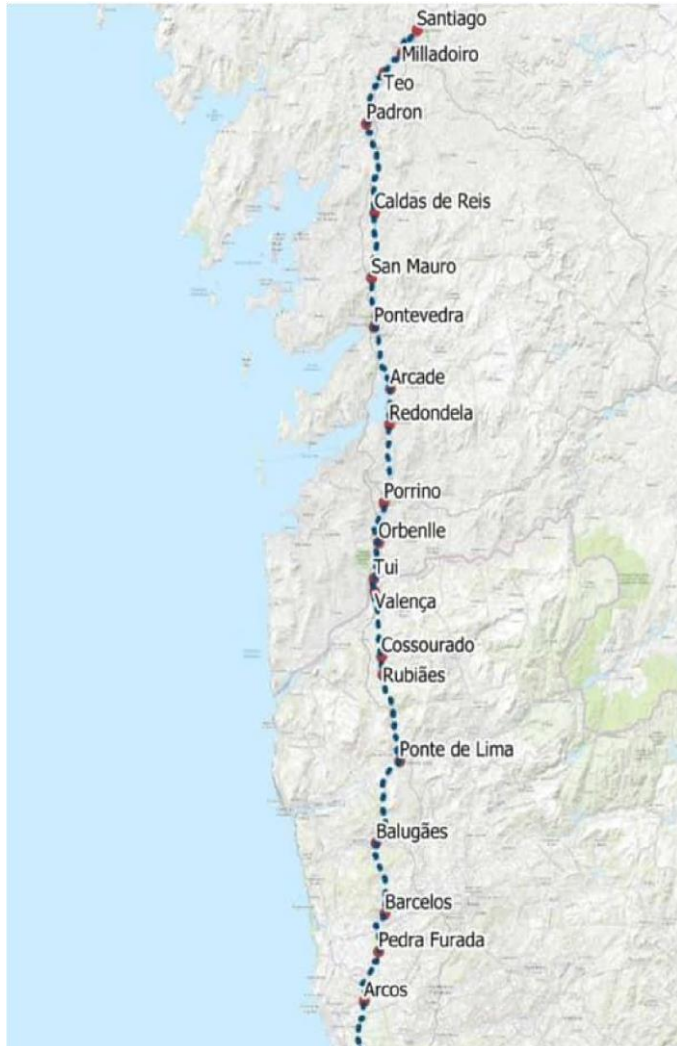


## Richard and Agnes walking the Camino

The castle / church on the hill is Tui (Spain / Portugal border) and this was our view from our hotel last June 2023 (in the rain). It's the halfway point of the Camino Porto to Santiago and it was one of the locations that inspired me to attempt the walk this year.

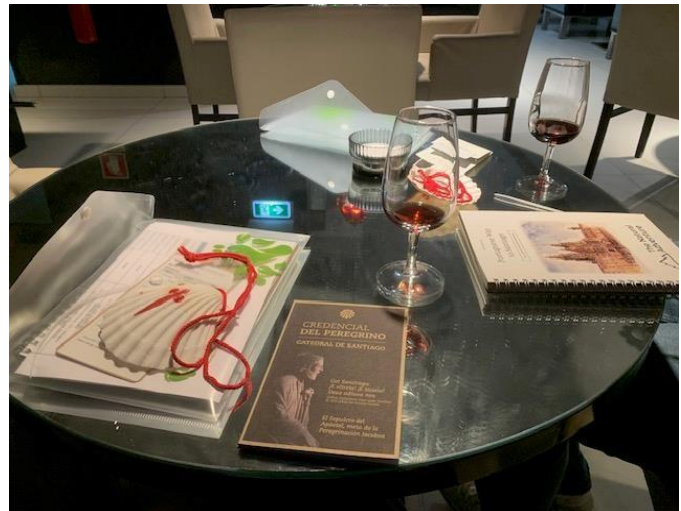


So, I am intending to walk from Porto (Portugal) to Santiago (Spain) during the last 2 weeks in April with Agnes, a member of our Yorkshire Walking Group. I will post details of each days walk with photos and maps. We have chosen the Central Route. It is one of the 20 recognised Camino de Santiago routes

