
THE RELUCTANT PILGRIM



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PAUL HUSCHILT

**THE
RELUCTANT PILGRIM**

**AN INCOMPLETE GUIDE TO WALKING
THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO**



SIGNAN PRESS

The Reluctant Pilgrim:
An Incomplete Guide to Walking the Camino de Santiago

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For Kevin, who walked with me these 19 years

and with gratitude to my parents,
for everything else.

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Special thanks, too, to my clients and to the more than 100,000 people who have watched me perform as a professional speaker. You've allowed me to do what I love most – to spread joy by encouraging people to laugh, think and focus on wellness. Your indulgence over the last 11 years has transformed my life and world view. Thank you.

And to the millions of people who have walked the Camino over the 1,200 years of its existence, I both thank you and blame you for the inspiration.

DISCLAIMER

I've always wanted to write an incomplete guide to something, and here it is – as half-baked as I've dared to make it. And yet, I felt it wouldn't be unabridged enough if it didn't include this small disclaimer.

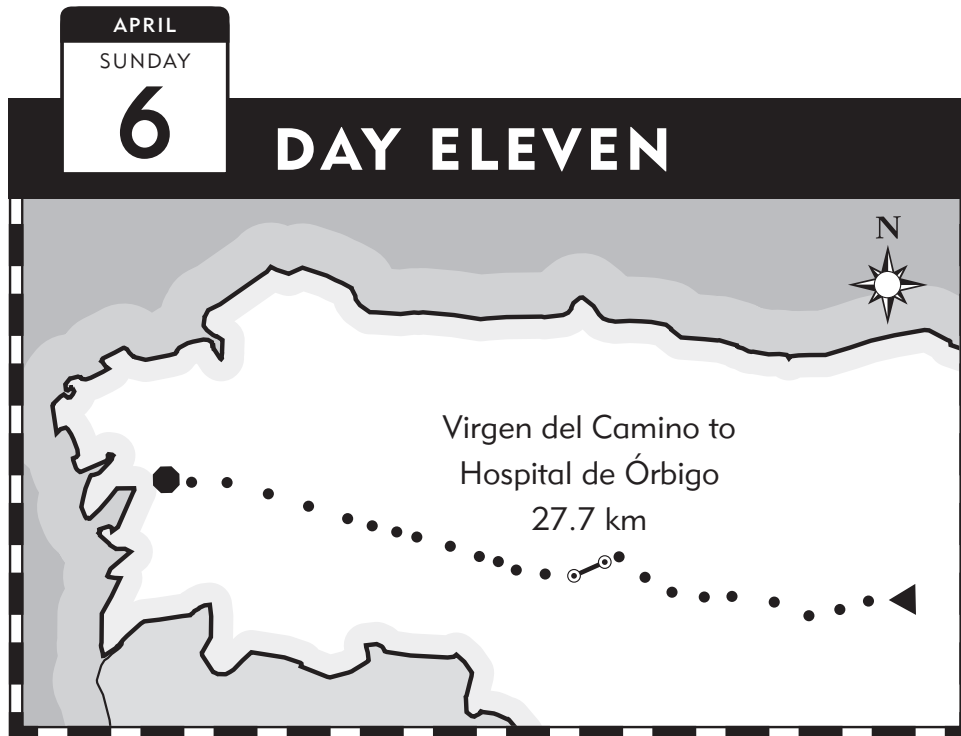
As much as I have tried to provide an accurate, albeit humorous, account of walking the traditional Christian pilgrimage called the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, there are a couple of things you should know. Day 7 was not as sunny as I say, while Day 17 was not as uniformly grey. Looking back, the rain on Day 22 was not as bad, while the rain on Day 23 was worse. We really did do laundry every night, but not everything on the last day was quite as sturdy as I describe. Don't say I didn't warn you.

I also changed the names of people I wrote about so they couldn't sue the pants off me.

Other than that, what I write about is exactly how it happened ... more or less.

It's time to move along now, pilgrim.

Enjoy the walk.



AS THE SUN CAME UP, I saw that wild mustard along the path was covered with frost, and looked like lettuce placed too close to the back of the fridge. Rather than admit that I wished I had warmer clothes, I suggested we stop as soon as we could for breakfast. Within 3 km of starting out, we found an *albergue* which was so large, so new, and so clean that it felt like a four-star hotel (albeit where everybody sleeps in the same room). Famished as always, we ordered Spanish omelette.

«¡You are *ayujadora!*» I said to the young owner as she returned soon after with our food.

She blushed and laughed sweetly.

“*Ayujadora*” is a Spanish word I made up. It means “a very helpful woman”. In Spanish, there is a word “*trabajadora*” which means a woman who works a lot. I just applied the same ending, “*jadora*” to the root of the word “*ayudar*” (to help) and voilà: “*Ayujadora*” and instant rapport! The woman’s response inspired me. I suddenly wanted to help my fellow pilgrims connect more with the locals. Over the next 24 km, I stopped here

and there to draft PAUL'S INCOMPLETE GUIDE TO PILGRIM SPANISH in my notebook.



Paul's Incomplete Guide to Pilgrim Spanish

PRONUNCIATION

As selfish as it might seem, the Spanish have little thought for us when they open their mouths and speak in ways that only they understand.

