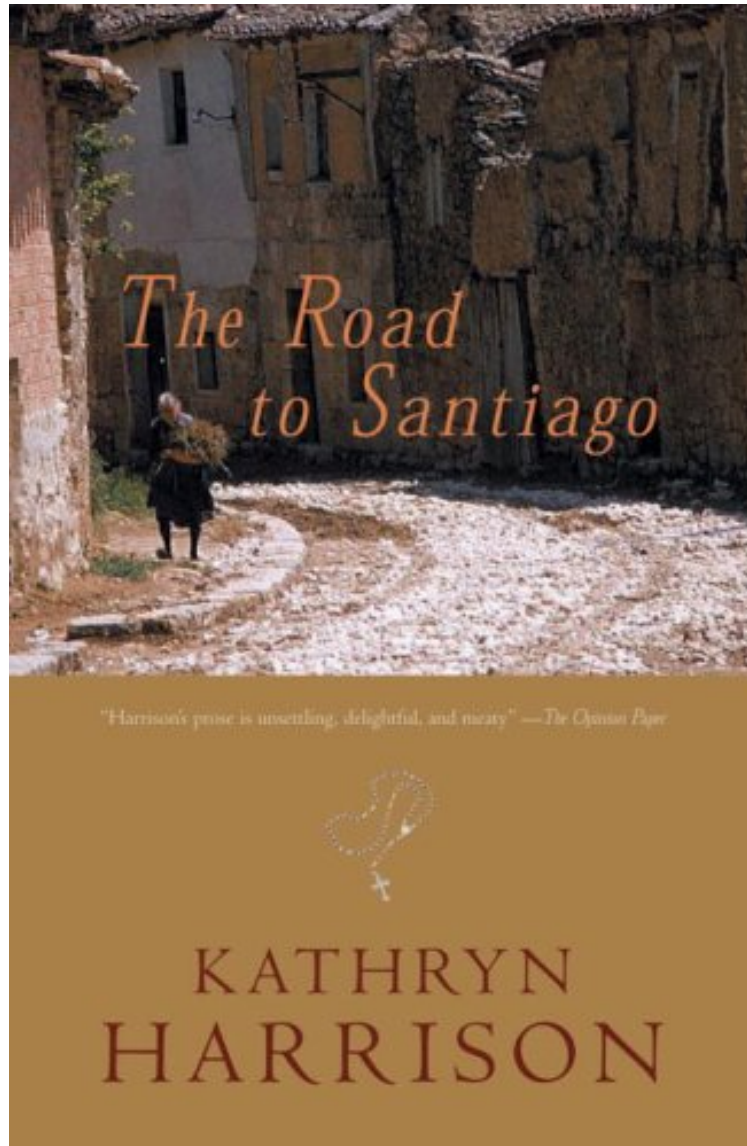


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Road to Santiago (Directions)

Kathryn Harrison

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Kathryn Harrison : Road to Santiago (Directions) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Road to Santiago (Directions):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Disappointing.By MRLonerganWorking my way through the hefty number of memoirs written about the Camino de Santiago,in preparation for my own pilgrimage, Ms. Harrison's short meditation on her experience was entirely disappointing. I was looking forward to something a bit different from the usual travelogue of quirky characters and difficult conditions. I just did not get the purpose of her trip nor of her

writing about it. I felt annoyed at her lack of engagement with her fellow pilgrims and native Spaniards, her silly decisions to walk late in to the night, her endless complaining. She walks SIX days and her knee hurts, I get it already. The insights are worthy of a private journal, not National Geographic standards. My two suggestions: Jack Hitt's, "Off the Road" for humor and history and Catholic priest, Kevin Codd's beautiful account, "To The Field of Stars".0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Camino de SantiagoBy Nancy G SinnettReally enjoyed this book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A spirit laid bareBy LorrieThere's something about reading the account of another person's journey that reels me in. Harrison as usual is fearless in her writing, but also as she offers a glimpse into the proverbial struggles, discoveries and delights on this adventure.

