



✠ NEWS FROM THE CONFRATERNITY OF SAINT JAMES OF SOUTH AFRICA ✠

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CSJ South Africa heads international “Spring Clean” on the Camino Frances

Millions of pilgrims have walked the historic Camino de Santiago, an ancient pilgrimage across the north of Spain. In the past three years alone an estimated 273,000 people walked, biked, or rode horses along the 800-kilometer Way.

➔ ➔ *Unfortunately, thousands of them left a trail of trash behind them* ← ←

Water bottles, food wrappers, plastic bags, and sewage blot the margins of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Local groups stage clean-up days along some stretches, but other areas have accumulated tons of trash. Not all of it is pilgrim-generated: plenty of tires, building materials, and garbage are dumped along the Camino by irresponsible neighbours.

In May 2007 Margi Biggs, a Cape Town native, walked from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago. She says she enjoyed almost everything about the journey. “But what did disturb me was the amount of litter left by other Pilgrims over the years,” she said. “So I thought a Camino Spring Clean was in order.”

Work has already begun. Donors in South Africa have produced 10,000 small litter pick-up bags for distribution to pilgrims, overprinted with a message in eight languages inviting them to fill the bag with the litter they find and finally drop it into the efficient Spanish garbage-collection system.

In late May Margi will join South African hospitalero Gordon Bell to drive down the trail, distributing the materials to pilgrim hostels and albergues. Margi and a collection of friends will walk the Way from Ponferrada to Santiago starting June 1, cleaning the trail and spreading the anti-litter message. On 12 June all are invited to a celebration in Santiago following the noontime Pilgrim Mass.

Sponsors are being sought to design and print multi-lingual, anti-litter posters for display in pilgrim gathering places. Pilgrims planning to make the trip this year should be informed in advance -- perhaps when they receive pilgrim credentials -- that littering the trail is not part of the pilgrim experience, but cleaning up surely should be.

Confraternities and clubs from around the world are joining the effort, and your help is welcomed. Perhaps you can begin by translating this announcement and forwarding it to members of your Friends of the Camino group. Thank you in advance for your support!