

EXPLORE!

Cycle the Camino de Santiago

8 days

Spain - Trip code CCDS



Cycle the Camino de Santiago

Following the route of ancient pilgrims we cycle sections of the legendary trail to Santiago de Compostela - the resting place of Saint James. The trip follows the last 200 kilometres of the scenic route through northern Spain, starting on the high plains of the Castilian meseta. We ascend into the fertile region of the Bierzo and traverse the rolling hills of Galicia to the delightful city of Santiago completing our pilgrims' passport as we go.

Trip highlights

- ★ **The legendary Camino de Santiago route** - Beautiful scenery and cultural highlights as we cherry pick the best bits of the route
- ★ **Santiago De Compostela** - Lively historic town and 'holy shrine' of the pilgrims
- ★ **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
- ★ **Pilgrims' Passport** - collect local stamps as you go and fill up your passport

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, 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.

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.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Tour starts in Bilbao

Arrive Bilbao and check into our hotel. You may like to take an evening stroll to visit and view the impressive Guggenheim Museum from the outside.



Accommodation: Hotel Barcelo Nervion (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Drive to Leon for sightseeing; cycle across the high plateau to Astorga

We start the day with a four hour drive to Leon, set in the heart of the Spanish meseta (high plateau). There will be time to discover the ancient centre of town and have lunch (not included). We cover a lot of ground today so only a short visit in Leon is possible. Leon was once the centre of Christian Spain, during the time that two thirds of the peninsula was under Muslim rule. The two central buildings of the city are its great Gothic cathedral and the equally superb Romanesque Basilica de San Isidoro, both among the finest examples to be found anywhere in Spain. The cathedral 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. After lunch we continue by bus to the village of Santovenia where we commence our cycle ride. Over the coming days please note that we won't always be precisely following the path used by pilgrims on foot (too rough in parts). Our cycle route is actually an advantage and it still allows us to see the important monuments and places of interest along the route because we always return to the Camino. The route from here to Astorga gives us a feel for the endless Meseta. We negotiate a series of secondary roads that undulate through the countryside towards the small town of Astorga. Once a strategically important staging post on the Roman route to Andalucia, it was from this small outpost that the Romans controlled the traffic of gold from mines in the nearby hills of Las Medulas. Later it became a major stopping point on the pilgrim trail to Santiago. Astorga houses some fine medieval buildings, including the superb

cathedral, but it is the Palacio Episcopal that probably shines out. Designed by Antoni Gaudi, the Modernista architect at the end of the 19th century, the magnificent Bishops Palace was built to replace its predecessor, destroyed by a fire in 1887. 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 Astorga's history and its importance on the Pilgrim route. Astorga is also famous for its chocolate and in medieval times it was one of the first centres in Europe to undertake the production and copy of the original recipes brought from the Spanish colonies in Mexico. Please note that the ride today is unguided. The Tour Leader drives the support vehicle and gives clear instructions of the route to follow. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 51 kilometres (Total 300 metres ascent and descent)



Accommodation: Hotel Gaudi (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Cycle the rolling landscapes of the Bierzo mountains to Molinaseca

As we leave Astorga the scenery takes a dramatic change, from the expansive high plateau of La Meseta towards the rolling landscapes of the Bierzo mountains. We cycle through Castrillo de Los Polvazares, one of the finest medieval villages in Castille and through Rabanal del Camino, an outpost built by the Templars to ensure the safe passage of the pilgrims travelling through this wild country. Heading into the hills we then pass the village of Foncebadón en route to the 'Cruz de Ferro' (Iron Cross), which is the highest point in the entire Camino Francés at 1482m. This is one of the most significant points on the route, where for centuries pilgrims have been leaving stone offerings from their homelands, in the hope that they would offer protection for the rest of the pilgrimage. From here we can see the mountains of Galicia for the first time in the distance. After a picnic lunch (not included) in the woods somewhere near Riego de Ambros, our journey takes us along a mainly downhill route for the rest of the day, until we finally arrive after a steep downhill to the small village of Molinaseca where we plan to spend the night. Today is probably the most demanding ride of the trip, so you can relax well tonight. The ride today is unguided. The Tour Leader drives the support vehicle and gives clear instructions of the route to follow. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 48 kilometres (Total 600 metres ascent and 900 descent)



Accommodation: Meson de Palacio (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Transfer to O'Cebreiro; cycle the rural heart of Galicia to Samos


This morning we start with a transfer to the unusual village of O Cebreiro, a tiny wind-battered settlement of stone houses high above a patchwork quilt of green valleys. The village is famous for its 'pallozas' - traditional circular, thatch-roofed houses. Back on our bikes the first section is mostly downhill, heading steeply downhill to the small village of Triacastela, nestling amongst some of the most unspoilt countryside on the entire Camino. Deep in the rural heart of Galicia the scenery takes on a mantle of lush vegetation, ancient forests and small rural hamlets. From Triacastela we cycle to the nearby village of Samos with its delightful Benedictine monastery, one of the most important in Galicia and an interesting diversion. NB - The keener and fitter cyclists could opt to start today's ride in Villafranca del Bierzo, which would involve an additional 34km distance and some demanding uphill sections. The ride today is unguided. The Tour Leader drives the support vehicle and gives clear instructions of the route to follow. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 38 kilometres (Total 300 metres ascent and 900 descent) and there is a further 34 km optional ride.




