

Camino de Santiago

Hotel-to-hotel independent walking

- A luxury linear walk along one of the most ancient pilgrimage routes in the world!
- The very best accommodation: converted water mills, hilltop monasteries, stylish farmhouses
- Soaring cathedrals, Roman bridges, country chapels and thatched Galician villages
- Poppy sprinkled wheat fields, orchid rich water meadows, pine scented woodland
- Share in a 1000 year old sense of achievement that will take your breath away!



The Spanish Camino de Santiago – The Way of St James - is one of the most ancient walking routes in the world. Ever since the C9, the ‘French Road’ has led thousands of pilgrims on an 800km/500 mi journey across northern Spain, winding from the Pyrenees across the wheat fields of old Castile to pass through Leon – the seat of Spanish kings, full of soaring cathedrals and hushed convents. From Leon, the Camino leads over pine ridges and through oak woods, between lush vineyards and across rushing rivers below castles of the Knights Templar before entering Galicia. The route then builds to a spectacular finale at Santiago de Compostela’s majestic Baroque cathedral, the last resting place of the Apostle St James.

Walking the Camino is an amazing way to meet people from all over the world. You walk begins in Leon and, in keeping with the theme of a pilgrimage, you walk daily along farm tracks, paths and country lanes, enjoying sociable lunches in restaurants en route. In the evenings, you’ll stay in an astonishingly diverse range of properties including hilltop monasteries, converted water mills and stylish farmhouses, all of them packed with period features. We have included transfers after breakfast on the first three walking days, after which you’ll walk all the way to Santiago. The rush of achievement on arrival is immense, and sharing in this experience is incredibly rewarding.

Everyone on the Camino has a ‘Pilgrim Passport’ that can be stamped in bars, hotels and churches along the way to qualify for a certificate from the official Pilgrim Office in Santiago. Along with your passport, you’ll notice a profound and heart warming camaraderie with other walkers, as day by day you fall in and out of step with people from all over the world, some of whom have been walking for months covering hundreds of miles! You’ll also find complete strangers cheering you on and wishing you “Buen Camino!” (“Enjoy your walk!”).



CAMINO DE SANTIAGO | DAY BY DAY

Day 1 Arrival in Leon

Arrive at your historic hotel in the heart of Leon. Lots of restaurants/ tapas bars on your doorstep, so we've left you free for dinner tonight.

Day 2 Leon to Molinaseca 16km/10mi/4hr or 8km/5mi/2hr

After a 1hr transfer to Cruz de Ferro, a remote hilltop chapel high in the smoky Montes de Leon, the Camino winds downhill through fragrant pines where once the Knights Templar protected pilgrims from bandit attack. An easy path lined with wild chestnuts, cherries, peppers and fennel leads to riverside Molinaseca, where you'll meet your host Juan Belda, who has walked the entire Camino three times!

Day 3 Ambasmestas to O'Cebreiro 14km/8mi/4.5hr

After a short transfer (30 mins), you ascend the Rio Valcarce valley, climbing into moody oak woods strung with lichen and strewn with early purple orchid. O'Cebreiro is an C11 village in the heart of the Cordillera Cantabrica – walk to the viewpoint above the village for a perfect sunset and views over 4 ranges of hills, then return along the narrow cobbled streets past traditional thatched houses known as *palazos*.

Day 4 Triacastela to Sarria 18km/11mi/5hr

Farmers wield razor sharp scythes in tiny fields outside Triacastela, as the Camino meanders between heather clad villages overlooking the Monastery of Samos – you can even hear the bells! On reaching Sarria - the antiques capital of Galicia – you'll be whisked to Javier and Raquel's luxurious country rectory, (10 mins), complete with chapel and al fresco dining patio.

Day 5 Sarria to Portomarin 21km/13mi/5hr

A Roman bridge leads out of Sarria up the Celerio Valley, where you'll traverse the hamlets of the southern flank of the Sierra del Paramo. Descend into Portomarin - the original village was drowned by the Belesar Reservoir, and houses still shimmer below the surface! This evening, meet Mario's horses and enjoy wine from his vines, before a waterside stroll after dinner.

Day 6 Portomarin to Lestedo 20km/12mi/4.5hr

Drop into Portomarin's church then follow the Torres stream passing between cornfields lined with ox-eye daisies. Stamp your pilgrim passport in country churches dedicated to the Order of St James before arriving at your delightful rural farmhouse this evening.