Displaying her "real talent for conjuring far-flung times and places," Kathryn Harrison tells the mesmerizing story of her 200-mile pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. In the spring of 1999, Kathryn Harrison set out to walk the centuries-old pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela. "Not a vacation, " she calls it, "but a time out of time." With a heavy pack, no hotel reservations, and little Spanish, she wanted an experience that would be both physically and psychologically demanding. No pain, no gain, she thought, and she had some important things to contemplate. But the pilgrim road was spattered with violets and punctuated by medieval churches and alpine views, and, despite the exhaustion, aching knees, and brutal sun, she was unexpectedly flooded with joy and gratitude for life's gifts. "Why do I like this road?" she writes. "Why do I love it? What can be the comfort of understanding my footprint as just one among the millions? ... While I'm walking I feel myself alive, feel my small life burning brightly." Throughout this deeply personal and revealing memoir of her journey, first made alone and later in the company of her daughter, Harrison blends striking images of the route and her fellow pilgrims with reflections on the redemptive power of pilgrimages, mortality, family, the nature of endurance, the past and future, the mystery of friendship. *The Road to Santiago* is an exquisitely written, courageous, and irresistible portrait of a personal pilgrimage in search of a broader understanding of life and self.

From Publishers WeeklyMore memoir than travelogue, Harrison's contribution to National Geographic's Directions series is reflective and deeply personal, yet still manages to recreate a physical place in all its rugged, peaceful glory. The titular road is a 400-mile path beginning in France and ending in Santiago, in northwestern Spain. A thousand-year-old pilgrimage route, the road can be walked in segments or in total, and Harrison (*Seeking Rapture; The Kiss; etc.*) touches upon her three separate trips along the camino. She bravely-some might say illogically-makes her first pilgrimage (in 1992) solo (*solita*), when she's seven months pregnant. Her second-and perhaps most significant-voyage along the camino comes seven years later, alone again. The third trip, which she makes with her 12-year-old daughter, is the one that begins this book, and kicks off the series of lessons Harrison learns along the way. Traveling with an adolescent, Harrison discovers "the grace to quit." As she walks "toward the invisible, the improbable, the ridiculous," the author discards extra soap and leaking bottles of sunscreen in an effort to lighten her pack (although she refuses to toss the pages of her novel-in-progress, as it defines who she is). She meets other pilgrims and some intriguing locals, continually "putting one foot in front of the other," an act which, on its own, is not dramatic, but "can wreak inner havoc." In rearranging her priorities (e.g., does she have enough water to make it to the next town?) and admitting defeat (which has an oddly relaxing effect), Harrison comes to learn-and indeed, teaches readers-the importance of acceptance. Map not seen by PW. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.From BooklistOn the first night of their pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, Harrison and her daughter checked into a picturesque hotel. Overcome by the scenic beauty, Harrison threw open the hotel-room window shutters and exclaimed, "Look at the mountains!" From behind her, 12-year-old Sarah ecstatically waved the television's remote control and shouted, "French MTV!" So began a voyage distinguished by a mother getting to know herself through her daughter. For hundreds of years, thousands of worshipers have trekked, like this mother and daughter, on foot, the 400 miles from St.-Jean-Pied-de-Port, France, to the sacred shrine of the apostle James, the brother of Jesus. Everyone who endures the inhospitable weather, poor road conditions, and exhaustion does so not so much to enjoy the shrine as to survive the pilgrimage, a time-out-of-time penance. Harrison had taken the journey before, alone, and learned something about herself. Her account of her accompanied, reprise journey and what she learned, part of the National Geographic Directions travel series, endears with its wit and sensitivity. Donna ChavezCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reservedAbout the AuthorKathryn Harrison is the author of the novels *Envy*, *The Seal Wife*, *The Binding Chair*, *Poison*, *Exposure*, and *Thicker Than Water*. She has also written memoirs, *The Kiss* and *The Mother Knot*, a travel memoir, *Saint Therese of Lisieux*, and a collection of personal essays, *Seeking Rapture*. Ms. Harrison is a frequent reviewer for *The New York Times Book* ; her essays, which have been included in many anthologies, have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Vogue*, *O Magazine*, *Salon*, and other publications. She lives in New York with her husband, the novelist Colin Harrison, and their children.