

Camino de Santiago

Blog & Thoughts - Part 2

Day 8 - Logroño , 28 (165) KMs - Mon 6/20;

You are never alone on Camino, I miss my friend Mardi, she stayed back in Pamplona for a rest day, but like they say many interesting people on Camino. At a distance, one can see the next town almost as you exit the current town, only a few KMs away.



I walked several kilometers with Antonio, he rode his bike on Camino last year and wanted to experience walking it. Living in Cunit, 40 KMs south of Barcelona, enables him to do it in stages. He is 62 and in good shape and a fast walker, but I managed. What he enjoys most is living a relaxed life after retiring from a travel agency and Cunit seem to be a perfect place for that. I am now thinking about Camino on a bike, perhaps next year. The vistas continued along, every square foot planted with wheat, oats and barley. Occasionally one would see a vineyard and many peregrino shrines.





Entering Viana was super special, established in the year 1219 and celebrating 800 years.





Another spectacular church in Viana



And there was Anna, from Canary Island, walking with her daughter. From her description, the Canary Islands are to Spain just like Hawaii is to the USA. 100% tourism and expensive since it all needs to be shipped from the mainland. Anna works at the airport and during Covid was one of the lucky ones that the government kept her employed. COVID decimated many businesses as the Canary's were in total lockdown. Street scenes from Viana



We all shared our calling for Camino, living experiences, very deep conversation about humanity, life, health and our purpose on earth. The KMs went by quickly.



The Camino, scarred from earlier fires, yet still thriving while recovering.



Finally crossed the Rio Ebro as I arrived in Logroño, a beautiful city.



A very typical city, Churches, Plazas and lots of beautiful narrow streets.



The café lined streets are so nice.



Also, today I found out about my good friend Jim, my quarterly lunch partner and at 67 years old, he is (was) super active. He became infected with COVID Pneumonia and after several day in the hospital, including ICU, is now attached to an oxygen tank.

Never take health for granted and take care of yourself.

Day 9 - Nájera, 30 (195) KMs - Tue 6/21;

Leaving Logroño the next morning, there were many Camino homages



Camino continued to bring people into my walk, among them, Bobby, a web designer whose Camino calling is to figure out what is next in his life and career. At almost 40, he felt the years ticking away and needed time to think and relax after 16 years of stress. I could only think about my 35+ years in financial services and how much that wore my intellect, psychic and my body.

Then there was Felicia & her daughter. The Aussie gal from Adelaide, Brad, the history teachers from San Diego, etc, etc. Not all conversations were deep or insightful, but entertaining and I always learned something.

Always something interesting to see, a redhead Camino squirrel, haha,



And more Shrines and beautiful flowers



Navarrete, another beautiful town



Of course a church and a nice plaza where I had lunch



Ventosa and many many vineyard approaching Najera



Always a nice feature and/or interesting path on the trail



Najera photos, the river with the white flowers on the river was very cool



Lastly, as I was walking I noticed my backpack starting to rip at the top seam in between the straps and a smaller rip at the bottom. This is my favorite day pack, light, folds into a small pack and sturdy,

after all, I bought at the Katmandu store in New Zealand and it has traveled the world with me. I started recalling all the places I have taken this backpack with me.

South Island Christ Church NZ, and in no particular order:

Chile, London, Berlin Wall, Uluru, Great Barrier Reef, the Great Wall of China, Kilimanjaro and Serengeti National Park, 20-25 National Parks in the USA, Prudhoe Bay Alaska, all over the UK, the Galapagos, The Peak in HongKong, Bangkok, ChangMai and Krabi, top of the Calakmul sites in Mexico, Cartagena, Tokyo, Manila, several Indian cities, and many other places.

Day 10 - Santo Domingo de la Calzada, 22 (217) KMs - Wed 6/22;

After 2 back to back ~30 KM days, I was looking forward to a short one. I woke up unusually tired and a bit achy to a nice morning. I am longing a rest day, I should have planned for one in Logroño, but was not really sure. 3 more days to Burgos, where I do have a day off planned.



There are extensive water canals moving water to the planted land, some by flood, others by sprinklers. The water canals look like they have been there forever.





