

## ABSTRACT

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Pilgrimages like the Camino de Santiago in Spain date back over a thousand years. The reason pilgrims undergo something as physically and mentally challenging as a long distance, multi day hike varies from person to person. The one thing all pilgrims have in common is that they feel the drive to walk. While we might understand the power and importance of walking, we do not always understand how to make architecture that can enhance and more effectively support that experience. The *refugio* is not a stop along a path, it is part of the path and should be designed to capture the positive aspects of this great experience. When we walk we enter a different state of mind and in order to design for that state we have to understand the Pilgrimage, the Camino, and why we feel the great desire to walk and be a pilgrim. Ultimately, the design of a *refugio* should complement the experience of walking the Camino.

Architecture for the Pilgrims

By

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## Introduction

What drives someone to begin a pilgrimage can be quite different for each person. While in the past, the pilgrimage was often driven by a need to connect with God, today there are as many people walking for other, non-religious reasons. Cultures throughout the world have emphasized the importance of traveling by foot, as the act of walking reinforces a connection between the mind and the earth. Each step one takes must be planned. This simple but important task allows the mind to clear and move more slowly, and leads toward a kind of meditative state of being. The pilgrimage is an all-encompassing physical and emotional task. Every part of the day is spent either traveling or preparing for the next day's journey. The pilgrimage becomes the center of your life. While you are on the path your only goal is to find your way to the next town; to find where your next meal will come from. In each town you stay, you become part of their culture for a brief period of time. For a thousand years pilgrims have passed through these towns, and they become as much a part of the town as the cows and chickens. This total change in how you live and think allows for a closer connection with God, yourself, and others. There is something about walking with all your belongings with you that makes the journey so much more powerful. The goal is not to get to Santiago, but to become a pilgrim - it not about who you were before the Camino it is about who you were on the Camino.

# Chapter 1: History of Pilgrimages

## Historical Pilgrimages

The pilgrimage is an act of traveling to a sacred or holy site to pay homage to God. The pilgrimage is tied back to the Old Testament when the Jewish people were exiled from Egypt and forced into the desert before entering the Promised Land. Three times a year the Israelites were to make pilgrimages to the holy city of Jerusalem. Like the Jewish people, Christians found the need to make pilgrimages to the holy city. Mohamed made the act of pilgrimage one of the five pillars of Islam. Traditionally, people would undertake a pilgrimage to, in a way, close the distance between themselves and God. They would hope to accomplish this by the act of traveling to a site that had some significance to their god. The traditional view of pilgrimage is best presented by Wiederkehr:

Pilgrimages have been an important part of religious history throughout the ages. A pilgrimage is a ritual journey with a hallowed purpose. Every step along the way has meaning. The pilgrim knows that the journey will be difficult and that life-giving challenges will emerge. A pilgrimage is not a vacation: it is a transformational journey during which significant change takes place. New insights are given. Deeper understanding is attained. New and old places in the heart are visited. Blessings are received. Healing takes place. On return from the pilgrimage, life is seen with different eyes. Nothing will ever be quite the same again.<sup>1</sup>

These pilgrimages can be to a holy land, a shrine, or to see a relic – this could be the body of a saint or a piece of a holy item that is significant to the church and individual. The traditional pilgrimage is centered on the individual and their journey, while the modern day pilgrimage is focused on the collective experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Raj and Morpeth, 18.

The exact reason someone decides that they must undertake a pilgrimage is unique to that individual, but there are some recurring reasons that one would undergo such a journey. Some of the classic examples of why someone would undergo a pilgrimage are:

- Profession of faith
- Form of punishment (i.e. fixed penalty system operational during the Middle Ages)
- Means of atonement
- Way of acquiring merit
- Opportunity to venerate sacred relics
- Escape from everyday life
- Professional pilgrims (i.e. those completing the journey for others)

These are some of the classic reasons someone would go on a pilgrimage like the Camino de Santiago, but some of these have changed over the years.

### Modern Pilgrimages

There are primarily two ways of viewing a pilgrimage. The first and more traditional definition is when the pilgrim makes a journey to a holy site, with the intention that during his walk he will have time to focus and prepare for the end destination. When he arrives at his destination he will then be closer to God. This type of pilgrimage is classified as a “classic pilgrimage” that is centered on a religious site. This definition is based on the idea that the end goal of the pilgrimage is the most important part, and the time and effort taken to get there is a secondary element. The second definition of a pilgrimage, classified as a “transit pilgrimage,” is a secular pilgrimage where those undertaking the journey are not doing it for holy means. As a result, the journey to the site is the primary goal, and the end destination is less important. Both views are valid ways of viewing a pilgrimage and both must be



planned for when trying to understand the modern day pilgrimage, since pilgrims walking the same path can be following either type.

The Camino de Santiago is one of the three big classic Christian pilgrimage routes, but with the large amount of attention that it has received in the last 30 years it has become very popular. This increase in its popularity has caused large numbers of both classic and transit-oriented pilgrims to try and make their way to Santiago. It is important to understand that even though these two groups have different end goals, both have the same primary goal, which is to travel along the Camino. The physical needs of both groups are the same – each pilgrim needs a place to sleep, eat and wash – but their spiritual needs are different.

This is where the design of the *refugio* comes into play as an important part of the pilgrimage. In classic pilgrimage, the *refugio* is a place to stay where pilgrims can rest in order to continue on the journey to Santiago. For the transit pilgrim who is more focused on the everyday journey, the *refugio* is a key part of the pilgrimage – it is a place where pilgrims can interact with each other and enhance their journey. On the Camino you find many pilgrims traveling for different reasons. The *refugio* must be designed for both types of pilgrimage.

## Chapter 2: History of the Camino

The origin of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela dates to the time of Jesus. James (Santiago) the Greater and his brother John were fishermen on the coast of Galilee. The New Testament states that James was the fourth person Jesus recruited to join his Apostles. Before Jesus was crucified, he divided up the world among his Apostles so that they could spread the word of God after his death. James was sent to the Iberian Peninsula (modern day Spain) and traveled as far as Galicia before deciding to return back to the holy land. Upon his return in 44 C.E., he was beheaded, becoming the first Apostle to be martyred. His body was then placed on a boat and sent out into the Mediterranean where it found its way to Galicia. Santiago's disciples then recovered the body and buried him on a hill.

