

EXPLORE!

Self-Guided Cycle Camino de Santiago

10 days

Spain - Trip code CSCS



Self-Guided Cycle Camino de Santiago

Cycle the legendary pilgrimage trail from Leon to Santiago de Compostela - the resting place of Saint James. On this self-guided cycle trip you follow the route of ancient pilgrims on a scenic ride through northern Spain, starting on the high plains of Castile in the impressive city of Leon. Crossing the Bierzo hills you then traverse the rolling countryside of Galicia, passing historical monuments and pretty villages along the way, often in the company of other pilgrims.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Legendary Camino de Santiago** - Cycle through beautiful landscapes and historically important towns and villages
- ★ **Santiago de Compostela** - The holy shrine of St. James and a lively town with fine architecture
- ★ **Leon** - Imposing Gothic Cathedral with stunning stained glass windows
- ★ **Astorga** - Magnificent Bishop's Palace designed by Antoni Gaudi
- ★ **Cruz de Ferro** - The famous iron cross at the highest point of the Camino
- ★ **O'Cebreiro** - Charming mountain village with cobbled streets, round stone thatched houses and picturesque valley views

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Premium

Our premium accommodation is hand-picked and chosen for its character, location or local importance. These properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

CYCLING GRADE:

Moderate

Medium length rides suitable for cyclists who are used to undulating routes with occasional energetic climbs. Mainly on trails and quiet roads and you should have a reasonable level of fitness.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Holiday starts in Leon

After arriving in Leon and checking into your hotel, we recommend spending time exploring this historic city. Situated in the heart of the Spanish Meseta (high plateau), Leon was once the centre of Christian Spain, at a time when two thirds of the peninsula was under Muslim rule. The city's great Gothic cathedral and the equally superb Romanesque Basilica de San Isidoro are among the finest examples of their architectural style to be found in Spain. The cathedral, in particular, is unique for the quality and magnificence of its stained-glass windows, which span seven centuries and cover subjects as diverse as religion, mythology and even medieval life. Your included rental bike will be delivered today or tomorrow morning depending on your arrival time and you will be required to sign an agreement of care upon receipt of the bike. Details of how to reach the start point of your holiday can be found on our website in the tour specific 'dates and prices' section by clicking on 'Joining Info' and then the 'Show More' button.



Accommodation: Hotel Real Colegiata (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Gentle ride to the historic town of Astorga

After you have tested and adjusted your rental bike, you start your Camino journey with a gentle ride through the plains of Castille to the small town of Astorga. Once a strategically important staging post on the Roman route to Andalucia, it was from Astorga that the Romans controlled the traffic of gold from mines in the nearby Las Medulas hills. The town is home to some fine medieval architecture, including a superb cathedral that is worth exploring. However, it is the Palacio Episcopal that is its most famous asset. Designed by Antoni Gaudi, the Modernista architect at the end of the 19th century, the magnificent palace was built to replace its predecessor, destroyed by a fire. Unfortunately, its radical design and horrendous costs resulted in it never being used and it now houses a unique collection of artefacts and treasures devoted to the town's history. Tonight's accommodation is the first of many gems on the trip. Once the Earl of Tepa's glorious residence, when Napoleon came to Astorga during the French siege of the town, he stayed at this home after the conquest. Your total cycling distance today is approximately 48 kilometres.



Accommodation: Posada Real Casa de Tepa (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Bike to Molinaseca via the famous Cruz de Ferro

As you leave Astorga, the scenery takes a dramatic change, from the expansive high plateau of La Meseta, towards the rolling landscapes of the Bierzo Mountains. Your route will take you through Castrillo de Los Polvazare, one of the finest Medieval villages in Castille, before ascending higher into the hills to reach the Cruz de Ferro (Iron Cross). This is the highest point of the Camino at an altitude of 1482 metres. As one of the most significant points on the route, pilgrims have been leaving stone offerings here for centuries, in the hope that they would offer protection for the rest of the pilgrimage. In good weather, you are likely to be able to see the mountains of Galicia for the first time in the distance. From here, it is mainly downhill to the small village of Molinaseca, where you will spend the night. Your total cycling distance today is approximately 49 kilometres.



