

# The Smart Camino: Pilgrimage in the Internet Age

By: Nancy L. Frey, PhD

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## 1. Introduction (5 min)

In a way this feels like a coming home. In January 1995 I came to London to attend the AGM and other Practical Pilgrim sessions as part of my anthropological research into the late 20<sup>th</sup> C rise of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. I felt at the time and continue to feel very grateful to the Confraternity of St James and its members who generously welcomed me here years ago and opened their doors and minds to my research into the Camino (Slides with Howard, Marion, Alison, William, Laurie, the Foxes, James). Little did I know what a lasting impression these pilgrims and the thousands of pilgrims I have met since then would have on my heart and psyche. Thank you for inviting me back here all these years later.

Some of you may know who I am but others probably will not and you may wonder why I would be asked to talk about 25 years on the Camino. My first direct contact with the Camino was in 1992. As a doctoral student in the Cultural Anthropology department at UC Berkeley, I was in Spain looking for the topic for my dissertation. I reached Santiago in July at the height of the Feast of St. I saw pilgrims arriving into the Plaza de Obradoiro with their packs and scallop shells. In stark contrast to other Catholic pilgrimage, such as Lourdes, the suffering body was not in evidence. In fact many glowed or looked as if they had been through a powerful physical and mental journey. I sensed almost instantly that I had found my project: to understand the modern resurgence of this grand medieval pilgrimage. To learn about the pilgrimage I knew that I would have to both study its history and participant in it as pilgrim. In 1993 I walked from Somport in France to Compostela over 6 weeks. Initially an academic

exercise, the pilgrimage ended up leaving a deep and lasting impression that continues to today. In 1994-95 I returned to Spain to conduct my field research and worked at six different pilgrim's refuges or *albergues* including a memorable stint at Rabanal del Camino in July 1995 (which I repeated in 1997). I lived in Santiago de Compostela, traveled and walked parts of many different Caminos and visited pilgrims in their homes to do follow-up interviews in England, Spain and Germany. I attended pilgrim's association meetings, retreats and as many events Camino related as possible. The outcome of my research was my book *Pilgrim Stories. On and Off the Road to Santiago*.

The Camino gave me many gifts, some very unexpected, and ultimately changed my anticipated life course. In 1997 I cycled the Camino again from Roncesvalles to take photos for my book with a pilgrim I had met during my research and who became my life companion. In 1998 we led six students from Roncesvalles walking the Camino and leading an academic course. Since then we have worked together teaching and guiding people from around the world about Spain and the Camino. Consequently, it's been my remarkable fortune to have walked on the Camino several times a year for the last 17 years meeting pilgrims, hearing their stories, watching their journeys. People sometimes ask me if I get tired of being on the Camino. I can honestly say that No, for me it's always a landscape of discovery and a privilege to share in someone's potentially transformative journey.

This leads me to my current research. For many years, I didn't think the Camino had changed very much beyond expanding numbers and progressively increasing infrastructure. When on the Camino all of these 25 years, I have never stopped observing, listening, interviewing and analyzing the pilgrimage experience. It was around 2006 that I started to notice changes. At first the change was slow and subtle and then it became progressively more rapid. For me the most profound change on the Camino since the publication of *Pilgrim Stories* in 1998 is the incorporation of new media technology into the Camino on the level of infrastructure, planning, contact and on the experience of being a pilgrim.

### 3. General Changes in Camino (10 min)

Marion Marples contacted me to speak at the AGM and suggested it would be interesting to hear “an overview from your perspective of the current state of the camino and the changes since *Pilgrim Stories* was published.” Before I address changes wrought during the Internet Age, here’s a brief trip down memory lane of a few changes in the Camino over the last 25 years. This is a very general overview and by no means an exhaustive list. To prepare and illustrate this talk I had many old slides and negatives digitized from 1993-1997.

One caveat about Change: I’m very aware that the Camino has been in a constant state of flux and change at every point in its development since Pelayo supposedly first saw that star in the woods over Libredón in the 9thC AD. Many people yearn for the vague ‘medieval’ experience but the Camino never is what it was. One constant I have heard repeatedly over the years is that people typically think the Camino was ‘better’ when they did it which, of course, is a perfectly valid sentiment. It probably was “better” precisely because it was their first time and there’s nothing like the first time. The Camino will continue to evolve and change a reflection of our times, values, resources and psyches. It simply is what it is now.

#### **Pilgrim’s Office and Statistics**

I thought it might be interesting to start out with a few statistics from my book (mid-1990s) and 2015<sup>i</sup> (the 2016 year-end stats still not compiled). Statistics are a sticky issue on the Camino. The only consistent records are those maintained by the Pilgrim’s Office in Santiago statistics and these only reflect the pilgrims who apply for the Compostela Certificate and miss many others. Nonetheless, they are the best available.<sup>ii</sup>

**Numbers: 1996:** 23,218 pilgrims got Compostela, **2015:** 262,516. The Camino's popularity as an international destination continues to grow. Excluding the Holy Years, the Camino's growth steadily increases with no end in sight.

**Sex: 1996:** 65% men and 35% women, **2015:** 53% men and 47% women. With greater popularity increase in women.

**Internationalization: 1994:** 33 nationalities **1996:** 64 nationalities **2015:** 153 nationalities. The Camino continues to attract travelers from far-flung places.

**Top 5 nationalities:**

**1996:** Spain (70%), France, Germany, Holland, Belgium

**2015:** Spain (46.6%), Italy, Germany, USA, Portugal, (France #6, UK #7 and Korea #10)

**Mode of Travel: 1996:** 71% walk, 28% cycled; **2015:** 90.1% walk; 9,6% cycle. Cyclists were always in the minority but their numbers are waning as the mental shift has occurred that this is a 'walking route'.

**Roads Traveled – Development of other Routes:**

**1996:** Camino Francés – no specific data – vast majority; **2004** – Francés: 77%, Portuguese – 8% **2015:** Camino Francés – 65.6%, Portuguese – 16.4% and Norte – 6%

**Acquisition of the Compostela Certificate**

I've debated about whether or not to bring up changes related to the Compostela Certificate as this is a sticky subject among the pilgrim community that often degenerates into non-productive and heated discussions about "authentic" and "real" pilgrims and could be an entire presentation on its own.

Nonetheless, I would like to make a general observation. As the pilgrimage unfolded in the 20<sup>th</sup> C getting the Compostela Certificate was most often a very meaningful memento but not necessarily the **objective** of one's Camino. As the Camino has grown in popularity worldwide and gets regularly listed as one of the "World's Great Walks" the idea has grown that one of the principal objectives is to "Walk the

last 100KM to get the Certificate”.<sup>iii</sup> This focus has heightened conflicts among some pilgrims who believe that long distance pilgrimages are innately better than short distance pilgrimages and that the **form** of the pilgrimage (distance, where you start, what carry) is more important than the **content**. Even though clearly inner miles that are walked cannot be judged by superficial criteria of form, they regularly are by longer-distance pilgrims who disdain the 100KM pilgrims. I do not have time here to discuss this in-depth but at least two of the consequences have been 1) the increase in numbers and demand to walk the last 100Km, especially from Sarria putting a lot of pressure on that section; and 2) the Cathedral’s decision to incorporate a **Certificate of Distance** in 2014 to capitulate to the ego needs of long-distance walkers who place more emphasis on form than content in the pilgrimage experience. As one man wrote on a pilgrim forum, when the decision was announced: “My wife, who walked only from Sarria, said I should get a different one since I started at SJPP!”<sup>iv</sup> The goal of the Camino becomes the pride and the Certificate and reinforces a competitive model of pilgrimage.

### **Motivations and Expectations.**

To get the Compostela Certificate at the Pilgrim’s Office you need to state your motive because it is supposed to be given only to religiously motivated pilgrims.<sup>v</sup> The Church has progressively become more lenient on how it defines religious. In my book I recount two controversial cases that would never occur today (a spiritually oriented Japanese Buddhist who was denied the Compostela and a Protestant man grieving for his son was finally given the Compostela after a lengthy interview with Don Jaime). In the 1990s the Pilgrim’s Office accepted the following religious motives: a) spiritual, b) religious and c) religious-cultural. On the Pilgrim’s Office website in 2017, the motives have evolved to: “Make the pilgrimage for religious or spiritual reasons, or at least an attitude of search”.<sup>vi</sup> The religious-cultural motive no longer exists and the vaguer “search” has been incorporated to attend to the vast array of people who now find their way to the Camino.

