

# PILGRIM BLESSINGS

## THE WAY OF ST. JAMES

*The Ancient Pilgrim Path  
Also Known as Camino de Francés*



*Pilgrimage isn't about what you take with you.  
Pilgrimage is about what you bring back.  
In that way, the journey is always a journey home.*

—Ned Allen Parker

*Fran Fisher  
September 2015*

**DEDICATION**

***My story is dedicated to Gloria Knapp,  
my friend and fellow pilgrim  
on this sacred journey.***

***We fulfilled our dream  
of sharing this adventure together.***

***We remembered to keep our promise  
in the face of the adversities: Embrace and Giggle!***

***And, for you, my fellow traveler,***

***Buen Camino!***

## Table of Contents

<b>History</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Inspiration</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Planning</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Travel</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Walking</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Gloria</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Reflecting</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Home</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Fran Fisher, MCC</b> .....	<b>36</b>

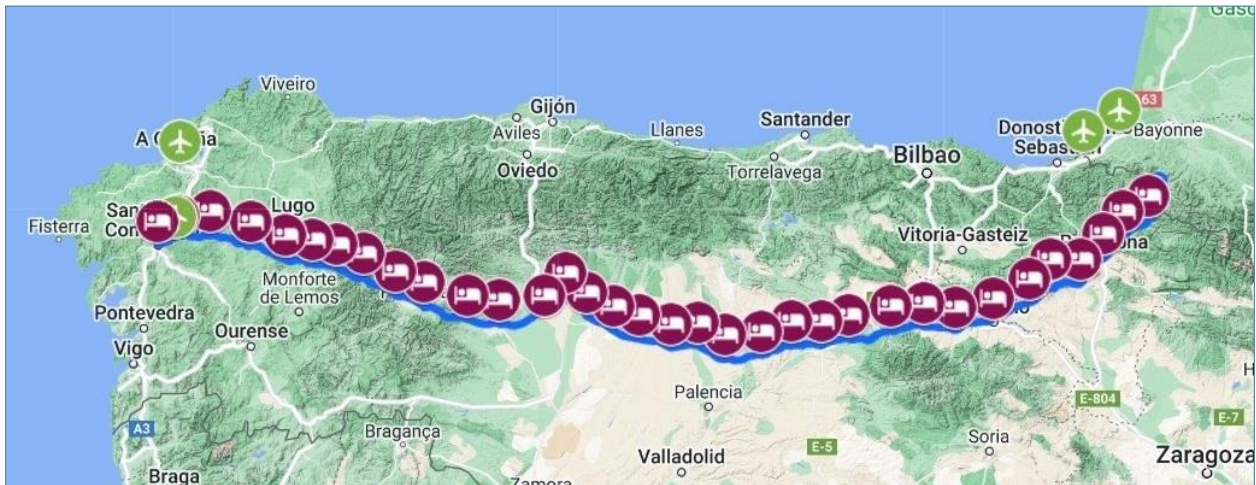
# WALKING THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

SEPTEMBER 2015



## CAMINO FRANCÉS ROUTE

---



*Fran's and Gloria's route to Santiago de Compostela, Spain (Google Maps)*

*The Camino de Santiago path from St. Jean Pied-de-Port in France to Santiago, Spain, and on to Finisterre.*

## History

Excerpt from: <http://www.americanpilgrims.com/camino/history.html>

### The Camino in History

*El Camino de Santiago, in English “The Way of Saint James,” is the pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, where legend has it that the remains of Jesus’s apostle Saint James the Elder lie. The Camino has existed as a Christian pilgrimage for well over 1,000 years, and there is evidence of a pre-Christian route as well. Throughout the medieval period, it was one of the three most important Christian pilgrimages undertaken. Indeed, it was only these pilgrimages—to Jerusalem, to Rome, and to Santiago de Compostela—which could result in a plenary indulgence, which frees a person from the penance due for sins.*

*Christian legend has it that when the Apostles divided the known world into missionary zones, the Iberian Peninsula fell to James. Seventh and eighth century documents suggest that he spent a number of years preaching there before returning to Jerusalem where, in the year 44 AD, he was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I. After his martyrdom, popular belief relates that his followers carried his body to the coast and put it into a stone boat, which was guided by angels and carried by the wind beyond the Pillars of Hercules (the Strait of Gibraltar) to land near Finisterre, at Padrón, in northern Spain. The local Queen, Lupe, provided the team of oxen used to draw the body from Padrón to the site of a marble tomb which she had also provided. Saint James was believed to have been buried there with two of his disciples. There the body lay, forgotten until the 9th century.*

*Early in that century, Pelagius, a hermit living in that part of Galicia, had a vision in which he saw a star or a field of stars that led him to what proved to be an ancient tomb containing three bodies. He immediately reported this to the local bishop, Theodor, who declared the remains to be those of Santiago (Spanish equivalent for James) and two of his followers and who in turn reported the find to the King of Asturias, Alphonso II, who forthwith declared Santiago to be the patron saint of Spain, or of what would eventually be Spain. That would come later.*

*A small village named Campus de la Stella (Field of Stars) and a monastery were established on the site (or possibly the Roman word for cemetery, "componere": to bury, is the source). News of the discovery spread like wildfire, and a trickle of pilgrims began to arrive. Miracles came to be attributed to the site, and the miracles*

*encouraged pilgrimage and pilgrimages elicited more miracles. This was all greatly encouraged by the powerful Archbishop Gelmirez of Galicia and the cathedral authorities, who were anxious to promote Santiago as a pilgrimage destination, as well as by the monks of the Abbey of Cluny in France who were anxious to support the Spanish Church in its struggle against the Moors on the Peninsula. Thus began the millennium-long relationship between the holy and the commercial.*

*Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela reached its peak during the Middle Ages, and it is safe to say that it constituted a major cultural aspect of that period of history in Europe. By the 12th century, the Camino had become a rather organized affair. In addition, a massive infrastructure developed to support pilgrimage and, not coincidentally, to gain commercially from it. Bridges were constructed across rivers to draw pilgrims to certain cities, and they prospered. Pilgrim hospices were chartered by religious orders, kings and queens, and they gained favor in heaven. All manner of commercial businesses were established to take advantage of and to support pilgrims. Cultures mixed, languages merged, and history was affected.*

## **Why the Scallop Shell**

As with many myths, the details change depending on who is telling the story. To repeat part of the story, after Jesus' crucifixion, James went to the Iberian Peninsula to preach. Eventually he returned to Judea and was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I.

