



Newsletter

November 2015

What does the CCoP do on the Camino?

Spain is a long ways away and we can't easily take a half-hour drive to Spain to touch up an albergue's roof or fix a toilet. So we work closely with the London-based Confraternity of Saint James, the long-established mother group of all anglophone pilgrims' associations. They run two albergues in Spain, Guacelmo in Rabanal del Camino (after that stiff hill walk out of Astorga), and Miraz on the Camino del Norte, which provides accommodation to break up a 44km stretch.



We sponsor the Guacelmo albergue for Canada week (between the Saint-Jean and Canada Day) and, over the years, we have considerably helped the restoration of the albergue in Miraz, ensuring that it has the very useful (for pilgrims, anyway) hot water

systems and kitchen. If you shower at Miraz, think of the generosity of your fellow Canadians.

They write back:

The CSJ is extremely grateful for the continuing support you give to our 2 refuges in Spain and to the pilgrims who stay in them. We hope we shall be able to welcome you to either Gaucelmo or Miraz either in person or on facebook - both have their own pages.

At Gaucelmo we continue to offer hospitality in an oasis of relative calm, where pilgrims are offered tea in the afternoon and are able to enjoy the shady and spacious garden. Each spring as we open there are ongoing works to keep the building safe and attractive and the garden provides herbs for use in cooking and as health treatment.

At Miraz, last year's works to improve the building have continued – and we are getting to understand fully how the new boiler and solar panels work best.

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The International Conference of Pilgrim Associations in Santiago de Compostela

In June of this year, there was a gathering of all of the pilgrims' associations in Santiago to address the challenges of the growing numbers of pilgrims on the Camino and to meet and exchange ideas and solutions. This was the first gathering of this kind. Canada was represented by the Canadian Company of Pilgrims (Austin Cooke, president) and the Association Québécoise (Johanne Morin, president), as well as by a delegate from Canadian Hospitaleros,

Wendy Loly, coordinator of the CCoP's energetic Victoria chapter, and were supported by CCoP member and hospitalero trainer Mary Virtue, who took advantage of a European visit to detour to Galicia to help us out.

Wendy wrote about the meeting:

It was a great experience to meet so many others who are involved in this type of association, and

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Credentials



Our credential elf team is recovering from this year, which had the highest number of credentials issued ever—almost 1,300—200 more than in 2014.

According to our agreement with the Cathedral in Santiago, credentials can only be issued to our members. Each document bears the name of the member, and is used for registering them at pilgrims' albergues along the way, and when stamped in fulfillment of the Cathedral's requirements (once a day, and twice for the final 100km), supports the issuing of the Compostela, or certificate of

completion of pilgrimage.

There are conditions for its issue laid out in the inside cover, reminding us that it is our responsibility to keep the albergues clean, to keep the peace, to respect other pilgrims, and to contribute to the upkeep and survival as generously as we can in return for the hospitality we are receiving.

Pilgrims will likely remember the small green booklet we use. Some people like the folded "accordion" style used by other associations.

Let us know what you think.

... International conference

(con't from page 1)

to compare notes on our operations and concerns. Much valuable information was exchanged, especially during informal meeting times (e.g. over lunch, on the bus). There were approximately 300 representatives from 154 associations in 24 countries.

Session topics included:

- History and research by Camino associations (e.g. research to restore old routes);
- Communications (in person, books, magazines, radio, and electronic);
- Hospitality on the Camino - caring for the pilgrim body and soul along the way. The speakers represented albergues in Roncesvalles, St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, Rabanal, and Santiago;
- Relationships between associations as they seek to preserve and protect the heritage, art, culture and environment of the Camino;
- Present challenges and future concerns (increasing availability of electronic information may result in decreasing membership numbers and thus decreasing \$\$ and volunteers for associations; many pilgrims don't re-join after walking.)

In addition to preparing pilgrims to walk and receiving them home again, most European associations are involved in waymarking routes, and operating albergues. Both these activities require many volunteers. Many associations, especially in central Europe, are also researching and opening new routes. These groups were

all keen to attract pilgrims to their own routes.

Many of the groups outside of Europe deal with similar issues to those in Canada: large distances between chapters and executive members; difficulty in mounting a national meeting due to distance; communication challenges; helping pilgrims overcome language barriers in Spain; expenses of travelling to Spain.