Camino brought some new and old acquaintances, Sue from Seattle, The Swedish National porting a trailer and Bobby once more.

I thought a lot about the number of people with knee braces, heart conditions, limping, etc, yet they were out here, trying to do something in spite of their ailments. Note to self, take great care of myself, not just physically, but mentally. Stop putting myself at the end of the line.

I was really tired and achy, so not too many pictures today.



This little snail reminded me to take my time, walk slowly



Another small town along the way and Parque del Santo monument



I have to share this, it happened yesterday, late evening, around 8 PM.

I was walking around one of the many streets, kind of loitering and all the sudden I see a sign with a sewing machine and a knife and fork, of course it was a restaurant. However, I looked to the right and I see a window curtain store and a lady in the far back with a sewing machine, an actual real sewing machine. I went in, and asked her if she could sew a backpack for me, she was hesitant because she thought that perhaps the backpack would be too thick for her sewing machine. The store closed at 8:30, so I had to go back to my hotel grab my backpack and go back to the store before 8:30.

I made it back on time and the lady started looking for threads to match my backpack colors. I hesitated and told her that she can use any color she had on her machine but she quickly replied that she does either everything correct or not at all, wow. She took her time selecting the right color thread for my backpack, and tripled stitched the ripped seams. My backpack was like new again.

I asked how much do I owe you, but she declined any compensation for her work and she said simply wished me a “Buen Camino”.

I never took a picture in the shop, but I saw her later on her way home and asked her if she minded me taking a picture of her and her husband for my blog. She kindly agreed and here it is. What karma!



Throughout my walk, I saw many many beautiful and very colorful flowers. Windows have red cardenal flowers that help keep mosquitos away when the windows are open. Here is a sampling.





Day 11 - Belorado, 23 (240) KMs - Thu 6/23;

Spain produces most of their own food (and exports quite a bit), wheat, barley and other grains; livestock, meats and cheeses, they have a vast coast for fish and seafood, grapes for wine and variety of fruits and veggies especially stone/citrus fruits and most important olives for oil. It seems that every bit of land is used to grow or raise something. The black sheep reminds me of me. Haha





So grateful for my health, especially when I pass youngsters struggling. I am sad for them and wish I could help. I need to take excellent care of my physical body.

Walked mostly alone this morning, it was kind of nice, just admiring the scenery and the clouds



The defacement of signs and walls really got to me today. I feel sorry for the souls that find joy in doing that. And god bless the caretakers of Camino, having to continuously battle the graffiti.



For the last few KMs, I, once more, ran into Josie from Australia. We chatted the entire way. Josie, and avid cook (and grows her own veggies) lives in Holland for 6 months and in Adelaide (AUS) the other 6 months. She appreciates simplicity in life, devoid of materialism and excess. Very interesting to hear her perspective. Maturing into middle age, she always worked 2 jobs to care for her daughter, her ex husband is lazy and never really worked, leaving Josie to work, raise her daughter and support him. Sad. We agreed to have a meal over the next day or two.

There were so many inbetween town, seems like every 6-10 KMs, Grañón:



And Vitoria de Rioja:



And finally Belorado, I had to take a picture of the Camino map, Belorado is right most 1st picture



So if the map is right, I am about over a ¼ of the way there. Actually it is right, 240/800 KMs, 30%.



I am really longing a rest day, just one more overnight until Burgos where I will take my first rest day of the trip. Belorado was very pretty with the typical church, plaza, bridge and buen camino sign.



Day 12 - San Juan de Ortega, 24 (264) KMs - Fri 6/24;

A very scenic walk, lots of up and down, but mainly dirt farm roads.

I had been struggling and battling with the last 4-5 KMs, whether I had walked 16/20 or 25/30. Kind of hitting the wall (marathon term), a mental battle to finish.

Today, for the first time, I finished strong, no hitting the wall, excellent pace and no mental block. I think I finally got my Camino legs. It felt so good. Perhaps knowing the rest day was near also helped.



Passing the KM markers was always fun, it showed and reinforced the progress I was making, Also got a laugh at the horse parking sign.



Random photos along the way.