After his death, his body was mysteriously transported by a ship with no crew back to the Iberian Peninsula to the Northwestern province of Galicia. A wedding was taking place along the shore as James' ship approached. The bridegroom was on horseback, and on seeing this mysterious ship approaching, the horse spooked, and horse and rider plunged into the sea. Through miraculous intervention, the horse then emerged from the waves with horse and rider both covered with cockleshells.



Another version substitutes a knight for the bridegroom, but whichever, Santiago had performed his first miracle. On the other hand, the symbol may have come into being simply because pilgrims while in Santiago de Compostela had ready access to a plethora of seashells, Santiago being relatively close to the Atlantic coast, and enough pilgrims returned home with them as souvenirs that the seashell eventually became the symbol of the pilgrimage.

But whichever story you buy into, it is fact that to this day, the scallop shell, typically found on the shores in Galicia, remains the symbol of Saint James and the Camino.



## Inspiration

It was in 2000 that my dear friend Gloria Knapp and I both read Shirley MacLaine's book *The Camino, A Journey of the Spirit*. We were immediately inspired to do the Camino walk in Spain together someday.

Years went by as it was never a good time. One day in the spring of 2013, Gloria called to tell me that someone had produced an independent documentary called *Six Ways to Santiago*. We went to a theater to see it ASAP! The film followed six people who were walking the Camino de Santiago. We were so inspired that we agreed to start our planning.

Then we learned about a Hollywood movie, *The Way* with Martin Sheen, that had been released in 2010. Oh my gosh, after seeing this movie, we were even more motivated!

Gloria and I agreed to take two years to plan, research, and physically train for the walk.

We read several books written by people who had made that trip and learned many do's and don'ts from them. We shared everything that we were learning. We researched the right shoes, back packs, ear plugs, water containers, guidebooks, clothing, travel to get there, and more.

I started walking three miles on weekdays. Then when I had the right backpack, I carried 15-20 pounds on my walks. On weekends I walked six miles each day. Based on what I was learning from others, I had decided to limit my backpack weight to a maximum of 20 pounds.

Gloria and I started talking about our purpose for our quest – in other words, our reason or goal for having this experience. Being Catholic, Gloria had a spiritual/religious purpose. For her it would be a walking meditation. The Camino de Santiago is historically a Catholic pilgrimage, and she planned to visit many of the cathedrals along the way.

My quest was clear, I wanted to deepen my ability to live more fully in the present moment. With my history of workaholic patterns, I was committed to having this pilgrim experience be an intervention on those addictive patterns.

One message that was consistently shared in those books was this: “Expect the unexpected on the Camino.” So, Gloria and I made a pact. If something unexpected

should occur for us along the way, we will “embrace it and giggle.” THIS intention got tested, by the way. More about those stories later.

Letter to clients and colleagues August 15, 2015

*Dear colleagues,*

*Hello! I will be out of the office and “off the grid” from August 25th – October 15th, walking the 500-mile Camino de Francés across northern Spain. This adventure has been on my “bucket list” for 15 years and this year IS IT!*

*People ask me, “Are you going to blog?” NO. I’m embracing this opportunity for gaining greater mastery at living more fully in the present moment. This is my spiritual quest, so no email, phone, blogging, or post cards.*

*I’ve seen the movies, and I’ve read several books written by people sharing their experience and stories. I know I am in for a significantly altered environment without the creature comforts I am accustomed to enjoying daily. I expect this experience will bust up many of my attachments and shift some of my perspectives.*

*In the last two years that I have been planning and training for this, I learned that the process of preparing has already been part of “my Camino” experience - mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. It began when I made the commitment. Yes, themes for a book are already taking shape.*

*Buen Camino -- Happy trails to you!*

*Fran*

WHY? One day, a few months before we flew to Spain, I was on my daily walk, and I asked myself, “Why do I need to go all the way to Spain for this Camino walk in order to learn to live more in the present moment?” I pondered that question as I walked.

As I walked through the door of my home a few minutes later, I had an insight. I couldn’t achieve a breakthrough in the space I live and work in because there are so many triggers and habituations here in this space. I NEED to cause an intervention for

myself. Ah ha!! I get it. THAT realization cleared up the last vestige of any resistance, concern, or fear for embarking on my adventure.

There was a saying among pilgrims: “On the Camino, every day is a journey, and the road is HOME.”

There was a fellow pilgrim on the walk who shared with us over dinner one evening, “I have been looking for answers on my walk, and today I realized that I don’t even know what the question is yet.” A gentleman at the table replied, “I think we always have the answer within us, but we don’t ordinarily take the time to let them surface.”

## Cathedral at Santiago

If you have seen either of the movies about the Camino de Santiago that I mentioned, you know about what a BIG deal it is for the pilgrims to reach that destination of 500 miles and then experience the ritual of communion with priests swinging the grand incense burner.

Being there, I was moved by the depth of meaning of this experience for pilgrims, who have made the journey for over a thousand years and reached this place – for whatever their reason. Not being a Catholic didn’t diminish my appreciation for the opportunity of witnessing the sacredness of being there for the experience and sense of accomplishment.

