

CAMINO 2025 BLOG

April 21, 2025: CONTIGO NO JUEGO

Hello faithful readers. As promised, a new blog about this year's foray into Portugal and Spain.

I left Dallas on Easter Sunday for a three plane trip to my favorite city in the world – Seville. I thought I might get a rise out of you by leaving on Easter. Ouch. Please don't be cross with me. Whoa, Nipsey! Okay, okay, I'll resurrect some new humor. Sheesh.

Uneventful flights with a minimum of bumpity bump. Except for that Army helicopter in Philadelphia.... But hey, America's great again so no worries. I watched The Apprentice on the plane. Roy Cohn taught Panty Boy well is all I can say. I also watched Almost Famous for the first time in a long time and it made me fall in love with Rock N Roll all over again.

Got to Seville and it was like I had never left. My cab driver was blasting "Contigo No Juego" which has all the lyric depth and subtlety of "Stupid Hoe" by Nicki Minaj

Come on! Everybody now!

"You a stupid hoe, you a, you a stupid hoe
You a stupid hoe, you a, you a stupid hoe
You a stupid hoe, you a, you a stupid hoe
You a stupid hoe, yeah, you a, you a stupid hoe
You a stupid hoe, you a, you a stupid hoe (you stupid, stupid)
You a stupid hoe, you a, you a stupid hoe (you stupid, stupid)
You a stupid hoe, you a, you a stupid hoe (you stupid, stupid)
You a stupid hoe, yeah, you a, you a stupid hoe (you stupid, stupid)"

Contigo no juego
Contigo no juego
Contingo no juego.

You get the idea.

"There was the Frio Moron sign on Avenida Kansas City just as I remembered it. Avenida Kansas City? How so, you may well ask. I'll tell you.

The Plaza de Espana was built in the early part of the 20th Century as a joint celebration of friendship between the U.S. and Spain. Remember when other countries used to be our friends? Anyway, Avenida Kansas City was named after the hometown of one of the American organizers. So there.

By the time I got to my hotel, it was 2:30 pm local time so I unpacked and conked out for an hour. I have a groovy little terrace that has a hint of the Islam about it.



Remember what the three colors of Islam stand for? I told you the last time I was in Seville. Alert reader, Deborah Steed, I'm counting on you.

Here's the view from my terrace:



And speaking of Islam, I went wandering about before dinner. I happened upon a monument to Christopher Columbus (who I also told you about last time I was here). If someone can tell me what connection Chris has to Seville, I'll give you an Amana Radar Range from the Spiegel catalog. That's Spiegel, Chicago 60609. Extra credit if you can tell me what connection Chris's brother has to Seville. Here's the monument:



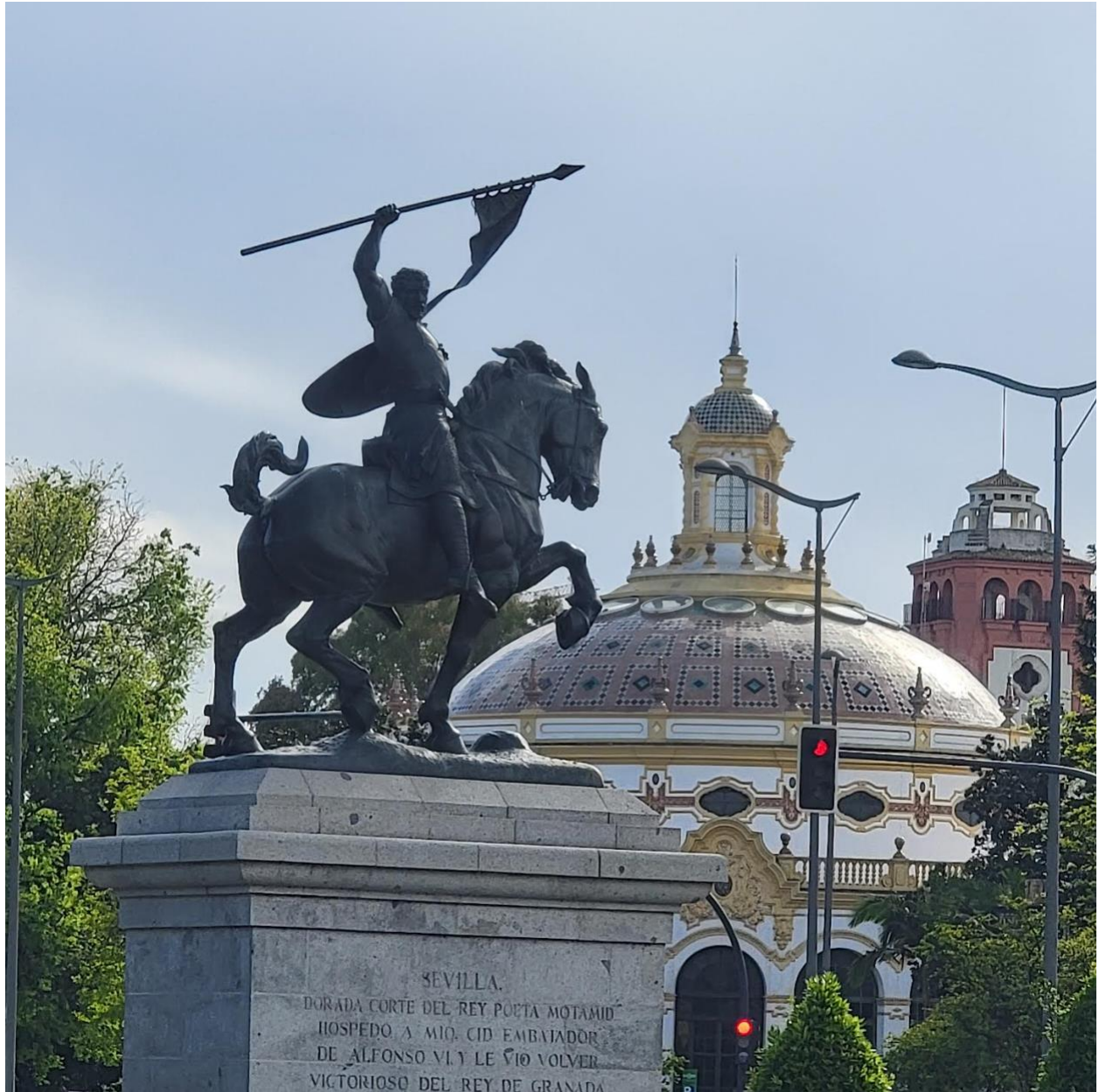
You can see a bit of the fountain. Spanish or Moorish, and how can you tell? A Broyhill Living Room Suite is yours if you can tell me.

And speaking of fountains, I just happened upon the Plaza de Espana. It's really on my itinerary for tomorrow, so I won't spill too many beans, but here's an amuse-bouche:



Spanish or Moorish? I expected to see Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder, or at least Marlo Thomas, but all I got was a Spanish family wearing UT paraphernalia. Moor tomorrow. See what I did there?

And speaking of El Cid, here's a statue of him:



El Cid was bad ass. Or maybe he was just pragmatic. After all, he fought on both sides during the Christian wars with the Moors.

Okay, theatre friends. Time to show off your theatre history knowledge. Surely you must know who the author of *Le Cid* was. If you can tell me the playwright's name and why *Le Cid* is significant in theatre history, you'll win the mink coat from Dicker and Dicker of Beverly Hills now being modeled by the lovely Carol Merrill. Emily Ernst, I'm counting on you.



All in all, it was a pretty good day. And Seville is as lovely as ever.



However, I've been up now for 36 hours or so and I think I'm starting to hallucinate. Either that or there's a guy wearing a coon skin cap a la Davy Crocket walking down the street.

So I leave you to ponder the true magic and mystery of Seville's illustrious native son. Who is that you may well ask?

Duh. Dave Seville, of course. I mean, they named the town after him after all.



Hasta manana.

April 22, 2025: WHAT DID THE ROMANS EVER DO FOR US?

I spent most of the day wandering the ruins of Italica. Those of you who know me well know that I like Roman stuff – especially during the late Republic through the Five Great Emperors. What? You don't know about the Five Great Emperors? Hmm. We better do something about that.

Although one can quibble about dates, the Roman Empire existed for about 450 years. During that time, the Roman Empire had 77 Emperors (For brevity's sake I'm omitting the 94 Emperors of the Eastern [Byzantine] Empire). Of those 77 Emperors, only five were considered "Great" and they ruled in succession for close to 100 years from 96 – 180 CE/AD/BVD/PDQ. Not included in the five was the Emperor's fwend Biggus Dickus.



Seriously though, if you can name the Five Great Emperors without consulting the internet (including Wikipedia, the most trusted name in information delivery), I will send you a trinket of my choosing from my peregrinations. You don't even have to name them in order. Although I bet Deborah Steed can.

For extra credit, three of the five were born in Spain. Name those three and I'll double down on the trinkets.

Finally, two of the five were born in Italica. Here they are, in order no less:





Name them, and I'll take the triple dog dare and get you three trinkets of my choosing. Megan Harris Art Major, I'm looking at you.

So just what the heck was Italica and why should we care?

Well, you'd care if you happened to be living on the Iberian Peninsula during the time of Hannibal. Hannibal was from Carthage which is now in Tunisia. Hannibal set out to open a can of whup ass on the Romans, so he crossed the Strait of Gibraltar, set up shop in Spain and proceeded to cross the Pyrenees and the Alps with a bunch of elephants, resulting in a mighty hurt for the Romans. The Romans, being a canny lot, looked at a map and said "Hmm, that Hannibal is pretty smart. We need to play his game. So, the Romans established a settlement at

Italica. Italica was the first Roman settlement outside of Italy, hence its name. A guy named Scipio (well, actually the third of that name [the Scipios must have been related to George Foreman]) then took the whup ass to Hannibal. The Iberian Peninsula was thus secured, and Scipio became known as Scipio Africanus. Thereafter, the Romans developed a system of allowing Roman Legionnaires with twenty years' service to retire in the location of their last posting. So it was with Italica. That's why the two Emperors who appear above wound up being born in Italica. Their dads were retired Legionnaires. Italica thus thrived until the 11th century CE/AD/BVD/PDQ when it sort of ran out of steam.

Here are some things you can see in Italica. Commercial roads:



All commercial roads in Italica were three meters wide. A typical chariot was one meter wide. Thus, commercial traffic could travel in both directions with plenty of room to spare, unlike the streets of Seville which are so narrow one can easily get run over by the Scooter People.

In contrast, residential streets were narrower because there was only foot traffic. Italica residents conducted business out of their houses. The picture below is of a typical residential street. The brick columns supported awnings under which people could sell stuff, thus providing shade for buyers and sellers because it gets hot as butt in Italica.



Here is a typical column support for an average house:



The columns of a typical house were made of stone. Only the rich folks had marble columns.

The private chambers of a typical house had mosaics on the floor. Here's one of the seven planets that were known to the Romans:



I've always liked mosaics. Ever since my Magilla Gorilla mosaic set that I had when I was five years old. I still miss that thing. Plus, mosaics are the only visual art form I was ever any good at. I really suck at art.

Today's imponderable: A mosaic that was excavated at Italica.



Clearly the bird in the mosaic is a peacock. Peacocks come from India. Alexander only spent 19 months in India, approximately 100 years before Italica's founding. The Romans never went to India. So, how did the Romans know about Peacocks? Deborah Steed?

And speaking of poo poos, here is where Bigus Dickus' wife, Incontinentia Buttocks, chewed the fat with the other Italicans.



Apparently, public poo poo facilities were gender neutral. So suck on that Governor Abbott.

