

# Transform Your Life by Walking

Share in one woman's thoughts as she  
hikes across Spain

## Jackie Jarvis

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## **Prelude**

If you have ever wondered what it might be like to walk one of the pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela and what impact it may have, reading this book will certainly give you one woman's perspective. Mine!

Walking a long-distance pilgrimage is one way to understand yourself better, as I found out. Walking in this way can help with processing life changing events, making big decisions, or simply exploring a new way of being personally or professionally.

By giving yourself time to walk through stuff that may need walking through you create the space to make changes, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Walking long distance can be a way of experiencing how a simpler way of being can ignite new feelings. New feelings of happiness and joy that you may not have experienced before.

*Transform Yourself by Walking* is my way of sharing my experiences with you, so you can imagine walking these paths alongside me, gaining the insights that I was blessed to receive on my journey as a pilgrim.

You may relate to my stories, questions, and ideas. You may think about the cross over into your life and business.

It is my intention to give you something important, an idea or an insight that resonates and shifts something in you.

You never know, you may end up feeling like taking a very long walk.

Buen Camino

Jackie

## Comments

When making these journeys I shared some of the content of this book on social media. The comments I received motivated me to find a publisher. Thank you to everyone who commented in such a positive way:

*'Lovely story of persistence and calm beauty'* **Rupert Cutler**

*'Your thoughts are so inspiring thank you for sharing'* **Rikki G Andersen**

*'Beautiful words from a beautiful soul'* **Laurelle Rond**

*'Huge respect, you are a strong brave lady'* **Paul Ray**

*'I love reading your diaries, they always give me a boost'* **Val Catkins**

*'Very spiritual and enlightening'* **Andy Phillips**

*'What amazing stories, make sure you put them in your book'* **Nikki Poole**

*'Jackie Jarvis you are one incredible human being'* **Jan Campbell**

*'These posts are full of profound wisdom; love to see them in a book'* **Stewart Stone**

*'Wonderful reflections of your walking adventures'* **Nick Matthews**

*'Beautiful images along with evocative text'* **John Prior**

*'Beautiful Jackie, thanks for sharing this experience with us'* **Lyle English**

*'Wonderful, I was with you every step of the way'* **Katie Gordon**

*'Great words and reflections that have got me thinking'* **Steve Mills**

*'This is an epic achievement, I loved the comment about the heaviest load was in your head and your heart, glad to hear it got lighter'* **Lauren Cooper**

*'A great story with even greater learnings, thank you for sharing and inspiring us all'*

**David Yeabsley**

## **About the Author**

As a practicing Walking Business Coach and passionate long-distance hiker, Jackie Jarvis has experienced first-hand the value and benefits that walking can create in business and life. Jackie helps business owners and professionals use ‘walking and talking’ as a transformational tool to stimulate clarity, change, strategy, and greater wellbeing.

The mission behind her work is ‘To elevate thinking by walking’.

She works personally with individual clients, one to one and virtually, runs Team Walking events and is one of the founders Natural Netwalking.

Through her work and writing her mission is to elevate thinking by walking.

She is the author of several Amazon books, *Go Slow to Grow*, *Quick Wins in Sales and Marketing* and a contributor to *My Camino Walk #1*

She is available for talks on the Transformational Benefits of Walking, in Life and Work.

And from anywhere in the world, you can Listen to her ‘Walking Thoughts’ podcast as you walk.

## **Acknowledgements & Dedication**

Thank you to everyone who have contributed to making my 'SOLO' Camino journeys transformational and enabled me to share the learnings from it.

I would like to give extra special mention to Christopher and Michelle Conroy, Rikke Granum Andersen, Don Mc Cormack, Patrick Habbo and Jennifer, and Mark Niesner with whom I enjoyed deep and meaningful conversations and many good laughs over wine and tapas.

As I walked the most recent routes, I took with me the spirits of two very dear friends, Carla Belshaw and David Curley, who sadly lost their lives to Cancer. Carla and David will always be in my thoughts. I was blessed to walk on the path of life with them for many years.