## Pilgrim Office

There is a Certificate Office near the cathedral where pilgrims go to receive their *Certificate of Completion*. In order to prove we actually made the trip, we had to show our “passport,” which shows a date stamp from each place we stopped along the way. For example, there are *albergues* (pilgrim hostels) all along the Camino del Santiago, so we had to get stamps at every *albergue*, bar, restaurant, tourist site, etc. we visited to prove we’d been there.

I didn’t walk the full 500 miles due to the tendonitis I experienced, so there were segments along the way when I took a taxi or a bus. I knew I hadn’t earned a *Certificate of Completion*; however, I was curious about the entire experience so when I reached Santiago, I went into the Pilgrim Office to watch others receiving their Certificates and to experience the celebration for and with them. *As I write this memory, I still feel the emotion I felt that day, being in that space.*

When I arrived, there was only one woman in line to whom the clerk gave an official certificate with her name on it—a beautiful certificate suitable for framing. As I celebrated her, she asked me to take her picture. She then left and I was alone in the room, so I went up to the clerk's counter. With tears of sadness, I told her I couldn't complete the full walk, but I came anyway to experience the space where the pilgrims come for their certificates. She touched my heart with her empathy, and then she said, "What I CAN do is stamp your passport with the *Oficina Del Peregrino*." I walked away feeling seen and blessed.



## Planning

Following is my planning and packing check list. This list evolved over the two years we were researching and preparing for the trip.

YES/ Ready	Preparations	By when
	Manicure 8/21, hair 8/23	
	Call US Bank/Call VISA	August 20, 2015
	Email auto responder/Facebook: OFF the GRID	August 25th
	Coordinate with bookkeeper for my financials	Aug 19th
	Annual Corporation RENEW by 10/31	Oct 10th
	House plants to Jenny	Aug 23rd
	PACK	
	Backpack Osprey Tempest 40	
	Ear plugs	
	24-hour earrings to wear	
	RegeniFREE (anti-inflammatory)	
	Calcium/magnesium/greens	
	Eye drops	
	2 water bottles	
	Sleep sheet	
	Travel pillow (blow up)	
	Shoes: Trail runners	
	Shower shoes	
	Hiking poles (2) - Check as baggage	At airport
	Silk liner socks (2)	
	Light hiking socks (2)	
	First Aid Kit with blister bandages	
	Sunglasses – Clip-ons with case	
	Sun hat with neck flap	
	Red kerchief	
	Sunscreen lotion	
	Shampoo/conditioner	
	Toothbrush/toothpaste/floss	

YES/ Ready	Preparations	By when
	Neutrogena bar soap	
	Collapsible hairbrush	
	Aveeno body lotion	
	Chap Stick/lipstick	
	Wash cloth and large towel (microfiber)	
	Large safety pins for hanging laundry	
	Head lamp and fresh batteries	
	iPhone, charge cord and converter	
	Notebook/pen with my list of mantras	
	Underpants (2)	
	Silk top and bottom underwear	
	Tops with short sleeves (2)	
	Bra (2)	
	Long sleeve light shirt with pockets	
	Protein bars (8)	
	Hiking pants w/pockets and removable legs	
	Hiking skirt with pockets	
	Lightweight warm jacket	
	Waterproof jacket and pants	
	Waterproof backpack cover	
	Sunscreen gloves	
	1 quart zip bags (4)	
	Passport/Pilgrim Credential/credit card	
	Insurance cards – COPIES ONLY	
	Pink silk body pouch	
	Mesh bags for toiletries	
	Small collapsible bag for flight/train, etc.	

We learned that wearing two pairs of socks would wick moisture and avoid blisters. So, we wore silk inner socks and wool outer socks. Along the trail, Gloria and I saw others suffering with blisters, but neither one of us got a single blister.

We learned that a sleeping bag would have been too bulky and would have added too much weight. Instead, I packed a semi-sleeping bag called a sleep sheet. It would

provide a clean liner top and bottom for me to sleep in. It turned out that the *albergues* mostly provided blankets anyway.

In my reading I learned about hiking skirts. I got one and I loved it! It was more comfortable than pants, and the best part was that during the day when I needed to “go,” I didn’t have to take off my pack and undress. I could simply lift my skirt! I tended to wear that skirt more often than full-length pants or shorts.

On Day Two of our walk, we both decided we wanted to lighten our loads. On Day Three, we came to a place where pilgrims left items for anyone who could use them. I eliminated the silk underwear, tops and bottoms. I thought I’d be wearing them as pajamas or as an extra layer under my pants and shirt during the day, but the weather was too hot. I also left my waterproof pants because they were too bulky and heavy in the backpack, so I decided to take the risk that I could go without them. Luckily, there were only a couple of rainstorms at night and one day when it sprinkled for a couple of hours, and that was the only time I used the waterproof pack cover.

Gloria found that she was also too loaded with stuff, so she boxed up those items and mailed that box home.

## Travel

On our departing travel day, we flew from Seattle to Paris on an overnight flight, arriving at the Paris airport at 8 AM. We were supposed to have a 3-hour layover in the Paris airport and train station, which was a good thing because it took us almost the full 3 hours to get through luggage, passport control, and customs. We hadn't checked any luggage since we were only traveling with our backpacks, but we were required to package our hiking poles and check them as baggage. Security considered them dangerous, so they wouldn't let us carry them onto the plane. We put our poles together into one fat tube, taped it up, and checked it. On arrival, we spent a lot of time trying to find our tube with the poles in baggage claim. Finally, we saw a place where baby seats and skis were piled and there, we spotted our tube.



We then ran to catch our train, not knowing which direction to go! There was no signage that we could understand, so we asked people for directions as we ran!