For 750 years the location of Santiago's remains was forgotten. During those years, Christianity spread across the Peninsula. In 813 the Christian hermit Pelayo heard music and saw lights near a small cave, where he discovered and unearthed the remains of Santiago. Soon pilgrims from all over the world started visiting the site, and a city quickly formed around the location of Santiago's remains. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century the Muslims ruled much of the peninsula. In 852 CA, at the battle of Logrono, soldiers attested that they saw Santiago mounted on a white horse leading the Christians to victory, and from then on, Santiago took on even more importance. Thousands started to make their way to visit the remains of James who was now known as Santiago the Apostle and Santiago the Moor-slayer. Pilgrims came from all over the world and for a variety of reasons. Some were moved by a spiritual desire, some sought to profit from the pilgrim trade, some were sentenced to walk the

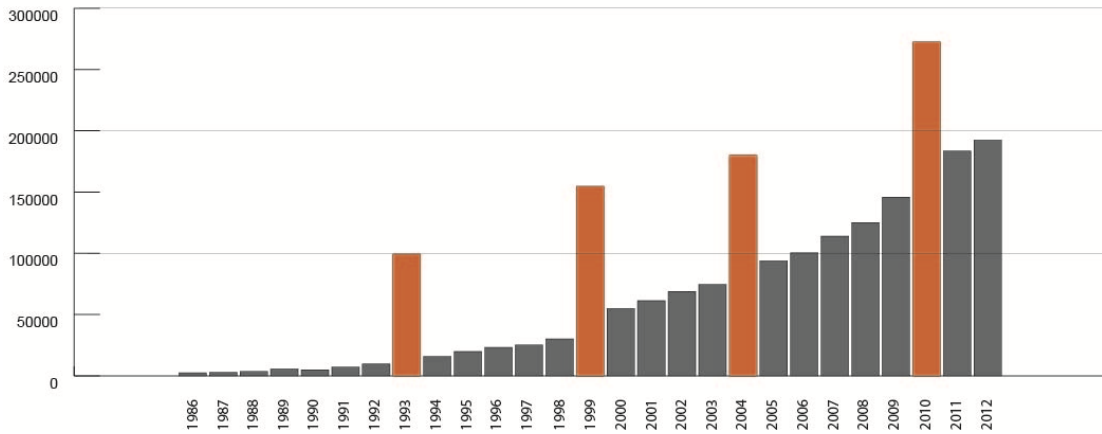
Camino as punishment instead of going to jail, and some walked in the hope that they would be healed or that their village would be saved.

By the mid 10<sup>th</sup> century the pilgrimage to Santiago had become a Christian tradition. Large groups of nobles, churchmen and laypeople from all over Europe were making their way to Santiago. Infrastructure based around the pilgrimage started to emerge along the route. The height of the medieval pilgrimage was during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. During this time the route to Santiago was still dangerous, as pilgrims were often the targets of thieves and bandits. In the late 12<sup>th</sup> century the Order of Santiago was created with the intent to protect the pilgrims on their journey to Santiago. Around that same time guidebooks on how to get to Santiago were being written and distributed.

The popularity of the Camino started to decline as the religious reformations of the Renaissance were taking place. The numbers of pilgrims continued to fall as Spain's political climate shifted over the last 200 years. However, despite these events, the number of pilgrims traveling to Santiago never fully stopped. During years when July 25, Saint's Day, falls on a Sunday, large numbers of pilgrims make their way to Santiago.

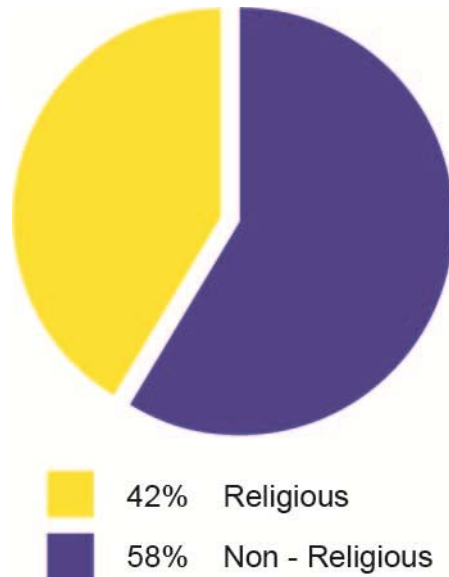
The Council of Europe proclaimed the Camino De Santiago the first European Cultural Route in 1986. It was also named a UNESCO World Heritage Site the same year. In the 26 years since the being declared World Heritage Site the popularity of the Camino has increased each year, going from 2,491 pilgrims in 1986 to 192,448 in 2012 (Figure 1).

## Number of Pilgrims from 1986 - 2012



**Figure 1 – Number of pilgrims from 1986 - 2012**

As the Camino's popularity has increased, the reason for which people undertake the journey has changed from one based purely on religion to one that is done for many reasons (Figure 2). This new 21st century pilgrimage has to adapt to the changing needs of the new pilgrimage culture.



**Figure 2 – Reasons pilgrims walk**

## Chapter 3: Why we Walk

There are many reasons people walk. Walking is a great way to stay healthy, to experience nature, and to interact with others in a different way. All of these things can be done without walking long distances. People can exercise in a gym, drive through nature, and interact with others in local community centers. So the question really becomes why we still walk when we don't always have to. A focus on the act of walking itself can lead to an understanding of the reasons people still choose to undertake it.

People throughout time have found the need to walk as a way to help them focus on important decisions. Cultures separated by great distances have independently realized the benefits of walking. The Australian Aborigines would journey out into the wilderness for periods of time when they would live off the land and return home re-centered weeks or even months later.

So why do we feel the need to walk? What about walking lets us think more clearly? To understand this, we must first examine the physical act of walking. Around the age of one, we take our first steps, and from then on, we walk everyday. In fact, the average American walks between 2000-3000 steps per day, which comes out to a little over one mile per day. By the time we are in our 20s, we have walked thousands of miles. It is so second nature to us that it takes very little mental effort to walk for any length of time on any surface.

When we walk, we must pay attention to two main things – our destination and the surface on which we are walking. These things require a small amount of constant attention, so that we do not fall over or walk into something that could cause

pain. It is this constant attention that allows our minds to slow down and think more clearly. When we have to use just a small amount of brainpower to focus on one simple task, we can keep our mind from wandering. A study done at the university in Plymouth, England, showed that people who doodle during class were able to retain 29% more information than those who just sit there and listened. Like walking, doodling does not take much thought but is a continuous activity. If walking and doodling can help focus the mind, then it is important to study other tactics that people have used to gain a greater sense of focus.

