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Walking Tips Along the Way (Camino de Sydney reflections Part 3)

I have been wondering if during these Covid times, people may have embarked on more walking than previously? Some of this could be associated with walking newly acquired pets. I loved a cartoon I saw last year that had an exhausted dog hiding in a corner as the owner approached saying time for a walk again.

It may be that people have also discovered areas in their own suburb, including some of the lovely parks, like Sydney Park in St. Peters, now a favourite among the inner-city crowd.

From my experience of walking the Camino de Sydney in 2021, I compiled a mental list of tips, and after writing my reflections, I thought it would be helpful to provide this list in a brief final article.

These tips are applicable for a range of walking experiences but have an orientation to city and suburban based day outing arrangements.

Use good quality boots, rather than sneakers.

Double sock or use proper hiking socks. Break your boots in with shorter walks, rather than 30 kms on the first day.

Use a strong but lightweight backpack as you may need to carry a few litres of water some days.

Carry plenty of water. Take double the amount if the day is scheduled to be hot. Do a search before on the areas you are walking for stops for refreshments and water re-filling.

Take a spare hat (foldable in your backpack) in case you accidentally misplace your main hat, or it flies off in a wind gust over that nearby ravine.

Carry sunscreen protection and actually use every 2-3 hours as needed.

Take a poncho. A poncho is much easier to use than an umbrella and if it does rain heavily your backpack will be kept dry, snuggled under the Poncho.

Download the National Public Toilet Map app. This could be a very timely guide.

Buy and carry with you a **portable phone/device charger** and make sure it is at 100% power at the start of the journey. (This presumes you will also carry a phone, and thus have GPS access and hopefully a compass app.)

Carry some physical money. There may be some more remote areas that are not as reliably internet connected, or as I experienced where mobile, or payment machines were not working due to internet outages.

Pack a pair of reasonable gloves. These can be very helpful for climbing over barb wire fences or holding onto branches and trees when scaling down the side of hilly areas.

Take a small stock of energy bars. Look for low sugar ones, as you don't really need a sugar hit, but occasional sustenance.

Look before you leap. I did tend to rush onto the nearest path in a bushland area, but soon learnt it was best to check if it was the right one as that saved quite a bit of doubling back.

Don't trust Google Maps or other maps fully. Sometimes they give you quite intriguing directions for walking that would take several days to complete. If on the Sydney Camino, it is helpful to go over the Camino map before you start out and look at different images and types of maps as well using the satellite or area coverage available in Google and Bing, or on the NSW national parks and wildlife service website.

Consider preparing an intent form. This will not be necessary for the more suburban areas. but is a good idea for areas like the Blue Mountains and the forms are easily accessible on national park websites.

Ask locals if you are in need. I found people who were very hospitable along the way quite open to you checking about directions or a certain aspect of the area, including a good cafe.

And certainly pray.

- Pray for wisdom and discernment about the day and the directions for the walk.
- Pray for an attitude of hospitality and sharing of the path (s).