This was our first time dealing with trains in Europe, so it was all very confusing in addition to the panic we were feeling. We just barely made it! Our train took us across rural France, and we enjoyed the picturesque rolling green hills and farms with lovely corn fields and fields of sunflowers. Our destination was Bordeaux where we changed trains for Bayonne. In Bayonne, we transferred to a bus that took us to the charming French village called St. Jean Pied de Port, arriving at 7:30 in the evening.

We were exhausted, traipsing around the village trying to find our lodging! Our place was called *Ultreia*, and our room was five flights up narrow stairs. We had a room to ourselves, but we shared a bathroom with the pilgrims across the hall.

Gloria, bless her, had made these reservations ahead of time. Little did I know that this night would be the first and only time I would need the ear plugs I brought. Gloria was so tired she snored loudly enough to keep me awake all night, despite how tired I was. And, yes, I've teased her about that many times since!



The next day we relaxed and toured the village. The following day we started out early to begin our 500-mile walk.



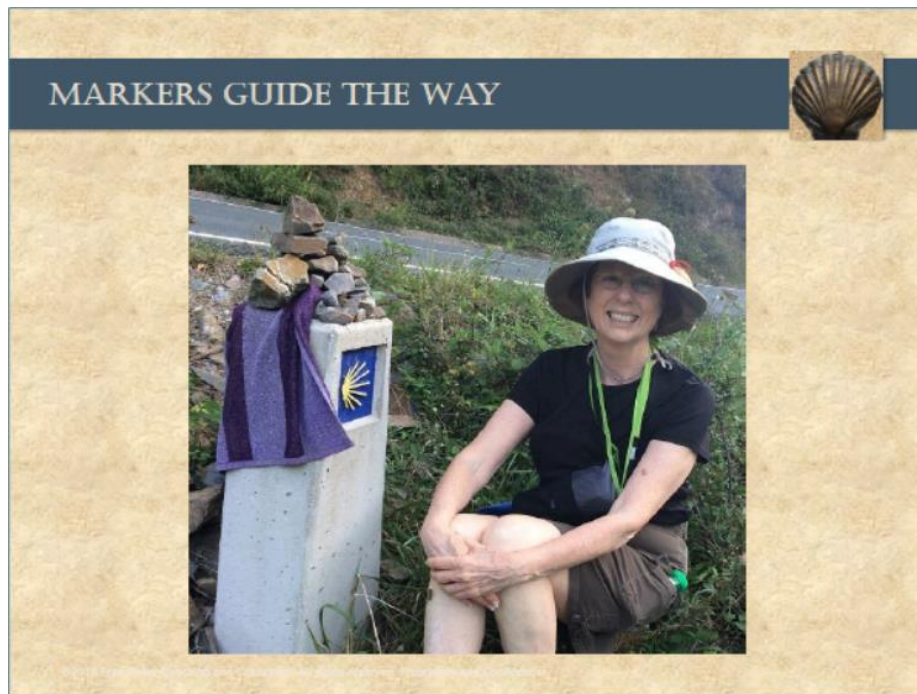
## Walking

On the Camino de Santiago, everyone greets a fellow traveler with “*Buen Camino!*” It was seldom that pilgrims exchanged names, however it was common to ask, “Where are you from?” since people come from all over the world to take this walk.

Gloria and I averaged walking about 12 miles a day—sometimes 10 miles, sometimes up to 15. People have asked how far we walked each day, and when I say, “12 miles, I think,” it doesn’t sound like much. But as I reflect on it, we did stop to smell the roses, so to speak, along the way. For us, it wasn’t a race. It was about quality versus quantity. We savored the sights. We paced ourselves. Not only that, but we were also not walking on roads or paved paths but mostly rocky terrain. So, I am pleased at the way we managed our pace so that we could really enjoy the experience.



Throughout our journey, I loved experiencing and living in those life metaphors: “*slow down in life*” and “*trust in your Divine Source.*”

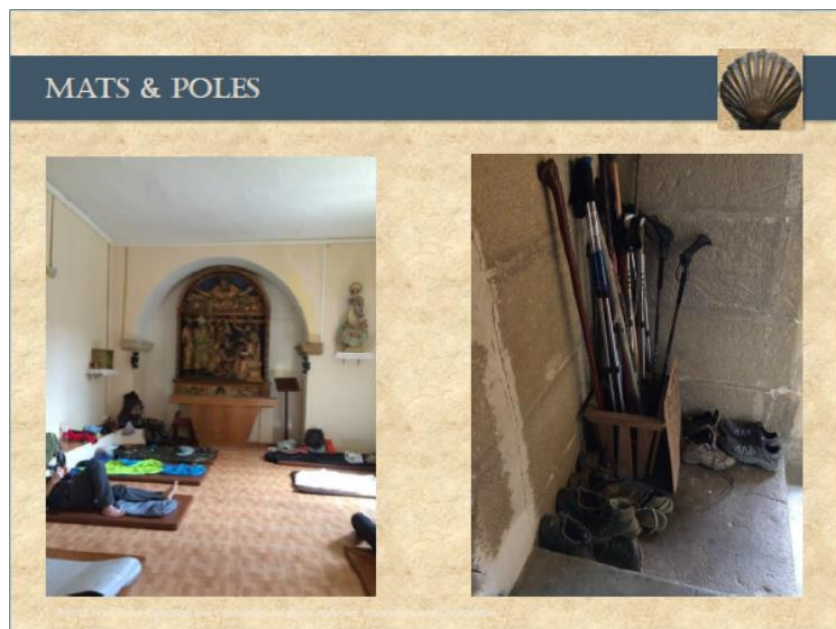


## The Albergues Along the Way

When we arrived at an *albergue*, we hand-washed our clothes. There were always clotheslines provided, but the space for hanging the clothes was sometimes competitive. We used our own large safety pins to hang our clothes to dry. Then we rested, found a quiet place for our journaling, ate our evening meal in community while visiting with other pilgrims, and then did some planning for the next day.



