

Walking the Camino to open at The Guild

Pilgrim: A traveler that is taken seriously. — Ambrose Bierce



New Mexico has its own share of pilgrimages that take place from Chimayo to Las Cruces. But none can compare with the Camino de Santiago in Spain, the route that over 270,000 people attempted in 2010 alone. The trail starts near the borders of France and Spain and winds its way through the Pyrenees Mountains and through three other regions of Spain, over highlands, wine country and farmland. The trail stretches for 500 miles and everyone that tries to walk, bike, or ride a horse over the path has their own reasons for doing so, including the director of this enriching documentary, Lydia Smith. She walked it in the spring of 2008.

"I had no intention of making a film and I felt a real resistance to do so, from past experience," she said. "I felt that the Camino is sacred and magical and wasn't sure I could do it justice."

Walking the Camino: Six Ways to Santiago has a tagline —"A 500 mile journey to yourself" — indicating the very personal experiences Smith chose to represent in the film. She follows six travelers as they do the trail, each for his or her own separate reason.

There is Annie, who is doing the walk for spiritual reasons; and Jack and Wayne, retired Canadians. Jack has always wanted to do the Camino because of his interest in history, and Wayne, recently widowed, appreciates the idea of "the one-way nature of the trail, which represents leaving his past and walking toward his future."

Misa is walking alone at the start to explore her inner self, but soon discovers a possible love interest in William, who is able to help her look in a different direction. Sam has clinical depression and hopes that she can restore her body chemistry through exercise and nature, permitting her to stop taking her medications. Tomas is looking for a physical challenge, while Tatiana, from France, has brought her very active young son on the trip.

None of the stories intermingle: Smith allows us to observe each traveler's journey. She is still in touch with all of the hikers, and all are helping on the film in one way or another.

"As we shot the film, I felt that making the film was what I was supposed to do. There was a real synchronicity," she recalls.



Still photos from the documentary "Walking the Camino: Six Ways to Santiago," directed by Lydia Smith.
Courtesy of Lydia Smith.

Smith expertly blends the history of the trail, sometimes hearing from those who live along the Camino and offer food and shelter to the travelers; and other times via effective and interesting narration.

Walking the Camino is a gently engrossing and interesting film and it certainly is not afraid to point out the travails of such a journey. Smith's personal journey in making the film allowed her to learn to trust herself.

"There is a saying that the Camino starts when you get home," she says.

For more information: caminodocumentary.org

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—Jeff Berg is a contributing editor to ABQ Arts & Entertainment.

**March 14-17, 3:15 and 7:30 pm
Director's guest appearance:
March 14 only.**

Walking the Camino: Six Ways to Santiago

The Guild Cinema, 3405 Central NE,
255-1848, guildcinema.com

Screenings will also take place at CCA Cinematheque, 1050 Old Pecos Trail Santa Fe beginning on March 14, with Smith as guest on the 15th, and in Taos at the Taos Center for the Arts, 33 Paseo del Pueblo, from March 16-18, with Smith on hand on the 17th and 18th.