Accommodation: Hotel El Palacio de Molinaseca (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 4 - Peddle to Vilafranca del Bierzo via Ponferrada

Today's more leisurely ride heads for the city of Vilafranca del Bierzo - an important gateway to Galicia. En route, you will pass through Ponferrada - another town founded by the Roman gold mining industry and home to an impressive 12th century Templar castle which occupies an area no less than 8000 square metres. Tonight's hotel accommodation is ideally located in Vilafranca del Bierzo's pretty and historic town square. On the ground floor, you will find the oldest pharmacy in Spain, which has been converted into a museum. Your total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres.



Accommodation: Hotel Posada Plaza Mayor (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Climb to the historic village of O Cebreiro

Today's ride into Galicia is small on distance but big on gradients as you face a six-kilometre climb up a dirt road to your night stop in O Cebreiro. If you prefer, this steep climb can be avoided by following the old national road to the Pass Pedrafita and then taking the tarmac road to O Cebreiro. Sitting high above a patchwork quilt of green valleys, O Cebreiro is a remarkable and emblematic village, full of legends and stories related to the Camino. The village is famous for its 'pallozas' - traditional circular thatch-roofed houses. Its impressive Romanesque church dates from the 11th century. Your hotel is just next door. Your total cycling distance today is approximately 29 kilometres.



Accommodation: Venta Celta (or similar)



Simple



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 6 - Cycle to Sarria, via Samos' Benedictine monastery

After an initial short ascent, today's ride is mostly downhill. Deep in the rural heart of Galicia, the scenery takes on a mantle of lush vegetation, ancient forests and small rural hamlets. Cycling through the village of Samos, you may choose to stop and visit the delightful Benedictine monastery - one of the most important in Galicia. Although founded in the 6th century, it was continuously reformed until the 18th century. From here, you will pedal on to your nightstop in Sarria - Galicia's principle town. Situated on a hilltop with a river on either side, the town commands great views of the region. Your total cycling distance today is approximately 47 kilometres.



Accommodation: Hotel Restaurante Roma (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Bike to Palas de Rei; Stay in an old Galician farmhouse

On today's ride, you will accomplish a total ascent of 725 metres, but this will be staggered with climbs of no more than 200 metres at a time. The rural landscape that you cycle through continuously changes and you will pass plenty of village cafés and restaurants in which to meet fellow pilgrims. Your total cycling distance today is approximately 52 kilometres if staying in Palas de Rei or 59 kilometres if staying at Parada das Bestas.



Accommodation: A Parada Das Bestas (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 8 - Cycle to Arzua; Stay in a converted Galician manor

Today's ride is gentle and undulating day as you cycle from one village to another. Dairy production is the main industry in this area, although the pilgrimage trade is also important. At our night stop in Arzúa, we can look forward to more characterful accommodation. Here, our hotel is a converted traditional Galician manor house, known as a Pazo. Your total cycling distance today is approximately 33 kilometres.



Accommodation: Pazo de Santa Maria (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 9 - Reach your journey's end at Santiago Cathedral

Your final day's cycling sees the landscape flatten for your last push to Santiago. If you choose the standard route, you will peddle through the outskirts of Santiago and via the famous Monte del Gozo. This hill translates as the 'Hill of Joy' as it is the place where pilgrims catch their first glimpse of the cathedral. If you would prefer to take a more scenic route, you can cycle via Touro, adding about 11 kilometres to your day's total distance. Cycling into the heart of Santiago, your journey ends at the gates of the 12th century Baroque cathedral that towers over the surrounding city streets and is one of Christendom's holiest shrines. Indeed, after Jerusalem and Rome, this city was once the most important place of pilgrimage anywhere in the Christian world. The tomb of St. James is believed to lie in the crypt beneath the cathedral altar, part of the original 9th century foundations of an earlier basilica. After checking into your hotel, you may choose to explore more of Santiago on foot. Alternatively, you may prefer to relax with a well-earned glass of something, reflecting on the incredible journey you have undertaken in the footsteps of so many before you. Your total cycling distance today is approximately 39 kilometres (with optional extra 11 kilometres).