During discussions at the sessions, concerns were expressed about:

- overcrowding on the Camino frances. (Is the 100km rule an arbitrary one? Can it be changed?)
- safety on the Camino, especially for women walking alone.
- authorities who are confusing pilgrims with tourists. They need to be treated differently or we risk losing the true spirit of the Camino.
- some pilgrims confuse volunteer hospitaleros with 'staff', and have unrealistic expectations of them.
- litter and graffiti along the Way.
- need to recruit younger volunteers;

One delegate likened the entire Camino to a Cathedral that must be respected and defended in all aspects. There was emphasis on maintaining the Camino as a way of humanity, harmony, peace and understanding.

We'll let members know when the proceedings are available— the Canadian presentation took on the subject of communications among Camino associations. The CCoP made a formal representation to the Galician authorities about measures for to strengthen pilgrim security on the Camino, and we were supported by the Association Québécoise and American Pilgrims on the Camino.

... What the CCoP does (con't from page 1)

From Rabanal, from hospitaleras Barbara Woolner of Peterborough, Ontario, and Donna Michael, of Calgary.



Senior Hospitalero John Little shows us the kitchen and water heater at Miraz, which are the projects supported by CCoP donations over the past few years.

stinging nettles to make a medicinal tea for everyone. Also each day we welcome guests from the monastery and the retreat house for tea. Brother



Thank you for your support of Refugio Gaucelmo; we were especially proud to receive the moral support. We are delighted to share some highlights of the week you support with you. Afternoon tea is always a big hit and we have added iced tea to the offering due to the excessive heat. Two Lithuanian girls bravely harvested

Marius is especially fond of Maria cookies.

A Slovak pilgrim walked to Rabanal from his front door. Two French pilgrims who met en route discovered that they will soon be related; one member from each other's family will marry in July and each plan to

attend the wedding. The bees have been active in the huerta— we have a pool each day to guess the number of stings. A Belgian couple is celebrating their 50th anniversary walking the Camino. An American team is making a documentary on mediaeval medicine and filmed in the herb garden. An initially reluctant Irishman told us how proud his father would be of his reading at Vespers. One night, all 23 pilgrims cooked a feast together, each taking on a task from appetizer prep to centrepiece making to dessert, wine, and clean-up. This was a really special experience. Donna and I (the two hospitaleros) spent their last evening watching the moonrise and listening to the symphony of sleeping pilgrims.

It has been a pleasure to serve and Rabanal is truly a special place. We took care of 157 pilgrims from Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgarian, Canada, Chile, Denmark, France, Holland Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania New Zealand, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, UK, USA and Jordan, Croatia, and the Ukraine.

Thanks again for the generous support of the Canadian Company of Pilgrims.

Annual General Meeting

This will be held in Saint Barnabas' Church Hall, at the corner of Kent & James Street, in Ottawa, Saturday, December 5, from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm. There will be the usual reports from officers, discussion, and the election of a new president. Paid-up members for 2015 or 2016 are welcome to send in nominations to secretary@santiago.ca

Moving On...

Austin Cooke has served as president for the past seven years and is stepping down. He writes that he has greatly enjoyed working with members and coordinators, especially those establishing new chapters, and has very much appreciated the dedication of the volunteers across Canada, as they help prospective pilgrims prepare for their Camino.



