

FRANCE & SPAIN – CAMINO DE SANTIAGO CLASSIC PILGRIM TRAIL

36-days/35-nights: St Jean Pied de Port to Santiago de Compostela – **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn walking



The Way of St James, Camino de Santiago or Chemin St Jacques - the route to the shrine of St James the Apostle in northwest Spain - has attracted pilgrims from all over Europe since the 12th Century who walked, rode or were carried along the route to the city of Santiago de Compostela.

Today, it is possible to experience the same route as the medieval travellers, walking the most unspoilt sections of the route on a self-guided 'inn to inn' walk – staying mostly in simple but comfortable 1, 2 or 3-star accommodation usually with your own bathroom / toilet – and with your baggage transferred each day.

One of the most popular pilgrimage routes is from St Jean Pied de Port in France, crossing the Pyrenees at the Roncesvalles Pass, joining other trails at Puente la Reina in Navarra (near Pamplona) to form a single path across northern Spain to the shrine at Santiago de Compostela. The Spanish part of *El Camino de Santiago* runs 800km through La Rioja, Burgos, León and finally across Galicia to Sarria and Santiago.

Share in the scale, the mystery and the history of this great medieval pilgrimage phenomenon on a journey where you can imagine the hardships, the pleasures and interests of those early pilgrims. Follow a succession of trails linking cities, villages, great cathedrals, fine churches and ancient monuments. See the Pyrenees and the great Navarre plains, see the Montes de Leon, the vineyards of Rioja and the Bierzo, before reaching the fertile valleys of Galicia and the sacred shrine of St James.

We offer a **Classic Long Distance Pilgrim Trail** with an easy to moderate walk from St Jean Pied de Port crossing the Pyrenees and along northern Spain to Santiago, on the road to Compostela.

Departs: Daily from May to October 2024

Starts: St Jean Pied de Port, France

Ends: Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Cost from: **\$8210** per person twin share Single Room supplement **\$1900**
Solo Traveller Supplement **\$725**

Includes: Comfortable hotel / guesthouse accommodation, usually with ensuite bathrooms, daily breakfasts, most evening meals (Bed & Breakfast only in Pamplona, Logroño, Santo Domingo, Burgos, Santiago), luggage transport (one bag per person), transfers as specified in the itinerary on days 12, 13, 14, 15, route notes, maps, local travel information and guidebook (one set per room).

Not Included: Entry fees, meals and drinks not mentioned, excess baggage fees or any personal expenses.

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It is possible to add rest days to this itinerary and also to shorten the daily distances by adding an extra night where indicated with an asterisk*. Hotel upgrades to Paradors in León and in Santiago are also available. Please ask for details and costs when you make your booking.



Walking Difficulty: An average of 4 to 8 hours of moderate walking daily, over mostly undulating terrain. Some of the longer days may be shortened using a shuttle bus (at extra cost). The walk starts with a strenuous ascent in the Pyrenees before descending to some easy flatter sections over the plains, then a gradual ascent over the days between Logroño and Burgos. In the third and fourth weeks, walk through undulating countryside including a climb to O Cebreiro, before a descent and then fairly flat terrain with longer daily distances between there and Santiago.

Suggested itinerary: (overnight stops indicated may change as accommodation availability allows)

Day 1: Arrival St Jean Pied de Port before dinner

Plan to arrive mid-afternoon for time to explore this beautiful medieval town in the foothills of the Pyrenees.

Day 2: St Jean Pied de Port – Roncesvalles

walking @ 25km

Cross the Pyrenees from France into Spain, along the Napoleon route through the Roncesvalles pass. Ascend through peaceful meadows on an ancient Roman road, past the Biakorre Virgin, then through the pass. The descent into Roncesvalles can offer magnificent mountain views.

Day 3: Roncesvalles – Zubiri

walking @ 22km

This is the first stage entirely in the Spanish Pyrenees walking through several small, charming villages. This is the land of the legendary Roland, of the *Chanson de Roland*, who met his death in battle here.

