

Camino de Santiago

Blog & Thoughts - Part 4

Day 31 - O'Cebreiro, 30 (632) KMs - Wed 7/13;

I worried about the forecasted heat and hearing/reading about some peregrinos having to abort their walk because of the heat. So, I decided to leave at 5 AM. Outside it felt cold in a short sleeve, but I didn't mind and quickly warmed up. It was pitch dark, especially nestled in between the mountains.



I quickly noticed a Peregrino walking with a head flashlight and I decided to follow closely. Her name was Chris, a German hiker doing her 5th Camino. She was very happy that I was following her because it was very dark and no one really around. We had a lovely walk for about 15 KMs. I then stopped for breakfast.





The route was mostly uphill next to the road initially, and the last 15 or so KMs it was an uphill with some very steep segments. You can see the high overpasses for cars and trucks.



The cool morning turned into warm and then HOT, HOT, HOT, 38°C, just over 100°F.

After a short flat and just beyond the town of Vega de Valcarce, Camino turned into a dirt trail. The trail was well maintained and manageable to walk on, not like the Ponferra experience. Some lucky folks rode horses up the trail, the passed me about ½ of the way up. Panoramic views were beautiful, it reminded me of the Pyrenees Mountains, although not as green.



I crossed into province of Galicia, supposedly where they make the best bread in Spain. Passed the 100 mile marker, (160.363 KMs) to go, wow, Camino is coming to an end really fast.



Many milking cows, including the head cow distinguished by the cow bell.



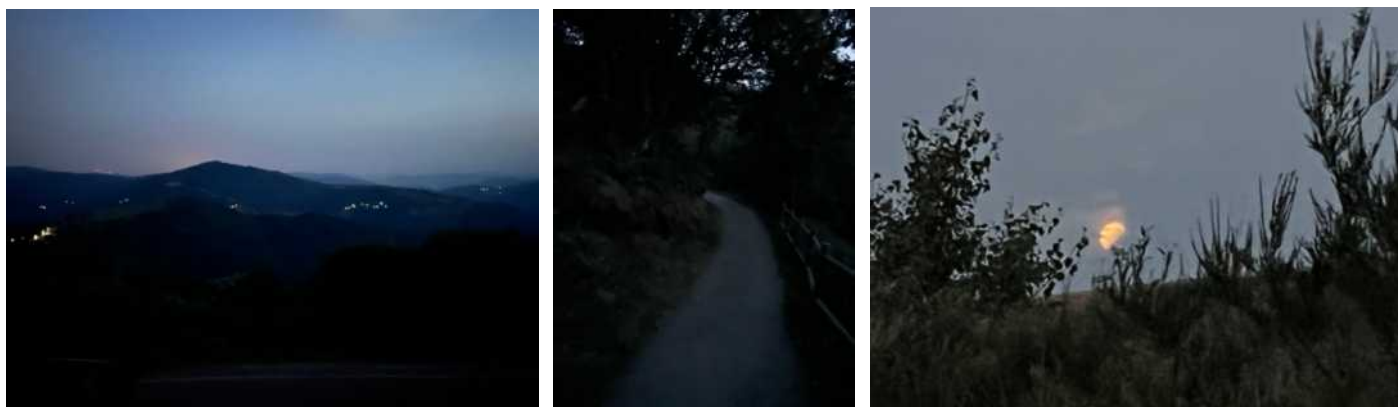
And finally O Cebreiro, 30 KMs, a over 6 hours, but a good long walk. Time for a shower and a nap.



Day 32 - Triacastela, 21 (653) KMs - Thu 7/14;

I woke up early today, knowing that my Christina would be departing Los Angeles to fly to Madrid, take a train to Sarria to meet me. We are going to walk the last ~120 KMs together. I am excited to see her.

The Camino path is very well maintained path, perfect for my dark departure. It is unusually warm this morning, I would say the warmest of my trip this far and have a rising moon. Galicia has Camino nailed, a beautifully maintained trail with abundant marker and KMs tracking.



In Galicia all distance pyramids markers have a KM+3 digits, to the meter precision.



At the Alto, someone put a ban aid on the toes of the peregrino statue, haha



Thinking about my Christina, I know she landed in Madrid, I keep checking my phone.

And now the sun rise.



Very lucky to catch the repositioning of the cattle, watching the dogs work was very cool. They guard the cattle while inside and outside.



When on the hills, one can see towns from very far away. Beautiful hilly terrain.





Some very, very old villages on the way to Tricastela, but the Camino path was well marked and in great shape.



And finally Tricastela. Very nice small village with a church and a plaza. and some interesting features.