Some *albergues* were privately-owned, and some were municipally-owned and operated, but they were shelters for pilgrims only. The *hospitaleros* are volunteers at the *albergues*, and they are Camino Angels! They loved being of service to the pilgrims.



The *hospitaleros* would greet us warmly, take care of our needs, and remind us to slow down on the walk. It was crazy how some people would try to make over 20 miles a day. It seemed like they were racing to compete for their choice of lodging. The *hospitaleros* assured us that as pilgrims *we would always be taken care of on the Camino*. It turned out to be true. At one place that was already full when we arrived, the village opened other accommodations to accommodate the pilgrim overflow!

It was the same protocol at every *albergue* along the way, and here's how it worked:

- The lodging fee included something to sleep on, generally a floor mat or bunk bed, and the pilgrim's breakfast and dinner.
- Lights would come on at 6 AM every morning. Everyone was out and on their way by 8 AM after having enough time for toiletries, breakfast, and packing.
- Volunteers then completely cleaned the facilities, changed linens, and started preparing the evening meal.
- The albergues did not re-open until noon or 1 PM.
- Lunches were not provided, so pilgrims had to find their own food during the day.

Fees were either pre-set, such as 8 or 10 euros or payment was offered as *donativo* (donations from the heart). In either case, the funds collected were needed to provide the meals for the next day's pilgrims. Sometimes we were served a very plain breakfast of baguette, butter, and coffee. Sometimes jam, hot chocolate, an orange, or a small carton of yogurt was also available, depending on the generosity of the pilgrims who came before us. Dinners were generally a soup or stew, baguette with butter, green salad, yogurt, and/or a cookie.



Gloria and I had a guidebook that we consulted each evening before we went to bed. We identified our route and approximate destination for the following day. Each morning, we set out in the dark walking westward. Often there were beautiful sunrises at our backs, projecting long shadows that stretched out before us.

One of the profound experiences of my Camino journey was starting out each day with only the pack on my back and its simple contents, not knowing where I will find food along the way or a place to sleep that night. Noticing my courage, excitement, and willingness to “not know” was the beginning of my awareness that I was fulfilling my quest. I was experiencing what it felt like to be more in the present moment, step by step, watching the unfolding adventure of the day.

Mid-day on Day Nine, we were touring a very small village where they were having an annual celebration for their village patron saint. Suddenly, I felt a shooting pain across my left ankle and up the inside of my leg. It was a holiday for the village, so there was no doctor or *farmacia* available. We were two kilometers from our lodging, so Gloria carried my pack as I limped slowly and painfully step-by-step back to our hotel room. This was one of those “unexpected” events on our adventure that we had been forewarned about.

It occurred to me to try to locate an elastic ankle brace, so I asked the receptionist for the nearest *farmacia*. She spoke Spanish and I spoke English. I was drawing on my memory of words I learned in high school Spanish class and, of course, lots of hand gestures.

She volunteered to take me to the nearest city which was about ten miles by car. She needed to take her daughter to a school function, drop her off, and then return immediately so she could get back to work. So, I rode along and she dropped me off at a *farmacia* where I was able to obtain an elastic ankle brace. Then, she picked me up on her way back to the village. We connected sweetly and managed to communicate as she drove me there and back from the generosity of her heart. I was truly grateful, again appreciating the thoughtfulness and generosity of another “Camino Angel.”

## Serendipity Along the Way

One day, as I was walking toward Burgos to meet Gloria, there was a moment when I



found myself alone on the trail. There was no one in sight ahead or behind me. I noticed as I walked that I was “empty minded.” I wasn’t thinking about my work at home or any of the usual busy-ness in my head. The only thing I was aware of was that I was *noticing* what I was noticing, such as the texture of the gravel, a leaf, a blade of grass, a flower... *That was it!* At that moment of noticing, I felt in my body what it was like to truly *be in the present moment*. There was such a sense of freedom and peace and trust.

In the years since that experience, I have been able to revisit that moment when I needed to bring myself out of distraction and back into the present moment. The visuals and those sensations are still as strong and clear

for me as in that moment of awareness. I am grateful for the grace of Spirit for that lasting gift!

## Nurturing Food

To keep the weight down in our packs, we didn’t carry food. Along the way, we would watch for a bar or small village market unless we were walking through a larger town where we could find a restaurant. Restaurants provided a special pilgrim meal menu

that offered simple fare at a reduced rate. Usually, they offered a choice of an *ensalada mixta*, a fish-with-potatoes entrée, soup, and wine plus a yogurt or ice cream for dessert.

One of our most memorable meals was our first pilgrim meal on our very first night in St. Jean Pied de Port in France. This was the evening before Day One of our journey. We ordered their special Pilgrim roasted chicken dinner. It came with a half chicken each, French fries, vegetable, baguette with butter, apple pie, and a bottle of wine. Neither one of us could eat it all! We asked for a “doggie bag” and the waitress said that it wasn’t allowed. We also learned that tipping is not acceptable. Our learning curve about this culture had begun! Surprising and slightly embarrassing for these American visitors!



Another favorite midday meal was a picnic lunch. We would find a small village market and buy a fresh, locally grown tomato, a cucumber, cheese, and crackers. We relished our simple fare.

## Water

Every small village had a water fountain in a center court or easily accessible for pilgrims. We could trust the quality of that water, so that is where we filled our water bottles during the day. I took a picture of most of those fountains as we passed through because they were so charming, with some of them dating back more than a hundred years.