Day 4: Zubiri – Pamplona

walking @ 21km

Today: follow the valley of the River Arga to Zabadilca, with its 12th Century church. Cross a short pass then descend to the undulating plains surrounding Pamplona. The walk is through the city's urban fringe to the narrow lanes of the historic centre of Pamplona, a city known for the festival of the Running of the Bulls.

Day 5: Pamplona – Puente la Reina

walking @ 24km

Leave Pamplona through the university campus over undulating terrain to the picturesque village of Zariquiegui, then cross the Sierra del Perdon, surrounded by windmills. Descend to Puente la Reina, where you may meet pilgrims from the Chemin d'Arles, which joins the French Way here.

Day 6: Puente la Reina – Estella

walking @ 22km

The landscape becomes drier crossing the Navarran plains, past olive groves and small towns. When you pass through Cirauqui allow time to visit the Church of San Roman. Heading out of the town follow an old Roman road heading for Estella, a town built for pilgrims in the 11th Century.

Day 7: Estella – Los Arcos

walking @ 22km

The route today crosses cultivated fields, and very few villages. Perhaps take a short detour to visit the Irache monastery, built in the 11th Century, with its impressive Romanesque church. There is a remarkable fountain reserved for pilgrims which pours water from one spout and wine from another.

Day 8: Los Arcos – Logroño

walking @ 28km

The la Rioja wine-producing region is famed principally for its reds made from Tempranillo and Garnacha (known elsewhere as Grenache). Logroño, the regional capital, offers a well-preserved medieval centre.

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Day 9: Logroño – Nájera*

walking @ 29km

Depart Logroño through the park of Pantano de la Graiera, with its huge artificial lake and gardens. The landscape here is dominated by vineyards. Passing through Navarrete, known as the potters' city, the trail ascends to the Alto de San Anton, where there was once a Knights Templar monastery. Here you follow the Najerilla River to Nájera.

Day 10: Nájera – Santo Domingo de la Calzada

walking @ 21km

The route crosses the Meseta, a high central plateau covered with fields of grain. Just before Cirueña, a stand of oaks provides shade for a well-deserved break. Follow country roads and old farm tracks to Santo Domingo de la Calzada.

Day 11: Santo Domingo de la Calzada – Belorado

walking @ 26km

Depart Santo Domingo on a bridge over the Rio Oja, from which la Rioja takes its name, then across largely empty Meseta landscapes into Castile and the province of Burgos to Belorado.

Day 12: Belorado – San Juan de Ortega

walking @ 24km

From the Meseta the trail arrives at Villafranca Montes de Oca and ascends through forest, where once medieval pilgrims were threatened by wolves and thieves, to the Puerto de la Pedraia. Cross the plateau and descend slightly to San Juan de Ortega and, as there is no suitable accommodation available in San Juan de Ortega, a taxi is arranged to take you back to last night's hotel in Belorado (included in tour cost).

Day 13: San Juan de Ortega – Burgos

walking @ 28km

After breakfast return by taxi to San Juan de Ortega (included) to continue the walk. Leaving the forests of the Montes de Oca behind, descend to the fertile plains of the Rio Arlanzón. There are two options to enter Burgos, one through the rather ordinary suburbs and the other through the Fuentes Blancas Park. There is much to see in Burgos, including the World Heritage-listed Gothic Cathedral, the historic quarter, and Castle Hill, with expansive views of the city.

Day 14: Burgos – Hornillos del Camino

walking @ 20km

From Burgos, today's walk takes you through Tardajos, where you can visit the Baroque 16th century church of Iglesia de la Asuncion before continuing to Rabé de las Calzadas. Of note in this peaceful village are the historic pilgrim's hospital, now a private residence, and the Church of Santa Marina with its Romanesque entrance and beautiful interior. The afternoon walk is through the vast open landscapes of the Meseta before a short transfer to the hotel in Isar.

Day 15: Hornillos del Camino - Castrojeriz

walking @ 20km

A short transfer this morning to Hornillos del Camino. Walk to Hontanas, with the refreshing natural springs, and on to the ruins of the San Antón Convent. After a gradual ascent into Castrojeriz you can explore the village's medieval charm, from its ruined castle to churches like the Iglesia de Santo Domingo and Iglesia de San Juan.