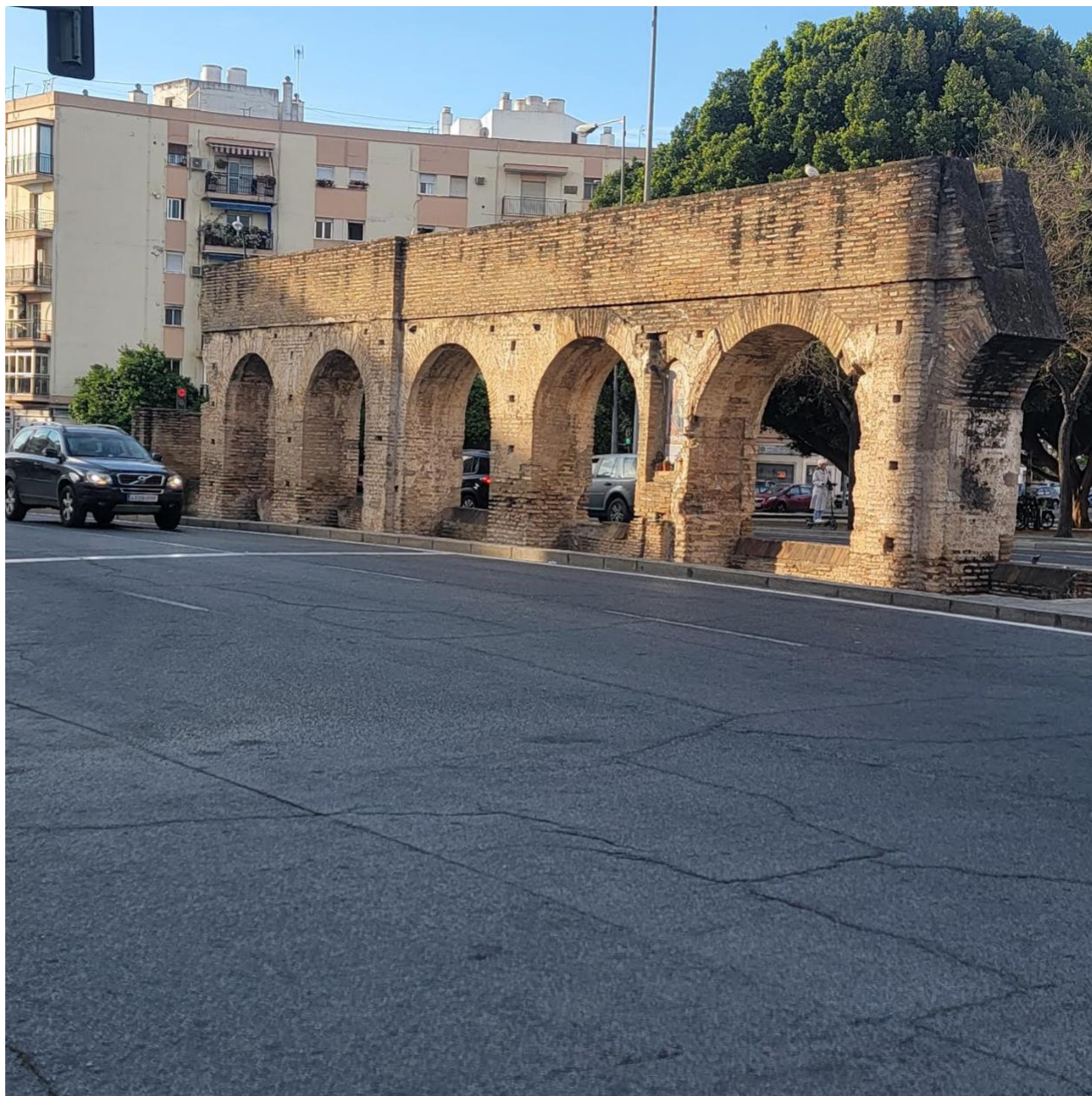
Finally, Italica had the second largest amphitheatre in the Empire. Supposedly it could accommodate 35,000 spectators and could be flooded to facilitate sea battles. I have my doubts.



I also have my doubts about our guide's explanation of what constituted an amphitheatre as I have never heard that amphitheatres could be hinged to open into a semi-circle or closed into an oval like the Coliseum. Anyone of you theatre folks ever heard that? Emily Ernst?

However, they did film some of the last episode of Game of Thrones in the Itálica amphitheatre. Whoopee. They filmed a ton of GOT in and around Seville.

So, what did the Romans ever do for us? "What about the aqueducts?"



What about the lovely floor given to Italica by Benito Mussolini?



He was probably just sucking up to Franco. Who is still dead.

What about Italcra Oil?



Those wacky Romans. They could have just filled up their chariots outside of the Italica gate instead of having to have horses.

Our last stop of the day was a monastery founded by St. Isidore of Seville. It was kind of underwhelming. However, St. Isidore was the first to translate the Latin Bible into Spanish, so I suppose that's something. Here he is doing just that:



When we got back to Seville, it was time for a non-existent lunch. So I ate my non-existent lunch here because we all know there is really no such thing as



So, that's my thing.

After wandering around Seville for the bulk of the afternoon, I wound up at Plaza de Espana.

Plaza de Espana is pretty cool, as you can see from yesterday's pictures. The coolest thing is the panels celebrating each of the Spanish provinces and historically significant towns. Here's the one for Seville:



Apparently, Jimmy Durante had something to do with Plaza de Espana.



I have no idea. To top off the Plaza de Espana experience, I got to see some flamenco.



Eat your heart out Michael Flatley.

And now, the sun is starting to set, I've had my existent dinner, and I'm a bit knackered.

I've really enjoyed my time in Seville and sharing a bit of it with you. Tomorrow, a new adventure awaits in Portugal. Until then, inka dinka doo.

April 23, 2025: PORTO CALL

I arrived in Porto around noontime. Driving in from the airport, I notice the countryside has many more trees than where I was in Spain. That may be why it's a little cooler here. That said,

it's still pretty hot in the sun. Today's imponderable then is why are so many people wearing what look to me to be winter coats? I wonder if they know something I don't.

After getting my hair cut and having a 5 Euro lunch – yes, Portugal appears to be less expensive than Spain – I went walking around. First impressions: The city reminds me of Buenos Aires, only not as run down. Cranes are everywhere and building and/or renovation seems to be the name of the game. Gosh I hope they build some mixed-use developments. Then it'll be just like Dallas!

Same old graffiti as is everywhere. I don't get the appeal.

Tons of barber shops. There are five within three blocks of my hotel, which is very nice by the way. I got my hair cut at THE Barbershop Luiz. I met Luiz, but David cut my hair, and I have to say it's a better cut than I usually get in Dallas. I suspect that might have something to do with the fact that I get my hair cut at Sport Clips.

And speaking of haircuts, I urge you all to enjoy every minute of your life. One day you're playing lead roles, the next day some guy in Portugal is trimming your ear hair. I wonder why I always get a haircut when I go to a different country?

Lots of prospective Peregrinos seem to be wandering around. My hotel seems to have a cottage industry of preparing folks for The Way by offering several options for beginning the trek to Santiago de Compostela.

At the airport, there were four bros in front of me who I just know are going on the Camino. Backward ballcaps, lots of fist bumping and tattoos, braggadocio and too loud laughter. I felt like I was in the midst of Leon Skum's DOGE boyz.

It's weird to want to speak Spanish when someone speaks Portuguese to me. The languages are similar enough to warrant the impulse, but I realize that I sound like a dope by replying in Spanish. Oh well, I'm sure I'll adjust as I'm in Portugal for the next ten days.

I don't really know much about Portugal except that Magellan and Henry the Navigator were Portuguese. By the way, if you want to read a really cool book about Magellan, check out *Over the Edge of the World* by Laurence Bergreen. It would make a great movie.

Porto is the second most populous city in Portugal. I know nothing about it except that my friend Maya Kanehara moved away because of the lousy internet connection. It can't be any worse than Seville, and it's fine in my hotel room. I'll keep you advised.

Since I don't know anything about Porto, except that the Duke of Wellington led an invasion of Portugal in the Peninsular War to beat back Napoleon's forces and fought a decisive battle in Porto, let's check out what Wikipedia (the most trusted name in information delivery) has to say.

“Porto (Portuguese pronunciation: [\[ˈportu\]](#) [ⓘ]), also known as **Oporto**,^[a] is the [second largest city](#) in [Portugal](#), after [Lisbon](#). It is the capital of the [Porto District](#) and one of the [Iberian](#)

[Peninsula](#)'s major urban areas. Porto city proper, which is the entire [municipality of Porto](#), is small compared to its metropolitan area, with an estimated population of just 248,769 people in a municipality with only 41.42 km² (16 sq mi). Porto's metropolitan area has around 1,319,151 people (2025)^[11] in an area of ,395 km² (925 sq mi), making it the second-largest urban area in Portugal. It is recognized as a [global city](#) with a Gamma + rating from the [Globalization and World Cities Research Network](#).

Located along the [Douro](#) River estuary in northern Portugal, Porto is one of the oldest European centers and its core was proclaimed a [World Heritage Site](#) by UNESCO in 1996, as the "Historic Centre of Porto, Luiz I Bridge and Monastery of Serra do Pilar". The historic area is also a National Monument of Portugal.^[17] The western part of its urban area extends to the coastline of the Atlantic Ocean. Its settlement dates back to the 2nd century BC when it was an outpost of the [Roman Empire](#). Its combined [Celtic-Latin](#) name, [Portus Cale](#),^[18] has been referred to as the origin of the name *Portugal*, based on [transliteration](#) and oral evolution from Latin.

[Port wine](#), one of Portugal's most famous exports, is named after Porto, since the metropolitan area, and in particular the [cellars](#) of [Vila Nova de Gaia](#), were responsible for the packaging, transport, and export of [fortified wine](#).^{[19][20]} Porto is on [the Portuguese Way](#) path of the [Camino de Santiago](#). In 2014 and 2017, Porto was elected *The Best European Destination* by the Best European Destinations Agency. In 2023, Porto was named *City of the Year* by *Food and Travel* magazine. In 2024, the city was awarded *World's Leading Seaside Metropolitan Destination* at the World Travel Awards.”

There you have it.

Went back to the airport later to meet San, my traveling companion, on what promises to be one hootenanny of a Camino. We had a great dinner with copious amounts of cooked meat – Porto style – and not too much wine. Now it's time for sleep. I'll see you tomorrow when I shall no doubt regale you with more tales and pictures of Porto. Rest well.

April 24, 2025: SHAKIN' THE TREE

A lot of you know that I'm a big Peter Gabriel fan (hello Hamlet and King Lear casts) and Shakin' the Tree is one of my favorite songs of his. However, I've never really pondered what the phrase “Shaking the Tree” actually means. I'm probably slow on the uptake because I'm sure my wife knows (and you too, Deborah Steed), but today I had a Doh! Moment as I walked the streets of Porto (or Oporto if you're speaking Portuguese). More on that later.

We left for our rendezvous point – the Praça de Gomes Teixeira (not that Teixeira) – because we wanted to soak up some local atmosphere.

Not our Jimmypage or Robertplant but a nice cat all the same.



Vibrant building murals.



Statue of a guy with his hand in his vest. Why do subjects of portraits and statues always do that? It's like Emmitt Smith in that ubiquitous Choctaw Casino commercial they broadcast during Stars games.



The Porto NBC Studio.



FDR with Xray Specs.



Vegetation roofs.



