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#hikeforonegirl

How Climbing a Mountain in Spain Can Help Make Lives Better for Some of the World's Poorest Girls

At a time when each day seems to bring more news to cause worry about the future, one Australian woman living in the Netherlands has decided to make the change she wants to see. The mother of four has used the global power of the internet to put a plan into action that is already creating real benefits for some of the world's most disadvantaged daughters.

Australian Dutch citizen, Frances Antonia, will be gone from her home in Hilversum, Netherlands for up to 30 days in April and May this year, as she leaves her four children behind with her partner and sets out on a one-woman, pilgrim-style walk through some of Europe's most beautiful landscapes in Northern Spain — challenging herself to hike 769 kilometres for charity.

This minimalist mum will be hiking the 'Camino Frances' - Camino being the Spanish word for 'trail'. Otherwise known as The Way of St James, her trek begins in the French town of St Jean Pied de Port and weaves its way through rugged mountains, vineyards, medieval villages and vast open meadows to its end point, Santiago de Compostela.

Traditionally, pilgrims took the route for religious reasons and now as writer Leslie Gilmour says 'modern Pilgrimages seem to be a lot less about religion and more about peace, finding something in life, a time to think, and for some, a challenge.'

Antonia says she's viewing her own fundraising walk as being a bit like a modern pilgrim. "For me it's the challenge, the adventure, a way to share travel combined with humility, the chance to be a voice for what matters and to show my kids that standing for something is important," Antonia says.

The walk is expected to take 30 days and she plans to cover 20-30 kms per day carting all she needs in 7kgs on her back. She will stay in 'refugios', being low-cost / no-cost pilgrim-style accommodations and eat locally along the route. The whole adventure is to be an exercise in minimalist and sustainable travel, while fundraising to make a difference.

In furthering her ambition to create change, Antonia has become an Ambassador for One Girl and also a '[Wilderness Wear Tribe Member](#)' and sees the trek as her response to a world that she finds in dire need of many kinds of solutions - from responding to climate change, addressing the 'real' cost of consumption and the lack of access for all to basic human rights, including education.

"I believe it is not good enough to just sit back and talk about everything that is wrong," Antonia says. "Living a life that is simple has always seemed better to me, and after embracing the slow life and moving my family across the world from Australia to the Netherlands, I want to live a life that reflects that. I am fortunate to live in a country that is well-off and safe, that provides a great education system for my kids. The benefits my family enjoys because of where we live are just not available to too many people, especially girls, living in some of the world's most disadvantaged countries."

Antonia has set up her walk as a one-woman initiative to raise funds to benefit [One Girl Australia](#). She first learned about the work of this particular charity at the end of 2016 after sitting in the audience of a presentation from Morgan Koegal, CEO of One Girl, during a Women's Adventure summit with her 10 year old daughter, Zoë.

Morgan said: 'When something feels wrong in your gut – do something about it'. So they did. In a concentrated two-week school raffle with ethical and sustainable prizes, Antonia and her daughter Zoë raised enough money to educate eight girls for a full school year. Antonia watched in awe as her very own 'one girl', together with her friends, stood up for girls who don't share the same privilege and freedom as them. Antonia says she learned a lot from watching those 10 year olds.

"Being paralysed by my own 'guilt of privilege' and fear of standing up, of speaking up doesn't sit right in my gut anymore," Antonia says, describing how this challenge represents a way to use her love of hiking to join the movement of women who are using adventure to create change.

Antonia added: "One Girl works in both Sierra Leone and Uganda, two of the most challenging places on earth to be born a girl. For girls born in these countries, education changes everything."

Antonia references statistics from the region which show:

- A girl's income increases by 10-25% for every extra year of education.
- She'll marry later and have a smaller, healthier family - when she's ready.
- Her health, economic status, and future family then all benefit.
- Educated mothers are more than twice as likely to educate their children.

"I will walk solo, though some of my donors have said they may walk a few hours with me," says Antonia. In fact, a fellow hiker in the USA has been so inspired she has signed up to walk her own Camino for One Girl. Antonia describes this as "the ripple effect" and is also why she has decided to share her story more widely, to be a voice for women who 'adventure'.

“My partner Greg and my kids will be checking-in with me along the way and I will also post regular updates online from the road, to share the journey with the people who are supporting the One Girl cause with their donations, sponsorships and support.”

Antonia said a number of Australian organisations have lent their support, including: Wilderness Wear, Travel Play Live Magazine, Go To Skincare as well as international supporters, including: Out Now Global, Salomon UK, TravelSafe Int. B.V. and Just Grab Bits - an initiative to pick up the plastic litter that may otherwise end up in the world's oceans.

Individuals have also supported her efforts with an initial group of individual donors finding out about her plans on her Instagram posts [Frances Antonia](#) and also at her website, [Slower Family Travels](#).

“I think all the time about my four children and the world they will grow up into,” Antonia said. “I really want it to be a better place so this walk is something I can do right now to help the girls that One Girl supports in Africa. Having an education really makes an enormous difference to help escape a life of poverty. My three boys are very supportive and my daughter is delighted that this project will help make other girls' lives better. I will end up changed, fitter and along the way I'll see amazing sights and make memories and friends that I'll treasure while helping a great cause. All funds donated will go directly to the One Girl charity.”

“This is really just a story about a woman using adventure to help make a change not only to herself but in the world. I am really looking forward to it.”

To donate, click on the link to Frances Antonia - Hike for One Girl [LINK: <https://slowerfamilytravels.com/how-to-help/>]

#hikeforonegirl

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APPEAR ON NEXT 2 PAGES

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IMAGE 1: PYRENEES MOUNTAINS



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IMAGE 2: FRANCES ANTONIA

