

Spain: Landscapes from the Camino de Santiago

Air Package Itinerary

Soak up the rich history and cultures of northern Spain as you explore scenic local walks and highlights from the Camino de Santiago. Our local team has selected from over 50,000 miles of trails lacing the Iberian Peninsula to curate the very best of this trail network. Starting in the heart of Basque Country, a walk along the Camino's Northern Way brings you the spectacular coastal scenery of Cantabria—returning each evening to relax in historic accommodations. Walk the most idyllic segments of the Camino's French Way, visiting the charming, thatched huts of O Cebreiro, tasting traditional Galician *orujo*, and exploring a local vineyard perched above the Ribeira Sacra Canyon. Enjoy a scenic slice of the Camino's Finisterre Way as you walk among fragrant pines and eucalyptus into the city of Santiago de Compostela—where you'll spend an opulent evening at a charming local hotel. Along the way, your Spanish Country Walkers trip leaders will enthrall you with tales of the Camino de Santiago and the ancient cultures of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, Basque Country, and beyond.



Highlights

- Stay in historic Spanish *paradors* for most of your trip—landmark buildings rich in history, thoughtfully converted into luxury hotels—plus one night at an elegant *Relais & Châteaux* estate just outside Santiago de Compostela
- Walk through an impressively diverse array of landscapes, from rural coastal fields and

dramatic cliffs to mountain villages, deep valleys, and forested gorges.

- Hike the steep, vineyard-covered slopes of Ribeira Sacra's spectacular Cañón do Sil, then enjoy a wine tasting and lunch with the family who runs the winery.
- Witness a fascinating sheep-herding demonstration as a local shepherd and his border collie corral their rare Xalda sheep with precision and skill.
- Sample beloved Galician beverages, including distilled apple cider and the Celtic-influenced *queimada*, and learn how these traditional drinks are prepared.

On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Air Packages include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate (with challenging sections), with an average of 4 to 8 miles per day. Maximum elevation gains and losses during the walks range from 500 to 1,900 feet. Daily ascents and descents can be steep in places and are often challenging due to uneven footing. The terrain is varied—dirt roads, paved and cobbled streets, sandy and rocky coastal paths, and single-track hiking trails with loose stones, gravel, rocks, and roots. Some trails are exposed to the sun, which can increase the level of difficulty during warmer weather.

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 61°/46°, May 67°/51°, June 74°/56°, July 79°/59°, August 80°/60°, September 76°/57°, October 67°/52°

Average Rainfall (in)

April 85, May 60, June 35, July 22, August 24, September 42, October 86

Flight Day

Depart for Your Vacation

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

Arrival Day

Arrive in Bilbao. Pre-Tour Hotel Night: Bilbao

A Country Walkers representative will greet you at the airport to start your adventure off right. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel—just 15 minutes away.

You'll be staying at the Radisson Collection Hotel, Bilbao, a stylish and modern property housed in a historic building in the heart of the city. Located along Gran Vía, one of Bilbao's main boulevards, the hotel is within walking distance of the Guggenheim Museum, the Fine Arts Museum, the Nervión River promenade, and Casco Viejo—Bilbao's charming Old Town. This elegant and centrally located hotel is an

ideal base for discovering the city's rich culture, architecture, and world-renowned Basque cuisine.

The remainder of the day is yours to enjoy—perhaps visit a museum, stroll the riverside paths, or settle into a local café for lunch or dinner. We provide detailed city information to help you make the most of your time in Bilbao.

DAY 1

Your Country Walkers Vacation Begins: Hike Quebrada Natural Park and Travel to Santillana del Mar

Costa Quebrada; 2.5 miles, easy to moderate

After breakfast, meet your leaders at 9:30 a.m.

in the hotel lobby. They will be wearing Country Walkers shirts for easy identification. Please be dressed for walking—comfortable, weather-appropriate attire, sturdy footwear, and a daypack (to carry essentials such as rain gear and a water bottle) are required.

Travel about one hour and 20 minutes to the outskirts of Santander and the heart of the Natural Park of Costa Quebrada in Spain's stunning Cantabria region. Here, dramatic cliffs, arches, islets, and coves tell a unique story of coastal geology shaped by the tides. This is a spectacularly scenic corner of Spain.

