

# *Ultreia et Suseia! The Newsletter.*

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Vol. 5. No. 1.

## February 24, 2025, Christchurch Camino Group

'Homecoming is not post-Camino. It is the final critical part of the journey where we learn to put into effect the changes that were awakened in us as we walked.' Alexander John Shaia

### Editorial

#### The Turning Around Point

Alexander John Shaia refers to the arrival at the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela as the turning around point of the pilgrimage. What does he mean? In earlier times that indeed was the case. Arrival at the cathedral meant turning around and walking home! He is referring to the Inner Journey which has been happening simultaneously. On the Camino pilgrims might awaken, the transformation though, could take place once home. Shaia arrived home completely unaware of the effect the pilgrimage was to have on his life, and he found there was no support. He experienced great difficulty synthesizing material and adjusting over the following twelve months. He set about writing the book, '**Returning From Camino,**' which he wished he had been able to refer. I read reviews and decided this volume was quite a departure from the usual memoirs which outlined transformation issues experienced by pilgrims.

I purchased a Kindle copy and found it surpassed expectations. There were valuable suggestions for pre and post Camino. I consider it essential reading, and in the top 5 Camino books I had read. I arranged for Christchurch City Libraries to purchase a hardback copy.

Unfortunately this book spends most of its time languishing on the library shelves.

Ultreia Suseia  
Philip

Image: Cathedral, Santiago de Compostela

### Reference

'**Returning From Camino,**' Alexander John Shaia, 263 SHA, Christchurch City Libraries, [1 copy]  
'**Returning From the Camino: An Outer & Inner Journey,**' Alexander John Shaia, Youtube, [58.31]. An excellent discussion, and a great companion to the book. Highly recommended.

'But it is clear that the return home is an essential part of pilgrimage: one needs to put be back in the daily routine to appreciate the Camino.' Alexander John Shaia

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**Noticeboard**

The following are the remaining scheduled meeting dates for 2025: Monday 9 June, Monday 25 August, Monday 17 November. Our venue for 2025 is meeting Rooms 2 & 3 Upper Riccarton library, 71 Main South Road, Sockburn, entry via the library main doors. Walk down the right aisle towards the café.

**Christchurch Camino Walking Group**

The Christchurch Camino Walking Group meets on the second Sunday of the month, usually at 10 am. The walks are a mixture of flat and hill walks around Christchurch and surrounding areas. They provide an opportunity to try out new walks, and exercise with people who share a love for the Camino. Walks are usually completed by around 3 pm. This group is for people who have a Camino interest and attend our quarterly meetings.

Please contact Cecilia for more information and to join the separate mailing list:

[chchcaminogroup@gmail.com](mailto:chchcaminogroup@gmail.com)



**Image:** Ashley River Lagoon.

**Website**

Remember to visit our website: [chchcamino.net](http://chchcamino.net). Contributions about equipment and Camino Stories are welcome. Please contact Alan: [chchcamino@gmail.com](mailto:chchcamino@gmail.com) Send photos to Deb: [chchcaminogroup@gmail.com](mailto:chchcaminogroup@gmail.com).

**Advice Given to Pilgrims**

We wish to emphasise that all information and answers given by our presenters, organisers and meeting participants and in our newsletter are provided in good faith, and have been found to work for them/us on that particular occasion.

The information provided is a starting point for your research so that there is a range of possibilities to investigate and can be adapted to suit individual circumstances.

## *February 24, 2025, Christchurch Camino Gathering Follow Up*

**Apologies:** Colleen, Elizabeth.

On behalf of Deb, Philip welcomed everyone to our new venue. This was our biggest meeting so far (57) with rooms LC 2 and LC 3 almost at capacity. We are also into our ninth year. (31 meetings.) **Returning Pilgrims' Ceremony:** For those pilgrims who have returned since our last meeting in November. There were no returning pilgrims. **Departing Pilgrims' Ceremony and gifting of scallop shell necklaces.** For those pilgrims departing before our next meeting on 9 June 2025, A sizeable number of pilgrims are heading mainly to the Frances and Portuguese Caminos. The shell necklaces are currently being presented to first time pilgrims only. I purchased 30 in Santiago de Compostela last year and the supply has almost been exhausted. I'm hoping some kind soul will offer to bring some back, with full reimbursement. Then there might be sufficient to present to those without a shell making subsequent Caminos.

