

Spain: Camino de Santiago

Tour-Only Itinerary

Scallop shells mark your path and Galician bagpipers squeal out a serenade as you pass under the arches into Santiago de Compostela's cathedral square. Since the ninth century, seekers have dreamed of reaching this final stage of Europe's greatest pilgrimage. Pause a moment to reflect on your unique journey, and the amazing people you've met along the way. In eight days on this Self-Guided walking tour of the Camino de Santiago, you've traveled halfway across Spain, walking the Camino's prettiest segments, and traveling the rest via taxi.

From Roncesvalles near the French Pyrenees, you've crossed almond orchards to hilltop hamlets, wandered La Rioja's vineyards, toured the great monuments of Burgos and Astorga, and climbed chestnut-shaded Roman roads into Galicia's green mountains. Now the ultimate goal, the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, is just one staircase away.

¡Buen camino!



Highlights

- Journey through diverse landscapes, from the rugged Pyrenees to the wine country of La Rioja to the medieval cobblestone streets of Santiago de Compostela.
- Enjoy scenic transfers between walking regions in the company of friendly, knowledgeable drivers who know the countryside intimately.
- Tour the spectacular Episcopal Palace in Astorga, an excellent example of Modernism style, and one of only three Gaudí buildings outside of Catalonia.
- Attend the moving "Pilgrim's Mass" at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, honoring the pilgrims who complete the Camino.

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



A local representative available 24/7.



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



Detailed maps & route notes featuring turn-by-turn directions and places of interest.



Experts to handle all the details, including moving your luggage between hotels while you're out exploring.



Scheduled taxi transfers to bring you to and from each day's walks.



Access to a Self-Guided Flight Concierge—ask our knowledgeable team to find flights that sync with your planned trip.



Delicious meals—many are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Self-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 5 to 9 miles per day and no options. The terrain includes minimal elevation gains and losses, except for three days, with 700-, 1,000-, and 2,000-foot ascents. Walks are on extremely well-maintained, wide trails, sometimes paved, but most often on packed dirt or gravel paths, with occasional loose rocks. From the French border to Santiago de Compostela, the diverse inn-to-inn itinerary selects highlights of the entire “Camino Francés” of the St. James Way, including seven separate Spanish provinces with widely varying scenery: the Pyrenees, Atlantic-influenced forests, limestone-capped vineyards of the Rioja region, the

open plains of Castile and León, and the verdant pastures and gray stone of Galicia. Thanks to daily transfers ranging from 30 minutes to 2 hours, this tour is a literal walk through history with a unique camaraderie shared by fellow pilgrims. Each step reveals medieval towns, cities, churches, monuments, and UNESCO World Heritage sites such as the cathedrals in Burgos and Santiago and the prehistoric site of Atapuerca. Additionally, Spain's long days allow ample time for exploration as well as relaxation. Remember: preparation is the key to ensuring your tour readiness; the more you walk or participate in aerobic exercise prior to your trip, the more you will enjoy your experience!

DAY 1

Arrival in Pamplona. Transfer to Roncesvalles. Orientation meeting en route to or upon arrival at your hotel

You are met in Pamplona by a representative who transports you northwest to the tiny town of Roncesvalles, nestled just under the Ibañeta Pass, the crossing of the Pyrenees between France and Spain. A feeling of anticipation and excitement is palpable, as this town was purpose-built as a waypoint on the Camino. In fact, it is the first stop in Spain for those pilgrims, *peregrinos* in Spanish, who began the Camino Francés in St. Jean Pied de Port, France. The route actually passes right through your historic hotel complex, a former ecclesiastical residence surrounded by tranquil forest. In addition to its significance as a waypoint on the Camino, Roncesvalles was also the site of the battle between Charlemagne and the Basque tribes who defeated him and killed the legendary Roland in 778.