I have met many peregrinos from lots of places and most spoke either English or Spanish, but surprisingly most French national I have met, only speak French, they smile and have positive body language, but they only speak French. I am starting to believe that most Americans label the French as unfriendly, when it is genuinely a language knowledge issue. I walked with one couple, and we had a great time, didn't really communicate orally, but pointed things out and shared photos and places we had both traveled to. Many KMs went by and it was a great interactive experience.

San Juan de Ortega is a very big monastery, nothing there other than the Albergué and a hotel. Food also sub-par. All they seem to serve for dinner is pizza, gross. There is a first for everything. Haha.



Day 13 & 14 - Burgos, 26 (290) KMs - Sat & Sun 6/25 & 6/26;

The walk to Burgos was exciting because I was so looking forward to my rest day. Leaving San Juan de Ortega, some 2-3 KMs, was the cutest village of Ages. Note to self, stay there instead of San.



With an overcast sky and the occasional sprinkle, the walk took me through various farm dirt roads, some very rocky and tough on the soles. It made me sad to see this van boondocking, it reminded me of my Road Art.



A long climb uphill to the Cross and a long downhill to the outskirts of Burgos.

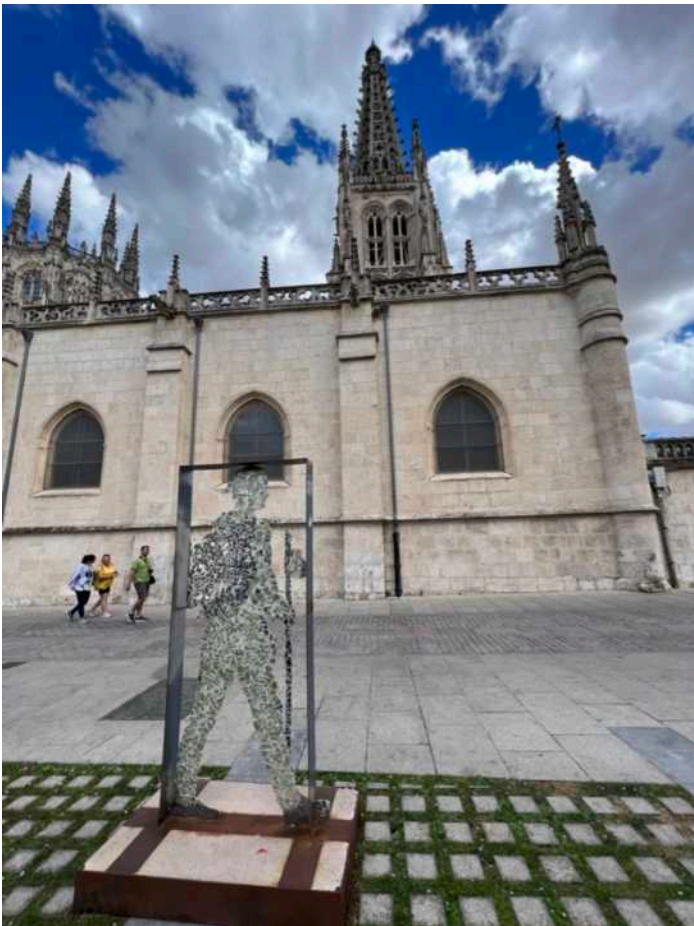


Interesting signs and sight and scenery along the way. Only €5.00 for a room.



Approaching Burgos, just before the airport, one could follow the traditional route or an alternate on the south side of the airport. Much quieter and a gravel road with no cars (vs a divided 4 lane road). I chose that and highly recommended, 2-3 KMs longer, but totally worth it. My Camino legs stayed with me for a 2nd day and I finished strong once more. My friend Antonio told me he must have 1,000 pictures of the Catedral de Burgos, no I understand why. Its simply stunning and a UNESCO 1993 site.



