



## Travels with My Donkey: One Man and His Ass on a Pilgrimage to Santiago

*Tim Moore*

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Having no knowledge of Spanish and even less about the care and feeding of donkeys, Tim Moore, Britain's indefatigable traveling Everyman, sets out on a pilgrimage to the cathedral at Santiago de Compostela with a donkey named Shinto as his companion. Armed only with a twelfth-century handbook to the route and expert advice on donkey management from Robert Louis Stevenson, Moore and his four-legged companion travel the ancient five-hundred-mile route from St. Jean Pied-de-Port, on the French side of the Pyrenees, to the cathedral at Santiago de Compostela which houses the remains of Spain's patron saint, St. James.

Over sun-scorched highways, precipitous bridges, dirt paths shaded by leafy trees, and vineyards occasionally lashed by downpours, Moore and Shinto pass through some of northern Spain's oldest towns and cities in colorful company. Clearly more interested in Shinto than in Moore, their fellow walkers are an assortment of devout Christian pilgrims, New Age--spirituality seekers aspiring to be the next Shirley MacLaine, Baby Boomers contemplating middle age, and John Q Public just out for a cheap, boozy sun-drenched outdoor holiday.

As Moore pushes, pulls, wheedles, cajoles, and threatens Shinto across Spain, the duo overnights in the bedrooms, dormitories, and---for Shinto---grassy fields of northern Spain. Shinto, a donkey with a finely honed talent for relieving himself at the most inopportune moments, has better luck in the search for his next meal than Moore does in finding his inner pilgrim. Undaunted, however, Man and Beast finally arrive at the cathedral and a successful end to their journey. For readers who delighted in his earlier books, *Travels With my Donkey* is the next hilarious chapter in the travels of Tim Moore, a book that keeps the bones of St. James rattling to this day.

## Travels with My Donkey: One Man and His Ass on a Pilgrimage to Santiago Details

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## **From Reader Review Travels with My Donkey: One Man and His Ass on a Pilgrimage to Santiago for online ebook**

### **Fiona says**

I took this book with me when I walked the Camino in 2007. I wish I hadn't because it took up valuable space in my luggage. Although some of his anecdotes rang true, on the whole I found it lacking in any kind of detail about the experience, the country, the food, the people and it just wasn't funny - with the exception of his comment about FLAN (you'd have to read the book unfortunately).

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### **Erica Hudson says**

I registered a book at BookCrossing.com!  
<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/13001424>

I like pretty much any book which features travel with a donkey, horse or mule. I also find Tim Moore very funny. Win win for me.

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### **Kelly says**

Hello traveling by ass. This book is so hilarious that while reading it (and laughing out loud until I cried), a woman came up to me in the coffee shop and demanded to know what the title was so she could get it. The writer, Tim Moore, out of mid-life crisis whatever, decides to walk el camino de Santiago, a famous pilgrimage in Spain, but he'll be arsed if he's going to carry his gear himself. Enter Shinto, a little burro who fears all things water, bolts at the slightest provocation, and makes a mockery of all donkey training (or mistraining, as the case may be) that comes with him. It's a travelogue by a prissy Brit, with a semi-uncontrollable animal to boot. Wonderful stuff.

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### **Pam says**

This is one of those rare books that actually lives up to the reviews on the front of it. It is laugh-out-loud in many parts, utterly endearing and enjoyable from beginning to end. It really did make me want to do the Santiago de Compostela...with a donkey!

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### **Robert Bovington says**

A Long Hard Slog  
Spanish Steps – Travels With My Donkey by Tim Moore  
A Review by Robert Bovington

I found this book annoying, often tedious, occasionally interesting and very occasionally funny. So why did I find the book annoying? Well to start with, various critics have described the author as humorous – inside the book cover, ‘Image’ described Tim as “Without a doubt, the funniest travel writer in the world”; the ‘Irish Times’ even hailed him as the new Bill Bryson. What rubbish! I find Bill Bryson so interesting and amusing that I have read all his travel books two or three times and even his other, more serious, works like “Mother Tongue” and “Shakespeare” are funnier and better written than Tim Moore’s book about his long expedition with a donkey. Like his journey, I found the book a long hard slog.

I found his writing style extremely verbose, sometimes undecipherable and often plain irritating – okay, the word ‘click’ may be military slang for a kilometre but I found the copious use of the word irksome. I found his humour often grated – too many puns and too adolescent. I certainly didn’t ‘laugh out loud’ but, to be fair, I did chuckle to myself on a couple of occasions. I didn’t mind, either, some of his ‘toilet’ humour, though there were too many references to donkey poo for my liking.

