

THE SAINT JAMES WAY IN SPAIN

CAMINO FRANCES

From León to Santiago de Compostela

This is the final section before your arrival at Santiago de Compostela. The scenery you pass through has a beautiful diversity and you leave behind you the seemingly endless 'meseta castellana'. The hills of León, the first relief that you reach, are welcome. Your route takes you through villages which are typical of the area and full of charm: Rabanal del Camino, Molina Seca, Ponferrada, Portomarín and even the renowned stage taking you to O Cebreiro, which marks the entry into Galicia.

What can be said of the splendid heritage which you encounter throughout the whole length of your journey: the famous bridge of the Hospital de Orbigo, the magnificent Astorga, the monastery of Samos...

Then you will arrive in Galicia, a region bearing the marks of celtic culture, where you can experience with intensity the final stages of the great pilgrims' way of Saint James of Compostela. Entering the town of Santiago and progressing towards the Monte de Gozo are likely to be emotional experiences. You will pass through the Porta do Camino, and then enter the streets and alleys of the old city. Your arrival into the huge space in front of the cathedral will mark the climax of your long and beautiful journey along the pilgrims' routes of the St James Way to Santiago de Compostela.

PROGRAMME

JL004

15 days, 14 nights, 13 days walking.

DAY 1: LEÓN 820 m

Check in to your hotel, which is in the middle of the town of **León**. Take the opportunity to admire the impressive cathedral, a high point of Spanish gothic architecture, the basilica of San Isidoro, the ancient royal pantheon and, in addition to all these, the Casa de los Botines, a work of the Catalan architect Gaudi. Overnight stay and half board.

DAY 2: LEÓN - HOSPITAL DE ORBIGO 823 m

This stage takes you to **Hospital de Orbigo** and its famous Romanesque bridge (20 arches, 204m long). The first silhouettes of the Picos de Europa mountains start to appear on the skyline. It is possible to hire transport to shorten this stage of the walk. Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 9 hours (35 km)

DAY 3: HOSPITAL DE ORBIGO - ASTORGA 870 m

The walk takes you to **Astorga**, a splendid little town. Take the time to look at the town's architecture: the beautiful cathedral, the bishop's palace designed by Gaudi. Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 4 hours (17 km)

DAY 4: ASTORGA - RABANAL DEL CAMINO 1153 m

Today you are walking through the region of la Maragatería. You will cross the hills called the Monts de León before arriving at **Rabanal del Camino**, a charming little stone-built village. Overnight stay and half



board.

Walking time: 5 hours (20 km)

DAY 5: RABANAL DEL CAMINO - PONFERRADA 530 m

First you pass the celebrated Cruz de Ferro, a high point of the walk where every pilgrim puts down a stone. Then you tackle a downhill section going due west, going through Manjarín, El Acebo and then Molinaseca. You arrive at **Ponferrada**, where you can admire its chateau, which has a Scottish appearance.

Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 7.5 hours (32 km)

DAY 6: PONFERRADA - VILAFRANCA DEL BIERZO 500 m

This day's walk takes you through the middle of the plain of Bierzo before you reach **Villafranca del Bierzo**. This pretty little town is a staging post on the Camino Francés and has a church dedicated to Saint James. Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 6 hours (25 km)

DAY 7: VILAFRANCA DEL BIERZO - O CEBREIRO 1296 m

Today we set out on the so-called 'queen' of the stages of the St James Way. This is the climb up to **O Cebreiro**, an emblematic village of the Way. At the same time it is also the entry into Galicia which is marked by buildings called "Pallozas", dwellings of Neolithic origin which now have thatched roofs.

Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 8 hours (27 km)

DAY 8: O CEBREIRO - TRIACASTELA 662 m (Nuit à Samos)

The stage starts beautifully on the crest of a ridge. Then the Way goes down into the green countryside of Galicia, well-wooded with pines and eucalyptus. Finally you reach **Triacastela**. **From Triacastela, you take a taxi to Samos.** Overnight stay with half board at Samos.

Walking time: 6 hours (23 km)

DAY 9: TRIACASTELA - SARRIA 454 m

A taxi will transport you to Triacastela. Between **Triacastela** and **Sarria**, there are two possible routes. One goes via Samos and its monastery; the other goes through the villages of Montán and Pintín. Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 5 hours (18 km)

DAY 10: SARRIA - PORTOMARÍN 387 m

This stage takes you through the heart of Galicia, where green is the predominant colour. You will see the *horreos*, grain stores perched on four pillars. Passing through bewitchingly beautiful landscape you arrive at **Portomarín**, a drowned village which has been rebuilt on higher ground. Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 6 hours (23 km)

DAY 11: PORTOMARÍN - PALAS DE REI 565 m

The way takes you through eucalyptus plantations between Portomarín and **Palas de Rei**, a major crossroads in the old days. Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 6.5 hours (25 km)

DAY 12: PALAS DE REI - ARZÚA 389 m

This is an undulating section passing through verdant Galicia. Here you can admire the beautiful traditional



houses called ‘pazos’ with their raised granaries. You cross many watercourses before arriving at **Arzúa**.
Overnight stay and half board.
Walking time: 8 hours (29 km)

