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WMU Undergraduate Honors Thesis Abstract

“Following the *Flechas*:” The *Camino de Santiago* and its Inner Workings

For my thesis, I walked the *Camino de Santiago*, a Catholic Pilgrimage route in Northern Spain. The 450-mile journey from Pamplona to Santiago de Compostela took twenty-four days with approximately twenty miles per day. Named after Saint James, an apostle of Christ that spread Christianity to a Muslim Spain near AD 40, the *Camino* once functioned for pilgrims to trek to Santiago to pay homage to the remains of Saint James supposedly buried in the cathedral.

Today, the *Camino* holds a very different meaning to many of its travelers. People choose to walk for a myriad of reasons: to lose weight, to find Enlightenment, to spend time with family, to change one’s ways, to experience the adventure, to rid oneself off a former life, to challenge oneself, to grow closer to nature, and much more. Both participant observation and interviewing travelers on the *Camino* shed light on these reasons to introduce the *Camino* to WMU students and people in the Kalamazoo community as a way to find oneself in the world. This thesis follows my journey chronologically and shares the stories of other pilgrims on the path. Conclusions include my own personal findings as well as what I learned from others.