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*Walk in Beauty: Pilgrimage of El Camino de Santiago, Spain*

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*“...even before you sat down with them,  
broke bread and drank wine,  
wiped the wind-tears from your eyes:  
pilgrim they called you again. Pilgrim.”*

*---David Whyte, from Camino*

### *A Brief History of El Camino*

El Camino de Santiago, or “The Way of Saint James,” is the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in north western Spain. According to legend, Santiago is the place containing the remains of the apostle, Saint James the Elder. The Camino has been in use as a Christian pilgrimage for over 1,000 years, utilizing existing Roman roads and ancient trade routes. It was one of three important Christian pilgrimages routes during the medieval period. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to Rome, and to Santiago de Compostela would earn the pilgrim plenary indulgence, or freeing of the soul’s sins.

Seventh and eighth century documents suggest that St. James the Elder spent a number of years preaching on the Iberian Peninsula before returning to Jerusalem where he was beheaded in 44AD by Herod Agrippa I.

His remains were gathered by his followers, placed in a stone boat and guided by the angels to a place called Iria Flavia, south of what is known as Santiago de Compostela – St. James in the Field of Stars. His remains were forgotten until the 9th century when a hermit, Pelagius, investigated a ‘field of stars’, a celestial beam of light illuminating a small knoll, and discovered the remains of a holy person. Soon after this discovery, the King of Asturias, Alphonso II, authenticated the remains and found them to be those of Santiago. This apostle became the patron saint of Spain.

Today, El Camino is one of the most famous pilgrimages in the world!

