

## WALK THIS WAY

*Grad student hiking 900 km on Spanish pilgrimage*

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
sbolan@yrmg.com

Angela Durante has never been one to shy away from challenges, especially those that push her body, mind and spirit to their limits.

Which is why Ms Durante is embarking on a 35-day, 900-km pilgrimage from St. Jean Pied de Port in France to Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain this week.

She jetted to Europe last week. The rest of the trip will be one long walk.

"I don't know what this 900 km will bring me; I'm curious; I'm dying to know," said the 31-year-old York University PhD history student and Whitchurch-Stouffville resident.

The trek Ms Durante is going on is called the Camino de Santiago, which traverses along a large network of ancient pilgrim trade routes across Europe and ends at the tomb of St. James who was one of the original 12 apostles.

Legend has it that James was a fisherman who left his nets by the Sea of Galilee to follow Jesus and help establish the Christian faith. Following Jesus' death and resurrection, James travelled across the Mediterranean to Spain to preach.

James then returned to Jerusalem around 44 A.D. only to be beheaded by Herod Agrippa. James was subsequently the first apostle to be martyred.

The legend further claims that in order to prevent the desecration of his body, James' followers secretly carried his body back to Spain

**'...I don't want to be found 24 hours a day. I think we live in a crazy time. I think we live in a time of too much pressure, too much technology, too many distractions.'**

Angela Durante  
Stouffville student

and buried it near the northern coast, where it remained undisturbed until 813 A.D.

Within 100 years, people from across Europe were making the journey to pray at his grave site.

A church was subsequently built over his bones and around it and the town of Santiago de Compostela was created.

Ms Durante heard about the trek from other travellers earlier this year while she was in France and Morocco.

"I would say I'm spiritual, but not religious," she said of her decision to make the trip only six weeks prior to her departure.

"It's a rejuvenation season; time to gather yourself," she said of the pilgrimage's spring timing.

The trek, which Ms Durante will do all on foot, is also part of a larger trip she is embarking on. Once she has reached Santiago de Compostela, Ms Durante will head off to Portugal and Morocco, where she will write the next chapter of her PhD's dissertation on the images of women produced in the 1920s.

"I found this fabulous place in Morocco (Essaouira) ... The pace of life is a lot simpler and a lot slower and I think that's what I like about it."

Solo excursions are nothing new for Ms Durante, who prefers to explore the world on her own because "for me, travelling alone has provided a source of reflection and I can't do that with other people."

"I think we tend to be attached to other people ... (and) sometimes we don't know who we are by ourselves."

Travelling alone has also enabled Ms Durante to get an inside look into the various countries and their cultures because she has been able to stay with local families from time to time.

"That's really enriching because you can immerse yourself (into) other cultures," she said.

Through her travels, Ms Durante has also found a greater appreciation for a simpler life.

"I used to be one of these (24/7 connected people) and slowly, over the past couple of years I've pared down," Ms Durante said; adding she does not own a phone, watch or car. However, she does have a computer so she can work.

"At first I think (people) find it jarring, but once they know me, they realize I don't want to be found 24 hours a day," she said. "I think we live in a crazy time. I think we live in a time of too much pressure, too much technology, too many distractions."



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Angela Durante is in Europe on a 35-day walking trek. The Spanish route has ancient roots.



**THE CYCLEPATH**

- Sales • Service
- Selection



Best Bicycle tune up  
anywhere... **GUARANTEED!**

Great selection of 2009  
models now in stock!

Avoid the spring rush!  
Get your bike  
**SERVICED NOW!**

'Best Bicycle Shop 11 Years in a Row'

**Get "IN GEAR" for Spring**

29 Main Street, Markham Village (Hwy. 48, just North of Hwy. 7) • [www.cyclepathmarkham.com](http://www.cyclepathmarkham.com) • 905-294-8955