## FOUNTAINS



## WATER & WINE



## Beautiful Doors

Oh, my goodness! There were breathtakingly magnificent doors on cottages, *albergues*, churches, cathedrals, and shops! I took so many pictures of doors that I could do a slide show of only doors, with some of them dating back to the 1600s.



## Direction Markers

We travelers were dependent on finding the markers that would show us “the way.” The most highly recognized marker was a scallop shell or a stylized scallop shell. Sometimes the marker was a painted yellow arrow. We found them on posts, fence railings, posted high up on the side of a building, or embedded in the sidewalk if we were walking through a city. We had to be vigilant to find them so we could stay on track. A couple of times we missed our markers, but fortunately on both occasions, a local “Camino Angel” recognized us as pilgrims heading in the wrong direction and offered to redirect us.



## Gloria

One of my most important motivations for the Camino walk was to have it be an experience I shared with my dear friend Gloria. We met in 1971 living in a small ski resort town in Southern California.



We connected immediately like soul sisters, and then I moved to Seattle six months later. We have not lived near each other geographically since that time. However, after I moved to Seattle, we made time periodically to get away for a few gal-pal road trips. For those drives, we brought our favorite Broadway singalong music, while enjoying the scenery along the byways, savoring great food, and of course, endless sharing about everything imaginable!

For food, we kept a cooler in the car stocked with breakfast food for our mornings in a hotel room, picnic food for the afternoons, and then we would typically treat ourselves to a nice meal in the evenings—that is, if we hadn't filled up with snacks in the meantime!

The best part of all for me on those travels with Gloria was that we could easily get carried away with lots of spontaneous giggles and hysterical laughing! There's something about being with Gloria that brings out my silly, fun-loving playfulness. I wanted all of that again with her on our Camino adventure.

About six months before our target date to go to Spain, Gloria and I had a significant phone conversation. I was having reservations (read "fear") about taking that relatively large chunk of time off from my work. I declared, "I can't afford to take this trip!" She replied, "But, Fran, it's only the airfare that's an expense. We'll probably spend even less on food." She was right about that—our airfares were very reasonably priced. And, while it was going to be a stretch for me financially, I was highly motivated to give myself this gift *and share it with Gloria!*

Then, I realized that in speaking this out loud, my fear was, as a solo entrepreneur, about having a big 4- to 6-week gap in my client work and cash flow. I didn't know how long it would take to build up my business again after I returned. Gloria was comfortably retired. The time and money for the trip were not a concern for her. I was not retired, and I needed the cash flow to support myself financially.

I took a breath, faced my fear, and then I had an epiphany! “Wait a minute!! I am focusing on fear and scarcity thinking, yet I have a lifetime of evidence that I am a manifester!” I shifted my attention to trusting my Source of abundance and, in that moment, I freed myself up of that fear completely. I left that phone call with Gloria in a new state of being excited, motivated, committed, and trusting the process. *Oh, and free to have fun!!*

Our starting point was in France. We then began each morning to start our walks by saying our Pilgrim Prayer together. We found this prayer in a book by a Catholic nun who wrote about her Camino story:

***Guardian of my Soul,  
Guide me on my way today.  
Keep me safe from harm.  
Deepen my relationship with You,  
Your earth, and all of Your family.  
Strengthen Your Love within me  
That I may be a presence  
of Your Peace In our world.  
Amen***

Gloria and I can find humor and delight in the simplest things. We love to laugh. For example, along the way we would occasionally spot a pithy quote on a rock or fence post. Gloria called that anonymous Camino Angel the “Sharpie Pilgrim.” One day, passing through a small town, something strange caught our attention and immediately piqued our curiosity. Gloria walked over to get a closer look, raised her arm at something that looked like a car-washing brush, and called out to me, “Look, it’s a pilgrim wash!” I was still laughing hysterically a few miles down the road.



On Day Ten of our walk, Gloria suddenly experienced excruciating pain in her left knee. This was quite unexpected. I was already limping from my ankle pain that started the day before. We had five kilometers left to get to the next village, so it was a tortuously slow walk to get there. I left Gloria sitting with our back packs and hiking poles and scouted around town for a place to stay for the night. All of the *albergues* were already

full, so Gloria got on the phone and located a nice *pensione* hotel room with a private bath where she could soak in a hot bathtub and have a real bed for the night.

We then ordered a taxi to take us to the nearest hospital, which happened to be in a very large city called Logroño. It was going to be a few hours for her to see a doctor and have them take any tests deemed necessary, so, I picked up our packs and poles and set out to find an *albergue* for us in Logroño. The guidebook showed one in the old part of the city, located in a church cathedral.

Having no map of the city, I walked and limped and walked and limped, using my intuition for choosing direction. I kept saying our mantra to myself as I was crossing the city, “embrace and giggle...embrace and giggle...embrace and giggle!”

Finally, as I stood at a busy street corner, a gentleman asked me if he could help. It was obvious to him I was a traveling pilgrim. He was another Camino Angel! We communicated without the benefit of a translator, and he knew where the *albergue* was that I was hoping to find. He led me there through a labyrinth of the old city streets and alleyways.



The *albergue* was still closed that morning, but I knocked on the door anyway. I pleaded with him to let me in long enough for me to share my story and request, on behalf of my suffering friend, that he reserve a lower bunk for her. He was very gracious and hospitable.

Gloria arrived by taxi about an hour later. She said the doctors diagnosed tendonitis in her knee. The bad news was they told her to stay off her leg for a week. We were both deeply shocked and disappointed. I wasn't in much better shape. The elastic ankle brace I was wearing helped me only intermittently.

