

SPAIN

Classic Camino de Santiago

A Guided Walking Adventure





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Travel Style

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.

And, with our **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **Bilbao Pre-Tour Extension** to complement this destination, we take care of all the travel to simplify the journey. Refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

Overview

The Camino de Santiago is perhaps the original European walking tour, and this unique itinerary selects the best walking and scenery of the Way of St. James—the ancient pilgrimage route to the city of Santiago de Compostela in Spain's northwestern corner. A condensed version of the Camino Francés—the French route—this tour traverses almost two-thirds of northern Spain, about 500 miles in all, from the Pyrenees on the border with France through seven Spanish provinces. Each step is a link between the present and the past on this legendary trail that early Christians followed to the “ends of the earth”—still part of today's landscape are medieval monasteries, hermits' chapels, and soaring cathedrals at Burgos and Santiago—both UNESCO World Heritage sites. From the diverse landscapes of Basque mountain villages, the vineyards of La Rioja, and the lush meadows of Galicia, you are guided into historical city centers and Roman ruins, to hilltop towns and sweeping coastal views, as well as the Atapuerca archaeological site. Gracious Spanish hospitality is a constant—in family-run inns, a resort, and boutique hotels. As varied as the scenery, Spain's intensely regional cuisine from both land and sea is superbly highlighted—delectable tapas, cured hams, and even chocolate from its Spanish birthplace at Astorga—all paired with world-renowned wines of the Rioja region and beyond.





Daily Itinerary

DAY 1

Meet in Bilbao. Roncesvalles to Bizcarreta; 7 miles, easy to moderate, 900-ft. elevation loss

The tour begins in Bilbao, the Basque country's largest city and a major port that has experienced a renaissance with its striking Bilbao Guggenheim Museum. Leaving the city, you travel by private coach into the heart of the countryside, rising from the coast and through rolling foothills, approaching the spine of the Pyrenees. The walk begins near the tiny town of Roncesvalles, just below the Ibañeta Pass at an elevation of 3,000 feet on the border between France and Spain. Small but rich in history, Roncesvalles is a popular starting point for many pilgrims—*peregrinos* in Spanish—walking the Camino de Santiago, and it was also the site of the defeat of Charlemagne by Basque tribes in the year 778. From the 18th-century stone hostel, the former pilgrims' lodging, the trail descends through beech forest alternating with lush pasture into the village of Burguete, the trout-fishing area described in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. You enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before embarking on the afternoon trail. Passing the sturdy stone and white-washed Basque farmhouses, you continue through the meadows of Altos de Mezkiritz before descending to the town of Bizcarreta, also a 12th-century pilgrims' way-point, where you are met and transferred to your hotel in Pamplona—the city that is best known for the running of the bulls

through its historical center during the San Fermín festival. Dinner this evening is at a restaurant within your hotel, a unique opportunity to taste and toast the days ahead over a fine regional wine.

Pamplona Cathedral Hotel, Pamplona

Located within the ancient walls of the city's old town, this hotel is an ideal home base for travelers hoping to make the most of the first urban hub along the Way of St. James. This four-star property makes exceptional use of its former-convent building, with a restaurant housed in the former chapel and unique, contemporary rooms. Conveniently close to the Portal de Francia (where the Camino enters the city) and the Plaza del Castillo, it also boasts free high-speed wifi, room service, and an excellent staff.



DAY 2

Uterga to Cirauqui; 9 miles, easy to moderate, 700-ft. elevation gain and loss

After breakfast this morning, a 20-minute transfer takes you to the start of the day's walk in the town of Uterga, where, although not far from the Pyrenees, the Atlantic-influenced geography gives way to a more Mediterranean feel with olive groves and vineyards. You walk through peaceful small towns with buildings made of the region's golden stone, in the late summer matching the hue of the grain fields nearby. 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 with its 11th-century Romanesque six-arched bridge, constructed for pilgrims to cross the Arga River. Past the 13th-century Santiago Church, you follow along the right bank of the Arga into the wine town of Mañeru, where a lunch of local specialties refuels you for the trail ahead. One of the Camino's most picturesque views awaits—a trail winding up through vineyards to the hilltop medieval town of Cirauqui. A steep but short ascent leads to the ancient walls surrounding the town and the San Román Church. Later, you transfer to your hotel in the heart of the Álava region, where you are surrounded by the sheltered vineyards of numerous wineries. Here you are offered a private tour of one of the many bodegas followed by a tasting to elucidate the intricacies of Rioja wine. This evening, you enjoy dinner in a region not only blessed with its own excellent products, but also benefitting from the



fresh seafood of the Atlantic to the north and the high-quality meats from the southern plateau.