Accommodation: Hotel Roncesvalles, Roncesvalles

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2

Roncesvalles to Bizkarreta

7.2 miles, easy to moderate, 450-ft. elevation gain and 900-ft. elevation loss

After a copious buffet breakfast, your first steps on the Camino de Santiago begin right from your hotel and lead out through the hamlet of Roncesvalles. With the Pyrenees and the French–Spanish border at your back, your walk descends gradually throughout the day from a starting elevation of 3,000 feet to the town of Bizkarreta, at about 2,500 feet. Pass through a mixed forest and by a Gothic pilgrim's cross, and in a few miles, you'll emerge at the tiny town of Burguete. Here, you'll find one main street of Basque-

influenced, sturdy-beamed houses. The nearby Irati river is the trout fishing area that Hemingway described in *The Sun Also Rises*. Although you are officially in the Navarra region of Spain, the heavy stone architecture, traditions, and language are strongly influenced by the Basque region to the north and west. Continue from Burguete to the town of Bizkarreta, which was a Camino stopping point in the 12th century, complete with a pilgrims' hostel. A 30-minute transfer takes you to your night's lodging in the vibrant city of Pamplona. With an intriguing old quarter, lovely parks, and main square, the capital of Navarra is best known for the running of the bulls through its historic center, which takes place during the San Fermín festival in mid-July.

Accommodation: Pamplona Cathedral Hotel, Pamplona

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3

Uterga to Cirauqui

9.2 miles, easy to moderate, 700-ft. elevation gain and loss

A 20-minute transfer takes you to the start of the day's walk in the town of Uterga. You're still not far from the Pyrenees, but you have passed from an Atlantic-influenced geography to a more Mediterranean feel of open vistas with olive groves and vineyards. The peaceful, small towns you walk through today are built of the region's golden stone, a hue that matches the color of the nearby grain fields in the late summer. From Uterga you come into the village of Muruzábal with its Baroque-era palace, now a wine cellar. Crossing some quiet roads, you enter Puente La Reina, the day's recommended lunch spot, with its 11th-century Romanesque six-arched bridge, explicitly built for pilgrims to cross the Arga River. The route departs the town past the 13th-century Santiago Church and follows along the right bank of the Arga. After the wine town of Mañeru, one of the Camino's most picturesque views opens up—a trail winding up through vineyards to the medieval hilltop town of Cirauqui. A short and steep ascent leads to the ancient walls surrounding the town, and you make your way the San Román church. In Cirauqui, a peaceful, authentic place, there is time for refreshment, perhaps at a small bar, as you await your transfer toward the wine-producing region of La Rioja.

Accommodation: Señorío de Briñas, Briñas

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4

Ermita de Valdefuentes to Agés

6.3 miles, easy to moderate, 160-ft. elevation gain and 250-ft. elevation loss

This morning a one-hour transfer brings you to start of the day's walk at a hermitage just off the main Camino path. A gentle climb on a gravel trail soon transitions to a wide, packed forest road. In the past, this remote and isolated wooded plateau was one of the Camino's most dangerous sections—now this forest of pine and oak is a tranquil haven, the habitat of deer, wild boar, and raptors. The route continues past the 11th-century monastery complex of San Juan de Ortega, and then into a forest before arriving at the traditional town of Agés. Nearby is the archaeological site of Atapuerca, a designated UNESCO World Heritage site, containing evidence—fossils and stone tools—of the earliest known hominins in Western Europe. Dating to an estimated 1.2 million years ago, these fossils predate the French site of Lascaux. There is time to learn more about this site tomorrow. A short transfer takes you to the historical heart of medieval Burgos, where you refresh at your hotel before strolling out to choose from the city's many dining options and sample the traditional cuisine of the Castile and León region.