The mind is an intensely complex organ. It is capable of great things when it can be focused on the right subject, but getting it to focus and stay focused takes a great amount of effort. People have been trying to find ways to focus the mind since the beginning of time. One of the best-known ways of focusing the mind is through the act of meditation. Meditation is defined as a “continued or extended thought; reflection; contemplation” (dictionary.com). Meditation is used to allow the mind to clear itself of excess distractions and focus on higher levels of thought. In order to achieve this, those who practice meditation concentrate on things such as the act of breathing and the environment they are in. This focus on what is going on around them allows their minds to center and remain free of extra thoughts.

There are different ways of practicing meditation. The most common way is to sit in a quiet room and focus on breathing and the objects that surround you. Some people hold objects in their hands and either focus on their weight or move them slowly in their hands. A meditative state can also be reached by walking, where one focuses on the physical act to clear and focus the mind. The strategy is the same

between the two forms of meditation in that by focusing the mind on simple tasks, it is possible to clear your mind of excess thoughts.

### Meditation and the Camino

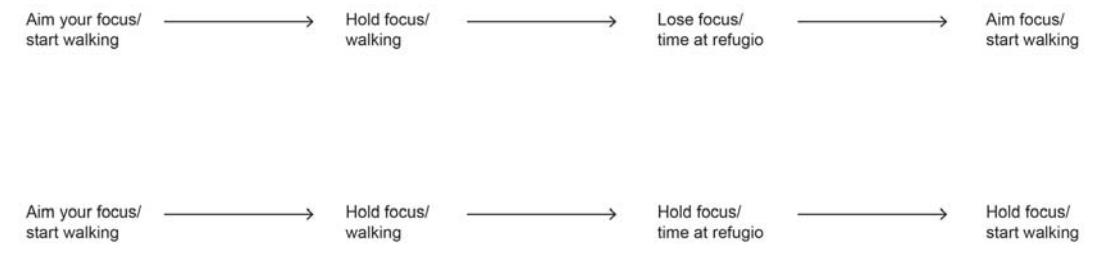
There are many traits that the Camino and meditation have in common. Many who walk the Camino do not need the aid of a walking stick, since the terrain is predominantly flat, but almost every walker has one. Many find that the repetitive action of placing the walking stick on the ground and lifting it up with each step provides something to focus on. This is much like the way monks use beads when they meditate, as they focus on the weight of the beads or the movement of the beads in their hands to quiet the mind.

Those who travel the Camino often travel in groups. Some start the journey in groups while others form smaller groups as they walk the path. It is common to see a group walking together, but rarely do people walk next to each other – they walk just a few feet or even yards apart, yet still consider themselves as part of the group. They arrive at each town together, but for most of the journey they have been walking apart. This can be compared to group meditation where people meditate individually but identify with a larger group.

### Stages of meditation

Walking the Camino allows pilgrims to focus their minds on many things. While walking, things become clear, and we are able to focus on one idea or belief for long periods of time without interruption. It is this meditative effect of walking that attracts many people to the Camino, even though most do not begin the trip with the intention to meditate. Throughout the Camino walk, we go through cyclical stages of gaining and losing this clearer state of mind. Many walk so that they can enter this state, so to lose it or have to keep starting and stopping can diminish the experience. (Figure 3)

There are essentially two places of interaction on the Camino –the path and the *refugio*. It is clear that the path has a great beneficial effects on one’s physical and mental well-being, but it is unclear whether the *refugio* experience goes beyond the physical needs it fulfills. So the question becomes how to combine the positive aspects of the path and *refugio* and to create a continuous experience throughout the whole Camino.

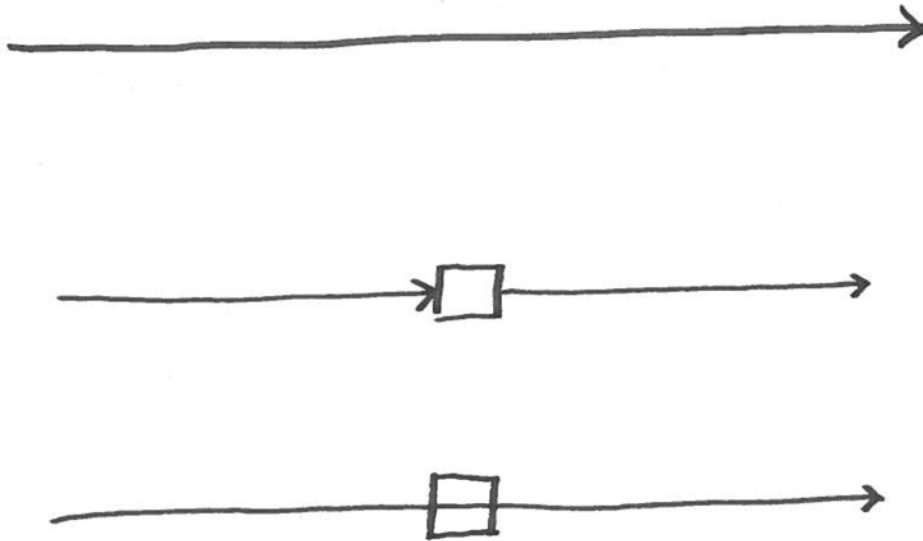


**Figure 3 – Pilgrim focus**



## Chapter 4: The *Refugio*

To understand the effect the *refugio* has on the pilgrimage we must think of the journey as one continuous process (Figure 4). As a pilgrim travels the Camino he or she interacts with *refugios* along the way. The design of the *refugio* today does not typically contribute to the positive aspects of the pilgrimage and often gets in the way of the pilgrim's experience. Instead, the *refugio* should be designed so that it can add to the journey and be a part of the process. In order to design the *refugio* we must first understand the Camino.



**Figure 4 – Path and the Refugio**

The Camino de Santiago covers thousands of miles in Europe and the path goes through hundreds of towns. The modern path of the Camino is well marked and connects towns to one another. In the past the small number of pilgrims would rely on the town's residents to house and feed them on their journey to Santiago, but with the increase in the number of pilgrims walking the Camino each year there has been a

rising need to house the pilgrims in more acceptable accommodations. To solve this problem, townships and other groups have erected special housing for the pilgrims to use so that the townspeople do not have to house them. On the Spanish Camino they are called *refugios* and in France, they are known as *gites*. These temporary housing structures provide a place to cook, sleep, wash, and interact with other pilgrims. Here, pilgrims are able to stay for one night as they travel to Santiago.