Hotel Viura, Villabuena de Álava

Stunning modern architecture amidst a traditional Basque village describes this special hotel located in the heart of small but beautiful Villabuena de Álava . The restaurant features first class service,

creative and inspiring cuisine, and a host of local wines. The rooftop terrace offers expansive views of the surrounding hillside while rooms and public spaces stylishly combine contemporary architecture with luxurious comfort.

DAY 3

Ermita de Valdefuentes to Agés; 6 miles, easy to moderate

This morning, a 75-minute transfer brings you to the 12th-century Ermita de Valdefuentes. With a central statue of Saint James to watch over the pilgrims, this tiny hermitage is said to be the last vestige of a Cistercian monastery on the site. You enter a tranquil forested plateau where, in the past, lurking thieves made this section one of the Camino's most dangerous. Now, the pine and oak trees provide habitat for deer, wild boar, and raptors. Continuing past the 11th-century monastery complex of San Juan de Ortega, you emerge from forest onto the Atapuerca plains, and then continue on to the traditional town of Agés for lunch. Afterward, you transfer to Burgos, where you embark on a guided tour of the 13th-century cathedral—a crucial stop for Camino pilgrims; with its delicate spires, it is unique for its scale and French Gothic style. You are now in the region of Castile and León, and in a city key to Spanish history at the confluence of the Duero and Arlanza rivers—a statue memorializes the birthplace of national hero El Cid, and the magnificent cathedral is also a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The tour concludes at your hotel, ideally located in the medieval heart of the city, where, just a few steps away is a true pilgrim hostel (and an organization that Country Walkers proudly supports —the Burgos Association of Friends of the Camino de Santiago). Time permitting, you enjoy a brief visit of the hostel this evening (or the following morning). Your hotel provides an ideal base to choose from the city's many excellent dining options as confirmed by its status as the 2013 “Spanish Gastronomy Capital”.

Hotel Palacio de los Blasones, Burgos

A 16th-century mansion in the historical center of Burgos is steps away from the cathedral, museums, and main plaza. Artful restoration combines original exposed stone, arches, and beams with striking contemporary design and décor in its reception lounge, restaurant, bar, and glass-roofed atrium.



DAY 4

Castojeriz to Itero de la Vega; 7 miles, easy to moderate

This morning, you transfer to the Atapuerca UNESCO World Heritage location—where recent archaeological research has confirmed evidence of the earliest-known hominids in Western Europe. You are guided around the excavation site, where fossils and stone tools were uncovered dating to around 1.2 million years ago, thus predating the French site of Lascaux. Afterward, you return to Burgos for a visit of the new Museum of Human Evolution—to complement your visit to the site and learn more about the network of caves in the Sierra Atapuerca, where incredible discoveries are ongoing.

You enjoy a lively tapas-style lunch before leaving the city, perhaps traditional *patatas bravas* (potatoes with spicy sauce), the region's excellent cured ham and cheeses, salads, calamari, olives, and croquettes—the small-plate possibilities are endless. Afterward, you drive about 45 minutes to pick up the Camino at Castojeriz, also an important pilgrim way-station that once had several hostels and a stone hilltop castle that is now a ruin. In this vast landscape of Spain's central plains, you make out windmills on the far horizon and arrive in the hamlet of Itero de la Vega, from where you are transferred about 30 minutes to the small *pueblo* (village) of Villoldo and the family-run inn there, a true culinary destination. As throughout the tour, local and seasonal ingredients are presented in traditional dishes with a lighter and creative touch, such as grilled octopus with rosemary potatoes and red-pepper aioli.

Estrella del Bajo Carrión, Villoldo

Between the cities of Burgos and León, three sisters run the hotel founded by their father over 30 years ago. The modern and airy country house features balconied guest rooms and common areas with fresh flowers and unique architecture. In addition to the fine-dining restaurant, the hotel features a library,



billiard and wine room, and a willow-shaded terrace for breakfast or drinks *al fresco*.

