only happen without the details being predetermined, this is latent potential and potential is diversity. If you micro manage you tend to kill the potential and limit the diversity. To macro manage your trip is to have a goal, to know where you start and where you finish. To know the beginning and the end only, then everything in-between is potential. Chaos and order are in tension, not too much chaos nor too much order. Plan your trip in order and leave the the details to chaos.



Encounters and departures are two sides of the same coin:

The encounter creates expectation, the time together creates friendship and the parting creates appreciation, a sense of longing and gratitude. You have the feeling a part of you is left behind and a part of the other is now with you, so your loss is compensated by their loss and vis versa. When you encounter someone, you first meet the being and when you depart you leave the human.

Putting others ahead of yourself:

The people you encounter along the way are part and parcel of the walk! To put yourself ahead of others on the way is to make the path parochial, narrow, myopic and the journey tends to start and end with you alone. If however you regard



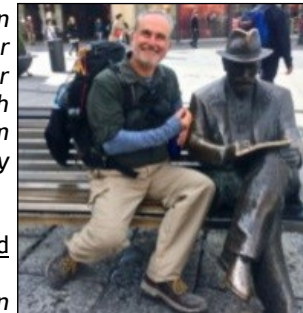
the people you encounter as part of the journey, the real Camino commences in your open heart and extends out as far as the open heart of others will allow. To walk into the open hearts and minds of others is the most awesome, grandiose pilgrimage of all. The Camino is analogous of life's sojourn, the path belongs to all, just as life belongs to all, your right to walk the Way is the right of all to walk the Way. The Camino is one single narrow line that stretches out in front of you.



One's life is a narrow path, sometimes difficult, sometimes easy, sometimes shared and sometimes alone, all life belongs to us just as our life belongs to all.

Walking alone for the sake of walking is an exercise that engages the whole you. It is an experience in experiencing self, it is a meditative act:

When you walk alone you walk with your shadow person and you contemplate the self in relationship to your shadow person. This rhetorical dialogue enables introspection, it is a conversation with the soul. You walk with your thoughts alone, it is the meeting place of the physical body and the meta physical inner self. If you can't enjoy your own company it may indicate that you don't know your shadow self well enough or you may not love your shadow person enough. You may need time alone with your shadow self to learn to live with him, forgive him and love him. Walking alone grants us the opportunity to discover our relationship to our shadow person.



We need very little in life, less is more and more is less:

To know you have a roof over your head and bread on the table gives you security and to have water when you are thirsty gives you life. Our needs are simple, when we have too much we are suffocated by choice. Our needs represent life filled with the necessary things of space and an abundance of time to enjoy life. Where as our wants may represent our life crammed with unnecessary things of space that leaves little time to enjoy life. Too much is an evil that chokes our soul, too little is an evil that chokes our life.

We are all essentially the same, yet unique:

We are all vulnerable to the same needs of shelter, food and water. We are all the same as to things of space, but we are all unique with respect to things of time. Moments of time reveal our uniqueness and places of space reveal our commonality. Moments speak to the metaphysical and places speak to the physical. Moments are doorways of the spiritual, places are doorways of the material. Each person is as unique as to the moments of time that create his human experience. Each person is as common as the places of space we inhabit. The places we expe-



rience are finite where as the moments we experience are infinite. The former is fleshly the latter is spiritual. We are the same as to the space we share, we are unique as to the time we spend.

On the Camino time is compressed especially as to self discovery and interpersonal relationships: As for interpersonal relationships.

8 hours on the Camino spent talking, walking and eating with another is like 8 weeks spent talking, walking and eating with someone at home. What compresses time is a willingness to be open to one another, quickly abandoning any defences or masks that otherwise impede our truly knowing someone. Sharing with another their pleasures and pain without reservation, looking out for each others physical needs makes short work of the time that separates us and one begins to feel time compress. One day of sharing may feel like months or even years knowing someone. The more you are connected to the inner life the less time you require to experience this close bond and time begins to compress, the more material or fleshly you are the more time it takes to bond and time begins to dilate, time literally drags on. Share space and time without fear, and love fills that time and space with friendship. To be vulnerable is courage in the face of fear, to share your fears is faith in the face of another and to have faith in the face of another is to love unreservedly.

Caught in a loop:

The Camino is supposed to represent the way to live life with purpose and meaning in relation to others and the planet. Some, however are caught in what I call a loop. I met young young men that had been on the Camino 6 or 7 times or couples that were there for the 4th time. It occurred to me that experiencing the Camino is to allow yourself the time and space to learn new lessons or reaffirm old lessons. To test your mind and body, to know thyself more deeply. The end of the Camino should symbolise the beginning of the lessons learnt. The Camino's end should represent the the beginning of a new life or a rebirth of the old. It should move us to live without fear of the absurdity and banality of life. However for some I met, the Camino has become a safe place to avoid confronting life's tragedy, absurdity and banality, it seemed as if they were endeavouring to numb the aforementioned. They do this by returning to the Camino often so as to heighten their senses and awaken their life force from without. The Camino should teach us to heighten our senses and awaken our life force from within.