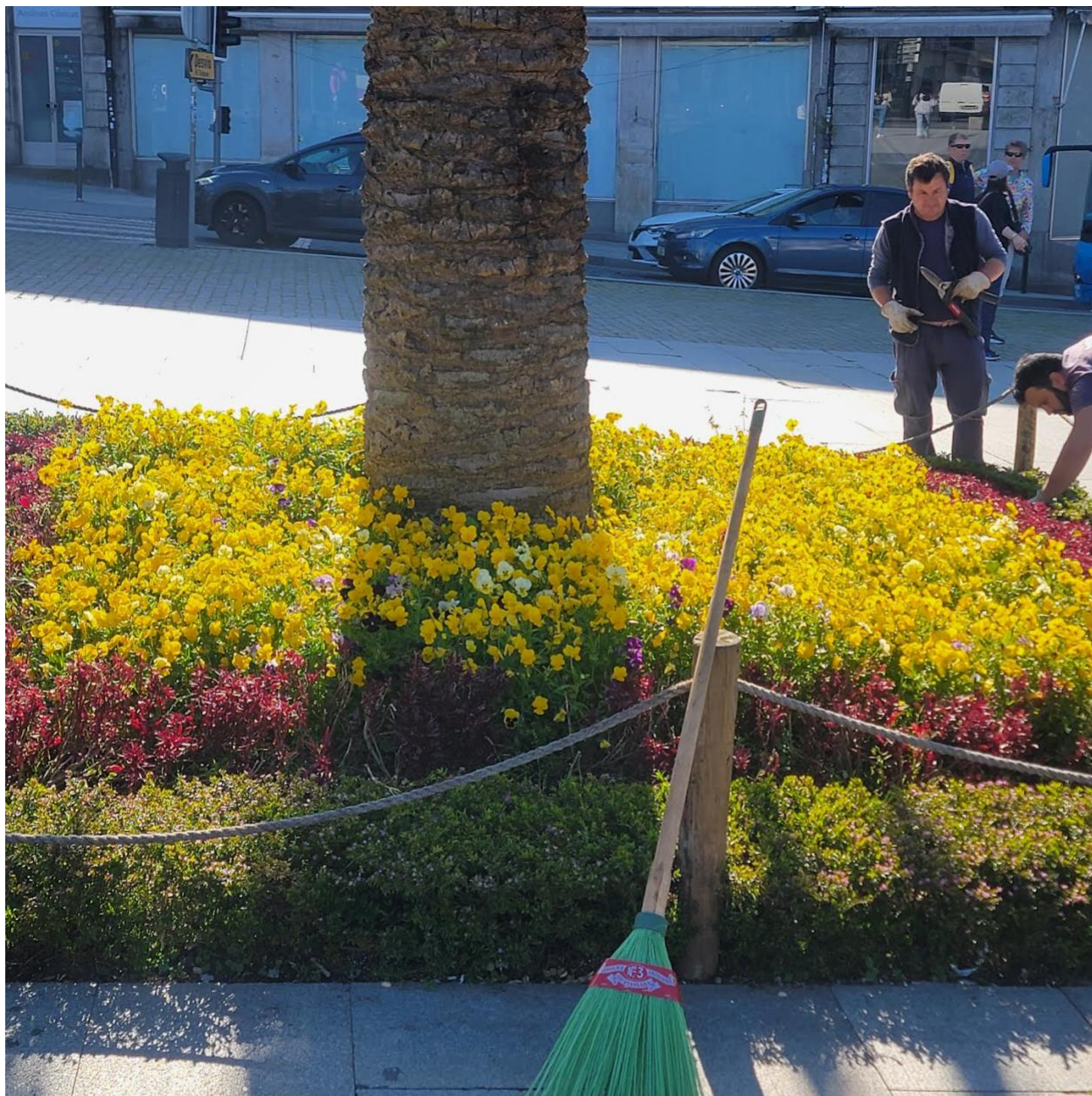
Zamfir Jr. and his birds that can sing Besa me Mucho.



I was glad to hear that Porto has an ear for the light classics.



We arrived early at Praca de Gomes Teixeira; in time to monitor the spring planting process.



Apparently, all of the tours of Porto begin in Praça de Gomes Teixeira. Except nobody calls it Praça de Gomes Teixeira. I approve because I always hated Mark Teixeira.



As smug as Ken Paxton.

Instead, everyone calls Praça de Gomes Teixeira the “Lion Fountain.” Even though there are no lions at the fountain..... uh....

This is San at the lion fountain.



I have to confess that I wasn't very keen on taking this walking tour because I thought it would not be very informative. Man, was I wrong. What a great tour! Our guide, Pedro Cardoso, was terrific. I highly recommend it.

Here is Pedro showing us an 18th century fire alarm.



Here is Pedro showing us a double church.



Problem: the Catholic church requires that all churches have four separate walls. None can be shared. So, to get around that, the Bishop dedicated the little sliver in the center to a tiny space for the priest to live in. Problem solved. Until the 17th century when the King outlawed all religious orders. Hence, the former Carmelite Convent adjoining the church is now a police station.



You may be asking yourself why the heck did the King outlaw religious orders. Why? Because he's the King, don't ask questions. No one really know why, actually, but ever since Portugal has made it a point to shelter all religions. In WWII, Jewish people escaping Uncle Adolf were given sanctuary in Portugal, which maintained its neutrality. Good thing too. Otherwise, the Atlantic would have been sewed up by the U-Boats. Later on in this trip I'll tell you about Vigo, Spain and WWII. Because Franco is still dead.

Tomorrow, April 25th, is the 51st anniversary of the overthrow of the Salazar regime, when the Portuguese military overthrew Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. Things have only gotten better since then. Pedro's parents were teenagers in 1974 and they could tell you some tales.



But enough of that icky stuff. It's not like anything akin to Salazar could ever happen in the U.S. Uh....

Since Salazar's overthrow, Porto has come alive and is bustling. In 2000, it hosted the European Cup and the money started rolling in. Whereas before 2000 one couldn't fly directly to Porto from anywhere, there is now a state of the art airport. I told you about all the cranes yesterday and the city is humming with construction. If you read the Wikipedia (the most trusted name in information delivery) article I posted yesterday, you'll have learned that the old walled city is a World Heritage site. Here's how you can tell where the World Heritage boundaries are.



It's better than a Little Orphan Annie decoder ring and the symbol doesn't mean "Drink Your Ovaltine." Although I'm not sure what the symbol symbolizes, Porto people are very proud of its WHS designation. And it certainly seems good for the economy.

Besides Port Wine, Porto is known for its ceramics.



This firm has been around for 200 years.



It is still a going concern as evidenced by the 200 year old 4000E tureen in its window.

Eat your heart out Suzy Homemaker.

Porto is also known for cork. In fact, it's protected. You have to have a government permit to harvest the cork from the cork trees. As Pedro said, "you can kill someone and not go to jail, but if you cut the cork tree they'll throw you in the slammer." Who'd have thunk it? However, most of the cork in the world comes from Portugal, so offer up thanks the next time you open a bottle of wine.

The Douro River borders Porto.



The Douro has been significant in Porto's development because of the vineyards that grow in the alluvial soil and because it is a vital transportation route for the rest of Portugal.

Porto's nickname is the "Invicta City" because it has not been conquered since the 800s. Napoleon tried in 1809, but Wellington beat him back. I guess old Nap found it unendurable.

So, shaking the tree. You thought I forgot didn't you?

I learned today how one harvests olives. By... you guessed it. By shaking the tree. You all probably knew that, right? Anyway, I didn't know it. But now I do.

The oldest known olive tree in Portugal is 3000 years old. It still produces olives. Olives are harvested in November. The oldest known olive tree in the world is in Greece. 5000 years old.

Here are some olives that have bloomed. In six months, they'll be ready to be shaken from the tree.



San and I saw a nice outdoor bar on our walk today. In an olive grove. So we went back this evening for cocktails before a scrumptious meal of tapas.





Remember when I commented on everyone wearing winter coats yesterday and being worried that they might know something I don't. They do. The sun went down and it is now cold as butt. So I'm going to bed, where I can get warm.

We really enjoyed our day in Porto. One more before we set off Saturday on our adventure.

As PG and Youssou N'Dour sang:

"Turning the tide, you are on the incoming wave
Turning the tide, you know you are nobody's slave
Find your sisters or brothers who can hear all the truth in what you say
They can support you when you're on your way."

Go shake your trees.

April 25, 2025: NATURE ABHORRORS A VACUI

Have you ever noticed how hearing a song can define a place you've been, even long after your visit?

I will always remember Porto for the following songs:

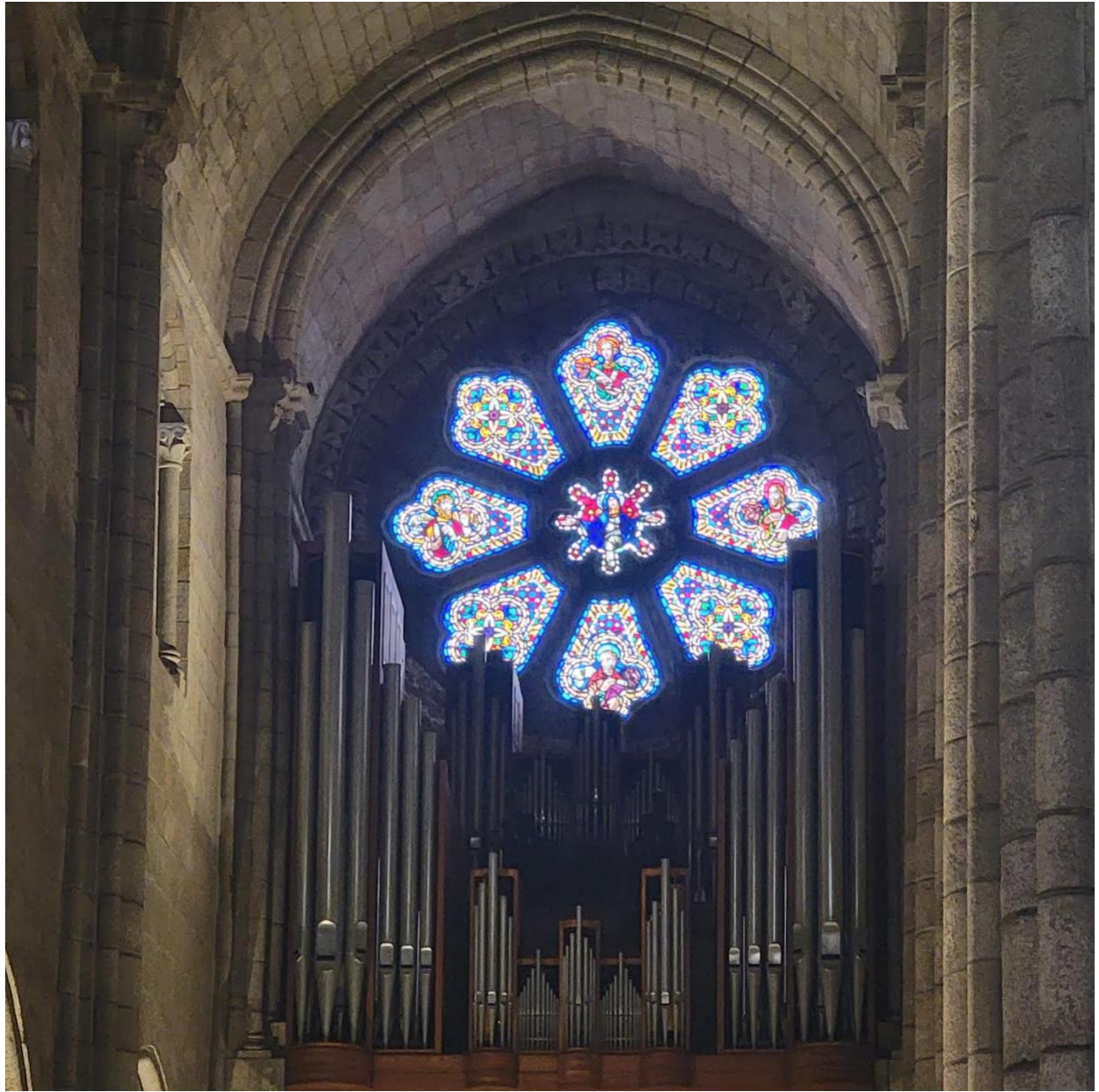
A Portuguese cover of Comfortably Numb during a late night cab ride, Material Girl during a promenade along the Douro, Ella's cover of Am I Blue during a veggie burger in Noshi, our lunch hangout today.



It's our last day in Porto and while I liked it better than I thought I would, I feel like I've seen and experienced it and now it's time to get down to the Camino.

We went over to the Cathedral this morning to scope out where to stamp our credencial tomorrow before setting off tomorrow morning and to take the tour. It didn't bowl me over. Like a lot of things in Porto, the Cathedral is in need of an upgrade.





I did, however, like this panel of John the Baptist.



However, I question whether this little guy is conducive to people sticking their fingers into the font upon entering.



