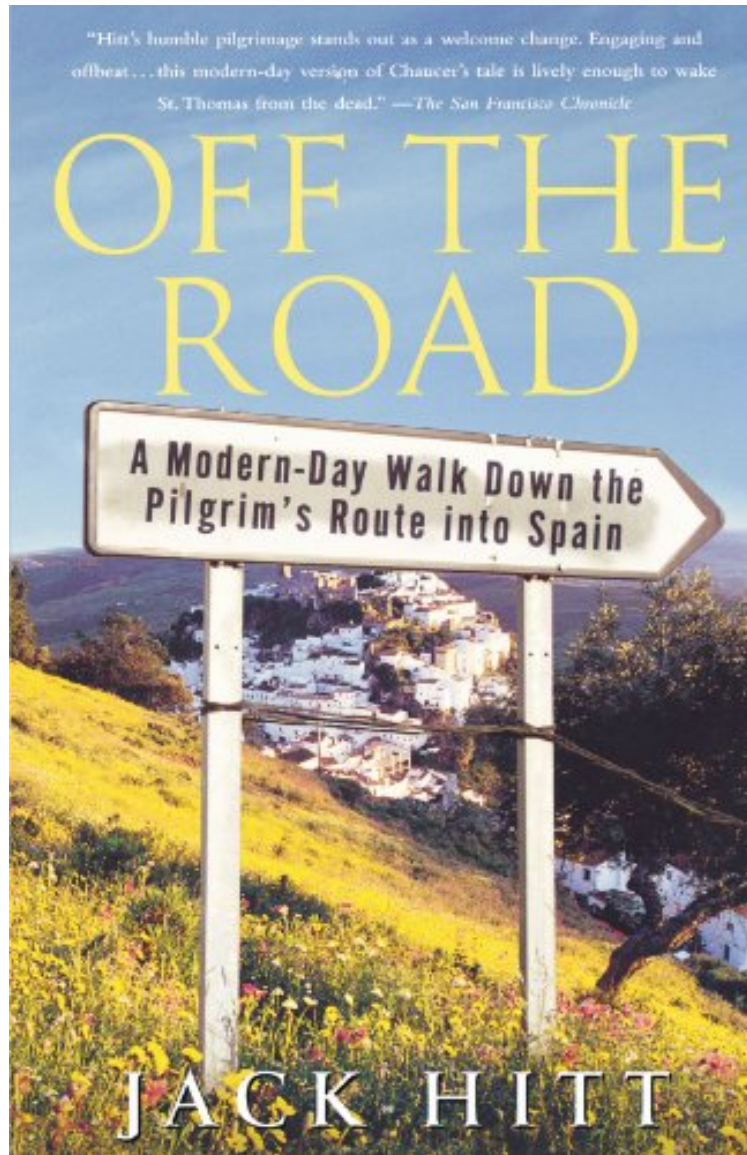


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Off the Road: A Modern-Day Walk Down the Pilgrim's Route into Spain

Jack Hitt

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Jack Hitt : Off the Road: A Modern-Day Walk Down the Pilgrim's Route into Spain before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Off the Road: A Modern-Day Walk Down the Pilgrim's Route into Spain:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Funny, wry and thoughtfulBy LibbyI enjoyed this book very much.

The stories of life on the Camino all illustrate the struggles, not just of the work of walking the Way, but of life itself. The revelations the author expected didn't drop down from heaven at the moment he knelt at the feet of the statue at the end of the walk. They came bit by bit as he incorporated the small lessons of his Camino experiences into the life of his family. Thus he learns that all of life is a pilgrimage, a long journey with a destination in mind. Then there are all the little detours along the long, long metaphorical road. The people Hitt meets along the Camino are a microcosm of life back at home. There's the loud, uncouth, friendly pain in the neck. The sanctimonious harpy who declares just who is and is not "a true pilgrim," despite never having walked the Camino herself. The mule. The heedlessly self-involved schmuck who never learned the value of all-for-one-and-one-for-all. The control freak. The I'll-handle-this assuredness of a mother figure. We all know people like this. These characters are universal. This book was surprisingly funny and peppered with interesting historical background stories that tie together the experiences of both the ancient and the modern pilgrim. Now that I know the characters I'll re-read it again soon to see what's changed.