The good news was that on the way over she'd been thinking and had come up with a plan. We would put her on a bus to Burgos the next morning. According to the guidebook, the distance to Burgos was a seven-day walk. She would get herself a hotel room where she could rest for the week, and I would walk to Burgos while she was recovering. She was already embracing the opportunity because she had packed her

drawing supplies so she could capture some of our views along the way, but she hadn't yet actually done any drawing. She had been taking plenty of photos, however, so her plan was to spend those seven days drawing. There was a lovely silver lining to Gloria's predicament!

But, while we could both celebrate Gloria's silver lining, I was having to forfeit my dream of sharing the *whole* experience with her. Boohoo! I sucked it up and said goodbye to her at the bus depot the next morning. We would be in touch with each other via texting every day.

I found my way through Logroño and on to the Camino pilgrim trail again by myself. It didn't take me more than an hour of being on my own that an epiphany revealed *my*



silver lining! I realized that this was the way I could have it all! Sharing part of my Camino experience with Gloria—and another part of it on my own at my own pace and with my own opportunities. I also noticed that I had a different natural pace walking by myself. My spirits lifted immediately, and there was a renewed pep in my step.

On Day Six of my walk to Burgos, my right ankle/foot/leg with tendonitis was hurting so badly that I sat down at an outdoor pub to think about what to do. I would have one more day of painful walking to get to Burgos. So, I called Gloria to get the address of her hotel and room number, and then I called a taxi to take me to Gloria's hotel in Burgos.

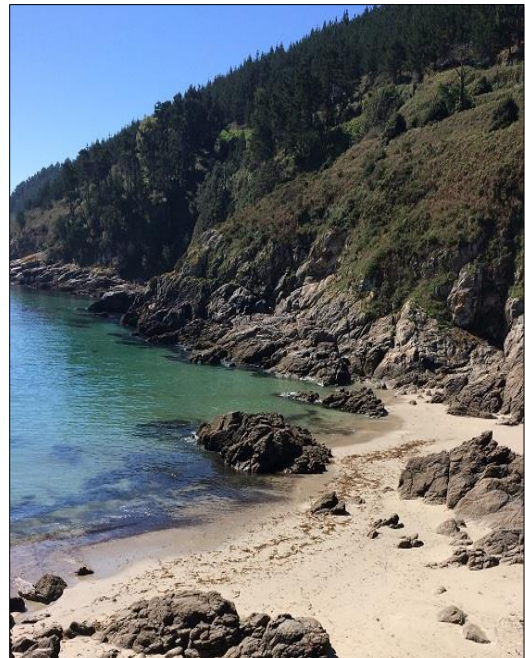
I was reminded of something another pilgrim shared at the end of a rough day of walking in pain, "A bad day for the ego is a good day for the soul." I could embrace that philosophy 100%!

Gloria's leg was still not recovered enough to walk, so I went to find a *farmacia* where I purchased a pair of crutches for her. These helped her get upright and more mobile. So, the next day we toured Burgos on a little tourist train, after which we toured the famous Museum of Human Evolution and the magnificent Our Lady of Burgos cathedral, dating from 1212 and famous as a UNESCO World Heritage center.

Neither of us was in shape to walk seven days to León, so we took a bus. In León, we treated ourselves to a hotel room with a private bath, bathtub for soaking, and a hair dryer. We each did some site-sightseeing and then we ordered a fabulous *ensalada mixta* dinner. This was a salad that we had grown very fond of on our travels. Every time we ordered it, it came in a different variation but, basically, it was a mixed green salad with tuna or chicken, a great variety of veggies, and a hardboiled egg.

Gloria found a monastery nearby where she could go for a three-day meditation retreat that would give her knee more time for healing. Overnight I began feeling a shift. I woke up feeling complete, ready to get to Santiago, and then on to Finisterre, and then home. Gloria wanted me to stay with her to finish our walk to the Santiago cathedral together. But, by then, I was clear. It was time for me to bring closure to my Camino experience.

I chose to take a bus to Santiago, where I spent three days touring the famous Santiago de Compostela Arch Cathedral Basilica and the old city. Then, it was on to Finisterre on the Iberian Peninsula, where I spent three days resting and reflecting on my experience. From there, I flew to Amsterdam, changed planes, and flew home to Seattle.



After I left Leon, Gloria’s three-day silent retreat was just “what the doctor ordered.” She then walked the rest of the way to Santiago where she also visited the famous Cathedral de Santiago where St. James is buried, collected her Certificate of Completion at the Pilgrim Office, took the bus to Finisterre, and then flew back home to Seattle.



## Reflecting

I picked up a sheet of Pilgrim Blessings in one of the small village churches along the way. They were translated from Spanish into English, and they didn't quite resonate for me. But they did inspire me to write my own Pilgrim Blessing to reflect my experience and learning. I'll share them with you here:

*Blessed are you, Pilgrim, when you*

*PAUSE your walking as you take a sip of water, put on your hat, or adjust your backpack.*

*GREET your fellow Pilgrim whom you pass or who passes you: "Buen Camino!"*

*Walk with EMPTY MIND.*

*Choose days for SILENCE or SOLITUDE.*

*SURRENDER to what is, embrace it, smile, and find PEACE in your heart.*

*Graciously RECEIVE the gifts of support from others.*

*CONNECT with others without your persona.*

*RELAX and TRUST that your true needs will be provided.*

*Make of the Camino a WAY OF LIFE.*

*LIGHTEN your backpack of things you "might need."*

*HONOR your body as a sacred vehicle for your journey.*

My final steps on the Camino brought me to the famous cathedral in Santiago (see my experience of the cathedral in the chapter on "Inspiration"). While in Santiago, I explored shops near the cathedral, and I discovered a small bookstore. There on a shelf was a used copy of the Shirley MacLaine book that I had read in 2000. So, I took it to Finisterre on the coast of Spain. Some say that Finisterre (translated as "end of the earth") and the lighthouse there is the true end of the pilgrimage walk.

