

5 hours ago SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA: FOLLOW THE YELLOW PLAQUE ROAD

Most pilgrims who set out on the Camino de Santiago walk it while others cycle and some go on horseback. When I checked it out earlier this year, I could almost have swum it. The journey begins where you want it to begin and ends in Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia. That's the bit of northern Spain that sits on top of Portugal like an umbrella, and it gets more rain than Dublin in the spring. However, when the sun shines it's hot to trot – or pedal or walk.



[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-IID-2yEM8eU/VJDVDUOtXzI/AAAAAAAAACHc/mvg0qALsB-c/s1600/1xCamino%2Bwaymarker.jpg>]

MAJOR MILESTONE: The yellow scallop shell symbol of St. James, like this significant one in Finisterre, marks each kilometre along the Camino for pilgrims, below



[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-8KtGL_PliUk/VJDV7TMEqCI/AAAAAAAAACHk/9HSJP_HxfS_Y/s1600/2xCamino%2Bpilgrims.JPG]

Follow the yellow scallop shell signs that mark the Camino de Santiago and you won't get lost, except perhaps in your thoughts. You'll arrive days, weeks, perhaps even months later in Santiago de Compostela, no doubt weary and probably wiping a tear. Completing the journey can be a very

emotional experience, especially if you continue on to Finisterre – what the Romans considered to be the end of the known world.

People ‘do’ the Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James) for reasons of faith or fitness or friendship, to find themselves or forget, or to raise much-needed funds for worthy causes, and they return home with a tale to tell. No one, however, has a tale quite like the one told by life-long best buddies Justin Skeesuck and Patrick Gray.

One Saturday afternoon two-and-a-half years ago, Justin was flicking through the channels on his TV at home in Boise, Idaho, when a programme that was just starting caught his attention. It focused on pilgrims following the Camino de Santiago. Intrigued, he watched it right through and thought: “I wonder if that’s something I could do?”

Some days later when Patrick called round, Justin showed him the programme, which he’d recorded. When it ended, he said: “Well, what do you think?” Patrick didn’t think. Not for one second. He simply turned to his friend who was sitting in his wheelchair and said: “I’ll push you.”



[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-T9m07Qh5qG8/VJDWQP8pW4I/AAAAAAAAACHs/6F0-3hc_PMw/s1600/3xGoing%2Bup%2Ba%2Bhill.jpeg]

PULLGRIMS: Justin and Patrick get some help from fellow adventurers on this hilly part of the Camino

When Justin was 16 (he’s now 39, as is Patrick), he was involved in a car accident that triggered a progressive auto-immune disorder that left his legs, arms and hands paralysed. But it didn’t paralyse his zest for life, one in which he could count on the unstinting support of pal-in-a-million Patrick.

These guys were born 24 hours apart, played together as little boys, went to school together, grew up together and each was best man at the other’s wedding. Their wives are best friends and their children could be forgiven for sometimes forgetting which parents they belong to, such is the bond between the two families. So Patrick’s automatic response of “I’ll push you” was perfectly natural.

Justin and Patrick spent two years meticulously planning their pilgrimage along the Camino Frances – the French Way – from St. Jean Pied-de-Port in the foothills of the French Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela, a distance of 766km (nearly 500 miles). But all the planning in the world

couldn't have prepared them for the magnitude of the task they'd set themselves when they began their journey last June 3.

As Patrick said: "It will live on in infamy as the hardest physical, mental and spiritual challenge I have ever or will ever encounter. It was mind-bogglingly difficult, but you don't really know what you can do until you're faced with a difficult challenge. Honestly, through some divine intervention we were given the strength to carry on."

And that was only the first day.



[<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/->

[u1bCAbr_TQo/VJDWnyP39wI/AAAAAAAAACH0/Kx_WFiqGbzE/s1600/4xCamino%2Blads%2Bon%2Bthe%2Broad.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-u1bCAbr_TQo/VJDWnyP39wI/AAAAAAAAACH0/Kx_WFiqGbzE/s1600/4xCamino%2Blads%2Bon%2Bthe%2Broad.jpg)]

CHAIRLEADERS: Justin and Patrick set the pace out on the road. Below, the guys pose with some pals



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[J2JbApm_Hck/VJDWylFMRI/AAAAAAAAACH8/tY0Tz9r0ISA/s1600/4xCamino%2Bgang.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-J2JbApm_Hck/VJDWylFMRI/AAAAAAAAACH8/tY0Tz9r0ISA/s1600/4xCamino%2Bgang.jpg)]

Justin and Patrick faced one obstacle after another as they continued on their arduous way, including knee-high rivers, cloying mud and steep slopes that sometimes proved impossible to get up or down without the help of fellow pilgrims, which was always offered without having to be sought. At one point, Justin had to be carried all the way up a mountain in an improvised sling by Patrick and half-a-dozen hikers before they returned for his wheelchair and hauled it up too.