There are many paths to Santiago. Pilgrims walk from all over Europe, but the most popular path stretches from France to Spain. Most pilgrims start at the border of France and Spain but many choose to start in Le Puy, France, which is located in the middle of the country. Those who decide to walk from Le Puy notice that the Camino is different in some subtle ways. The major difference besides the language is that the pilgrim accommodations are known as *gites*. On the whole, they function in the same way as a *refugio*, but the numbers of people traveling the Camino in France are much smaller, so therefore the *gites* are much smaller. In Spain, *refugios* must deal with very large numbers of pilgrims everyday, sometimes as many as 300 in locations close to Santiago. In France, the number of pilgrims in a *gite* can be as few as 10, or even fewer in some cases. The small number of pilgrims that a *gite* has to hold allows the owners to provide a greater level of care than those in Spain that must house very large numbers of pilgrims. Many of the smaller French *gites* are run by families that have decided to turn some unused rooms in their large farmhouses into a small *gite*. These *gites* often provide a meal along with a room to stay.

The Camino season runs from April to October, and for these months the system of *refugios* is in operation. Each *refugio* is run differently, but the basics of

how they operate and the interactions between pilgrims and the *refugio* is essentially the same. The *refugio* system is well documented so that pilgrims know which towns have a *refugio* and the capacity it can hold, along with what amenities it has (i.e. cooking facilities, showers, whether it has undergone restoration). The *refugios* are often run by local townspeople who work there either as a way to help the pilgrims or as a way to make money. This difference leads to a sharp contrast in the design and operation of the *refugio*. The intent of the *refugio* is to provide the basic needs of the pilgrim, but as the pilgrim and the Camino have changed from one based solely on religion to one of culture, the design of the *refugio* should also change to reflect this.

#### Factors that Shape a Refugio

Many factors come into play when designing a *refugio*, such as location along the Camino path, size of the town, and even the person operating it, all of which have an effect on how well the *refugio* operates. Most *refugios* are located right off the path but sometimes the *refugio* is located a few miles outside of the town where it is hard for the pilgrims to make the trip to town and back more than once a day. Many of the towns in Spain and France are small farming towns that often do not have many shops or restaurants. The *refugio* that is located in a small town must be designed differently than one located in a larger town. In the large towns or cities pilgrims are not as tied to the *refugio* itself, since they can rely on local shops for food and entertainment. But in smaller towns, the *refugio* becomes the only place that the pilgrims can occupy. As a result, these *refugios* need a place for the pilgrims to get a meal as well as a place where they can buy food and cook it. Since the pilgrims spend most of the day there, the *refugio* must have an area where the pilgrims can gather.

The most influential factor on the design is the person operating that *refugio*. The goal of all *refugios* is to house the pilgrims for one night, but the intention of the operator can vary. There are two types of *refugios* – those that are run by the local town and those that are run for profit. Each type of *refugio* ranges greatly within its own grouping. Those who have walked the Camino more than once notice that the quality of a given *refugio* can change greatly each year.

The first type of *refugios* are those that are run by local town governments. These organizations are often run by small groups of volunteers who take care of the *refugio*. The structure that makes up the *refugio* is often an old building that the town no longer uses, like an old school house or out building. Because these are not for-profit projects, they are often simple structures designed to house as many pilgrims as possible. Some of the people who run these *refugios* see them as just a place for the pilgrims to sleep, and they often are not cleaned or, in some of the worst cases, safe places to stay. Many of those who operate this type of *refugio* believe that the pilgrims should have to suffer on the road to Santiago and therefore do not offer many services beyond the basic needs.

The second type of *refugios* are those run by an individual who is trying to make money on the use of the *refugio*. These types of *refugios* can range from rented rooms in someone's farmhouse to a new structure built specifically to house the pilgrims. This concept of building a *refugio* to make money is a new idea along the Camino. Like the first type of *refugios* run by local town governments, the range in the building's quality can vary greatly. Some people build a large structure and locate it where there is not already a *refugio* in order to get as many pilgrims per day as they

can. Others believe that if they are able to design a *refugio* that has a high level of quality, pilgrims will plan their route in order to stay there.

Whether the *refugio* is run by a town or by someone trying to make a profit, the quality of the *refugio* is determined by the person running it as well as the location and structure of the building itself.

### *Pilgrims' Interactions with a Refugio*

The ritual of arriving in a town is very specific. When a pilgrim or group of pilgrims arrive in a town they first locate the *refugio*, which is often situated right on the path. Most *refugios* do not open until early afternoon. If no one is at the *refugio* when the pilgrim arrives it is common for the pilgrims to place their bags in a line outside the *refugio* as a way to hold their spot. At this point it is important to understand that there is almost no theft of pilgrims' bags in almost any of the Camino towns. Once they have claimed a spot in the *refugio*, most pilgrims set out to resupply their food for the next day or so, since typically they carry no more than 1 or 2 days' worth of food at a time.

Once the *refugio* opens, the operators of the *refugio* will examine the pilgrim's passport – a document that allows the Camino system to keep track of where pilgrims are staying and how many of them are traveling at one time. They are also used as a way to make sure that the pilgrim has traveled far enough in a given day. Any pilgrim can obtain a passport at a *refugio* or the local town hall. Each *refugio* has a unique stamp they use to mark the pilgrim's passport. Once the operator of the *refugio* has reviewed the passport he or she will collect the fee for staying at the *refugio*. This ranges from a voluntary donation to a set cost that ranges between 5-

10 dollars. Once pilgrims have paid, the operator will show them to a bed, in rooms that are sometimes separated by sex but more often than not are shared facilities. This is often the pilgrim's last interaction with the *refugio* operator. There are no set curfews but it is common that everyone is in bed by 8 or 9pm, due to exhaustion from the day's walk and in preparation for the day to come. *Refugios* require pilgrims to leave by 8 or 9 the next morning, and they do not allow anyone to stay more than one night unless they are sick. The rest of the experience with the *refugio* ranges greatly between structures.