DAY 5

Villares de Orbigo to Astorga; 9 miles, easy to moderate, 650-ft. elevation gain, 530-ft. elevation loss

Breakfast this morning is a delight of homemade juices, breads and pastries, and jams of local fruits and berries. After checking out, a drive of a little over an hour takes you to the walk's start at Villares de Orbigo. You are entering yet another region—the terrain here has a more Mediterranean feel, with its underlying geology of red stone nourishing vineyards and oak forests. Look out for the stork's nest on the town's Santa Maria Church..

After passing the cross of Saint Turibius, the region's 5th-century bishop, you descend past the village of San Justo de la Vega, making your way to the city of Astorga. You are welcomed here with a tasty lunch, perhaps followed by a sampling of hot chocolate, the specialty of the Spanish birthplace of chocolate, thanks to the dry climate and location on the trade routes from the north and Andalucía to the south. You have a short tour of the town's Roman ruins, as well as the fine cathedral and the bishop's palace, one of only three buildings designed by Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí outside of Catalonia. Late afternoon you settle in to your hotel with time to relax and refresh before dinner. The menu this evening features traditional regional dishes—accompanied by excellent wines—and may include lamb, delicious local ham, fresh river fish, and frogs' legs for the true gourmet!

Hostería Camino (or equivalent), Luyego de Somoza

This boutique hotel in a restored home has spacious, individually decorated guest rooms with polished wood floors and décor combining Spanish antiques with exposed beams and brick. Common areas include a fireside living room with inviting couches, a relaxed café for drinks or light fare, and a dramatically lit fine-dining restaurant. An antique shop is also on the premises.

DAY 6

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

This morning the transfer is just under 90 minutes, bringing you farther west to the trailhead in the hamlet of Las Herrerías; just past it is the Barrio de Hospital, which housed a medieval hospital for English pilgrims. As you move toward Galicia, the landscape takes on a more Celtic feel; leaving behind Mediterranean vegetation, you are entering countryside that evokes the



British Isles—verdant pastures, ancient gray granite stone. Most of the day’s walk is a long gradual uphill; however, you are able to warm up on the paved flat terrain of the lush valley. Leaving the pavement, the Camino begins the gentle ascent on a path bordered by moss-covered stone walls and shaded by chestnut trees. After the village of Fada, 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 and, soon after, you cross the border from the province of León and officially enter Galicia. The walk ends in the town of O’Cebreiro, with its panoramic views over the province, as well as the Royal Saint Mary’s Church, built on the foundations of a pre-Romanesque church, and most importantly, lunch at an ancient hostelry. A Roman road predated the Camino here, and the *pallozas*—prehistoric stone homes—provide evidence of earlier people in the region. Driving down from O’Cebreiro toward your next hotel, you enjoy stunning views of the seasonally snowcapped mountains of León. The hotel’s grounds and garden offer both an outdoor swimming pool and a river bathing area. A canoe and bicycles are also available. With an excellent wine selection, the hotel’s fireside restaurant offers updated Galician cuisine from a wood-fired oven, featuring dishes such as suckling pig, lamb, and capon.

Casa Grande da Fervenza, O Corgo

A beautifully restored 17th-century miller’s residence within a biosphere reserve is a peaceful haven in the Galician countryside with fireside fine dining. Individually decorated guest rooms feature unique antiques, hand-embroidered linens, polished wood floors, and exposed beams and stone. An outdoor swimming pool is on the grounds along with gardens along the river, where you can also swim, or rent a canoe.

DAY 7



Sarria to Ferreiros; 8 miles, easy to moderate, 1,020-ft. elevation gain

You transfer from your hotel this morning to the town of Sarria. For many, this is the start of their Camino walk, as it marks the point where pilgrims can begin the minimal consecutive distance (100 km) necessary 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 a unique camaraderie. You begin on the main street and encounter a set of steep stairs leading up to the center of the town and the hilltop Convent of Magdalena, dating from the 15th to 18th centuries. The Camino then descends to the Rio Pequeño, which you cross on the medieval Ponte Áspera bridge, and continues through fertile pasture and small vegetable patches. Depending on the season, small farms offer fresh berries for sale. Concluding the walk in Ferreiros, you savor lunch.