Accommodation: AC Hotel Burgos, Burgos

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5

Castrojeriz to Itero de la Vega

6.9 miles, easy to moderate, 450-ft. elevation gain and 500-ft. elevation loss

This morning you are free to explore the culturally rich city of Burgos, integral to many key events in Spanish history. Most of the city's sites can be reached easily on foot from your hotel in the picturesque old quarter. Serving for five centuries as the capital of the joint kingdom of Castile and León, Burgos was long an important stop on the Camino. Today, it is home to one of the jewels of Spanish Gothic art, the Cathedral of Santa María, a UNESCO World Heritage site well worth visiting. Another Gothic architectural gem is the Palace of the Constables of Castile—or, in Spanish, *Casa del Cordón*—where the king received Columbus after his second voyage to the Americas. A visit to the Museum of Human Evolution is a must (closed on Monday), especially to learn more about the nearby prehistoric archaeological finds of Atapuerca through fascinating state-of-the-art exhibits (in English). Burgos is also the home town of “El Cid,” the 11th-century warrior and Spanish national hero, who is memorialized on a mounted statue. After

this morning's explorations and lunch, you transfer 45 minutes farther along the Camino, where you begin the day's walk at Castrojeriz. This last town in Burgos province was also an important waypoint along the Camino, and once the site of several pilgrim hostels, its hilltop castle ruins attest to its long history. The route this afternoon involves a moderate climb and descent, and features wide-open scenery, with windmills on the far horizon. You make your way to the hamlet of Itero de la Vega, where you are met and transferred about 30 minutes to your home for the evening.

Accommodation: Estrella del Bajo Carrión, Villoldo

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Villares de Orbigo to Astorga

9.2 miles, easy to moderate, 650-ft. elevation gain and 550-ft. elevation loss

A delicious breakfast of homemade baked goods and jams fuels the day, which begins with a 75-90-minute transfer to the trailhead. The packed picnic lunch from the kitchen of your last hotel will be a treat. Begin your walk as you enter yet another of the varied regions on your itinerary—the terrain here has a Mediterranean feel, with an underlying geology of red stone that supports vineyards and forests of conifers and oak. The oak translates into delicious local hams, as acorns are the preferred diet of pigs. Setting off from the village of Villares de Orbigo, your route leads you through agricultural land to the village of Santibañez. A rolling path ensues through oak and chestnut forest, leading you to the flat top of the range where you are rewarded with views to the north as far as the Cantabrian range. Passing the house of one of the Camino's modern "hermits," you soon reach the cross of Saint Turibius, the region's 5th-century bishop. You then descend toward San Justo de la Vega and make your way toward the city of Astorga. In addition to Roman ruins and a fine cathedral, Astorga is perhaps best known for containing one of only three buildings outside Catalonia designed by Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí—the Episcopal Palace. This fascinating structure was built between 1889 and 1913 and is an example of Gaudí's distinctive Catalan Modernism style.

Accommodation: Hostería Camino, Luyego de Somoza

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7

Las Herrerías to O Cebreiro

5.3 miles, moderate, 2,000-ft. elevation gain

A transfer of about two hours west brings you to the beginning of today's walk in the hamlet of Las Herrerías. Just past the start, is the Barrio de Hospital, which housed a medieval hospital for English pilgrims. As you move toward Galicia, the landscape takes on a "Celtic" feel; leaving behind Mediterranean vegetation, you enter countryside that evokes the British Isles—verdant pastures and ancient stones of gray granite. Most of the day's walk is a long uphill, a challenging but important stage for all pilgrims as it leads to the long-awaited province of Galicia. You are able to warm up on the paved flat terrain of the lush valley alongside a bubbling stream before beginning the steady ascent. Camaraderie and excitement also grow steadily amongst walkers on this wooded path, which is bordered by moss-covered stone walls and shaded by chestnut trees. After the village of La Faba, where you may choose to have lunch or a drink, the wooded area transitions to wide-open vistas of the forests along the Atlantic coast. The ascent eases up as you reach the village of Laguna de Castilla, also with a bar and hotel, and soon after, you cross the border from the province of León into Galicia. You are rewarded at the conclusion of the walk at the town of O Cebreiro with wonderful open views over Galicia, as well as the Royal Saint Mary's Church, built on the foundations of a pre-Romanesque church. Predating the Camino was a Roman road, and even earlier than that, the *pallozas*—prehistoric stone homes—you see nearby. Your drive down from O Cebreiro toward your next accommodation provides stunning views of the mountains of León, which, depending on the season, might be snow-capped.

