

## **Brian spoke of The Camino historically. I will give you my personal take on our Camino Experience.**

Ten years ago, the beginning of my retirement was marked by a 200 km walk across England . Long distance walks have become a favorite way of combining a love of travel, history, nature plus an interest in keeping active. At that time. I had never heard of the Camino.

We discovered our local board of education offered workshops on Walking the Camino. We attended 2 and found them to be practical and compelling. We were drawn to the idea of this particular long distance walk or **pilgrimage**.

The 5 W's come to mind when describing the lead up and actual walk itself.

**The When:** We **disregarded** advice **not** to walk during a Holy Year when pilgrims would exceed 150,000. The numbers did not prove to be problematic. We chose **Fall** , not wishing to deal with snow, freezing temperatures or the blistering heat,

**The Where:** We chose **not** to walk the entire 800 km, so avoided the Pyrenees. More undulating , bucolic landscape was our choice. We chose **not** to stay in refugios **aka** youth hostels , because at our pace , we would **not** arrive in time to claim a bed . Happily, we did not have to share the bedbug experience; an issue this past season.

**The What:** A walk requires sturdy broken- in boots. This is key. Lists of other necessities is available on line.

**The Who:** Alone or in a group ? The choice depends on your ability level and the purpose of your walk. We chose to go with a semi-guided group: our rooms were booked and our bags were transported ahead.

**The How :** By bike, horse or by foot? Walking these long distances: 25 km on average, day after day is challenging. Weeks of training is highly recommended ....with regular back to back walks included in the preparation.

**The Why:** People have many different **reasons** for undertaking this Walk; religious, spiritual, physical, thirst for community, respite from an increasingly frantic life style, ....

To **personalize** our own experience, we undertook a low-key fundraising effort for The Peanut Butter Project. Since 2005, we have volunteered a couple of times in the African country of Lesotho. We worked in the areas of literacy and health. We are committed to the children there. Most are hungry and suffer from the HIV-AIDS experience. **The Peanut Butter Project** works like this. It provides children at the hospital in Holtse, Lesotho 1 jar of PB per hospital visit. Good protein: both child and family benefit. This endeavour is spearheaded by a former colleague of Brian's. Happily, we have been able to provide for approximately 3-4 months of support, thanks to donations we received.

### **Reflection:**

*It's only been a month – but images come to mind*

*... people from all over the world.... meals /conversations/ pep talks/health tips ...**shared** with strangers....*

*...a sense of history as we walked along beautiful pathways millions had walked **before** ...*

*... **hospitality** given us as we trespassed on people's yards, lanes, fields... 'Buen Camino!' they called out as we passed...*

*... I became more aware than ever **of distances Lesotho's grandmothers** walk daily, to provide their grandchildren with the necessities of life: water, papa, firewood, medicines...*

*... **Community – Connectedness - Communion**... all part of Camino... the more I think of it .... all these aspects of the Camino may be experienced right here...you don't have to go to Spain...just step out your front door as the original pilgrims did and your\* journey begins...maybe **that's** what I've learned from My Camino....*

[www.helplesotho.ca](http://www.helplesotho.ca)

[www.AIDSorpancare.org](http://www.AIDSorpancare.org)

\* [www.chemindesoutaouais.com](http://www.chemindesoutaouais.com) (1 819 7776023) local walk/pilgrimage in May: Ottawa to Montreal