In April 2015 I conducted a survey with follow-up interviews about tech and the contemporary pilgrimage experience at the Pilgrim's Office. I was very surprised by the results. In my survey pool of 51 (representative of pilgrims arriving that day), not a single person indicated that "culture or history" motivated their journey. Rather the new primary motivation was "Experience", " i.e. "having the experience" or wanting a "new experience". As a 'world walk' the Camino is now a 'bucket list' trip for many people who want to have and share the experience. "Personal" reasons including a "time out" was the other major motivation among the pilgrims in the survey group and gets more to the idea of an inner journey with self-reflection. <sup>vii</sup>

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

With the increase in pilgrims, the infrastructure and pilgrim based services (albergues, shops, vending machines, etc) has increased dramatically. The growth of private albergues with a standard fee has completely outmoded the donation-based model started in the early 1990s loosely following the tradition of monastic hospitality for pilgrims and the poor. Small towns that did not have any or very few services in the 1990, now have hopping pilgrimage-based economies – Moratinos, Hornillos del Camino, Rabanal del Camino.

There's more competition between these services vying for pilgrims' attention and increased commercialization. Signs on the edge of villages to advertise albergues are increasingly common. The woman who opened the first pilgrim's refuge in 1990 in Hornillos del Camino, found herself criticized in 2010 by albergue owners in Fromista who thought that her donation-based refuge would be unfair competition.

Sections of Camino have been destroyed or continuously "improved" and it gets progressively more difficult to get muddy boots.

Increased growth has also brought increased regulation of activities linked with the pilgrimage meaning more red tape, bureaucracy and licenses. Good Samaritans like the Englishman John, The Pilgrim Helper, who offered free pilgrim attention out of his mobile refuge, found himself no longer welcome at the Sierra del Perdon because he needed a license as his free service competed with the local vendor who set up shop.

## **EQUIPMENT**

Pilgrims in the 1990s were pretty low-tech and “come as you are”. The current high-tech pilgrims weigh all the objects in their packs by the ounce, carry super-light, quick-dry, UVA protected clothes and carries physio tape instead of duct tape.

In the same vein, in the 1990s pilgrims often found their walking sticks (preferably hazelnut) early in their walk. The stick would become a companion and sometimes carved becoming a special map of the journey. Pilgrims still carry sticks but walking poles predominate.

## **INVASION OF OUR ATTENTIONAL SPACE**

This is part of larger societal trend that public spaces are open for publicity with advertisers constantly vying for our attention.<sup>viii</sup> On Camino now anybody with a cause, albergue, or other business creates a sticker to plaster on any open space to try and grab your attention. Since 2012 there has been a huge increase of **graffiti** on way markers, especially in Galicia. In addition to the typical Izzy was Here and I Love Pepe, now see ads, web addresses, Pilgrim Hash Tags and a even commentary on popular mobile phone game: Pokémon GO, pilgrims, which keeps pilgrims faces to their phones and off the Camino.

## **THE CATHEDRAL: Security, Protecting Patrimony and Limited Access**

The rise of Muslim terrorism changed security measures and pilgrim backpacks are no longer are piled up on the columns. In fact you can't bring backpacks into the Cathedral anymore.<sup>ix</sup>

## **DOGS:**

The fear of wild dogs and dogs in general was very real in the 1990s and even into the early 20<sup>th</sup> C<sup>x</sup>. From the dogs' point of view, pilgrims have gone from being strangers (something to bark at) to familiars (a normal part of the landscape). Dogs on the Camino Frances are now bored by pilgrims and the sound of passing sticks puts them to sleep. The taming of the Camino dogs is wonderful metaphor for the progressive domestication of the Camino over the years.

### **Changes related to Internet Age (30 min)**

“Nothing vast enters the life of mortals without a curse.” ---Sophocles

To compare the Camino from a pre-Internet time to an “Internet Age”, I’m using the year 2000 as a rough cut-off. Even though internet technologies were used on the Camino pre-2000, their use in the Camino pilgrimage experience was significantly more limited and thereby less impacting.<sup>xi</sup> I would like to make a general observation about tech.<sup>xii</sup> Technology (and by that I mean social media, mobile phones, Apps, the internet, etc) is a tool. Understood as a tool it is inherently neither good nor bad but neither is it neutral, many products are specifically designed to keep the mind engaged and users coming back for more.<sup>xiii</sup> My research on the influence that media tech has on the Camino and pilgrims is not a judgment on whether it is good or bad. Sometimes people say to me, “Tech? What do you mean? It has nothing to do with it. It doesn’t impact the Camino at all. It’s just part of everyday life.” My role as an anthropologist is to make evident our implicit assumptions and how these guide our actions in ways we may not be aware of. Each person needs to come to their own conclusions on the role they want tech to play in their experiences.

### **Pilgrimage is a process**

In *Pilgrim Stories* the structure I gave to the book follows the idea of pilgrimage as a rite of passage. Underlying all rites of passage is a basic three-step sequence of movement: Separation, the Limen (In

this case the journey along the Camino), and the Return Home.<sup>xiv</sup> No matter what the motivation, the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage follows the same pattern; the individual leaves the familiarity of home, begins a new identity as an anonymous pilgrim, and is often outside of one's comfort zone. The change in external conditions can be destabilizing and disorienting and stimulate internal changes leading to insight and reflection. The final stage is the Return to daily life somehow different than before one began. In the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage both the physical and mental elements of this process, working in tandem, are highly salient. **While the physical component has remained relatively the same, for most people the mental component has changed dramatically in the Internet Age.**

Over the last 15 years, I've witnessed the progressive disruption of this three-stage.<sup>xv</sup> **The Internet Age has brought a new layer of experience (the Cyber/Virtual Camino) and potentially increased Mental Activity that did not exist before as a reality or a perceived need.** Also, as media tech becomes habitual in the Camino **the boundaries between these different stages blur** as people move in and out of them on the mental plane, ultimately impacting the power of the overall experience.

### **The Before in the Internet Age**

Feeling anxiety before launching oneself into the unknown is a normal and universal human emotion.<sup>xvi</sup> One way that people manage anxiety (as well as to heighten potential enjoyment and success of the encounter with the unknown) is to prepare both physically and mentally. Before the rise of the Internet preparation was mostly limited to books, articles, word of mouth, Pilgrim Preparation talks and the like. Since the mid to late- 1990s and especially from the year 2000 on, the amount of information available on every conceivable aspect of the Camino is remarkable. With the birth of new forms of human communication (such as websites, blogging, vlogging, text messaging, online forums and social media groups), the Internet provides an easily accessible gold mine of information that now permits the potential and armchair pilgrim worldwide to find and get answers to any question they might have. If

someone cannot find the answer through already established written sources on the web, questions can be directed to on-line Camino de Santiago forums, newsgroups and websites specifically dedicated to helping potential pilgrims develop and plan their journeys. Potential pilgrims can even pay for and attend classes to learn how to be a good pilgrim.<sup>xvii</sup> The Camino's accessibility for consumption and participation has vastly increased for audiences that would have previously missed out due to lack of information or perceived support and "do-ability."

While the wealth of resources has numerous benefits, pilgrims also experience drawbacks related to "too much information". Potential pilgrims can get bogged down in the minutiae, feel overwhelmed by the quantity, confused by conflicting info and not be clear on when "enough is enough". When scanning forums and Facebook pages to see what kinds of concerns potential pilgrims have popular topics in the Internet Age (from 2007 on when Camino Forums began to take off) some include: raincoat vs. poncho, toilet etiquette in albergues, is it difficult to make friends on the Camino?, and 30 Dos and Don'ts for Newbies. In fact, instead of diminishing anxiety, the information overload can prey on people's fears and increase anxiety leading some people to cut off their forum connections before going<sup>xviii</sup>. As one 20-something male wrote:

I leave next Tuesday and I've decided to stop reading the forum now as its mostly just worrying me.

Every day I'm reading how there are no beds.

Every day I'm reading that you can't walk your own Camino because you need to plan for the people who get up at 5am or only walk 15km, and are taking all the beds by midday.

I keep on reading about people not acting in the spirit of the Camino.

I just want to get there now as my amazing journey is starting to seem a little less.

Hopefully a break from the forum will allow my preconceptions to equalise again and allow me to regain my excitement.

Rant over! Aug 19, 2013

The perception of how difficult it is to prepare for the Camino has progressively increased over the years and you can witness it in the evolution of Camino guidebooks. For example, the first modern guidebook to the Camino de Santiago, written by Don Elias Valiña in 1985 (and then published in English in 1992), contains one page of commonsensical preparation advice called "Getting Your Bearings".<sup>xix</sup>

Over the years guidebook introductions progressively got longer and longer leading in 2011 to the birth of a new genre of guidebook solely devoted to helping you prepare to do the Camino.<sup>xx</sup> Ironically, as the Camino has progressively and objectively become easier to plan, organize and do with increased information sources available from the comfort of home, efficient way- marking, and increased on-the-ground services readily available people now flounder in the morass of information and may need a guidebook to pull them free of it. Do you objectively need more help to do the Camino in 2016 than you did in the 1990s or have we made it more complicated than it is?<sup>xxi</sup>

### **Creation of Pilgrim Identity Pre-Camino and attachment to a Virtual Community**

Another new facet of pilgrimage in the Internet Age is the development of one's virtual Pilgrim Identity and participation in real time in other people's Camino experience before even setting foot on the Camino through participation in online Camino Forums, FaceBook groups and the like. In 2008 I began to follow Forum threads and noticed that potential pilgrims began to start threads and identify themselves in jest as part of the "Class of 2008".<sup>xxii</sup> A participant's forum engagement can span days, months or even years before going. Some potential forum pilgrims post hundreds of comments before they ever set foot on the Camino and engage actively with other first time pilgrims, "Veteran Posters" and "On the Road" pilgrims who connect to the Forum from the Camino to check in or ask questions. These continuing Class of... groups share information on their upcoming journeys, motivations for going, encourage one another in their efforts and express gratitude for the Forum. Virtual connectivity to the Camino and an online Camino community is intensely heightened in the Internet Age.