By late afternoon, you enter Santiago de Compostela and set off on an easy walking tour of this capital of the autonomous region of Galicia. Narrow granite-cobbled streets loop past the Plaza de Cervantes with its small statue of the writer, and on to the Plaza de Obradoiros, overlooked by the cathedral’s main façade. The Rua do Franco, a bustling shopping street, leads down to the Alameda Park. The tour culminates at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in time to participate in daily mass—a breathtaking gathering, both from the cathedral’s grandeur and from the sense of accomplishment and emotion in the pilgrims who have arrived here from the many Camino routes. The *peregrinos’* final steps lead to the statue of Saint James at the cathedral’s entrance.

Construction of this cathedral, now 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 it gained importance as an Episcopal see and place of pilgrimage—the third most important destination for Christians after Rome and Jerusalem.

This evening your guides provide suggestions for dinner in the lively pedestrian old town, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in its entirety for its wealth

of historical buildings—choose from a myriad of cafés, tapas bars, and restaurants.

Altair Hotel (or equivalent), Santiago de Compostela

This family-owned-and-operated boutique hotel located in a quiet corner of Santiago de Compostela's historical center has been renovated to seamlessly blend minimalist contemporary décor and colors with the building's original stone walls and exposed beams throughout plush individually decorated guestrooms and the lounge and bar.

DAY 8

A Costa da Morte, Moraime to Muxia, 2-3 miles, easy

After a hearty breakfast, a 90-minute drive takes you northwest of Santiago to the coastal town of Muxia, which is considered the true end of the pilgrimage by many pilgrims who continue their walk after reaching the cathedral in Santiago. The coastline's spectacular beaches and surf have made it the site of many shipwrecks, but this location also means it is the Costa del Marisco (the "Seafood Coast"); therefore, lunch is Galician-style seafood: perhaps clams or mussels, accompanied by an *albariño* white wine.

Returning to Santiago, you have time to rest or explore more of this fascinating city before gathering for a final celebratory dinner of regional specialties, toasting your "pilgrimage" on the ancient route.

Altair Hotel, Santiago de Compostela

DAY 9

Departure from Santiago de Compostela

You depart Santiago de Compostela after breakfast this morning at your leisure. If your schedule permits, you may wish to attend the daily noontime mass at Santiago's cathedral; the use of the famous incensory suspended from the cathedral's ceiling—the *botafumeiro*—cannot be guaranteed at this mass or any other services at the cathedral as the schedule of its use changes regularly.

ITINERARY CHANGES

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices:

Assisting Pilgrims on The Way: Every year, over 200,000 pilgrims walk the various routes of the Camino de Santiago. Coming from all corners of the world—with diverse needs, expectations, and reasons for walking—these travelers require lots of care from their host country. The Federación Española de Asociaciones de Amigos del Camino de Santiago (Spanish Federation of Associations of Friends of the Camino de Santiago) coordinates a vast national network of hostels, volunteers, parishes, churches, and shelters in an effort to keep pilgrims safe, healthy, and informed about their journey. Along with organizing and managing shelters along the many routes, they train volunteers, petition for the upkeep of sections of the path, and produce publications relating to The Way. Country Walkers is proud to support the Burgos Association of Friends of the Camino de Santiago and their efforts on behalf of every Camino de Santiago guest. You are able to see this organization in action when we visit their pilgrim hostel in Burgos.

Tour Itinerary Overview

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel NH Collection Ría de Bilbao (formerly known as the Hotel Hesperia Bilbao), Bilbao, Spain, 8:30 a.m.

Campo Volantin, 28, Bilbao
Tel 011 34 94 405 11 00
Email nhcollectionriabilbao@nh-hotels.com

NIGHT 1

Pamplona Catedral Hotel

Calle Dos de Mayo, 4
Pamplona, Spain
Tel 011 34 948 22 66 88
Email info@pamplonacatedralhotel.com
pamplonacatedralhotel.com
Wireless Internet and hair dryers. Laundry service unavailable.

NIGHT 2

Hotel Viura

Calle Mayor
Villabuena de Álava, Spain
Tel 011 34 945 609 000
Email info@hotelviura.com
hotelviura.com
Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

NIGHT 3

Hotel Palacio de Los Blasones

Fernán Gonzalez 6-10
Burgos, Spain
Tel 011 34 947 271 000
Email recepcionpb@ricehotelesburgos.com
hotelricepalaciodelosblasones.com/
Wireless Internet, hair dryers. Laundry service unavailable.

