

WALKING CAMINO IGNACIANO

www.caminoignaciano.org

I began walking Camino Ignaciano in 2007, departing Loyola on November 7, 2007 reaching Manresa on December 7 and Barcelona on December 12. In 2011, I made the decision to re-walk the section of the Camino from Loyola to Logrono because I wanted to follow Ignatius' route more closely than I had originally done in 2007. The following is my blog of the 2011 journey from Loyola to Logrono. While, officially, Camino Ignaciano begins in Loyola I began my walk in Pamplona, from the spot where Ignatius fell wounded in May 1521. While I was walking I let myself imagine that I am part of the 1521 stretcher party detailed by the victorious French to take Ignatius back to his home, talking to him as I walked. Thus, Ignatius became more present to me.

Day1: Friday August 26, 2011.

Belfast to San Sebastian.

Arrived Biarritz Airport. Took the C bus to Gare de Biarritz (€1), a 10 minute journey away. Purchased a ticket for Hendaye (€5.40) and got the 16.18 train to Hendaye which took 20 minutes. Exited the station and found the TOPO within 50 meters of the station. TOPO is the train which goes from France to Spain (San Sebastian). Cost €1.60. Arrived San Sebastian, found the Tourist Office (and the information I required) and then headed to my university accommodation by bus. All so easy despite my initial uncertainty and anxiety! Had a nice dinner and ready for Pamplona next day.

Day2: Saturday August 27, 2011.

(San Sebastian to) Pamplona to Irurtzun

Up at 7am and exited accommodation by 8am. Got bus to Plaza Pio XII where the ALSA bus office is. Got my ticket for Pamplona. Arrived Pamplona 10am where MY Camino Ignaciano is to begin. Both the Ave. De Ignacio de Loyola and the Plaza del Castillo (where the Castille which Ignatius was defending used to stand) are very close to the bus station. So too is the Tourist Office where I booked accommodation in the Hostal Betelu (€28) for Sunday night. I ALSO GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED FOR THE FIRST TIME THERE. (Passports are available from the Sanctuary of Loyola).

My first port-of-call was Iglesia San Ignacio on Ave. De San Ignacio. There, I spent some quiet time and reflected on my reasons for wanting to walk with Ignatius to Loyola and also about the people I would be "carrying" with him on the road home. Outside the church I found the spot marked on the pavement where Ignatius is said to have fallen, and I spent a moment or two there. Then across the road to the sculpture which marks the beginning of his journey home. Andoff I go on my way towards Loyola.

My route today is via IZA to ZUASTI to SARASA to SARASATE and on to IRURTZUN. (Sources say that IZA and ZUASTI were part of the route by which Ignatius was carried away from Pamplona. SARASATE must also have been part of that route for geographical reasons). The Palacio Zuasti (where Ignatius may have stayed for up to eight days because of his wounds) is today a Golf Club. I also found the remains of an old road 50 meters west of Sarasate, which I took, and which helped me with "composition of place". The old road continued for several kms where it then came to a halt. Had to walk on the N240 for a couple of kms before finding the old road again (on RHS of the road and marked by an old milestone). This side road took me to Irurtzun by a very quiet route.

Walked (almost) constantly for 7 hours and travelled 33.8kms. When I add my walking within Pamplona, my day's walking came to about 38 kms. Arrived tired at 7.30pm. Spent only about 4 kms max on N240. Stayed at Hotel Plazaola. Potential blister on left ball of foot. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED!

Day3: Sunday 28 August 2011.

Irurtzun to Betelu.

As days go this was quiet and uneventful. 29.9 kms. Left 10.30am and arrived 5.45pm with a couple of rest stops.

Left foot is blistering and bothering me a bit. Despite my constant awareness of it, it has not been too much of a problem thanks to Compeed! I found I was focussed constantly on it which took my attention away from anything else. But on the other hand, I am fortunate because, as a result of my little bit of discomfort, I feel I am really walking with Ignatius and with the others I am also "carrying". So my foot problem is a bit of a "grace" reminding me of them.

The walk was very quiet. Along roads. The odd car, motorbike, cyclist. Scenery was beautiful. I walked the "backway" to Lekunberri and then through the Larraun Valley to Betelu. (The Lord of the Palacio Zuasti gave Ignatius escort to the Larraun Valley). Found my Hostal. Hot bath. Dinner. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day4: Monday 29 August 2011.