Day 16: Castrojeriz – Frómista

walking @ 26km

A climb with fresh legs to begin the day and afterwards, most of today's route is undulating. You cross the 11-arched Itero Bridge over the Rio Pisuerga and enter into Palencia province following the Castile Canal to Frómista. Allow time this afternoon to visit the Romanesque church of San Martin in Frómista.

Day 17: Frómista – Carrion de los Condes

walking @ 21km

A choice of routes today. The official path follows the road; alternatively follow a route alongside the Rio Ucieza. There is a short detour to Villalcazar de Sirga, which has a huge church dedicated to the Virgen Blanca, built by the Knights Templar. Then continue on to Carrión de los Condes

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Day 18: Carrión – Calzadilla de la Cuenza

walking @ 18km

After spending the night in the beautiful town of Carrión de los Condes, pass through grain fields and along an old Roman road, the Via Aquitania to Calzadilla de la Cuenza, where the legend of the goose that laid the golden eggs began.

Day 19: Calzadilla de la Cuenza - Sahagún

walking @ 24km

Leaving the province of Palencia, today's walk takes us to the fascinating Múdejar style town of Sahagún in the province of León.

Day 20: Sahagún – El Burgo Ranero

walking @ 26km

After leaving Sahagún, you'll pass through Calzada del Coto, a quiet village (except in mid-August when the annual fiesta dedicated to San Roque is held) and then on to Bercianos del Real Camino where Iglesia de San Salvador is located. Your destination today is El Burgo Ranero

Day 21: El Burgo Ranero – Mansillas de las Mulas

walking @ 20km

Again, there is a choice of routes today – one a well-trodden tree-lined path, the other a more peaceful and less shaded route on an old Roman road. The two paths meet in Reliegos and continue on to Mansillas de las Mulas, named partly for the mule markets that once took place here.

Day 22: Mansillas – León

walking @ 19km

Depart Mansillas on a medieval bridge over the Rio Elsa, then mostly flat, pleasant walking, with views northwards to the Cantabrian Mountains and a beautiful descent into León. In León consider an upgrade (at extra cost) to León's Parador in the Hospital de San Marcos, once a pilgrims' hostel, now an elegant hotel. It is worth spending some time in the historic centre of León to see the Pulcra Leonina and the Spanish 'Sistine Chapel' in the Cathedral and Basilica of San Isidro. The city centre has earned the nickname *El Húmedo* (the wet district) for its proliferation of restaurants, cafes and tapas bars.

Day 23: León – Hospital de Orbigo

walking @ 28km (optional local bus at extra cost)

You can shorten today's route considerably by taking a local bus (at extra cost, approx. €4) through the suburbs of León to Virgen del Camino (about 11km). Again there is a choice of routes, both taking you through the arid landscape to Hospital de Orbigo and the famous Puente de Orbigo.

Day 24: Hospital de Orbigo – Astorga

walking @ 18km

This short stage marks the end of the undulating sunburnt Meseta and the transition into the Montes de Leon. Allow time this afternoon to explore Astorga, taking in the Bishops' Palace, a neo-Gothic work designed by Antonio Gaudí, the Gothic cathedral and its Roman mosaics, and the chocolate factory.

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Day 25: Astorga – Rabanal del Camino

walking @ 21km

Shortly after leaving Astorga there is an opportunity to detour to Castrillo de los Polvazares, declared a national monument for its traditional 'maragato' culture and architecture. Continue past isolated mountain villages and the remains of Roman gold mines and ascend to Rabanal del Camino.

Day 26: Rabanal – Ponferrada*

walking @ 33km

A long walk, starting with an ascent to the Cruz de Ferro, an iron cross at one of the highest peaks on the Camino (1504m) with breathtaking views across to the west to Ponferrada, your destination for today. Descend to the charming villages of Acebo and Molinaseca, then cross the plain of Bierzo to Ponferrada, whose historic centre is dominated by a 12th Century castle.

