



What the Psychic Told the Pilgrim: A Midlife Misadventure on Spain's Camino de Santiago

Jane Christmas

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In this wickedly funny account, Jane Christmas describes her pilgrimage along Spain's infamous Camino de Santiago de Compostela in celebration of her fiftieth birthday. Somehow she finds herself leading fourteen squabbling middle-aged women until she inadvertently loses them and sets out on her own. That is when her real adventure begins, as she battles loneliness, hunger, and exhaustion.

But she also encounters charming villages, thickly forested vales, and more compatible pilgrims, including an enigmatic fair-haired man, whose appearance has been predicted by a psychic. By journey's end, Christmas has discovered that it is the detours of life that leads us to our heart's desire.

What the Psychic Told the Pilgrim: A Midlife Misadventure on Spain's Camino de Santiago Details

Date : Published August 9th 2007 by Greystone Books

ISBN : 9781553652403

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Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Travel, Nonfiction, Biography Memoir, Cultural, Canada, Adventure

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From Reader Review What the Psychic Told the Pilgrim: A Midlife Misadventure on Spain's Camino de Santiago for online ebook

Nikki Bouchier says

If this book didn't already have me at its title, then it certainly had me in the first paragraph: ?? "Impulse is intuition on Crack. If Intuition is the prudent angel who carefully directs your spirit, then Impulse is its mischief-making twin. The "imp in impulse."

I want to start by saying that you shouldn't read this book as a travel guide. If you're thinking of going on the voyage then do it! Don't let this person's experience taint your reality. She didn't mean it as a travel guide, she meant it as a journal of her own sabbatical. And don't mistake her brutal honesty for whining when she describes the trials and tribulations of taking yourself out of your comfort zone and stepping into the unknown.

?? This is from the perspective of a woman turning 50 and having initially fallen into leading a group of middle-aged women along this pilgrimage. The woman telling her tale is a bit pessimistic and quite intolerant of stupidity and shallowness.

The beginning of her voyage includes the challenge of leading this pack of women she progressively disdains. ?? Before she even leaves her home for the unknown she meets with a psychic and she tells her many things that unravel accordingly throughout the entire story. ?? She continues to face challenges of rugged terrain, unpleasant weather, blistered feet and other misc. injuries. Loud and sleepless nights in tight sleeping quarters, creepy men and an unkempt, imageless way of life. ?? These are supposedly the sole reasons why everyone embarks on this pilgrimage, for the spiritual journey one finds in self-recognized martyrdom.

?? She constantly struggles throughout the entire journey with the urge to give up and find logic and reason for the path she has chosen. ?? Although I personally would not be interested in this particular path of self-discovery and soul-searching I found her way of writing extremely poetic and in that cynical manner in which I love to immerse myself.

?? I always love when a story can leave you with a feeling of completion, yet open to some interpretation. Full circle yet joined to other circles. A fine balance between pessimism and optimism. ?? For me the closing sentence was just as capturing as the opening sentence, causing me to close the book with a snap, a smile and a satisfied sigh of content.

Jacquie says

Seldom have I disliked a narrator as much as I disliked Jane Christmas. Suffice it to say she deserved all the misery she encountered on the Camino!

Peggy says

I am walking on the Camino in two months (only part of it!), so I was interested in what this Canadian author had to say. It's a humorous account and quite honest. I see there are a number of criticisms of the author by other Goodreads readers, but I think it takes courage to say frankly (knowing it may not be politically correct) how you react to situations and people. It's true she whined sometimes and was not always tolerant of others, but I appreciated her honesty. It gave me an enjoyable reading experience and a background for what's to come.

Rochelle Bugeja Magri says

The writing itself hooks you as it is smart, funny and gripping, however, the camino experience as told by the author was highly off-putting to me, in view of the pessimistic approach conveyed. Being a resident of Spain, I was somewhat disappointed at how little the author seemed to appreciate the Spanish culture and temperament and the idyllic beauty of the typical ancient villages, or at least her appreciation thereof did not come across vividly in the book. Suffice it to say, I count it as a demotivator to embark on the camino.

John says

Balanced writing - informal without being obnoxious.