So what were the good points? Well, Tim Moore follows the travel writer’s ‘well worn path’ by describing many of the places he visits and supplementing this with quite a bit of history. He does this quite well. He also manages to get across to the reader the sheer scale of the journey – the good bits and the bad. Blistered, sometimes sun-scorched, occasionally rain-soaked, the author does a credible job of describing his 750-kilometre trek across northern Spain accompanied by a donkey.

I can applaud Tim Moore for completing the ‘Compostela de Santiago’ even if his ulterior motive was to provide material for a book. However, in my view, it is nowhere near the best travel book I have read. He may have walked the path of St. James but he is not yet fit to be mentioned in the same company as Washington Irving, Gerald Brenan, Ernest Hemingway or Chris Stewart – nor Bill Bryson.

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### **Elaine says**

Just started this book but it seems to combine midieval history, humor, and adventure.

Ended up not finishing the book. It didn't hold my interest and there are so many more books to read...

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### **Sarah Fisher says**

I got so bored reading this book and it was hard to finish. His writing stuck me as scattered and his writing style extremely wordy.

And the humor...hmm...I definitely wasn't laughing out loud like everyone else. Sometimes the jokes were just...out there...somewhere.

And the donkey? As much as he jokes about animal abuse I couldn't help but think...yep...that's pretty much animal abuse. I mean, really, who just buys a donkey to take a 500 mile hike while basically refusing to learn how to care for a donkey!!!

Also, I don't feel like I got a good sense of the landscape the people of northern Spain. I read this in conjunction with "Off the Road," another guy doing the same hike and I'd recommend that instead. Better pace and better blend of history/humor/awkward encounters. Maybe because that author actually hiked the whole route without having family visit, staying in hotels, etc etc.

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### **K. says**

I read this just before leaving for my own pilgrimage through Portugal and Spain, and I laughed till I cried. Really hilarious. It's not great literature, but it offers great laughs and looks with a slant eye at the whole subject of pilgrimage.

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### **erin says**

I'm happy to report I've found the antidote to the poison that was reading Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*: Tim Moore's *Travels With My Donkey*. He's a lot like Bryson, but without the snark, attitude, superiority, whining and misanthropy, and with an actual sense of humour. Which is to say, he's not like Bryson at all. I found myself running the laugh gamut from smiles to chortles to out and out giggles. Along the *camino* he experiences not only fatigue and frustration, but also good company and the kindness of many, many strangers. There is no big epiphany for Moore on his trek, but he does learn how to take things in stride - a million strides, as it were, straight across the North of Spain, with his intermittently trusty steed, Shinto, at his side. I haven't had this much fun with a book in a while.

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### **Anne says**

I can't tell you how many times I laughed out loud while reading this! The author's British self-deprecating wit and clever language were just my cup of tea. Beyond his fine writing though, Moore is a keen observer of people and his surroundings and I appreciated the fascinating historical tidbits he included about the Camino which has been one of the world's great pilgrimages since the Middle Ages.

My only reservation about the book was his conceit to travel with a donkey when he knew so very little about the care of them. His frustration with his donkey ultimately resolved and it could be that he embellished his description of their relationship for humor, but there were many times while reading this when I felt that poor animal deserved better.

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### **Michael Grant says**

Bored me to bits. Can't believe this is from the same author as *French Revolutions*.

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### **Adam says**

Tim Moore likes big words and arcane references, but he's funny enough to make it worth the effort. I would also say that the book works at a larger level, too. It's not just a travelogue; it's something of a spiritual journey as well. There's a symmetry to the relationship between the author and his donkey that somehow frames the pilgrimage in terms that both a skeptic and a believer will understand.

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## Conrad says

Entertaining, though not a lot happens. it's a long journey that's pretty much the same all the way: he meets various cohorts on the pilgrimage, he describes the variety of his sleeping quarters, he has the same problems with balky donkey, he questions why he's doing it. He has a breezy style that's often funny—depending on your taste—but the humor sometimes relies a bit too much on metaphorical references to current entertainers, etc., and that's lost on me. Quick laughs, quickly dated. He stays firmly in the camp of "comic travel writing," and I really don't see clearly what his pilgrimage achieves except to write another travel book. His self-deprecating style is engaging up to a point, but eventually, for me, it wears thin. I do recommend it as light, entertaining reading.

