

The Road Goes Ever On: My Experience of the Camino de Santiago

By Fr. Robert Falzon sdb

"The journey is the destination." Though not an official slogan, it is surely a very appropriate one for anyone doing the Camino de Santiago. Yes, the moment of arrival at Santiago after so many kilometres on foot feels glorious but the real transformation happens during the journey itself.

Since the medieval times, perhaps around the 8th century AD or even earlier, thousands of people have flocked to Santiago, travelling for hundreds of kilometres on foot as pilgrims to the place of St. James the Greater's burial site. Today, the Way of St James - as the Camino de Santiago is also known in English - has not lost its popularity, even though, admittedly not all who embark on the Way are spiritual pilgrims: many do it for cultural reasons, for fitness and sports reasons or for the sheer enjoyment of walking. Two of the routes of the Camino have been listed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO. The Camino, in fact, played a key role in religious and cultural exchange in Europe in the late middle ages: so much so that upon entering the old city of Santiago, the pilgrim (or trekker) comes across



the words "Europe was made on the pilgrim road to Compostela" written with letters engraved in the ground.

My adventure started when I was invited by the vice-parish priest of Marsascalca, Fr. Luke Cutajar, to join their parish initiative to do the Camino de Santiago. It had been around 11 years since I had heard for the first time about the Camino and I had longed to do it since. Various commitments as well as not finding someone to go with, kept me from going. So this invitation presented itself as an irresistible opportunity.

We were a much varied group of 34 people ranging between 15 and 70 years. Most of the people within the group didn't know each other well or at all. Yet despite the large variety of personalities that soon emerged as soon as we started the pilgrimage, a healthy sense of unity could soon be felt.

The route that had been chosen was that known as the French Route. We started walking on this route from Sarria: about 120 km from Santiago. There were moments, especially in the beginning, when we talked a lot and shared experiences, when we got to know each other

