

Co-creating a Camino Community

a group experience on the Camino Santiago

You are invited to join me on the Camino France pilgrimage in May and June 2014. The Camino France, one of the many Camino Santiago routes, is the most popular (and the setting for the movie [The Way](#)). It is a 500 mile (800 km) trek from the French Pyrenees Mountains to Santiago de Compostela that has hosted pilgrims for well over 1000 years. The Camino continues to draw contemplatives and seekers of all nationalities and beliefs to experience its powerful invitation to deep contemplation, reflection and renewal. It also seems to be a strong attractor of people going through changes and transformation in their lives and careers and who are open to deep conversation.

I have walked the Camino twice (you can read some of my experiences and reflections on [my blog](#)) and want to go again. While the Camino is a great place to meet new friends, I feel a desire to experience the Camino this next time as part of a community.

Everyone experiences his/her own Camino. This is a basic truth of the Camino which expresses itself in new ways every day. Everyone's need for learning and experience is different and (another Camino truth) *the Camino will provide.* Being responsible for one's own decisions, learning to listen to one's body, paying attention to personal aspirations and intuitions, solving the little (and not so little) problems that arise - these are the challenges and opportunities that help make the Camino a transformative experience.

For me, the Camino has been a place for experiencing solitude and independence and deep personal learning. I wonder what more this experience could be if I shared it within a group of fellow pilgrims, an intentional community of travelers committed to supporting the personal and individual journey of each other. I sense the need in myself and in the world to integrate the hermit with the community, the individual and the collective. I yearn to be part of a group that honors and supports the need for solitude and contemplation and also the need for group support and shared reflection.

How would it be to live as part of a community based upon the shared commitment to “ask for what you need, offer what you can”? And from the foundation of this shared value, to discover together what shape such a community will take over several weeks on the Camino? This is something that I want to experience and to learn from and I need and want companions to join me in this learning journey.

What will this look like? I am not really sure and, to me, that unknowing is the attraction. Within a light minimal essential structure, the group can organize itself and

each member can design and experience his/her own pilgrimage.



I sense the need and the possibilities for such an experience and, as a consequence, I am inviting companions to join me. In addition,

I am stepping forward with an offer to host the group process as we come together and begin self organizing our community. Once we are together as a community, it is my vision that there will not be a need for a leader or organizer or guide and that all of us will find ways of sharing our unique gifts in support of a community that will support each of us on our journeys. Together we will decide when and where to meet as a group along the way and there will be opportunity for everyone to offer his/her gifts and to host our collective processes. Welcome to a hosted experience, not a guided one.



Whenever it starts is the right time.

I will be in St. Jean Pied-de-Port France on May 26, 2014 and welcome the rest of the initial group to join me for an opening circle on May 26 and to begin walking on May 27. For anyone wanting a shorter Camino, there will be opportunities to join in Logroño on June 3, in Burgos on June 9, or Leon on June 16. Each day will begin for each of us at whatever time we choose. Some may be early risers who want to begin before dawn while others may start later in the morning. This will all be self organizing.

Perhaps summer of 2014 is not the right time for you. This trip is a prototype for discovering what is possible for a group walking the Camino as a community. Depending upon what we discover, there will hopefully be similar trips in the future, perhaps as soon as fall 2014. Let me know if you are interested.

Living in open space

This experience is an invitation to walk the Camino while living in the spirit of open space.

The principles and laws of open space Technology (adapted slightly) provide the framework within which I imagine our community developing.



Whoever comes are the right people.

Everyone is invited, whether I know you or not, whether you know anyone else in the group or not. If you know deep within yourself that you are a pilgrim and that you desire to discover how to live in a community of fellow-travelers, then you could be the right one. To keep the group small enough to establish trust and intimacy and to minimize logistical challenges and impact on the Camino, I propose to limit the size to eight people at any time, at least for this first trip. Some may leave along the way and others may join.

When its over, its over.

I intend to arrive in Santiago de Compostela on June 29. This so may be the end of our shared experience. Or maybe some of us will want to continue walking further together (Finnesterre or Muxia are on the coast, just 90 km further). Maybe we will remain in contact in a virtual community after the Camino. Maybe some will choose to leave the group for some or all of the Camino to join new friends or to walk alone. Whenever it ends will be a personal decision of each group member. Logroño on June 3, Burgos on June 9, or Leon on June 16 are all natural ending points for anyone who is unable to walk all the way to Santiago.

Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen.

This experience will take its own shape and will likely be full of surprises. Weather, full hostels, blisters and fatigue are all part of the Camino experience and they all offer opportunities for learning. Each person is responsible for his/her own Camino experience. The rest of us are resources and support for this learning process. There are a few things that I want to offer to interested group members - a welcome circle in St. Jean Pied-de-Port; Flow Games in Logroño, Burgos and Leon on rest days; and a night walk on the full moon. It is my hope that everyone in the group will offer to host processes along the way, all in a self organizing pattern.

The bumble bee's role is to fly from flower to flower and to cross-pollinate.

As other friendship groups form along the Camino, some of our group may decide to move among various groups and to enrich our community with those experiences. The commitment to be part of this Camino community is not a commitment to stay with the group for any length of time. The only commitment is to communicate openly about one's needs - to ask for what you need - and to be open to the needs of the rest of the group. Part of the opportunity for our communal learning will be to discover how to support needs that are divergent from the rest of the group's.