Listen with your eyes

When you hear with your ears you pay attention to the information conveyed by another, when you listen with your eyes you pay attention to the person behind the information. Ears hear facts about a person, eyes listen to the feelings of a person. If you employ both you connect to the soul of a person. Ears receive Logos, Eyes perceive Pathos and the heart manifests Ethos.

David Grioli (QLD)



BOOK REVIEW

CSJ CAMINO GUIDES 2019

The London, UK-based Confraternity of St James (CSJ) was founded by 6 camino enthusiasts in 1983, making it the oldest English-speaking association of pilgrims. It now has over 2000 members, has issued over 10,000 pilgrim passports, and runs two pilgrim *albergues* in Spain. Like other international Camino associations, including the Australian Friends of the Camino, its essential aim is to promote pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostela. From its very beginning it recognised the need for a publishing program focused on printed guides. That program is described by CSJ as 'The lowest cost and lightest on the market and which are frequently updated by our volunteer Camino pilgrims'.

Confirmation of CSJ's continuing commitment is to be found in recent editions of 4 of its guides eg its very first guide, to the C Francés, was published in 1983, now in its the 36th edition! Whilst this reflects the popularity of the Francés, it's also indicative of the great voluntary work of experienced pilgrims over many years which has enabled regularly updated new editions.

For many years the CSJ guides would best be described as cheap, and not particularly cheerful - characterised often by plain covers, small print, no or poorly reproduced photos, no colour, limited route maps and no elevation profiles. Nonetheless they filled a vacuum not then met by commercial publishers. Over the years have improved and still maintained a commitment to low cost and, importantly, low weight.

The most recent evidence of this achievement are new editions of 4 guides, which in their variety manifest the ever widening range of connected pilgrimage in Spain and elsewhere.

The Camino Inglés 6th ed. 2018/19. This covers the two starting points for the C Inglés, from El Ferrol and A Coruña. 74 pg, 77gms, £8.99 plus PH.

The Camino Portugués de la Costa 1st ed. 2018/19. 130 pg, 130gms, £9.99 plus PH.

St James Way : a pilgrim way from Reading to Southampton 2nd ed. 2018/19. 54 pg, 57 gms, £8.00 plus PH.

The Camino Francés: Saint-Jean-de-Port to Santiago de Compostela 36th ed. 2018/19. 150 pg, 150gms., £15 plus PH. Incl 2 booklets, *Preparing for the Camino Francés* and *Pilgrim guide to Santiago de Compostela*.

The format is the same 'pocket size' (12cmX16.5cm) and still light-weight, and features attractive covers, no wasted margins, high quality readable printing and copy editing, relevant photographs, route outlines and, lastly, elevation profiles derived from *Gronze.com*. Check out the range of CSJ guides at www.csj.org.uk. Kindle versions are also available. In conclusion, CSJ guides remain inexpensive, light, and very good value.

Alan Bundy (SA)



