

MADRID & BEYOND

Discovering The Camino de Santiago (i)

May 12

Upon your arrival in Madrid - Barajas airport, you will be welcomed by your professional tour escort, who will accompany you throughout your travels in Spain.

Together you will travel into the centre of Madrid.

In recent years, with the integration of Spain into the EC, the renovation of hundreds of facades along its grand boulevards and the creation of new culinary landmarks, Madrid has re-emerged as one of Europe's Great Cities. In addition to its world-class museums and monuments, Madrid has defined its own style in a new generation of designer boutiques, restaurants, music scenes and nightlife.

You will check in at the hotel [El Prado](#).

A small and comfortable three star hotel, situated in an ideal spot near the museums.

Leaving the hotel for an evening panoramic tour of Madrid before dinner

In the evening, enjoy a **Tapas Dinner!**

In a nutshell, tapas in Madrid means tradition, and this includes the atmosphere, not just the food. In charming small bars in the heart of Madrid's charismatic old Austrias area, sample hearty food in manageable portions, helped down with some pleasingly potent wines, and amidst the joyous hullabaloo of the welcoming *Madrileños*. The variety is extensive, encompassing varied meats and offal, fish and seafood (the capital offers some of Spain's best seafood), the obligatory Spanish potato omelette and other potato inventions... 'tapear' in Madrid is a fun and recommendable alternative to the full-blown sit down meal.

Overnight: Hotel El Prado

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Discovering The Camino de Santiago (ii)

May 13

Breakfast at your hotel.

This morning, you will board your private bus and head to León.

The drive takes approx. 4 ½ hours.

Upon your arrival you will check in at the Hotel AC León.

The AC Hotel San Antonio is a modern hotel located in the centre of the new city. Situated only a few minutes from the Cathedral and next to the famous “Casa de Botines”, this luxurious four-star hotel is perfect for those □raveller who wish to explore the city. Designed by the architect Antonio Gaudi, the hotel is located close to one of the shopping centres of the city, as well as “La Chantria” and the university area.

You will spend the afternoon with a local art historian visiting the Pantheon of Kings and Cathedral in the old Roman city of León.

By the Church of San Isidoro, the Romanesque Pantheon of Kings is highly-prized for the carved capitals and rare 12th century frescos illustrating biblical and mythical subjects and scenes from medieval life.

In the heart of the Old Quarter you continue to the Gothic Cathedral where we view in awe the magnificent 13thcentury stained-glass windows. Considered a miracle of architecture, the quantity of glass marvels even the modern day engineer. Light pours in through more than 1,800 square meters of stained glass – a magical sight that has mesmerized millions of □ravellers before us.

The evening is free to go tapas-hopping in the Old Quarter or perhaps stroll by the River Bernesga where the locals meet and play petanca at sunset.

Overnight: Hotel AC San Antonio



Discovering The Camino de Santiago (iii)

May 14

Breakfast at your hotel.

This morning you will have a meeting room for your introductory Seminar.

Walking the Camino de Santiago is not a conventional walking trip but a pilgrimage through history, art, culture and legend stretching back over 1000 years.

The Camino de Santiago – “The Way of St James” - goes back to the ninth century when the discovery of the remains of St. James by Bishop Teodomiro in a field near Iria Flavia prompted King Alfonso II to consecrate the spot with a chapel. News of this discovery at “Campus Stellae”, so named by Alfonso, spread like wildfire within Christendom and soon pilgrims were journeying across northern Spain to pay reverence to the Saint who quickly became an idol and a rallying point in the struggle against the Moors, then in control of much of the Peninsular. In the centuries that followed, the pathways of the Camino were trodden by humble peasants, priests of Europe and even monarchs who sought to venerate the tomb of the apostle St. James, thus converting Santiago into Christendom’s most important site after Jerusalem and Rome.

The abundance of cathedrals, monasteries, shrines, monuments and inns built in the Middle Ages are ever present as you move towards Santiago, making the journey a feast of cultural and architectural wonder. You will stumble across fairytale palaces, weave along old farm tracks, climb to points offering spectacular views, descend into valleys of breathtaking beauty, wonder through rural villages where time has seemingly stood still for centuries, receive genuine Galician hospitality and enjoy one of the world’s greatest walks.

After your seminar, you will check out and drive to Sarria.

Upon your arrival in Sarria, you will check in at the hotel Alfonso IX.

Overnight & dinner at hotel Alfonso IX

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Discovering The Camino de Santiago (iv)

May 15

STAGE: SARRIA-FERREIROS approx. 15 KM

Breakfast at your hotel.

Walking this section of the Camino is considered by many to be the highlight of the trip. We traverse a maze of tracks and footpaths through enchanted forests, granite hillsides covered in gorse, heather and broom and a patchwork of primitive farms worked as they were a thousand years ago.

Your bus and driver will be waiting for you in Ferreiros to shuttle back to Sarria.