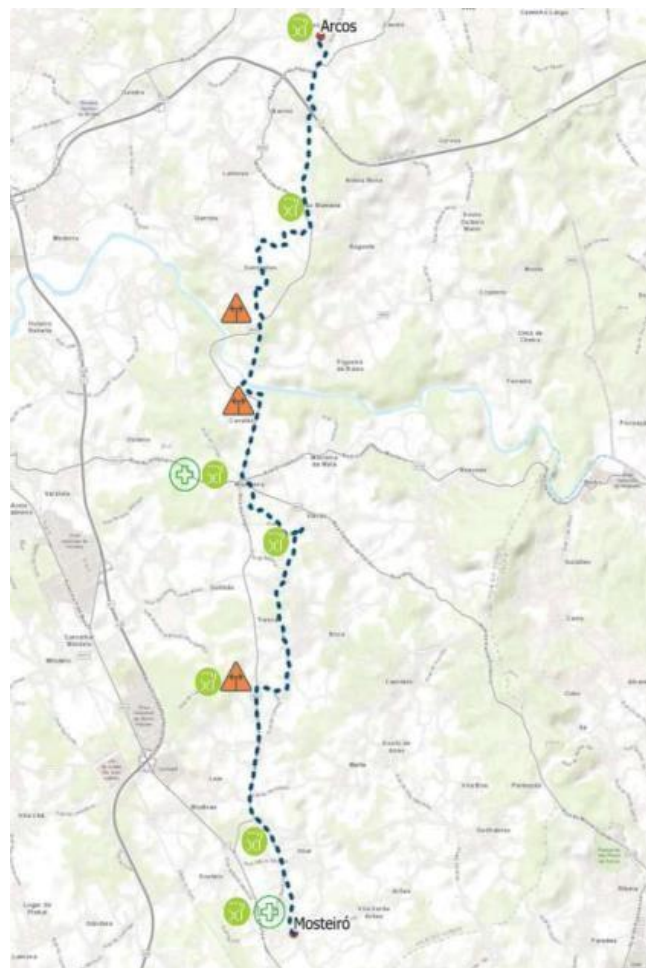


Our route up from Porto to Santiago

**Day 1** Arrived at hotel for a lovely glass of port. Flight delayed by 2 hours so took taxi to hotel. Expensive but worth it at this time of night. Very smooth flight. Start walking tomorrow. Never started a walk with so many aches and pains but hey-ho here we go.



All our pack and route ready to go.





The start of our Camino

Off we go! 250km







First few steps, with cobbles already







Our lunch stop was closed!!!!!!







Our lovely Holtel in Arcos



Completed 12 miles today in bright sunshine. Glorious but not what I had expected. Thought about 16 degrees but has been 25 plus. Hotter than when we were in the region last June!!! Looks like it's going to be like this for the fortnight. Better than rain though. Walking in the countryside down paths was simply wonderful equally the road sections simply awful. Ankle very painful so not sure about walking every day. The hotel tonight is worth returning to in the future. Quaint village and boutique type accommodation and restaurant



**Day 2.** Another day of glorious sunshine. The morning walk through farmland and villages for 11km and lunch in Pedra Furada was delightful. The afternoon 11km was more built up but the city of Barcelos where we are tonight is beautiful.



















Only 205 to go!



**Day 3** Last night we dined with a couple of other 'pilgrims' at a lovely restaurant with white linen tablecloths - looked quite upmarket but we were able to have the pilgrim's menu. Superb 3 course meal and wine for 16 euros. Today done over 12 miles again. 80 degrees at lunch time. Was expecting 60 for the walk. Today we meandered through lovely countryside and ended up at quirky boutique type hotel. Have been sat in the garden with our feet in an ice-cold dipping pool eating oranges plucked from the trees in the garden. Looking forward to another gastro dining experience tonight. Still not sure the ankle is going to last the distance but a lovely holiday regardless.





Early morning from Balugues



















**Heaven**













The smallest dining room ever!?

**Day 4** (another 12-mile day and 30,000 steps) and the walking has been the best so far. A lot less roads and some magnificent countryside. Last night our bijou hotel restaurant was the smallest I've ever dined in. Just 3 tables for 5 people. Good job I'd booked ahead. Other guests had to walk to the nearest restaurant half a mile away. Arrived in Ponte de Lima at lunchtime - what a jewel of a town. Hope to explore any tonight.