### *Programmatic Elements of a Refugio*

The design of the *refugio* can be looked at in two basic ways – those that have been built to house the maximum number of pilgrims and those that have been built in order to add to the overall experience of the Camino. All *refugios* exist to serve the same basic functions – they all must have a place for pilgrims to sleep, eat, and wash, but the way they perform these task can be very different.

A pilgrim's first interaction with a *refugio* is often in some kind of entry space. In this space there are areas where the pilgrim can rest and wait for the operator of the *refugio* to see them. Sometimes this space is outside of the *refugio*; other times it is a small room. The primary reason for a room like this is to make sure that the *refugio* operator can control the check-in process and keep track of how many beds have been filled.

The primary space in almost all *refugios* is the sleeping quarters. These rooms are sometimes divided into men's and women's quarters but more often than not they are mixed. These rooms consist of rows of bunk beds that each pilgrim can claim by

placing his or her bag on the bed. Most of the time these beds consist of just a mattress, and in some of the more modern *refugios* they may include a pillow and blanket. Very rarely would there be clean sheets, so most pilgrims bring some kind of sleeping bag. The number of beds in a room is only limited by the size of the room and the amount of walking space needed to move around. The largest sleeping quarters hold up to 50 pilgrims, and the smallest hold as few as four. These numbers vary greatly based on how close a *refugio* is to other *refugios* and its distance from Santiago.

In most *refugios* there are people in the sleeping area at all times of the day. These are considered quiet areas where pilgrims can nap or read if they want to remove themselves from the common area. Most *refugios* do not have a curfew, but it is not common for pilgrims to stay out late at night – most are in bed by 9pm. In the hottest parts of the summer, pilgrims find that it is easier to walk during the cool morning hours than in the hot afternoon sun, so they are often up and moving by 6am. With the close quarters of the sleeping area it is hard to keep from waking other pilgrims, so once several people are awake and moving, most of the room is as well.

All *refugios* have a place for the pilgrims to prepare food, since many pilgrims cook all of their own meals. This is often just a small kitchen with a few cooking surfaces, so the space is quickly overcrowded and people have to wait in line to even enter the room. The kitchen area is often considered flex space in some of the smaller *refugios* and is even used as a sleeping area in certain circumstances. *Refugios* will not turn a pilgrim away after a given hour or if the distance to the next *refugio* is too far. At times during the busy months, the *refugio* can run out of beds and pilgrims are

given small mattresses and instructed to sleep on the floor. Often the only floor large enough is the kitchen, which can be a problem when other pilgrims start cooking breakfast in the morning.

The last primary element that all *refugios* must have is a place to wash, both yourself and clothes. These rooms often serve dual purposes – clothes are washed in the sink and left out in the sun to dry. The number of showers does not always correlate to the number of beds in the *refugio*, so the lines for the shower can be long and hot water does not always last, if it is available at all. In some *refugios*, these areas are not well-maintained by the staff.

The *refugio* is the center of Camino culture as they are the only places along the Camino specifically built for pilgrims. Only pilgrims can stay in a *refugio*. When on the path, pilgrims tend to space themselves out as many choose to walk alone. The *refugio* is where they have the chance to come back together. The design of the *refugio* should be able to provide a variety of experiences for every pilgrim group. There should be places where pilgrims can gather as well as places where they can feel separated. The *refugio* is a major part of the Camino experience and it should be able to give something back to each pilgrim. The *refugio* becomes your home for one day and each *refugio* should be something the pilgrims remember. Those pilgrims that feel even more connected to the experience should have to chance to give something back or even leave something behind for those that will come later.



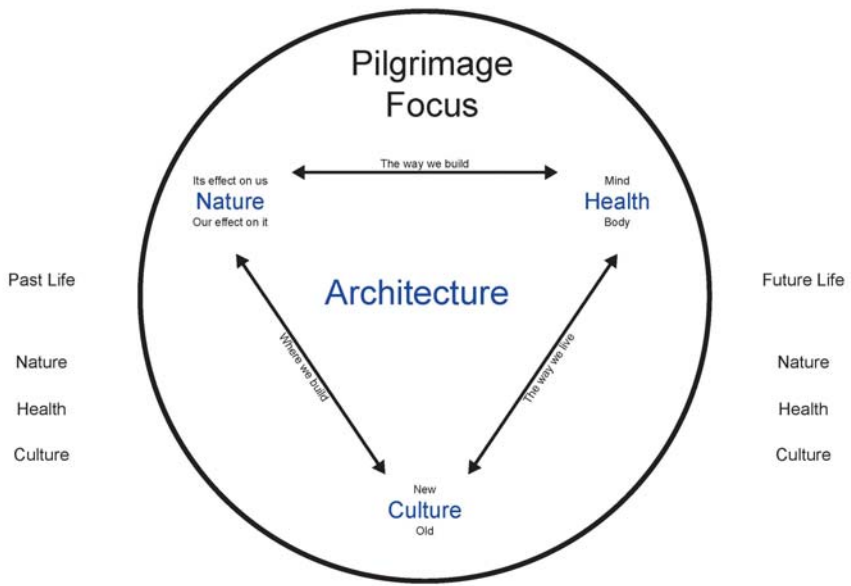
## Chapter 5: The World of the Pilgrimage

If we think about the pilgrimage as a journey we must then think about the journey as a stage in someone's life. When someone undertakes a pilgrimage they leave their past world and all their belongings behind. They enter the world of the pilgrim – a transit world. When they are on this journey they have little to no connection to their past or future life. Since pilgrims carry everything with them at all times they become a moving world, and it is only when they stop at a *refugio* that their world increases in size past that of just the person. Once a pilgrim leaves a *refugio* and continues on the path they return to a solitary world.

Many pilgrims find that since their world has become so much smaller and their lives are based on the just the basic needs of life they find that their mind becomes more aware. This is best decided by Nancy Frey in *Wanderlust*:

When pilgrims begin to walk several things usually begin to happen to their perceptions of the world which continues over the course of the journey: They develop a changing sense of time, a heightening of the senses, and a new awareness of their bodies and the landscape. (Solnit, 51)

The focus a pilgrim gets from the act of walking along with the fact that they have now entered a world different from their life before will cause them to view life with new clarity. They will be able to see how things like culture, health, and nature all have an effect on each other in many different and complex ways. (Fig 5)



**Figure 5 – The pilgrimage state**

## Chapter 6: Aspects of a *Refugio*

The Camino takes place in two phases that happen each day. The first and most well-known is the walking phase in which you travel along the way. This is mostly a solitary phase where pilgrims have little interaction with others. The second phase is the rest phase which takes place mostly in the *refugio* where pilgrims have the chance to interact with other pilgrims if they so choose. The *refugio* becomes the center of the pilgrim community, therefore it must understand and incorporate many of the unique aspects of the Camino and the pilgrimage culture. The study of the Camino itself, as well as the study of the act of pilgrimage in both past and modern times, should inform the design of any *refugio*. These include the following:

### **Historical Connection**

Pilgrimage sites throughout history have been designed in a specific way to reveal elements of their design in a set order with the intent of creating a desired effect. This is done through the use of location, use of materials, threshold, procession and many other architectural techniques.