Begin your Spanish amble on an easy coastal trail along open pastures and a gravel road. Soon, the breathtaking Covacho Beach appears, where crystalline waters kiss a spit of sand reaching out to a rocky islet. There will be time to admire this remarkable vista before continuing to Playa de Arnia, where magnificent rock formations rise just offshore—some forming parallel striations, others towering like massive walls.

Your walk follows a single-track path along one of the most impressive coastal vistas in northern Spain: the Senda del Litoral, a stunning alternative route to the Camino Norte, one of the many pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela.

At the end of your walk, you may stop for lunch on your own before transferring to one of Spain's

most beautiful villages—Santillana del Mar—where you'll rub shoulders with many Camino pilgrims who overnight here. Before settling into your first *parador*—part of Spain's network of historic buildings gloriously restored into stunning hotels—join your city guide for an illuminating walking tour of this eighth-century town. Stroll among ochre-hued mansions and palaces as your leader shares the legends and lore of this medieval gem.

Then, settle into your *parador* and get acquainted with your travel companions over a welcome drink. This evening, enjoy a dinner of delectable regional specialties paired with local wine in the hotel's formal restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 2

Travel to Asturias. Walk the Coastal Camino Norte. Cheese Tasting and Farm Picnic

Coastal Camino Norte; 3-6 miles, easy to moderate, 400-ft. elevation gain and 600-ft. elevation loss

Enjoy a hearty breakfast, then travel 40 minutes to one of the most magnificent coastal regions of the Principality of Asturias. Here, you follow an invigorating footpath along the Camino Norte—one of the most spectacular segments of the Camino. Your seaside route traces open pastures and a series of cliffs, where you might encounter sheep, cows, and horses. As your walk begins on flat trails, you pass green pastures, sea caves, and tiny villages before arriving at an overlook that offers sweeping views of the sea.

Continuing on, after a short shuttle, you pause for lunch at a local cheese farm. Here, owner Aurelio tends to goats and makes cheese in the traditional way. Following a visit to his farm and production room, you sample his cheese and enjoy a cozy picnic lunch featuring local specialties.

If time allows, avid walkers may continue for another two hours from the Mirador de la Boriza—or the “stairway to nowhere”—where concrete steps lead to fantastic vistas of Llanes.

Alternatively, take a short ride to Llanes, a charming village set beneath the long limestone ridge of the spectacular Sierra del Cuera. Explore on your own, perhaps visiting the town's medieval tower and the Gothic Santa María del Conceyu church, before regrouping for a short drive to the hotel.

Later, gather at your next stunning *parador*, a peaceful riverside retreat housed in a former 12th-century Benedictine monastery. Featuring Romanesque architecture, atmospheric cloisters, and scenic mountain views, it offers a unique blend of history and natural beauty. This evening, enjoy local Asturian dishes and Spanish wine in the hotel's elegant restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3

Walk Along the Sella River to Cangas de Onís. Shepherd Demonstration

Cangas de Onís; 4-7 miles, easy to moderate. Optional loop above Cangas de Onís; 4 miles, easy

Start your day with a pleasant, easy walk along the Sella River, perhaps catching glimpses of morning kayakers or swimmers in the waters below. Your destination is the center of Cangas de Onís, renowned for its perfectly preserved Roman arched bridge. This was the site of the pivotal Battle of Covadonga in 722—the conflict that launched the Reconquista and established the Kingdom of Asturias. If you wish, take an optional 4-mile walk above the village through forests and tiny hamlets.

After your included lunch at a local *llagar*, you retrace your steps back to the *parador* to meet a local shepherd, his border collie, and his rare Xalda sheep. Your new friends demonstrate the fine art of shepherding—an impressive display of how these highly trained dogs communicate with both humans and sheep.