On July 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 fellow pilgrim Christopher Conroy also sadly lost his life to cancer. I was so glad that walking the Camino four years earlier helped him decide to take early retirement and spend important years with his family in Bali. I will always remember his kind help and friendship.

I would like to thank my publisher Carl French for his belief in my ideas and willingness to support this book, Caroline Blackhurst for her careful editing, and JMZ for his excellent map illustrations.

A special than you to my clients and business colleagues that have engaged with the idea that walking and talking brings life to ideas, clarity to mind and makes taking next steps so much easier.

Let walking continue to be transformational for us all.

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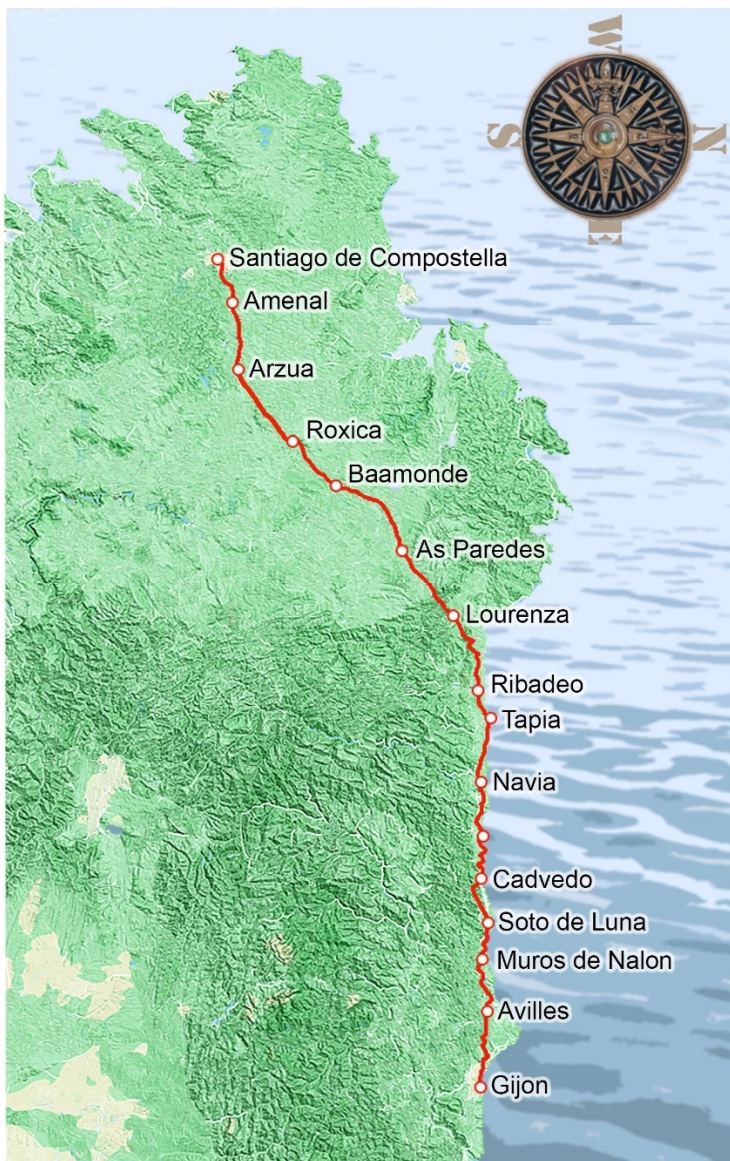
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# THE CAMINO DEL NORTE



## Map: The Camino Del Norte



## **Introduction: The Camino Del Norte**

### **My Other Half - The Solo Journey 373 Kilometres 15 Days May/June 2018**

You may think it strange that I am starting this book half-way along the Camino Del Norte but there is a good reason for this. I had walked the first half the year before with my then partner Matthew Wright, but sadly shortly before our plans to walk the second half of the route together he walked away from our relationship.

I had a choice.

Don't go, give up Camino Hiking, believing that doing it would remind me of all the good times Matt, and I shared walking Caminos together and therefore be too painful to walk without him by my side.

