



Stacey O'Rourke and John Hanifin on the Camino.

The Camino Ignaciano

by Nancy Nee Hanifin, Jamaica Plain MA

You've walked the Camino Francés, maybe more than once. You've walked the Portuguese, the Primitivo, perhaps even the Vía de la Plata. You've totally embraced the concept and the gifts of pilgrimage: the inner peace, the outer struggle, the insight, the inspiration. But what next?

If you'd like to experience a deeper, more intentionally spiritual walk, the Camino Ignaciano awaits (map on page 19). This 647-kilometer pilgrimage originates in the Basque region of Spain, in the birthplace of St. Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Jesuits. A well-to-do rogue, soldier and social-climber, Ignatius was gravely injured in the Battle of Pamplona in 1521. During his convalescence, he had a conversion. In 1522, after regaining the ability to walk, and determined to visit the Holy Land, Ignatius set out on foot toward Barcelona with a stop at the 11th century monastery in Monserrat. But plague broke out in Barcelona, so Ignatius walked instead to Manresa where he spent the following year aiding the poor, praying and writing his *Spiritual Exercises*.

The *Camino Ignaciano* was conceived to celebrate the 500th anniversary of his walk and the founding of the Society of Jesus. Flechas naranjas – orange arrows – trace the steps of Ignatius from his home in Loyola, down through the Basque mountains and into the Rioja region where they meet the flechas

amarillas – yellow arrows – of the Camino Francés for two days heading west.

In Logroño, the path turns toward Cataluña, following the Ebro River, and the Camino Catalán. Pilgrims will often see the two arrows together pointing in opposite directions! The path passes through four provinces and affords a visit to Zaragoza, with its incredible Basilica of Nuestra Señora del Pilar; Verdu, where one can sleep in the 15th century home of St. Pere Claver, patron saint of slaves, to whom he ministered in Cartagena, Colombia; and to Monserrat, where pilgrims are allowed a two-night albergue stay in those mystical heights.

The official *Guide to the Camino Ignaciano* has detailed maps and instructions as well as a spiritual guide to the “interior way,” allowing the pilgrim to undertake a form of the *Spiritual Exercises* while walking. Ignatius required a month-long pilgrimage of each Jesuit novice. The two primary forms of praying he taught in the *Spiritual Exercises* are meditation and contemplation, which are familiar to nearly every pilgrim.

For more information about this Camino and about the *Spiritual Exercises*, see <http://caminoignaciano.org/en> or email me at boston@americanpilgrims.org. ♦



Map used with permission of the Oficina del Peregrino del Camino Ignaciano.

"Gratitude, like faith, is a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it grows, and the more power you have to use it on your behalf. If you do not practice gratefulness, its benefaction will go unnoticed, and your capacity to draw on its gifts will be diminished. To be grateful is to find blessings in everything. This is the most powerful attitude to adopt, for there are blessings in everything."

- Alan Cohen