DAY 13: ARZÚA - LAVACOLLA 300 m

The next to the last stage before you reach Santiago de Compostela. The staging post is at **Lavacolla**, where pilgrims used to follow the ritual of washing their feet in the river. Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 7.5 hours (29 km)

DAY 14: LAVACOLLA - SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA 260 m

This is the final stage, rich in emotion and crowned by the arrival in **Santiago**, which UNESCO has declared a World Heritage Site. You go over the Monte de Gozo which gives you a view over the whole city. You approach the city centre through the suburbs seeing many interesting sights on your way: the cathedral and the Plaza de Obradoiro, the Hostal de los Reyes Catolicos, the cloister and the archbishop’s palace and the Palace of Raxoi... Overnight stay and half board.

Walking time: 2.75 hours (12 km)

DAY 15: SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

Holiday ends after breakfast.

Note: 1 – It will not be possible to alter the places where you are accommodated or the order of the walking stages etc (for obvious organisational reasons). Once the day’s walk has started, you are expected to continue the day’s programme as arranged, except where exceptional circumstances intervene (for example, safety issues linked to adverse weather conditions).

2 – If you wish to shorten a walking stage, you will need to contact and pay for any taxis used when the occasion arises.

DATES

There is no fixed departure date. It is for you to choose, any time between mid-April and the beginning of November (All Saints’ Day) subject to the availability of accommodation.

Please indicate on the booking form any alternative dates which might suit you (for example if you would be able to book the holiday for a period of time shortly before or after your preferred date). This may be useful if one or more hotels are already booked on the preferred date.

For similar reasons we ask you to **make your reservation as soon as possible**. We do not keep places reserved in the hotels and some of them can fill up with bookings several months in advance.

THE PRICE INCLUDES

- half board in all the hotels
- the carriage of luggage
- a guidebook (one guidebook for 1-2 people)

THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

- packed lunch/ midday meal
- insurance, drinks; personal spending
- the cost of getting from your home to the starting point, or getting home again after the holiday
- any taxis or shuttles taking you back to your car; any extra transport for shortening sections of the walk



- parking fees.
- visits
- Booking fees
- Extra charge for postage outside France.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Reception for holiday participants takes place in the hotel at León at the end of the afternoon before your first day's walk.

Your holiday finishes at Santiago de Compostela after breakfast.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

From 4 to 8 hours' walking per day in country which is mountainous at León; then, in Galicia, it becomes easy undulating terrain. There is no more than 300 metres' climbing per day (with the exception of the climb up to O Cebreiro after Villafranca, when there is about 800m of uphill walking).

ACCOMMODATION

This will be in one- and two-star hotels. It might be that showers and WCs will be positioned on the landings of certain establishments. Dogs are not allowed.

If hotels are full:

It can happen that hotels fill up on certain dates. If this happens, and to ensure that you are comfortable, different accommodation will be provided.

FOOD

Breakfasts are served rather late by French standards, typically after 8.30am. If you need an earlier breakfast than this, please talk to the hotel staff the evening before if possible. Generally speaking, Spanish hotel-keepers are usually happy to serve earlier breakfasts to satisfy the needs of walkers.

Bear in mind that Spanish mealtimes are often different from French ones. Meals can be served up to two hours later than their French equivalents (breakfast around 8h30-9h and the evening meal around 21h: i.e. 9pm).

Packed lunches are not included in our prices. You will be free to organise your own picnics. Along your walking stages you will find opportunities for buying food.

TRANSPORT OF LUGGAGE

All you need to carry are things you will need for your day's walk and your packed lunch. Other luggage will be carried for you in a vehicle. We ask you, however, to **make sure that you do not have more than one piece of luggage for each person** and weigh no more than 15 Kg

If you are a member of a group we ask you to show on your luggage labels the NAME of the group leader (the person who booked the holiday).

ACCESS

Train and bus timetables vary according to the time of year and the day of the week. We suggest that you contact directly the different public transport operators to prepare your journey to the starting point, and from the finishing point, of the holiday.

GETTING THERE



By train: There is a daily, direct train service from Irún to León.

There are other train services from Burgos.

You will need to take a taxi from the station to the hotel. (10 min, cost about 6 €).

By car: From Bayonne, take the motorway through San Sebastián, Bilbao. Then follow the signs for Palencia. Leave the motorway at Exit 14 which takes you on to the N120 and to San Mames, heading for Osorno la Mayor, Carrión de los Condes, Sahagún, and León. Michelin Map N° 442.

Estimated journey time between Bayonne and León: 4h10.

If you want to leave your car at León there are private pay car parks near the hotel. Below is information about car parks at León (aparcamiento):

Parking San Marcelo, plaza de Santo Domingo, tel. 0034 987 23 40 13, cost about 20 € per day (no reductions available).

Parking Ordoño, calle Ordoño 2, tel. 0034 987 22 24 66, cost 50 € per week and 85 € (approx) for two weeks.