The boundaries between the three stages of pilgrimage blur significantly as the Future/Virtual pilgrim enters the 'Live' Camino via the Virtual Camino. Virtual pilgrims create memories about places and form impressions of people, places, landscapes and experiences before setting foot into them.<sup>xxiii</sup> How does this impact the real, on the ground experience once the Virtual pilgrim is literally on the

Camino in terms of expectations and attitudes about what their Camino should or ought to be? I'm not advocating not preparing but rather encourage potential pilgrims to use common sense and reflect on the impact of being hyper-informed. Discovery, wonder and surprise are elements often traditionally sought after in such a journey into the unknown, like the Camino, and can be impacted by extensive pre-activity and engagement.

## **WHAT TO TAKE**

Packing lists have evolved significantly since the 1990s. Now in 2017 the vast majority of pilgrims carry a mobile communication device (eg, Smartphone, iPhone, tablet, pre-paid phones with Spanish sims) and will upload a Camino App as a guidebook, reference, connection point, etc.<sup>xxiv</sup> In Pilgrim Stories I made reference to one man with a mobile phone on the Camino that I encountered. An oddity. As our world has evolved over the last 25 years, the desire to connect to virtually both in and outside the Camino has progressively increased. I've also watched the evolution of Forum conversations regarding tech going from "Should I take mobile tech?" to "What mobile tech should I take?" These themes often overlapped and the topics generally created heated debate between self-defined "techno-geeks" and "purists" regarding the virtues and disadvantages of tech on the Camino. By 2014-2015 the bulk of questions revolve around the technical aspects and practicalities of phone usage rather than questioning the role tech might have in one's journey.

Here's a list of tech related items potentially on your packing list taken from a sample of thousands of Camino packing lists on-line and the photo that accompanied this blog entry. The author begins with the comment: "When it came to tech, I wanted to take as little as possible to both remain in the moment and keep the weight down." On his list, made in 2015, he includes: a 4-way USB charger, sports watch, portable battery, Smartphone (as a camera, communication device and with an uploaded guidebook App), cables and noise-isolating earphones.<sup>xxv</sup> He mentions the sports watch that he uses to

monitor his Camino. It's progressively more common for people to monitor their journeys and bodies with Fit Bits and other Wearable devices to track number of daily steps, pace, distance, heart rate, calories consumed, start and stop times, etc.<sup>xxvi</sup> To keep their tech charged, some people bring their own solar panels attached to their backpacks. Are these new "essential" items of the Internet Age based on a real need or a need we've created by our progressively tech-centered lives?

### **During – Once on the Camino**

#### **OUTCOMES OF PREPARATION**

As a result of preparation, some people do make better choices for themselves but it is readily apparent they many 21<sup>st</sup> C pilgrims still experience the same problems (both physical and preparation-wise) they did in the 1990s despite all the information available. The fumbling, the making of mistakes and dealing with the "problems" or adversities are actually an important part of a pilgrimage process the pilgrim often goes through to gain insight and reduce mental weights. Reading about it online or in a book is clearly not enough. For example, "reducing the bag", ie, realizing you don't need everything you brought and letting some of go, is often an important mental and physical step towards discovering the power of **simplicity**. Shedding the physical weight in the bag often then leads to the subsequent realization and comparison to one's daily life – "Ah, my life is cluttered and materialistic. There is a lot I can let go of. In the Camino I feel so good and have so little."

#### **MOBILE TECH ON THE CAMINO**

By 2017 most pilgrims carry a mobile device (as a minimum) on the Camino but there is a considerable spectrum of usage and level of connectivity. Generally, people who are more connected at home will also be more connected on the Camino unless they make specific, conscious decisions regarding tech usage. And likewise someone whose is less connected in daily life will probably tend to

be less connected in the Camino. Some people are aware that tech habits might interfere in the process of pilgrimage as a meditative activity and make choices to be less connected. Many are not aware especially among the younger generation that grew up in a connected world and may have never experienced sustained disconnection in their lives. Others simply embrace technology and revel in all the ways they can remain connected, monitor and share their pilgrimages and keep their normal channels open and daily life activities up to date. For many tech connectivity will seem like a non-issue.<sup>xxvii</sup> One pilgrim described in a 2016 article his surprise in how attitudes had changed on the Camino since his first pilgrimage in 2007:

Behavior that is acceptable in public today — such as posing for selfies, constantly checking email, posting and texting in meetings and in class and in almost any social situation with friends and family — would have seemed odd, perhaps even rude back then. But things have changed.<sup>xxviii</sup>

#### **THE EXPERIENCE OF TIME AND THE INCORPORATION OF TECH TIME**

In the 1990s when you left, you experienced a bracketed period of time away where there was a significant mental and physical disconnection from home and the world imposed by the tech limited circumstances pre-Internet. Studies show that nature has a calming effect on the human mind<sup>xxix</sup> and walking is a meditative act which also has calming effects on the mind and can be therapeutic<sup>xxx</sup>. You found yourself grounded intensely in the present, in the Here and Now. It was hard to escape unless you chose to leave the Camino. The simplified day consisted of getting up, packing the bag, eating, finding the arrows and walking, mostly in nature. **The combination of enforced reduced mental activity, the therapeutic and meditative powers of walking<sup>xxxi</sup> and the calming effect of nature led typically to a profound change in the pilgrim's sense of time and place.**

People often carry a layer of stress in their daily lives, like a cork. Reducing the mental responsibilities, activities and stress in the Camino pre-Internet, allowed the release of that cork. As the cork popped unanticipated, unforced and often confusing upwellings of emotion and memories poured

forth. Over the course of the journey these were often cathartic and profound. Pilgrims wrote in diaries and occasionally chatted with family but these experiences built up inside of the pilgrim, had to be dealt with in the moment, became layered and mulled over forming a large 'whole' within that bracketed time away. Often it was not until the Return that the pilgrim was able to begin to process the events of the journey.

In the Internet Age the power of the physical journey (the walking and the calming effect of nature) remains clearly present but the mental journey is significantly altered. People still face adversity through blisters, pains and day-to-day trials that arise. Pain helps anchor pilgrims to the here and now. But Tech usage helps keep that cork of stress in place rather than remove it making it more difficult to access those inner worlds. Your mind is kept engaged and distracted with status updates and notifications, taking photos and selfies, checking and posting social media, body and journey monitoring, online bill paying, checking the news, informing your family and friends, writing a blog, working, reading reviews of albergues, making reservations for the next day, checking your on-line dating site or resolving problems mediated by your phone. Rather than getting out of your comfort zone, it's much easier to stay in it. Instead of a global, bracketed time away mentally and physically in a unique place and space, Internet Age pilgrims progressively tend to have a fragmented experience where their bodies are physically in the Camino but their minds are often switch-tasking<sup>xxxii</sup> between different virtual realities disassociated from the Camino at hand. Rather than being in the Camino people seem to want to constantly get out of it. It's harder and harder for people to simply be content and be where they are.

#### **MOBILE TECH PILGRIMS HAVE NEW NEEDS and NEEDINESS**

**"If you have a voice that could have a say in getting this fixed, what the Camino needs is better bandwidth, a larger WiFi zone and more outlets to charge devices."** American pilgrim (age 72), Sept 2014, San Juan de Ortega<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In the 1990s there was little to no perception that a Camino pilgrim “needed” a mobile device to do the Camino. Now, in 2017, there’s a very high perception that it is necessary to have a phone and that doing so will improve your Camino experience. And, not having a phone is even considered irresponsible. The usual reasons given are safety, information, contact with family and convenience. The presence of mobile tech, and the demand for it, has created a new layer of “needs” for the pilgrim. The question in the 1990s for the needy pilgrim when entering an albergue was “Do you have hot water?” and then it became “Do you have a washing machine?” From roughly 2010 and beyond it became “Is there WiFi?” As more and more accommodations have WiFi (up to 90% as reported by one pilgrim in 2015<sup>xxxiv</sup>) it is less of a question than a given. The new question is simply “What’s the password?” or if there is no WiFi some pilgrims will move on to the next albergue. This new need for connectivity also reinforces a layer of necessary “end of the day” tech activities for the pilgrim which requires significant mental engagement and distraction. It’s now an invisible weight people are unaware they are carrying but that increases one’s mental baggage substantially depending on how one uses it. Also giving people everything they want doesn’t necessarily make them happier. It tends to simply make them more needy and demanding.