There are a number of important moments along the Camino where thresholds create a significant moment. The first and one of the most powerful moment is at Le Puy, France, one of the most popular starting points on the French route of the Camino. Here, pilgrims attend the pilgrims' mass in the cathedral of Le Puy where they receive the pilgrim's blessing then exit the cathedral by passing down a set of staircases and out into the city through a massive portal. This moment marks their first steps on the journey to Santiago some 1000 miles away.

The arrival in Santiago has also been planned in a specific way to create a desired effect. The symbolic end of the Camino is when you enter the main square of Santiago itself. Here pilgrims enter the square on its corner through an arched walkway with the cathedral behind them, unseen. They walk into the square and turn around to find the cathedral in all its glory. This act of the cathedral revealing itself all at once creates an amazing final moment.

### **Ability for the pilgrims to feel connected to the path and the refugio**

On the Camino, the path becomes your life. The connection that is created between the pilgrims and the path is strong. It is very common for pilgrims to feel the need to leave something behind. A message, a note, or even a small pile of rocks become ways for them to leave their mark.

There are many moments along the Camino where you find signs and messages that have been left by earlier pilgrims. These can take the form of actual notes or symbolic forms. Some chapels also have the option for pilgrims to leave prayers in the form of notes for other pilgrims. It is a common practice to pile stones into what is known as a cairn. Many believe that this is done as a way of making a small private chapel or used to make a wish, though the true meaning is different for every pilgrim. Moments like this can be found all along the Camino. Some of the traditions like the large pile of stones along the way at Cruz de Hierro, Spain, have great symbolic meaning to many pilgrims. Here, pilgrims often bring stones or notes from home to leave. This tradition dates back before the Camino to the Romans, who would leave a stone as an offering to the gods for safe passage. Now it has become an important event where pilgrims can leave a part of themselves on the path.

### **Connection to the local culture**

The Camino becomes a culture of its own, set in an ever-changing landscape through many different regions. Each region has its own cultural effect on the Camino, which is expressed in the food you eat, the buildings you sleep in, and the people you interact with.

The regions the Camino runs through are often small and remote. These cultures are unique and see little outside visitors besides the pilgrims themselves. The placement of *refugios* are often set within these small towns, and in many cases they are the only source of food and housing for the pilgrims. The *refugio* offers ways for the pilgrims to feel like they are part of the local culture by serving local food cooked in traditional ways, housing them in buildings that are often built of local materials or transformed secondary buildings. Pilgrims find themselves immersed in many different cultures as they move through different countries and regions.

### **Connection to the path**

The modern Camino is very well marked. There is little need for many maps other than those that tell you where the amenities are. *Refugios* are most often very close to the path and it is not hard to find out where to go.

### **Ritual of Food**

The Camino is a path through a populated country where food is not hard to find but is very important. Pilgrims only carry a small amount of food that needs to be resupplied daily. This act becomes a ritual of gathering food for each day.

### **Community**

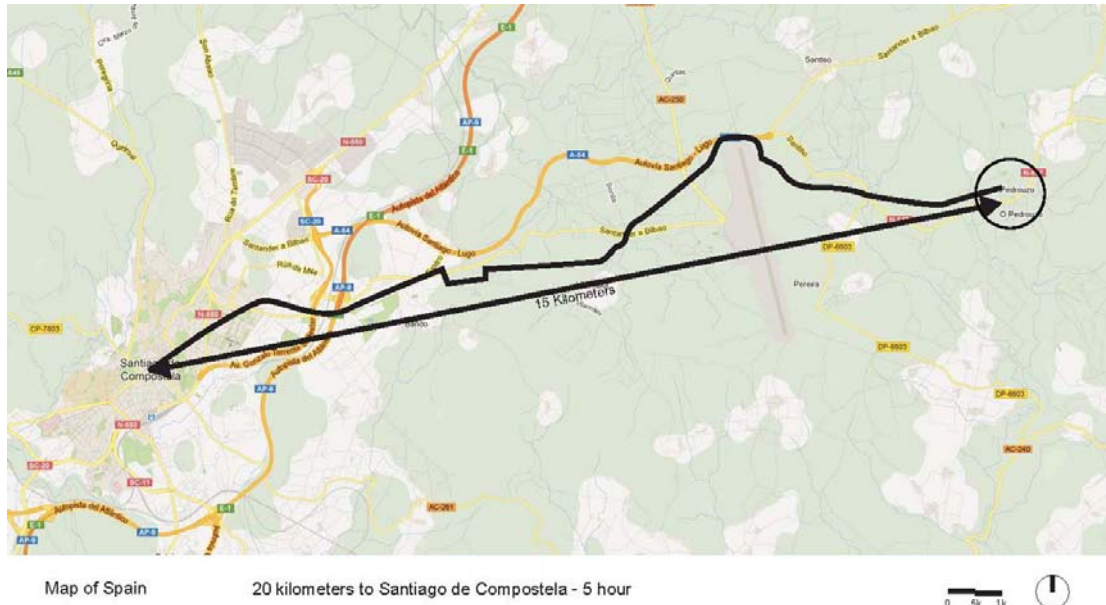
The Camino becomes a community in motion where pilgrims travel together in groups from town to town. These groups grow and shrink as the rate at which people walk varies. On the trail there is little interaction between pilgrims, since most of the time is spent walking alone or with the others you are traveling with. The *refugio* is the one place where pilgrims get to interact with each other. Here pilgrims have the chance to wash their clothes, clean their bags, and write letters to loved ones at home. It becomes your home, and the other pilgrims become part of your family.