But despite everything the Camino could throw at them, and determined to prove the doubters wrong, they made it to Santiago – a day ahead of schedule.

“There’s nothing more satisfying than setting out to accomplish a goal and have so many people tell you it was impossible, and then to achieve what we set out to do,” said Patrick.

“Just because you have limitations doesn’t mean you have to be defined by them. You can overcome them if you choose to do so and let people help you and love you. We knew there was no way we would accomplish this alone. We were gonna have faith that people would show up and help and they did, time and again.”

People certainly showed up last July 7 when, 35 days after leaving St. Jean Pied-de-Port, Justin and Patrick arrived exhausted but ecstatic in the Praza do Obradoiro in front of Santiago Cathedral. There to greet and embrace them were their wives and hundreds of cheering pilgrims they’d met on their journey. There too were total strangers who’d followed the friends’ progress on radio and TV, in the newspapers and online and wanted to be present to give them a heroes’ welcome.

That’s the true spirit of the Camino de Santiago, and it can be found all along the way. It’s there in something as simple as a cheery salutation – “Buen Camino!” – from a shepherd, a shopkeeper or a child skipping to school or a glass of water from a villager. When the going gets tough on this toughest of journeys, a kind word can lift the heart and melt the miles, but three kind words – “I’ll push you” – can move mountains.



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BUD BROTHERS: An emotional moment for Justin and Patrick in Santiago

Nearly a dozen recognised pilgrim routes lead to Santiago and the resting place of St. James the Great in the cathedral. The three most popular are:

The French Way from St Jean Pied-de-Port via Pamplona, Logroño, Burgos and Leon (766km). For walkers who don't have a month to spare, the last 100km from Sarria to Santiago are enough to earn a 'Compostela' – a certificate of completion.

The Portuguese Way from Lisbon via Porto and Pontevedra (610km).

The Northern Way from Irun via Bilbao, Santander and Oviedo (820km).

There's also an Irish Way dating from the Middle Ages when pilgrims set out from St. James's Gate at the western entrance to the city where the Guinness brewery (a latter day place of pilgrimage itself for more than a million tourists each year) now stands. In those days they sailed to either La Coruña or Ferrol in northwest Galicia to join the English Way. That sea voyage took a couple of weeks, but Aer Lingus has regular flights from Dublin to Santiago that take only a couple of hours.



[<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-BOA3UR8b--8/VJDXU0-327I/AAAAAAAAACIM/fxpCICwSPLk/s1600/6xStatue%2B saint%2Bjames.jpg>]

HIGH HORSE: Rooftop equestrian statue of St. James

Former fisherman St. James, who was one of the apostles and the brother of St. John the Evangelist, twice travelled to Galicia, the first time on business when he brought Christianity to the pagan Celts. When he

returned some years later it was, according to lore, on a stone boat pulled by three angels blowing trumpets. He was an awful show-off – for a dead man. Known for his fiery temper, St. James frequently lost his head. This didn't endear him to Judean monarch Herod Agrippa, who had him executed in Jerusalem in AD44, thus making the frequent permanent.

His decapitated remains were interred by his disciples Teodoro and Atanasio on Mount Libredon, where for nearly 200 years his marble tomb drew pilgrims from throughout Iberia. However, the Roman persecution of Christians in that part of the empire meant the tomb was abandoned in the latter part of the third century and soon forgotten. And forgotten it remained until one moonless night in 814AD when a hermit named Pelagius stubbed his big toe on a rock and hopped around cursing in a very un-Christian manner.

Pelagius wasn't in the habit of wandering around in the woods after dark, mainly because he was allergic to the wolves, lynxes and bears that roamed Mount Libredon, but he'd seen strange lights in the sky and, almost in a trance, was following their trajectory with his eyes up and his guard down. And that's how his big toe discovered the long-lost tomb, and the remains therein, of James the Great, patron saint of Spain, Galicia, tanners, vets, pharmacists, furriers and equestrians.

