



The Camino Made Easy: Reflections of a Parador Pilgrim

Olivia Pittet

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The Camino Made Easy is an inviting guide to a travel adventure filled with cultural and spiritual enrichment.

For those who feel called to the ancient practice of pilgrimage but who are not into the physical pain and stress associated with an arduous walking tour, Olivia Pittet's excellent guide, *The Camino Made Easy*, reveals how walking the ancient Camino can be not only exciting and possibly life-changing, but an experience of "slow travel at its best."

Drawing upon Pittet's personal experiences as a pilgrim, the book combines history, cultural and spiritual enrichment, and practical information with astute or hilarious observations on what can be expected from traveling companions on a programmed tour. Quotes from English literary giants regarding the Camino illuminate its timeless influence.

The book suggests leaving the trip's logistics to the professionals; the itinerary, transportation, luggage transfers, and accommodations can all be provided by others, and even arranged to accommodate particular travelers' needs. To prepare for the trip, it recommends working up to being able to walk at least five miles a day on varied terrain several days a week. Helpful instructions on what to wear, what to bring, and how to keep hydrated are provided, as is a list of trusted tour companies.

The book targets readers fifty and up, and highlights van-assisted, hotel-based, small-group walking tours for grown-ups, with "serious attention paid to the creature comforts of not-so-fit retirees." It respects the fact that each pilgrimage is personal, and in a chatty, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic manner provides trip options through detailed coverage of the three Camino trails in the Way of Saint James—the *Camino Francés*, the *Camino Finisterre*, and the *Camino Portugués*. Each comes to life thanks to colorful descriptions of dramatic landscapes, castles, great cathedrals, and ancient landmarks encountered along the way.

Written in a friendly, conversational tone and filled with facts, legends, and the history of the places visited, the book holds appeal for armchair travelers as well as pilgrims. It is enhanced with maps, hand-drawn illustrations, and beautiful black-and-white photographs. An ample bibliography is included for further research. Those interested in religious and secular history will find much to appreciate in the quantity of information provided, though the pace drags in related sections.

Detailed and honest, the book not only shares the deep emotion and awe that can arise at the landscapes and sites visited, but also forecasts the possibility of bad moods, fatigue, less than stellar menus, and inclement weather. Still, this is a lighthearted guide that honors the opportunity for personal growth that comes both from joining the lineage of those who've made the hallowed pilgrimage and from learning to treat oneself and others with compassion on the journey.

The Camino Made Easy is an inviting guide to a travel adventure filled with cultural and spiritual enrichment, moderate physical challenges, and the potential for a life-changing experience.

KRISTINE MORRIS (April 30, 2019)

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