

I'm back. What an adventure along the coast of Portugal and Spain to Santiago de Compostela. I have hours of material that I will produce over the next few months. Today, a very brief episode about accessibility. Remember, I have Multiple Sclerosis, which affects my stamina, balance, and vision. I can stand, I can walk. Unless I'm in a small room, I need forearm crutches for walking or an electric wheelchair. I can fold my wheelchair, roll it, and assist in getting it in and out of the car. I am not wheelchair dependent. I walk a minimum of 3500 steps a day, every day. Not all at once, but in segments. I fatigue, but I can recover relatively quickly. I manage my double vision, most of the time. I can hear with hearing aids, sometimes too much. I can breathe, talk, eat, and toilet unassisted. My disabilities and pain levels are mostly moderately annoying. I describe a personal adventure with my extended family and those I've met along the way. Clearly, your adventure would be different. People with all ranges of abilities travel the Camino. Preparation and assistance are key. See several resources in the show notes.

My companions and I are all 70+ years old. During these 16 days, we traveled about 160 miles (260 km) on the Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage from Porto, Portugal. I went 70 miles (113 km), averaging 4600 steps or 2 miles a day walking and the rest in my electric wheelchair. I had help finding accessible ways and maneuvering. We dealt with roots, ditches, streams, stairs, sand, gravel, slippery slopes, and other obstacles in rural areas. I fell over backward in my chair once. I'll put a link in the show notes to YouTube of it. I was recording at the time of the fall.

In urban areas, we scouted cutouts, maneuvered around construction, crazy traffic on narrow roads, crowds, stores, restaurants, churches, and cathedrals. And OMG, the elevators – tiny, tiny, tiny. Find one elevator experience linked to YouTube. The image for this episode is of one ridiculous cutout into a store, perhaps designed for a two-foot-long bicycle, worthy of a belly laugh. The European airports provided considerably better assistance than American airports. Touring a twelfth century castle I was shocked, shocked that it wasn't wheelchair accessible. I motored and walked around anyway.

We made hundreds of little and big decisions about handling obstacles and my safety. Key word: we. I made some decisions as I do in routine life, I had help, more than I thought I would need.

As I reported in the last episode, the most significant disability would have been no charger, but as in 2019, my biggest handicap was not speaking Spanish or Portuguese. Our hosts went out of their ways to communicate as best they could. I am eternally grateful.

I had the time of my life!!



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