

 Jacobeo

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Pilgrims

Gianchi. Italy. 2018

His first Camino was when he was 56 years old, the age at which he could retire. "I wanted to do something new and to take my mind off this moment of great change in my life. I had worked for 40 years in the same job and at that moment I wanted to try to do something different." He knew of the existence of the Way because he had heard a friend talk about his experience, also something on television, so he finally began to gather information.

He started his Camino in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, where he arrived with a return ticket. On that Road, everything was very well organized, but finally, instead of the 30 days programmed, it ended very quickly. He liked everything about that experience but at the same time he believes that it was too fast, that he did not enjoy it with the calm relaxation of other, later experiences. From that first experience he remembers his enthusiasm, he enjoyed it a lot



especially until Leon, a stretch in which he found it easy to socialize.

It was summer, the end of August. He very much liked the experience, he felt free, he could decide everything himself- when to walk, when and where to stop ... with a guide downloaded from the network as his only support. Already on that first Camino he ended up by not making many plans and stopping there where he liked what he found : cities such as Burgos or Leon, where there were many things to visit. That experience led to him to finding his own way of pilgrimage: to do it at his own pace, without criticizing or judging anyone, whether the others walk or not, whether they carry their backpacks or not ... He followed his own rhythm and finally arrived in Santiago five days ahead of the schedule he had planned, where he waited for the arrival of his wife, as had been previously agreed.

The following year he organized a return to the Camino. This time with another Italian from Emilia Romagna whom I had met on the Camino. The two decided to travel the North Way from Irún. They started off walking very fast as they had done before, but soon began to wonder why they were hurrying and began to walk more slowly: "I wanted to "saporare" (taste) the Camino to Santiago. That Road was a great pleasure and, specifically, I remember a place: Miraz.

Owing to a small health problem he could not walk the following year, but

in 2016, when he returned to make a pilgrimage with his friend from Emilia Romagna, this time in Italy: Via Francigena. They traveled throughout the Italian territory, from the Great San Bernardo. Of places and memories Val Promaro stands out, and the a very beautiful hospital just outside Luca, and then the arrival in Rome that is very beautiful, with its the descent from Monte Mario overlooking the Vatican.

The experience had differences and similarities with the Camino de Santiago, in particular remember that there were far fewer people and that



almost all were Italians, but also there were also some foreigners, for example Spaniards. Among those whom he remembers one was called Jesus.

Last year he travelled the Portuguese Way. They followed the Central Way from Lisbon, deviating to Fatima and to visit Coimbra, and then, from Porto, they took the Camino de la Costa to Vigo. He also liked this experience, the sea, the landscape and Portugal and he remembers good food: cod or bacalao and at a good price.

This year he has just travelled the Via de la Plata from Seville, a long and hard road that, however, was not enough for him, so they continued on to Fisterra-Muxia. Actually, it was not the first time that he has continued on to reach the coast. For him the end of the Camino is to reach the ocean, the city and sanctuary of Santiago have their importance but he always follows on to the coast.

He has done all this walking tour with sports shoes, good ones that protect the foot, and much prefers them to boots. He has not suffered any problem despite the distance travelled. The rest of the year he usually walks but never performs a professional preparation. Maybe the first year, in fact, he was so prepared that he moved so quickly and almost did not feel the Camino because of the fatigue he felt.

Unlike his first time, he now comes to the Camino only with a one-way ticket, leaving the purchase of the return ticket for the last days, about ten days before or so.

As for his way of pilgrimage, sometimes he prefers to be alone and reflect for a bit on the past, and he also likes the change that it implies with respect to his habitual way of life, the experience of living without many things. In fact, every year when making up the backpack you realize that you can do without more than the previous year.

In his opinion, the experience lived on the Camino with people is almost too perfect. You live in agreement with everyone, everyone seems to love each other on the Camino, but we must not forget that it is a utopia. You have to know little about life to

that's why it is difficult to return to everyday life. When you return home you have to apply what you have lived and test whether it can help you for something in the real world, with its mixture good and bad aspects. You have to try to keep the good things that are found in the Camino and try to bring them to everyday life as much as possible, but do not believe utopically in the impossible.

He summarize his experience, all their Ways so far, saying: what has happened is that a new window has opened in my life, a window that I occasionally want to look out of.

María. Spain- Australia. 2018

to attend a family wedding. She had recently divorced and, after attending the wedding, decided to tour Galicia with two relatives. She knew nothing at all about the Camino and only became aware of its existence when she arrived in Santiago and saw the pilgrims in the cathedral. She remembers some people performing rituals like head-butting the saint "dos croques" of the Portico de la Gloria. She thought they were crazy.