**No idea what the drink was but it was wonderful!**

**Day 5.** The guidebooks suggest you take a rest day in Ponte de Lima before tackling the Labruja mountain. We didn't plan any rest days. In view of the 78 degrees mid-day heat we decided to take transport to the foot of the mountain trail to conserve our energy and avoid the mid-day heat. (It's not normally scorching hot like this at this time of the year). It's a boulder strewn steep climb but the views from the top are stunning. Coming down was much worse on my ankle. Arrived at yet another bijou hotel with a swimming pool so have just cooled off in that. The experience is surreal. I'll let you know about the dining experience tonight, tomorrow.









**The long hard rocky climb**



## The Top



































An old favourite Mateus Rose





**Day 6.** A mainly downhill stage so I thought I'd give my trainers a go instead of my boots. Bad decision. Ended up with a blister on my big toe and ankle that really hurts. Anxious about the next few days. The weather is still unbelievable with blue skies no

wind and 75 to 80 degrees. Never known a whole week of cloudless skies. However, it does make walking very tiring. Dined in old city of Valena having had a pre-dinner drink at the bar that Carol and I had lunch at in the rain last June.







Carol and I dined here last June in the rain on our holidays













**Day 7** Again we are walking in cloudless skies 75 to 80 degrees. Visited the Parador in TUI where Carol and I stayed in pouring rain last June. Not too many road sections but 16 miles and 36000 steps. Arrived exhausted. Same again tomorrow. Not sure my body will take it. Good evening meal. Had swim in Ice cold pool which was wonderful. Agnes's body is taking the strain better than mine. (Younger than me and doesn't have all my ailments!!)



Below is the Parador at Tui that Carol and I stayed at last June in the rain.







