"[I]t was only in around 800," declares Ashley in Being a Pilgrim’s foreword, "that the discovery of the apostle James the Greater’s relics in north-western Spain led to the establishment of a shrine at Compostela and the subsequent growth of an international pilgrimage to Galicia by the eleventh century." This portrayal of the pilgrim experience en route to Santiago de Compostela makes extensive use of primary text and present-day photography. Extracts embrace disparate voices, among them, pilgrim, secretary, monk, and historian. An array of art, architecture, and outdoor scenes is documented in color, especially decorative arts, paintings, sculptures, and churches. Illustrated maps are included and provide additional aid to the reader. The iconography of Saint James is addressed, and a chapter devoted to music identifies instruments depicted in art. There is an engaging sprinkling of references to contemporary pilgrimages to the shrine.

Being a Pilgrim contains notes, “Further Reading,” and an index, but lacks a glossary or a list of artwork. Photographers other than coauthor Deegen are credited in captions, as are institutions that provide reproductions. There are a few minor drawbacks in design and production: font size is small though legible, some slight typographical errors appear, and sharpness of photography varies.

Regarding available material on this topic, it is worth bearing in mind that about half of the sources in “Further Reading” are non-English or translations into English; thirty date from 2000 to the present. There are no online sources. Librarians should note that the visual resource ARTstor now has a substantial body of images that is associated with Santiago de Compostela.

Authored and predominantly photographed (digitally) by Ashley and Deegen, both academic professors, Being a Pilgrim is handsome, well written, and illuminating. Its clear, concise tone, use of primary information, reliance on illustration to support and enhance the text, and overall interdisciplinary approach result in a worthwhile and rewarding read. Spanning several centuries of material, this work is appropriate for undergraduate and graduate students, museum staff, and recreational adult researchers. The publication is recommended for art libraries, especially those that focus on Spanish art and architecture, pilgrimages, or serve interdisciplinary courses.

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