Day 8
Tuesday
September 2, 2025

From Logrono to Najera
Destination: City Express Hotel Fernando III

Time on the Trail: 8 hours, 7 minutes
Distance Travelled: 18.24 miles (29.4 km)
Total Distance to date:

Speed: 2.3 mph (3.6 km/h)
Pace: 26 minutes/mile (17 minutes/km)



Note on the Terrain Graph: Yes, there was a climb of about 900 feet (274 meters), but it was over a time of about 6 hours, so it was not as difficult as it might appear. By the time we got to the descent of about 500 feet 9274 meters) over the next 2 hours we were too tired to care.

Jimś Daily Trail Comments: (A surprise, theory appear later in the story)

We got a very early start, well before sunrise. The route out of Logrono was well marked. But since we were the only pilgrims in our own Pension, it was reassuring to join with other pilgrims as we made our way out of town. There is an indefinable joy in those quiet city mornings as pilgrims slowly grow in number from different hostels scattered throughout the city, joining along a common path marked only by yellow arrows on walls and scallop shells in the sidewalks. There is an unspoken bond as if we are being drawn by some invisible force in the early morning hours. Drawn to Santiago.



My sister Marylou to her daughter Valerie:
Are you sure Jim and Mike can do no this without you…..? I'll definitely light a candle in front of st
Anthony.... ,patron saint of hopeless causes'
6:42 AM
Oh no! It's St. Jude!!! Where can I find him now....

Sister-in-law Mary Elna to Marylou:
St Anthony of lost articles, travelers, and elderly. You might right the first time

Marylou:
It never hurts to light a candle in front of st Anthony.... especially If you can't find st Jude anywhere!

Brother Nick:
This is Mike and Jim. You may want to light a large bonfire!

Mike:
You can add St, James to the list of saints whose intercession you are requesting since it is to his bones we are hiking. “Please help Jim & what's his name survive the next 35 days...” Can't hurt to request St Christopher as well, even if he is officially an imaginary saint now...

Marylou:
Nice pics, but you look tire, Mike

Mike: I kind of thought I looked old, tired and saintly.

Marylou:
I did think that you looked a little like St. James - especially when you wear your hat.... But you need a beard of course.

The path out of Logrono stretched for miles on sidewalks and paved paths, eventually leading past a large park area and leading upward (surprisingly) to a large nature preserve around a reservoir - Embasle Grajera.

Except for a couple tiny lizards on Day One and the ever-present town swallows, it was here that I encountered the first wild animal that I had seen on the Camino. A rabbit! Not a very smart one either, as it ran directly at me for a dozen yards trying to escape from a dog.

It did seem odd throughout the Camino that we saw so little wildlife of any kind. There must have been some rodents or lizards or predators somewhere in all the countryside we walked through. But if so, they were very elusive, even in the early morning hours. (We did often hear gunshots in the distance in the mornings - more often than I ever heard in Chicago - so I assume there were hunters. Or farmers. But even insects seemed rare.

After leaving the Logrono park system, we again entered wine country. I tasted some green ones, which were deliciously sweet. My favorite Spanish meal by far. But as Jim commented, after the first 10 miles of vineyards, vineyards are no more interesting than the corn fields back in Illinois.



Sweet green grapes, freshly filched



The stems of these vines looked ancient

We stopped for lunch in Navarette, a wonderful medieval town, with a beautiful large church. The Church of the Assumption of Our Lady (Parroquia de Nuestra Senora de la Asuncion) is as impressive as a cathedral, but on a smaller, more manageable scale. It has a high gilded sanctuary and numerous life-sized statues, including one of Jesus on a burial slab, and St. James (as The Pilgrim) and my favorite - St. Roque (also known as St. Roche in France and St. Rocco in Italy) - the patron of dogs and dog lovers and pilgrims.



Church of San Saturnina, Ventosa



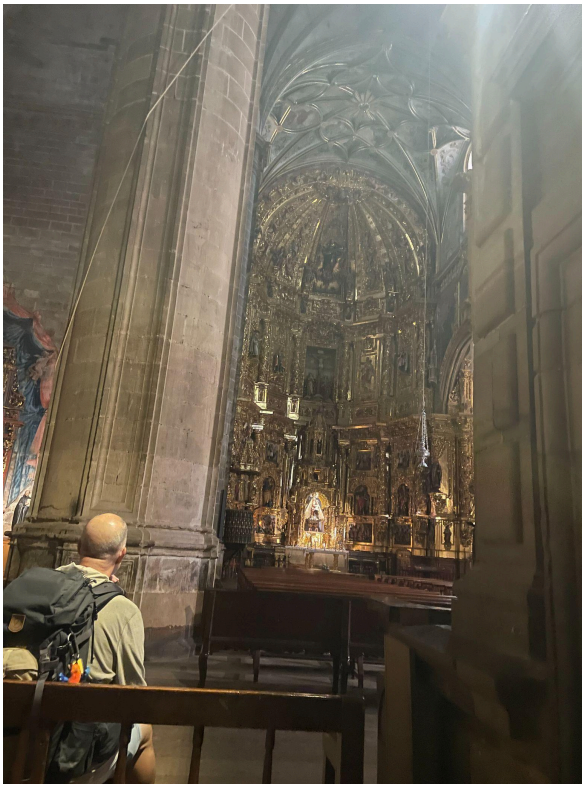
Church of Santa Maria la Real, Najera







Statues of Jesus, The Pilgrim (St. James?), and St. Roche
in the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady, Naverette

The main altar of The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, Navarette