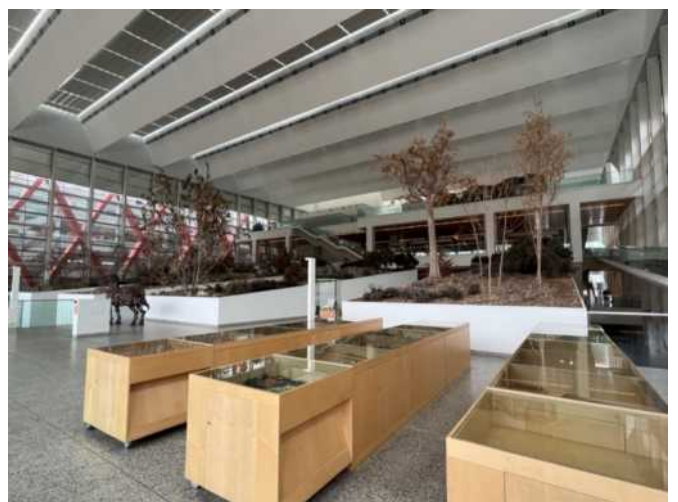


The city of Burgos is awesome. A city full of life, peaceful, full of people enjoying their lives and coexisting in harmony. Young, old, older, families, children, you name it, all enjoying themselves and celebrating life. The weekend was the celebration of the Festivities of San Juan, very jovial. I will let the photos speak for themselves, Plaza Mayor and random streets:





Museo de Evolución Humana





The vistas from Castillo de Burgos were awesome, built to defend themselves from the French.

Burgos Castle

Burgos Castle is found on a hilltop with a commanding view over the valley of the River Arlanzón, a strategic site of primary importance, inhabited as early as prehistoric times.

The founding of the Castle dates back to the year 884, when Count Diego Porcelos, by order of King Alfonso III, built the fortress which would give rise to the city of Burgos, with the aim of repopulating the region and restricting the movements of Moorish armies. From then on the historic role of the castle was to be tied to the city of Burgos and to the Kingdom of Castile, in so far as it became a royal residence, a meeting place for the Spanish court, a scene of dynastic wars, the bastion of the "comunero" movement, an artillery barracks...

The last moment of splendour for Burgos Castle was at the start of the 19th century, when it became a centre of operations for the French army during the French occupation and the Spanish War of Independence. Before abandoning the fortress, the French army set off an explosion that destroyed a large part of the Castle's southern wall, including the gatehouse opening on that side. The damage inflicted did not prevent the Castle from being used as a fortress during the Carlist wars; a role that it no longer played in the 20th century, when it fell into a state of ruin that lasted until its renovation as a historical and cultural heritage site at the start of the 21st century.



Various Churches, and the nesting Storks everywhere.



Restaurants, Bars, Shops, a very lively place.





So thankful that I got to visit here, normally, I always thought of Spain as Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and the southeast coast; there is so much more to Spain and its rich culture.

Day 15 - Hornillos del Camino, 21 (311) KMs - Mon 6/27;

Exiting Burgos took me through a route among many residential neighborhoods, a rather peaceful walk through city suburbs and the Universidad de Burgos. The University looked more like a big high school, plus some dorms.



Along Camino, I thought about the pros and cons of connectivity and social media. While I have glanced at my email and posted 2-3 times on Facebook, I tried to stay away from most of the news, stock market and email. Being connected is great, but it does rob us from experiencing everything thing alive and around us. Hard to explain how and why zero tech gives us the basis for thoughts that enables the mind to wander.

Crossing the 501 KM marker felt great, it is no longer 500 miles, but 300 miles left for Santiago.



Spain has quite a few windmills generating green and clean energy, I never realized how big each blade is until I saw a parade of trucks carrying them, I got lucky to photograph a couple.



Tardajos, another small village along the way complete with plaza church.



Next up was another small village, Rabé de las Calzadas; church with stork nest too!



Rabé de las Calzadas had many murals on the façade of very large buildings, here are some of my favorites, I have to say a totally unexpected sights.



I visited a very small chapel upon exiting Rabé de las Calzadas. Inside was the kindest nun, Teresa, greeting and genuinely blessings each peregrino by name. Her gentle touch when she held both of my hands was extraordinarily moving and you could feel the love that she had for humanity and in doing God's work. She gifted me a small medal that I will carry to Santiago de Compostela.