0 people found the following review helpful. An inspiring, informative irreverent travelogue about the 1,000-year-old pilgrimage that is the Camino de Santiago. By Jeff Titelius If you loved the movie "The Way," then this book is a must read since many of its anecdotes inspired some of my favorite scenes in the movie. Written in 1994, "Off the Road..." recounts author Jack Hitt's pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago--a 500-mile or 800 kilometer journey from Saint-Jean Pied de Port in southwestern France, to Santiago de Compostela in the northwest corner of Spain; a pilgrimage that millions of peregrinos have traveled for more than 1,000 years. Not only does Hitt immerse you in the sights along the way, the struggles, the triumphs and the antics of his fellow pilgrims; he complements places of interest with historical yet surprising and sometimes irreverent facts, that at times left me either laughing or in awe of histories of Templars, relics and legends and lore. Along the way of Saint James, Hitt meets a colorful company of pilgrims from all over Europe who not only share in his quotidian peregrinations but add a lot of humor to the story, some of those moments building on those before until hilarity breaks down even the most deadpan of readers. But the most profound discovery that he and reader realize at the end of the Camino de Santiago is not about the revelations or epiphanies that one might expect from such a pilgrimage, but an inspiring sense of comradeship in the community of new-found friends, each going about their day-to-day grind while contributing to the greater whole of their traveling procession. Triumph prevails when Hitt and his comrades arrive at Santiago de Compostela cathedral but not without a tear-jerking moment of gratitude and humility. I say no more but of course, I cried. As all good things must come to an end, so too must the travels along the camino and alas, the community of fellow pilgrims that we have all grown to love parts ways, each returning to the life they led or to new roads ahead. Buen Camino!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Journey, Not A Pilgrimage. By William West I bought this book as part of my "watch the movie, read the book" purchases in the spring. I watched the movie with Martin Sheen and Emilio Estevez, and my curiosity about El Camino de Santiago was piqued. The movie was different than the book, but a few scenes were directly from the book. Once I got past Mr Hitt's discussion of his views of the Episcopal Church and organized religion in general, I found the book to be like the road must have been, a journey sometimes tedious and occasionally surprising. An interesting book that I'm not sure I'll read again. Once was enough, but I'm glad I made the journey.

When Jack Hitt set out to walk the 500 miles from France to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, he submitted to the rigorous traditions of Europe's oldest form of packaged tour, a pilgrimage that has been walked by millions in the history of Christendom. *Off the Road* is an unforgettable exploration of the sites that people believe God once touched: the strange fortress said to contain the real secret Adam learned when he bit into the apple; the sites associated with the murderous monks known as the Knights Templar; and the places housing relics ranging from a vial of the Virgin Mary's milk to a sheet of Saint Bartholomew's skin. Along the way, Jack Hitt finds himself persevering by day and bunking down by night with an unlikely and colorful cast of fellow pilgrims -- a Flemish film crew, a drunken gypsy, a draconian Belgian air force officer, a man who speaks no languages, a one-legged pilgrim, and a Welsh family with a mule. In the day-to-day grind of walking under a hot Spanish sun, Jack Hitt and his cohorts not only find occasional good meals and dry shelter but they also stumble upon some fresh ideas about old-time zealotry and modern belief. *Off the Road* is an engaging and witty travel memoir of an offbeat journey through history that turns into a provocative rethinking of the past.

From Publishers Weekly When freelance journalist Hitt decided he needed a long walk, he had in mind the 500-mile trek from Saint-Jean Pied de Port, in France, to Santiago del Compostello, in Spain, one of the medieval routes of pilgrims to the shrine of St. James the Apostle. For this lapsed Episcopalian, his immersion in the history of Santiago meant not only a long walk to clear his head but adventure and an exotic setting for a travel book. The self-questioning Hitt found the road crowded with other pilgrims with different agendas. In a pale, somewhat self-conscious version of a *Canterbury Tale*, he sketches them deftly as they straggle along, silhouetting them and himself against medieval pilgrims and dipping into church history and architecture, love and the stories of Saint James. This offbeat travelogue describes a still-living tradition of pilgrimage and a culture of the road both delightful and informative. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal For centuries the Spanish town of Santiago de Compostela

has been a magnet for millions of the faithful throughout Christendom. This shined city, devoted to the martyred apostle St. James, is traditionally reached on foot by peregrinos (pilgrims) who hike hundreds of miles to receive blessings. Hitt, a contributing editor to Harper's and Lingua Franca, spent weeks walking this path, where Charlemagne, the Cid, Pope John XXIII, and countless others have tread since the ninth century. The author endured grueling weeks of rugged countryside, scorching weather, mangy dogs, and eccentric hostlers to write an irreverently amusing and colorful adventure. Most interesting are the assortment of characters he meets along the way, each of which could be drawn from Chaucer. Beyond his personal experiences, Hitt offers fascinating historical background on church architecture, the Crusades, and the Knights Templar, which makes this travelog a terrific complement to travel and Spanish and European cultural collections. David Nudo, "Library Journal" Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Thanks to skilled writing, sharp observation, and irreverent humor, Hitt's travel memoir is engaging without being cute, insightful without being self-absorbed, informative without being boring. It starts with what, for Hitt and us, is an offbeat idea: to walk the route from France to Spain that pilgrims of the Middle Ages trod to venerate the bones of St. James the Apostle, ostensibly discovered there by a hermit, circa 800. Hitt walks the road for two months with a rucksack full of questions, among them--besides the unanswerable Why am I doing this?--What is a pilgrim? Am I a good pilgrim? Who is a true pilgrim? Can you be a true pilgrim if you travel with others, occasionally get drunk, stay at a hotel once in a while? Are bicyclists less true pilgrims than walkers? What do you do about blisters? How can you avoid "on the road" clichés when telling the story? By journey's end, Hitt has the answers and has met fellow pilgrims as colorful as Chaucer's on the road to Canterbury. Mary Ellen Sullivan