The bridge on the  
border at Tui  
Valencia





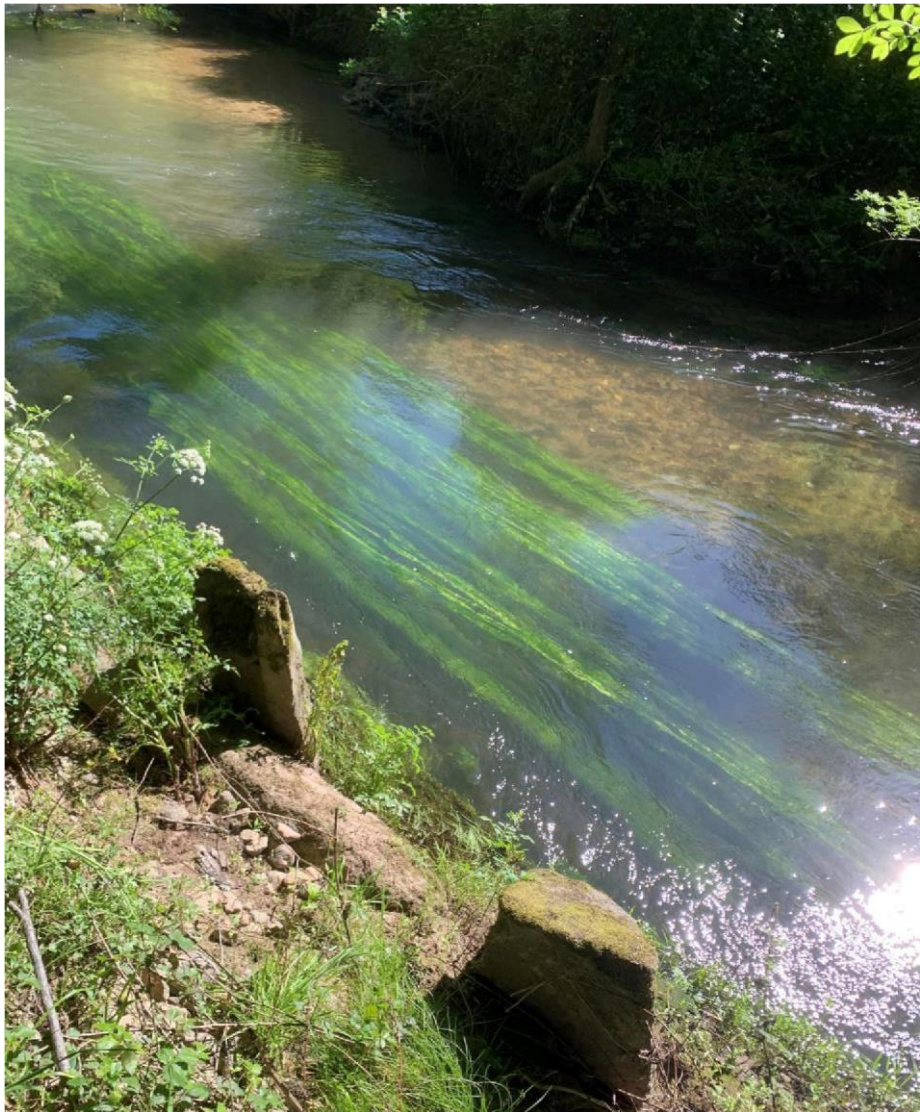






**The lonely bag piper**

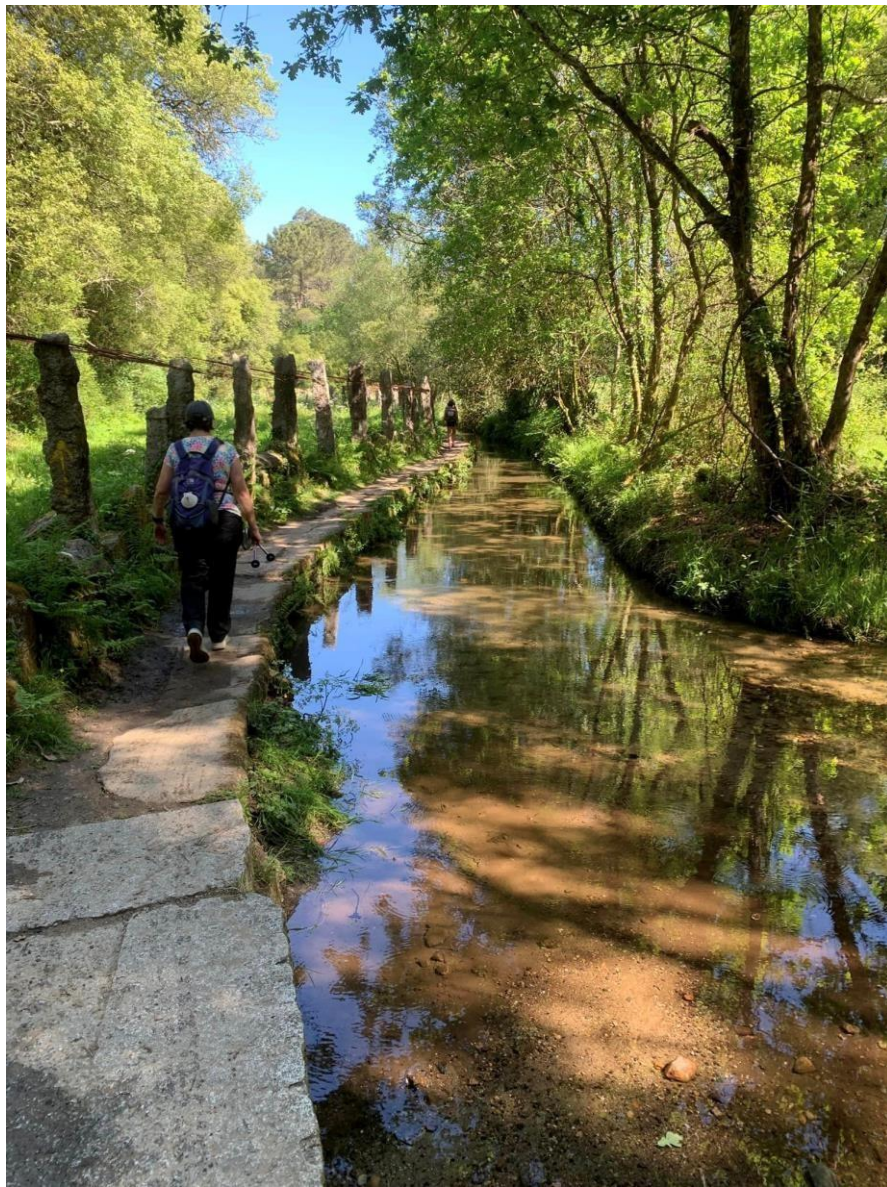












**Day 8.** Starting to sound like a stuck record. Cloudless blue skies but the heat made the 2 climbs today very draining. I think the weather breaks tomorrow. Not a good day today as far too much road walking. It ended up as 15 miles. The first week through Portugal was simply magical with beautiful countryside and very few walkers/pilgrims. This second week is OK but not as good. Loads of people must have started to do the last 100 or so km from Tui and the countryside not as rural.





