I wanted to light a candle for Marjorie Taylor Greene, but there were none to be had and no chapels in which to do it. Too bad, as MTG is in serious need of forgiveness.

Today is a quasi-holiday in Portugal. As I mentioned yesterday, it's the 51st anniversary of the Carnation Revolution when the Salazar dynasty was overthrown by the military. From what I've seen, that was a good thing. The Salazars were brutal dictators under which Portugal stagnated for three-quarters of a century. That's why I don't get why people support Communism, at least as it's been practiced since 1917. Rather than a people's movement, Communism is, in reality, fiat by dictatorship and central control of the economy by an oligarchical few. The "People" are kept in economic bondage while the dictator and his cronies rape the treasury so they can remain in power. Good thing that can't happen in the U.S.



And speaking of the color blue, everything in Porto has blue and white tile decorating the interiors and exteriors of . . . well. . . everything.



DILECTVS MEVS DES-CE-NDIT
IN HORTUM SVVM

PVLCHRA ES ANIKANEA
ET DICORA Sicut IERUSALEM





Que diabos?

Actually, azulejos - blue and white tile - is a thing in Porto. Rooted in the cultural and historical tradition of the Moors, who had practiced “horror vacui” (fear of empty spaces) in their artistic expression, the azulejos found expression in Portugal by use of the azulejos. I’m not a fan as it looks too Dutch for my taste, but who asked me? Like it or not, it’s ubiquitous and like most of Porto, the azulejos are undergoing slow but steady restoration in most public spaces.

It's almost cocktail hour, so we're off again to BASE for a final libation before an early dinner and an early sleep. Obrigado, Porto. I hope our paths cross again.

April 26,2025: WALK IT MAN

We packed our bags last night.

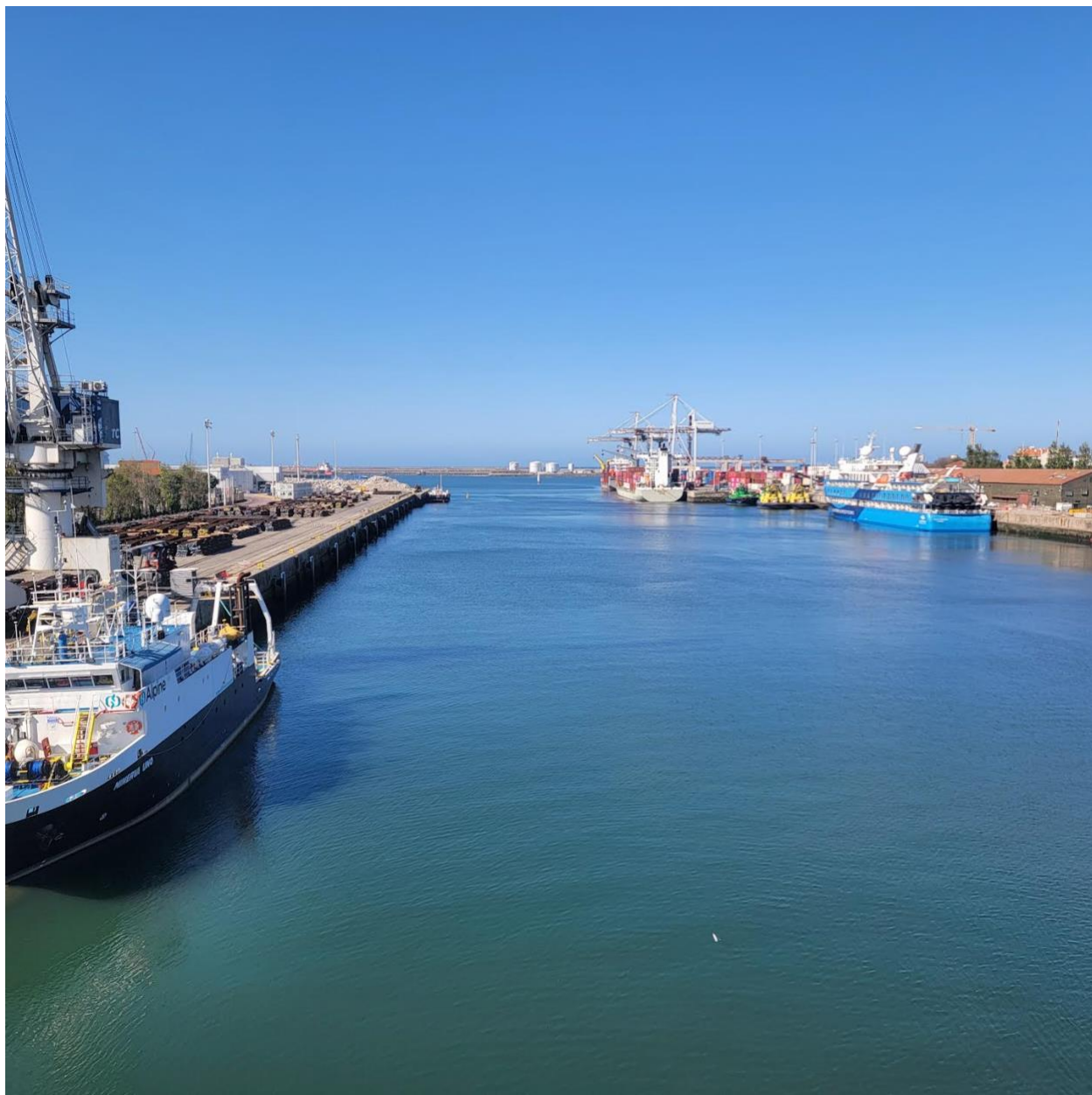
Zero Hour 9 a.m.



And we're off. No real fanfare. We trundled through Porto to the Bridge and crossed over into such a timeless flight.



This is the only day of our Camino that we could walk the Camino Litoral, so we took advantage of it and headed for the Atlantic.



It was a perfect day. Sun. Not too cold. Windy, yeah, but not too windy before lunch. So, we headed for the “treacherous and tragic Costa Negra” – where ships and U-Boats go to die.



The Costa Negra (“Black Coast”) is “tragic and treacherous.” It is the most “tragic and treacherous” coast in Portugal. There are many shipwrecks, including a famous one in 1913 and a U-Boat that was scuttled in April 1945. Apparently, the crew, hearing that Germany had surrendered, scuttled their boat 30 meters off the beach and surrendered to the British rather than going back to Germany to surrender to the Russians. And I thought all the Nazis were imbeciles.

Okay Deborah Steed. You’re up. WTF is this (sorry about the fingers)?



There is no interpretive plaque explaining what this is. I know it's art. But what is it? I'm deuced if I can interpret it.

I know what this is:



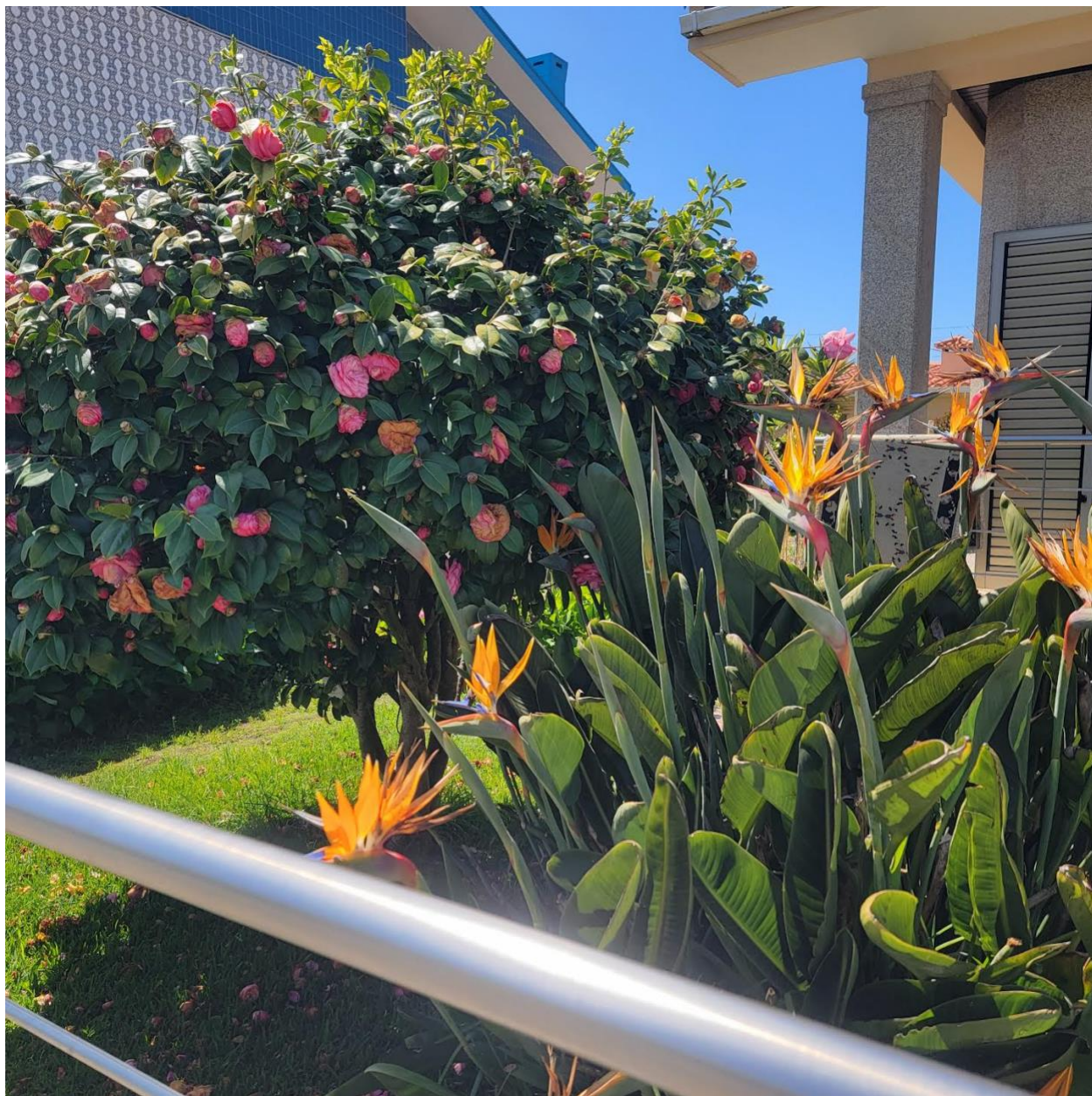


It's my little Jimmypage, who's a good boy.

After lunch, the wind became too much. Like 70 miles an hour too much. San and I were being blown off the boardwalk and we were afraid of becoming casualties of the "tragic and treacherous Costa Negra" so we turned inland.

I must confess I'm not much of a beach community guy. I like doing and seeing things, not sitting in the sand inviting skin cancer. So, I'm probably not the best guy to ask about the appeal of beach town living.

However, I will say, that beach towns in Portugal have bitchin' flora.



And of course, this Poinciana tree inspired me to hum the Manhattan Transfer cover of “Poinciana” the rest of the afternoon.



We spent the rest of the afternoon wandering through some of the small towns that dot the Portuguese Atlantic coast – which is “treacherous and tragic.”





After an 18 mile day, we reached Quinta Sao Miguel de Arcos, which is now the seventh Camino lodging I've stayed in and which is far and away the best.



I wish I could be around when the grape vines are in bloom.

What's that? The worst place I've stayed during my peregrinations? I'll say no more.



We had a wonderful dinner at Quinta Sao Miguel de Arcos, the service was first rate, and I wish I could stay for a few days.

Here's a little chapel to which I managed to pay a visit just before the lady who tends it hobbled home.



So I think it's gonna be a long long time before the touch down, but if today's any indication of how the rest of the trip is going to go, I can't wait.

Maybe I'm not the man they think I am at home.

April 27, 2025: I'M SO TIRED

No, not like Madeline Kahn in Blazing Saddles.



No, not like The Beatles



Paul is dead, BTW.

No, today was a tiring day between Arcos and Barcelos.



Today was an RFD day and every freaking farm we passed was loaded down with tires. Tires, tires, tires! Where do they get them all? What you see in the picture is only the tip of the iceberg. It was very tiring to see.