Betelu to Tolosa

21 kms walk. A quiet uneventful journey. Foot is OK. Stopped a couple of times along the way to take in the quietness. Prayer time. Got to Tolosa. Found a Pension €30. Had a nice meal. Found a pharmacy where I got a gel support for my toes to see how it might help the blister situation. Found the POOR CLARES in Tolosa as a place for some quiet time. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day5: Tuesday 30 August 2011.

Tolosa to Loyola

On the tar roads towards Loyola. Weather was beautiful and the scenery stunning. A quiet road but dangerous! "Carried" Ignatius right up to the front door of his house and knocked on it with my fist! Decided to stay an extra day in Loyola to rest my left foot. Found my accommodation.

Later in the evening I went to Ignatius' Parish Church in Azpeitia where he was baptised. Found out that his family owned the main altar in the church and the front row of seats. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day6: Wednesday 31 August 2011.

At Loyola.

A rest day, and needed! I ate, slept and visited the SANTA CASA where Ignatius was born, lived and where he recovered from his wounds. Took my time appropriating the story of the House. Booked accommodation at Arantzazu for two days hence (Friday). Thunder and rain!

STAGES 1-8: LOYOLA TO LOGRONO

Day7: Thursday September 1, 2011.

Stage 1 Camino Ignaciano - Loyola to Zumarraga.

This is the first day of CAMINO IGNACIANO proper (which begins officially here in Loyola but which began for me at Pamplona). I took the GR120 route to L'Antigua (instead of following the stage one route as per the website www.caminoignaciano.org) and then on to Zumarraga. This is a very quiet hilly route (except for a few dogs!). In 2007, I had walked the official stage one route to Zumarraga, which is also quite pleasant and interesting for different reasons. But on balance I prefer GR120 because it gave me the quietness I wanted for reflection and more importantly I was away from traffic.

Arrived in L'Antigua where Ignatius is said to have spent some time on his way to Arantzazu. On to Zumarraga. A great lunch in Pension Balentine in Calle Urola, and got a room there too. Total cost? €35. Very good value, I thought. I liked Zumarraga. A town of young people and families with an easy, relaxed, warm and homely feel. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day8: Friday September 2, 2011.

Stage 2 Camino Ignaciano - Zumarraga to Arantzazu.

Departed 9.30am. Arrived 3.30pm. 24kms. The stage details on the website are excellent. I followed them exactly. At Telleriarte I took the road for Brinkola and the GR120. The ascent to Arantzazu is not "medium" but a "fairly difficult", sharp ascent in places. Got to Arantzazu and found my accommodation in a Hostal. Visited the Virgin in the church and also the Crypt (where there is a plaque marking Ignatius' visit in 1522). Foot is a bit worse today. Tourist Office booked me into accommodation in Albeniz (2kms beyond Araya) for tomorrow night. The Tourist Office never lets me down! Rained all night. Nice dinner and conversation in my Hostal. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day9: Saturday September 3, 2011.

Stage 3 Camino Ignaciano - Arantzazu to Araya.

Rained all night and morning. Cloud was down so I had to gear up for the weather. Walk was good even though it was in dense mist. I had to stay very alert for the direction signs. The initial 700 meter ascent of Aizkorri towards Urbia was easier than expected. Directions for this stage were good and very necessary because of the fog. Blackberries and Aranaks!! Fresh!!

I went beyond Araya because I could not get a place to stay there and stayed instead in Albeniz in a B&B – Casa Rural Beraetxea. There is also a truckers Hotel which looks excellent a couple of kms just beyond Albeniz at San Roman de San Millan. It has a large restaurant. 24.8kms today.

Used the new toe gel support today and it worked excellently. Will continue to use it from now on. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day10: Sunday September 4, 2011.

Stage 4 Camino Ignaciano - Albeniz to Alda.

My worst day! Why?

I got lost on this stage while following the directions from the website. I could not find the Shepherd's hut mentioned and I ended up getting lost and walking 37.7kms through Sierra de Entzia – an extra 15 kms. Eventually I got to Alda and found the Agrotourismo there, Biltegi Etxea. Slept 12 hours. Nice breakfast. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day 11: Monday September 5, 2011

Stage 5 Camino Ignaciano - Alda to Genevilla.