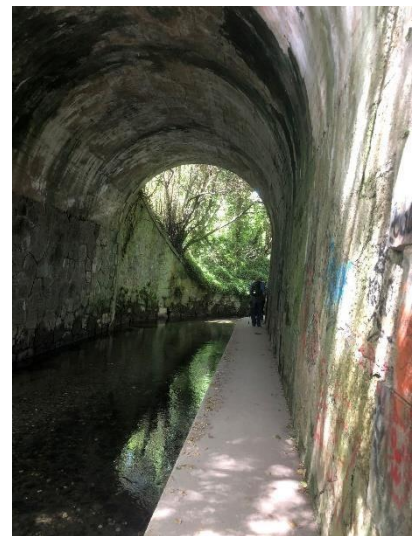




## Day 9

Last night when we arrived at Arcade taxis took all the guests out into the countryside to our lovely remote farmhouse accommodation. Not sure what went wrong this morning as no one had booked same taxis (all part of the package) to get us back to where we had finished yesterday. So quite a late start. Weather no longer wall to wall sunshine. More like a nice English summers day.















## Day10

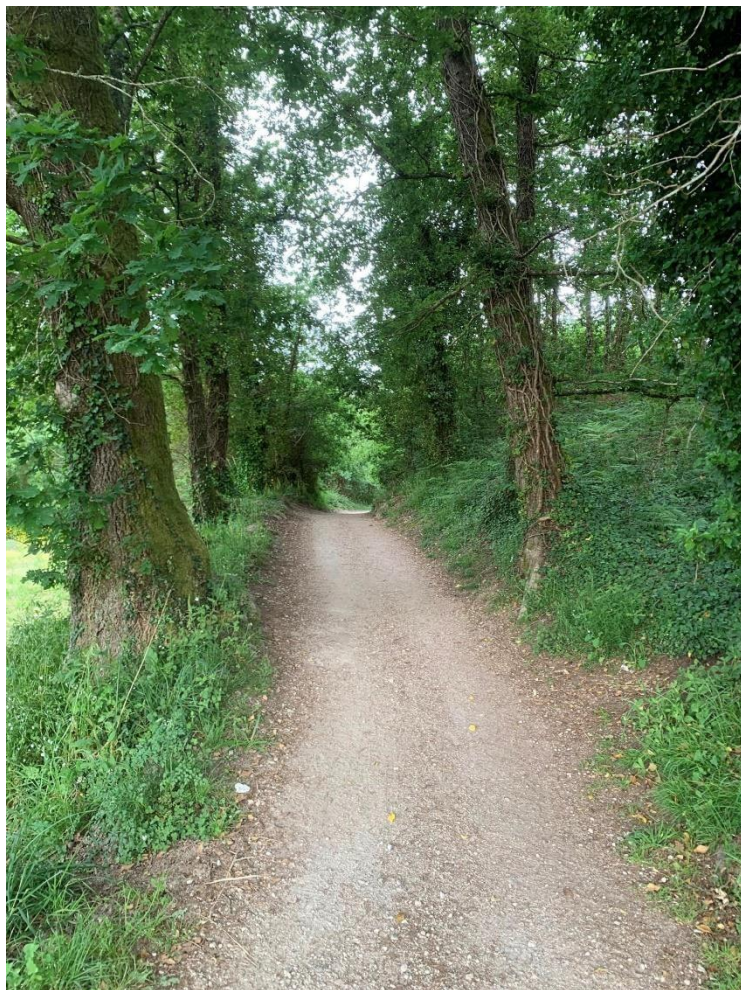
Today's post has a slightly different tone to the previous ones. The hotels we have been staying in have been nothing short of brilliant- until last night - the pits. But one in a fortnight I can live with. It was compounded by not sleeping a wink. I never mentioned in previous posts, for fear of scarring the folk back home, but the day I left the UK I had tickly cough. As we progressed up Portugal it became a sore throat like I swallow a box of razor blades that then became a chest cough, and I just haven't been able to throw it off. So today we split the stage into transport and walking and went to the medical centre in Caldas de Reis to see a doctor. I now have some medicine that should get rid of it. The days and nights of endless coughing have been draining on my energy, so I'm taking tomorrow as a rest day to be fit for the last 2 days into Santiago. What is wonderful is that Carol made a surprise decision before I set off to fly to Santiago on Saturday to be there to welcome me in on Sunday!!! They call it a cloudy day here today. I call it a nice English summers day. When I set off, I thought the dodgy ankle might be the thing that could stop me, but I've kept strapping it up (thanks Jenny Rose), I never thought a good old-fashioned bout of man flu or whatever was going to come close. The hotel we are in tonight is another super boutique hotel combining old and modern. I'll tell you more about it tomorrow. I think that's enough for one day.