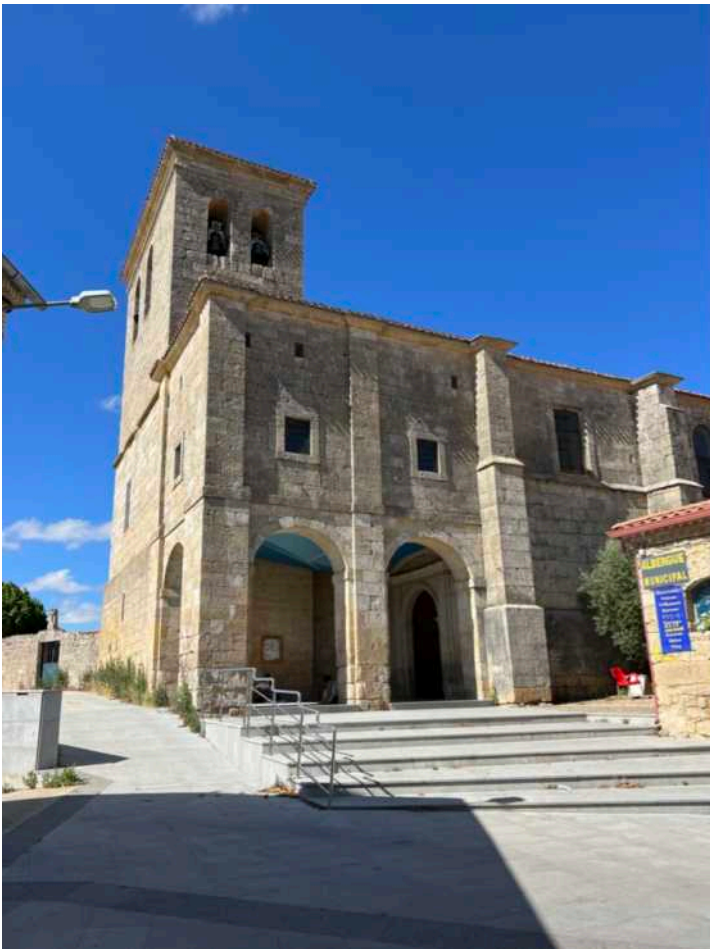
Later I met up with Karina from Rumania, we chatted while we walked along all the way to Hornillos. An avid photographer and an online newspaper reporter, we shared lots about each other. It's kind of strange how much of your life you seem to share with complete strangers. I think part of the answer lies in the fact that we are not rushed and therefore can have a deeper conversation vs a superficial chat about meaningless stuff.



I have been collecting "cellos" or stamps all along, update on my passport.



Hornillos was a typical town with another beautiful church.



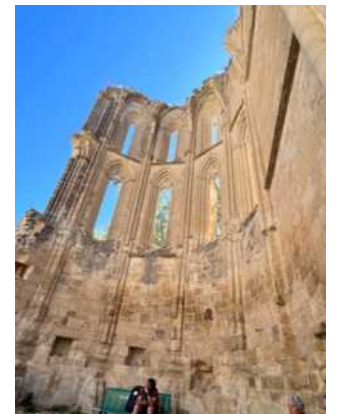
Day 16 - Castrojeriz, 21 (332) KMs - Tue 6/28;

This morning I noticed the very long shadow, the days and sunrise is changing both in time after solstice and by being further west. I it was a balmy 42°F/6°C upon leaving my hotel and with a forecast of 82°F/28°C, big change. Nonetheless, I appreciated the cool weather, although I stripped a lot of clothes as the day wore on.



I caught up and walked for a bit with Oresto and Teresa from Cuba, now living in Miami for 35 years. They shared lots of Cuban history and travel advice. Lots of Meseta walking today, many skip this part of camino and taxi ride ahead, it tends to be flat and a bit dull, I enjoyed it. I will let the pictures speak for themselves; hot with little shade as the day wore on.





Lots of people were talking about politics today, I had to look at the news in case something dramatic happened. I kind of stayed independent, only sharing that I am and try to vote on issues vs party lines

and/or specific candidates. No one was too bothered, but I am incredulous on some of the things I heard. Not just about USA politics, but Europe, Ukraine, Russia, China and Australia; and of course Trump, haha.

This was also the first section of Camino without mobile service. I like to check my progress and mark waypoints along the way, but no big deal. Finally, Castrojeriz with a beautiful church.