Or I could go alone, believing that as doing this is my passion, I could create my own experience, walk my own way and no matter what, it would be ok. I could choose to be brave.

I decided to go. I was scared, I was upset, and it was hard at first. But it was the beginning of the most important journey in life. The one you make alone.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the Camino Del Norte was my first solo experience. Little did I know then that I would continue in that way for several years.





## Finding the Courage to go Solo

### Arrival Day in Gijón

When you travel alone, especially with a challenge of this nature, you need to take charge of yourself in a very different way, to the way you do, when you have a partner or buddy with you. This is a true test of self - leadership.

Will I be able to find my way relying only my slightly suspect navigation skills, I fondly call *Jack Nav*?

Can I be self-reliant every day, walking up to 30km with a 12kg pack on my back? (I am carrying a lot at this point).

These are thoughts I have before I leave, and yet at the same time I feel excited.

### I want to feel free

I need to be able to do this alone, to feel free. Free to do the things I want to do, able to enjoy them alone. Everyone says, 'You are never alone on a Camino'. However, this route, is not as popular as others (such as the Camino Frances) so I must be prepared to be alone.

So, I find my way to Gijón, the place where I finished the first half with my partner Matt last year. I walked along the beach and reflected on how different that experience was. I had a buddy, someone to share the experience with. This time, a year later it is just me! Not what I expected. It is a very different feeling. I am a little bit scared.

### Getting into the moment

As I allow myself to get into the experience I can feel a kind of acceptance, like it is exactly as it is meant to be. I am aware that I have something important to gain from this that can only be achieved by being alone. I need to embrace that space, that gap, between knowing and not knowing. I will allow myself to go with it, to be in the present. I want to just embrace this experience, right now, which is mine alone.

So tomorrow will be the first official walking day. I get an early night.



## **Extending Time**

### **Day 1 – Gijón to Avilés - 24km**

All packed up and ready to go. The lady at the hotel in Gijón stopped me. She suggested that I took the bus. Well, just to give me a head start on the day and make sure I missed the boring city walking. Actually, I was relieved she had suggested it and as a number 1 or 12 bus left literally just along the road from my hotel. I thought why not.

Just as well I did, as the day was still 24km and certainly enough for a first day carrying about 12 kilos. I managed to jump off the bus at the right place and caught sight of my first Camino sign... my friends for the next 2 weeks.

### **Just walk...**

As I walk, I slowly start to relax. Just my own two feet to rely on for two weeks. I walk up into the hills close to Gijón, through some little villages, I cross paths with a few fellow pilgrims, and we chat for a while. I wonder who I will meet on this trip. I must be prepared to be alone and be comfortable with it. There are not as many pilgrims on this route at any one time, so I may find myself walking alone. I don't mind.

Eventually I arrive in Avilés and find my Hotel, Hotel Don Pedros, in the old town. I met a friendly Australian couple, who had been walking for months 1200 miles of the Camino Routes. We talked about the impact this kind of experience has on you.

### **Time slows down**

One thing it defiantly does is extend time. You are forced to slow right down. Mindfulness eventually takes over. The days fall into a kind of rhythm, a rhythm that is very different from normal life.

You start to pay attention, see things that you may have missed if you just rushed by. You create space in your mind, you start letting go of all the noise that has been filling it up for so long.

I know this will happen more and more. I am looking forward to it.



## **A Test of Self-Leadership and Trust**

### **Day 2 – Avilés to Muros de Nalón - 27km**

This was a day of solitary walking, which was very peaceful. I had to rely very heavily on my own sense of direction and make sure I did not miss any signs. The thing is, when the only person around is YOU – that is who you must rely on. (Scary thought!)

#### **You have a plan – but is there evidence you are on track?**

I had planned my daily stages, was armed with a Camino app and a guidebook. However, things don't always go exactly to plan

At one point in the morning, I found myself in the woods unable to see any signs for what seemed like a very long time. I was tempted to turn back but something made me carry on. I needed to trust that I was right.

Similar situations occur in life and business, you plan, think that you are on track, but the evidence you are looking for may not be immediately visible.

Do you press on regardless, trusting that the results will eventually materialise?

