



Jesus and the Plastic Bong

An Anthology of
Thru Hiker Folklore

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What on earth is thru hiking?

As defined by one informant, thru hiking is a backpacking trip > 1,000 miles'

We interviewed eight hikers across the Appalachian, Chilkoot, Colorado, El Camino de Santiago, and John Muir Trails

Most undertook their trip in young adulthood and the majority were male.

A hiker with a large backpack is walking away from the camera on a dirt trail. The trail leads down a grassy hillside towards a valley. In the valley, there is a large lake and a winding road. The background features rolling mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A dead, gnarled tree stands on the left side of the trail. The word "Tradition" is written in a pink, serif font across the middle of the image.

Tradition

Ozette, Washington

Traditional Traditions

Universal

Cairns

Trail names

Trail registers

Certificates

Particular

Jesus and the plastic bong

Shell of wine

Tour-a-grinos

“Buen camino”

99 bottles



Superstition



‘stitious

Lucky hat

Old mallet

Hiking in the Morning

Limited by practicality:
we had foolish notions



A coastal landscape at sunset. The foreground is filled with large, weathered pieces of driftwood on a pebbly beach. The middle ground shows a calm sea reflecting the orange and yellow light of the setting sun. In the background, a dark, silhouetted headland with trees is visible against the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, pink, and grey.

Legend

Ozette, Washington

Mystic Mystery Materials

Scallop shells

Wedding rocks

Stuffed bear

Gold rush artifacts



Original Origins

El Camino de Santiago was a pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

Chilkoot was created by Native Alaskans, then claimed by Gold Rushers

Appalachian, PCT, and Colorado were recreational from the start



Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

Trail Names

Identity • Anonymity

Soul Surfer

Goat Slayer

Tadpole

Can-do

Four Seasons

With-a-spoon

Magic

Second Wind

Ozette, Washington



Colorado Trail

rites of passage

Informants often undertook mentally and physically demanding thru hikes at points of transition

A photograph of a dirt path winding up a grassy hill. In the background, a thick layer of white clouds fills the valley, with distant mountains visible on the horizon under a clear blue sky. The path is made of light brown dirt and is flanked by green grass and some rocks.

Transition

Graduation

Memorialization

Custody shift

Spiritual awakening

Thru hiker folklore facilitates:

immersion

reinvention

actualization

FIND YOUR PLACE



Santo Domingo de la Calzada, El Camino de Santiago