Virginia Pulver says

I walked the Camino myself in Apr/May 2009. I've read widely about the Camino and I've read many books about it (both before my own pilgrimage and afterwards). I kept thinking this book would get better, but when I finished my read, I literally tossed the book across the room. I was disappointed. I would not recommend this Camino book to others. I enjoy humor, but it just did not come across in this book. Nor were there any redeeming factors...just a lot of superficial whining. There are some very good books (both humorous and informative) about the pilgrimage to Santiago; this is not one of them.

"Ginn"

In Sunny SC

Peregrina 2009

Jo-anne says

After reading some of the comments on Goodreads I was prepared to give this book a pass but I am really pleased that I gave it my own read. I have been intrigued with Spain's Camino for several years now and have spoken with pilgrims, read and watched different works. Each provides its own interesting perspective. Jane is a voice that I connected with as the thought of having a group of women join me on such an undertaking has absolutely no interest to me. This was reinforced after attending a Camino talk at our local MEC store. When I mentioned that I had come to terms with the fact that my health would not support a total commitment to walking and that I was pleased that there are other creative options when if going gets too tough, the Purists in the group made me feel very inadequate. Woman Purists... I should note. The men did

not feel the need to provide unasked for comments. I can say with some certainty I will not take on the Camino Frances but still hold onto a small ray of hope for the Portugal Camino. "Besides, we are pilgrims, not martyrs, right? A pilgrimage is not about punishment but about making an intentional decision to look at the world with fresh awareness and to consider your place in it. A pilgrim defines her own pilgrimage; maps are guidelines, not prison sentences. If I walked every single step of the Camino's route, it would not make me a better pilgrim or a better person. It could make me a superhero, but I had already traveled that road and found it to be highly overrated."

I found her honesty refreshing and her humour entertaining. I liked that finding love on the Camino, although what must be a huge story for her as she has moved to Britain with her "fair-haired man", did not become a central theme of the book. Some passages really resonated with me. "It made me pine for the comfort and the familiarity of my ordinary but happy life. I always seemed to be looking toward greener pastures for answers to questions I couldn't even articulate, when in fact, my own pasture was perfectly fine, perfectly beautiful." Ulteya....Onward.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-bhx...>

Barbara says

Just finished walking from Burgos to Ponferrado with one taxi ride when my 17 year old daughter was too sick to walk. We were part of an Anglican church group of eight. I am also just a year shy of fifty and have three children 15, 17 and 21. My oldest daughter invited me to join the group with her when she had only one course left to finish high school and a very accommodating biology teacher. So we added mother/daughter dynamics to our walk. I found I empathized with the author in many ways: the desire, joy and loneliness of walking alone, the spiritual struggle within oneself, the working self and being true to values - having integrity when it is not valued, moving beyond a self identity as mother to ...something else I'm still figuring out. And for me it was also the wife thing -beyond parenting together and forward to a renewed partnership that allows for the individual to thrive after 25 years. I loved being all about me and the walking. Jane captures so much. The pain involved, for me it was blisters and shin splints. The naked bike riders - my daughter slept beside them on the dining room floor when the Auberge in Boadilla was filled to every available space - and it was a very hot night. There were a few differences, I found the people in Spain to be lovely, friendly and unfailingly helpful. The food was almost always delicious and the wine complimented every supper. I still indulge in cafe con leche and toast with peach jam for breakfast. Thank you for your story Jane Christmas. I wish I had your ability to write so beautifully. I laughed and I cried and I remembered and this morning I went for a long walk - to pray and to think. My daughter and I are planning our next Camino to complete another portion of the Way of St. James.

Ali Boom says

I'm planning on going on Camino this fall and read this book as a funny prep book for what is to come. I couldn't get over all the complaining. She also constantly contradicts herself. Example: She's borderline volcanic when she's with the group she organized to walk with, but when she 'loses' them, aka ditches them, she whines about being alone. She has this 'entitled to a miracle' attitude that I find revolting. 'Ooooh the cathedral wasn't what I imagined. St. James didn't speak to me...'

barf

And she writes as if she'll do anything to get to the end, even if she's crawling to Santiago to Compostela.
But she forgets to stop and smell the roses, and make real connections.
But when she means a man, suddenly she's seeing everything with whimsy.

barf

I will give props to Jane Christmas on her writing style. She made me laugh out loud through some of the stories.