## Chapter 6: Site

The site selected for the *refugio* for my thesis project is the small town of O Pedrouzo, Spain, just 15 kilometers outside the final destination of Santiago de Compostela (Fig 3). A pilgrim walking from O Pedrouzo to Santiago along the path itself travels 20 kilometers, which takes around 5 hours. (Fig 6) This town was selected because it is the last place before Santiago where someone can stay in a *refugio*. Before O Pedrouzo there is a town of Santa Irene, but if a pilgrim was to stay there they would have to walk 27 kilometers to Santiago, which would make the final day into Santiago a difficult one.



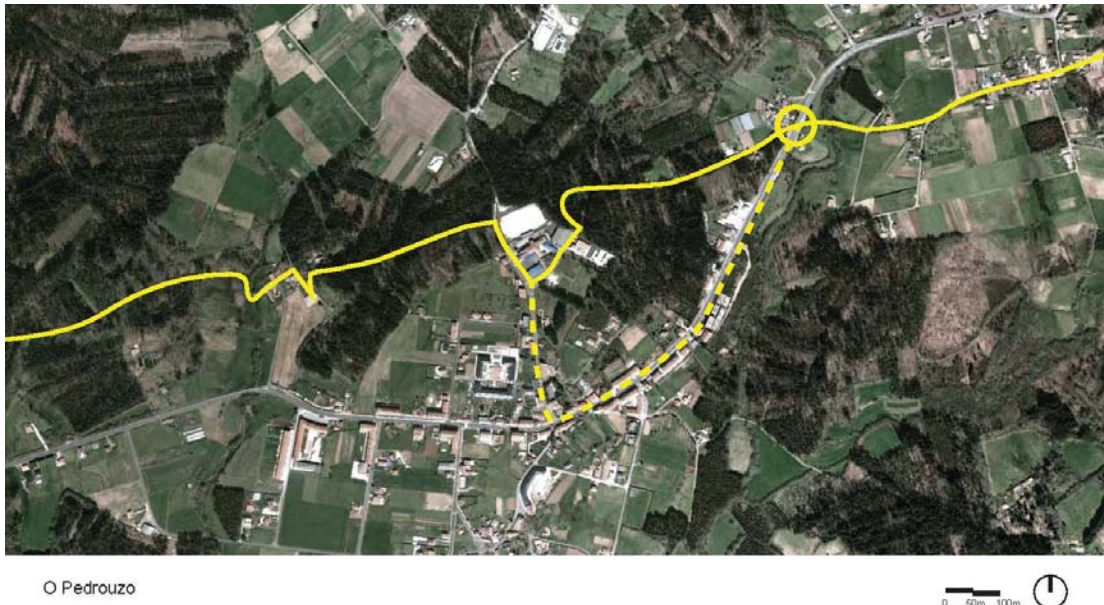
Figure 6 – Distance from Santiago to O Pedrouzo



**Figure 7 – Walking path to Santiago**

Looking at an aerial view of O Pedrouzo we can see that the path of the Camino runs to the north of the main street of the town (Fig 5, solid yellow line). The decision point comes when the pilgrims arrive at the intersection of the path and the N-547 highway (Fig 7 yellow circle) There they have to choose whether to walk into the woods and bypass the town or take the detour along the N-547 which leads into town. If they choose to walk the detour they have to travel an extra kilometer.





**Figure 8 – Map of the Camino through O Pedrouzo (Camino path - Solid yellow path, Detour on the N-547 - dashed yellow line, intersection – Yellow circle)**

The town of O Pedrouzo has 4 existing *refugios* (Fig 8). The largest of these is the government-run *refugio* located to the north of the town. It has 126 beds and a cost of 5 Euros per night. Pilgrims who walk the main route of the Camino will pass right by this *refugio*. If the pilgrims wish to stay in one of the private *refugios* they would have to take the detour along the N-547 into town. The first of these *refugios* is the *Albergue Porta de Santiago* – it has 60 beds and costs 10 Euros per night. It is located right off the N-547. The second of the private *refugios* is the *Albergue Otero*, which has 36 beds and costs 10 Euros per night. It is located right along the bend of the detour path of the Camino. The last and newest private *refugio* is the *Albergue Edreira*, which has 56 beds and costs 10 Euros per night. This *refugio* is not located along the path and any walker would have to be guided to the site by some means other than the standard Camino markings.



**Figure 9 – location of existing *refugios* in O Pedrouzo**

The town of O Pedrouzo is the last place a pilgrim can stay before walking into Santiago. At this point the number of pilgrims walking is at its maximum. With the ever-growing number of pilgrims walking the Camino there will be a continued need to house them at this location.

The path of the Camino separates where the pilgrims have the chance to walk into the town of O Pedrouzo or to bypass the town and continue to Santiago. Once they pass the town they have very limited options of where to stay until they are just 4 kilometers outside Santiago – some 16 kilometers (4 hours walking time) after O Pedrouzo.

The proposed design provides two new *refugios* and support buildings for the town of O Pedrouzo, Spain. The intent is to provide amenities for the pilgrims that the area does not currently have. These amenities will consist of two small structures designed to provide shade and water, as well as two *refugios* that provide places for the pilgrims to stay. By creating several different moments along the route these structures help link together the separated path as well as provide different experiences for pilgrims along the way.

The design of each element is done in an order so that pilgrims will interact with them in a set way. The first moment is a simple fountain that will provide drinking water and a moment to pause in the shade. Located at the point where the path splits, it will inform the pilgrims what lies along each route (Figure 10).



**Figure 10 – The Crossroads**

One option is to travel into the wood and bypass the town of O Pedrouzo, while the second is to travel into the town itself. If they wish to bypass O Pedrouzo they will first encounter a small shade structure in a clearing where they can take a moment to rest before continuing on the path itself (Figure 11).



