

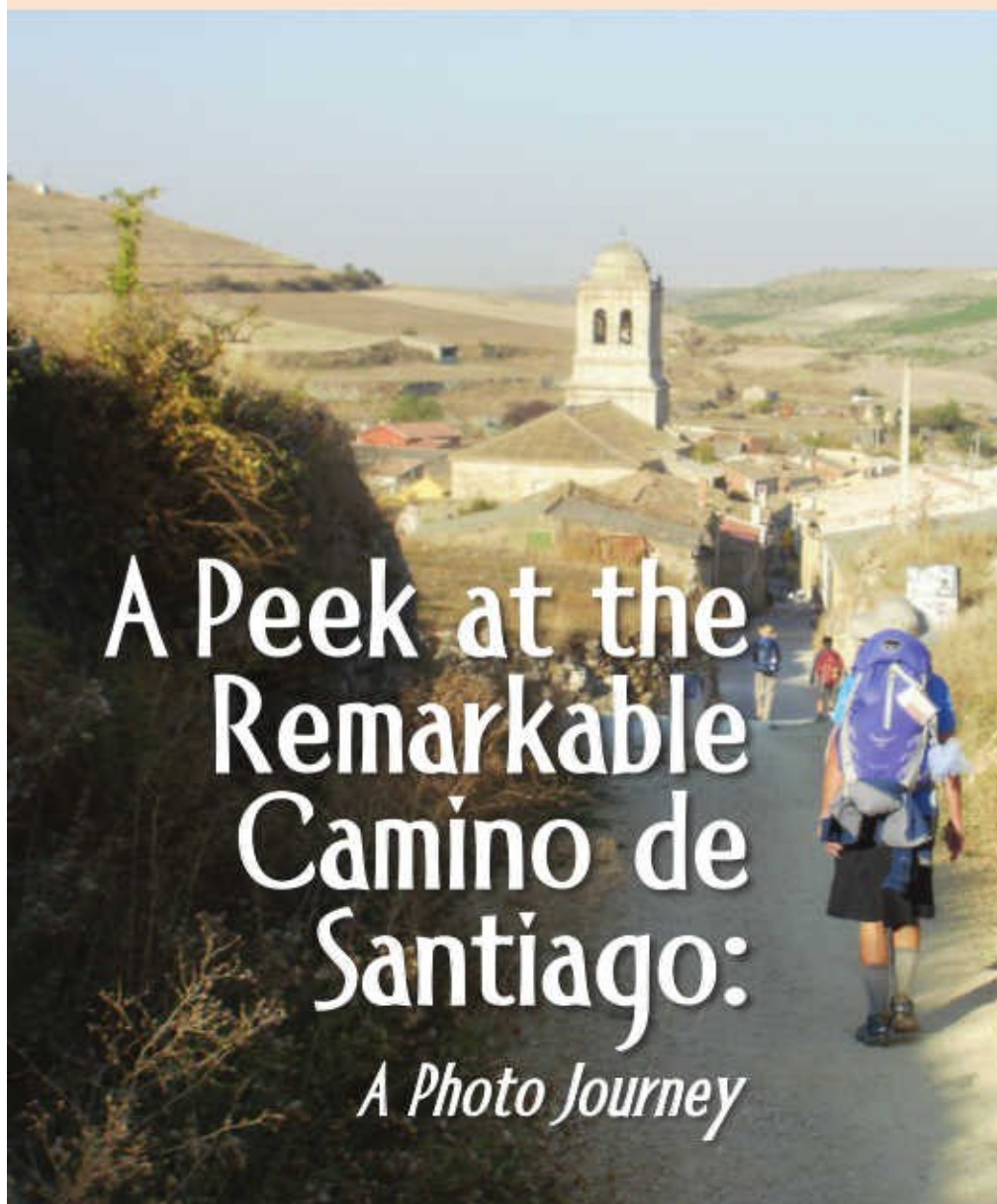


physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wanderings

Jane V. Blanchard

A Peek at the Remarkable Camino de Santiago:

A Photo Journey



**A Peek at the Remarkable Camino de Santiago:
A Photo Journey**

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For information, address inquiries to:

Jane V. Blanchard

P.O. Box 18364

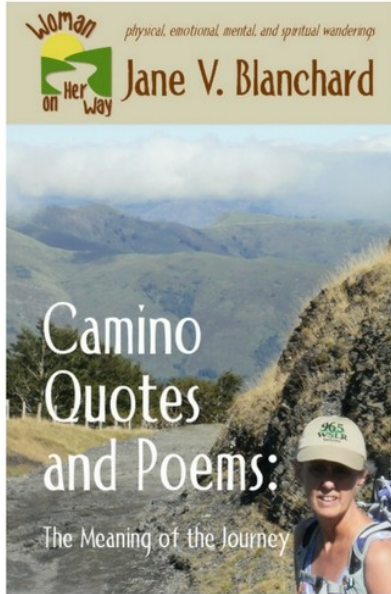
Sarasota FL, 34276

Email contact: Jane@janevblanchard.com

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Dedication

To past, present, and future pilgrims of the Camino de Santiago.

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To my readers

Thank you for taking a peek at the remarkable Camino de Santiago. If you are feeling any pre-Camino jitters, I hope this photo essay will ease your fears. If you are contemplating your own pilgrimage, I hope these pictures will lure you into setting a date.

Since the 9th century, Catholics have pilgrimaged to Santiago de Compostela to visit the tomb of St. James the Great, one of Jesus' twelve apostles. Traveling from all over Europe, pilgrims created a network of trails that lead to Santiago. The most famous of these trails is the Camino Francés. Traveling east to west, it traverses four Spanish regions: Navarra, La Rioja, Castile and León, and Galicia. Since the Council of Europe has designated this path as a Major Cultural Itinerary, the Camino attracts many modern-day pilgrims who hike the trail for nonreligious purposes.