Tinika says

What the *Psychic Told the Pilgrim* is a bit of a mess. I see other reviewers have talked about the charm and humour of the writing but did they read the whole book? The reason that I am asking this is that the book did, indeed, start off charming and humorous. Jane Christmas relays her reasons for walking Spain's Camino de Santiago, her preparations for this month long walk and her visit to the psychic which casts just the right amount of foreshadowing to create suspense. All in all, this first section is well done.

Once in Europe, the writing starts slipping, becoming more disorganized as the book progresses. Another personality emerges, that of the world's most disagreeable group leader/pilgrim. Christmas is whiny and blames her emotional highs and lows on others, especially when they are not around. She does not like her travelling companions but does she feel this creates the tension needed for a good story? Even if so, it is handled as sporadically as everything else in this section. Woven in with her woes with her group are her woes with the terrain, woes with the refugios and woes with her life in general. I detected no personal growth. She occasionally breaks her grievous litany to haphazardly throw in something about the Camino's history or a legend associated with it but there is not enough information for a good travel read. All in all, I found a lack of focus.

The final few chapters are the worst; here she does not seem to remember what she writes from one page to the next. She felt nothing from the Camino; she felt so much it would take years to process. Finisterre lacked the hospitality of the Camino; then what was all that belly-aching about sullen and disinterested refugio attendants? On seeing Santiago for the first time, she mentions "A pilgrim's newly acquired traits of humility and tolerance." This takes the prize as any flashes of humility were fleeting and tolerance failed to make an appearance at all. What was she referring to?

A book like this, a pilgrimage, should be a work of love, thoughtful and crafted. To be fair, it did send out that vibe in the beginning but by the end it felt like a bunch of pages hurriedly slapped together to meet a publisher's deadline.

Sueheartist says

"A pilgrim life is largely an artificial one; you exist in a bubble of camaraderie, pain, & poverty of shared purpose." Jane sums up her experience in that statement very nicely. Her dismay of the church celebration in Santiago reminded me of a procession in Italy; the adornment of money and garish parading is quite the contrast to the individual whom the celebration is dedicated to; here it is St. James. St James was a humble servant of God. The walk could be anywhere but unfortunately the popularity of this walk has taken on quite the consumerism in the local communities and the Catholic church. I am glad I read this book because my curiosity to participate in such a venture has been satisfied.

Jaimie says

There is NO reason this book should have been written. This is a long, boring, irritating, entitled and often excruciatingly negative account of the Camino.

Doreen Richards says

I picked the book up 10 months ago and as it did not "grab" me put it aside thinking it was probably my mood at the time. Picked it up again two days ago and decided no, just not worth my time.

Deborah Gray says

I don't actually have any plans to walk the Camino, so I came to this book with no preconceived notions. I didn't expect a travel guide; I expected a memoir. It didn't disappoint. Jane's 500 mile midlife walk of the Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James) included hiking up the Pyrenees and a personal and seemingly unvarnished account of a range of encounters, beautiful and mundane scenery, difficult personalities, sweet strangers, deprivation and physical challenges. Interspersed with cafe con leche and wine, both of which appear to be a Camino staple.

It wasn't a walk in the park and it wasn't at all a gloomy whine either, which some reviewers felt to be the case. It felt truthful and accurate, and just as Shirley MacLaine told a unique story of her journey, this was Jane Christmas's own and very personal experience.

The memoir was written with deft skill and wry humour in a forthright style. At times it was laugh-out-loud funny and at other moments I cringed for her. She wasn't all that happy on much of the journey, but as far as I'm concerned she showed remarkable restraint in not running screaming from her female companions the first opportunity she got!

Jacquelyn says

What the Psychic Told the Pilgrim was exactly what I needed! At the end of the school year (I'm a teacher) I get the travel bug, and this book has helped me scratch that itchy (slightly!). The story holds the same tone as

Christmas's other books. If you've read any of her other novels and enjoyed it then this book is for you! If you haven't read one of her novels and you love a good travel story then I'd highly recommend this book. Christmas goes to Spain to walk the Camino de Santiago. The story is full of spiritual musings, hilarious moments, and good detail of what it would be like to venture out on your own. It's the perfect balance of thoughtful without being daunting to read. I can't recommend her books enough. Happy reading!