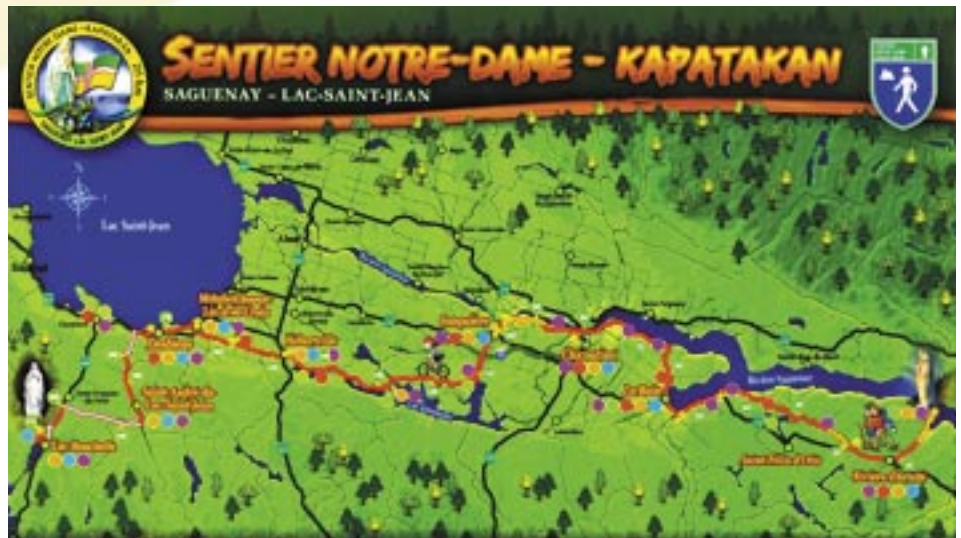
The Sentier Notre-Dame Kapatakan

After completing the Camino de Santiago in 2013, we read a brief note about Canadian pilgrimage roads in the April 2014 issue of this Newsletter. All of the trails are located in Quebec. We were mostly interested in the Sentier Kapatakan because we had travelled through the Lac St-Jean area 10 years ago on our way from Calgary to Newfoundland and liked that pastoral region so much that we wanted to go back for a more detailed look.

What better way to get a detailed look than to walk the area? So we contacted the organization (www.sentiernotredamekapatakan.org), bought the excellent guidebook and passports and planned to go this year. We always camp when we hike, sleeping in our minivan, because that provides us with the ultimate freedom to schedule our hikes as we wish. There are a number of Auberges and pensions along the route for those who want to hike Camino style (although the prices are significantly higher than in Spain). Because of the potential threat of black flies, we decided to walk as late in the season as possible which happened to be the second half of August and the first week of September since most of the campgrounds in the region close after the Labor Day long weekend.

The Sentier is a 215 km hike through the Laurentian hills, largely along the roads - some quiet, some rather busy - but also on paths through the woods along previously existing trails. The official opening was in 2009 so it has not been in existence for a long time. A great effort was made to properly mark the trail with signs and maps and it is all but impossible to get lost.

Most hikers take about 10 days to walk the trail if they trek from auberge to auberge but we needed 12 as we lost time backtracking to our car. We would park along the trail at our starting point for the day, walk for 1 to 2 hours,



and then return. In theory, that would double the mileage we would have to walk but in reality the friendliness of the locals helped us immensely as we usually could hitch a ride back. Then we would drive to the point from which we had returned and start the process again, often doing 3 or 4 of these sections each day, averaging 15 to 20 km, depending on the weather.

The Sentier starts in the Parc National du Fjord-du-Saguenay, where you climb to the gigantic statue of Notre-Dame du Saguenay above the waters of the fjord, and it ends at the Grotte de Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes at Lac Bouchette.

This year, less than 50 people walked the Sentier. When we started on August 24 and signed the log at the Parc National we noticed that the

previous hiker had started 18 days earlier, so it is not a busy trail. We never met another Sentier hiker, which is quite a difference from our experience at the Camino! But the excellent work done by the creators of the Sentier deserves a lot more attention from hikers who want to go out on a 2-week trip in Canada. We enjoyed this "Little Compostela", as they call it, tremendously and you do not need to be religious to participate.

On a final note, one of the locals providing us with a ride back in Chicoutimi was the daughter of Florence Masson, one of the two ladies who put the Sentier together. She took us to her mother where we enjoyed coffee and had a nice conversation about the Sentier. How is that for chance? Stuff like that can only happen in Canada!

ROYAL CAMINO - Supporting Soldiers

Volunteers from the Royal Canadian Regiment Association are planning a group Camino to provide the means, environment, and challenge for operationally stressed and injured soldiers, so they may garner both physical and inner strength in a positive manner. Further information can be obtained from David Brydon at: dwbrydon@gmail.com or found at: <http://www.gofundme.com/RoyalCamino>

Membership Form

Canadian Company of Pilgrims

Please complete the following form and submit it with a cheque payable to:

The Canadian Company of Pilgrims
P.O. Box 57004,
Ottawa, Ontario
K1R 1A1

Only one membership is required per household.
Individual memberships are required for separate addresses.
Please circle the appropriate choice: New / Renewal

Name.....
Address.....
City/Province/Postal Code.....
Country.....
E-mail address.....(circle here if new)
Phone(.....).....
Number of Memberships Required.....X \$10 =.....
Number of Credentials Required.....X \$ 5 =

Number of Badges Required.....X \$ 4 =	Total = \$.....
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Names on Credentials.....
.....
.....
Date of Departure.....

Credentials are available to members only.
Please allow three weeks turn-around time.