We saw a lot of livestock today. From a watch cow to a watch lamb.





On the road, we saw the remnants of Easter with Peregrino tributes piled up.



Rock on!

We also saw flora. “The calla lilies are in bloom again. Such a strange flower. I carried them on my wedding day, and now I place them here in memory of something that has died.” Seemed fitting given the previous picture.



We saw a really impressive church. In the middle of nowhere.



I have no idea.

After a hot day in the sun, we reached Barcelos, which one gets to by crossing a medieval bridge.



Apparently, there is a famous accordionist from Barcelos named Lucas Fachinelli. I'm not sure if he would appreciate the tribute.



Nor would one appreciate what I hope is not a traditional Barcelos seasoning.



Not speaking Portuguese myself, I hope the sign doesn't mean what I think it means.

What Barcelos can be proud of is "Galo de Barcelos" (Barcelos Rooster), which is a symbol of Portugal, representing good fortune, justice, and the Portuguese spirit of resilience. Galo de Barcelos is rooted in a legend about a wrongly accused Peregrino who, before being hanged, predicted that a roasted rooster on the judge's table would crow, proving his innocence. The rooster's crowing, a miracle in the legend, resulted in the pilgrim's release and the rooster's subsequent iconic status.

Okay, that little tale raises a host of questions. What crime was the Peregrino accused of? Was it serious enough to warrant execution? Did the judge sentence the Peregrino in his dining room? Was the rooster canonized? The list is endless. Nonetheless, here is a picture of San and me with the Galo de Barcelos.



So there you have it. Another splendid day on the Way. Tomorrow.... 22 miles. The longest day we will have. A greater distance than a Roman Legionaire was expected to march in a day. But no sweat, we're Peregrinos! Well, maybe a little sweat. My back hurts...

April 28, 2025: VLADIMIR, STOP!

So today's big news is that there is reportedly 16 European countries without power. That means no electricity, no internet, and no tourist attractions. I have no idea whether the reports are true, but I do know there is no electricity in Ponte de Lima, Portugal. More significantly, I can't charge my phone or open the blackout blinds in my hotel room. "Where was Moses when the lights went out?" The first lucky contestant who can tell me what play that quote is from will win a trinket of my choosing from my peregrinations, which at the moment may be a clod of dirt as no souvenir shops can sell us Peregrinos Peregrino merch. Well, like everything else in the world, I suspect it's Biden's fault.

Today we were not Roman legionnaires. It's 87 degrees outside, the sun is intense, and the thought of marching to Pretoria just didn't appeal. So we took a bus. And I'm glad we did. Barcelos to Braga to Ponte de Lima. 22 miles, 8 Euros, 1 hour and 15 minutes and Bob's your uncle.

Ponte de Lima is a quaint medieval town. It happens to be celebrating the 900th anniversary of its founding this year. It has a cool medieval bridge guarded by the Winkies. It also has a medieval weaponry museum that I might have liked to see. Except I couldn't because of Hunter's laptop.







Instead, we had a leisurely lunch by the river, then I took a snooze on a park bench under a shady tree on a lovely promenade.



Maybe I can post this with some pictures someday. Seems a pity, but I don't think I can write anymore. For God's sake, look after our people....

Wait a minute. That's what Scott wrote as he sat freezing to death in a tent in Antarctica, nine miles from salvation. We aren't quite that bad off. Yet. However, I don't relish showering in the dark or trying to rummage through my suitcase to find a clean pair of socks. Who knows what tomorrow will bring, but at the moment I feel like I'm in a sensory deprivation tank, so I'm going to go outside and do the only sensible thing there is to do under the circumstances. Drink alcohol. After all, there comes a time in a Peregrino's life when he has to take the bull by the tail and look him in the eye. Bom Camino, chump. Er, um, uh, chum.



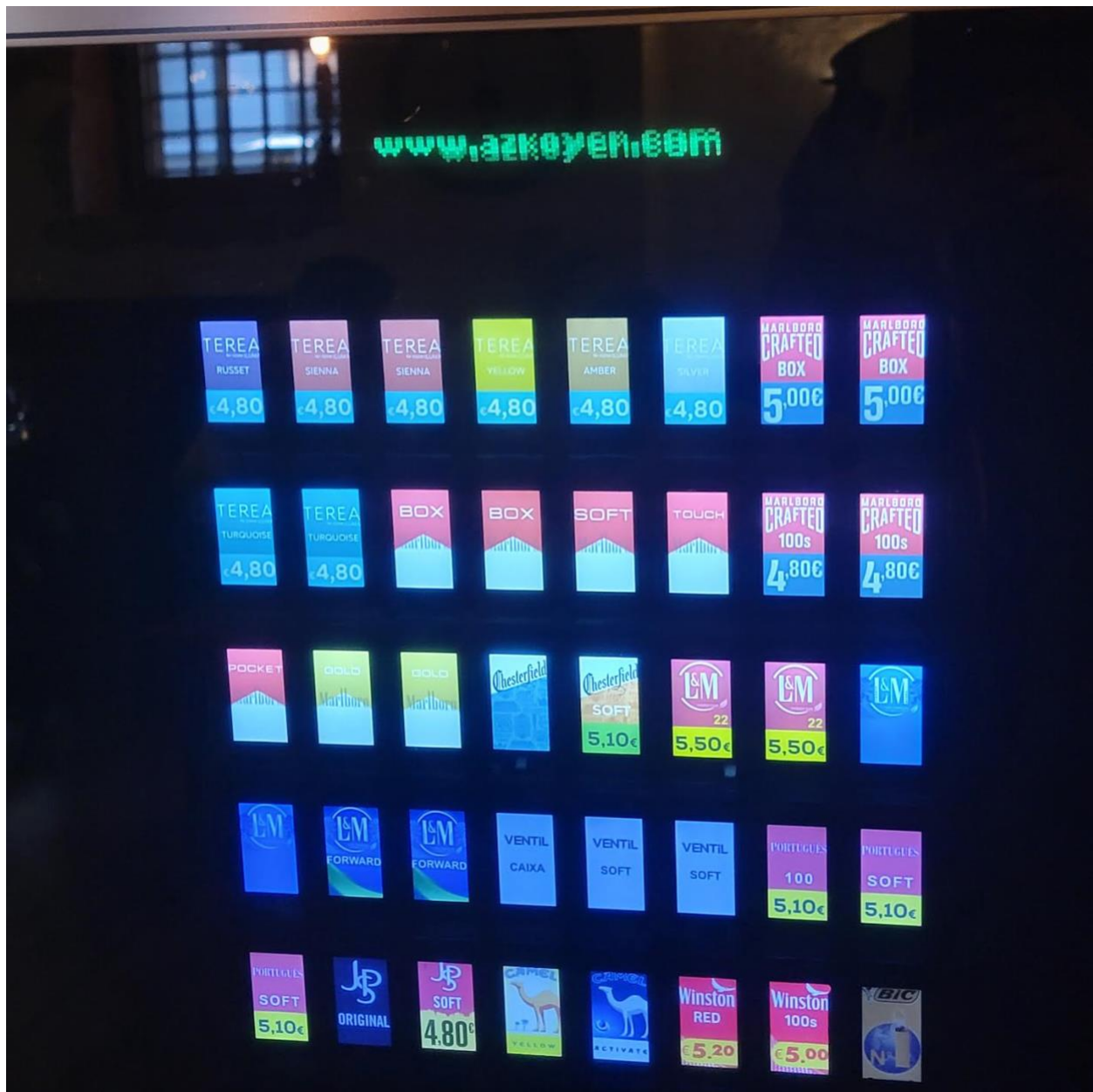
April 29, 2025: COULDN'T GET MUCH HIGHER

The electricity came on last night around 10:30, so I can show you a few more pictures of Ponte de Lima, which has been my favorite town so far.

This one looks like Texas. Kill the libtards!



And what could be better than a nice smoke after a hard day of shooting people who threaten your view of the world? Seriously, when was the last time you saw a cigarette machine?



Here is the story of Portugal as told by Al Hirschfeld.



Here's the story of Portugal as told by Bernardo Bertolucci.



Here's the story of Portugal as told by Robert Crumb.



Here's a reminder of my sweet puppy, Pippa.



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Today is our last full day in Portugal and it ran the gamut from the high to the low.

We walked 12 miles today – a pretty normal distance for a Camino stage. However, two thirds of the way was up, then down this:



It's four miles up on terrain that looked like this:



Imagine that for four miles while the elevation rises by 1500 meters. As my friend Whitley Smith wrote in his diary during our canoe trek to Canada when we were 14 “it was HELL!!!”

Before we began our ascent, we stopped for coffee at a cool spot. The coffee shop provides a number of tents for sleepy Peregrinos on its shaded terrace. Nice.



We also tromped through the Boogens which were presided over by the "As quatro deusas e o mago do pântano."







Notwithstanding their dire oracular admonitions, we began our ascent. After all, *alea iacta est*.



We made it. Others didn't.



Nah. I'm just kidding with you. Or am I?

We did get to see the big, beautiful wall that Portugal is paying for, though.



It's going to be yuge. It will be tremendous. It will keep out all the Portuguese gang members who sneak into the United States from Portugal. It's beautiful. It's tremendous.

But we don't need the ladies crying cuz the story's sad because our payoff was our abode in Rubaies.





Quinta da Gandra was better than the way we had.

We sipped port wine by the pool until the shadows lengthened. A really lovely day.

I was in Portugal for a week and here are some of my takeaways:

I never saw a clock that was set to the correct time.

The people are very reserved and correct with foreigners. Loud, boisterous, and laughing with each other.

One can never predict which faucet is the hot water. If there is only one faucet, one cannot predict which way to turn it to get hot water.

The flora is a vibrant Kodachrome.

The Camino trails are superbly marked. Even I couldn't get lost. Much appreciated in comparison to my last one which required me to set off cross country with a machete and a compass.

I wish I had heard more authentic music.

Ponte de Lima was a highlight. Even though the power was out. And speaking of quotes from plays, well done Louis A. Lotorto who was the first to correctly identify the quote I posted yesterday from The Glass Menagerie. Louis is an actor bud of mine out west. His father Lou played Nathan Detroit in a production of Guys and Dolls I was in during the Reagan administration. Lou taught me the word "popliteal" in reference to a conversation we had about Betty Grable. Great memories.

So that's it for the Portuguese portion of the Camino Portugues.



It's been a blast so far and who knows what mischief awaits us tomorrow when we're back in Spain for the Spanish portion of the Portuguese Camino. We'll just play it play by play.

Until then, I leave you with my sincerest appreciation.



April 30, 2025: RODE HARD AND HUNG UP WET

Well, today we walked 12 miles in a steady downpour. I think my phone may be kaput. I was able to take a few pictures earlier, but now I can't get it to turn on, even though I kept it zipped in my raincoat. Not really sure what I'm going to do without a phone for the next 3 weeks, but I guess I'll figure out something. In the meantime, I'm going to try a couple of fixes that Adriana sent me. Fingers crossed.

To top it off, I can't even post this because the internet at my hotel is, shall we say, sporadic. Sheesh. What a day.

May 1, 2025: MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

I think my phone may be working again. Fingers crossed. I left it out in the sun all day and it is currently taking a charge, allowed me to take a picture, and transfer a few photos from yesterday. So, maybe....

If all seems well, I won't have to hang around tomorrow until the phone repair shop opens. Hope that's the case as we get to tromp through the rain again tomorrow. And Saturday. And Sunday.

Today, however, was beautiful. Sunny and warm, not hot, and really great for walking around Tui, which is very nice. I don't have any pics of Tui to share with you as my phone has been sunbathing all day, but a highlight was the Tui Cathedral, the original of which dates back to the 5th (yes 5th) century. Its first iteration as we know it was completed in the 1000s before the Norman Conquest of England. To give you some idea. It also has a battlement design and has served as such throughout its history. My favorite part of it was the "Catholic Jail." No kidding. I couldn't access it though because there was a mass going on. I like the Tui Cathedral better than the Porto Cathedral. Here are a couple of pictures of it from the internet:



Tui is situated on a hill, affording us a lovely view of Valenca, Portugal across the river. After a splendid lunch of Tapas, I took a snooze and reorganized my packing for the next phase of the Camino.

