

## Walking The Camino *(continued from page 24)*

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woods, high Dakota-like desert, California-like mountainous terrain, vineyards, pine forests, big cities, riverbeds, small hamlets, graveyards, farmyards, churchyards, etc.

The days were long and arduous. We walked for two months. I carried 15 lbs. including food for breakfast and lunch and my water for the day. Most days we walked 10-12 miles. Our longest day was 16 miles. The Path is a testimony to the millions who have traveled the Camino. In places the trail has been worn down by the human foot to such an extent that the surrounding land is 10-20 feet higher than the trail.



After the first two days our minds stopped chattering, and our feet started talking. Perspectives necessarily shift. Daydreams and night dreams converge: the psychic content of my life simply rose from the depths and floated, easy and free, unencumbered by the press of modern life. The land, trees, rocks, sun, rain and blue Spanish sky communed with me directly. That was yet another motivation: I wanted the purity and simplicity of being in the elements for a good long while.

The following is a quote from an anonymous pilgrim: “When you walk across the fields with your mind pure, then from all the stones and all growing things, and all animals, the sparks of their souls come out and cling to you and become a holy fire in you.” I found it to be true and wonderful beyond my powers of description.

When at the end of the journey, I stood looking out over the Atlantic Ocean, I felt cleansed, satisfied and immeasurably stronger in every way. Beside me on that promontory were two worn-out hiking boots, cast in bronze, a tribute to all who have trod the Camino de Santiago.

This quote from Rumi sums up the experience beautifully: “... The mind, this globe of awareness, is a starry universe that when you push off with your foot, a thousand new roads become clear, as you yourself do at dawn, sailing through the light.”

*Ann Oneita Thomas is a massage therapist, a healing arts practitioner, and a writer who lives in Urbana. She has also lived in Wisconsin, Oregon, Florida, Ohio, California, Sweden, Spain, Guatemala, and Micronesia. From 1986 to 1993 she lived on a boat, sailing from Florida through the Panama Canal to the Pacific. In 1991 the boat was hit by lightning, and that event brought her (by circuitous route) to the work she does today. Her two children, three grandchildren and 92-year-old mother all now live in Urbana. In the year 2010 she plans to finish the book she is writing, walk across Wales, and install a sump pump. For more about Ann, see page 9 in this guide.*