By plane: There is an airport at León but flights are not straightforward: they always go via Madrid or other Spanish cities.

If you do arrive at León airport, the best way to get to the hotel from the airport is to take a taxi.

There are also flights to Santiago de Compostela from Paris, Nice or Lyon. You then travel to León from Santiago:

By train: Use the services of RENFE (Spanish railways).

By bus: The bus company ALSA runs the service between Santiago de Compostela and León. The journey takes about 6 hours.

GOING BACK

By train: There is a rail service Santiago - Irún - Hendaye. It is also possible to travel back to León by train (journey time: about 5h40).

By bus: There is a regular bus service between Santiago and León (journey time: about 6 hours) with the ALSA company. Alternatively there is a bus service to Irún, compter, but it takes a long time: 13h minimum.

By plane: From the Airport of Santiago de Compostela, there are regular and low coast services.

By car:

If you have left your car at León you can take a train or bus back from Santiago de Compostela.

DOCUMENTATION

A guidebook will be sent to you on receipt of your holiday payment (**1 guidebook for 1 to 2 people**). In it you will find a description of your route (all the tracks are way-marked). You will also find information on villages, features of interest etc. In addition we will send you a travel wallet for all the documents you will need on your walking holiday: luggage labels, information about organisation and other practicalities and the addresses of hotels.

THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU

A small rucksack for packed lunches and whatever you may need to carry with you when walking A small individual first-aid kit, including elastoplasts (sticking plasters), 'new skin', disinfectant/antiseptic for treating blisters or small wounds etc

A pair of strong, comfortable walking shoes suitable for long-distance walking on stony tracks Beware of bringing new footwear which has not been tested for comfort!

Sun-glasses, sun-cream and a sunhat

Rain-wear



Light footwear for the evenings.

A water-bottle: you will need to drink 1.5 to 2L of water each day.

A knife

A small torch (optional)

Binoculars (optional)

Paper handkerchiefs/tissues

Needle, thread and a couple of safety pins.

INSURANCE

Our insurances, Contrat Assistance Plus (Assistance étendue) and Contrat Sérénité (Premium) are individual and optional. If you sign up for them it must be **AT THE LATEST, 14 WORKING DAYS** after booking the holiday, and the insurance cannot take effect until after you have paid the full cost of the holiday. Anybody can take out one of our insurances, whatever their country of residence.

The total cost of the Contrat Assistance Plus (insurance for Assistance/Rapatriation) is set at 1.70% of the cost of the holiday. It takes into account only the cost of the holiday.

The total cost of the Contrat Sérénité (insurance for Assistance/Repatriation, cancellation and interruption of the holiday) is set at 3.6 % of the price of the holiday. It takes into account the cost of the holiday and the extra charges (for individual bedrooms, for a single holidaymaker, extra nights and possible extra transportation etc).

If you cancel the holiday yourself, if you haven't taken out our insurance for cancellation, the cancellation fees will be retained by us.

The size of the cancellation fee depends on the date of cancellation:

- 1) more than 30 days before the planned departure: 50 € of administration fees per person.
- 2) between 30 days and 22 days before departure: 25% of the total cost of the holiday.
- 3) between 21 days and 15 days before departure: 50% of the total cost of the holiday.
- 4) between 14 days and 8 days before departure: 75% of the total cost of the holiday.
- 5) between 7 days and 2 days before departure: 90% of the total cost of the holiday.
- 6) less than two days before the departure date: 100% of the total cost of the holiday.

In all cases of cancellation, even if it is more than 30 days before the planned starting date of the holiday, a fee of 50 € per person will be retained by us to cover administration costs.

➤➤ If the person with whom you planned to share a bedroom cancels their holiday, you will be billed for the individual supplement for that bedroom.

If you have to cancel your holiday **before you set off**, contact La Pèlerine on +33 (0)4 71 74 47 40, and we will do whatever is necessary.

During your holiday, your first action in such a situation should be either to contact **ASSISTANCE MUTUAIDE** on +33 (0)1 45 16 43 47 (if you have taken out the insurance contrat assistance plus) or **SERVICE SINISTRE ASSURANCE** on +33 (0)5 32 09 21 81 (if you have taken out the insurance contrat sérénité).

If you have any questions about your insurance contract, please contact the Hot Line on **05 32 09 21 81**.

Not turning up at the beginning of the holiday, or abandoning the holiday after you have begun it with no explanation, will disqualify you from reimbursement.

An example of an insurance contract, detailing the guarantees it gives you and the procedures you have to follow to make a claim, will be sent to you either at the time you make your booking – or at any other time if you ask for it.



CHANGING YOUR BOOKING:

ATTENTION!

Administration fees (50 €) will be kept by us for **any change you make in a booking already made** (e.g. for type of bedroom, departure dates, number of people etc).

If you want to book **extra nights** at the beginning or the end of your holiday this **must** be done **at the time of booking** and be specified on the booking confirmation sheet. Once bookings have been confirmed, if you want to arrange extra nights this must be done directly with the establishments concerned, and paid for at the time.