I did get to take a few snaps yesterday before the rain came. The picture of San shows our descent into the Labruga Valley.



This next one shows the Peregrino massage therapy stop, although I can't imagine stopping as it's a long way from anything.

The next one shows a Roman bridge.



And finally, a subtle reminder to get the shell out of there before the rain comes!



A couple of mental snapshots from yesterday: We must have stopped for coffee at the Portugal Wino Club. Holy moly, everyone there looked drunk and really old. There must not be much to do in that part of Portugal. Or in Tui as the first thing we saw when we left the hotel this morning was a wino screaming at no one in particular as he gesticulated down the sidewalk toward parts unknown.

We were practically waylaid by Veranika at the yellow food truck who insisted we try the pivoyok. The pivoyok was okay, but nothing to write home about. It's kind of like an open-ended corny dog.

Veranika is from Belarus. She has lived in Portugal for 10 years but only opened her food truck eight months ago. She has crazy eyes, but big plans. Next time we come, she's going to have tables and chairs and we can sit and relax and eat borscht and pivorok and we can either eat it there or take it with us or eat some of it and take some of us with us or whatever we want to do. Okie dokie.

Time for dinner. Despite phone anxiety, it has been a restful day, which I suspect we're going to look fondly back on tomorrow. However, I shall be older and wiser. As alert reader Deborah Steed pointed out, I "need to invest in one of those protective bags you use on a boat." So I'm off to look for one. On a national holiday. When all the shops are closed. Doh!

May 2, 2025: ABEYANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON

We beat the rain to Porino. Good thing, 'cuz it's a frog strangler out there. I know you're all dying to hear about my cell phone dilemma. It's kaput. I'm not convinced it's beyond salvage, but I am convinced it is beyond salvage in Spain, so I am cell phoneless for a couple of weeks. Fortunately, San can send me pics, so you can see a little of what we're up to each day.

It was a short walk today to Porino. Given the looks of Porino, I would have been happy walking a little further.

Porino is an industrial town – it's the seat of granite quarrying in Spain - and it looks it. Pretty grim. Think Cleveland in the '70s. Below is a picture of pretty much the entirety of the town square.



The highlight of our lunch (which was actually pretty good) was the three guys plotting something at the next table. I swear they're from a Mamet play. The guy in the 1980s Adidas

track suit is clearly the boss because he had his hair slicked back. The chain smoking guy has to be the muscle and the other guy is the getaway driver. I wonder what those guys were up to.

However, the walk to Porino was delightful. Sun dappled lanes most of the way.



We saw a guy playing a gaita about half way.



If you recall my last Camino blog, a gaita is the Spanish version of bagpipes. Is there a connection to Scotland? You betcha.

Northern Spain is the Celtic Part of Spain. It's the Northerners like St. Columba who migrated to Ireland and Scotland, and some of the Spanish cultural traits are evident. Ever heard the expression "Black Irish?" That's the Spanish influence on the Celtic gene pool.

We gave Gaita Guy a couple of Euros and he stamped our Credencial. The Credencial is what you have to show the lady at the Camino office in Santiago de Compostela to prove you actually walked the Camino and in order to get your Compostela, you have to have at least two Credencial stamps per day.

The highlight of the day was seeing where San Telmo bit the dust (that's St. Elmo to you. Patron saint of mariners and he of nautical fire fame). He dropped dead in the 1200s on the bridge you see behind me in the picture. I don't know what he died of, but since he is also the patron saint of abdominal pain, I'd like to think he suffered a burst appendix or something similarly miraculous to put him on the road to sainthood. Hmm. Maybe it's because of San Telmo that we get the expression "fire in the belly." I need to look that up.



Eventually, we crossed the Louro River, which we followed most of the day, into Porino. Clearly, I was expected.



Now I'm holed up in my room listening to the deluge and wondering what tomorrow will bring. No doubt, it will be adventurous. 'Cuz that's just the kind of guys we are. Hope you all have a dry night.

May 3, 2025: WHO IS NAKOR SHEY?

All over Galicia, on every surface that can be tagged, Nakor Shey has left his imprimatur.



Verbal tells us of the ruthless exploits of the shadowy crime figure Keyser Soze, explaining that “[h]e is supposed to be Turkish. Some say his father was German. Nobody believed he was real.”

So it may well be with Nakor Shey. ShapeFickle945 says “Always watching , rarely seen Nakor Shey. They say it mostly comes out at night to stalk the trail, mostly, Nakor Shey.”

Puzzleheaded-Box4724 says [sic] “I know Nakor Shay. He and his clan are first class losers. Writing his name of shame along the Camino fits into this losers way of living. He stoled the paint from real artists.”

So there you have it. Nakor Shey. I’ll leave the last word to Verbal: “The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist.”

Today, we mostly walked along the Rua Roman XIX. After the 19th Roman Legion. We . . . what? You don’t know about the 19th? The 19th was the famous “Lost Legion.” It was the crème de la crème of the Roman Legions. Its commanders were hand-picked by the Emperor. No greater honor could be had for a Legionnaire than to be selected to serve in the 19th. The Germans wiped them out in 9 AD/CE/BVD/PDQ in the Battle of Teutoborg Forest. So much for the mystique of the 19th. However, before they got blowed up real good by the Teutons, they were famous for conquering Iberia. The road we walked today to Redondela was the road trod upon by the 19th. Pretty cool, huh?

The Rua Roman XIX took us through Mos on the way to Redondela.



As you can see, the Rua is in pretty good shape. A bicycling event of some sort was going on today so we kept dodging Speed Racers. However, we stopped for coffee at the place you see on the left. It was Mos Def tasty good.

On the way today, we crossed the 100km threshold.



As I write this, we have only 82km to go to the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. Woot.

One thing I continue to marvel at along the Camino is the kindness of the locals. They're always cheering us on and encouraging us to continue on The Way. A typical act of kindness appears below. A seat in the shade outside of someone's gate. So touching.



We had a fair amount of up today before we got to go down. However, it was a gradual ascent over the course of several kilometers, so while it was challenging, it wasn't lung splitting. Besides, the view from the top was pretty great.



As we passed through Redondela, we spotted this last remnant of Easter.



I have no idea how the Easter Egg tree became a thing in Spain as it's predominately Germanic in origin and significance. The Teutons must have imported the custom after they blew up the 19th.

As I write this, I am in my room at Praia de at Cesantes. The Praia sits at the edge of the Ria de Vigo, our destination for tomorrow when I shall fulfill my promise of regaling you with stories of spies and intrigue. Until then, ponder the identity of Nakor Shey. And keep a light on. Goooooooddd Niiiiighttttt!

May 4, 2025: FIRST, VIGO DIS VAY. DEN, VIGO DAT VAY

I am not actually in Vigo. I am a few miles north, in Pontevedra.

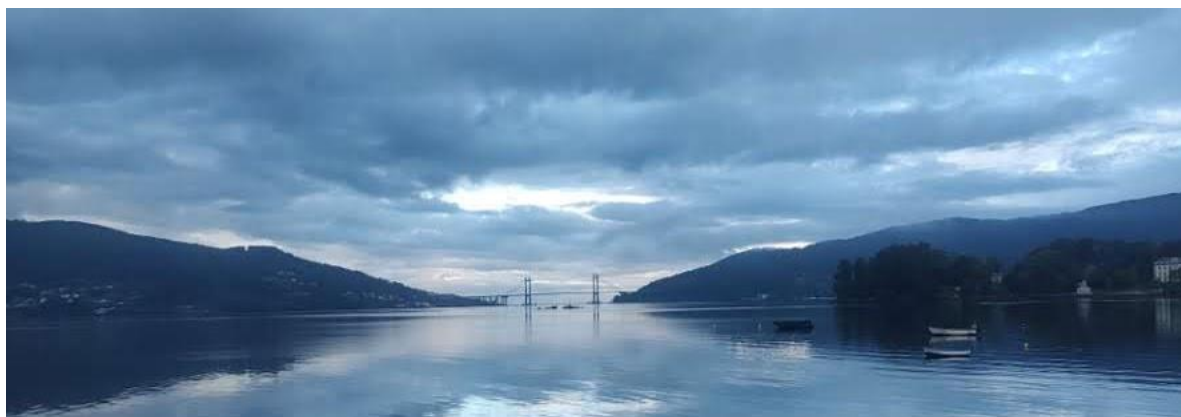


Pontevedra is an old medieval city just inland from Vigo. It's a university town with a population of 80,000. The hotel we're in is the nicest one we've had on the trip. We made the best time on the trip today as well, despite a fairly significant ascent. 12 miles in 5 hours. Not bad for a couple of old men.

I fear that tomorrow may be our toughest day as we begin the Spiritual Variant of the Camino Portuguese. I will tell you more about the Spiritual Variant tomorrow, assuming I'm still alive. First stop is a monastery that is 1500 meters above sea level, so we'll have some climbing to do. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Today was perfect weather. Cool and cloudy all day. Highs in the low 60s. Very nice for Caminoing as one starts sweating after about the first 15 minutes on The Way. Given the high humidity, one gets pretty sticky pretty quickly.

We started early and San got a nice shot from our hotel's terrace.



As we walked along the beach, we ran into a local rowing club unloading and getting ready to row the bay. I told them my friend Jr. Ranger Balazs Csafora, the Hungarian Bear Killer, is a competitive rower. They didn't seem very impressed.



We only went through one town today on the way to Pontevedra – Arcade – a really nice medium sized town with a couple of nice bridges.



The rest of the day was mostly uphill. A lot of it was against the current of the river's runoff on slippery rocks.



When we got to the crest, there was a food truck where we got a refreshing fresh squeezed lemonade before descending into the Vigo area.



So Vigo. If you've read *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or paid attention to the early years of *Saturday Night Live*, you might recall that Spain had a civil war in the 1930s. On one side were the "Republicans" who supported a democratically elected government. On the other side were the "Nationalists" who supported authoritarian rule (i.e. Fascism). The Nationalists were led by General Francisco Franco (who is still dead, btw).

The Republicans were a rag tag bunch, essentially comprised of guerillas, many of whom were American. They really didn't have a chance. They were outgunned and outmaneuvered. Franco won, with a lot of help from . . . Uncle Adolf! Uncle Adolf gave Frankie Frank bunches of neat cannons and machine guns and airplanes and grenades and mortars and oodles and oodles of arms and ammunition so Frankie Frank could kill a lot of poor people and artists. If you like any of the plays by Federico Garcia Lorca, you could have liked a lot more had Frankie's boyz not machine gunned him into a ditch.

Fast forward a few years. Uncle Adolf has conquered Western Europe. His U-Boats are sinking tons of supply ships sent by that no good commie FDR to help England maintain a desperate struggle against ever decreasing odds of survival. England can bomb and strafe and torpedo U-boats in the Mediterranean and the English Channel, but it can't do it in Spanish or Portuguese waters (which border the Atlantic) because Spain and Portugal are neutral. So what does Uncle Adolf do? He says "Frankie Frank, about those weapons we gave you to help make Spain great again, do you think we could have a few secret U-Boat bases? It would really help us sink FDR's commie supply ships." Frankie Franks, says "of course Uncle Adolf. As many as you like." And so, Vigo.

Vigo is a naturally protected inland port with easy access to the Atlantic. Uncle Adolf built a couple of U-Boat bases and his crews were able to sink a bunch of FDR's commie supply ships. Little Joe Goebbels denied that any U-Boat bases were situated in a neutral country, but Little Joe was lying. There were.

Vigo was also a spy hub. It was like Rick's Café Americain in Casablanca with spies from various nations bumping into each other all the time, especially British and German spies utilizing Portuguese intermediaries to get military messages from the outside world to occupied Europe and messages to the outside world about the conditions in the German occupied zones from prominent figures stuck therein.



It must have been a thrilling, if dangerous time.