However, returning from Santiago by bus while being half-asleep, she had a clear idea in her head: I will do the Camino. She also saw an image, that of her only son -who had died years before- and who kissed her. Although the idea of the Camino never left her, she did not relate it to her son again, nor did she have religious or mystical thoughts, but the truth is that she made the firm decision to do the Camino.

Years later, traveling with her current husband through the north of Spain, seeing the shells and signaling of the Camino in towns and villages of the Basque Country, she thought about it again. In 2015 she began to plan her first Way for the following year. All the preparations were made with a friend, but at the last moment this friend said that she could not go. But Maria had no doubts and, with her husband's encouragement, decided that she would do it alone. In the autumn of 2016 she finally began her first Camino in Roncesvalles.

As soon as she stepped on the Camino in Roncesvalles, María knew that her friend had done her a favor by not doing the Camino with her. She understood that she wanted to do it alone.

That first Camino was physically hard, especially because of blisters that were so painful that she had to go to the hospital in Burgos for treatment. For this reason she had to skip two stages and go by car. Now, however, on her second Way, she travelled these two stages alone, continuing later from Ponferrada with a group of fellow Australians.

Maria is clear that she will not seek suffering on the Way. She believes

that if there is a God He has put us on earth to do the best we can with our lives and not to suffer. For her, who is now 70 years old, doing the Camino with a backpack and sleeping in shelters is not an option. Just walking is already a great effort for her, and she believes that after a lifetime working, she can afford to pay for hotels and have her own room and shower. That is why she does not understand the purism of some who believe that there is only one way to do the Camino, she believes that everyone can choose their own particular way of doing it. She likes being able to walk alone when she wants to. On her first Camino that time alone in nature was what most delighted her. Discovering and perceiving the beauty of nature that surrounded her made a great impression on her. She realized that we took nature and its beauty for granted but the experience of walking in the midst of nature made her much more sensitive to its beauty, and she lived it with an intensity previously unknown.

She defines her most intense experience of the Camino as being: the observation of what surrounds you, of being able to observe attentively, without distraction. That is why she appreciates loneliness on the Camino. Normally, she is always surrounded by people and on the Camino she likes solitude, silence, peace. She does not need or like noise, she got tired of noise in her business life before retiring, now just eight months ago.

María and her current husband have to face a complicated family situation, a situation that causes them a lot of stress, that is why a few months ago while looking at photos of her previous Camino, her husband encouraged her to return. And here she is, on her second Camino, partly alone and, from Ponferrada, with a group.

After this second experience, she can say that for her the Way has not meant a revelation or a religious awakening, but a personal experience that for her is especially linked to the solitude and the contemplation of nature, but also a different way of knowing places, eating well and walking outdoors without worries. But nature continues to be the first thing, and if on her first Camino it was the colors of autumn that she fell in love with, on this occasion she remembers especially the fields of poppies in Castile.

She believes that she will return to the Camino, perhaps by other routes, with friends and her husband; she would like to walk with her husband with a support car, so they could stop wherever they want and walk whenever they want.



The Way of St. James

The Pilgrim Backpack

If there is one piece of advice we can give without fear of error, it is to carry as little weight as possible in the backpack. The luggage of the pilgrim must contain what is strictly necessary and the rule of eliminating all that is not indispensable should always be borne in mind.

When preparing the backpack we should never forget that it will go with us everywhere and over great distances, between 15 and 35 kilometers per day depending on the physical shape of the pilgrim and the objectives that have been set. Being too heavily laden can be the pilgrim's biggest enemy, causing problems on the Way, not only on one's back but also on the ankles and knees.

The advice that is usually given for the weight of the loaded backpack is that it should not exceed 10% of our body weight and, of course, the lower the weight the better. The result of this calculation indicates that, in general, the ideal would be an estimated weight of between 5/6 kilos for women and 7/8 kilos for men, something that the future pilgrim must understand in a practical way, going out to train weeks before the start of your Camino with the full weight you want to carry.

To begin with, it is important to remember that when choosing the

backpack the bigger it is the more things we will be tempted to take with us, so a small or not very big backpack is already a good start. Thus, taking into account the distance to be travelled, the time of year and the body can vary between 35 and 60 litres. It is important that the backpack be light and anatomical, preferably with padding, side pockets and hip support.

The next thing is starting to pack it ... and while doing so we must ensure that the weight is well distributed so that the backpack stays balanced.

Now the next question is to know what to bring? The best thing is always to think about the essentials, those things we have no doubts about. For it is often true that when we have doubts about taking something or not, it usually means that it is something we could do without. When we start dealing with "maybe's" we should pass them over. And in any case, if something should prove necessary, it can always be acquired on the Camino.