I think Tricastela is also used as a staging place for people to start their walk Camino walk. While Saria is the most famous starting point, Tricastela is less crowded and can enable one to ease into the Camino routine.

A Camino themed bench, the wine is so cheap and good (€4 - €7). Right now the Euro is at parity with the US\$. And update on my stamp collection, I am being careful not to fill it too fast, so I can collect my last stamp at the Cathedral in Santiago.



Day 33 - Sarria, 20 (673) KMs - Fri 7/15;

I am so excited to meet my baby Christina today. She is a trooper, not one complaint even though she traveled for 24 hours to get to Sarria. The train from Madrid to Sarria was full, and it de-railed the planned schedule. As they always say, Camino provides, she met a nice lady on the train to Ourense that drove her to Sarria from Ourense and saved her 2 hours waiting for the connecting train from Ourense to Saria.

It was a beautiful moon this morning, clear and fresh. I left early as the forecast was still a hot day. Unusual to see a Buddha, but it made a great picture.



Sometimes you have to make decision on Camino, mine mostly revolved around the original route, that is where you get to see the most original feature and tend to have more infrastructure.



And the cows definitely are free range and have a good life.



Samos, very tiny village, more like a few houses and a church.



120 KMs/75 miles marker, wow, I have walked a long way. Saria in the back, I just want to get there to meet my Christina, 5-6 KMs and I will be there.



Funny how you can tell the newbies from the Camino veterans, I just passed this guy in a button down long sleeve starched dress shirt. It would have been rude to take a picture of him. Haha.



Unbelievable, but ran into Gisela again at the entrance of Sarria. I met her over a month ago in St Jean Pied de Port. We chatted for a bit and hoped to run into each other in Santiago. The entrance to Sarria was warm and welcoming.



And of course they have a church and very big monastery, tons of cafes and restaurant the I will explore with Christina.



Had a great reunion with Christina, tour, dinner, monastery visit. Tomorrow we walk 22 KMs.



Day 34 - Portomarin, 22 (695) KMs - Sat 7/16;

Our walk begun, only 113 KMs/68 miles to Santiago.





One sees many different things on Camino, from sheep herding to a Camino dog. Haha



We crossed the 100 KMs/60 miles marker, kind of bitter sweet for me, but I was really enjoying the walk with Christina. Paradela as Rozas.



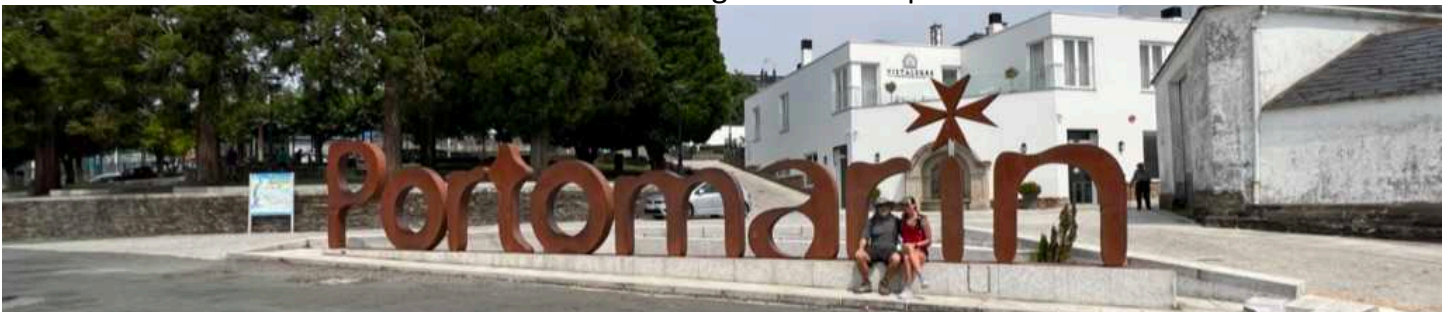
Camino never disappointed with interesting things to see along the way.



We talked a lot, from Camino and the experience to family to what's next. The KMs and time flew by and it was so enjoyable.



A coffee and walk around town before dinner to sightsee and explore.



Portomarin was really nice, church, cafes, restaurants, etc. Low key and peaceful.



A great diner at Meson Rodrigues, pulpo, salad, Galician empanada, fried egg and ham, fruit for desert, a beer and a soda for €40, so inexpensive for great food.

Early to bed tonight, it was hot and lots of sweating before falling asleep.

Day 35 - Palas del Reí, 25 (720) KMs - Sun 7/17;

The day started with 7:00 AM breakfast, ham, cheese, fresh bread, (I have never eaten so much bread in my life), cake, freshly squeezed orange juice, coffee and apples. And our trek begun.



Nice trees and sun/clouds peeking through the town and valleys.