Day 27: Ponferrada – Villafranca del Bierzo

walking @ 23km

An easy walk across the plain of Bierzo, surrounded by the vineyards that produce the region's lively red wines, typically made from the local Mencía grapes. Your destination, Villafranca del Bierzo, the 'city of the Franks,' is a charming town at the foot of the mountains.

Day 28: Villafranca del Bierzo – O Cebreiro*

walking @ 30km

Another beautiful mountain stage from Castile into Celtic-influenced Galicia. Here signs are in Galician rather than Castilian Spanish. A steep ascent in the afternoon to O Cebreiro and, if time permits, the intact pre-Romanesque church is worth a visit, as it is said to contain a Holy Grail. There are also unique *pallozas* here, round stone houses with straw roofs, one of which has been converted to an ethnological museum.

Day 29: O Cebreiro – Triacastela

walking @ 21km

The footpath follows the ridgelines and weather permitting there are breathtaking views over Galicia. At Alto de San Roque, with a bronze statue of a giant fighting the elements, there is a descent into Triacastela.

Day 30: Triacastela – Sarria

walking @ 18km

Again, a choice of routes today, one passing the village of Samos and its monastery, the other shorter and more peaceful through the Galician countryside.

Day 31: Sarria – Portomarín

walking @ 23km

Follow quiet country roads through shady oak forests and pretty villages. Many pilgrims join the route here as Sarria marks the start of the last 100 kilometres to Santiago, the minimum distance required to collect the *Compostela*. Time permitting you may visit the beautiful Romanesque church at Barbedelo. Through hamlets and villages to Portomarín, a village rebuilt stone by stone after the old village was flooded by the construction of a nearby dam. Take a rest on one of the numerous terraces of the main plaza.

Day 32: Portomarín – Palas de Rei

walking @ 25km

Cross the river Mino and ascend steadily through Gonzar then Castromaior, which has a Romanesque church and the ruins of a *castro* or hill fort. The landscape here is dotted with charms, crosses, meadows, hedges, stones, and calvaries typical in Celtic culture. The calm of the Galician Cemetery in Ligonde on a sunny day is a rest in itself. In Eirexe, the Romanesque portal of the church features a sculpture of Daniel and animals, as well as Santiago de Peregrino inside. Continue over undulating terrain to Palas de Rei.

Day 33: Palas de Rei – Arzúa*

walking @ 30km

Today, the route continues downhill, passing through many villages. At Melide the Camino Primitivo route across northern Spain joins your route. Cross several streams to the village of Boente with its church of Santiago. Continue to the medieval village of Ribadiso, and finally Arzúa, a small town with two churches well worth visiting, Santa María and La Magdalena.

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Day 34: Arzúa – Lavacolla*

walking @ 29km

Today is the last long stage. This shaded section of the Camino passes through forests, alongside streams and through sleepy villages to Lavacolla, where traditionally pilgrims would wash themselves in the village stream before making their final approach to Santiago.

Day 34: Lavacolla – Santiago de Compostela

walking @ 10km

Tall eucalyptus trees line the way to Monte del Gozo. From the 'Mount of Joy' you can see the Cathedral of Santiago. Enter through the Porta de Camino to explore this UNESCO World Heritage site and the cathedral in time for Pilgrims' mass at noon.

In Santiago de Compostela upgrade your accommodation (at extra cost) to the Parador in Santiago, in the former Hostal de los Reyes Catolicos, on the main square near to the Cathedral.

Day 34: Trip ends after breakfast in Santiago

Ask about extending your stay here in Santiago when making your booking as there is so much to see.



Outdoor Travel offers a choice of guided or self-guided walking holidays on the Camino routes in France, Spain or Portugal including the popular Sarria to Santiago route. Walks are also available on the **Via Francigena** – the pilgrims' road to Rome from the Swiss Alps – around Mont Blanc, the Pyrenees in France and Spain and in most areas of Europe or in the United Kingdom including the challenging Coast to Coast route or the Scottish West Highland Way.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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