The first thing is to choose a sleeping bag, one which is as light as possible. Thanks to the modern materials, sleeping bags nowadays can be extremely light. After the sleeping bag, there is the insulating mat, which usually has multiple uses for the pilgrims on the Camino- from taking a nap, to resting one's feet or even serving as a pillow.

Wearing headgear is not an option, but a necessity whether it be a hat or a cap. It should preferably have a visor or wings to protect you from the sun or rain, depending on the time of year.

It is also important to wear sunglasses and a neck scarf or a cloth or towel wristband that can be used to cool off with water and to wipe away dust and sweat from the face.

T-shirts and a sweater or a woollen jersey or fleece- will be worn for warmth, depending on the time of year and should always be chosen while keeping in mind their weight, the space they will take up and the ease with which these materials can dry out when we wash them (100% cotton takes longer to dry than many newer synthetic fabrics).

It is essential to carry two pairs of pants, one for walking, which will be long or short depending on the time of year, and a spare pair and to wear at the end of the stage, and at the beginning and end of the Camino. Do not forget a rain poncho that will cover the backpack, no matter the



time of year. In Galicia we know from experience that it may be necessary all year round! If it is a pilgrimage in winter, it should be a shelter and windbreaker, while in warmer times it could simply be a plastic raincoat that occupies as little space as possible and weighs almost nothing in the backpack.

Socks are a complex issue. Some people maintain that 100% cotton absorbs perspiration and prevents blisters, but they require more drying time. Another possibility is to opt for the new materials offered by specialized stores. As for the number of pairs, the minimum is 2, but 3 and even 4 is a good option, because many times we will have to change them more than once a day if we our feet are damp. We must never forget that it is essential to keep the feet dry to avoid blisters.

Regarding underwear, it could be enough with 3 or 4 pants could be sufficient, with the same recommendations on their material as for t-shirts and socks. In this case there is also the option of "paper panties", which take up no space, barely weigh anything and are disposable.

Regarding footwear, there is a huge variety of boots, sandals or trekking shoes today. Some still opt for boots that come up to the ankle, saying they avoid sprains, but increasingly there are more people who prefer modern sandals allow the foot to 'breathe.' The most important thing is that be a shoe that has been used in training, or other pilgrimages so that there will be no nasty surprises on the Camino. It is

essential that before taking them on the road, we already have the assurance that, after traveling long distances, they will not rub or burn the feet.

Along with the footwear for the Camino, flip flops will be necessary for the shower and to use at the end of the stage. A tip for choosing them is to consider if, according to the period of the year, it will be necessary to use socks, since those with separate toes will not be appropriate.

It is essential to also bring a toilet bag but it must be as basic as possible. In addition to personal hygiene products, if possible, you should have a small kit in case of possible injuries, chafing and blisters. So in addition to alcohol or Betadine you should also take should gauze, tape, strips and needle and thread for the cure of blisters. Another element to consider is the sun: you must not omit to include creams to protect you from it.

With regard to medicines, those who require some type of medication must take it for the entire journey and allergy sufferers should not forget their antihistamines.

We also recommend carrying writing materials with which make practical notes or personal impressions, a notebook and pen, or its more technological version, such as a

tablet. Technology on the Camino is a personal decision.

And of course, do not forget about documentation! i.e. an Identity card or passport and Social Security card or medical insurance.

It is also practical to have a multipurpose knife, a flashlight, a lighter and an aluminum or tin cup. Regarding food, in the backpack you can always have some nuts or chocolate for emergencies.

Finally, the famous staff or stickers. This can be an important support that will help to ease your downhill slopes and will also be useful for clearing of the path of weeds ... The important thing is its height, it is recommended that it is at least the height of the user.

In the case of pilgrims who make their way on a bicycle, several elements must be added for maintenance and repairs that may occur on the Camino, something that is not so problematic since the bike's bilateral saddlebags can be loaded more than the backpack.

Among the elements that specific guides usually point out are innertubes, it is advisable to take two or three of these and to know how to change them; along with patches for punctures and even a piece of tyre cover and an emergency solution to apply it with until the tyre can be changed. You should also an air pump; cleaning and greasing tools and brake shoes. And do not forget a padlock for the bicycle.

Santiago de Compostela

The Market of Santiago

The market of Santiago is the second most frequented place in the city, second only to the cathedral. It is one of the most lively places in Compostela, a special meeting place between pilgrims and visitors and the local population that, in addition, offers the pilgrim or tourist the possibility of experiencing Galicia through their taste buds.

Along with a huge variety of fresh products from farming, fishing and seafood from Galicia, the market also offers a rich variety of handicraft products, as well as numerous possibilities for tasting food and drink in the cafés, bars and restaurants that surround it. There are also restaurants that offer a kitchen service for those who wish to buy food products and do not have a place of their own to cook them.

