

THE WAY OF SAINT JAMES
Cycling the Spanish section
SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT / SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

Set out to explore the varied scenery of northern Spain as you pass through a number of regions, each of which has its own strong local identity: the Basque Region, Navarra, La Rioja, Castile, the famous Meseta and Galicia.

La Pèlerine invites you to travel by bicycle along the Spanish part of the Way of Saint James (known in French as the chemin de St Jacques). Doing this journey by bike is an excellent choice: the route has no great difficulties and there are many wonderful places to visit including some remarkable towns along the way. Furthermore we can plan a holiday for you to suit your individual needs and wishes, varying the lengths of the stages and the distances you cycle each day to suit your preferences.

As the kilometres stretch out behind you, immerse yourself in the Iberian cultures and enjoy the delightful surprises to be found on the ‘Camino Francés’ section of the Way of St James – which without any doubt is the most cosmopolitan long-distance cycle route in the world...

PROGRAMME

VL002

13 days - 12 nights - 11 days' cycling.

DAY 1: SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT

Arrive and check into your hotel at Saint Jean Pied de Port at the end of the afternoon. Night and half board.

DAY 2: SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT - PAMPLONA

73 Km

Go up over the col of Roncesvalles in the cool of the morning. Then you have an enjoyable section through the forest from **Roncesvalles** to **Zubiri**, passing through villages with Basque names. Next comes a section where you cross the valley of Esteribar. Then you arrive at Pamplona, the first big town on the Camino Francés, capital of Navarra and a place where you find many historical relics linked to the pilgrimage. **Evening meal not included.**

DAY 3: PAMPLONA - LOGROÑO

94 Km

You set off first to Puente la Reina with its famous medieval bridge, then Estella, a beautiful little town known as « Estella la Belle » graced with ancient houses, a palace and churches which fully justify the town's reputation. After this you leave Navarra and enter La Rioja. Logroño, the capital of La Rioja is an interesting town. It is well worth looking round the beautiful Santa Maria de la Redonda cathedral and the town's old quarter. Night and half board.

DAY 4: LOGROÑO - BELORADO

70 Km

From **Logroño** you head towards **Nájera**; your route goes through the vineyards and wheat-fields of La Rioja. The way takes you to Santo Domingo de la Calzada, a remarkable town. Here you can find out about the celebrities of



the cathedral, a hen and a cockerel... This part of the journey gives you a foretaste of the next section of your route, which crosses the wide plateau of the Spanish meseta, famous for its cereal-growing. Night and half board.

DAY 5: BELORADO - BURGOS

53 Km

You set off through villages and tiny hamlets, then continue through a more demanding section over the Montes de Oca. One particularly impressive section is at San Juan, one of the high points of the pilgrimage, not merely because of its altitude but also because of its architectural riches and its monastery. Then you cycle from the lonely monastery of San Juan all the way to the centre of Burgos. Here, take the time to have a pleasant stroll round one of the most beautiful cathedrals in Europe, the Queen of Gothic cathedrals. Night and half board.

DAY 6: BURGOS - FROMISTA

75 Km

You go through Castrojeriz, a pretty village of Roman origin perched on a hilltop, which owes its pre-eminence to its history of pilgrimage. From Castrojeriz you continue to Carrion de los Condes, a typical town in the middle of a vast expanse of wheat-fields. Next you pass through the attractive village of Fromista, where you can pause for a rest in the magnificent setting of the cathedral precincts. Night and half board.

DAY 7: FROMISTA- SAHAGUN

62 Km

From Fromista, take the road to Carrión de los Condes, a major village on the Way, which preserves all its old charm and has many relics of the old days : beautiful houses, churches and the monastery of San Zoilo. Your route then takes you to Sahagún, which is sometimes known as the ‘Spanish Cluny’ (from its resemblance to the French town of that name, which contains some impressive monastic ruins). Night and half board.

DAY 8: SAHAGÚN - LEÓN

66 Km

You follow the ‘camino’ across the *meseta* until you reach the town of **León**, where the old quarter contains some attractive features. These include the Casa de los Botines (a work by the Catalan architect, Gaudí), the splendid cathedral, the church of San Isidoro and indeed the hostel de San Marcos. Night and half board.

