

El Camino de San Antonio Missions in Texas Announces Official Partnership with El Camino de Santiago in Spain

Pilgrims traveling the famous “Camino of the New World” discover unique Franciscan missionary heritage stateside

San Antonio, TX, Sept. 12, 2023—Missionary fervor is palpable along the historic El Camino de San Antonio Missions Trail in the heart of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Home to the oldest functioning Cathedral in the United States and many original Spanish Colonial Missions dating back to the 1700s, the El Camino de San Antonio Missions Trail is the only place outside Europe where one can officially begin walking the El Camino de Santiago. Pilgrims who walk the entire pilgrimage route in San Antonio receive 30 km credit when walking the Camino Ingles (English route) along the El Camino de Santiago, making El Camino de San Antonio part of an official route of the Camino in Spain.

El Camino de Santiago is a Catholic tradition dating back to the 9th century, and today pilgrims travel from all over the world to pay homage to St. James the Evangelist at his burial site in the beautiful Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The Pilgrimage Office in Santiago de Compostela recognized the San Antonio Pilgrimage with an official designation in 2021.

“When you’re on the trail, pilgrims discover more than historic architecture and beautiful artwork. It’s about connection with the origins of the faith here. It’s about renewing your connection with God...” said Rebecca Simmons, Executive Director of El Camino de San Antonio Missions.

El Camino de San Antonio is a historical pilgrim route in the United States, walked first by early Franciscan missionaries who came to the New World on Spanish ships many years ago. Their passion for bringing Christ to those who did not know Him fed the very first Spanish Colonial Missions, which would become iconic communities of the American Southwest. San Antonio has five of these Spanish Colonial Missions still in use today within its city border.

Among the stops along the trail are:

- San Fernando Cathedral, the oldest continuously functioning Cathedral in the United States
- Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, completed in 1755 and the oldest unrestored stone church in the United States
- Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, known as “Queen of the Missions,” over 300 years old and one the most active parishes in South San Antonio
- Mission San Juan Capistrano, nestled near the San Antonio river, provided all the missions with water for their crops through an innovative series of water canals built by the mission Indians
- Mission San Francisco de la Espada, the smallest and oldest of the San Antonio missions, dates back to 1691 and is home to a crucifix containing a second class relic of Saint John Paul II

Sisters Norie and Mary Alvarez recently began their Camino in San Antonio and completed it in Spain. “The heart and soul meet on San Antonio Camino. I felt so much peace walking along the river and

visiting the missions,” said Norie. “I was spiritually renewed and physically prepared for the Camino in Spain. Walking both, I saw a unique connection between the old world and the new.”

“Forging a connection with the worldwide Catholic Church is just one aspect of the spiritual experience that draws hundreds of pilgrims to San Antonio each year,” notes Nicky Mata, Pilgrimage Manager at El Camino de San Antonio Missions. “The experience is about deepening a pilgrim’s relationship with God and awakening a desire to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others.”

For more information about El Camino de San Antonio Missions and a complete press kit, visit <https://caminosanantonio.org/about/media-kit/>.

Rebecca Simmons and Nicky Mata are available for comment in English. Binisa Zentella, Manager of the Padre Margil Pilgrimage Center for El Camino de San Antonio, is available for Spanish-language interviews. To request an interview, contact Carrie Kline at carriek@revolutionizingmissions.com.

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