Today was a great day indeed and my Camino legs felt strong all day. Upon arrival at my hotel, I was so glad that the bathroom had a tub, I soaked for quite a while thanking for all I experienced today.



Day 17 - Fromista, 25 (357) KMs - Wed 6/29;

Slow start for a long day. Had a good breakfast, bread, yogurt, bananas, bread, cheese, ham, jam and butter with a nice strong coffee. Breakfast has been my main meal, much needed calories for the morning KMs. Today's camino had a steep section, 12% grade with very rewarding vistas.

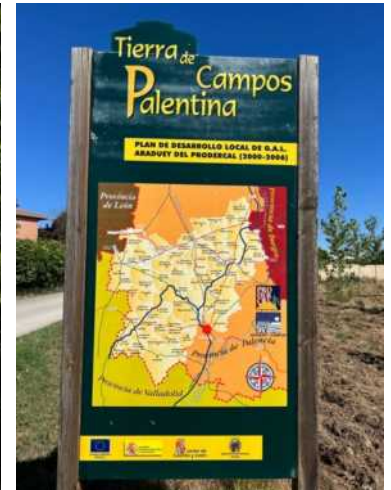




The arid fields began to turn green, vines and other crops, all irrigated by canals and sprinklers.



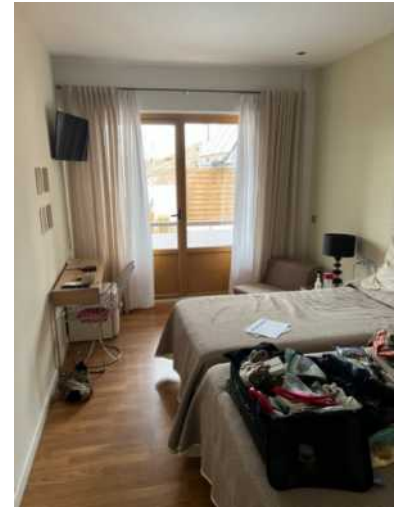
My new friends, Antonia y Mara, from Madrid y Sonora, Mexico respectively were great company for many KMs. We shared many stories, from personal lives to travels to desires in life. One common theme among all the people I have met is the fact they all think less is more. After all, you can't take it with you. Signage along camino was great, it allowed you to check your progress often.



And beautiful flowers adorning balconies and windows everywhere.



I ended up at Doña Mayor, a lovely eco friendly hotel with a balcony and a small pool. The pool was freezing, but the nice tub made up for it.



Day 18 - Carrion de los Condes, 20 (377) KMs - Thu 6/30;

Good morning bottomless Cafe con Leche. I missed having lots of coffee in the morning.



There is always cool stuff along the way.



I decided on the alternate dirt route, away from the busy country road even though it is 2 KMs longer, after all I'm here to walk. Lol.



The irrigation canal system is unbelievable, repairs are now modern with drainage piping.



Photos along the way.



Decided to take a lunch break at Villalcazar, and after checking my messages I got good and bad news from my friend Bobby, he found a new gig, bad because we will no longer be crisscrossing our paths on Camino, he is flying back to the Bay Area.



I had to stop 3 times to remove tiny pebbles today. At home I usually push through and endure the discomfort, on Camino you can't do that. I have seen tiny things turn into Camino ending injuries, blisters, infections, etc.

Most of the way, you can see the next town by spotting the church steeple, 5-8 KMs away. Typically, you find a cafe, bar, tapas and water.

So far on the alternate route, not one peregrino on today's walk. Kind of bitter sweet. The sweetness is in the solitude and the reflection time by yourself. So I started composing and singing, perhaps the heat got to me a bit today. Haha.

🎵🎹🎵 (Hotel California)

Up ahead in the distance
I saw peregrino silhouettes
My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim
I had to stop for a break
Then they stood in the pathway
I heard the Mission's bell

And I was thinking to myself
This could be Heaven or this could be Hell
Welcome to Villalcázar de la Sirga 🎵🎹🎵

and now I leave the Camino alternate route after a coffee with the peregrino statue. (Photo above) As I approached Carrión de Las Condes, I spotted some peregrinos, one particular peregrino walking all the way from Belluno, Italy to Finisterre, approximately 2,200 KMs/1,320 Miles, wow.