DAY 9: LEÓN - RABANAL DEL CAMINO

66 km

This stage takes you to **Hospital de Orbigo** with its celebrated Romanesque bridge, which has 20 arches and is 204 m long. From here you can see the first signs of the Picos de Europa mountains on the horizon. You continue to **Astorga**, a wonderful little town with its beautiful cathedral and its bishops’ palace designed by Gaudí. Night and half board.

DAY 10: RABANAL - O CEBREIRO

91 km

This day’s ride takes you through the famous Cruz de Ferro (1490m), the highest part of the Way where each pilgrim leaves a stone. Then you have a descent, due west, passing through Manjarín, El Acebo and then Molinaseca. At **Ponferrada**, you can make a halt and admire the castle, which has a Scottish look about it. Then it is time to tackle the climb up to **O Cebreiro**, an iconic village of the camino which marks your entry into Galicia. Night and half board.



DAY 11: O CEBREIRO - PALAS DE REI

94 km

You have a beautiful start to this stage along a ridge, then the Way goes down into the green and wooded countryside of Galicia, with its pines and eucalyptus trees. It takes you to **Triacastela**. **Next**, you have a choice of two routes. You can either pass through Samos and its monastery, or you can go through the villages of Montán and Pintín. On the way you will see some *horreos*, these are grain-stores perched on four pillars. You then pass through eucalyptus plantations between Portomarín and **Palas de Rei**, formerly important as a major crossroads of pilgrimage routes. Night and half board.

DAY 12: PALAS DE REI - SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

70 km

This is your last stage, and an emotional one, because it is crowned by your arrival at a famous destination, **Santiago**, now a UNESCO World Heritage site. To reach it, you go over the Monte de Gozo which gives you a view over the whole town. Make your way through the outskirts of the town and give yourself time to see some of its many notable features: these include 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... Night and half board.

DAY 13: SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

Your holiday ends after breakfast.



- The practicalities of your holiday are 100% taken care of, so that you can cycle without worries to Santiago de Compostela.
- High quality accommodation is provided along your entire route.
- We can organise a 'made to measure' holiday for you, to suit your own requirements.

***Note:** 1 – It is not possible for us to alter the places where you are booked to stay, nor to change the order of the cycling stages – for organisational reasons. Once you have started your holiday, you will have to follow the programme which has been confirmed by us – except under special circumstances (for example for safety reasons linked to exceptional weather conditions).*

2 – In the event that you wish to shorten your cycling stages, you will have to book and pay for the taxis yourself at the time.

DATES

There is no fixed departure date. You can choose to set out on your holiday between the middle of April (this depends on the weather and if it is suitable for crossing the Pyrenees at that time) and the beginning of November, depending on whether the accommodation is available.

(However, we cannot arrange this holiday between 01/07 to 15/7 inclusive : Festival of Pamplona).

Please indicate on the booking form any alternative dates which might suit you as well as your first choice holiday dates (e.g. if you could bring your holiday forward, or delay it, for a few days). This will enable us to arrange alternative bookings if hotels etc are fully booked for your first choice dates.

We also urge you to **book as early as possible**. We do not keep places reserved in hotels and some of them may be fully booked several months in advance.

THE PRICE INCLUDES

Half board (except for the evening meal on Day 2).

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Transportation of baggage

A cycle touring guidebook (1 guidebook between 1-2 people).

THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

Hiring the bicycle

The evening meal at Pamplona

Packed lunches/midday picnics

Transport between your home and the starting and finishing points of the holiday; parking costs.

Buses or taxis to get back to your vehicle, or to shorten certain stages.

Insurance.

Booking fees and postal costs.

Drinks and personal spending.

BEGINNING AND END OF HOLIDAY

Your holiday starts when you arrive at your first hotel in the town of Saint Jean Pied de Port, the evening before your first day's cycling.

You can leave your vehicle in the town square opposite your hotel (parking not secure).

Your holiday ends at Santiago de Compostela, the morning after your last day's cycling, after breakfast.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 The daily stages we have arranged vary between 80 and 90km on average. The route follows small country roads. There are no special difficulties but the route does pass through some hilly areas. We draw your attention to the fact that we can arrange the stages of the holiday so that their lengths suit your own preferences.

ACCOMMODATION

In hotels 1*, 2** and 3***. It may be that showers and toilets are on the landings in certain establishments. Dogs are not allowed.

If hotels have been heavily booked:

It might be that certain hotels are completely booked up on certain dates. If this is the case, for your comfort and convenience, different hotels or accommodation will be booked.