The first 12-15 KMs went by fast, but as the mercury rose, the last few KMs felt long, more like miles vs KMs. We saw many peregrinos, Saria to Santiago is a very popular stage.



The little structure below is to store and dry corn during winter, elevated and away from the mice.



Along the way...





80.000 KMs/50 mile marker, lots of beautiful flowers everywhere.



Landscape was very plain, towns kind of average, walking with Christina, priceless! Many different animals.



One cool shrine where many left a special note or relic.



And in no time, we were in Palas del Rei.



Restaurante Castro, an insanely great meal with sea scallops, grilled veggies and a 1 kg grass fed ribeye for €65. Wow!



How are we going to eat this cow?



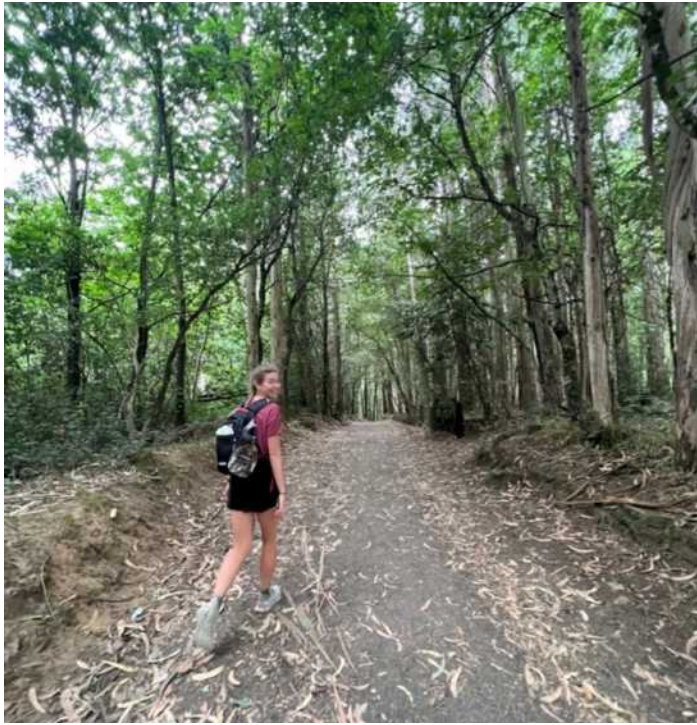
Day 36 - Arzua, 29 (749) KMs - Mon 7/18;

After Breakfast, we have a long day today. Christina building upon the stones on top of the markers.



Little village of Melide.





Needless to say, the 29 KMs flew by, we were in Arzuá ready for a rest, shower and dinner. Our luggage transport has been great, and tracking with an AirTag gave me lots of comfort. The bags always arrived before us. A plug for Jaco Transport.



Awesome flower pots.



After cleaning up, a town visit and dinner.



Most restaurants had a super duty Barista Coffee maker and a fresh squeezed OJ machine.



Mental notes: a peregrino olive oil grower recommended that I always buy olive oil extra fresco; it was weird to see leaves turning color and there was no Camino marker at marathon distance of 42,195 meters.

Day 37 - Arca, 18 (767) KMs - Tue 7/19;

Typically, I write things and make notes as I go along so I don't miss anything for my trip report. Today, I took zero notes, just enjoyed being in the moment walking along with Christina and enjoying the last 2 days. Less than 40 KMs/24 miles to go and my Camino will come to an end.

The day started as they have the last 37 days, big breakfast and go. This morning was raining, although light rain. Other than a brief 30 minute shower a couple weeks ago, I have had no rain.





The rain was short lived and it stopped mid morning. Interesting beer bottle art.



Another shoe shrine; I had never seen sheep with tails, typically for hygiene they are cut off when born; Only 29.787 KMs to Santiago.



Camino Memories en route to Arca, the last overnight before Santiago de Compostela.



Day 38 & 39 - Santiago de Compostela, 21 (788) KMs - Wed 7/20 & Thu 7/21;

My last Camino day, I'm sad but try not to show it. Many Peregrinos with only 17.6 KMs to go. I have read many blogs and they all say it's a very emotional day; it is indeed.



Getting very close and the excitement is building, hard to describe the feeling.



7.660 and 6.550 KMs marker and one coffee before the official welcome sign.





Walking toward the Cathedral, Christina notices someone waving, It was my Camino friend Gisela. I met Gisela in St Jean Pied de Port on my first day of camino. She lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina and loves hiking and adventure. Albe to work remotely, she decided to embark on Camino. We crisscrossed many time throughout our journeys and always had great conversation and company.



And finally, after 38 Days and 800 KMs / 500 miles, I arrived at the Catedral de Santiago de Compostela accompanied by my Christina. What a journey.