### **My TECH TIME**

With the fragmentation of the Camino as a global, bracketed mental experience, the sense of the day’s routine appears the same but now contains significant differences.<sup>xxxv</sup> As this technology became more accessible from roughly 2009 on in bars, albergues and places where pilgrims gather, people progressively spent more time connecting. Since 2012 when stopping at a bar or a café, pilgrims began to habitually take out phones. Also, when finished walking, settling into the accommodation, and attending to mundane activities like wash, the new normal is to have some “Tech Time”. In addition to the tech activities I mentioned above en route or throughout the course of the day, people also spend

their free time in the albergues using their phones to play games, watch movies, read books, read and respond to threads on the Camino forum or FB group, Skype a loved one.

How much time people spend online varies considerably but it is a reality for most to spend some time each day. Pilgrims also learn from each other and do what others do. Some people have personal rules to manage their technology. One woman explained to me that she created for herself a “switch-off zone” when she turned off her phone while walking. The rest of the day is still in the Camino but its okay to be tech connected. In general, it’s common now to have reduced mental activity when walking and then increased mental activity during breaks and the end of the day.

### **INCREASE VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS AND DECREASE FACE-TO-FACE CONNECTIONS**

Ease of social relations and community building, one’s Camino Family (as it’s now called), continue to be highly valued among Santiago pilgrims. How people develop and maintain bonds has undergone changes in the Internet Age. Cyclists have lost their “pony express” role connecting waylaid walkers and lost loves. It’s no longer necessary in the Internet Age.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Cyclists generally liked this role but this connection point which helped reduce resent between the two groups has essentially been lost.

Internet Age pilgrims continue to randomly meet up, form groups and may or may not share contact info. The increased numbers of walkers and accommodations means that it’s harder to always run into the same people. When contact info is shared, it’s often a mobile phone number, WhatsApp or FB acct, and maybe an email address with the older crowd. To contact another pilgrim, texting is common and meeting up has become much easier. Depending on the information shared, one’s anonymity, highly valued in the pre-Internet, is potentially reduced because anyone can access “who you are” through an Internet search.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### **Pilgrim community impacted by My Tech Time**

Internet Age pilgrims' "tech time" practices increasingly impact the social aspect of the Camino. Pilgrims are less likely to reach out to others, if your social and emotional needs are being met through your device and your virtual connections. In the afternoon and evening, due to bandwidth limitations in albergues pilgrims gather around the WiFi zone, to connect and have their tech time. Pilgrims are increasingly "alone together" borrowing from sociologist Sherry Turkle's work.<sup>xxxviii</sup> One long-term *hospitalera* in the meseta explained in 2015 how WiFi worked in her albergue in the meseta: Sometimes she would forget to turn on the WiFi in the morning and people would ask her to do. She commented, "they get agitated if they can't get online". She also shared that "As an innkeeper it's great because WiFi is like sweets for kids, a pacifier." She explained that if she wanted some peace and quiet, "I give everyone the password and then they all hook-up, and they get looking at their own individual screens contentedly<sup>xxxix</sup> Potential bonding experiences are missed if you are busy doing something else."<sup>xl</sup>

## **RELATIONSHIP TO HOME**

Going back to pilgrimage as a rite of passage, Leaving Home entailed a physical and mental break and transition between the familiar to the unknown. There was an implicit mutual understanding between home and the traveler that communication would be very limited, irregular and mostly one way (initiated by the Pilgrim). Both Home and the Traveler/Pilgrim accepted these limitations with some exceptions as a normal, and often difficult, part of "going away" and "being left". Leaving might also be a tremendous relief coupled with excitement of going on an anticipated journey with new adventures waiting. There had to be a basic trust and letting go on both sides.

In the Internet Age, the Pilgrim's relationship to Home is radically transformed on the mental level. Physically the pilgrim leaves but typically maintains a more heightened mental proximity to home and the world in general. One common reason given for carrying tech is to allay fears, report back and keep in touch with loved ones. "Worry from Home" projected onto the Pilgrim increases the sense of

“needing to be connected” and being “on-call”. Pilgrims also want to share their experiences or know about home. That need to constantly reinforce home that all is “okay” is a shift in our attitudes regarding separation in travel. The old adage “No news is good news” appears less and less relevant suggesting that our contemporary virtual relationships have a greater fragility and they need constant, often public, reinforcement.<sup>xii</sup> In addition, pilgrims now receive constant feedback about their experiences from friends, loved ones and unknown audience members. Here once again, we see the blurring between the different phases of pilgrimage. People often experienced a tremendous sense of freedom by going on the Camino. You could be a different person and experience new and different things without judgment or ties or worry about what “home” might think. If you are constantly reporting back, you may inhibit yourself from experimenting with self and others.<sup>xiii</sup>

The sense of Missing and Longing for loved ones when far away can be an important step in realizing their value to you. Connection can provide tremendous support for a pilgrim especially when feeling down, tired, insecure, or lonely. The temptation and the ease with which you can resolve those negative feelings through a phone reduce the need for the pilgrim to look within to find a solution or look around to fellow companions or circumstances. Pilgrims appear more independent but actually become more isolated from their on-the-ground community and more dependent on their phone and virtual community to resolve crises.<sup>xiii</sup> The consequence is self-limitation. People now experience “collaborative pilgrimages” where they never really separate emotionally and mentally from a larger audience with their experiences and remain entangled with home and the world on the mental plane losing self-individuation and self-reliance in the process.

## **PRE-INTERNET IS NOW DIGITAL DETOX**

Curiously, what was a “normal” pilgrimage in the 1990s is now called a “Digital Detox” when someone chooses consciously not to use or bring a mobile phone on the Camino. This type of pilgrimage

is rare and considered radical, extreme and even “medieval”. My research includes an in-depth interview and correspondence with a Swedish woman who did DD pilgrimages in 2006, 2013 and 2014. One difference between the 1990s and now is that the highly tech -connected mind needs time to settle down and resists disconnection as the brain is accustomed to continuous activity and stimulus. When someone with a high level of connectivity in daily life chooses to not use mobile tech in the Camino, they can experience withdrawal symptoms such as phantom ringing and vibration for days and it can take more than a week for the mind to slow down and allow the pilgrim to feel the power of solitude, open your senses and deeply feel the Here and Now. Another pilgrim who went without tech in Sept 2015 reported on the digital media website Mashable that :

The first days were the hardest. I felt something missing from my hands. I am used to constantly reading emails and news on my phone, so I was anxious. In restaurants, I could not get used to not having my phone on the table. Everyone else connected to the Internet and I felt ignored. I'd go to the restroom or check my backpack.<sup>xliv</sup>

We expect now to be busy all the time, to have our hands and heads occupied and doing something. For many people their phone is their third appendage. We take these same daily life practices unreflectively into the Camino and suggest that we don't know how to be with ourselves without our tech. Camilla, the Swedish detox pilgrim, told me in a 2015 interview:

*“When people are bringing computers and iPads they are making it very difficult for themselves to actually get at what I consider to be the real experience. ...I'm surprised people don't see this! And “my right to technology” is, you know, so much more important than to the whole Camino [experience]. It surprises me a lot actually because I'm using the technology all the time [in daily life] but for me it's super natural not to try and use it on the Camino, or at least to a minimum.”*

## **EXPECTATIONS & TECH**

There's been a shift in pilgrim's expectations, often vastly differing, of what the Camino should or might be as a travel experience, a journey and/or pilgrimage over the last 25 years. The Camino as a pilgrimage in the traditional sense implies both an inner and outer journey to the sacred place. There's an understanding that it entails a step into the unknown, the wilderness of the world but most importantly

of the wilderness within, the inner places we haven't visited in a long time or may not even know are there. A huge part of pilgrimage can be a confrontation of the self, a willingness to go down the unexplored, rough paths, take risks, overcome fears, experience solitude, loneliness and boredom, and confront discomfort both mental and physical, feel discouragement, desperation or intense joy and ecstasy.<sup>xlv</sup>

Many Internet Age pilgrims are aware of this as a model of the Camino but may not share it as an expectation of their journey.<sup>xlvi</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> C travelers want to connect and expect to connect. With the rapid advances in cheap, easy to use technology providing instant, real-time information, it's possible to control many more aspects of the day to day Camino experience and thereby keep oneself from feeling as intensely. Tech usage can have a numbing quality on both positive and negative emotions.<sup>xlvii</sup> Mobile devices, headphones, tablets, etc, can help us keep distance from ourselves and others as well as potentially uncomfortable situations we don't want to deal with. Pilgrims have gradually accepted and welcomed these changes for the most part. If you get lost, don't ask someone, look at your GPS or call emergency services. Where to eat? Don't bother exploring the village or town, just check your App for the best pilgrim recommendation or ask your virtual friends in online Forum group. Another major fear managed by tech is for example, "where to sleep". The "not finding a bed" fear generated a lot of anxiety among pilgrims in the 1990s and continues to be a major source of anxiety.<sup>xlviii</sup> One solution that tech and the online albergue system gives the pilgrim is to book accommodation ahead thereby eliminating the worry of where to sleep.