Accommodation: Virxe de Cerca (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Holiday ends in Santiago

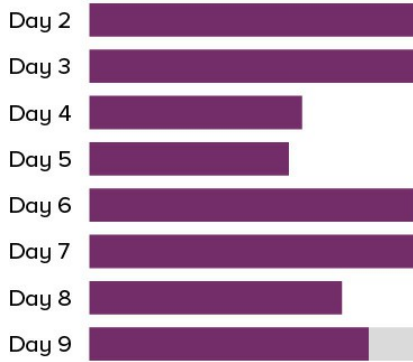
After breakfast, the organised part of your holiday comes to an end.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information

DAILY DISTANCE



Optional Rides

General cycling information

On this journey you cycle 324 km over eight days (an average of 41 km per day). The terrain is mostly undulating with gently rolling hills and some steeper ascents. On three of the days there are prolonged steep ascents. We cycle mostly on quiet interior roads and about 10% is on wide gravel tracks. We have graded the route as moderate.

Bike included

24 gear Mountain Bike with lockable front suspension.

Bike information

Your included bike is a 24 gear mountain bike with lockable front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. Various models are possible, each of a similar standard, eg Orbea Dakar, Mondraker Concept, Merida Matts. Each bike is fitted with a lateral pannier bags (20 litre capacity) as well as a 3-litre handlebar bag that doubles as a map note holder. A water bottle holder and new water bottle is provided as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A lock, pump, spare inner tube and puncture repair kit with tyre levers is included. All you need to bring is your own helmet. You will be required to sign an agreement of care upon receipt of the bike. 10 Electric bikes (e-bikes) are available for an additional cost for the duration of the holiday (£155). A pannier can also be hired at extra cost. You will be required to pay a refundable deposit upon collection of the e-bike in country. Please contact us for more details or to request your e-bike.

Cycling grade

Moderate



Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a pump, lock, spare inner tube and tyre levers. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 9
Dinner: 4



Transport

Bicycle



Accommodation

1 nights simple
5 nights premium hotel
3 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Spain Holidays & Tours

Climate

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a Spanish trip - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The high central plains suffer from fierce extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round. Spain's Islands the Canaries and Balaerics experience very mild winters and warm summers making them ideal year round destinations.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

There are numerous opportunities throughout this trip to stop of at monuments and religious historical sites. The following are particular places to note. Day 1 - In Leon visit the Gothic cathedral & Basilica of San Isidoro (entrance cost around 8 Euros). Day 4 - Visit the Castillo de los Templarios on your way through Ponferrada. Day 6 - It is well worth stopping in Samos to see the monastery (entrance cost around 10 Euros). Day 9 - Spend time at the end of the cycling to explore the Romanesque Santiago cathedral. Perhaps eat tonight at a Tapas bar.

Clothing

Bring cycling gear such as quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts and cycle gloves. Remember that the weather is slightly more changeable in northern Spain, and it can be cool, especially at night and at the start and end of the season, so bring a warmer jacket/fleece. A waterproof cycle jacket is recommended in case of rain. A light windproof jacket is always useful.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage: On tour

Bring one main piece of baggage as per your airline luggage allowance, maximum 20 kg per person. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage if using public transport so don't overload yourself. Luggage transfers between hotels are normally arranged by the hoteliers. Please note luggage transfers are restricted to 15 kg per person, any additional weight will need to be packed in your day bag or pannier bag. Mark your bags clearly and leave them at the place and time arranged with them. When travelling on public transport you should always take your luggage with you.

Luggage transfer

Included between each hotel.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. It is a legal requirement in Spain to wear a helmet that meets current safety criteria. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses (to protect against dust, insects, pollen, sun etc) , cycle gloves (padded for more comfort) and a water bottle or water delivery system (eg camelback or platypus). You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage. Maps - Along with the destination manual and route notes you will be sent a set of maps that have been created specifically for this trip to help you navigate. The route is marked on each map together with a series of numbered waypoints which correspond with instructions in the route notes. Should you wish to purchase a more detailed commercially produced map we recommend the following:- General Map Michelin Zoom Map 160 - Camino de Santiago (scale 1:130.000 / 1:200.000)

Country Information

Spain Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£12.00 - 16.00

Beer price

£1.50 - 2.50 (depending on the region/area in Spain)

Water price

£1.4

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euros

Recommended Currency For Exchange

We recommend you take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability

In cities and most major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bicycle

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing

accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Premium - Hand-picked and chosen for their character, location or local importance, these properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day. Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Spain: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, US, New Zealand, US or Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Spain Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.