### ***Day 11***

All change. It rained. The plan had always been to stay in this magnificent hotel for 2 nights and do a bit of shuttling on Sat a Sun rather than 2 nights in Santiago. It was on the basis that this hotel was Spanish Parador standard, and it is. Back to today the photos show the wall to wall sunshine has gone to be replaced by fine drizzle. Agnes, Hillary and Malcolm got here around 2 pm. It's very popular so we have booked dinner for 7.30 to be sure of a table. Not that I'm eating very much as the meds the Doctor prescribed yesterday seem slow to shift whatever I've got.







































## ***Day 12***

Our entire days walking was in rain. 1 day in a fortnight for northern Portugal and Galicia isn't bad. I've heard Carol has landed in Santiago, so we are about 20 miles apart. We should meet up tomorrow afternoon!!!! I think it could be very emotional.

I'm still taking the medicine and the coughing is less intense, but it remains, cough, cough, cough. Very energy sapping.

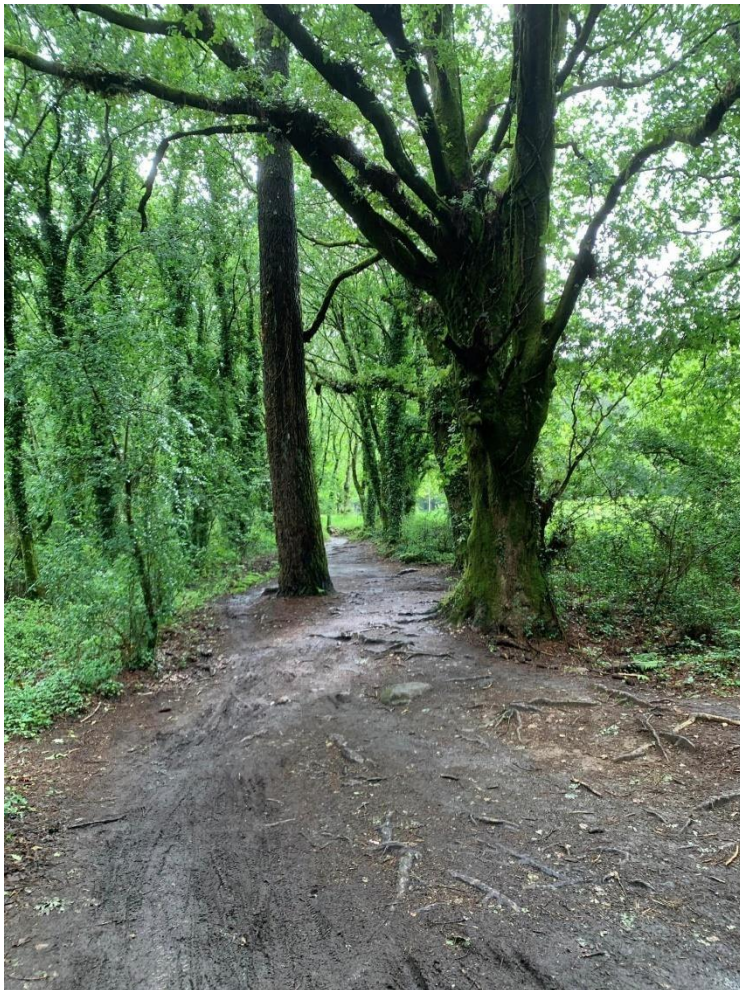
On the bright side tomorrow is the final day. Can't wait to get there.