Those remains are believed to now repose in a silver reliquary in the crypt beneath Santiago cathedral's main altar and were visited last year by almost 216,000 pilgrims and many more tourists. The crypt also houses, according to the faithful, the relics of Teodoro and Atanasio, who were also elevated to the sainthood.



[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-HLWbw-oBksQ/VJDXkiAzZMI/AAAAAAAAACIU/KNs1-D9RW38/s1600/7xSaint%2BJames%2Bsarcophagus.jpg>]

SILVERSMYTH? The silver reliquary that is believed to contain the remains of St. James in the Cathedral

You'd think that having completed their journey, modern-day Camino adventurers would be content to sit outside the cathedral, nurse their blistered feet (saddle-sore cyclists have to be more discreet) and then spend a few contemplative moments in the crypt. However, for those who are able, a trek up the 110 steep steps to the roof will prove rewarding, especially for fans of cult TV comedy series Father Ted, because hidden

among the gargoyles is a medieval version of Kicking Bishop Brennan up the Arse.

During construction – no one knows exactly when – the churchman in charge was notoriously slow at paying the stonemasons' wages. Going on strike was out of the question – they'd have been thrown off the work crew or, just as likely, off the roof. So they wreaked a rascally revenge by carving an effigy of the bishop's backside beneath a gutter and took great delight in slapping it each time they passed. It didn't put food on their tables, but at least it put a smirk on their faces.



[<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-vO8hqIQXix8/VJDXw6rwZI/AAAAAAACIc/r2TGXeHbFhw/s1600/8xCamino%2BBishop%2BBrennan.jpg>]

[<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-vO8hqIQXix8/VJDXw6rwZI/AAAAAAACIc/r2TGXeHbFhw/s1600/8xCamino%2BBishop%2BBrennan.jpg>]

HOLY SHOW: The effigy of the bishop's backside on the roof of Santiago Cathedral, below



[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-RiJBSIMHFq/VJDX5ntzvHI/AAAAAAACIk/KiyYc0w2Xpg/s1600/9xCamino%2Bcathedral%2Broof.jpg>]

[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-RiJBSIMHFq/VJDX5ntzvHI/AAAAAAACIk/KiyYc0w2Xpg/s1600/9xCamino%2Bcathedral%2Broof.jpg>]

The cathedral is a magnificent mix of Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque architecture and the main attraction in this historical and famously hospitable city (when you've been catering to millions of pilgrims for more

than a thousand years you get the hang of looking after visitors, at which Santiago excels). Construction began in 1075 and was declared completed 136 years later on April 21, 1211 when it was consecrated in the presence of King Alfonso IX of Leon.

While the tomb of St. James tops everyone's list of things to see in the cathedral, many people time their visit to coincide with a remarkable spectacle.

Goldsmith Jose Losada, who in 1886 crafted the reliquary for the saint's remains, had also produced, 35 years earlier in 1851, the cathedral's botafumeiro – one of the world's biggest censers or thuribles. Anyone who has attended a Roman Catholic funeral will have seen the priest circling the coffin at the end of the mass, swinging the thurible – a small, metal incense burner hanging from a chain. The aromatic smoke from the incense signifies prayers rising to heaven.

Master Losada didn't do things by half. His gleaming botafumeiro ("smoke expeller" in the Galician language), which is made of a brass-bronze alloy and plated with silver, stands 1.6 metres tall and weighs 80 kilos. Shovels are used to fill it with 40 kilos of burning charcoal and incense and then it's attached to a rope hanging from a pulley mechanism dating from 1604 high up in the dome. That's when eight red-robed muscle men called tiraboleiros step forward and the show begins.

One of the tiraboleiros gives the botafumeiro a push to get it moving, then each grabs a rope and pulls, setting it off in ever-increasing swings between the Pratarías and Azabachería doorways at either end of the transept. When it really gets going it travels at 70 kilometres an hour, spewing clouds of thick smoke, and reaches a height of 21 metres, just short of the ceiling.