The day ended with a tour and walk of the town and a stop to buy some fresh fruits for tomorrow. No real towns along the way until Calzadilla de la Cueva.



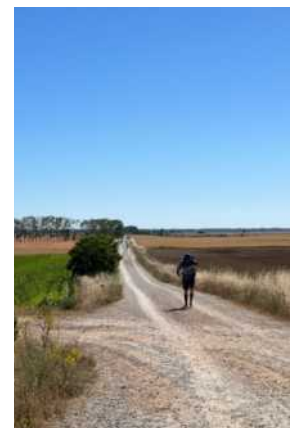
I have been watching the movie, "The Way" as I make progress on my Camino, pretty cool to see familiar sites.

Day 19 - Calzadilla de la Cueva, 17 (394) KMs - Fri 7/01;

Short day today, only 17 KMs, ham and eggs for breakfast, "I missed them eggs". Plus your standard bread and butter, jams and coffee. I have snacks packed and am ready to roll.



Caught up with many of my Camino friends, Ryan, Kyle and Lexi, all traveling together, Mara and Antonia, and my first friend from SJDPD, Gisela. After a short break, I met Marijana, originally from Bosnia, now living in Sweden. Very neat person, but going very fast, 30 KMs per day, so I don't think I will run into her again.



Very small town, not a lot to do here except eat and sleep. I did find a massage place, had a foot massage for €25. It was more like a cream application instead of a massage. Haha.



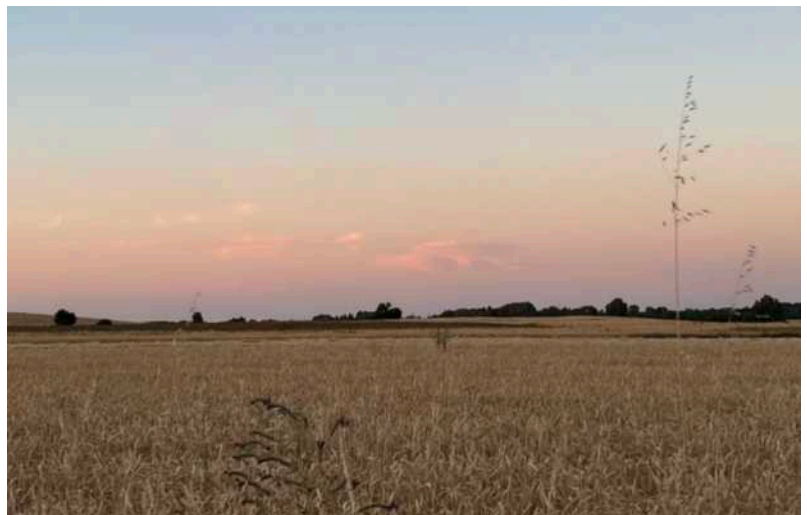
There were Barley mounds everywhere, drying in full sun to begin the pre-brewing process.



Early night for me tonight, watch a bit more of the Camino movie & sweet dreams. Breakfast is at 6:00 tomorrow.

Day 20 - Sahagún , 23 (417) KMs - Sat 7/02;

Very good breakfast accompanied with a beautiful morning glow





Road signage is always telling, its been a hot weather all along, but it must get cold here, hence the warning



Mountains are part of Parque Nacional de Los Picos de Europa and just beyond is the Bay of Biscay.



So far, not one peregrinó on today's walk. Kind of bitter sweet. The sweetness is in the solitude and the reflection time by yourself. I continue thinking about what is next after Camino?

It's very quiet here today, just realized it's Saturday. Constant positive thoughts and karma.



Hoony, a Korean man, retired from the post office in Long Island NY, on his second Camino was the only person I met. After 1 KM he decided to stop for a break. I pressed on since it's going to be hot today, 90°F/32°C or more.



The contrast of the land among the different crops was amazing. The sunflower 🌻 were beautiful.





One common theme is beautiful gardens and flowers everywhere.



And next was Sahagún, a good size town. Camino markers were on the lamp posts.

