



# Paris to the Pyrenees: A Skeptic Pilgrim Walks the Way of Saint James

*David Downie*

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Part adventure story, part cultural history, *Paris to the Pyrenees* explores the phenomenon of pilgrimage along the age-old way of Saint James

Driven by curiosity, wanderlust, and health crises, David Downie and his wife set out from Paris to walk across France to the Pyrenees. Starting on the Rue Saint-Jacques, then trekking 750 miles south to Roncesvalles, Spain, their eccentric route takes 72 days on Roman roads and pilgrimage paths—a 1,100-year-old network of trails leading to the sanctuary of Saint James the Greater. It is best known as El Camino de Santiago de Compostela—“The Way” for short.

The object of any pilgrimage is an inward journey manifested in a long, reflective walk. For Downie, the inward journey met the outer one: a combination of self-discovery and physical regeneration. More than 200,000 pilgrims take the highly commercialized Spanish route annually, but few cross France. Downie had a goal: to go from Paris to the Pyrenees on age-old trails, making the pilgrimage in his own maverick way.

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