The butterfly's role is to hang out alone and be beautiful.

Everyone in the group is welcome to butterfly in the form of walking alone or taking time away for the group at any time. Butterflies often attract other butterflies and so it is most likely that new friendships will form along the way. If and how new people are integrated into our group will be up to us to decide.

The Law of Two Feet:

This is a funny and appropriate law for a pilgrimage. We are all responsible for our own experience. If you need to move faster, do so. If you can't keep up, move slower or take a bus or have your pack transported. If you need to leave the community and pursue your own path, go for it with the group's blessing. There is no right way to walk the Camino and I hope that there won't become rules for how we have to behave in our group (if so, I might need to use my own two feet). What will it be like to live such radical freedom within a group?



Be prepared to be surprised.

This is an invitation to live with radical freedom within a committed community. I am inviting you to join me in this experience without knowing what will emerge from it and what we will create together. What I do know is that the Camino is a place of magic and surprise and I totally expect that we will experience the unexpected together and that it will be just what each of needs.

My own additional principle: whatever you give is the right amount!

I am inviting you to join me on this adventure without any expectation of being financially compensated. My own journey is one of learning and service and I have been blessed by innumerable gifts along the way which allow me to continue giving. So I choose to freely give my gifts to the world and to trust life to give me what I need in return. If you choose to offer me a gift, I will accept it with gratitude and use it to continue my journey of offering my gifts to the world. Your gift could take any form and be of any amount. You will know what is right for you. Living in this gift economy is one aspect of my own learning journey; I don't have it all figured out and I welcome your involvement in my discoveries.

Logistical Support

Having walked the Camino twice, I have some knowledge that could be useful; I am happy to share what I know. This includes pre-trip information about equipment, budget, transportation, weather, etc. It also includes information along the Camino about where I've stayed and where I've eaten and what to expect on various stages along the way. But remember, I am not a guide! It is very important to me to allow each person (including myself) to have his/her own experience, including the opportunity to experience the Camino with beginner's mind. I don't want to impose my knowledge or to predispose anyone about what to expect. So, please ask me for what you need. I am available by email or Skype to answer question and to help in your preparations. This includes both the tangible issues and the more intangible but more important inner preparation of clarifying intentions. I am happy to offer my gifts as a coach to support your journey in whatever ways you need. Again, just ask for what you need.

Registration

If you are interested in being part of this experience, please contact me so we can begin a conversation and collectively discern whether this is a good fit and good timing for you. If now is not a good time, we can stay in contact as I hope to offer this again in the future.

Space is limited to six people in addition to me. If you are ready to commit to this experience, let me know. I will put your name in one of those six slots when you have purchased your plane ticket (your expression of commitment).

As the time approaches, I will create a group on Facebook and will schedule a Skype call for us to begin getting to know each other.



Companioning

Companioning is about being present to another person's pain;
it is not about taking away the pain.

Companioning is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being;
it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.

Companioning is about honoring the spirit;
it is not about focusing on the intellect.

Companioning is about listening with the heart;
it is not about analyzing with the head.

Companioning is about bearing witness to the struggles of others;
it is not about judging or directing those struggles.

Companioning is about walking alongside;
it is not about leading or being led.

Companioning means discovering the gifts of the sacred silence;
it is not about filling up every moment with words.

Companioning is about respecting disorder and confusion;
it is not about imposing order and logic.

Companioning is about learning from others;
it is not about teaching them.

by Alan Wolfelt



A bit about me...

I am a pilgrim, discovering the road as I travel it, one step at a time. Since 2012, I have been a nomad without a fixed home or job. My intention is to live with generosity and gratitude as I follow life's invitations into learning and service.

For 38 years I worked in a nonprofit healthcare organization in rural Oregon. There, I had multiple responsibilities focused around organizational culture, team building, information management and leadership development. In 2010, I left the organization and my work in healthcare to be able to form Itineris Coaching & Consulting and to offer my gifts on a global basis.

Utilizing my skills in hosting meaningful conversations, ontological coaching, aikido, mindfulness meditation and leadership development, I am now traveling the world.



The Details....

When	Where
May 26, 2014	Convene in St. Jean Pied-de-Port
May 27 to June 2	Stage 1: St. Jean Pied-de-Port to Logroño
June 3	Flow Game and Rest Day in Logroño
June 4 to June 8	Stage 2: Logroño to Burgos
June 9	Rest Day: Burgos
June 10 to June 16	Stage 3: Burgos to Leon
June 17	Semi-Rest Day: Leon
June 18 to June 29	Stage 4: Leon to Santiago de Compostela
June 29	Arrive in Santiago de Compostela

Cost: All participants are responsible for their own costs including accommodations, food and transportation. All of my services including pre-pilgrimage consultation, hosting and coaching (including post-pilgrimage follow-up) are offered in the spirit of donativo ~ the Camino practice of giving with generosity and gratitude. My services are a gift. You are invited to gift back in whatever way you choose. You can learn more on my thinking about the gift economy [here](#).

For more information or to register: contact me at sryman@gmail.com

Please feel free to share this invitation with anyone you think might be interested.