**Christchurch Camino Walking Group Report:** Cecilia reported on the group's activities since our last meeting in November. In December a picnic was held in Hagley Park to celebrate another great year of walking. The following walks have taken place: January; Akaroa and Nikau Palms,



**Image;** Te Kuru wetland.

track, February; Woodend to Ashley Lagoon. Cecilia explained that the walking group is only for those who have walked, or intend to walk a Camino and attend our quarterly meetings. We walk as a group, the faster people waiting every now and then for slower walkers. The walks are a great way to share Camino information, stories and have questions answered. To join the mailing list for the walking group write to Cecilia at: [chchcaminogroup@gmail.com](mailto:chchcaminogroup@gmail.com)

### **Journey Presentations**

**Colleen and Daphne ~ 'Walking the Portuguese from Porto as a Joint Venture. Flexibility along The Way.'** ~ Daphne.

*Colleen and Daphne didn't wish to walk alone nor lose their independence. Find out how they achieved a mutually acceptable balance. Includes tips and suggestions from walking one section solo. (Daphne also walked the Camino Ingles solo in 2024.)*

Daphne made an excellent solo presentation as Colleen had unexpected family circumstances arise. She sent Ivor, her husband, along to assist with the IT aspect of the presentation. It is Daphne and Colleen's belief that clear communication regarding intentions is essential prior to departure. For example having the expectation that at times throughout the day they would walk separately allowing for inner silence, or taking in points of interest to them. Daphne happened upon a book in an airport bookstore which provided an excellent framework: Don Miguel Ruiz 'Agreements.'

They then utilised the book's framework as a basis for their discussions.

- ~ Know your own expectations and intentions - putting cards on table, clear intentions
- ~ Don't make assumptions – being different isn't wrong, ask questions before leaving, other plans
- ~ Be nonjudgmental – being grateful
- ~ Take nothing personally – agree beforehand – walk solo, can stay in contact. Daphne had a memorable overnight at Hebron monastery, and turned off to walk the Variante Espiritual.
- ~ Work with each other's strengths – Colleen great at researching, planning stages etc. Plan for setbacks, and illness.

In conclusion walking together proved to be beneficial to both parties and a positive experience. So much so that a further trip together is on the cards!

#### Solo Camino ~ Camino Ingles

Daphne gained the courage to walk the Camino Ingles solo following previous Caminos with Liz and Colleen. Her presentation showed the stages followed and included illustrative photographs. This is a great Camino to combine with another shorter one. (118 km.)

#### **'Walking the del Norte Camino - Through a Photographer's Lens. ~ John Malliard**

*John has a passion for the art of photography. He walked the Camino del Norte in April of 2023 over 6 weeks from Irun to Finisterre. He will share with us images from this picturesque Camino and the highlights of his journey.*

I wouldn't be alone thinking that this was only Part One of this incredible Camino presentation! John, we want more! There were headings on screen just waiting to be explored. eg. An Enlightening Spiritual Experience, the man who finished the Camino was quite different to the one who started! A planned long trek in the USA was cancelled due to excessive snow fall. There were also personal issues which required time for resolving and healing. And so the Camino del Norte was chanced upon. John outlined how a Camino can be a pilgrimage, a Hero's Journey, facing challenges and overcoming them. One of the first challenges was pack weight. Superfluous items were packed off home, and walking shorter distances initially, helped avoid injury. He learned to go with the flow, and try different things. A smelly dorm provided the opportunity to walk through the night. He recommends having an understanding of the history and cultures of the area being traversed. John also dotted his talk with tips based on his experience. For instance rap pack in cling wrap for air transportation, local shops have everything you require, importance of strong soles on footwear, light packing tips, and always using rubber tips on walking poles! John's incredible images charted his journey of over a 1000km, he took lots of deviations and even walked parts of the Primitivo. There was also Camino Magic at work. In a photograph taken at Finisterre and through sheer coincidence we see Colleen included!

John is to be congratulated on walking with an open heart, not being overly planned, learning from the challenges, acknowledging the locals, immersing himself in, and appreciating the landscapes and built environments along the way and most importantly engaging with fellow pilgrims. John's presentation was humorous, filled with nuggets of gold, and with excellent images.

*John's professional work may be found at: [waihora-gallery.com](http://waihora-gallery.com)*

The meeting concluded with **Small Group Discussion**. Alan prepared an excellent local walks PowerPoint presentation. We are working on ways to share it more widely.