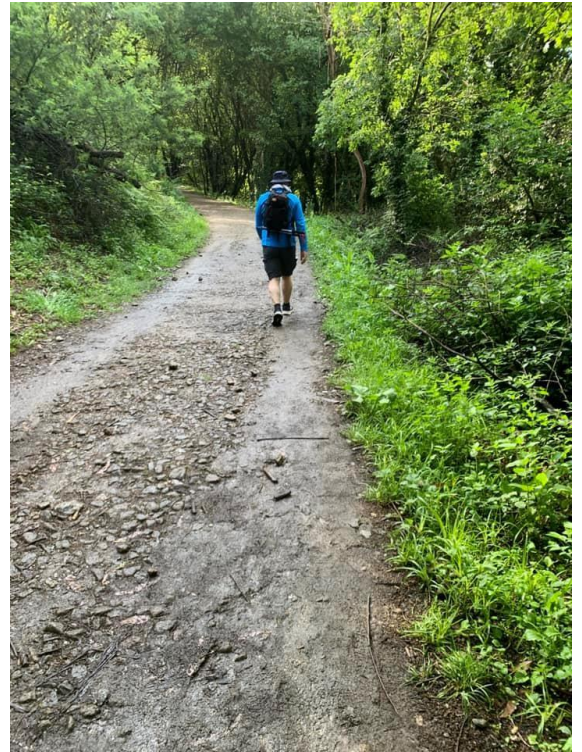






### Day13.

We've arrived. It was wonderful walking into the magnificent square and seeing Carol waiting there to welcome us in. I'll add a lot more to this tomorrow but for the moment I need rest.







### **Overall reflections on the Camino.**

It's been a wonderful experience in particular the section of the first half from Porto in Portugal to the Spanish border was simply magical. Walking day after day through beautiful scenery pretty villages with very few people around you really did feel like you were out there on your own. I'm not saying that it hasn't been good since Tui on the border but at this point what seems like thousands of people who decided to get their certificate by doing the last hundred kilometres means that there are swarms of walkers on the route, and it really did spoil the impression of doing something unique. It felt more like joining a load of other people doing the same thing because it felt like a good idea. The thing that made it really special for us is that the company that organised hike selected the most wonderful hotels. Mostly of a boutique style, all be it one we're in tonight at the end is more like a castle and so we have been in fantastic environments and in that sense, you're away to some degree from the hordes who seem to be undertaking a tick box exercise. They of course were staying in Albergues and of course that is the way you are supposed to do it. It's a hardship trail, not a 5-star cruise. But at my age and with my condition this was the way for me. As you will have read in my commentaries earlier the big concern, I had had from day one was not being able to get to the end having developed a dodgy ankle in the few weeks before setting off from the UK. Fortunately, with some judicious strapping up every day (Thanks Jenni Rose) I've been able to keep it so that it's no worse today than it was when we set off.

What I had not bargained for was that the slight tickle of a cough on the Sunday night before I set was going to turn into such a vicious, cold chest infection or whatever. (Just been to doctor and it's a chest infection so I'm now on antibiotics for a week)

Initially with a razor blade like a sore throat followed by very heavily congested chest and unable to stop the incessant energy sapping coughing it all resulted in ending up having to go to the doctor to get some medicine to try and clear it up and that basically got me going through to the end, but I've certainly not felt at my best. I could never have anticipated that something like that was going to come at the 11th hour Fortunately because of the 10 days of glorious sunshine it didn't really spoil the walking in any way. The sun, countryside, and the walking and the environment was so great the cold seemed to pale into insignificance. It's just in these last few days it's got me down and it's become bloody annoying. If anybody asked me, should they do the Camino the first thing I would ask? Is why do you want to do



it? It's not something like the English Coast to Coast. In many of the villages coming north of the Spanish border, there were lots of slogans and signs in the villages against the Camino saying that it was anti-ecological and when we first saw them, we thought it was a bit mealy-mouthed but as we progressed, we could see what they mean, it really has become a bit of a 'tick box activity' for millions of people from all around the world doing the Camino for whatever reason. No doubt about it. The whole economy of Galicia is dependent on people walking from TUI to Santiago. I just ended up with a slight underlying feeling that it was a bit like the way Halloween and Easter other holiday times things have become very commercialised and Americanised And subsequently lost its meaning. The other big surprise was that I thought it was going to be predominantly English people but fortunately, I have to say we were definitely in a minority. People had come all round the world lots of Americans Canadians Japanese, Koreans. Australian Brazilians, lots of mid Europeans lots of Dutch German. I was surprised how many Spanish especially young ones (like end of term).

I just question what it's become.

Of course, we were part of the problem.



Our certificates – we did it!