The architecture of the market has a double artistic value: that of its own buildings and the setting in which it stands . The market has been in its current location since the year 1870, when all the stalls scattered about the town were brought together into one centralized space. To the north it is flanked by the square and church of San Agustín and, to the south, by the medieval church of San Fiz de Solovio and the plaza of the University with its monumental faculty of Geography and History.

The current edifice with its granite pavilions has largely replaced the original structures of the nineteenth century, which did not allow the stallholders to protect their wares from the rain. The current pavilions were designed by the architect Joaquín Vaquero Palacios around 1937, the project was completed in 1941, the year in which the market was launched as we know it today. In recent years its



facilities have been the subject of various improvements and restorations.

Whether you decide to buy or not, whether you have kitchen facilities or not, as a visitor you will discover numerous services that will allow you to enjoy your visit. To start with, you can enjoy a walk among the colors, smells and flavors of the best Galician products: meats, fish, seafood, fruit, vegetables, cheeses, flowers and handicrafts of all kinds.

And how can you resist such products when you do not have a kitchen in which to cook them? As we have pointed out, not having a kitchen in your Santiago accommodation is not a problem, because for a small percentage of the purchase price the market bar will cheerfully offer to cook the products that are purchased. The market also offers other alternatives for catering: from grocery stores to "chic" restaurants, which in all cases use fresh produce from the market stalls for their cuisine.

Among the options and services offered by the Santiago market, there are services such as home delivery of purchases or the possibility of ordering by phone or online, orders that can be placed both at the central offices of the market or directly with the market traders themselves.

Whether for ordering services by

telephone or Internet or by helping the buyer on the spot, the market offers personal advice and help to every shopper.

In addition, there are many vending machines and stalls offering other services, such as distribution of fresh milk, various packaging and packaging services, as well as there being a deposit where purchases made up to 9:00 pm may be left.

For more details, you can visit the web page of the market: <http://www.mercadodeabastosdesantiago.com/>

The College of San Xerome

The College of San Xerome is one of the four buildings that flank the famous Plaza del Obradoiro, occupying its southern side. At the moment it is the seat of the Rector of the University of Santiago, but its origin derives from an older foundation funded by the Archbishop of Compostela, Alfonso III of Fonseca, that was situated before in the rúa of the Acibechería.

The original institution was created in or around 1521. It was a residence for students, preceptors and poor lecturers of the city of Santiago. Its foundation was made possible by the availability of the building and rents of the old hospital of pilgrims of the city, the hospital of Santiago el Mayor. It was located

in the Acibechería but lost its function after the foundation and endowment of the new Royal Hospital by the Catholic Monarchs.

The College in Acibechería depended on the rents and goods of the old hospital and adopted, at the beginning, the name or ownership of Santiago el Mayor, although already in 1555 it was changed to that of San Xerome. Finally, in the mid-seventeenth century, the old building was demolished and the College moved to its current location, which still retains some architectural and sculptural elements brought from the old building of Acibechería: two coats of arms of Alonso II de Fonseca that are preserved on two of its facades; and the magnificent sculpted portico on the east side, that is, the one facing the Obradoiro.

The sculpted doorway was probably

built after the founding of the College at the beginning of the 16th century, although it is still stylistically and structurally linked to the Gothic, as is obvious when compared with the Portico de la Gloria in the Cathedral. Its sculptural set is distributed between the jambs, the tympanum and the flared arch that frames it.

On the jambs there are six sculptures of apostles and founding saints of the mendicant Orders: Saint James the Greater, his brother Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Francis of Assisi on the right jamb, and Saint Peter, Saint Paul and Saint Domingo de Guzmán on the left. In the tympanum we find the figures of the Virgin and Child and on either side of them, St. Catherine and the Archangel St. Michael, protective saints against death and the dying - invocations linked to the origin of the institution, when it was a hospital.



On the splayed arch there are eleven figures, with particular importance given to the female figures, highlighting in the center the Virgin Mary -in fact a triple Santa Ana, while representing Santa Ana, the Virgin and the child- and at her side María Cleofás and María Salomé, figures very little present in religious iconography but in the city of Santiago they are the mothers respectively of St. James the Minor and St. James the Great.

The rest of the sculptures represent saints and holy fathers of the Church, figures linked to knowledge and writing, as well as the Magdalena, undoubtedly a nod to the old hospital for pilgrims, because the cult of Maria Magdalene is particularly linked to hospitals on the Camino de Santiago.

In the interior of the building there is a classic 16th century courtyard, which is currently glazed.