Accommodation: A Veiga (or similar)



Standard Hotel

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Cycle to Portomarin via the medieval village of Sarria

From Samos we cycle across Galicia passing Sarria town, traversing a terrain of undulating hills in this most verdant of all Spain's regions before finally reaching Portomarin. Once a splendid medieval village and Templar stronghold, the original settlement was relocated by Franco when the Rio Minho was dammed and the old village flooded. When the water level is low in the reservoir you can still see parts of the medieval town rising up from the waters of the lake. We are now within the last 100km of the journey to Santiago, for so long a magical marker for the weary pilgrims and the minimum distance a true pilgrim has to cover on foot to be recognized by the Association of the Friends of the Camino, who reward the effort with the famous stamped document. Subsequently we will encounter a lot more walkers on the Camino as we get closer to Santiago. The ride today is unguided. The Tour Leader drives the support vehicle and gives clear instructions of the route to follow. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 36 kilometres (Total 500 metres ascent and 700 descent)

 **Accommodation: Villajardin** (or similar)

 Standard Hotel


 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Cycle to Arzua; chance to try traditional Galician dish of octopus

Continuing through the pasturelands of Galicia the landscape alternates between dense forest of chestnut and small isolated villages, the few occupants living their lives much as they have for generations. Today is a good day for trying some traditional Galician dishes en route, specifically the famous octopus with potatoes! The village of Melide is renowned all over Spain for this particular meal and we can stop here for lunch in one of its traditional restaurants. And what better way to finish than by washing it down with some of the excellent local white wine from the Riberas Baixas near Pontevedra. After lunch we complete the last few kilometres across rolling hills to the town of Arzua, our destination for the evening. The Tour Leader cycles with the group today and the ride is accompanied by a support vehicle. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 62 kilometres (Total 650 metres ascent and descent)

 **Accommodation: Hotel Suiza** (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Cycle from Arzua into Santiago; free afternoon

Our final day's cycling traverses more undulating terrain as we travel between Arzua to the outskirts of Santiago itself, arriving eventually at Monte de Gozo, the final hill before the city and the point where the pilgrims could finally see the towers of the Cathedral (on a clear day!) and the end of their journey. After contemplating what an emotive moment this must have been for the exhausted pilgrims, we cycle into the heart of the city itself and the gate of the cathedral - journey's end. After checking into our hotel the afternoon is left free to explore something of Santiago on foot, enjoying the relative peace of the late afternoon to visit the cathedral. The 12th century Cathedral towers over the surrounding city streets and is one of Christendom's holiest of shrines, indeed after Jerusalem and Rome this city was 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 altar, part of the original 9th century foundations of an earlier basilica. The majesty of the Praza do Obradoiro, the immense square that stands before the cathedral was the focal point for the arriving

pilgrims, a fitting setting for the end of their (and our) journey. The Tour Leader cycles with the group today and the ride is accompanied by a support vehicle. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 48 kilometres (Total 600 metres ascent and 750 descent)



Accommodation: Rosa Rosae (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Tour ends Santiago de Compostela

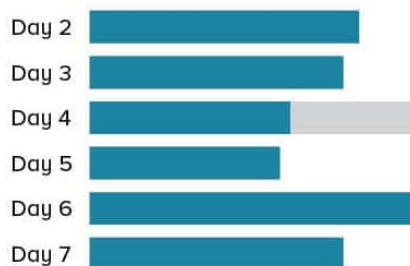
The tour ends in Santiago de Compostela this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information

DAILY DISTANCE



Optional Rides

Distance Chart

General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 283 km over six days (an average of 47 km per day) with a further optional 33 km available. The route is mainly on tarmac. The first day of cycling is relatively flat and the subsequent five days across the rolling hills of Galicia involve frequent uphill and downhill sections. The cycle rides are not accompanied by a cycle guide, except on days 6 and 7 when the Tour Leader will cycle with the group. On the other days the Tour Leader drives the support vehicle, accompanying the ride wherever necessary or possible, and provides clear instructions throughout the ride so you can cycle individually or as a group. We have graded the route as moderate.

Bike included

27 gear Stevens Galant SX or similar hybrid bikes.

Bike information

Your included bike is a 27 gear Stevens Galant SX hybrid or similar make and model and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. A pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle carries the luggage from point to point and is driven by the tour leader. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

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 support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7



Transport

Bus
Bicycle



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Cycle
guide
Driver(s)



Accommodation

1 nights premium hotel
6 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

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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

Clothing

When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts, lightweight wind and water proof jacket and warmer breathable layers where local conditions require. Cycling gloves are strongly recommended as they will protect you from sunburn and may also help protect your hands if you fall. General: Pack essentially for hot or mild weather depending on the time of the year. A warm sweater or fleece and long trousers are advisable for the evenings especially in early and late season when the weather tends to be cooler. A rain jacket is also recommended.

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 so please check the trip notes. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

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, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. 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. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, we recommend approximately GBP 15 per person for tipping. 10% is recommended at meal times.

Country Information

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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

Bus, 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.

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, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

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.

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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.