So that's Vigo in a nutshell. It's almost cocktail time, so San and I shall go forth into the night looking for American cocktails and a chapel in the shape of a scallop shell (the symbol of Los Peregrinos) that reportedly sits in the medieval square of Pontevedra. Wish us luck, and don't take any wooden nickles.

May 5, 2025: STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

Three thousand feet up
Up the side of Mt. Crumpet
We got to the top
But we still had to hump it.

That was our day.

“Yes, there are two paths you can go by, but in the long run
There's still time to change the road you're on”

So today we started the Variante Espiritual just outside of Pontevedra.



And what is the Spiritual Variant you may well ask?

“There's a feeling I get when I look to the West
And my spirit is crying for leaving”

You probably know the Camino de Santiago Compostela is comprised of several different pilgrimage routes of varying distances in a network spread throughout Europe that all end up at the Shrine of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain where his remains are reportedly entombed.

San and I are currently walking the Camino Portuguese. But there are a bunch of other Camino routes. For example, you may recall I walked the Camino Finisterre a few years ago.

The Spiritual Variant of the Camino Portuguese follows what purports to be the actual route of St. James' remains as they made their way to Santiago de Compostela. More on that on Wednesday.

“In my thoughts I have seen rings of smoke through the trees
And the voices of those who stand looking”

We began at the water in Poio.



“In a tree by the brook, there's a songbird who sings
Sometimes all of our thoughts are misgiven”

Then we began to climb.



About 3 kilometers up, we looked back and could see where we started.



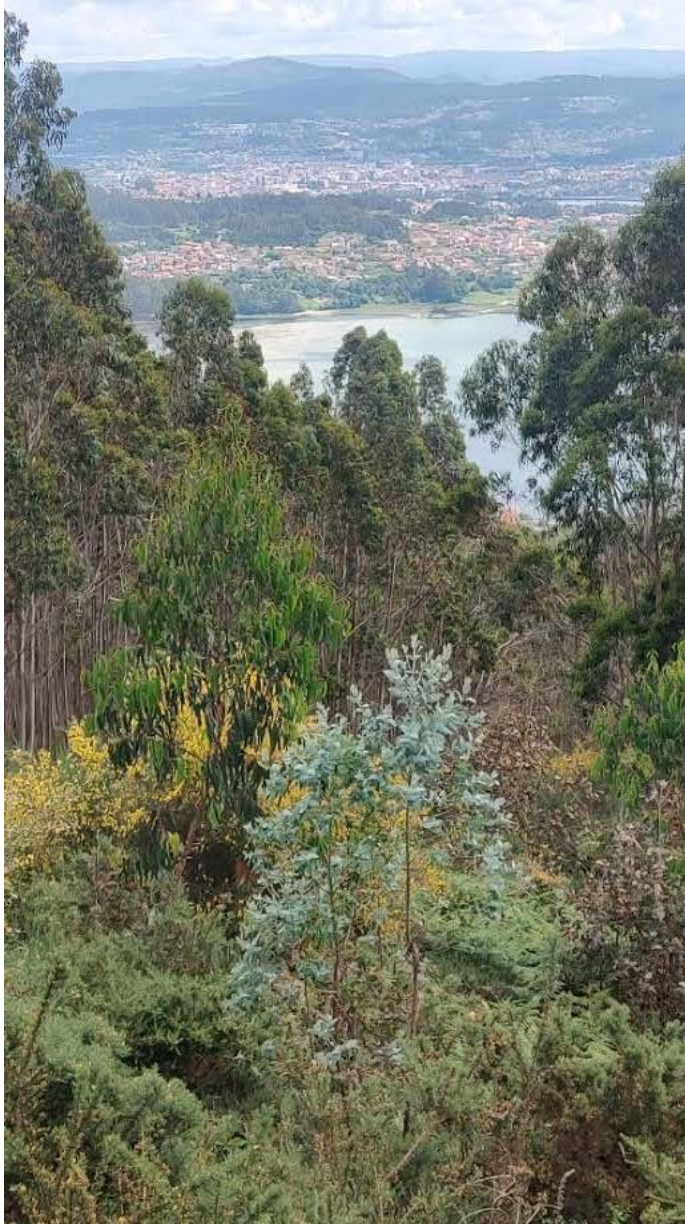
About 5 kilometers up we saw the last of the animals.



The hill you see in the background is what we still had to climb.

“And a new day will dawn for those who stand long
And the forests will echo with laughter”

At 8 kilometers up, we looked down again.



We went still further up.

As San heard someone say in a movie theatre when they were watching Misery, "that sh*t is
fuc*ed UP!"

“And as we wind on down the road
Our shadows taller than our soul
There walks a lady we all know
Who shines white light and wants to show
How everything still turns to gold
And if you listen very hard
The tune will come to you at last
When all are one, and one is all
To be a rock and not to roll”

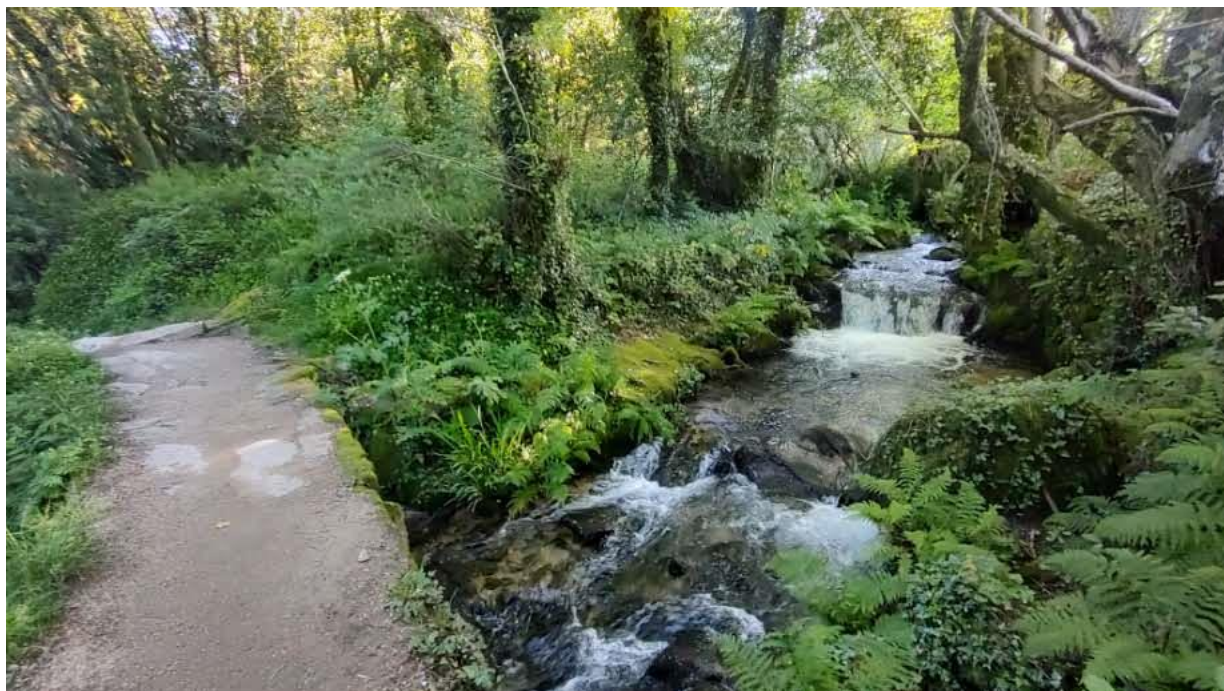


The Piper's calling you to join him.

May 6, 2025: LIFE'S A BEACH

It was a perfect day on The Way. Couldn't have asked for better. Cool tending toward cold most of the morning and I didn't even break a sweat until after lunch. It was also our longest hiking day – 18 miles in 8 hours – almost all of which was a feast of bucolic bliss for the eyes. Only one ascent near the end and it wasn't even that bad. I suspect today is going to be our peak day on the Camino as we round the clubhouse turn for Santiago de Compostela.

In the morning, we walked along the Umia River through a nature preserve.



Then we stopped for coffee at a typical café along the Camino. If you have never had Torta Galiciana, you are missing out. I've been Jonesing for it for three years and it was scrumpdiddlyumptious.



A lot of what we walked through today was wine country. San likes wine, so he took a lot of vineyard pictures. Which was vine with me.



As we began the descent from the high country, we crossed the Umia and left the Ruta da Pedra e Auga (Trail of Stone and Water). Yes, Auga is how the Galicians spell water. Go figure.



We then stopped for lunch in Igrexia. I am generally not one to post pictures of food, but San took a picture, so I thought I'd show you a typical Galician lunch of a potato tortilla and Padron Peppers. Of which we picked a peck.



We then completed our descent into the seaside town of Vilanova de Arousa and promptly saw one of them nekkid beaches. Boy hidey, tell you what. I felt like a swinger! But I can't say I was "Arousad." Get it?



So that was our day. We take the boat to Padron tomorrow, which will be a welcome relief from walking as I think I may have a stress fracture of my left ankle. It doesn't really hurt, and I can walk on it without pain, but it sure looks angry and red and it's swollen. Anyone out there with

medical training who can confirm? Deborah Steed, I'm looking at you. In the meantime, I wish you a pleasant day and a better tomorrow. Buen Camino.

May 7, 2025: UP A LAZY RIVER

Today has been kind of a weird day. We didn't do much walking. On the plus side, I was able to give my ankle a rest – it looks a lot better than it did yesterday and I got an ankle brace at a farmacia after a nice lady from Edisto Island gave me an ice pack last night. So, today felt like a rest day after we did 22 kilometers in a boat.

On the minus side, we still have 25 kilometers to go before we get to the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela tomorrow. To further complicate matters, it's supposed to rain tomorrow, after three days of perfect spring weather, and it's going to take eight hours to walk the last stage. But that's tomorrow.

Today, we took a boat up the Ulla River from Vilanova de Arousa to Padron. The river was only so-so. Not very scenic and there's a Nestle factory opposite the dock in Padron. I hope its belching white smoke doesn't extend as far as Rome or it might confuse the Conclave. I can see it now. We have a new pope!



Here's the party line about how Santiago (St. James the Apostle) ended up in Iberia.

“The harbours of **Ribeira** and **O Grove** mark the entrance to the **Ría (sea inlet) of Arousa** whose waters were navigated by the boat bringing the body of the Apostle the last few miles. The **Mar de Arousa and Río Ulla route** is a special maritime and river itinerary which commemorates the arrival by sea of the body of the Apostle Santiago in **Galiccia** after his martyrdom in Jerusalem approximately in the year 44. Ancient Christian traditions and several medieval texts — the most important being Book III of the **Codex Calixtinus** — assures us that Santiago was transferred from the Port of Jaffa — in Palestine—, across all the Mediterranean and the Atlantic coast of Iberia to the limits of the Western World, where he had preached the Gospels. This is known as the Translatio.

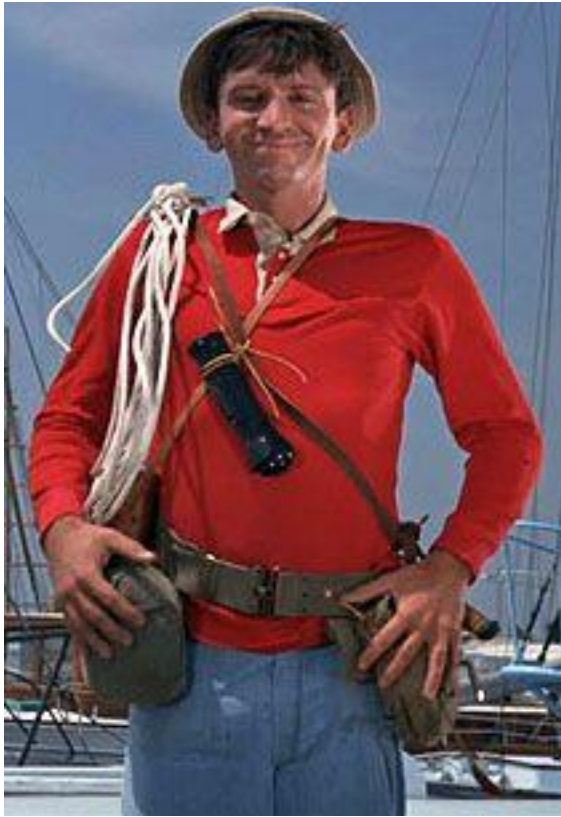
The body of Santiago — accompanied by his disciples Teodoro and Atanasio — was brought into the Ría de Arousa and travelled up the River Ulla until it docked in Padrón, the river harbour of the Roman city of **Iria Flavia**. It arrived on board a Stone Boat, probably a reference to the boats which, at that time, transported minerals from **Galiccia** to other places in the Roman Empire.”