NIGHT 4

Estrella del Bajo Carrión

Villoldo, Spain

Tel 011 34 979 82 70 05

Email info@estrellabajocarrion.com

estrellabajocarrion.com

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

NIGHT 5

Hostería Camino

Ctra. Sra. de los Remedios

Luyego de Somoza, Spain

Tel 011 34 987 60 17 57

Email informacion@hosteriacamino.com

hosteriacamino.com

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

OR

Hotel Vía de la Plata (April 26th Private Adventure only)

Calle Padres Redentoristas, 5

Astorga, Spain

Tel 011 34 987 619 000

Email info@hotelviadelaplata.es

hotelviadelaplata.es

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

NIGHT 6

Casa Grande da Fervenza

Ctra. Lugo-Páramo, km.11

27163 O Corgo, Spain

Tel 011 34 982 15 06 10

Email info@fervenza.com

fervenza.com

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

NIGHTS 7 & 8

Altair Hotel

Rúa Loureiros 12

15704 Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Tel 011 34 981 55 47 12

Email info@altairhotel.net

altairhotel.net

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

OR

Hotel Virxe da Cerca (October 3rd tour)

Rue Virxe da Cerca, 27

Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Tel 011 34 932 20 25 00

Email vdacerca@pousadasdecompostela.com

Pousadasdecompostela.com/hotels-santiago-y-galicia/hotel-virxe-da-cerca/

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Altair Hotel (or Hotel Virxe da Cerca for October 3rd tour), Santiago de Compostela, Spain, after breakfast

TRAVEL DELAY AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

If you are delayed while traveling, or experience any unforeseen situation en route to your tour, assistance is only a few, easy steps away:

As a Country Walkers guest, you benefit from 24-hour, toll free access to One Call Emergency Hotline and Travel Assistance. Call the numbers below from anywhere in the world to get immediate assistance (regarding everything from lost luggage, to missed connections, to health concerns or notifying your guides or our local partners of a delayed arrival).

To contact One Call, please use one of the following methods:

By Email: mail@oncallinternational.com

By Text: 603.945.0103

By Phone:

If calling from within the USA: 800.555.9095

If calling from outside the USA: 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Planning and Travel Resources: AT&T International Access Codes. If you receive an automated response, when prompted, you can then enter either of the numbers above; One Call accepts collect calls 24/7.

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to **800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710**.

Should there be any problems placing a collect call (as is occasionally the case depending on the country), dial, email, or text One Call directly and ask them to return your call immediately to minimize any out of pocket costs.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)

9 days, 8 nights

DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE

Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel NH Collection Ría de Bilbao (formerly known as the Hotel Hesperia Bilbao), Bilbao, Spain, 8:30 a.m.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Altair Hotel (or Hotel Virxe da Cerca for October 3rd tour), Santiago de Compostela, Spain, after breakfast

ACTIVITY LEVEL

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 5 to 9 miles per day. Options are limited to skipping some of the walks and exploring or relaxing at each night's destination. The terrain includes minimal elevation gains and losses, except for two days, with 700- 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 several 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 20 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.

INCLUSIONS

- » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7
- » All meals except for two dinners; local wine or beer included with dinners
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

GRATUITIES

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency.

Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **pre- or post-tour extensions**, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel NH Collection Ría de Bilbao (formerly known as the Hotel Hesperia Bilbao), Bilbao, Spain, 8:30 a.m.

Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for walking.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT

Bilbao Airport (BIO), Bilbao, Spain

aena.es

GETTING TO BILBAO, SPAIN

Direct flights from the U.S. to Bilbao are not available; however, multiple major airlines offer flights to Bilbao with a connection in a major European city. Or you may choose to fly directly from the U.S. to Madrid, and then arrange a one-hour domestic flight from Madrid to Bilbao with Iberia (iberia.com) or another airline.

Should you choose to travel to Bilbao by train, approximate travel times from various cities are as follows: from Madrid, 5 hours; from Barcelona, 6½ hours.