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BEAM ME UP: A spotlight picks out the cathedral's botafumeiro in full swing during a pilgrims' mass

While all that swinging is going on, fascinated spectators are sitting there wondering: "What if those knots come loose?" It has happened on several occasions, though not lately. The most recent mishap was in July 1937 when the botafumeiro sprung a leak and took on the characteristics of a volcanic eruption, showering red hot charcoal on the tiraboleiros. The most

spectacular accident, though, occurred in 1499 when the original botafumeiro broke free on its way to the ceiling and sailed out of the Pratarías high window, killing and half-cooking a cow that was standing outside chewing the cud and minding its own business.

Speaking of cows, Galicia – the greenest of Spain's regions – produces the country's most succulent beef and lamb, thanks to the lush grazing land. That's why the poshest restaurants, from neighbouring Portugal and the Basque country to Barcelona and even as far away as the Canary Islands, take pride in telling their well-heeled diners that the meat they serve is Galician – and charge accordingly. In unpretentious Santiago, the prices are a lot more realistic.

Pork has a starring role in Galician cuisine too, especially in the winter months (pigs are traditionally slaughtered in November). A popular dish is Lacon con grelos, combining cured ham from the forelegs served with boiled potatoes, chorizo and, curiously, turnip tops. Galician stew, made with uncured pork, chicken, chorizo, foreleg ham, salted ribs, smoked pork fat, pig's ears and snout with potatoes, chickpeas and, again, turnip tops, will keep out the cold. If you haven't yet discovered potaje de lentejas (lentil stew), you're in for a treat because the Galician version containing green lentils, chorizo, peppers, onion, carrots, potatoes and paprika is outstanding.



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**SEALICIOUS: Boiled octopus with paprika and, below,
a selection of seafood on the menu in a restaurant**



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[Xo0W90CF6lg/VJDYplzYf6I/AAAAAAAAACI8/qITNRVE4s_I/s1600/11AxCamino%2Bseafood.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-Xo0W90CF6lg/VJDYplzYf6I/AAAAAAAAACI8/qITNRVE4s_I/s1600/11AxCamino%2Bseafood.jpg)]

However, it's for its seafood that Galicia is rightly renowned. The fishing fleet is the biggest in Spain, and boats daily offload hake, sea bass, sole, grouper, monkfish and sardines plus a huge selection of shellfish, crawfish, crabs and lobsters (you can see what's served in Santiago's restaurants in the lively Abastos Market where all the chefs shop).

If you're a sucker for octopus you're squids in, because it's Galicia's favourite dish. There are many fancy recipes, but it's at its best and bursting with flavour when simply boiled, sprinkled with cayenne pepper and olive oil and served on a wooden board.

The region's wines are as good as but cheaper than what the big-name Spanish bodegas produce and include the light young whites and strong reds of Ribeiro; Albariño from Rias Baixas, which is the perfect accompaniment for seafood; and Amandi, from Ribeira Sacra, a red the Roman emperors favoured.

To round off a meal, orujo is a local liqueur made from the residue of wine production that's drunk as a digestif – or as a dare. It's potent stuff and highly combustible: from it the Galicians make a drink called queimada, which involves dropping lemon peel, sugar and ground coffee into a clay pot, pouring in the orujo, setting it on fire and reciting a spell against the curses of witches until the flame turns blue (get too close and the air is liable to turn blue too).



[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-FNYOe-OE9Sg/VJDY1StY6nI/AAAAAAAAACJE/9oEMjtkX4Y/s1600/12.Queimada.jpg>]

HOT DRINK: Try a flaming queimada, made from orujo

It's said that pilgrims catch their first whiff of burning incense about three kilometres from Santiago and quicken their step, knowing their journey is almost over. The thought of reaching the city of St. James, paying their respects at his tomb and checking in to a proper hotel room instead of a snore-filled hostel dormitory makes the final few furlongs a doddle.

The ritual is to shower, change out of their grubby walking gear and go for dinner. It might be octopus, or maybe Galician stew, washed down with a bottle of Ribeiro. Then comes the coffee, and finally a flaming queimada. In their giddiness, some get too close to the clay pot and suddenly realise that the whiff they first caught on the outskirts of the city wasn't the scent of burning incense at all – it was the smell of singed eyebrows.

Ah, well. Buen Camino!



[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-nELxc_-IbBA/VJDZ4Kcyq6I/AAAAAAAAACJc/cbhuNKnJ3y8/s1600/13xCamino%2BTom%2Bsore%2Bfeet.JPG]

**PROS AND CORNS: Walking the Camino
is good for the soul, but the soles are
another matter altogether, as I found out**

GETTING THERE

CaminoWays.com organises walking and cycling holidays for prospective pilgrims and is behind the big increase in the number of Irish people setting out on the Camino de Santiago (5,012 last year and many more expected next year). Among the special deals for 2015 are:

Classic Camino: The final section of the French Way from Sarria to Santiago. From €492 per person sharing for a 6-night walking holiday.