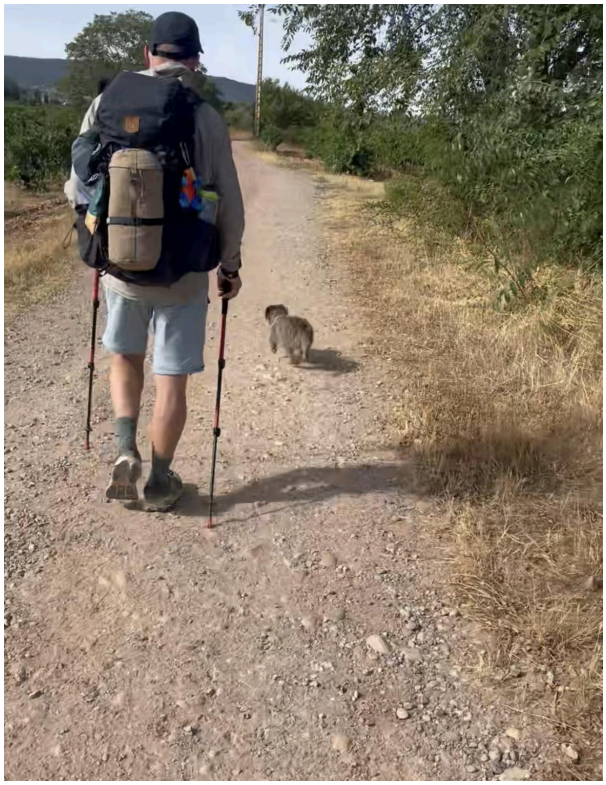
It was in this church that I started to wonder if perhaps the money spent on building and furnishing these impressive churches we have visited along the Camino might have been spent more wisely on helping the people instead.

Gradually I came to realize that these churches nourished the lives of the people they served for hundreds of years - baptisms, weddings, funerals, ringing out the hours, calling people to pray, giving the town an identity and a soul. Not to mention the employment that building a church gave to artists and craftsmen. Instead of being a waste of money, I came to see the churches as wise investments in small town living,

After Navarette, our day was mostly along dirt and gravel paths through vineyards on fairly level ground. On one stretch, we were accompanied by a dog. It was part of a large family group, and the dog would leave its family and run to join whatever pilgrims were ahead and take the lead until finally the family called it back. Then it would repeat the ¨guide dog¨ role whenever another pilgrim passed.

It was also on this stretch that the Flip Flop lady (no longer wearing flip flops, but still carrying a silver sun umbrella) and her young companion passed us by, wishing us a “Buen Camino” as they took the lead. On an impulse, I decided we should try to match their pace. Their stride was very short, much shorter than even mine. But their pace was so quick! After about 15 minutes, I was exhausted. I have heard of people trying to match the speed and stride of other pilgrims, hoping to hike with them. Most end up needing rest and recuperation after a day or so.

We caught up with them where the trail split between two choices, with one detouring to Sotes. We introduced ourselves, and they introduced themselves as mother (Roxanne) and son (Wyatt), from Minnesota. And that Roxanne had bruised her ankle and had been wearing slip-ons for four days. They chose the alternate route, to Sotes, while we continued on to Ventosa.



Jim and our guide dog.
Notice how red his calves are.



Wyatt and his mom, Roxanne,
The Flip Flop Lady

In Ventosa, we took a break at a very rustic hillside bar, La Mieleria (The Honey Shop), whose sello featured a large honey bee. It was probably the most primitive bar we rested at on our Camino, but it was also very popular, as there weren't many places to rest on this stretch before Navarro. And although we still didn't really know many fellow pilgrims yet, there were many family faces, and we were all in a good mood for some shade and refreshments.

It was a hot sunny day. Jim got a nice sunburn, so this was the last day Jim wore his trousers as shorts!!! (Our hiking pants had calf sections that could be removed or zippered back on.) I had already stopped taking off the bottom sections of the pants legs a day or two earlier. Too much sun!

I think the throng of pilgrims entering Najera was among the largest we had seen up to that time. The hostels all seemed to be in the far end of town, and we pilgrims were all crowding the sidewalks on both sides of the street, surging forward "en masse" in an attempt to get the choicest spots in whatever hostels were ahead.

In our hurry, Jim and I crossed to the less crowded (but unmarked) side of the main street. Trying to read directions to our albergue on his cell phone, while walking along a narrow sidewalk, with his hiking sticks carried under his arm, JIm's foot missed a curb, and he took a stumble.

The first actual fall of our Camino took place, not on a trail or mountainside, but in the middle of a good sized town.

Jim's comment at the end of the day:
"Well sunny, hot and a side of clumsy. Moral of the story, don't look at your phone for directions when in the city.... me and city curbs have a thing, they intentionally try to trip me up, the 4th time was the charm...
Good news is I had my poles in my hand so I couldn't catch myself, maybe hurting a wrist or shoulder, I also got a step in before I landed so I didn't fall as far. The bad news is all that momentum I gained with the extra step had to be slowed down with the side of my face and shoulder.... Can you say road rash?.... Mike said he saw the whole thing happen in slow motion, and I heard the gasp of the 30 other pilgrims who had the privilege of witnessing my act of trying to locate my feet after the feet had deserted me."

I have no other memory of the town of Najera. Our hostel, actually a hotel - "Cityexpress Hotel Fernando III" was a big modern facility. It had been the only facility in Najera that he could make reservations for.

Since I was sending my backpack ahead, Jim had to make reservations at least one day ahead. And the actual hostels (not hotels) in Najera were already filled by the time he started calling ahead. That was one reason there was an anxious throng of pilgrims on our way into town - many were just realising how tight the overnight situation was. And the next albergues were 4 miles further down a hot dusty trail.