Rather than let the trip unfold organically and face potential adversity as it comes, the trend is to try and control the Camino experience so "things don't go wrong." The old idea of "trusting the Road" is fading away. In exchange there's a growing implicit desire to have what I call a "TripAdvisor Camino", ie, one that has no glitches or problems. With our tech we are able to bubble wrap our Camino and resolve many more points of 'discomfort". This is good but it is also a double-edged sword. The

pilgrimage is 'smoother' and with fewer rough parts but it keeps us from exploring more profoundly the wilderness within. We wind up diluting our experiences in the process. People are developing the habit of looking down rather than looking up to resolve basic 'problems' fundamental to the pilgrimage.<sup>xlix</sup> There is an implicit, and at times irrational, trust that what the machine says must be true or is more reliable than our own instincts, observations or what we can learn in face-to-face interactions. We are encouraged by the tech industry to do this. To illustrate this and end the section focused on the "During" stage of the Camino, here is a video by a tech company that has developed a WiFi app for the Camino to guarantee full time WiFi connectivity so the pilgrim can always be connected wherever and whenever .– Video for <http://elcamino.tuwi.es/><sup>i</sup> . As rolling voiceover: **The advertising tells us:** "Do the best Camino with us...We will accompany and do the Camino with you so that it will all be much easier. We offer free WiFi so that you can live your Camino connected to the Internet. "

Our 21<sup>st</sup> C WiFi connected pilgrim looks down to solve his problems, interacts with no one as people have simply become noise around him, shares his solitary experiences with a virtual audience and never really seems to engage beyond the phone as WiFi fulfills all his needs. **Progressively we are outsourcing skills, unthinkable just a few years ago, to our phones and thereby atrophying those abilities within ourselves.**<sup>ii</sup>

### **The Arrival in Santiago**

Santiago is a transition point (as is Finisterre) between the Road and the Return Home. The Plaza de Obradoiro continues to be a powerful point of arrival and reunion point full of mixed emotions, elation, let down, triumph, worry about the future. Now it's also very common to share the moment with the world.

**MEMORY, HOW WE REMEMBER and HOW WE EXPERIENCE THE HERE AND NOW**

Now we move to the daily Pilgrim's Mass held at 12 Noon at the main altar in the Cathedral, a long-awaited event and important rite of closure for many pilgrims to Santiago even if they are not religiously motivated. An anticipated event for many people was and is the Botafumeiro censor swung at the end of the mass on special occasions. How we now experience that moment has changed dramatically. In 1994 we witness a sea of people **contemplating** the event. In 2016 we witness a sea of people **capturing** the moment.

Seeing how people experience the Botafumeiro through their devices is a good example of how our use of our phones and devices distances us from living them in the moment not just in Santiago but on the Camino in general. Rather than live them and feel them directly we mediate them through our phones by taking photos to share them or store them for future consumption. Or we multi-task our Camino and try to both live, see and feel it but also capture it and share it for others. Unless you focus on one or the other, it's hard to do either one fully and completely. At times our perceived "right" to capture and share moments, can interfere with others' enjoyment of simply being.<sup>iii</sup> Underlying this new trend in how we remember and experience events. We've developed a general distrust of our memories, memories often overworked by minds cluttered with all of our online communications.<sup>liii</sup> Rather than allowing oneself to simply be in the Camino, people have developed a layer of worry that "I need to record it or I'll forget." I have to keep track, rather than just be and trust the internal process.<sup>liv</sup>

## **REINCORPORATION – THE RETURN HOME**

The Return, tends to be the hardest stage to talk about because it's the least discussed and processed. In the 1990s I wanted to address the return – how did the Camino continue to impact people after they were done, if at all? In *Pilgrim Stories* I present the large spectrum of Return experiences.<sup>iv</sup>

My experience as a researcher on the Return in the Internet Age has been different than the 1990s. One difference is how people respond to me. When the Camino pilgrimage was a contained,

whole experience and people didn't have outlets, like they do now, the Camino remained more internal (unless you sought some mechanism of expression art, poetry, publishing a pilgrim's acct). When I asked questions via snail mail (hard to believe but true) I would receive lengthy, deeply felt hand-written letters. Sitting down and writing about their experiences was often therapeutic and participants frequently expressed gratitude for the opportunity to reflect. The responses I receive now tend to be much shorter or in some cases non-existent! In my 2015 survey at the Pilgrim's Office the 37 participants (of 51) who gave me email addresses had a dismal response: only 2 responded when I did a follow-up in 2016. Curiously, one of the two had consciously not taken a mobile device. When I posted a thread about my research on the return in the digital age in 2015 on a Camino forum<sup>vi</sup>, I was met with hostility and suspicion from a couple of members (some posts were even censored!) something that had not occurred when I did the same in 2007 and 2011. The most in-depth and profound responses I've received in my current research are from pilgrims who chose to walk disconnected.

Why might this be? One factor relates to the blurring of the stages (separation, limen, and return) and the mental proximity that is often maintained with home causing the intensity of the Separation and the Return to be diminished. When in constant and frequent contact with home describing the events and getting emotional comfort, there's less surprise, feeling of missing and storing up of experiences that need to be shared. Home is also less surprised by the Returnee, even if they don't really understand what the pilgrim has been through, because in way they've been there sharing photos, comments and stories along with the pilgrim. I mentioned this as the "collaborative pilgrimage."

Another factor relates to how communication patterns have changed over the last 10 years. On the Camino people share events, selfies, experiences, and emotions parceled out in bits and pieces to a virtual audience who may be giving real-time feedback to the pilgrim. When the return comes, there's less need to share as the pilgrim has been processing and sharing, but in a very different way, all along. Also, once back home, our connected lives simply take over and we move onto the next thing. In

my 2015 tech survey many people reported feeling less need to connect while on the Camino and liked connecting less but didn't think much would change once they got home. Social, family and work-related communication including emails, social media, games and other on-line activities are endless. People are so busy keeping up it's harder to reflect and process experiences unless you make a concerted effort.

As the Internet Age advances the evolution of motives, typically found pre-Internet, appears also to lessen and pilgrimages can be more reaffirming rather than transformative.<sup>lvii</sup> It's now common to expect the Camino to be a "great experience" and then it is. For example, in San Juan de Ortega I met a 68 year old woman who gave me her Camino card with her name and Camino contact info (including email). Also printed was the phrase "It's the journey that matters in the end." She already knew before coming that it was the journey that mattered – a common Camino "lesson" of the 1990s. When I asked her to reflect on her Camino a year plus later she quoted from her blog entry written soon after she completed the Camino . The message confirmed the idea on her card and reaffirmed her expectations about what she hoped it would be. It was a wonderful, reaffirming experience but it didn't seem to challenge her to evolve to a new place within herself.

The development of Camino forums, WhatsApp and FaceBook groups, etc in the Internet Age are a major change in the Return experience. These serve as important new outlets for Return Pilgrim to reconnect with other pilgrims, process the return, commiserate about the 'glazed over look' they get from friends and family and to help future pilgrims. The major difference between these forums and on the ground associations is the lack of face-to-face contact and infinitely greater access, upon demand, to the community. Generally, more posting and more likes lead to greater status and you can become a Veteran Poster, respected within the community. The tone of the forum depends greatly on the tone the Moderators and Veteran Posters give to it and this can vary tremendously depending on their level of experience, attitudes about the Camino and beliefs about what the Camino is or should be. For many

active participants, membership is an important part of maintaining their connection to the Camino, pilgrim identity and sense of belonging in this enormous, ever-expanding virtual Pilgrim community.<sup>lviii</sup>

### **Conclusions (5 min)**

The Camino and the pilgrims who course its ways are a reflection of the societies and worlds they come from. The world is not the same as the 1990s and inevitably the Camino is not either. Does this mean you can't have a profound experience? Of course not. The important thing to be aware of is how our choices, our intentionality and our way of relating to the Camino, to home, our phone, etc influence a very important element of the journey - extended mental engagement or disengagement. People seek today mental disengagement a "time out" yet find it hard to see how the tech connectivity makes any difference to their overall experience. We seem to be progressively less aware of how these new habits keep us engaged mentally and distracted from where we are. Others embrace the engagement and enjoy the enhanced virtual Camino experience and sharing the Camino with others at large.