Accommodation: Hotel Monumento Pazo de Orbán, Lugo

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8

Sarria to Ferreiros

8.1 miles, easy to moderate, 1,000-ft. elevation gain and 150-ft. elevation loss

Although it's your final stage on the Camino de Santiago, for many pilgrims this is their first. From the day's starting point in Sarria, it is 100 kilometers to Santiago de Compostela—the minimum distance completed consecutively to achieve the "Compostela," the official certification of completion of the pilgrimage. Pilgrims have their Camino "passports" stamped along the way at the major local churches or official hostels. You're likely to meet many walkers and pilgrims today—people from around the globe sharing this

long walk and truly creating a unique camaraderie. You begin on Sarria's main street and encounter steep stairs that bring you to the town center and the hilltop Convent of Magdalena, dating from the 15th to 18th centuries. The Way then descends to the Rio Pequeño, which you cross over via the medieval Ponte Áspera bridge, and continues through fertile pasture and small vegetable plots. Depending on the season, in Peruscallo, you may be able to buy fresh berries from small farms nearby. Your driver meets you in the town of Ferreiros, allowing you to avoid outlying neighborhoods to bring you into the final stage of your journey at the edge of the city of Santiago de Compostela. You are dropped off at your hotel, where you can refresh before setting off to find the trail of scallop shells embedded in the cobbled streets that mark The Way. Follow the path, flanked by stone archways, until you arrive at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela—a breathtaking sight both in its grandeur and in the sense of overwhelming accomplishment it inspires in the walkers and pilgrims who have arrived here from the many Camino routes. The *peregrinos'* final steps lead to the statue of Saint James at the cathedral entrance. You may choose to attend an evening pilgrim mass, although the famous *botafumeiro*—a Galician term for the large incensory suspended from the ceiling—is only used on special occasions. Construction of this cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage site, began in 1075 over the remains of a pre-Romanesque church. Expansion and embellishment continued from the 16th through the 18th centuries as the cathedral gained importance as an Episcopal see and place of pilgrimage—the third-most-important destination for Christians after Rome and Jerusalem. After the excitement, you might be ready to retire at your hotel in a quiet neighborhood of the historic district. A celebratory drink is in order—the final punctuation to completing a truly fascinating walk through living and ancient history. You can step out later for dinner in Santiago, exploring its intriguing medieval streets and enticing restaurants.

Accommodation: Altaïr Hotel, Santiago de Compostela

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9

Departure from Santiago de Compostela

After breakfast at your hotel, you can depart at your leisure; however, it is highly recommended that you spend an additional day or two in this fabulous city. If your schedule permits, you may want to explore the cathedral museum, the open-air market, or join the 12:00 p.m. "Pilgrim's Mass" (arrive early!). You might complete your journey with another exclusive experience by joining a guided tour of the cathedral rooftops.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Boutique accommodations	✓
15 meals: 8 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 4 dinners	✓
Detailed water- and tear-resistant Route Notes and maps	✓
Orientation meeting with a Country Walkers representative	✓
Local representative available 24/7	✓
Scheduled taxi and luggage transfers (Please note: If unable to walk, it is possible to transfer with your luggage from one accommodation to the next; there may be an additional charge.)	✓
Travel assistance available 24/7 provided by Allianz Global Assistance	✓
Access to Self-Guided Flight Concierge—Ask our knowledgeable team to find flights that sync perfectly with your planned trip.	✓