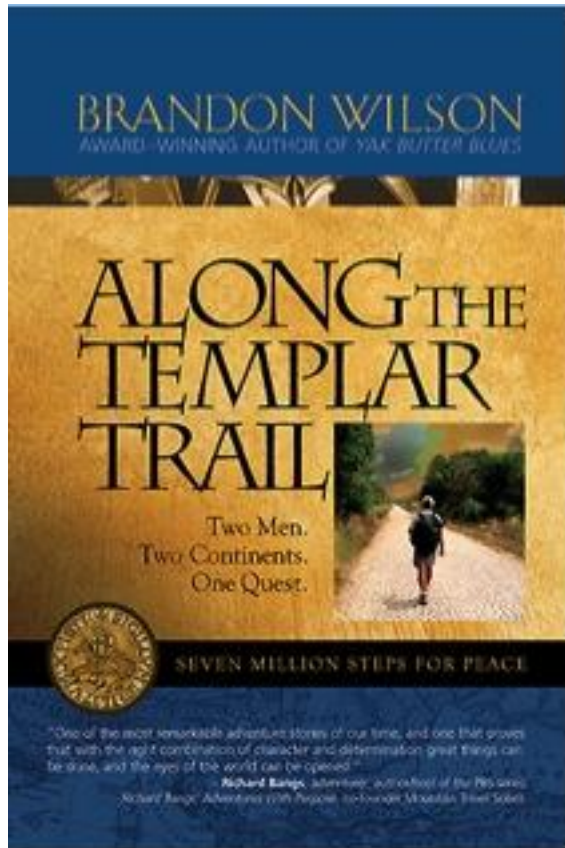


## Walking to Jerusalem Inspires a Poignant Tale of Courage and Peacemaking

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While many of us dream of making some small impact upon the world, few risk taking it to this extreme. Author Brandon Wilson and his 68-year-old French friend recently completed an eleven-country, two-continent pilgrimage walk for peace from France to Jerusalem. Their courageous journey traced one marched a millennium ago by early pilgrims, Crusaders, and those who were to become the first Knights Templar.

They found it fittingly ironic that their path of peace would coincide with a trail long used for war. Their odyssey began in Dijon, France where they followed pathways along ancient canals. Once in southern Germany, they connected with the Donau Radweg, or bicycle path, and followed the Danube River through Germany, Austria and Slovakia to Budapest, Hungary. From there they headed south along country roads to Serbia and Bulgaria where they connected with what was once the old Roman road or Via Militaris to Istanbul, Turkey.

Improvisation was their constant companion. Since they were re-blazing a thousand year old trail, everything was uncertain. Carrying only a fifteen-pound pack, Wilson found refuge in simplicity. They traveled 25-50 kilometers each day without a tent, often staying in monasteries or simple hostels along the way.

Time and again they were helped by “angels,” strangers who offered food when they were hungry, water when they were thirsty, and often a place to sleep when they could walk no farther.

Nevertheless, the pilgrims faced personal challenges as they trekked 2620-miles (the equivalent to crossing the U.S.) across difficult terrains. Temperatures varied from the near-freezing Black Forest to Turkey's broiling plains. It rained eighteen out of twenty-one days in Austria as they completed a virtual marathon each day. However all that paled in comparison to what awaited. When war erupted in Israel and Lebanon, everything became uncertain – except for their steadfast and perhaps life-threatening resolve.

Asked why he set-off on this unique journey, Wilson explained, "First, it was a personal pilgrimage, a spiritual quest."

"Next," he continued, "I wanted to establish this trail as an international path of peace for people of all cultures, faiths and nationalities, in the tradition of the Camino de Santiago. Walking reduces life to its essentials. At the end of the day, all pilgrims rub sore feet, bandage blisters, take cold showers, and share food around the same table. As we share stories and dreams, we realize how similar we are, our hopes of peace, a homeland, health and security for our families, a better life for our children. Once people realize this, everything else is superfluous."

As word of their mission spread, their trek attracted the attention of national television networks and newspapers in major cities such as Belgrade, Nis, Sofia, Plovdiv and Alanya, allowing them to spread an impassioned call for peace to millions of Christians, Muslims and Jews. Without fail, those ordinary people echoed their call to focus on our commonality instead of our differences – and the urgency of resolving our problems.

The peace walker is no novice to these types of journeys. His fascination began when he and his wife Cheryl became the first western couple to walk a 1,000km. Buddhist pilgrimage trail from Lhasa, Tibet to Kathmandu. This world adventurer and "perpetual pilgrim" has gone on to trek five of the world's most important pilgrimage trails: the Camino de Santiago and Via de la Plata across Spain, the St. Olav's Way across Norway, and he was the first American to walk the 1150-mile Via Francigena from England to Rome.

Brandon Wilson's inspiring new book about their historic odyssey, *Along the Templar Trail: Seven Million Steps for Peace* (Pilgrim's Tales, Inc.), stands as a strong testimony to the courage of the human spirit.

The Midwest Book Review calls it "More than the mere adventure of two brave men, it is a grand and noble quest for peace, as well as a spiritual voyage that will leave readers emotionally and intellectually replenished... Reviewer Mayra Calvani goes on to add, "Wilson's writing combines a marvelous sense of Zen with good humor, and his personal style makes you feel as if you were there taking part in it all..."

With 44 photos, maps/illustrations and stages with distances, *Along the Templar Trail* provides a signpost for those who dream of making a similar journey—on foot—or just in spirit and mind.

#### About the Author

Brandon Wilson is the award-winning author of *Yak Butter Blues: A Tibetan Trek of Faith*, a book chronicling his trek across Tibet, and *Dead Men Don't Leave Tips: Adventures X Africa*, a book about a crazed journey from London to Cape Town. His story "Life When Hell Freezes Over" appears in *They Lived to Tell the Tale: True Stories from the Legendary Club*. His photos complement the new book *Naïve & Abroad: Limping 600 Miles Across Spain* by Marcus Wilder, and he has won photo awards from *National Geographic Traveler* and *Islands* magazines. Wilson is a member of the prestigious Explorers Club.

#### Early Reviews

"A fascinating testimony of faith and gumption...A must read." ~ Arun Gandhi, president of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence

"Simply one of the most remarkable adventure stories of our time, and one that proves that with the right combination of character and determination great things can be done, and the eyes of the world can be opened." ~ Richard Bangs, adventurer/author/host of the PBS series *Richard Bangs' Adventures With Purpose*

"If we want peace on earth, we must make the effort to embody peace with each step. Brandon Wilson's inspiring journey,

told beautifully in this book, is a living example of peacemaking.” ~ Cindy Sheehan, noted peace activist

“A rhapsody on the theme of pilgrimage. May Brandon Wilson’s goal of fostering peace along the glory roads of the world inspire a trail of pilgrims to create their own sacred journeys in the interest of world peace.” ~ Phil Cousineau, author of *The Art of Pilgrimage* and *The Book of Roads*

ALONG the *TEMPLAR TRAIL: Seven Million Steps for Peace* by Brandon Wilson is available worldwide from your favorite bookshop or Internet bookseller.

To preview, please visit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pJaLpWZWbU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pJaLpWZWbU)

Or: [www.pilgrimstales.com](http://www.pilgrimstales.com)

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