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## James says

There can't be many authors who have dedicated their book to a donkey. But then, there aren't many who would take one on a 500-mile trek across northern Spain. That's what Tim Moore did, and the result is an entertaining and informative account of his journey to the pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela.

Quirky one minute, cranky the next, Moore manages to gouge out the extraordinary from the everyday. The people he encounters become players in his crazy theatre of life, while he spares no ridicule for himself as he does battle against the elements, the landscape and his stubborn travelling companion.

Previous journeys have taken Moore across the London Monopoly board and the Tour de France route. So, making this pilgrimage in a conventional way just wouldn't do. Realising the journey will require a shed-load of equipment, he certainly doesn't want to be tainted with the label of a backpacker: "People with rucksacks don't have fun, or if they do it's the sort that involves a Thermos flask and brass rubbing."

The solution, when it comes to him, is heaven-sent. A donkey carried Christ into Jerusalem, so what more appropriate beast of burden to carry the author's beastly burden on his own Via Dolorosa?

It becomes clear that Moore's main purpose is not merely to complete the arduous journey with a moody mule but to recount how he did it. In other words, (and you'll have been expecting this) he pins the tale on the donkey.

Shinto is indeed the star of the show, with more character in one of his animated ears than many of the two-legged pilgrims trudging along the camino. The author's early attempts to get the reluctant creature across a wooden slatted bridge signals the beginning of a vexatious relationship between one man and his donk. Yet, as they make steady progress across the back of northern Spain, there is a bonding. Nothing untoward, of course, but eventually they reach an understanding about who's really in charge – and it's not the one with only two legs.

There are some genuinely sticky moments. During one especially arduous stretch when Shinto sinks to the ground, Moore is seriously concerned about his wonkey donkey. His remedy for setting Shinto back on his hooves is as surprising for the donkey as it is entertaining for the reader.

Moore has to face all of the challenges of any other pilgrim, but his difficulties in locating food and accommodation are compounded by the need to find somewhere to park his donkey. Some of the locals are helpful, some refuse them both point blank, while others provide the unlikeliest assistance. A drunken fireman, for instance, offers Shinto sanctuary in a deserted bullring.

Throughout the book, the author explains some of the background to the history of the pilgrimage. From its medieval origins to its rebirth as a purging exercise for New Age disciples, the route has attracted its fair share of eccentric travellers. Among its more famous aficionados is Shirley MacLaine, and Moore wastes no time in ripping apart the book describing her journey. "Shirl's book is so mad it howls at the moon," he says, "a book that with any name on its cover but that of a Hollywood legend would have had orderlies with soft, placatory smiles knocking on the author's door."

The spiritual aspects of the pilgrim route seem lost on Moore, and he spends much of the time poking fun at his earnest fellow travellers. Two Germans who eat an inordinate amount of candy are dubbed "the German chocolate girls", and an American woman given to telling conflicting stories about her origins becomes "Baroness von Munchausen".

That said, the book isn't without its heartwarming moments. For part of the route, Moore is joined by his family. His wife is Icelandic and their children's names – Valdis, Kristjan, Lilja - bring a fairytale quality to the story. But Moore's treatment of his children isn't in the least sentimental, and he's not above allowing them to upstage their father. When Shinto balks at yet another small bridge, his youngest daughter takes over. A few whispered words, Shinto's ears prick up, and he's across the bridge in no time, leaving the author to wonder what mystical power over animals has been imparted to his daughter.

At times, one wonders if they will ever make it to journey's end, especially since Moore comes across as being unprepared and pretty incompetent. But his pain is our gain. Every sun-scorched, rain-soaked, donkey-driven, blister-bursting moment gives the author cause to amuse and enlighten his readers.

The worrying thing is what crazy scheme might he come up with next? Across the Atlantic in a wheelbarrow? The Trans-Siberian Express pulled by huskies? I can only hope he never reads this; it'll only give him ideas.

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### **John says**

I've decided Tim knows just when to keep from going over-the-top. That doesn't mean he doesn't actually do it every so often, but he's talented enough to get away with it when he does.

Unlike his previous escapades, he is forced to socialize a great deal (more) on this trip. And -- with a companion! He and Shinto are perfect together; the dread of separation is palpable in the final pages. Readers of previous books (yours truly included) have commented that his references have been highly Brit-specific; Our Author seems to have taken heed as this time they are far more balanced.

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