

My Camino -- Part Two

Some Suggestions

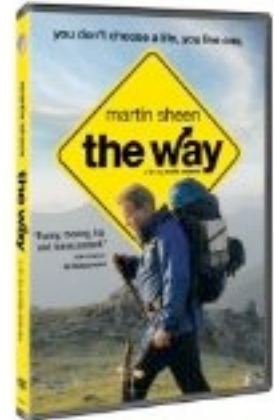
If you are interested in learning a little more about the Camino de Santiago:

1. Watch "The Way" -- a movie with Martin Sheen and Emilio Estevez

Movie Trailer -- <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1441912/>

DVD Trailer --- <http://www.theway-themovie.com/>

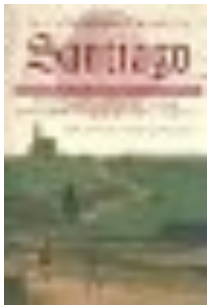
This was a sleeper movie which you need to watch twice -- first for the story and second for the scenery and background. You can also enjoy it a third time as the bonus features include Sheen and Estevez talking about the scenes.



2. Watch Rick Steves program on the Camino:

<http://www.hulu.com/watch/201247>

Thank goodness for hulu.com! You can watch Rick Steves' half hour program on the Camino and its highlights. Feel free to skip the 8 or so minutes on the running of the bulls in Pamplona at the beginning.



3. Buy the book: [The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago: The Complete Cultural Handbook](#) by David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson. New York: St. Martins Press, 2000. ISBN:0312254164.

If you want to explore villages or at least know what you are looking at, then this book is a must. It covers the history, folklore, art and architecture of the Camino. It has not been updated since July, 2000, but what you will be seeing has not been updated since the 10th century anyway.

Essentials -- for the Walk:

1. sew an American patch onto your backpack. This will make it much easier to connect with other English speaking pilgrims.
2. on the first day buy a pilgrim's shell and tie it to your backpack. Available from the Camino office in St. Jean-Pied-du-Port and just about every store you pass during your entire trip
3. you MUST break in your boots and bring the right socks - wool is good, and make sure they are wicking



4. lace-locks are helpful so you don't have to stop to re-tie your boots.
5. either stretch-gloves or work-out gloves (fingerless with a leather palm) as they will not only keep your hands warm, but will prevent blisters on your fingers from the walking poles.
6. a good fitting day pack - consider a hydro-pack as its important to drink lots of water while you walk
7. pants with pockets that close with zippers or velcro. This is not just to keep pickpockets out, but to keep your belongings from falling out on those "slight inclines"
8. even if you are used to a single walking pole, bring along two as this might help you balance better and be easier on your back as you walk
9. you need just two sets of walking clothes - think wicking
10. carry a plastic rain poncho that will also cover your backpack
11. bring a stone from home to lay at the Iron Cross

Essentials -- for your Comfort:

1. it is not customary in Spain for hotels to have in-room coffee/tea facilities - so bring your own travel pot or water immerser if you like your early morning coffee
2. if you're spending more time in Spain in addition to this trip, you might want to have a local sim card. My Bilbao Greeter (remember the lovely Marta?) did some research and recommended Orange Telecom's "Passport" sim as its about 1 cents (euro cents) a minute for international calls; and 7 cents a minute for domestic calls. I called our guides numerous times, including when I got lost. I bought 30 euro of talk time when I arrived in Spain, made numerous local and international calls and came home with 19 euro of talk time left six weeks later! At home, I found it connected to T-Mobile!
3. be sure to turn off roaming on your cell phone - roaming is super costly in Europe
4. most places have wifi so a smartphone or tablet can be useful
5. bring a bar of your favorite deodorant soap. Soaps in many hotels are minuscule and you get just one
6. have clothes that will dry overnight
7. have sandals or comfortable shoes as well as dressy pants and some tops for evening
8. bring vaseline or Body Glide for your feet. This will do a lot to prevent rubbing and subsequent blisters

9. a folding duffel that you can leave on the bus with your “extra” stuff -- things you bought, extra papers, etc. There is no reason to shlep everything on/off the bus each night. There is room above the seats as well as space under your seat.

And Be Aware:

1. almost everything is closed on Sundays. If you need snacks or other supplies do your shopping on Saturday

2. footwear will take up most of the space in your luggage. I brought ankle-boots, walking shoes, sport shoes and sandals and wore them all.

3. carry plenty of small change. This is useful at the coffee stops if you want to use the bathrooms. If you buy something, then feel free to use the facilities with no extra charge, but if you don't buy a coffee, coke, etc. then leave a few coins at the bar when you leave. (there are no public bathrooms along the Camino!)



Who would think that you'd find work by Colombian artist Botero in a teeny town in Spain? But there were his paintings as directionals at a coffee/toilet stop!



A Few Words on Shopping:

What you see most of along the Camino is souvenirs and T-shirts. Prices seem to be higher at the beginning of the trip (i.e.: T's run 10 to 15 euro between St. Pere de Port and Burgos), but from Leon to Santiago, prices go down and T's run 7-9 euro. The designs seem to be universal.

As for silver jewelry with the shell motif -- there is a good selection at O Cebreiro, a lovely para-Celtic village with cobblestone streets and two great gift shops. As you exit the Church, go first to the shop

to the left for the better selection of unique silver items. I bought a bracelet marked 925 and signed by the artist. I didn't see the design anywhere else.

Also, stop in to visit with the wayward monk (that little devil!) at the Monastery at Samos. There is an excellent selection of silver and at very good prices at the large gift shop. I don't think the monks realize silver has gone up almost 300% in the past few years. But take advantage of the low prices if you see something you like. You will see many of the same designs in Santiago de Compostela, but prices will be higher. Be sure what you buy is marked 925 (for sterling). On one "set" I bought, the earrings were marked but the pendant wasn't. It was my mistake not to check!



If you can wait and hold onto your euros, Santiago de Compostela is shopping central. Every other building along the long medieval streets is a shop with every kind of souvenir you would want. I even saw St. James figurines by Lladro and jewelry and T-shirt designs not seen anywhere else. And it is the epicenter of silver-everything.



My buy of the trip? Probably this great looking mailbox that I first saw in some of the small villages. It took a lot of wandering about and asking around to track one down.

With thanks to Karen, Glenn, Pauline, Barb and Janeen for their suggestions!