I'm struck as I continue to read pilgrims' accounts of what they value most about the Camino and the lessons they have learned along the way. Special face-to-face encounters with others, the power of the human touch, being in nature, and the satisfaction and joy found in simplicity as we lighten our load on the Camino are the qualities of the journey that people crave and remember. Pilgrims of the 21<sup>st</sup> C are finding and cherishing these same experiences as they did in the 20<sup>th</sup> C but now there is tendency to buffer ourselves mentally against them via technology. Many times unwittingly our 'independence/dependence' created by technology, potentially isolates us from real time experiences because we're too busy looking at our phones to be where we are and enjoy the many lessons found in silence, solitude and struggle.

People still feel good when on Camino because it stimulates feelings of connectedness. Even if the disconnection is brief or less intense it is positive. Pilgrims return to busy lives a little recharged and lament that real life isn't like the Camino without realizing that you can bring life into closer alignment with the Camino through many small steps. The hazard the Internet Age tech pilgrim faces is resisting the temptation to fill up the gift the Camino gives - freed up mental space- with a lot of distracting noise (most of it junk food for the mind).

Exploring the impact of technology on our life experiences, and something as potentially profound as a pilgrimage, is important. Reflecting on the choices that we make is important and realizing that we have choices is also important. Reflecting on your usage ahead of time, the relationship you want to maintain with home and friends, will allow you to engage in different ways and bring intentionality to the Camino. And, Remember to look up.<sup>lix</sup>

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://oficinadelperegrino.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/peregrinaciones2015.pdf>, Retrieved 10 Jan 2017

<sup>ii</sup> This is what the Pilgrim's Office looked like in 2004-05. I used to hang out there with Antonio, the attendant, waiting for pilgrims to arrive. Don Jaime had his office in the room adjacent to the Office and he would speak with pilgrims upon request. In the busy summer months, people would queue up on the Rúa do Vilar to wait their turn and more attendants were hired. In 2016, the Pilgrim's Office moved location to a large renovated convent on Rua das Carretas below the Parador. A security guard now mans the main door.

<sup>iii</sup> In *Pilgrim Stories* I trace the 20<sup>th</sup> C rise of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. Up to the 1960s renewed interest largely came from academic circles. In the 1970s 'doing the Camino' meant taking a road trip to Compostela. In the mid-60s a few people, mostly with an academic background, started walking again to Compostela. In ever widening circles these early travelers (cyclists and walkers to Compostela) sought adventure, culture and history, transition away. The focus was on the journey not getting a Certificate. With the growing popularity of the Camino and institutionalization of the Camino in the late 1980s with the development of the Pilgrim's Passports and limits established for the acquisition of the Compostela Certificate, a new motivation for doing the Camino developed and evolved adding controversy within the pilgrim community regarding authenticity – what is and is not a true pilgrim. In general, "more" is considered "better" and "authentic" with less focus placed on content, meaning and outcomes of an individual's experience. It's important to remember that in 1993 Holy Year the vast majority of pilgrims walking to Santiago that applied for the Compostela, started in Galicia and "only did the last 100Km" to get the Certificate but they were also mostly Spanish and probably did it with the desire to 'ganar el jubileo' (earn the indulgences associated with a Holy Year or Jubilee Year) even though it wasn't necessary to walk to earn the plenary indulgences, it was a sacrifice, an act of faith. Now those who "do the last 100Km" are foreigners and not necessarily doing it with the same motivation rather it's what they've heard the Camino is.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/threads/new-certificate-of-distance-offered-by-the-pilgrims-office.24969/>, Comment #5, retrieved 14 Jan 2017.

<sup>v</sup> "To be a *pilgrim*, one has to make the pilgrimage with a *religious/Christian motivation* – in a greater or lesser degree. This is generally also combined with a cultural quest. When, added to this motivation, the journey is made on foot (which is the pilgrimage par excellence), by *bicycle or on horseback*, the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela has, ever since ancient times,

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awarded the pilgrim an official document called a *Compostela*....Nevertheless, the essential things is to make the pilgrimage in the *spirit of faith*...and this can be achieved whatever the mode of transport. The Church, especially in a *Holy Year*, *opens its doors to all* and invites everyone to adopt the spirit of pilgrimage. (italics in original)" From the brochure titled "Holy Year Compostelan 1993" published in 1992 by the Comision Diocesana del Año Santo del SAMI Catedral.

<sup>vi</sup> Retrieved from the Pilgrim's Office's official website, Dec 18, 2016: <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/en/pilgrimage/the-compostela/>).

<sup>vii</sup> Frey, Nancy L. 2016. Tech Survey on the Camino de Santiago, April 2015 With Follow-Up in March & April 2016. Unpublished article in author's possession. Intentionality has changed for a lot of people since the 1990s – it's now more popular "To have the Experience" and a "Time Out" and less popular as a way to experience culture and history and "to walk in the footsteps of one's ancestors."

<sup>viii</sup> See Crawford, Matthew. 2015. *The World Beyond Your Head. On Becoming An Individual in an Age of Distraction*. NY, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

<sup>ix</sup> In 2006 one of the Santiago Matamoros (St James the Moorslayer) images became the politically correct Santiago Mataflores (Flowerslayer). Santiago 'mataflores', to 'deal' with radical Muslim terrorist threats in the Cathedral by not offending Muslims with the image of Santiago slaying Moors. The image is now perpetually covered with flowers up to the horse's flanks so that the slaughtered Muslims are no longer visible. Santiago appears to be riding through a field of flowers, sword raised and ready for action, but no violence. *El Correo Gallego*, 02 Enero 2011. <http://www.elcorreogallego.es/opinion/ecg/santiago-mataflores/idEdicion-2011-01-02/idNoticia-625783/>. Retrieved Jan 10, 2017. Another change from the 1990s in the Cathedral are the lack of enormous lines that use to form to touch the column of the Romanesque Portico de la Gloria and the kneeling statue of the "Santo dos Croques". But that ended in 2008 in the name of patrimony conservation as this Romanesque masterpiece is being studied and preserved.

<sup>x</sup> Alison Raju still mentions dogs as a worry in her 2008 edition of *The Way to Santiago*. Cicerone, p. 36.

<sup>xi</sup> Brief History of Tech on The Camino. One of the last things I wrote in *Pilgrim Stories* was a prescient quote from Manuel Fraga, Franco's Minister of Tourism and then Galicia's President for many years. In 1997 "he announced his dream to see for 'the Holy Year of 1999 the creation of a virtual [reality] Camino de Santiago, that like the Jacobean route will be made by thousands of cyber-pilgrims from the five continents simultaneously.'" (*Pilgrim Stories*, p. 254). In the year 2000 and beyond, the use of the internet to access information about the Camino and engage with pilgrim forums began to take off. As technology improved in this period, slowly increasing numbers of people began to carry mobile phones and other communication devices (eg, laptop computers) with them on the journey. Cyber cafés sprung up in towns and villages along the Camino. Emailing and blogging (a term invented in 1999 from 'web log') became common practice in this period. Pilgrims would spend free time in the afternoon hunting down cyber cafes in town or use the local libraries to connect. Social on-line networks such as Facebook and Twitter became mainstream around 2006 and 2007 respectively with millions of users around the globe. Other social messaging networks, video and photo sharing platforms such as Instagram (2010) and WhatsApp (2009) allow people to have instant connectivity to the internet, email, text messaging capabilities and the sharing of photos and videos at the touch of a button. Wifi and computers in pilgrim establishments (albergues and bars) became common around the same time (2010) making it less necessary for pilgrims to leave the albergue to find a cyber cafe. The development of Smartphones or iPhones, mini-computers that serve as cell phones, cameras and allow complete connectivity to the internet, news, and social media platforms, make bringing technology to the Camino very simple especially where there is free WiFi. Wifi is one of most important features of an albergue now. The Galicia government has prioritized having wifi in all the albergues over putting in adequate public toilets along the trail. Evidently, pilgrims connecting to the Internet is a higher priority than public health. In 2013 Apps (applications both free and pay) started to be developed specifically for the Camino for these devices and by March 2015 one researcher had compiled a database with "70 Camino-specific apps" Private email in author's possession from Robert Nickerson, 21 March 2015). See also Robert C. Nickerson, Mark Austreich, and Jamie Eng, "Mobile Technology and Smartphone Apps: A Diffusion of Innovations Analysis," Proceedings of the Twentieth Americas Conference on Information Systems, 2014. Marketing for these apps aim to make your Camino experience easier and more fulfilling. In only a decade our technology has advanced at a remarkable rate allowing ease of communication and connectivity to the net that was unthinkable only a few years ago. By 2014-15, this technology with improved Smart and iPhones could easily fit in your hand, pocket or backpack and came to be considered an indispensable piece of basic equipment. From Unpublished manuscript – *Pilgrimage in the Internet Age* by Nancy Frey.

