



## MANIFESTO of VILLAGRANCA del BIERZO

In Villagraanca del Bierzo on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2014, at the International Forum “The Legacy of Elias Valina” organized by the International Fraternity of the Camino de Santiago (FICS):

After analyzing present problems on the Camino de Santiago, participants from South Korea, Mexico, Japan, the Philippines, Portugal, United States, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Argentina, and Spain -- investigators, historians, hospitaleros, members of Jacobean associations, pilgrims, and lovers of the Camino -- together in open, fraternal and democratic assembly and united by our common love and service to the Jacobean pilgrimage,

We have come to the following conclusions on the following themes.

### PROPOSALS for SECTION 1: CREDENTIALS & COMPOSTELAS

We propose and are in agreement:

The credential is not a personal souvenir, it is a passport to the Camino. It identifies the holder as a pilgrim. This implies a series of rights (primarily access to the albergue network) but also responsibilities: proper behavior and cooperation on the trail and in the pilgrim albergues, helping to maintain the albergues with donations, labor, and material support; solidarity with other pilgrims on the Camino, and actively keeping the trails clean and clear, as a marks of respect for the Jacobean legacy. The credential shall not be sold as a commercial product. (Charges levied should cover only the costs of producing the item, or part of a completely voluntary donation to help the institution issuing the credential.) Credentials shall not be issued indiscriminately without

- A clear, verbal explanation to the pilgrim of what the Camino de Santiago is, and what a pilgrimage is.
- An agreement, consented-to and signed by the pilgrim as part of the credential, to respect the values of the Camino.

The entities that issue credentials should provide this agreement in languages understandable to the pilgrim, and provide their sello with the pilgrim’s signature.

- We ask that the credential only be issued properly stamped and as an altruistic offer by Jacobean associations, parishes, organizations and institutions willing to undertake the above steps.



The COMPOSTELA: It is clear that the final 100 kilometer hike required by the See of St. James to obtain the Compostela document, abetted by the Autonomous Community of Galicia, is the principal cause of the overcrowding, devaluation, vulgarity and confusion that reigns in these stretches of the Jacobean trails. Disingenuous promotions identifying only these last (Galician) kilometers as “The Camino de Santiago” means that now more than 35% of pilgrims walk the least number of kilometers required, while the thousands of pilgrims who have come much longer distances are disenchanted and disheartened when given the same recognition.

Limiting the Camino to Galicia throws aside the universality of the Camino de Santiago and the many historic trails that lead to the apostle’s shrine.

For this we ask the authorities of the Cathedral in Santiago:

Consider increasing substantially the kilometers required for the Compostela; AND include on the Compostela document the place where the pilgrim began his journey, thus acknowledging the achievement of the long-distance pilgrim.

## SECTION 2: Defense of Camino Heritage, Defining and Way-marking Camino Trails

In recent years we have seen multiple threats to the patrimony and identity of the Jacobean trails, not the least of these on the Camino Frances, a European Cultural Itinerary and a UNESCO Patrimony of Humanity site. It is easy to assume these incursions are the result of incompetent international law enforcement, but they are common along all the Camino paths, on itineraries with and without designations or legal protections. Building projects and demolitions of all kinds are undertaken on historic pathways without so much as an environmental impact study, much less construction of alternative pathways for pilgrims. Also lamentable is the loss of innumerable historic buildings along these trails, gone to ruin in plain sight of the administrators responsible for preserving them.

For these reasons we agree to:

1. Support the petition of ICOMOS-Spain to include the Camino Frances on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites in Danger.
2. Demand the enforcement of laws already on the books that defend and protect the itineraries known historically as “Camino de Santiago.”



3. Solicit true protections of the visual landscape of the Camino de Santiago as part of our heritage, the iconic landscapes as well as historical, architectural and artistic treasures.
4. Prohibit pavement of trails used by pilgrims, and in cases where it is absolutely necessary, provision of a parallel footpath.
5. Create secure passages in places that present a danger to pilgrims, with particular attention to road crossings, railway crossings, blind curves, etc.
6. Procure and dedicate a “1% for Culture” surcharge on public works in Spain not just to finance monuments and playgrounds, but to reduce the impact of major infrastructure projects on the landscape.
7. Create a public department dedicated to preserving Jacobean heritage.
8. Reactivate the Jacobean Council.
9. Offer pilgrim discounts at museums, churches, monasteries, and other historic or artistic sites.
10. Solicit maximum support from European institutions for the conservation and maintenance of the heritage we hold in common.

On the matter of historic legal designation:

It is essential we ensure the Jacobean Itineraries with the most historical claims as pilgrimage ways receive proper legal designations and protection.

On the matter of Way-marking:

Although the yellow arrow is the icon of the Jacobean pilgrimage in all the world, a chaos of markings and signs litter the pathways on the Way of St. James. We propose:

1. Unifying the way-marking of the Camino de Santiago throughout Europe, based on the European Council guidelines. Wherever possible the yellow arrow will be used.
2. Creation of specific rules or laws to determine who is authorized to erect waymarks; with fines or other sanctions for those who “freelance.”
3. We propose the authorized way-markers be the same people who have always maintained the Way: Associations, confraternities and Jacobean entities without profit motives.



### SECTION 3: Tourism and Pilgrimage

The explosion of the leisure culture on the Camino de Santiago has multiplied the problems already present on the principal routes: the overbuilding, vulgarity, and loss of the unique spirit and values historically associated with the Jacobean Way. Public administrations are to blame for their disingenuous campaigns designed to sell the camino as a “tourism product.”

We agree and propose:

1. Reorient institutional touristic campaigns to build respect for traditional pilgrimage values.
2. Urge associations, confraternities and camino-related organizations to better explain camino values and behavior to new pilgrims.
3. Initiate rigorous inspection of all services directed at pilgrims.
4. Support and organize programs to open and secure the churches, hermitages and monuments along the pilgrim paths.

### SECTION 4: Hospitality and Welcoming the Pilgrims

Hospitality is, without a doubt, one of the fundamental elements that sustain the Camino. But owing to the absence of common regulations, a variety of privately owned, fixed-price “pilgrim albergues” are proliferating along the Way.

We propose:

1. To begin a movement to standardize existing rules on pilgrim accommodation.
2. To change the designation of private albergues to avoid confusing them with traditional non-profit albergues. We can call them, for example, “Posadas de Peregrinos,” or “Hostales de Peregrinos.” Albergues with a traditional and altruistic welcome, attended by volunteer hosts, are the foundation and the soul of the Camino. As such, they merit special protection and distinction.
3. To offer preference in all institutional and traditional albergues to pilgrims traveling on foot, as well as long-distance hikers. Albergues operating under this designation will not accept reservations.
4. To configure, promote, and support a stable network of albergues and hospitality options for winter pilgrims.



5. To adjust and rationalize the opening and closing hours in every kind of pilgrim albergue on the Camino to ensure hospitaleros and pilgrims get enough rest.

The Camino is here for walking and enjoying, not for racing from albergue to albergue, standing in queue from 9 a.m. to get a bed for the night. Respect and solidarity should come first on the Jacobean Way.

ULTREIA E SUS EIA