Camino Francés crosses four regions of Spain

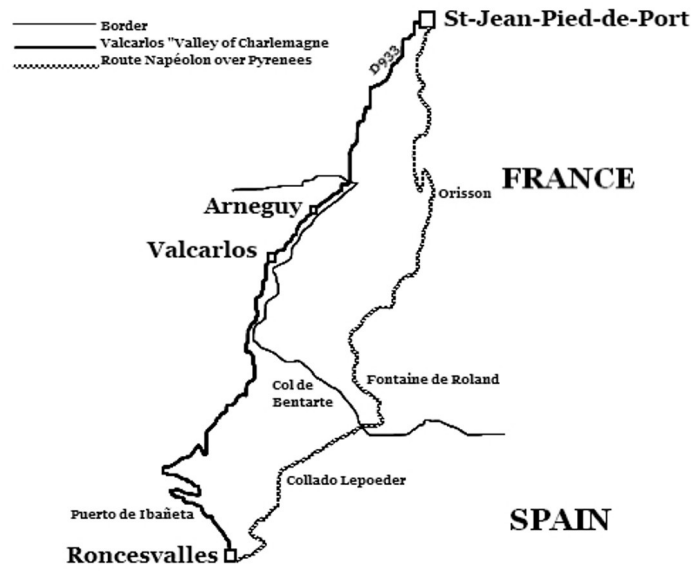
In 2011, my husband and I walked the 500 miles across northern Spain in forty-three days. This photo essay reflects our daily mileage and provides a glimpse of what you can expect to see along the way. Enjoy!

If you are interested in reading about my journey and the stories of women I met along the Camino, please see my book, [Women of the Way: Embracing the Camino](#).

If you are preparing your first pilgrimage, [Camino Tips: How to get the most out of "The Way"](#) will help you turn your trip into a legend.

[Hadrian's Wall Path, Walking into History](#) is the story of my walking 80 miles across northern England and visiting the famous wall that separated the then most northern boundary of the roman empire from the fierce Scottish tribes.

The Pyrenees



St-Jean-Pied-de-Port

Distance: 27 km (16.7 m) from Roncesvalles, Spain, over the Pyrenees to St-Jean-Pied-de-Port, France (hereafter called St-Jean).

Desiring to see both the Pyrenees and the Valcarlos valley, my husband Dennis and I walked counter to the way most pilgrims did the Camino through the Pyrenees. We started in Roncesvalles, Spain, walked over the Pyrenees on the Napoleon Route and returned the following day through the valley on the Valcarlos Route. The highest point is the Col de Lepoeder at 1,450 m. (4757.2 ft).



Way sign on the Napoleon Route. Because we were walking the route "backwards," we had to guess which was the way to St-Jean.



*Fountain before crossing the border into France. There is a Basque inscription on the fountain:
"Bidea - Iturria - Bizia," which translates in "The Way - The Source - The life."*



The majesty of the Pyrenees

Valcarlos Valley

Distance: 11 km (6.8 m) from St-Jean, France, to Valcarlos, Spain, plus an additional 8 km (5 m) getting lost.

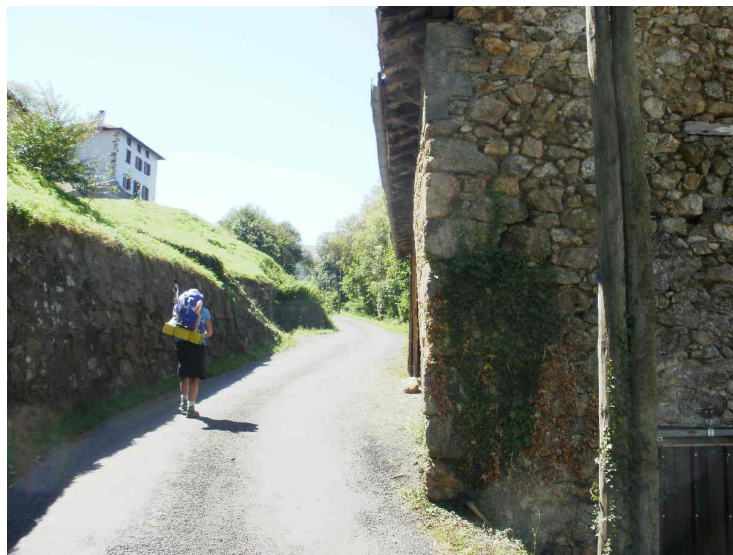
Having learned the importance of carrying food on the first day's walk (we "bonked" from not having enough), we purchased sandwiches in St-Jean before setting off for the route through the Valcarlos Valley. At the Pilgrims Office, we received a map, but it did not provide enough details and we missed a crucial right turn after Ondarolle France to cross over into Spain. As we were heading east, we were unconcerned about the route until we started getting low on water and the surroundings became very desolate. Trail angels stopped to give us water and take us back down the mountain to the turnoff point. Exhausted, we decided to spend the night in Valcarlos (Luzaide) and finished the walk to Roncesvalles on the next day.



Ondarolle, a mountain village



Note the yellow trail indicator on the right pole, which we missed and ended up walking back up into the Pyrenees.



The town of Valcarlos.

Navarra



Roncesvalles

Distance: 14.5 km (9 m) from Valcarlos to Roncesvalles.

It was mid-morning by the time we left Valcarlos, sore and stiff from two days of climbing the Pyrenees.



First shell sign seen in Spain



Panoramic vista



Monument commemorating the death of Roland (Aug. 15, 778)

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