Took to the road for ease of journey after yesterday. Arrived 3pm. 18.5kms. There was a Basque festival in Santa Cruz 3kms short of Genevilla and the town was full of people. The day was cool, overcast and "Irish". Wore windcheater all day. Blackberries!! Ready to fall off the calyx!

Two Casa Rurals in Genevilla close together. I stayed in the second where the owner has a wonderful art collection – a proper art gallery in itself. No restaurant in Genevilla. Went back to Santa Cruz and ate very well there. Lovely breakfast in my Casa Rural and goodbye. Could find myself back there some day! GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day 12: Tuesday September 6, 2011.

Stage 6 Camino Ignaciano - Genevilla to Laguardia.

Lovely walk. And a hot day. Followed stage map but somehow got lost again! As a result I had to head across fields in the direction of wind turbines where I knew the correct route was. Added 5kms to my journey. From there I stayed on tar all the way to Laguardia. Visited two wonderful DOLMENS along the way which added a further 3 kms to my day. 35 kms total.

Got to Laguardia eventually. This is a special place because Ignatius is known to have stayed here in 1522. Toured town at night. Excellent meal. Stuffed myself! Mass in the local church. GOT MY PASSPORT STAMPED.

Day 13: Wednesday September 7, 2011

Stages 7 and 8 Camino Ignaciano - Laguardia to Navarette to Logrono.

36 kms today. Hot day! Last day of walking!

On the road towards Navarette. Fresh figs!!

Crossed rio Ebro towards Fuenmayor.

Met the parish priest of Fuenmayor in a small wayside chapel (Our Lady of Mount Carmel, I think) a few kms short of Fuenmayor. When I was passing through Fuenmayor he was also in his parish church and gave me a tour. Part of that church is 15th century and they say that IGNATIUS SPENT

SOME TIME THERE ON HIS WAY THROUGH TO NAVARETTE IN 1522. An excellent discovery. This church is worth a stop!!

Towards Navarette. Stopped at El Cantaro, the Albergue where I began my Camino Ignaciano in 2007. I began (2007) and finished (2011) Camino Ignaciano in El Cantaro in Navarette. Alicia, the hospitalera, brought me to the old country residence of the Duke of Najera where Ignatius went in order to collect his wages. The discovery of this place was the highlight of the journey for me. Called to the Church in the centre of the town and then headed onwards to Logrono where I got a cheap one star hotel, ate very well, and reflected on my 14 days.

Travelling – 2 days; Walking – 11 days; Rest – 1 day;
310 kms walked; average of 28.2 kms per day.

Day 14: Thursday September 8, 2011. Logrono to Bilbao
Got the 11am bus to Bilbao for my afternoon flight home.

STAGES 9-27 (29 to Barcelona): LOGRONO to MANRESA (and BARCELONA)

Walking Camino Ignacio from Logrono to Barcelona is almost entirely the same thing as walking Camino d'Ebro and Camino Catalan IN REVERSE. It is Camino Santiago from Barcelona to Logrono in reverse. I walked from Logrono to Manresa to Barcelona between November 13 and December 12, 2007. The following were my stages:

Day1: **Logrono to Agoncillo**. 30.5 kms approx. Stayed in a truckers Hostel.

Day2: **Agoncillo to Alcanadre** 30 kms. Stayed in the Albergue at the Railway Station. Keys are kept in Bar Union. There is also a Casa Rural in the town.

Day3: **Alcanadre to Calahorra**. 29.4 kms. The best Albergue I have ever seen is in Calahorra!

Day4: **Calahorra to Alfaro**. 35.1 kms. Albergue close to the Police Station. The keys are kept in the Police Station.

Day5: **Alfaro to Tudela**. 28.7 kms. Stayed in a Hotel in town.

Day6: Rest

Day7: Rest

Day8: **Tudela to Gallur**. 35 kms. Stayed in (the only) Hotel in Gallur. An experience but adequate!

Day9: **Gallur to Alagon via PEDROLA** (where Ignatius almost killed a man). 29.1 kms. Stayed in the Hotel in the centre of the town. Alagon is a very interesting historical place with Jewish, Moslem and Christian quarters.

