

Author helps people find path to peace

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Brooke Broadbent is trying to help people by sharing his experiences of personal growth and his pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago. Broadbent recently published *Living from the Heart, Learning to live without struggle*, with lessons from the Camino de Santiago.

The 60-year old retired public servant has spent the last five years on a journey of personal growth. The Camino was part of that journey he uses to help others with their personal development. "I've transitioned from the public service ... and now I'm working in the personal coaching field," Broadbent said. "I've kind of gone from technology to working more with people."

For over 1,000 years, pilgrims have made the trek to Spain's Santiago de Compostela where it is believed the tomb of St. James rests. Historically, the faithful would walk the long roads believing half their sins would be forgiven and their time spent in purgatory would be reduced, Broadbent explained, adding the term "pilgrim" originated on the Camino.

Broadbent first heard about the Camino when he was in Switzerland 10 years ago. He was told there's a place in Spain where he could just keep walking with everything on his back. Curious about Spain and the history of the Camino, Broadbent learned more about the trail and decided to go.



Brooke Broadbent puts the miles behind him during a walking tour of the Camino de Santiago.

"I started as a hiker," Broadbent recalled. "A lot of people start as hikers but end up as pilgrims."

According to Broadbent, hikers go thinking it'll be a great walk, while pilgrims intend to have a spiritual journey and connect with nature, community, and self. The word 'pilgrim' has Latin origins and refers to someone who walks across the fields, Broadbent explained. A pilgrim leaves the normal path and seeks an experience. In May 2003 Broadbent ventured to Spain alone and walked 350 km over three weeks. This past August and September he went back with a walking partner and the two journeyed 450 km over four weeks.

A vast network of trails, the Camino offers up a new experience every time, and individuals take from it something unique. In medieval times, pilgrims went to the Camino for a deep spiritual experience. Some were ill, others would seek cures for blights, and all believed God would answer their needs. For others, the Camino would become their last journey and they would die along its paths. "You kind of create your own Camino; your own path, which is parallel to life," Broadbent said. "The whole thing is parallel to living."

Besides getting in touch with self, those along the Camino are touching history as they walk paths hundreds of thousands have trudged along before. Some bridges are 2,000-year old Roman structures, Broadbent said, and some walkers find themselves sharing the trail with cattle or hearing the crow of a rooster. "It's a simple existence people had hundreds of years ago and you're surrounded by this," Broadbent said. He added he returned more peaceful and clear about his intentions. His focus shifted from "things" to people, and he put more emphasis on being instead of doing.

Drawing from his experiences along the Camino and as a personal coach, Broadbent's newest book speaks to people going through transitions, planning for a better life, or people who are preparing for the Camino. He said change is possible and he has seen those with difficulties in life get out of their depression.

Broadbent also hosts workshops based on his book. The next series will take place at Brookfield High School early February. Broadbent can be reached through his website at <http://www.brookebroadbent.com/>

> Patricia Lonergan, Orleans Star