For further rail information, including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares, please visit the website of RENFE (Spanish Rail) at renfe.es/ingles/ or contact Rail Europe at 800.438.7245 or consult their website at raileurope.com. We recommend making train reservations in advance for major train routes. We suggest comparing the round-trip point-to-point fare with that of a Spanish Rail Pass (the pass may be less expensive and have greater value).

Once in Bilbao, the Hotel NH Collection Ría de Bilbao is a 20-minute taxi ride from the airport, which costs approximately 30 euros.

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the Hotel NH Collection Ría de Bilbao (formerly known as the Hotel

Hesperia Bilbao), your meeting point hotel, for the night prior to your tour. This modern four-star property is situated on the riverbank, just a short walk from the Guggenheim Museum. Furthermore, should you wish to visit the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, please keep in mind that except in July and August (when the museum is open seven days a week), the museum is closed on Mondays. To make a reservation, please contact the hotel directly. We suggest booking a pre-tour room as soon as you have confirmed your arrival date as this property fills well in advance.

Hotel NH Collection Ría de Bilbao

Campo Volantin, 28

Bilbao, Spain

Tel/Fax 011 34 94 405 11 00

Email nhcollectionriabilbao@nh-hotels.com

nh-hotels.com/hotel/nh-collection-ria-de-bilbao.com

Room rates vary according to room type and season.

DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS

If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Altair Hotel (or Hotel Virxe da Cerca for October 3rd tour), Santiago de Compostela, Spain, after breakfast

There are no walks scheduled for the last day of the tour. You may depart the final hotel after breakfast and prior to the hotel's checkout time of 12:00 p.m. The hotel staff can assist you with any taxi transfers you may require.

Depending upon your destination, it may not be possible to depart for the U.S. on the last day of the tour. Please check airline schedules carefully. If you plan to schedule return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please call your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORTS

Labacolla Airport (SCQ), Santiago de Compostela, Spain

aena-aeropuertos.es

Francisco Sa Carneiro International Airport (OPO), Porto, Portugal

porto-airport.com

LEAVING SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

There are no direct flights from Santiago de Compostela to the U.S. Most connect via Madrid and are operated by Iberia. Other options via other major European cities are mostly on low-cost or local carriers. Flights out of Porto, Portugal, are also a convenient alternative.

Labacolla Airport is located 16 miles from Santiago de Compostela. Empresa Freire buses depart every 30 minutes from various locations in the city center. The journey takes 25 minutes and costs approximately 3 euros. Or, taxis offer a flat fare of 20 euros from the city center to the airport.

There is a direct bus from Santiago de Compostela to Francisco Sa Carneiro International Airport in Porto, Portugal. The journey takes 3 to 4 hours and costs approximately 30 euros. For more information, please visit **alsa.es**.

Information & Policies

GUARANTEED DEPARTURES

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

**except in cases of force majeure*

GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

SCHEDULED GROUP INDIVIDUAL RESERVATIONS

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255 and providing a \$350 per person deposit. The Balance of your payment (final tour cost) is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date.

SCHEDULED GROUP CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost*. Please notify us in writing.

**One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

PRIVATE ADVENTURE RESERVATION & CANCELLATION POLICIES

If you are booking a Private Adventure, a \$500 nonrefundable group deposit is required to secure hotel reservations and guides. Once these arrangements are confirmed, the deposit will be applied as the provider's deposit for the trip. If we are unable to secure the hotel and/or guides for your requested dates, this deposit will be refunded.

Once your Private Adventure is confirmed, your individual \$350 per person deposit is required within 14 days. The balance of your payment (final tour cost) is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date. Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150 (plus the nonrefundable group deposit of \$500); cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. **Please note that Private Adventure tour pricing is based on a guarantee of a specified number of guests. Should the group decrease in size, we reserve the right to alter the per person price, if necessary.**

Spain at a Glance

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS



U.S. citizens: Passports are required and must be valid for at least three months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days. For more information, see travel.state.gov.

CURRENCY

Spain uses the euro (EUR). For up-to-date exchange rates, see oanda.com.

Many businesses in Europe will no longer accept credit cards without PIN numbers (chip and pin cards). Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

Travel Tip

Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), some dollars to exchange, and some euros in small denominations.

TIME ZONE

Spain is in the Central European Time Zone, Eastern Standard Time plus six hours. For more information on worldwide time zones, see worldtimezone.com.