Day10: **Alagon to Zaragoza**. 36.6 kms. Stayed with the Jesuit Community.

Day11: Rest

Day12: **Zaragoza to Fuentes del Ebro**. 34.3 kms.

Day 13: **Fuentes del Ebro to Bujaraloz**. 44 kms. Greatly helped by two kind women at the Ayuntamiento in Fuentes del Ebro who refused to let me walk between Fuentes and Bujaraloz (50kms). The area in between is semi-desert with no accommodation till Bujaraloz. Went by train to Caspe and by bus to Bujaraloz. BEST meal in Spain is in the truckers' Hostel in Bujaraloz.

Day 14: **Bujaraloz to Candanos**. 23.4 kms. Lovely walk! Stayed in and ate in El Pilar Pensione.

Day15: **Candasnos to Fraga.** 30.2 kms. Stayed in the Albergue. Must call first to the Police Station in order to get the permission to stay in the Albergue.

Day16: **Fraga to Lleida.** About 40 km walk. There was motorway construction and diversions. Stayed in University hostel. Excellent.

Day17: Rest

Day18: **Lleida to Castellnou de Seana.** 40.8 kms approx. Stayed in Casa Rural Casa Olive. Great meal and welcome in Bar Modern. There is also an Albergue in the town but there was no heat on and no blankets available when I called there. And the night was very cold. I had a lovely experience in Castellnou!

Day19: **Castellnou to Cervera.** 31 kms. Stayed at Sagrat Familia Albergue.

Day20: **Cervera to Jorba.** 28.7 kms. Hostal Jorba.

Day21: **Jorba to Sta Cecelia Albergue** (close to Montserrat) via Igualada. 38.2 kms. The Hospitalero was very kind to me at Sta Cecelia.

Day22: **Sta Cecelia to Montserrat.** 4 kms. Stayed in the Albergue.

Day23: **Montserrat to Manresa.** 26 kms. Stayed at Jesuit Community. VERY VERY tired!

Day24: Rest

Day25: Rest

Day26: Rest

Day27: **Manresa to Martorell.** 38.4 kms. Stayed in Hotel.

Day28: **Martorell to Barcelona.** 28.3 kms. Stayed at Jesuit Community.

Day 29: Walked Ignatius' Barcelona.

Day30: Walked Ignatius' Barcelona.

Day31: Walked Ignatius' Barcelona.

Day32: Depart Spain

Summary of Camino Ignaciano

| <u>From Loyola to Logrono:</u> | <u>From Logrono to Barcelona:</u> | <u>Totals:</u> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Days taken: 7 | Days taken: 28 | 35 |
| Walking Days: 7 | Walking Days: 21 | 28 |
| Rest Days: 0 | Rest Days: 7 | 7 |
| Kilometers: 177 | Kilometers: 600 approx. | 777 |
| Kms per day: 25 approx. | Kms per day: 29 approx. | |

Personal Comment:

No amount of information/data can substitute for the experience of following in Ignatius' footsteps, alone and on foot. Very little knowledge is actually required before one begins the journey. What is needed is picked up along the way on a day-by-day basis with minimum planning. One of the major aspects of pilgrimage is to discover (or re-learn) how to slow down, take life one day/step/decision at a time, and be present to the "now". Slowing down over a prolonged period of time helps to take one's focus off the destination, become less driven, and instead to pay more attention to the step-by-step PROCESS of the journey. One learns to appreciate the "now", the present moment. And one awakens to a "presence" and to journeying "with another" – whether that other is God, or St. Ignatius, or Mary, or a deceased spouse (I met a woman from Austria who was walking with her recently deceased husband), or a deceased son (as in the film *THE WAY*

by Emilio Estevez). It was noticeable that during all the weeks walking I never once felt alone or unaccompanied.

The benefits of walking the Camino really sank in for me after I returned home when, surprisingly, I found that the Camino mentality and attitude did not vanish but remained with me day after day. In that respect, I became aware I was still on Camino, only now in a different context and place. And what I had learned while walking was being translated into a new attitude towards the way I approached my daily routine of life – into a Camino of daily life, one could say.

Terry Howard SJ, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

January 12, 2012.