My intention was to spend my last three days there in reflection before I returned home. I re-read Shirley MacLaine's book and consequently enjoyed reviewing her experience as well as my own. I walked the beach in solitude, watching the waves, reflecting, and processing my experience, and I continued my journaling.

The custom at Finisterre is to leave something behind before going home. I didn't leave anything physical there on the rocks or on the beach, but I am aware of lightening my mental "load." There's a saying "It's not what you carry. It's what you leave behind."



In my journal, I wrote: "Being here has been about completing my life as I have known it. When I get home there will be a whole new world for me—more peace, love, joy, silence, and prosperity. I will be more relaxed, trusting the True Source of my existence. I learned to trust this as spiritual Life metaphor: "You will *always* be taken care of on the Camino."

In my journal, I asked myself "What am I choosing to leave behind?" I wrote a list:

- Judging myself and others
- Resistance to what is
- Attachment to things and stuff
- Belief that I'm not good enough

This Camino experience was my opportunity to disconnect from my false identity and re-connect with *Who I AM* at the level of my pure Self/Soul. Now I have a centering place within, where I can wake up and bring myself back to the Present.

## Home

I gave myself plenty of grace for a gentle re-entry. It was a year before I was ready to share my experience with my close friends. It wasn't until now that I felt ready to put pen to paper. I didn't feel like rushing that process. The bottom line: It was the spiritual experience I had hoped for—and beyond!

Immediately upon my return home, after only a month away, I was surprised to notice:

- I felt overwhelmed when I opened my closet and saw all my clothing. I was so accustomed to having one spare piece of clothing—whatever I was wearing and a spare. It was light and easy.
- I experienced culture shock in the complexity of the world compared to the simplicity of the culture I had experienced on the Camino.
- I felt strange in the driver's seat of my car. I felt afraid to drive my car the first few times.
- The first time I opened my computer, I couldn't remember my password. My memory was blank! It was a simple code word that I had been using for years!

I took me a full year of working with health professionals to resolve the tendonitis. I started with a sports therapist. She referred me to a physical therapist that I worked with for several months, and then I went back to my regular chiropractor. He finally said that he had taken me as far as he could, so he referred me to a specialist who used the Graston technique. That finally resolved the tendonitis issue, and I haven't had a recurrence since.

I was reminded of Joseph Campbell's metaphor of the Hero's Journey. I started the adventure answering the "call" to stretch myself into new territories (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual), face my demons, learn from my experience, and, like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, bring my learning back home to share. It has taken me these past eight years to be ready to share my story.

*Fran Fisher*

Fran Fisher  
June 1, 2023

## Fran Fisher, MCC

Fran Fisher is a Master Certified Coach (MCC) accredited by the International Coach Federation (ICF). With an international client list, Fran's mission is to empower her clients in achieving their visions while living their best lives. Her legacy to the international coaching profession demonstrates the value of personal and professional mastery and mentorship for all professional coaches.



Fran is a visionary leader, international speaker, and published author. She specializes in providing coaching services for visionary leaders and entrepreneurs, executives and business owners, collaborative work teams, as well as coaching and mentoring experienced coaches.

Fran is recognized internationally as one of the pioneers and champions for the coaching profession. In 2022, she received the ICF Circle of Distinction Award after being nominated by her master coach peers for her leadership and commitment to the coaching profession, as well as her years of service to the International Coach Federation (ICF) organization itself.

Fran served as a founding member of ICF, an Executive Board member, and co-chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee, responsible for developing the Credentialing Programs for aspiring coaches and training schools in the early years of the organization. She has served ICF as a PCC and MCC Credentialing Assessor since 1998.

Fran also received the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012 from the ICF Chapter of Washington State. She also served as the first Executive Director of the Association for Coach Training Organizations, ACTO.

In 1991, Fran founded the Living Your Vision® (LYV) process for empowering individuals in transforming their visions into reality. In 1997, Fran founded the Academy for Coach Training, one of the first International Coach Federation (ICF) accredited schools. In 2005, shifting her focus to private practice. Fran sold the ACT and LYV businesses and their associated trademarks to I & AM, LLC, dba inviteCHANGE.

Fran is certified in the Core Values Index (CVI) assessment as a Master VAR (Value Added Relationship) with Taylor Protocols, Inc., providing coaching and consulting for her clients. Taylor's CVI is a unique assessment that provides insight into the innate,

unchanging core-driving nature of individuals. Additional certifications include *Learning in Action EQ*, *Dependable Strengths*, and *TILT 365*.

Fran has also authored several books (available from Amazon.com), including

*Violet's Vision*

*The Illusion of Hopelessness*

*Calling Forth Greatness, Seven Coaching Wisdoms for Transforming Your Life*

*Empowerment Selling* (co-author)

*No Winner Ever Got There without a Coach* (co-author)

Fran's highest vision is a world where everyone is enjoying a rich and fulfilling life, living true to their essence, life purpose, and values. She believes this is what the world needs of us—to be true to ourselves—and that coaching is the contribution we can make for this transformation in our world.

She is also passionate about restoring harmony with our Mother Earth and supports a number of initiatives focused on innovative ways to address environmental issues.

In 2015, Fran walked the Camino de Santiago in Spain as a personal challenge and vision quest. In 2021, Fran expanded her vision to include relocating from her native Washington state to Windsor, Colorado, to begin a new and exciting chapter of her life. Fran continues to elevate both her professional and personal life doing the work she loves while making more time for relationship, exploring the Colorado Rockies, and sharing the adventure with her life partner.

For more information about Fran's coaching programs and resources, visit her website at [www.franfishercoach.com](http://www.franfishercoach.com).

You may also want to follow Fran on [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).