I am so grateful to my legs for carrying me such a long distance, wow.



We took so many pictures, and sat and enjoyed to plaza and peregrino watching for a while.



Santiago had beautiful streets adorned with flowers and lined with restaurant.



We found a spot for lunch, and ate excellent seafood, pulpo, oysters, fish, etc.



After lunch, the clouds cleared giving us a different view at the Catedral, of course it was time for more pictures and a visit inside. Equally as impressive, unfortunately, pictures do not do it justice.

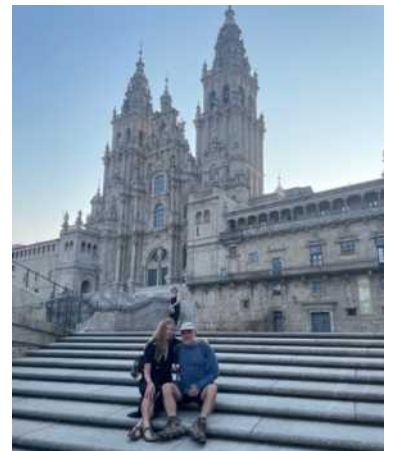


And the sunset made the Cathedral glow, how beautiful.



Day 2 - Thu 7/21

Several days ago we decided to take a bus tour to Fisterra on our 2nd day and it did not disappoint. It's the western most place in Spain. Many walk it from Santiago, it is about a 3 days. Our early morning departure allowed us to take some photos before any peregrinos arrive Santiago.



Being transported on a bus felt strange, my last vehicular ride was 38 days ago on a bus from Pamplona to St Jean Pied de Port. My legs are so used to walking. Coastal Spain is very picturesque.

Our first stop was Ames and Negreria-A Barca



Porto de Muros



Igrexa San Pedro



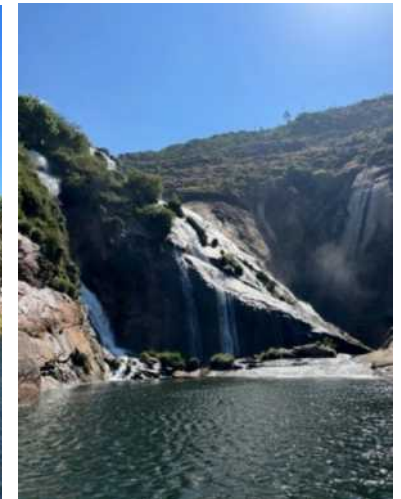
Muros beach, many swimmers.



The small village of Carnotas



Dumbria, the waterfall and hydroelectric power plant share the water.





And now Fisterra, the end of the land and Spain's western most point.





We had a nice pulpo and mussel lunch. This area of Spain produces currently produces over 200,000 metric/440,000 tons of mussels, 40% of the European and 20% of the World production.



After lunch we visited the pier on our way back to the bus to Muxia, our final stop.



Muxia, our final stop.



Inside the church is adorned with ships. Fisherman often built small replicas of their ships and brought them to the church for protection from the rough seas.



Back to Santiago for a steak dinner, our last night at Camino. While 37 days seems like a long time, its not. Each and everyday brought a new experience, a new site lots, new people and lots of introspection. I usually get homesick at around 30 days, and here too, I started missing home around day 30. Being here with my Christina made the trip so great, she is and awesome traveler, low maintenance and an explorer like me.



Train back to Madrid - Fri 7/22

After a good breakfast, we had time in the morning to visit the cathedral's museo before taking the train back to Madrid.



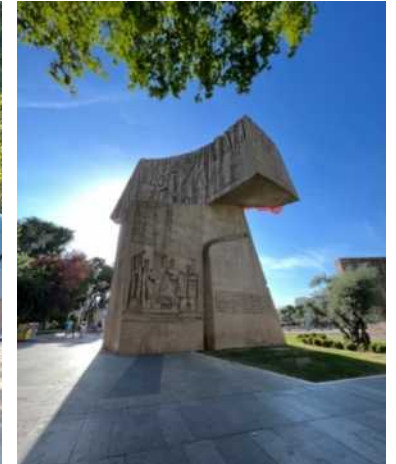
Views from the church's towers



Santiago de Compostela Train Station



Once in Madrid, we did some sightseeing visiting the botanical gardens and the famous Parque de El Retiro.



and had a great dinner at the chi-chi Ten con Ten, and then called it a day. Tomorrow back to Dallas.



I have to say, the Camino reset is a great experience. As I wrap this trip report, I want to do another Camino next year. This time from Lisbon to Porto and Porto coastal to Santiago and perhaps go to Fisterra as well.