Portuguese Coastal Way: From Porto, along the coast of northern Portugal and through southern Galicia. From €662pps for a 7-night walking holiday.

Camino del Norte: Try the section from Bilbao to Santander from €536pps for a 6-night walking holiday.

Prices for these and other options include accommodation on a half-board basis, luggage transfers from hotel to hotel and a holiday pack with practical information. Prices do not include flights, transport or insurance.

Optional add-ons include hotel upgrades, airport transfers and bike rental.

Book by December 31 for a 10pc discount on self-guided 2015 Camino trips.

www.caminoways.com [<http://www.caminoways.com/>]

FLY

Aer Lingus operates three weekly direct flights from Dublin to Santiago de Compostela on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from April to October. There's an additional flight on Wednesday during July and August, the busiest pilgrimage months. www.aerlingus.com [<http://www.aerlingus.com/>]



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09JE/VJDaK0iTmlI/AAAAAAACJk/ySyScP2VMh4/s1600/14xCamino%2Bhotel%2Bthis%2Bone.jpg]

SAN FRANTASTIC: San Francisco Hotel Monumento

STAY

There's accommodation to suit every pocket in Santiago, from €12 a night hostels and €40 pensions to top hotels. I've stayed in the following two hotels, which I'm happy to recommend.

San Francisco Hotel Monumento (Campillo de San Francisco 3). Part of a former convent dating from 1214 and adjoining the Church of San Francisco, this 18th century building in the historical heart of Santiago opened as a 4-star, 82-room hotel (with an indoor heated pool) in 2005.

www.sanfranciscohm.com [http://www.sanfranciscohm.com/]

Hotel Compostela (Rua do Horreo 1). Conveniently located, it's a five-minute stroll from the cathedral. Free wifi, and the bus stop for the airport is just around the corner in Praza de Galicia. Ideal mid-budget choice.

www.hotelcompostela.es [http://www.hotelcompostela.es/]



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uotFfSbtA/VJDakRHvZBI/AAAAAAACJs/QyVuK_aM3O4/s1600/15xCamino%2Bbeetroot%2Bcappuccino.JPG]

HARD TO BEET: My beetroot cappuccino in A Tafona

EAT

A Tafona (Virxe da Cerca 7, closed Mondays). What looked like a strawberry milkshake turned out to be beetroot cappuccino, and oh boy, it was amazing. So was everything else on the tasting menu, the ingredients bought only a few hours before from the Abastos Market just across the street. Owner/chefs Lucia Freitas and Nacho Tierna are in the vanguard of Galicia's emerging nouvelle cuisine that draws its inspiration from the region's traditional gastronomy. A top recommendation.

www.restauranteatafona.com [http://www.restauranteatafona.com/]

Cafe de Altamira (Pazo de Altamira Hotel, Rua das Ameas 9). I would have

happily sat in this place all night dreaming about the foie gras and fig pastry starter, only the staff were keen to get to their beds. Being a stone's throw from the Abastos Market, it's no surprise that seafood reigns beneath Altamira's roof, but a Monday evening main course of slow-cooked pork ribs (the fishing fleet doesn't go out on a Sunday) was divine.

www.pazodealtamira.com [<http://www.pazodealtamira.com/>]

Don Quijote (Calle Galeras 20). Here's a restaurant that specialises in the best of traditional year-round Galician cuisine and seasonal game. Want to know what the locals eat from land and sea at home? Don Quijote has been serving it in generous portions since 1979. One of the specialities of the house is cochinitillo – roast suckling pig – which can be described in many ways, but I'll stick with mmmmmmm!

www.quijoterestaurante.com [<http://www.quijoterestaurante.com/>]



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MACKNIFICENT: Mackerel sushi and fig in Abastos 2.0

Abastos 2.0 (Praza de Abastos, locales 13-18). A small gastro pub with a big reputation next to the Abastos Market, where whatever catches the chef's eye each morning dictates what he chalks up on the board. Very popular with the young crowd and those who like to share photos of artfully-presented dishes on social media.