The Letters "G" and "J"

The Spanish pronounce the letters "G" and "J" as though they have gone into anaphylactic shock. (Pronounced gutturally "Kh-h-h-h," while vibrating that dangly thing at the back of your throat.) If you say "*trabajadora*" and an American quickly comes over and performs the Heimlich Manoeuvre on you, you've got it right.

The Letter "H"

Although the Spanish do not pronounce the letter "H," they still insist on having one.

The Letter "S"

The Spanish have a soft spot for sibilance, as expressed through the Castilian lisp. The more pronounced the lisp, the more authentic the Castilian. Whether it's from belly dancers or conquistadors, "S" is pronounced "th."

The Letter "C"

The above applies equally to the letter "C" before an "E" or "I" and the letter "Z."

The Letter "V"

Pronounced "B" as in "bat." "Virgin" in Spanish is "*virgen*," but is pronounced "birgen."

COGNATES

Cognates are words so similar in Spanish as in English that only a moron could not tell what they mean. Here is what I hope will be an ego-building list.

adventure – *aventura*
 catastrophe – *catástrofe*
 direction – *dirección*
 fatigue – *fatiga*
 hotel – *hotel*
 imagine – *imaginar*
 participation – *participación*
 reality – *realidad*
 transformation – *transformación*

WORD ENDINGS

Adverbs often end in “*mente*.” For example:

absolutely – *absolutamente*
 finally – *finalmente*
 immediately – *inmediatamente*

But try also:

English	Wrong but Close Enough	Spanish
assiduously	assiduously- <i>mente</i>	<i>asiduamente</i>
favourably	favourably- <i>mente</i>	<i>favorablemente</i>
unexpectedly	unexpectedly- <i>mente</i>	<i>de forma imprevista</i>

Spanish nouns often end in “*encia*.” Replicate the above technique to invent useful words such as bread-*encia*, butter-*encia* and even spork-*encia*.

PLEASE NOTE: As you can see from the above examples, the Spanish take many English words and make them their own by simply adding longer, fancier endings. This is because they get all romantic over the sound of their mother tongue. It is ill-advised to interrupt Spaniards before their final “*encia*” or “*mente*.” If you do, they may well add longer and fancier endings to things they already said, complicating matters even more.

Generally speaking, if it takes you longer to say it in Spanish, your Spanish is good.

USEFUL PHRASES – LOCATIONS

Where is the post office?

¿Dónde está la oficina de correos?

When is the bloody thing open?

¿Cuándo está abierta esta oficina de mierda?

Use also with:

bank – *banco*

supermarket – *supermercado*

hardware store – *ferretería*

bakery – *panadería*

USEFUL PHRASES FOR MAKING FRIENDS

Your dog has really short legs.

Su perro tiene patas cortas.

Easy on the chorizo tomorrow; you are farting in your sleep again.

Mañana, no comes tanto chorizo; de nuevo estas echando pedos cuando duermes.

Your big toe looks really bad. Stop walking or cut it off. Can I help you?

El aspecto de su dedo gordo del pie no es bueno. Parese o amputelo. ¿Puedo ayudarle?

THE END

A SHORT 24 KM LATER and I could see that my guide to pilgrim Spanish was going to come in handy. In the shadowy inner courtyard of the parish hostel of Hospital de Órbigo sat an old Spanish woman who looked like she was born with a cigarette in her mouth.

“I got this,” I volunteered, as I approached the woman to register.

«Hola», I said.

«La la la la la la-mente», she replied, filtering the evening air through her cigarette.

«La la la la, la la la la-encia», she added, over-enunciating this time.

«¿Qué?» I asked.

“What is she saying?” asked Rita.

“I’m not sure. She has a very particular accent.”

“That would be a Spanish accent,” Rita deadpanned.

«*Credenciales por favor*», said the lady, suddenly speaking a Spanish I could understand.

We handed her our pilgrim passports and she stamped them in between heavy puffs.

After handing them back, she asked, «¿*Cuales son sus nombres?*»

«*Tres*», I said.

The old lady rolled her eyes.

«Our *nombres* is *tres*», I repeated, counting us off: “One. Two. Three.”

«¿*Cuales son sus nombres?*» she repeated.

“Maybe she’s hard of hearing,” I said to Rita.

«¡*Sus nombres!*» she repeated again.

«¡*Tre-e-e-es!*» I repeated louder, drawing it out so she would understand.

Putting her hand on my shoulder, Rita said calmly in my right ear, “I think she wants to know our names.”

“Yes,” said Fujiko, holding her electronic translator. “In Spanish, *nombre* means name. N-O-M-B-R-E. ‘Name.’”

«*Sus nombres, por favor*», puffed the woman, wryly smiling.

“Fujiko,” recited Fujiko: “F U...”

The old lady stared blankly at her.

“F U...,” repeated Fujiko.

“F U...,” repeated Fujiko louder.

Rita and I exchanged glances. A tear rolled down her cheek.

“I have an idea-encia,” I said. «¿*Write-o our nombres?*»

«*Si*», said the old woman, passing the book over to me across the tiny table.

As I wrote our names in her book, the old woman told us where everything was, while pointing in a zillion different directions.

“Got that?” asked Rita when the lady was done, to which I said, «*Nada*».