In the evening you might want to visit the 9th Century Benedictine monastery in Samos. Later you can the monks chant their evening Vespers.

Evening at leisure in Sarria.

Overnight at hotel Alfonso IX

May 16

STAGE: FERREIROS-PORTOMARÍN approx. 10 KM

After breakfast you will board on your bus and drive to Ferreiros. Here you will continue your walk to Portomarín.

After crossing the River Miño, you enter Portomarín. In 1962, the old village was submerged to create a reservoir. The town's treasure, the 13th Century Church of San Juan (once belonging to the order of St. John of Jerusalem), was moved stone by stone by the townspeople to higher ground where the current town of Portomarín is located.

You will check in at the Posada de Portomarín.

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Dine this evening in a Casa Rural surrounded by vineyards, vegetable gardens and horse stables on the banks of the Miño. The hospitality of our hosts, Mario and Olga, combined with their home-grown produce provide a perfect

backdrop for a memorable meal. We take part in the tradition of the queimada, a magical fiery brew made with coffee beans, sugar and a grappa-like liqueur called orujo. (According to Mario, the queimada fortifies the mind, body and spirit of weary pilgrims!)

Overnight: Posada de Portomarín

May 17

STAGE: PORTOMARÍN-VENTAS DEL NARON approx. 13 KM

Today we trace quiet paved roads past small villages, cruceiros (carved granite crosses that served to mark the Camino in medieval times) horreos (stone granaries) and tiny Romanesque churches. The abundance of Romanesque architecture in this area makes it one of the most important regions for art historians in all of Europe. Our destination is Palas de Rei, a town once inhabited by Visigoths, Celts and Romans. Its name is derived from the Visigothic king, Witiza who held court here (Palas de Rei meaning, The Palace of the King in Gallego).

In Ventas del Narón you will shuttle back to Portomarín where the afternoon and evening are free to horse-back ride, relax by the hotel pool or enjoy evening tapas in an outdoor café in the cobbled plaza.

Overnight: Posada de Portomarín

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Discovering The Camino de Santiago (vi)

May 18

STAGE: VENTAS DEL NARON-PALAS DE REI approx. 13 KM

After breakfast you shuttle to Ventas del Narón to continue your way to Palas de Rei.

At lunch today in a local pilgrims' restaurant, you enjoy the camaraderie of other pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela – many from Europe but others from more far-flung corners of the globe.

After lunch you shuttle back to Portomarín where the afternoon and evening are free

Overnight: Posada de Portomarín

May 19

STAGE: PALAS DE REI-MELIDE approx. 15 KM

Shady path weaves through pine, oak and eucalyptus forests dispersed with tiny villages. On the Camino, local people feel honored to see *peregrinos* pass through their village. The only traffic you are likely to encounter is that of gentle, lazy cows returning to village barns in the late afternoon.

In Furelos, you cross the magnificent *ponte velha*, a medieval bridge with four arches spanning the river. Soon after we arrive in Melide, a town dating back to pre-Roman times and where the former monastery houses interesting 15th century frescoes depicting St. James the Moor-slayer.

Upon your arrival in Melide you will be shuttle to your accommodations for today.

Tonight we will have to split the group into two or three Galician farmhouses. The three of them exudes charm, warm hospitality and excellent home-cooked food.

For dinner we enjoy the wonderful country fare from the Pazo's kitchen.

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Discovering The Camino de Santiago (vii)

Overnight & Dinner: Pazo Andeade/ Pazo Sedor & Pazo Eidian.

Pazo de Andeade was constructed at the beginning of the XVIII Century, and restored in 1995 with original high quality materials. Beside the respect paid to the original features of the main building the complex conserves all the elementary characteristics of Galician Architecture. The corn granary, the dovecote and the chapel- that boasts an altarpiece crafted by the Compostelan master woodcarvers from the age that the house was constructed- are proof of that.

Pazo de Sedor is a XVII Century building, founded by Francisco Gonzalez do Vilar, a Fonseca resident, a lawyer of the Royal Magistrates Court of the Kingdom of Galicia and a war prosecutor of the time. It is situated only 20 minutes from Santiago, in a region well known for its rural landscapes and agricultural production. The first feature to catch the eye of the guest on the main façade is the balcony that runs from one side to the other and its great baroque chimney that crowns the roof. Other notable characteristics are the originality of the main staircase and another smaller one that is “entre muros”.

The Pazo de Eidián, is a typical Galician country manor house dating from the late 16th century, which underwent partial transformation with the addition of defensive structures during the 1st Carlist war. It was the ancestral home of the López de Basadre family, whose coat-of-arms presides over the gateway. This stately home was built on land belonging to the Knights-Templar, from whose times only the village chapel remains.

May 20

STAGE: MELIDE-ARZUA approx. 14 KM

After breakfast, you will shuttle to Melide and continue your Camino.