FOOD

Breakfasts are served relatively late (compared with French times) starting, in theory, at 8h30. If you would like an earlier breakfast, check with each hotel the evening before if that is possible. Usually, hotels in Spain are happy to bring breakfast times forward to suit the needs of cyclists and walkers.

Bear in mind that meal times in Spain are often not the same as those in France. Typically, meals are served around two hours later in Spain than they would be in France (breakfasts around 8h30-9h and dinner (evening meal) around 21h).

Packed lunches and picnics are not included in our prices. You are free to put together your own picnics. You will find food shops of one kind or another all along your route, where you will be able to buy food for lunch.



TRANSPORTATION OF LUGGAGE

Your luggage will be transported by a **baggage transport company** between each of your places of accommodation at the end of the morning or during the afternoon.

ATTENTION:

We ask you to leave your luggage in the entrance of each of your places of accommodation at 8 H and to make sure that you have **NO MORE THAN 1 BAG PER PERSON, WEIGHING NO MORE THAN 14KG**; if you have more than one bag, or if your bag weighs more than 14kg, the transporter may charge you extra at the end of your holiday, or simply refuse to carry your luggage altogether if it is too cumbersome.

We strongly suggest you carry a small rucksack to hold the things you will need for each day's walk.

If you belong to a group, please show on your luggage labels the **NAME** of your group leader (i.e. the person who booked the holiday).

ACCESS

**GETTING THERE*

Train: Train to Bayonne, then the local SNCF (French railways) service (train or bus depending on the timetables) to Saint Jean Pied de Port (journey time: 1h15).

Plane: Airport of Biarritz - Anglet - Bayonne, then take the regional SNCF train service as far as St Jean Pied de Port.

Car: From your home, drive to Pau or Bayonne; then take the autoroute (motorway) A 64 between Pau and Bayonne, sortie (turn-off) n°7 at Salies, then D 430, D 933, Sauveterre de Béarn, D933 St Palais, D933 St Jean Pied de Port.

**RETURN*

Train: There is a rail link from Santiago - Irún - Hendaye. If you prefer not to use this there is the possibility of a bus or train service from Santiago to Roncesvalles.

Bus: A long bus journey is possible to Irún. Allow a minimum of 13h for this with the ALSA Company. This company will agree to carry bicycles. This will cost you about 10€ extra for long journeys.

Plane: Airport of Santiago de Compostela. There are regular services to Paris, Nice and Lyon.

Car: You can get back to your car parked at Roncesvalles by taking a train or a bus 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.

EXAMPLES OF SUITABLE EQUIPMENT PRODUCED BY OUR PARTNERS:

VERTICAL

RUCKSACK:

Aventure 40L, a very suitable volume for a walking holiday. It contains all you need, is made of light material and does not take up too much space.

OR

- **5L Polyvalent**: This small, all-purpose rucksack is very useful for one-day walks.

- **Compartment avant Trail (a chest-bag for wearing on your front)**: This fixes easily on to your chest at the level of your braces. It balances the weight carried in front and behind and gives you more comfort on a long walk.

CLOTHING MADE BY VERTICAL TREKLIGHT:

For walking, think of comfort but also breathability...

- **Shirt AUBRAC**, slightly shaped, with long sleeves in recycled Polyester which combine comfort and effectiveness for a weight of only 300g.

- **2nd layer ANTARA**: 295 grams! Warm, stretchy and very light. The inside has a 'brushed' surface; the outside is smooth. This gives good protection against the wind.

- **Rain cape**: Minimum weight and inconvenience for an excellent rain cape. It uses the membrane MP+ of Vertical, making it waterproof yet breathable. It has a practical design with a built-in zip which can be opened all the way in hot weather.

The + Vertical: This design feature, a section in the back which will open out, enables you to adapt your cape to the size of your rucksack up to 60-70L, thus keeping the rucksack dry as well as yourself. The cape comes with a stuff bag.

- **CoolTrek leggings**: These are very comfortable, stretchy and reinforced in the right places. This is one of the classics of the Vertical range. With its four pockets it is very practical to wear and use, yet it has a feather-weight of only 380g.

- **Cap with flap**: An indispensable item for protecting your head. The + Vertical: The removable sun-flap allows you to adapt the cap to the weather conditions.

- **Alu Trek Light walking poles**: 280 grams (weight of one pole). A necessity for walkers. They have a screw-lock adjustment system which makes them highly effective.



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