Do you look out for more signs that you are on the right path? Do you trust in the plan even although you can't quite see what is round the corner?

#### **Holding your nerve**

I kept going, not knowing, for what felt like ages. I had to hold my nerve. Eventually I saw a sign. Phew! I was on track; I was right to keep going. I was relieved. I felt a surge of new confidence in myself.

#### **A test of self-leadership**

Walking the Camino alone definitely tests your self - leadership. It is a challenging environment which is very different from normal life.

I ended up staying the night at Casa Camino in Muros de Nalón – a safe-haven where I connected with some fellow pilgrims.

I fell asleep listening to the gentle sound of the 'snore chorus' in the mixed dormitory.



## **Dealing with Overload – Again!**

### **Day 3 – Muros de Nalón to Soto de Luiña - 30km**

I started the day in quite a lot of pain. I had stupidly not packed the right blister treatment. I needed more padding and some antiseptic. Luckily there was a nearby large supermarket. However, I had to wait until 9am for it to open.

It is essential that you look after your feet, as they are the ones that are going to be essentially carrying everything. I was acutely aware of this and realised that now I would need to be my own foot doctor. (Poor feet!)



I hobbled along for the first 5km but found after a while it got easier. The more I walked on the less pain I seemed to feel. Were the Camino angels helping me out I wondered?

It did need dealing with though – it was a pain that I couldn't just ignore.

The route was challenging – relentless up and down, up and down, most of the way.

### **Overloaded again**

As the day went on, I began to realise that I had overloaded myself yet again. It was a case of all the little things adding up to a huge weight on my shoulders. Towards the end of the day, I was practically hunched over like a

true pilgrim. Is overload still a metaphor for my life, I wondered? (I wrote about this in my book *Go Slow to Grow*.) Was I still carrying too much? Ignoring all the little things, almost like they don't count.

I knew I needed to do something. I felt like a pack horse!

By the time I had crawled into Soto de Luiña I had made my mind up – I was going to let go of some of the small things that I really did not need to be carrying.

### **Lighten the load**

This lesson of unconscious overloading is one that is important to remember.

It can happen in business and in life if you are not careful. It all adds up slowly. All the things you say yes to, all the things you think are just quicker to do yourself, all the things that you think you can't let go off.

By lightening your load, you will be more effective, and like me be much more able to walk tall.

### **Hiding the load**

The small hotel (Hotel Valle Las Lunas) I stayed in, in Soto, was great and as the only restaurant in town it was buzzing later-on. I ate with a group of fellow pilgrims who I had bumped into earlier in the day. Most of them had also had to lighten their loads on route. We all had a laugh about it. I didn't mention the travel kettle that I sneaked in as my luxury item.





## When Flow and Hardship Co-Exist

### Day 4 – Soto de Luiña to Cadavedo - 22.5 km

From Soto de Luiña you had a choice, coastal or mountainous route. Well not a very difficult, choice, bearing in mind, big ruck sack and 2 blisters.

I had a good breakfast with 2 coffees to set me up. I had met some fellow pilgrims the night before, but they all must have started very early as the route was almost deserted.

So, it was down to *Jack Nav* to get it completely right again. I must have crossed at least 15 streams, at times having to balance on rocks and hope for the best.

### Walking through hardship

Whilst listening to the flow of mountain streams, I started to ponder on the word flow. I asked myself, what was flowing in my life and what was not?

My business life seemed to be flowing quite well, but my personal life, certainly, questionable right now. I knew I had many boulders to navigate.

Sometimes all you can do is walk on, trusting that hardship and flow can co-exist, was a good message to take with me that day.

At one point on route, I went wrong and ended up doing a quick run for it 3km on a main road.

Still after a lot of steep climbs up and decent down, I finally made it.

Digging deep at the end of the day is necessary, it's the last 5 km that is usually the hardest. You can't give up unless you want to spend the night out in the open (and I am not that brave!)

I luckily found a great place to stay in Cadavedo, Casa Inca.

I enjoyed an excellent supper in a very simple bar and restaurant, and I really appreciated my bed that night!