DID YOU KNOW ???

~~~ Pilgrim Commemorative Medal ~~~

The Pilgrim association in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port have instigated a commemorative medal for all pilgrims who commenced in St-Jean-Pied-de-Port and completed their 780km pilgrimage to Santiago-de-Compostele.

To qualify for the medal you must:

- Have completed the pilgrimage in 1 or 2 journeys from the year 2014
- Have commenced the pilgrimage in St-Jean-Pied-de-Port
- Provide copies of your Camino documentation (your final Compostela and your stamped pilgrim credencial)

To obtain your Commemorative Medal, send the following documents:

- Copy of your Compostela
- Copy of the first three pages of your credencial (including page with your name and details and showing the St-Jean-Pied-de-Port stamp) and the last three pages of your credencial including showing the Santiago Stamp.

Enclose: €10, or US\$15 or £10

Mail details of your name and postal address to:

Amis du Chemin de Saint Jacques

P – 39 rue de la Citadelle

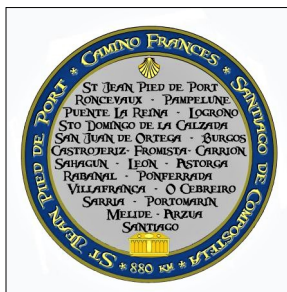
Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port 64220

FRANCE

You will receive a small document and your commemorative medal through the mail.

Website with more details (in French)

<http://www.aucoeurduchemin.org/actualites-clic-sur-le-titre/article/la-medaille-st-jean-pied-de-port-compostelle>



With thanks to Heather Pavitt (QLD)



With thanks to our Conference Sponsors & Donors



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEWLY-FORMED BARWON CAMINO GROUP!

This group covers the Geelong, Bellarine and Surf Coast areas in Victoria and plans to hold regular walks and other social gatherings where fellow pilgrims can get together and share stories and experiences. For more information see the Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BarwonCaminoGroup/> or email barwoncaminogroup@gmail.com

Beverley Exell and Peter Millington (both VIC)

TIPS & HINTS FOR WALKING A CAMINO

MARK YOUR WALKING POLES!

Here's a photo of my walking poles with their identifying ribbons. I've always had 'ribbons with meaning' - one off a 60th birthday present etc. These emerald green ones were chosen because I started my CP earlier this year on St Patrick's Day. It really helps to find them when they're jammed into a container, especially in the morning darkness.



I also take a supply of these brass kangaroo pins to hand out to Camino angels (see page 11).



Ines Jewell (VIC)

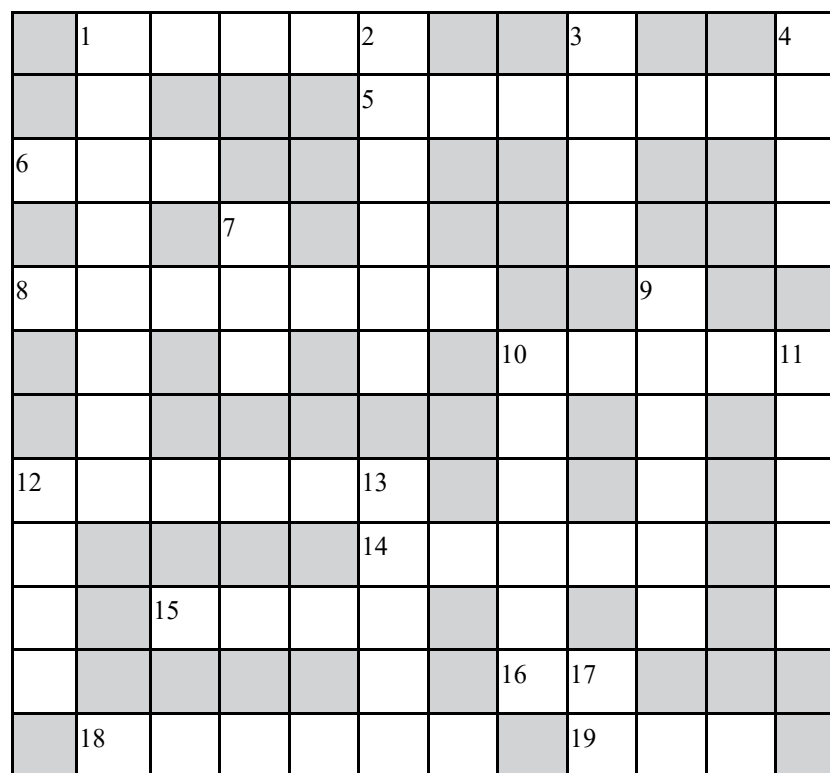


Send your TIPS & HINTS to
editor@afotc.org





CROSSWORD ~ SPANISH MUSIC & DANCE



Across

1. Composer of *Noches en los jardines de España*. (5)
5. Joaquín ... wrote *Concierto De Arun juez*. (7)
6. The fast *Jota* (dance) has three beats in each (3)
8. Andrés ... (1893-1987) was a virtuoso Spanish guitarist. (7)
10. The ... from N. Africa strongly influenced Spanish music and dance. (5)
12. A dance characterised by sharp turns, and pauses with one arm raised. (6)
14. Albéniz's most notable work, *Iberia*, is a suite of twelve ... pieces. (5)
15. Manuel de Falla composed *Ritual* ... *Dance*. (4)
16. A shawl is used a complement to flamenco dance. (2)
18. The instrument with which Spain is indelibly associated. (6)
19. Exclamation of approval in flamenco performance. (3)

Down

1. Art-form that includes singing, guitar playing, hand clapping and more. (8)
2. Above-mentioned derived from gypsy, ..., Jewish & traditional Andalusian song. (6)
3. Medieval pilgrims sang & danced as they travelled to and ... St James's shrine. (4)
4. Albéniz's *Iberia* suite captures the sounds, colours, and very ... of Spain. (4)
7. Commercial --- now dominates Spain's music industry. (3)
9. Spanish composer who often dispensed with bar-lines and key signature. (6)
10. A biennial flamenco festival is held in ... (on south coast). (6)
11. Monks of Santo Domingo de ... are famous for their Gregorian Chant. (5)
12. *Los Palentás* is a Spanish rock ... (4)
13. Montserrat Caballé is widely regarded as the last ... diva. (5)
17. Tárrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* is ... beautiful. (2)

Sue Burrows (SA)

Answers in the next CC!