Your destination is Arzua after passing several parishes like Boente where James is depicted as he is at the Cathedral of Santiago.

Upon your arrival in Melide you will be shuttle to your accommodations for today.

Tonight we will have to split the group into two or three Galician farmhouses.

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The three of them exudes charm, warm hospitality and excellent home-cooked food.

Overnight & Dinner: Pazo Andeade/ Pazo Sedor & Pazo Eidian.

May 21

STAGE: ARZUA-ARCA approx. 16 KM

After breakfast, you will shuttle to Arzua and continue your Camino.

Pilgrims will start today's journey full of joy, conscious that tomorrow they will be entering Santiago de Compostela, where many wonders await them, including the sepulchre of the Saint Apostle. The next stage, apart from being exciting for its sentimental and spiritual load, will be wearisome.

The Route advances towards Las Barrosas, where are the small chapel of San Lázaro and the Mill of the French. Further on the Route crosses Calzada, Calle and Salceda, where pilgrims can stop by a small monument in memory of a Belgian pilgrim who died here on 23 August, 1989. Then the itinerary passes through Brea and Santa Irene, and finally arrives at Arca.

Overnight & Dinner: Pazo Andeade/ Pazo Sedor & Pazo Eidian.

May 22

STAGE: ARCA-SANTIAGO approx. 19 KM

Beginning our walk in the tiny hamlet of Arca, enjoy each footstep as the Pilgrim's Way weaves through sweet-smelling eucalyptus groves and neatly-sowed fields and vegetable patches.

One tradition you do take part in - however - is the ascent to Monte de Gozo (The Mount of Joy), where pilgrims catch their first glimpse of Santiago de Compostela. Excitement builds as we get closer to the Holy City.

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Following now-familiar yellow arrows and Camino markers to the Cathedral, you arrive in the Plaza del Obradoiro; the heart and soul of Santiago and a place of constant activity.

Exuberant groups of pilgrims stand in awe in front of the grandiose façade of the Baroque Cathedral. Wrought-iron balconies and granite homes and public buildings lend a medieval air.

Upon your arrival you will check in at the Hotel Hesperia Gelmírez. This hotel is ideally located for those who look to stay within walking distance to the main attractions in this beautiful city it is just 10 kilometres from the airport.

Rest of day at leisure.

Overnight: Hotel Hesperia Gelmírez

May 23

After breakfast, you will have your closure seminar.

In the afternoon, enjoy a private half-day walking tour of the city with an expert guide.

You will visit the Cathedral, which stands on the Plaza del Obradoiro and dominates the whole town. It is considered to be one of the finest achievements of Romanesque architecture.

You might also stop at the Museo das Peregrinacións, or museum of pilgrimage. Located in a Gothic mansion, the museum presents the history of the pilgrimage to Santiago through models, displays, and artifacts.

Other sights include the many medieval plazas and monasteries near the cathedral.

Farewell dinner is celebrated this evening

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Discovering The Camino de Santiago (x)

May 24

Breakfast at your hotel.

After breakfast, your Bus driver will drive you to Madrid, where you will spend your last night in Spain at the Hotel el Prado.

Evening at leisure.

May 25

Transfer to Madrid's airport and say Adios to Spain.

The total cost per person would be approx. 1360,00 euros.

Please note that the price is per person based on 15x double rooms

3 free pax on single occupancy

Included in your tour:

TOUR LEADER:

Accompanying you throughout the trip will be one of Spain's best tour escorts. Highly experienced and outstanding guide, he will bring interest, life and good humour to the trip. All his accommodation and meals are included.

ACCOMMODATION:

Thirteen nights of accommodation (15 double & 3 single occupancy rooms) in Spain's most charming hotels.

MEALS:

Breakfasts at hotel every morning.

Welcoming Dinner in Madrid.

Dinner in Sarria.

Dinner in Portomarin (1 night)

Three dinners in Arzua

Farewell Dinner in Santiago.

MADRID & BEYOND

PRIVATE TOURS AND EXCURSIONS:

Madrid: Private half-day tour with our expert guide.

León: Private tour of León with our expert guide.

Santiago: Private half-day tour with our expert guide.

**Note: Only local qualified guides are permitted to visit monuments with groups.*

GROUND TRANSPORTATION:

Transfer: Madrid airport – hotel.

Full-day use of private vehicle and driver for Madrid excursion.

Deluxe Bus and driver for transportation from Madrid until your departure

OTHER SERVICES:

Use of meeting room in León & Santiago for your lectures.

All admissions while with expert guide.

Value Added Tax and all service charges.

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL:

All the intangibles that come with the connections, knowledge, passion and experience of one of the premier travel providers to Spain.

Not included:

Air arrangements.

Sightseeing/admissions when not with an expert guide.

Meals, unless specified in included list.

Transport unless listed above.

Gratuities.