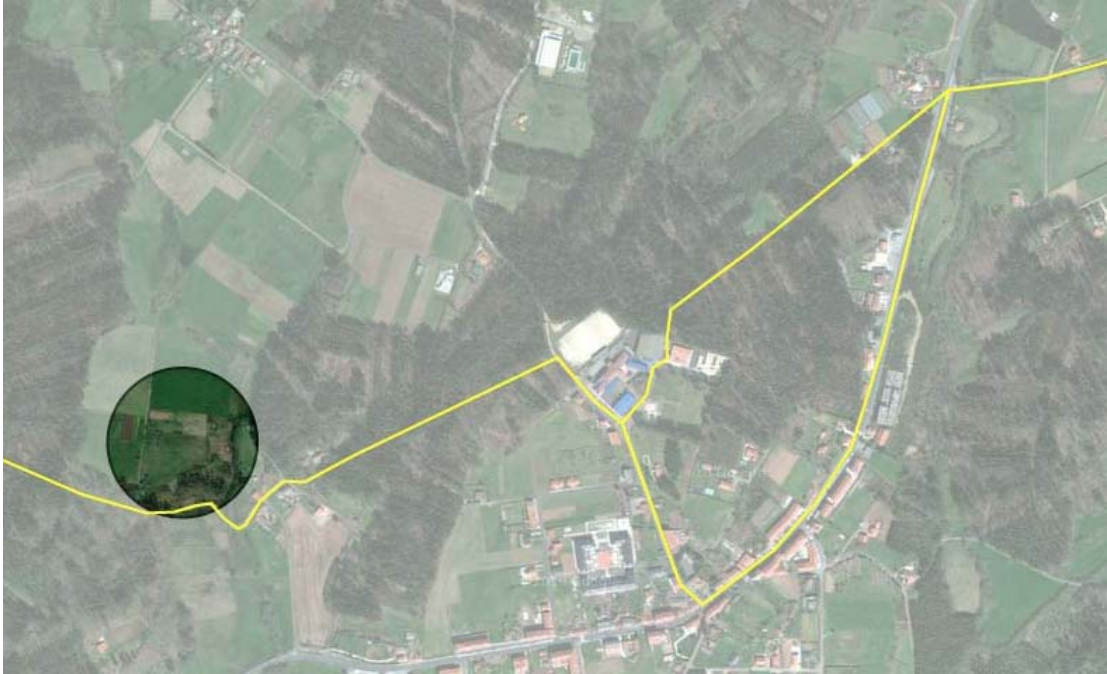
**Figure 11 – The Clearing**

If they continue into O Pedrouzo they will encounter the proposed *refugio*, (Figure 12) tucked away within a series of existing *refugios* and restaurants that line the main street. While the existing buildings provide little options for entertainment or reflection beyond sidewalk bars, the new *refugio* allows the pilgrims to remove themselves from the street and spend their last night as a pilgrim in tranquility.



**Figure 12 – The Town Refugio**

No matter which route the pilgrims choose, as they continue on the path either after encountering the clearing structure or after spending the night at the town *refugio*, they will encounter a hidden meadow that holds the large *refugio* complex (Figure 13). This large *refugio* is design to incorporate many of the unique aspects of the Camino. Here pilgrims will have the chance to spend their last night as a part of a remote pilgrims community. Each of the qualities used in the other sites will be incorporated into this comprehensive design for the meadow *refugio*.



**Figure 13 – The Meadow Refugio**

Once pilgrims arrive in Santiago their pilgrimage is over. That is why this *refugio* is located one day's walk from Santiago itself. Pilgrims will have the chance to experience their final day in a setting designed to enhance the qualities of this unique journey.

## Design

To accomplish the goals of this thesis four sites were selected to create options of different experiences along the Camino. Through the design process each site developed its own identity. The site located at the cross roads where the path of the Camino splits is known as the Fountain. The site in the town center of O Pedrouzo is named the Town. The site in the woods is the Clearing and the last and largest site is the Meadow.

The first location known as the Fountain was designed to provide a stopping point for the pilgrims before they head into the town or along the path that travels through the woods. Here they have the chance to rest and gather some fresh drinking water.

The pilgrims that choose to walk into the woods and not into the town will soon come across the site known as the Clearing. A small shade structure provides them with the chance to rest before continuing on the path itself.

The Town site is designed to give the pilgrims the chance to escape the busy streets of O Pedrouzo. Here, pilgrims have the chance to spend their last day separated from the street and more connected to nature.

The Meadow is a *refugio* designed to house a large number of pilgrims with the capability of providing them with all the needs a pilgrim has, as well as highlighting many different qualities of the Camino itself.



**Figure 14 - Perspective of each site (top left - fountain, top right - clearing, bottom left - town, bottom right - meadow)**

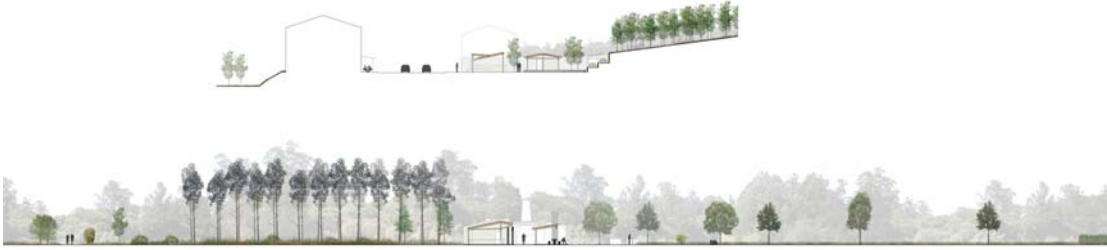




**Figure 15 - The Meadow**



**Figure 16 - The Town**



**Figure 17 - Site sections (top – town, bottom – meadow)**

## Conclusion

Existing *refugios* today do little to enhance the experience pilgrims have along the way, so the goal of this thesis was to capture the qualities of the Camino and use them to create a *refugio* complex that would add to the pilgrim's journey. This thesis proposes that through careful design, minimal cost, and the use of local building materials and labor, a new model of *refugios* can be designed to provide much more than the physical needs of the pilgrim community. Understanding the unique qualities of the Camino throughout its rich history, as well as the path as it is today provided insight into what the future can hold.

The design was generally received well and the use of local materials was much appreciated. Some of the critics liked the fact that this project looked like it could be built and would possibly work while some believed that it could be taken a little further in the design of the buildings themselves. There was some interest in seeing what it was like inside some of the buildings. The question of hierarchy in the buildings in the meadow site was raised, but the underlying intent of the design was focused on making "soldier buildings" that would help the experience of the Camino and not try to take away from the power of the Cathedral of Santiago at the end of the Camino.

Overall the project progressed well and many of the goals were realized. With more time it would be nice to get into the design of each building in more detail as well as to further pursue some of the design aspects. It would have also been nice to have tried this design in another region or country with sites located along the Camino such as in France. The goal of designing a place that would provide many of

the qualities of the Camino was very challenging and is something that I would love to continue working on in the future.

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