<sup>xiii</sup> Bosker, Bianca, Nov 2016. The Binge Breaker. [http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/11/the-binge-breaker/501122/?utm\\_source=fb](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/11/the-binge-breaker/501122/?utm_source=fb). Retrieved 9 Jan 2017.

<sup>xiv</sup> Turner, Victor. 1969. *The Ritual Process*. Ithaca: Cornell University.

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<sup>xv</sup> This is true, btw, of all rites of passage in the Internet age whether it be the way we experience going to the university, general travel or a study abroad program. In a discussion on “Learning as Loss” JS Atherton describes how rites of passage that are destabilizing ‘compel’ change vs ‘safe settings’ which make learning ‘possible’. Atherton J S (2013) Doceo; Learning as Loss 2 [On-line: UK] retrieved 19 January 2017 from [http://www.doceo.co.uk/original/learnloss\\_2.htm](http://www.doceo.co.uk/original/learnloss_2.htm)

<sup>xvi</sup> Diamond, Jared. 2012. *The World Until Yesterday*. NY: Penguin

<sup>xvii</sup> (<http://www.caminodownunder.com/html/classworkshops.html>).

<sup>xviii</sup> Camino de Santiago forum thread started Aug 19 2013, Need to Stop Reading this Forum,

<http://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/threads/need-to-stop-reading-this-forum.19975/> Forum increases anxiety so need to stop Reading. Retrieved Feb 28, 2014

<sup>xix</sup> Valina, Elias. 1992. *The Pilgrim’s Guide to the Camino de Santiago*. Trans by Laurie Dennett. First published 1985 in Spanish. This edition is the 1992 English edition, p. 18.

<sup>xx</sup> For example, the following three books are guidebooks on “how” to prepare and do the Camino: Nilsen, Sylvia and Greg Dedman. 2011. *Your Camino - A Lightfoot Guide to Practical Preparation*, EURL Pilgrimage Publications (308pp), Kelly, Gerard. 2012. *Camino de Santiago Practical Preparation and Background*. Create Space Independent Publishing (144pp), and Yates, Sybille and Daphne Hnatiuk. 2013. *Pilgrim Tips and Packing List Camino de Santiago: What you need to know beforehand, what you need to take and what you can leave at home*. Create Space Independent Publishing (138pp).

<sup>xxi</sup> Don Elías provided the following advice in his “Getting Your Bearings” advice, p. 18: “No anxiety – least of all about distance – should disturb one’s peace of mind. Don’t approach the journey in a competitive spirit; it is better to get to know the places on the route, their people and their monuments, and to have time to contemplate the beauty of nature. All of this will contribute to a satisfying encounter with others and with oneself.” Curiously, as more information has become available it does not seem that people are necessarily less anxious, more well-prepared or better pilgrims but the need to try and control the outcome of the experience (I want to do it right, have a great Camino, etc) by knowing as much as possible ahead of time has increased.

<sup>xxii</sup> What was occurring was the development of a pilgrim identity and feeling of membership in a virtual group with an anticipated shared, future experience together. You were cognizant that you might never meet anyone in your Class of 2008 in person but nonetheless you had a virtual mental bond and connection. In other words, you were going through a virtual rite of passage as the Class of 2008 of loosely connected individuals and once you completed your journey you would have the new status of ‘having done it’ increasing your sense of connection to your virtual Forum community.

<sup>xxiii</sup> This does not occur to the same extent in a Practical Pilgrim Day where your attention and experience is fixed to a particular place and space away from the Camino or simply reading about the Camino or hearing about it from a friend. In this Virtual Camino space it’s possible to have experiences and interact with the Camino and pilgrims on the Camino before actually being there.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Frey, Nancy. May 2016. Tech Survey on the Camino de Santiago, April 2015. With Follow-Up in March & April 2016. Unpublished paper in author’s possession. To assess the presence of mobile tech devices on the Camino, in April 2015 at the Pilgrim’s Office in Santiago I gave a questionnaire and follow-up interview to 51 people standing in line to get their Compostelas. My pool of 51 reflected the general cross-section of pilgrims arriving that day in terms of age, nationality, length of trip, etc. I chose people both using and not using phones as they waited in line. Of the 51, two did not have mobile tech devices with them. It’s the new normal to have a phone – a reflection of life in the Internet Age.

<sup>xxv</sup> One example of thousands of packing lists is the following from the blog *What Dave’s Doing* and his 5 Nov 2015 article “My ridiculously detailed Camino de Santiago Packing List: What Worked, What Didn’t and Why” <http://whatsdavedoing.com/camino-de-santiago-packing-list/#tech>, Retrieved 20 Jan 2017.

<sup>xxvi</sup> With increased camera photo quality in Smart and iPhones, it’s less necessary to bring a separate digital camera and was waning as of 2015-16.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Frey, Nancy. May 2016. Tech Survey on the Camino de Santiago, April 2015. With Follow-Up in March & April 2016. Unpublished paper in author’s possession.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Challenger, Douglas, 14 May 2016, Walking the Camino in the Age of WiFi, <http://www.onbeing.org/blog/douglas-challenger-walking-the-camino-in-the-age-of-wi-fi/8653>. Retrieved 20 Jan 2017

<sup>xxix</sup> Carr, Nicholas, 2011. *The Shallows*. What the Internet is Doing to our Brains, pp. 219-20, NY: WW Norton.

<sup>xxx</sup> Hartmann, Thomas. 2006. *Walking Your Blues Away. How to Heal the Mind and Create Emotional Well-Being*. Vermont: Park Street Press.

<sup>xxxi</sup> “Walking is a form of meditation and it gets us out of our incessantly thinking minds (future-past-future-past) and into the present moment where the world is more focused and where we notice those “signs” we otherwise might miss.” Anthropologist Bebee Bahrami in a private email, 27 Dec 2007.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Soojung-Kim Pang, Alex. 2013. *The Distraction Addiction*, NY: Little Brown, pp. 64-65. He has an interesting discussion on the difference between “switch-tasking” and “multi-tasking” and writes that “devices like cell phones are tailor-made for switch-

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tasking. They capture your attention by diverting it from something else” ultimately impacting your powers of concentration, p. 65.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Author’s field notes from Sept 2014.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> From blog entry What’s Dave Doing? <http://whatsdavedoing.com/camino-de-santiago-packing-list/#tech>, Retrieved 20 Jan 2017.

<sup>xxxv</sup> As internet technology evolved in the early years (2002-2005) people began to want to connect more regularly with home. Cyber Cafes began to slowly replace public phone booths and telephone shops to make calls. Pilgrims would often spend long hours in the afternoons hunting these down to send off messages. Phones were expensive and the technology to blog and post not user friendly. Progressively, albergues started to respond to the demand and some incorporated coin operated computers. Readily available WiFi and improved Smart and iPhone technology made a whole range of tasks very user-friendly.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Pre-Internet cyclists had a very important function as “the message bearers of the Camino... serv[ing] an important intermediary function between waylaid walkers, lost loves, hoped for reconnections, and messages of all sorts – the pony express of the past.” Field notes, 19 Jan 1995.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Some nationalities, such as Koreans, tend to remain separate and not integrate as much into the general pilgrim group largely due to language barriers and perhaps cultural attitudes regarding group and individual travel experiences. Their mobile phones help significantly reduce the need to connect with others as they can access answers to questions via Korean Camino help sites and Forums easily. A pilgrim in the 1990s and a long time Camino hospitalero, José explained how once he ran into Korean pilgrims in a daze walking around town because the albergue was closed but their phone information had told them it was open. He described them as being in a bubble and at a loss about what to do. Private field notes, Feb 2015.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Turkle, Sherry. 2011. *Alone Together. Why we expect more from technology and less from each other.* NY: Basic Books.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Frey, Nancy. Unpublished manuscript, *Pilgrimage in the Internet Age.*

<sup>xl</sup> In albergues tensions can arise over limited charging outlets and one of piece of advice from a former pilgrim was to carry a power strip (multi-outlet) as a good way to make Camino friends. Tech usage considered thoughtless can also cause other irritations in albergues when notification pings are left on, people talk loudly on phones or bright screens on tablets and phones light up the dormitory as pilgrims go to sleep.

<sup>xli</sup> Could go into FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) here and the traveler doesn’t want to disconnect either for fear of losing touch with the quick pace of relationships. My son, upon returning for one week in Jan 2017 without his phone on vacation, had 23,500 new WhatsApp messages plus thousands of other Instagram and SnapChat to go through.