Upon your return from lunch, there will be time to explore your historic *parador* and its beautiful natural setting. Later, you'll be driven back into town for dinner on your own. Cangas de Onís offers a lively and authentic dining scene, with cozy *sidrerías*, rustic taverns, and restaurants serving local Asturian specialties such as *fabada*, grilled meats, and cider-poured tableside. Your leaders will offer recommendations to help you find the perfect spot to enjoy your evening.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4

Walk the Coastal Camino Norte. Travel to Villafranca del Bierzo in Castilla y León

Camino Norte; 4 miles, easy to moderate, 250-ft. elevation gain

After a bountiful breakfast, travel to Isla. From here, walk a stretch of the Camino Norte, passing a few scenic ocean views framed by dramatic cliffs, before gathering with your group for a typical Asturian lunch.

Then, travel by shuttle to Castilla y León. We'll break up the three-hour drive with scenic stops along the way.

At the end of today's journey, you arrive in Villafranca del Bierzo, the region's "Little Compostela." Dripping with medieval and Jacobean character, this charming town is officially recognized as an Asset of Cultural Interest for its wealth of historic buildings. It also welcomed pilgrims who were too ill or injured to continue to Santiago de Compostela. During a short walk upon arrival, discover its 16th-century castle and the Collegiate Church of Santa María. At the Church of Santiago the Apostle, step through the Door of Forgiveness, which granted injured pilgrims the same indulgence as those who reached the cathedral in Santiago.

Tonight, settle into your elegant *parador*, a stately building blending traditional stone architecture with a peaceful hilltop setting overlooking the surrounding valleys. This evening, enjoy regional specialties from Castilla y León, accompanied by local Bierzo wine, in the hotel restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

Walk into Galicia from Las Herrerías to O Cebreiro on the Camino Francés. Travel to Monforte de Lemos. Celtic *Queimada* Demonstration

Las Herrerías to O Cebreiro; 3-5 miles, moderate, 2,000-ft. elevation gain

After breakfast, travel to the next trailhead in the hamlet of Las Herrerías.

Today's walk along the Camino Francés delivers you to the spectacularly scenic and culture-rich

region of Galicia, where Mediterranean vegetation gives way to landscapes that evoke the British Isles—verdant pastures and ancient gray granite stone. You begin in the flat terrain of a lush valley, then ascend gentle slopes along a path bordered by moss-covered stone walls and shaded by chestnut trees. After passing through the village of Fada, the wooded area opens to sweeping vistas of Galicia's lush interior—its forests shaped by the region's moist Atlantic climate.

Continue through the village of Laguna de Castilla and soon cross from the province of León into Galicia. Your walk concludes in the town of O Cebreiro, known for its panoramic views and the Royal Saint Mary's Church, built on the foundations of a pre-Romanesque structure. Perhaps most memorable is your lunch of Galician specialties, enjoyed in an ancient hostelry. A Roman road once passed through here, and the region's *pallozas*—prehistoric stone homes with thatched roofs—offer a glimpse into the lives of its earliest inhabitants.

After lunch on your own, the snowcapped mountains of León fade into the distance as you travel to Monforte de Lemos. Upon arrival at your next remarkable *parador*, set high above the town in a former monastery and fortress, take time to stroll its tranquil gardens or relax by the pool. This evening, gather for an introduction to the Celtic tradition of *queimada*, a fiery ritual involving distilled spirit, citrus, and incantations. Later, retreat to a private dining room and savor exquisite Galician cuisine paired with fine wines from the nearby Ribeira Sacra region.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Hike the Vineyards of Ribeira Sacra in the Cañón do Sil. Traditional Pottery and Galician Home-Hosted Lunch

Cañón do Sil; 5 miles, easy to moderate, 700-ft. elevation gain and loss

Once you've enjoyed a leisurely breakfast, take a short drive to the Cañón do Sil—a deep, dramatic gorge considered one of the most spectacular vistas in Galicia. Its walls soar some 1,500 feet above the river, creating a unique microclimate that allows olive trees and grapevines to thrive. Your walk begins above the cliffs through ancient chestnut and oak forests, then continues along paths threading through steep vineyards. Pavement, steps, and ramps guide the way through an environment where pruning and harvesting are done entirely by hand—

machinery simply can't manage the terrain.