www.abastosdouspuncero.es [<http://www.abastosdouspuncero.es/>]

Casa Marcelo (Rua das Hortas 1, closed Sunday evening and Monday). Michelin-starred restaurant and therefore not the cheapest choice in town. There's no a la carte, just a tasting menu that changes daily. Chef Marcelo Tejedor is known and respected for focusing on how his dishes taste rather than how they look on the plate.

www.casamarcelo.net [<http://www.casamarcelo.net/>]

Acio (Rua das Galeras 28). Chef Iago Castrillon and co-owner Eva Pizarro are a breath of fresh air and could probably serve fresh air as a starter, such is the confidence their devoted diners have in these two who refuse to follow trends. If you want to sample some of the most innovative cuisine in all of Spain, this is the place, but reservations are recommended.

www.acio.es [<http://www.acio.es/>]



[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-dj0rMg3tK44/VJDxsF7C4dI/AAAAAAAAACKM/YIOLNhBUHIE/s1600/acio.jpg>]

INKREDIBLE: Sweetbreads cooked in the ink of an accompanying baby squid in Restaurante Acio

READ

Father and teenage daughter Peter and Natasha Murtagh's book, **Buen Camino** (Gill & MacMillan), is a must-read for anyone planning to walk the Camino de Santiago. They unusually began their journey from the summit of Ireland's sacred mountain, Croagh Patrick, but set out on the Camino itself from St. Jean Pied-de-Port. **Buen Camino** is not a guidebook, it's a travelogue-cum-diary that charts the Murtaghs' progress from France to Santiago and then on to Finisterre. They write refreshingly honestly about the highs and lows of their adventure, and it's such an engaging read that I got through all 237 pages in four days.

John Brierley's pocket-sized **Camino Pilgrim Guides** (Findhorn Press) to the French, Portuguese and Finisterre Ways are by far the best and most comprehensive guidebooks, which is why they're the top sellers. Buy online at www.caminoguides.com [<http://www.caminoguides.com/>]

My colleague Pol O Conghaile at www.independent.ie/life/travel/europe [<http://www.independent.ie/life/travel/europe>] shares his **10 tips for the Camino de Santiago** which are invaluable. Tip No. 2, "break in your boots", sounds a no-brainer, but it's remarkable how many first-timers end up banjaxed by blisters. Follow Pol's advice and prevent your pilgrimage becoming a pain.

Best-selling Brazilian author Paulo Coelho's **The Pilgrimage** (HarperCollins) is a work of fiction and a great bedtime companion. Coelho spins a spiritual, mystical tale set against the background of a very personal quest, but this master storyteller weaves in many wonderful descriptions and anecdotes of the villages, towns and cities his protagonist (him) passes through on his journey.

WATCH

Emilio Estevez's 2010 film, **The Way**, starring his father, Martin Sheen, is an

enjoyable and inspirational introduction to the Camino de Santiago. Watch it for a taste of the camaraderie and scenery that await pilgrims who give themselves up to the experience. This film will probably do for the Camino what John Ford's Oscar-winning *The Quiet Man* (1952) did and continues to do for the west of Ireland. You just can't buy that sort of publicity.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Turismo de Santiago: See www.santiagoturismo.com [<http://www.santiagoturismo.com/>] for information on what to see and do in Santiago de Compostela and to book guided tours of the city.

Spanish Tourist Board: See www.spain.info [<http://www.spain.info/>]

The Confraternity of St James: A charity established to promote pilgrimages to the tomb of St. James, its website is packed with essential information. See www.csj.org.uk [<http://www.csj.org.uk/>]



[[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-vOKVNpKL1KM/VJDbBJXeMNI/AAAAAAAAACJ8/v8JOTbMcBW8/s1600/17xCathedral%2Bfrom%2BAlameda%2BPark.jpg)

[vOKVNpKL1KM/VJDbBJXeMNI/AAAAAAAAACJ8/v8JOTbMcBW8/s1600/17xCathedral%2Bfrom%2BAlameda%2BPark.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-vOKVNpKL1KM/VJDbBJXeMNI/AAAAAAAAACJ8/v8JOTbMcBW8/s1600/17xCathedral%2Bfrom%2BAlameda%2BPark.jpg)]

ROUTE AND BRANCH: The cathedral as seen from Alameda Park, where many pilgrims choose to first view and photograph the city before entering

Posted 5 hours ago by [Tom Sweeney](#)

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