#### **Starting the Pilgrimage of Life**



Check out the current entry door to the Santiago de Compostela cathedral in Plaza de Platerias. Focus on the façade. On the mullion between the arch of the two doors there is a Crismon, (Chi-Rho symbol), a monogram of Christ. But the letters are backwards. Alpha has exchanged places with Omega. The end is at the beginning. 'The goal of El Camino has now started another Camino, you have started a new life.' See Cathedral website.

**Image:** The Crismon above the current entry door of the Santiago de Compostela cathedral showing the end is the beginning.



## Article

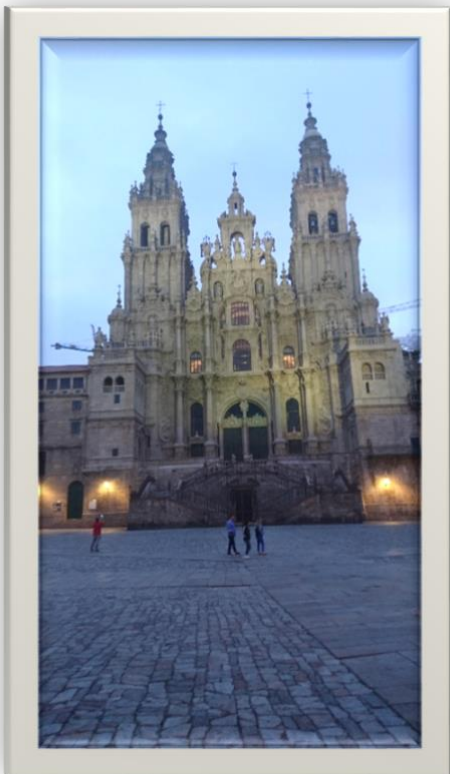
### Homecoming From Camino: Planned or Impromptu?

The traditional journey has three parts namely; separation, journey, re-integration. What thought prior to embarkation has been given to 'Homecoming', the re-integration stage where we arrive home with new 'gifts' and ideas. We face the challenge of 'fitting in,' or maybe making changes to our life situation congruent to our newly developing understandings. How can the best of the Camino be brought into our lives once home? Have we made provision in our schedule for this, or are we relying on an organic process? Below are two possible approaches.

## Article

### Allowing Camino Wisdom to be a Road Map for Life ~ Kathy Kehe and Adam Wells

On their website (heroscamino.com) Kathy and Adam have archived their presentation, '**Returning from the Camino and Keeping the Camino Spirit Alive,**' originally presented to American Pilgrims on the Camino, October 22, 2022. Go to "Webinars" and scroll down. This provides a link to YouTube, and Chrome casting to your TV is possible. Three tips were given: Understand your special (Camino) world experience, Consider What Might be Calling You Now, Allow Camino Wisdom to be a Road Map for Life. This is an excellent presentation and contains many nuggets of wisdom. Essential viewing.



## Article

### Bringing Qualities of the Camino Home

Kathy Kehe has continued her work on developing a plan for identifying personal qualities noticed and valued on the Camino and nurturing them once home. The steps include; identifying a quality you wish to bring home, developing a base line of its occurrence once home by noticing it in the world around you, creating conditions to enable it to flourish. eg. Incorporating it into an established routine, removing barriers, practising/observing the quality.

**Image:** Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela at dawn.

## Article

### Battling the Blues Once Home

**The Christchurch Camino Group** has as one of its goals to provide a space where like minded people can meet to share and discuss ideas. Friendships can form and flourish beyond the group meetings. **The Christchurch Camino Walking Group** provides another forum for the sharing of ideas and the forming of friendships while out walking.

An option I always find works is to begin making plans and preparations for the next Camino as I integrate my realisations! Christchurch City Libraries has extensive collections of books on both pilgrimage and Camino. Pilgrim memoirs often traverse Post Camino Blues. The Camino Guide books will assist with the planning of the next one.

**'The Artist's Way, A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity,'** Julia Cameron, eBook, Christchurch City Libraries, [4 copies], is an excellent introduction to cognitive writing therapy ~ a great way to sort out the ideas which arose during the pilgrimage and hopefully pave a way forward. There are 11 other versions in the library to sample ~ **'The Artist's Way for Retirement, It's Never too Late to Discover Creativity and Meaning,'** sounds inviting!