Day 7 Lestedo to Melide 13km/8mi/3hr

Country lanes lead past fortified farmhouses into the hillside town of *Palas del Rei* (Palace of the King) as you enter the province of A Coruna. You'll pass typical raised Galician granaries and chickens scamper across narrow streets as you enter vineyards, with views east to the Montes del Vacaloura.

Day 8 Melide to Arzua/Melide 18km/11mi/5hr

Melide is a thriving country town with tavernas brimming with locals enjoying Galician seafood in specialist *pulperias* (octopus restaurants!). Drop into the Romanesque church to admire the frescoes, before lanes lined with bright yellow celandine bring you into the lively market town of Arzua. We collect you here and take you back to Melide for a second night.

Day 9 Melide/Arzua to Rua 19km/12mi/5hr

Short (20 min) transfer back to Arzua's colonnaded streets which lead you into open country where local farmers wear berets as they tend vines and build haystacks with pitch forks. Your route rises and falls through river valleys crossing rushing streams. This evening you can marvel at Javier and Maria's breathtaking converted water mill, where original machinery has been turned into spectacular period features!

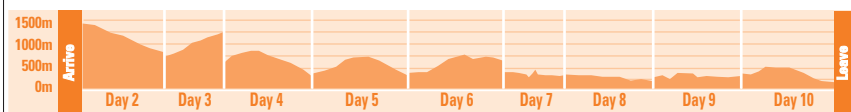
Day 10 Rua to Santiago de Compostela 19km/12mi/5hr

Excitement mounts as you set off towards Monte do Gozo – the Mount of Joy – where pilgrims of old caught their first glimpse of the spires of Santiago. It is a bit busier these days! On reaching Santiago's historic centre, congratulations are everywhere as a steady stream of pilgrims reach journey's end below the cathedral's spectacular Baroque facade. Drop into the Pilgrim Office to collect your certificate if you wish, before checking into our historic hotel near the old marketplace, still a riot of colour!

Day 11 Return home

Enjoy Santiago and the cathedral before taking a taxi to the airport (pay locally approx 15 euro). Or stay on for extra nights to explore this beautiful city.

CAMINO DE SANTIAGO | WALKING DETAILS



Walks on this holiday are on village streets, country lanes, farm tracks and rural paths. Walking boots are essential. Walking poles are recommended.



WHERE YOU STAY



Posada Regia
★★★ Leon, Day 1



Posada de Muriel
★★★ Molinaseca, Day 2



Hotel O'Cebreiro
★★★ O'Cebreiro, Day 3



Rectoral de Goian
★★★★ Sarria, Day 4



Casa Rural Sta Maria
★★ Portomarin, Day 5



Rectoral de Lestedo
★★★★ Lestedo, Day 6



Casa de Los Somoza
★★ Melide, Days 7+8



O Muino de Pena
★★★★ Rua, Day 9



Virxe da Cerca
★★★★ Santiago de Compostela, Day 10

For extra nights we recommend Leon and Santiago, and city add-ons can be arranged in Madrid.

2012 Dates and Prices

Departs Saturdays

Tour Only

2012 departures

Apr 7, 14, 21, 28	\$2,998
May 5, 12, 19	\$2,998
May 26, Jun 2, 9, 16, 23	\$3,064
Jun 30, Jul 7, 14, 21, 28	\$3,084
Aug 4, 11, 18, 25	\$3,084
Sep 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	\$2,998

Singles: Add \$45 per night for sole occupancy of a double room. Solo traveler supplement \$98 per night.

Child: This holiday is unsuitable for children under 12.

Room upgrade: Prices from \$13 per person, per night, based on 2 sharing.

Holiday type: Independent walking, hotel-to-hotel, no minimum group size, however, walking and luggage transfers are subject to at least 2 people (in total) booked on each departure.

Departs: Saturdays from Apr 7 to Sep 29.

Duration: 11 days (10 nights).

Meals: Buffet breakfast and 8 evening meals.

Other details: For "What your holiday price includes," see "Holiday Planning" section pp 48-51.

Tailor-made travel choices

Nearest available airport: Madrid airport for arrival, Santiago de Compostela airport for departure.

Air-rail: Flights can be arranged from most US airports, with connecting transfers as required, prices and details on request.

The above prices include our standard transfers: Tour price includes rail from Madrid Chamartin to Leon 14:06/17:37 (transfer to the hotel, 5 mins, not included, pay locally). **Return:** Santiago de Compostela airport (taxi, not included, pay locally).

Tour only: The price includes a rail ticket between Madrid and Leon however the start point for this holiday is the Hotel Posada Regia in Leon. *Due to the linear nature of this walk, it is not possible to fly into Santiago.*