<sup>xlii</sup> See the work of Jenkins, Kathleen E. 2014. “There’s an App for That: Parents and their Emerging Adult Children Undertake Emotion Work on the Camino de Santiago.” Presented at the August 2014 meetings of the Association for the Sociology of Religion and the forthcoming 2017 article, Jenkins, Kathleen E. and Ken Sun “Technologies of Intimacy: Families Negotiate Spirituality and Technology in a Sacred Space.” Sociologist Kathleen Jenkins has explored the relationships that parents and their adult children have when walking the Camino. One of the patterns of behavior she observed in conflict resolution between a parent and their adult child was the utilization of the phone to mediate the problem. For example, a daughter would spend considerable time texting her boyfriend back home to complain about her mother rather than deal with her mother directly. She was physically in the Camino but mentally at home with her boyfriend much of the time and engaged in “intimate labor” through her phone rather than face-to-face.

<sup>xliii</sup> While generally positive the relationship to home can also be considered a burden. As pilgrims get more deeply into the experience, and the feeling of the Here and Now, the need to connect can decrease. People may get tired of having to report about their journey and may just want to live it. This can cause conflict within the pilgrim who does not want to disappoint the ‘audience’ or worry home if they don’t communicate regularly.

<sup>xliv</sup> Tamara, EJ, 10 Sept 2015, Learning to live without technology on the Camino de Santiago, [http://mashable.com/2015/09/10/hiking-the-camino/#1vX\\_95IGTEqC](http://mashable.com/2015/09/10/hiking-the-camino/#1vX_95IGTEqC), Retrieved 20 Jan 2017.

<sup>xlv</sup> And through this exploration of that internal wilderness sometimes we find things we like and don’t like (how we react to a situation, deal or don’t deal). Potentially the pilgrim is given the opportunity to then reflect and grow as a person as they confront and react to the challenges the Camino places before them.

<sup>xlvi</sup> And the role of tech in the Camino (however defined) is debated within the pilgrim community. Voices have been raised over the years questioning this role. <sup>xlvi</sup> Pilgrims motivations, as discussed at the beginning, have evolved. A “time out”, an “experience” a “lovely holiday” are popular motives. Participants generally know that it will be physically challenging and usually entail some “roughing it”. People also expect now to be connected when they travel. For many people phones are now like a third appendage or an extension of their hand and have become accustomed to reaching for their phones to resolve problems and interact with others instantly. There’s also a general assumption that society (and in this case the Camino) should

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and will meet those tech expectations. From this point of view having a phone, Wifi and decent bandwidth is a no-brainer. For example, the thread from the Camino de Santiago is a good example, Is Just being there enough?

<https://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/threads/is-just-being-there-enough.29344/#post-247079>, retrieved 28 Sept 2014.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Carter, Christine. 2015. *The Sweet Spot*. Ballantine Books.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Jackson, Roni. Private email in author's possession from 11 September 2015. "There is a tremendous bed shortage right now it seems. I have been incredibly fortunate so far but there is such anxiety among the pilgrims about where they are going to sleep each night and if they are going to find a bed. So many pilgrims I speak to have started booking ahead-almost all of them it seems!"

<sup>xlix</sup> By planning and engaging online as one goes, yes, you ensure a comfortable, secure experience but you also potentially lose opportunities to discover, explore and learn life lessons.

<sup>i</sup> Website: <http://wifinova.es/con-wifinova-ahora-wifi-en-el-camino-de-santiago/>

Wifinova, company that allows all day connectivity. Connect you to <http://elcamino.tuwi.es/> "Juntos hacemos el Camino" meaning "Together we do the Camino"—reinforces idea of collaborative pilgrimages. From website <http://elcamino.tuwi.es/>, retrieved 22 Jan 2017. Quote in Spanish and translated by me. Here is the original "Haz el mejor Camino con nosotros...Nosotros te acompañamos y hacemos el Camino junto a ti para que todo te sea mucho más sencillo. Te ofrecemos Wifi gratuito, para que puedas vivir tu camino conectado a la red, y compartirlo y sentirlo como más te guste. Contamos con un gran despliegue para tu máxima satisfacción, siendo la red Wifi con más puntos a lo largo del Camino." "Do the best Camino with us...We will accompany and do the Camino with you so that it will all be much easier. We offer free Wifi so that you can live your Camino connected to the Internet and share it and feel it as you would like. We have an ample network for your maximum satisfaction, being the Wifi network with the most connection points along the whole Camino." Read this as video is going: In the website advertising, instead of a journey of self-discovery and solitude, it's now a "shared journey" where you are always accompanied by this virtual entity and community. The advertising video clip is found on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/eG4USG-D2X0>.

<sup>ii</sup> I'm paraphrasing Marshal McLuhan's idea from *Understanding Media* that tools "numb" the part of the body that they "amplify" and quoted in Carr, Nicholas. 2011. *The Shallows*, p. 210. Pilgrims also become more needy and demanding when things don't go their way if they are doing a Trip Advisor Camino. There is an expectation that they will and if they don't they find it difficult to adapt. "Gratitude often arises out of conditions of scarcity" paraphrasing Christine Carter, see above. The more pilgrims have the more they believe they should have. There's nothing wrong with this change it's just a shift in expectations about what it means to be a pilgrim on the Camino from the 1990s. There's a growing tendency to go to your phone for information (location, weather report, services) rather than use your observable information at hand.

In a meeting with a well-known in Santiago he told me one of the projects he was thinking about setting up was a 24hour Help Line for pilgrims to be able to call if they have an emergency or are sad and lonely, etc. My instant gut reaction was Why would you want to outsource pilgrim needs to a hotline to someone sitting in a room 1000 miles away? This is a new trend. People want to "help" pilgrims more and more but it's important to carefully analyze what "helping pilgrims" really means. Helping often signifies giving people more tech rather than encouraging self reliance, independence, resiliency and empowerment. With increasingly more "help" there's a tendency to push the panic button more readily and expect someone or somebody else to resolve your problem as well as think they should rather than do it yourself. People become more needy rather than self-reliant as a result. <sup>iii</sup>"Helping pilgrims" ends up meaning encouraging them to outsource their problem-solving skills to their device rather than exercise those skills.

<sup>iii</sup> From my article, 2015, *Fuck Your Selfie*, unpublished in author's possession.

<sup>iiii</sup> We are also aware that home consumers have limited attention spans and consume fragments better than long texts in Internet Age. A huge experience like a pilgrimage is an enormous process of experience, challenge, crisis, reflection, moving on and the way we remember things is disturbed by immediately fixing the memory or event in time and place. It's impacting the way we remember and what we remember.

<sup>liv</sup> The priority becomes sharing and showing the world where you have been rather than simply living the moment for yourself. This existed before in the 1990s, people carried cameras and this was a concern. I discuss in *Pilgrim Stories* people describing their camera as a burden and one man was relieved when he lost his on the train before reaching the Camino. He would keep it inside. Allow things to unfold internally rather than immediately fix it in time and space. Give self freedom to go through range of emotions and their evolution before putting it out there for external consumption.

<sup>lv</sup> Radical, long term change was unusual. Most people fell somewhere in the middle where the Camino's lessons influenced in direct and subtle ways further actions in their lives and led often to specific changes or actions. The Camino remained sharply in the pilgrim's memory often returning months later and was valued very positively, despite often being unsettling and confusing when your eyes were opened to the realities or hypocrisies of your life. Gratitude towards the Camino and the many gifts received from anonymous people along the way was a common feeling.

<sup>lvii</sup> Camino de Santiago Forum thread: Tell me about your Return Home

<https://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/threads/tell-me-about-your-return-home.31444/> Retrieved 2/26/16

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<sup>lvii</sup> Motives also do not appear to evolve in the same way with connected Internet Age pilgrims as in the 1990s. In *Pilgrim Stories* I describe how motives often evolved over the course of the journey within this bracketed space away. For example, someone might start the Camino thinking it's only a physical challenge and adventure but at the end it would have become an intense spiritual experience. It was much harder to escape from oneself without the handy distraction of tech and consequently the pilgrim was often pulled, despite him or herself, into a powerful and unexpected confrontation with the self. Consequently, rarely did people start and end with the same motives – some kind of inner shift usually occurred.

<sup>lviii</sup> As in the 1990s people still join on-the-ground Friends of the Camino chapters in their local areas, become volunteers or return to the Camino again. The Camino continues to draw people back again and again because they like the way they feel there. “Serial pilgrims” as I identified in *Pilgrim Stories*, have expanded their horizons and seek out other Caminos and European pilgrimage trails including Rome and Jerusalem once they get the “Camino bug”.

<sup>lix</sup> Levi Felix, a Proponent of Disconnecting from Technology, Dies at 32, [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/12/us/obituary-levi-felix-digital-detox.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/12/us/obituary-levi-felix-digital-detox.html?_r=0); Retrieved 12 Jan 2017 I feel similar to the late Levi Felix, founder of the company Digital Detox that sought to help tech-saturated individuals reconnect with their lives, “I love that technology connects us...., but we have to learn how to use it, and not have it use us”.