Micah Plender

Post-Trip Enrichment Summary

My time hiking the Camino in Spain was one of the best times of my life. I am so grateful that CSU offers this opportunity to learn about the culture, architecture, and language while offering credit. And, along the way, I made new friends that I know will be in my life for a long time. I know I learned so much and gained new language skills along the way.

One aspect of the trip that greatly enhanced my education was culture. In each town we stopped in, from Zaragoza, Pamplona, Sarria, Santiago, and everywhere in between, I gained a greater understanding and appreciation for the Spanish culture, people, and food. The way of life in Spain is different from life in the States: every other store is a bar, retail stores are open at odd hours, people walk everywhere and are friendlier, and the food is a lot more bland. Being immersed in the culture helps me to understand more about my Spanish history classes and literature classes.

Another thing that I learned while in Spain is the importance of architecture. The design of churches, cathedrals, government buildings, and palaces is so intentional. Each element of a building is symbolic and represents something important to the architect or the cultural ideas. Throughout the history of Spain, those in power used architecture and stylistic design to show this power. Knowing this was important not only to the classes I took while walking the Camino, but important to history as well.

Finally, my language skills have increased incredibly along the Camino. Having two professors and Spanish-speaking classmates was a big part of it. I also had the opportunity to talk to locals each day and experience the nuances of the dialect. For the last six days of our trip, we
had the pleasure of walking with Conchita, a local Camino guide. Because she didn’t know
English, I was able to use my abilities speaking Spanish to talk with her each day.

The knowledge I gained on the Camino were well-worth the muscle aches and sunburns.

I am thankful that CSU offers such a great trip, and happy that I made so many friends along the way.