After a revitalizing hike, take a short shuttle to tour a traditional pottery studio, concluding your visit with a tasting of local wine and farm-fresh products.

Later, return to your *parador* to unwind before reconvening for a walk into Monforte de Lemos for a guided city tour. Your local guide will lead you through the old Jewish Quarter—a maze of cobbled lanes such as Calle Zapaterías—where craftsmen and scholars once opened shops and offices. Dinner is on your own this evening, perhaps at one of the town's restaurants after your tour concludes.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7

Walk into Santiago de Compostela on the Camino Finisterre. Guided City Tour, Cathedral Visit, and Farewell Dinner at Your Hotel

Camino Finisterre to Cathedral; 5 miles, easy to moderate, 600 ft. elevation gain and 400 ft. elevation loss

After breakfast, travel west past Santiago de Compostela. You arrive in Roxos to begin your final walk into this revered city—widely considered the most beautiful approach thanks to its Fluvial Path, which follows a tranquil stream past well-preserved ancient mills. The Camino Finisterre leads you through some of Galicia's most remote and unspoiled landscapes. You pass through fragrant eucalyptus forests, traverse rolling pastures and open fields, and stroll through tiny villages seemingly untouched by time. Though immersed in sylvan beauty, the city and its sublime cathedral draw ever nearer.

Once in Santiago de Compostela, make your way through the Old Town to the venerated Cathedral. Narrow, granite-cobbled streets wind past the Plaza de Cervantes and its small statue of the writer, leading you to the grand Plaza de Obradoiro, dominated by the Cathedral's main façade. This magnificent square is alive with pilgrims who have walked for weeks—or even months—to reach their journey's end.

After lunch at your leisure, meet a local guide for a walking tour of Santiago de Compostela, including entrance to the Cathedral. Construction of this UNESCO World Heritage site began in 1075 over the remains of a pre-Romanesque church. Expansion and embellishment continued through the 16th to 18th centuries, as it grew in prominence as an episcopal seat and became the third most important pilgrimage destination in Christianity—after Rome and Jerusalem.

After time to absorb the ornate splendor of this historic city, take a short shuttle to your final hotel: the exquisite Hotel Spa A Quinta da Auga Relais & Châteaux. Nestled on a peaceful riverside estate just outside the city center, this lovingly restored 18th-century paper mill combines traditional Galician architecture with refined elegance. You may wish to unwind in the hotel's lush gardens or take advantage of its luxurious spa facilities—a well-deserved treat after your days of walking.

This evening, gather for a very special farewell dinner in the hotel's elegant dining room. Toast your unforgettable week in Northern Spain and savor a memorable meal of Galician specialties, beautifully prepared and presented.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8

Your Country Walkers Vacation Ends. Post-Tour Hotel Night: Santiago de Compostela

After breakfast, enjoy a relaxed morning to take advantage of the hotel's serene amenities or explore more of Santiago de Compostela. The city center and its magnificent Cathedral are just a 10-minute taxi ride from the hotel (at your own expense). We provide city information to help you plan your day in this captivating destination.

If you wish, you may choose to attend the early morning mass at the Cathedral—a breathtaking experience, not only for the grandeur of the setting but also for the emotion and sense of accomplishment among the pilgrims who have completed their journey along the many routes of the Camino. The *peregrinos'* final steps lead to the statue of Saint James at the Cathedral's entrance, marking the spiritual

culmination of their pilgrimage.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Departure Day

Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation will be provided to Santiago de Compostela Airport based on your flight departure time.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Air Package

Tour Only

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| Exceptional boutique accommodations and historic Spanish paradores | ✓ | ✓ |
| 16 on-tour meals: 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 5 dinners | ✓ | ✓ |
| Local leaders with you throughout tour | ✓ | ✓ |
| Local wine and/or beer with dinner | ✓ | ✓ |
| Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary | ✓ | ✓ |
| Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour | ✓ | ✓ |
| Roundtrip airfare | ✓ | |
| One extra night in Bilbao and one extra night in Santiago de Compostela with daily breakfast | ✓ | |
| Airport arrival and departure transportation | ✓ | |
| Business-class upgrades available | ✓ | |