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## Article

### Returning From Camino

I was really pleased to see the publication of Alexander John Shaia's book, **'Returning From Camino,'** because it filled a gap in the market regarding support for the homecoming process. And I purchased the Kindle version while requesting Christchurch City Libraries to purchase a book copy. The author recommends the reader read the book according to their stage in the pilgrimage process. He sets out a number of steps the aspiring pilgrim might take prior to departure. These range from completing a questionnaire, to having a mentor who will be for available for several months once the physical journey has been concluded. The mentor would assist with the reintegration process by acting as a sounding board. This might be a tall order to achieve in our busy world. In some ways the

Christchurch Camino group can play a part as we tell and retell our stories to those who are keen to listen. I was lucky to have two anamcaras (soul friends) I could call on to discuss in detail matters which arose from my pilgrimages in the years before the group's inception.

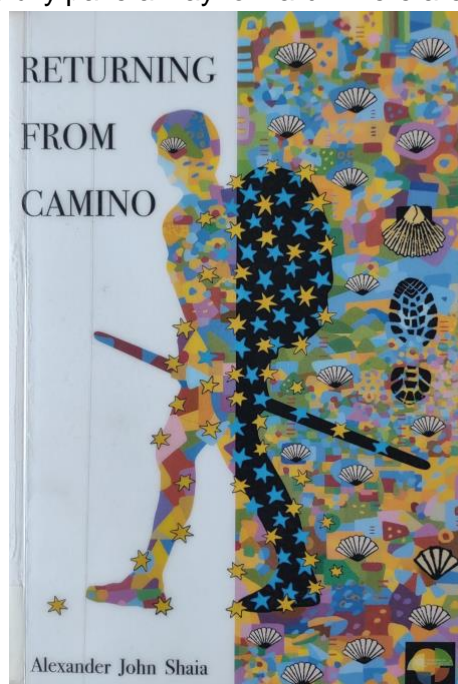
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## Camino Story

### A Memorable Moment on the Camino Frances ~ Christ in Action

I had set out from Pamplona. In one place the Camino track had slipped down the hill side. Everybody had to find their way down Alto del Perdon and through the slump before they could continue on their way. It was not easy particularly with a full pack. Two young pilgrims made the first move and found their way down. At the bottom they put their packs aside and proceeded to climb back up so one could reach the first waiting pilgrim and pass the pack to the second young man below. Then a helping hand was given as each pilgrim slowly made their way down and across the deep channels which had formed during the slip. There was word of a bed race but this didn't deter these young guys. They continued helping, even offering me assistance.

Later I chanced upon one of these helpers at the albergue, recognition helped by the sighting of his impressive leather hat. I engaged him in conversation and asked how his Camino was going. He said he was disappointed so far as he'd been led to believe this was a spiritual journey. And so far "nothing had happened." I was able to relate a spiritual experience that I had witnessed that very day and in which I had become immersed. I pointed out that he and his fellow pilgrim had been instrumental in providing an opportunity for a number of pilgrims on the trail to experience the love of God. He was somewhat surprised, slightly mystified, and grateful for the feedback.



## Camino Poem

### Path of Wind and Stars

Pamplona's park-like outer suburbs  
yield to a sea of yellow rape seed.  
Turbines perched on distant hills,  
resemble Deb Quixote's windmills.

Wrought iron sculptures  
depicting sixteenth century pilgrims  
line the crest of Mt Perdon.  
A memorial to hardy souls.

Torrential rain has rendered  
downward paths almost impassable.  
Two younger walkers toss aside their packs  
and assist fellow pilgrims,  
giving walkers an opportunity to experience  
the love of Christ.

© Philip, 2014

**Image:** Installation Mt Perdon Summit (Alto del Perdon)

'Where the path of the wind crosses with that of the stars.' ~ sculpture inscription.

Note: If one examines the sculptures closely more than 16<sup>th</sup> Century pilgrims are revealed.

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## Things to Do In...Ponferrada

Ponferrada is a town on the Camino Frances. It is also the commencement point for the Camino Invierno or "Winter Way," a route utilised by medieval pilgrims. The town is easily remembered for its hilltop Templars' castle.