PHONE & INTERNET

Spain country code: +34



Cell phone coverage throughout Spain is extensive, but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to countrywalkers.com/phones.

Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages; however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.

LANGUAGE

The official language of Spain is Spanish.

While knowledge of the local language is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish or the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book.

ELECTRICITY

Alternating current of 220V and 50Hz is used in Spain. Plugs have two round pins. For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see electricaloutlet.org.

WEATHER

One of Europe's warmest and sunniest countries, Spain has a predominantly warm Mediterranean climate, with dry summers and pleasant temperature ranges in spring and fall. Spain does have a variety of climates and zones because of its considerable geographical diversity. In Catalonia, the combination of Mediterranean and slightly mountainous climate results in temperatures from the low 60s to mid-80s (and 90s midday in August and September). In southern Spain's Andalucia, spring and fall are dry and sunny, with temperatures ranging from the 60s to the 80s.

For up-to-date forecasts, see qwikcast.com. For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see weatherbase.com.

FOOD & DRINK



Thoroughly Mediterranean, the foundation of Spanish cuisine is olive oil, garlic, and local and seasonal produce, meat, and fish. Spanish food varies by region, in the same way that there is great variety in Spain's geography and climate; however, some dishes can be found throughout the country—a range of tapas, paella, gazpacho, excellent cured ham, chorizo, meatballs, salads, good bread, fresh fruit, cheeses, and for dessert, flan (vanilla custard). Surrounded as Spain is on three sides by water, seafood dishes are plentiful throughout, including shrimp with garlic, calamari, octopus, porgy, or monkfish, all with regional variations.

Equally steeped in Mediterranean culture, wine has been produced in Spain since the time of the Romans, and the country is third in European wine production after France and Italy. Grown almost throughout Spain (except near Santiago de Compostela), quality red and white wines can be found in all regions, with the majority from the central Castilla-La Mancha region, with Catalonia second. A crisp and bubbly before-dinner drink is the Catalonia's sparkling wine, *cava*, named after the cellars in which it is produced.

Travel Tip

- Bringing your own hair dryer or other electrical device? You'll need a travel converter, available at most hardware, travel, or consumer electronic stores.
- For laptops or an electronic device with a dual voltage switch, you'll need the adapter plug but not a converter.

Travel Tip

¿Tapas?

Tapas, or *pinxtos* as they are known in the Basque country, are perhaps Spain's most well-known culinary export, with tapas bars and restaurants popping up worldwide. Part of Spanish life, they can be eaten with a drink as appetizers before a meal, or as a meal in themselves. There is even a verb in the Spanish language—*tapear*—meaning to eat tapas! These small savory dishes can be as simple as a plate of olives, slices of Manchego cheese, or chorizo, to prepared dishes such as grilled eggplant in tomato vinaigrette or slices of *tortilla española* (a dense potato and onion omelet). In Catalonia, a favorite is Pan Catalan or in Catalan, *pa amb tomàquet*, lightly toasted bread with chopped tomatoes and drizzled with olive oil.

Here are a few others Spanish favorites

Patatas bravas: spicy potatoes with a hot sauce.

Croquetas: a range of small fried croquettes that can be stuffed with Serrano ham, salt cod, hard-boiled egg, cheese, or vegetables.

Champiñones al ajillo: mushrooms, dripping with olive oil, garlic and dry Spanish sherry.

Morcilla frita: bite-size pieces of spicy blood sausage flavored with garlic and oregano.

LIFE IN SPAIN

Shopping and banking hours

Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m.; most department stores and some supermarkets are open all day, every day of the week, from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.



Banks are open from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday to Saturday (except from June to September when they are closed on Saturday).

Meal times

Breakfast is served at hotels from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. In restaurants, lunch is served from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and dinner is served from 8:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Tipping

Tipping in restaurants and bars is included in the total bill, but it is customary to leave an additional 5 to 10 percent of the total. Taxi drivers also receive 5 to 10 percent of the total, or you could round up the total, letting the driver keep the change. For luggage assistance, a small tip of one to three euros is appropriate.

TRAVEL RESOURCES

National Spanish tourist board official sites

spain.info

Public holidays



To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Spanish public holidays: **spain.info/en_US/informacion-practica/consejos-viaje/consejos-practicos/horarios-festivos/**. Visit the Spanish tourist board's website, navigating to **spain.info/en_US/que-quieres/agenda/** for a list of festivals and events, and an event finder.