Okay, I have a few problems with that narrative which I'll go into during my summing up on Saturday.

However, I will say now that I suspect only part of Jimbo, at best, wound up in Santiago since he was beheaded in Jerusalem, and presumably Teodoro and Atanasio didn't tote Jimmy's head along with the rest of him. Or maybe they did. . .



But far be it from me to dispute the Codex Calixticus. Suffice it to say it was hard to get into a spiritual frame of mind while aboard the S.S. Minnow blaring ABBA and crammed full of Peregrinos jostling each other with their backpacks while anxious to get back on The Way.



But if you're really curious, the Codex Calixticus is actually a kind of road map about how to be a good Peregrino in the 12th century. Ghostwritten for Pope Calixtus II by the French scholar Aymeric Picaud, the Codex includes sermons, descriptions of Jimbo's miracles, Jimbo's supposed writings and some polyphonic chant – all duly recorded more than a thousand years after the events it describes. O-kay. But I'll stop there. I still think the stories are cool even if I'm dubious of their authenticity and I don't want to be like the vociferous Dublin atheist we met in Rubaies. I mean, really. If you're walking The Camino and you're determined to trumpet your atheism, what's the point? Unless you're a masochist. The Way is hard, dude. Believe me.

Anyway, enough of my yakkin'. We had a mediocre lunch at a mediocre café and I took a snooze before elevating my ankle and spending some time with you. Now San and I shall go in search of cocktails as it's after 5 – although I have to say this place looks like the kind of place where “guys wanna get drunk and get drunk quick and it don't need no characters givin' the joint atmosphere.”



I'll tell San not to wear his chaps.

I hope you have a great day and I'll check in tomorrow, assuming we make it.

May 8, 2025: YOU'RE OUT OF THE WOODS, YOU'RE OUT OF THE DARK, YOU'RE OUT OF THE NIGHT

Hold onto your breath, hold onto your heart, hold onto your hope.



Yeah. We made it.

The energy was palpable as we set out this morning with a thundering horde of Peregrinos with only one goal in mind: Arrival at Santiago de Compostela.



To give you some idea, we walked 20 miles in 6 hours today. It got hot, but there was no rain, so woo hoo for small mercies.

Here's San with 10 km left to go.



Remember when it was a hundred?

Our first glimpse from about 7 kilometers out.



Upon arrival, as we ambled through the old town that brought back significant memories for me, I found myself smiling. And I will admit that there were tears in my eye when we reached the plaza. What a dope, huh?

The obligatory picture that every Peregrino takes.

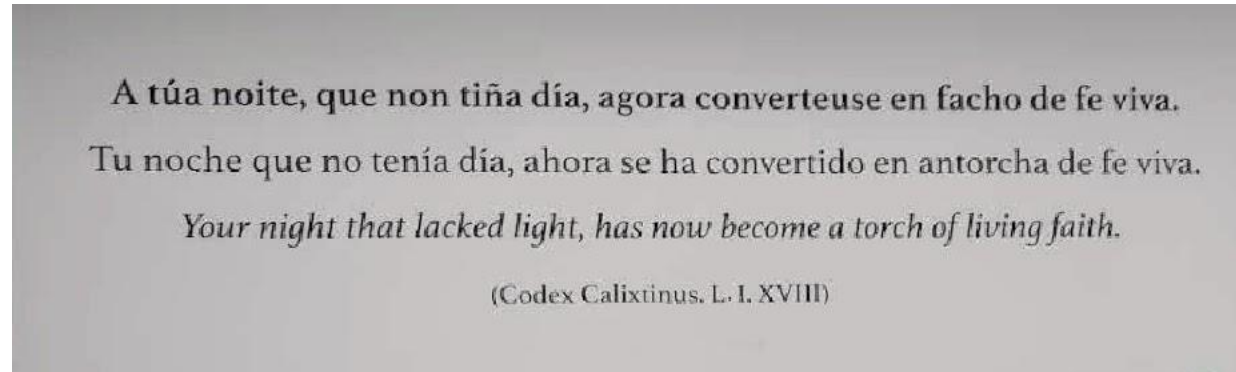


Once inside, we lit candles for the departed, we meditated on private matters, and we paid respects to St. James.



While we will attend one of the Peregrino masses tomorrow, tonight we will feast and offer a prayer for our new Pope. May he engender charity in the heart of Marjorie Taylor Greene.

I'll leave the last word today to the Codex Calixtinus.



May 9, 2025: HOLY SMOKE!

A day for spiritual matters it seems.

Got to sleep in today and it was great. After a leisurely breakfast, we went to the Peregrino Office so that San could get his Compostela. Success! He's all official now. A gin-u-wine, certified Pilgrim. He even bought a patch. Just for you, Gary Carter. Huzzahs to San!



We met a wonderful volunteer at the Peregrino Office – Roberta from San Antonio. She's walked all of the Camino Routes except the Camino Norte and she works at the Peregrino Office as a way of giving back. What a great person she is. We had a nice long chat about the deeper meaning of the Camino as spiritual metaphor. The most important takeaway for me was the acknowledgement that the Camino may/will not provide answers, but it may teach one how to ask better questions. That struck a chord for me.

We then went to the Pilgrim's noon mass at the Cathedral. It was bells and smells for sure – and I don't think they censored any of the text from the Bible (nyuk, nyuk). Much different than the 7:30 am mass I went to a few years ago. The place was jam packed and I'm glad we went early because by doing so, we were able to get a seat.



Because of Pope Leo XIV, every priest in Galicia was there – all 108 of them, including 2 Monsignors, 2 Bishops, and the Archbishop who, for whatever reason, looked like the cat who ate the canary. While we were waiting for mass to begin, I accidentally walked into the sacristy where the ordained ones were suiting up, having a smoke, and texting on their phones. I thought I was backstage getting ready to go on in a musical.

There was lots of singing and, at the end, the swinging of the giant censer you may have seen videos of. Without being too sentimental about the whole thing, it was really great and very moving.

Later, it rained. A lot. Can't complain as it missed us for most of the trip except for my phone's suicide.

First, we went for cheese. When in doubt, choose cheese. All the selections were from the Presti farms. Smoked, smooth, blue – the best was a combination of cow and goat aged 11 days. Farm raised in Lugo – on a different Camino route – but absolutely wonderful. Really great.

Then, a walking tour of Santiago. Except it rained. A lot. And still raining. So the walk was canceled. What to do? I know – COCKTAILS!!!

We went to the Hotel de los Reyes Catolicos on the Plaza and they actually knew how to make a Manhattan. After nearly 3 weeks in Spain, the 7 Manhattans we had in Santiago de Compostela were the first we've had thus far. Okay, okay, not seven. But . . . guess? Anyway, we waxed poetic in a 5 star hotel bar in the rain and it was perfect. When it's time to part, it's time to part. I'm now in my room, the rain is falling, and I have to be up at 5 to get the train to Cadiz.

Time together becomes more precious as one ages. Will I ever have two weeks with San again? I don't know. I hope so, but maybe not. All I know is that NOW is now. Later will take care of itself.

If you're reading this, you are precious to me. Who knows what the future will bring, so let's enjoy now now. I'll check in tomorrow with a wrap up and I may even post one or two from Cadiz before I go back to Dallas. But for now.... Peace and Buen Camino. We are all on The Way together.

May 10, 2025: MY WAY

I've always hated that song. But it seems apt for the Camino because for each Peregrino, it really is "my Way."

I'm writing this at the skrake as I hurtle through the early morning Northern Spanish mist on the way to Cadiz. Spain has one of the best train systems in Europe and I will be at the Atlantic by 4 pm where it will be warm and sunny. The Camino is already receding from the present and taking repose in the realm where memory lies.

I don't have any profound takeaways from this Camino. However, I did make a couple of personal decisions and, as Roberta suggested, I think I am learning to ask better questions. At least I'm trying.

I couldn't have wished for a better traveling companion than San Milton. We have been friends for close to 50 years and it was pure joy to be able to spend two weeks on the road with him.

Many laughs, great reminiscences, reinforcement of the connection. Our bonds of friendship run deep.

The Way is hard. It is physically demanding, and it is frustrating at times. If you're thinking about walking the Way, send me a message and I can give you a few practical tips. You DO need to be in shape. You will walk on many different and usually uneven surfaces – cobblestone, sand, gravel, loose rocks, flagstone, concrete, mud, and asphalt. It will be hard on your feet and your ankles. You will climb a lot of hills so you might think about increasing your lung capacity and going downhill will be hard on your knees. At times, it will be hot. At times, you will walk in a torrential downpour. At times, you will be chilled to the bone. You will get dirty. You will get really tired. Your fortitude will be tested and somewhere along the Way, you will want to quit. But. . . if you undertake your Way, you will change. You will develop friendships, you will laugh, and your heart will sing.

We met people from Brazil, Belarus, Canada, Portugal, Spain, Germany, France, Holland, Norway, England, Ireland, Belgium, Australia, South Africa, Japan, and China. We saw far more women than men; women of all ages traveling solo or in groups. Almost all the couples we saw were middle-aged. The Peregrinos on bikes were generally respectful of the walkers (except for the Spanish bro brigade), although I have to say I really don't see the point of biking the Camino as the hills make it very difficult and the biker winds up pushing his or her rig as much as he or she pedals it.

Memorable personalities include Endora, Veranika with the crazy eyes, Jane and Deborah from Lincoln, Belgian Bud on his 6th Camino, Colorado socks guy, Cierra from San Diego (follow your heart, not the money), Carol and her Edisto Island crew, Ukelele Girl, Lydia from Florida, the German Guys who I never saw ingest anything but beer, the Utrecht couple, the Padron waiter with the Aladdin Sane album cover tattooed on his bicep, and the skinhead Peregrino with the swastika tattooed on his head. Perhaps he's looking for a different Way.

We also saw many cats (a lot of Siamese), dogs, horses, rabbits, chickens, roosters, sheep, lambs, goats, ducks, seagulls, and geese.

We hadn't seen Nakor Shey since Pontevedra but he caught up with us in Padron, where the Variante Espiritual re-joins the Camino Portuguese. Apparently, Nakor is not a spiritual guy. However, he continued to tag things all the way into Santiago. So at least he's determined. I saw his last tag less than a kilometer from the Cathedral.

Before I close, a word about St. James. He is, after all, the ostensive reason people make this pilgrimage. I only half believe any of him is in the Cathedral. At best, he's only missing his head since he was beheaded in Jerusalem. Furthermore, there is absolutely no way Teodoro and Atanasio toted what was left of old Jimbo up and down some of the hills San and I trod on the Variante Espiritual. If they did, there would be absolutely nothing left of Saint J. as his body would have been mangled worse than Melquiades Estrada after the third burial. Therefore, if the

story is true, I think his body was taken by sea through the Mediterranean, around Gibraltar, and up the Atlantic to the Galician coast before sailing up the Ulla, past Padron and then being carted the last few kilometers to Santiago. But who am I to quibble? The story is cool. People believe it. And any way one gets to God is okay with me. So there.

I'm sorry that my phone drowned. I would have liked to show you more pictures. I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. C-beams glittering in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Wait a minute. . . that wasn't on the Camino. That's from Blade Runner. Never mind.

There's so much to say, but mere words simply cannot adequately capture the essence of The Way. Thank you for joining me on My Way. I think I'll end it here with words from far better writers than I:

And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.

Peace.