- Walk around the medieval town centre
- Tour the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Templar castle (Castillo de Los Templarios) – Closed Monday, free Wednesday, Pilgrims with credential \$4
- Visit Iglesia San Andres, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Baroque Church
- Visit the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Basilica de la Encina.
- Locate the statue of Pepe Cortes the waffle maker.
- Take refreshments in the town's Plaza del Ayuntamiento and enjoy the city's atmosphere.



**Image:** This bronze sculpture is located in the Plaza Mayor Ponferrada. It represents Pepe Cortes, the waffle maker.



## Camino Tip



Save the bench for those who need it!

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## Reviews

### Books

**'Returning From Camino.'** Alexander John Shaia, Christchurch City Libraries, 263 SHA (1 copy)  
A book about preparing for the inner journey, maximising the benefits while on the pilgrimage, and options to deal with inner changes brought about by the journey.  
A must read if your interests extend beyond preparation for the physical journey.

**'Your Inner Camino, Your pocket guide to inspiration and transformation along the Camino de Santiago,'** Karin Kiser, 2019, Camino Chronicles Press

In the foreword Karen indicates that this pocket book is designed to be read randomly as one walks. She advises against reading before commencing the pilgrimage. 'The exercises and contemplations are much more powerful when you are outside your daily habits and routines and on the Camino itself.'  
This book offers a map of the journey within, to inspire when the going gets tough, and exercises and things to ponder whilst walking.

**'After the Camino, Your pocket guide to Integrating the Camino de Santiago into your daily life,'** Karin Kiser, 2019, Camino Chronicles Press

Like its companion, **'Your Inner Camino, Your pocket guide to inspiration and transformation along the Camino de Santiago,'** it is suggested this pocket book is referred to frequently once home. It is to be viewed as a roadmap to keep the momentum going. This handy pocket sized book is divided into three parts: Things to do right away, Ten practices to incorporate over time, Exploring what's next on the journey.

[If purchased as a pair including postage, US 20.95.]

See August 2021, Vol. 1. No. 2. and November 2022 for further Returning from Camino resources.  
Also see, 'What Happens When the Yellow Arrows Cease?' February, 2023, Vol. 3. No. 2.



**Image:** The ghost pilgrim, Plaza de la Quintana, Santiago de Compostela cathedral, Santiago de Compostela.

**'Falling Upward a Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life,'** Richard Rohr, Christchurch City Libraries 248.4 ROH, [3 copies], e Book, [1 copy], Downloadable audio book, [1 copy].



Pilgrims contemplating their Camino inner journey experiences may find this provocative book useful. Chapter 2 is titled, 'The Hero's and Heroine's Journey.'

**'A Kiwi Camino, Our Family Journey of Discovery,'** Eirika Barden, (2024), Christchurch City Libraries, 946 BAR, [4 copies]

Erika and her husband Seamus first walked the Frances in 2004. They had resolved to walk it again with their future family. Twenty years later they were walking with their children; Malaika (15), Tarquin (13), Braeden (11).

A very well written, based on her blog, account of their "bucket list" adventure. There are 22 pages of Camino related photographs.

### Film

**'The Way, My Way,'** 2023, [1hr 39]

This is a film based on Bill Bennett's Camino memoir, 'The Way, My Way,' and provides a great overview of what it is like to walk a Camino especially the Frances. Chris Hayward as Bill Bennett is the star. Of the 20 pilgrims 4 are professional actors, the other 15 included pilgrims who recreated their 2013 roles. It is currently available on Netflix. The Christchurch City Libraries has 6 copies of the book. Kindle \$8.95.

### YouTube

**'John Brierley – The Inner Journey + Bringing the Camino Back Home,'** The Camino Café Podcast, 10/01/2023, [57.01]. An excellent discussion covering all the bases. There are a further 5 episodes of 5 – 8 minutes each, known collectively as 'The Docuseries.'

**'2 Weeks on the Camino de Santiago on a Budget – The Other Side of the Camino,'** Lisa and Josh, YouTube, [1:41:25]

This time Lisa and Josh walk the Portuguese Camino, (Senda Litoral, Central). This is an entertaining, informative and professionally produced documentary.

**'Efren Gonzalez – Camino de Santiago the Way of St James,'** Americans on the Camino, YouTube, [4.03].

An excellent overview mostly by drone. Ideal for giving others a Camino insight, while reigniting Camino Frances memories.

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'Wherever you stop walking is merely your turn-around place. Your journey continues and the road stretches before you. Pick up your pack and continue to walk *your* Camino.' Alexander John Shaia.

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