TRAVEL IN SPAIN

Airlines

The Spanish Airports and Aerial Navigation website, **www.aena.es**, has information on all airports and domestic flights. The Spanish national airline is Iberia, **iberia.com**.

Trains

Renfe: renfe.com, the national railway company, has an extensive network, including high-speed routes (AVE) from Madrid.

Raileurope: raileurope.com or 800.622.8600: a U.S.-based company that provides schedules, reservations, and ticketing for all European train networks (their multi-day/-week/-month passes in one country or combinations of countries may be an economical and convenient choice for European train travel).

Other local transportation

Spain has many regional bus lines that can be found at: **movelia.es**. Most major car rental agencies are available at airports and train stations. Taxis are available at all major airports, train stations, and in smaller towns, and can be reserved in advance (your hotel can usually provide assistance). For more information go to **spain.info**, and click on "Practical information" then "Transport."

Packing List

PACKING TIPS

Pack light! Keep in mind there will be times you may have to carry your own luggage for short distances, especially before and after your Country Walkers tour. Due to space constraints, we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece (approximately 18x15x29 inches or 8,000 cu. in.) and one small carry-on, per person. We recommend packing any personal necessities, medications, your hotel itinerary/emergency contact information, your hiking boots (or shoes), and some extra clothes in your carry-on luggage in the event that your baggage is delayed. We suggest leaving valuable jewelry at home. A copy of your passport or other important documents should be kept in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying a purse, camera, money belt, or backpack in busy cities, airports, and train stations.

LUGGAGE & PORTERAGE

Due to the fact that this tour involves several boutique hotel stays without dedicated porters, there may be times when you will have to carry your own luggage short distances. Please be assured that our guides and local partners will help you as much as possible, but we ask that you keep this factor in mind when preparing for your tour and remember to pack lightly.

FOOTWEAR

- » Hiking boots or shoes. There are many brands to choose from. Proper fit is crucial, so try on new boots or shoes while wearing socks you plan to use on tour. Be sure to break in new footwear well before your tour begins. By the time you're ready to join your walking tour, you should be able to complete 5 to 9 miles of walking without discomfort. We require lightweight boots or shoes with proper ankle support and good tread to ensure stability on all types of terrain. Waterproof footwear keeps feet dry in heavy rain and water-resistant footwear keeps feet dry in heavy dew. Country Walkers reserves the right to deny participation to any guest not wearing appropriate footwear.
- » Comfortable shoes for evening strolls
- » Synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended for walking as they will quickly cause blisters)
- » Blister remedy

CLOTHING

- » Lightweight, wash-and-wear long pants
- » Long-sleeved, wash-and-wear shirt
- » T-shirts and shorts
- » Polar fleece or light wool pullover (it will keep you warm even when wet)
- » Dinner attire: dress is smart casual

OUTERWEAR

- » Waterproof rain gear: jacket, pants, hat, or hood
- » Windbreaker with hood (your rain gear may be suitable)
- » Hat with a broad brim or visor

EQUIPMENT

- » Daypack large enough to carry water, extra clothing, rain gear, lunch, and personal items (camera, etc.)
- » Waterproof cover for pack
- » Water bottle, canteen, or CamelBak-type water reservoir or hydration pack to carry your own water while walking (equivalent of one liter)
- » Sunblock and lip balm
- » Insect repellent
- » Sunglasses
- » Toilet kit for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues, and moist towelettes, which can be disposed of upon return to the hotel
- » Personal first-aid kit, including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original container)

OPTIONAL

- » Telescopic walking sticks (Please note that while telescopic walking sticks are recommended for this tour, they are not provided by Country Walkers. Therefore, please plan on bringing your own should you wish to use them.)
- » Binoculars
- » Bathing suit for optional use of hotel pools or spas

- » Camera and charger and/or extra batteries
- » Zip-lock bags (to keep camera and valuables dry)
- » Small notebook and pen
- » Field guides (see enclosed reading list)
- » Folding umbrella
- » Bandanna
- » Washcloth (many European hotels do not provide them)
- » Hand sanitizer and/or moist towelettes