

EXPLORE!

Camino de Santiago

11 days

Spain - Trip code CDS



Camino de Santiago

Following in the footsteps of countless pilgrims since the 9th Century, walk the legendary route Camino Frances (French Way) to Santiago de Compostela - the resting place of Saint James, where we claim our pilgrims' certificate. Experience the most scenic sections between Leon and Santiago across the high plains of the Castilian Meseta and into the Galician mountains. Discover Gothic cathedrals, pass through medieval villages and climb to the Iron Cross (1,482m) along the way.

Trip highlights

- ★ **The legendary Camino de Santiago route** - Walk through beautiful scenery and historic towns along the best parts of the route to claim a pilgrim's certificate
- ★ **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
- ★ **Santiago De Compostela** - Lively historic town and holy shrine of pilgrims

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.

WALKING GRADE:**Moderate**

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

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 at Madrid airport. Walking tour of Leon

Our trip starts at Terminal 1 at Madrid airport, from where we travel for approximately three hours by charter bus to Leon. Leon is a great city with a wonderful sense of history reflected in its architecture. It is also an important waypoint on the famous Camino de Santiago. After settling into our hotel we have a walking tour of this interesting city. The city's main attractions are its beautiful Gothic cathedral with its unique stained glass windows and the Romanesque San Isidoro church. However there is lots more to discover, including the picturesque old quarter and the brass scallop shells set in the pavement that mark the route of the Camino de Santiago through the city.



Accommodation: Hostal Albany (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Walk from Hospital de Orbigo to Astorga

Today, after ensuring we have our Pilgrim Passports we drive to Hospital de Orbigo, famous for its 13th century bridge. We commence our trek from here, with a walk on the Meseta (the Castilian high plateau) to Astorga, home to the magnificent Bishop's Palace designed by Antoni Gaudi. Our first walk covers 16 kilometres over approximately four hours. The terrain is gently undulating with a total ascent and descent of +/- 200m.



Accommodation: Hotel Gaudi (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Ascend to the Iron Cross (1,482 m); descend to Molinaseca

We leave the high plateau of the Meseta behind us as we drive a short distance into the mountains to the near-abandoned village of Foncebadon. From here we walk, following the scallop shell markings, up to the famous Cruz de Ferro (Iron Cross), the highest point of the Camino at 1,482m. This is one of the most significant points on the route, for centuries pilgrims have left a stone brought from home, an offering they hope will give them protection for the rest of the pilgrimage. From here we can see the mountains of Galicia in the distance. The rest of our day is spent descending (steep in places) and we finally arrive in the small village of Molinaseca with its impressive Roman bridge. Here we meet our bus and transfer the short distance to our hotel in Villafranca del Bierzo. Villafranca del Bierzo was once an important medieval town and is home to some spectacular churches, including the Romanesque Church of Santiago. Today our walk covers 19 kilometres over approximately five hours. We ascend to 1482 m then gently descend along mountain trails. The total ascent and descent is approximately +100m / -930m.



Accommodation: Casa Mendez (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Walk to the pretty mountain village of O Cebreiro

After a short drive to the start of today's walk we continue along the Camino, following the course of the Valcarce River through the valley. This has been the route between Galicia and Castile since ancient times, passing through the small hamlets of Las Herrerias and Ruitelan to the border between Galicia and Leon. Here we come to one of the highlights of our walk, the unusual village of O Cebreiro, a tiny wind-battered settlement of stone houses set high above a patchwork quilt of green valleys. The village is famous for its 'pallozas' - traditional circular, thatch-roofed houses. Once in O Cebreiro we have time to relax and explore the village before meeting our bus for the drive to Sarria. En route there is the option to visit Samos Monastery, still an active retreat, and a landmark of the Camino. Today's walk is gradually uphill for most of the day and far from road access. We walk for nine kilometres over approximately three hours. The terrain is unmade mountain paths. The total ascent and descent is +750m.



Accommodation: Hotel Oca Villa de Sarria (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 5 - Pass the famous 100 km landmark

From Sarria we continue on foot through Galicia, traversing a terrain of undulating hills in the most verdant of Spain's regions. Passing the hamlet of Ferreiros we reach the famous 100km landmark, for so long a magical moment for weary pilgrims. It is here that they can re-gather their strength, knowing that it was now only another three or four days to go to Santiago. Nowadays this waypoint marks the limit from where one has to walk continuously to Santiago in order to get the 'Compostela', the official pilgrim's certificate. This afternoon we reach Portomarin, once a splendid medieval village, which was relocated by Franco to make way for a reservoir. Remnants of the town's more prosperous days can still be seen amongst its narrow streets, such as the attractive Romanesque San Pedro church. Our walk today covers 22 kilometres over approximately five and a half hours. The terrain is mainly unmade paths through hilly countryside with a total ascent and descent of approximately +640 / -680m.



Accommodation: Hotel Villajardin (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 6 - Descend to Palas de Rei

Today we start by crossing part of the reservoir on a disused railway bridge. Then the trail continues gradually uphill, passing the 80km mark near Castromaior village. In the vicinity is Casa Carneiro, in medieval times a night stop for 'VIP' pilgrims such as Charles V the emperor who stayed here in 1520 on his way to his coronation, and King Philipp II a few years later on his way to marry Mary Tudor in England. We reach our last high pass (722m) just before Ligonde, and continue on through undulating hills, Eucalyptus trees and Cruceiros (the stone crosses typical of Galicia), to gently descend to our night stop at Palas de Rei, an important pilgrim town. Our walk covers 22 kilometres over approximately six hours. We ascend up to the pass (722 m) and then continuing on unmade paths through gently undulating hills. The total ascent and descent is approximately +410 / - 300m.



Accommodation: Las Cabanas (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 7 - Hike through rural Galicia; cross the medieval bridge near Melide

Leaving the town behind, the Camino now takes us through idyllic rural Galicia, passing farmland and beautiful countryside. We walk through an oak grove to A Coruna, and cross a medieval bridge with four arches to reach Melide. Today is a good day for trying some traditional Galician dishes, specifically the famous 'pulpo a la Gallega octopus' for which the village of Melide is renowned, and maybe some of the excellent local white wine from the Riberas Baixas region near Pontevedra. Today our walk covers 22.5 kilometres over approximately six hours. The terrain is rural paths through farmland and gently undulating hillsides, with a total ascent and descent of approximately +350/-450m.



Accommodation: Hotel Pazo de Sedor (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Walk through local villages en route to El Amenal

Santiago is getting closer! Today you will pass many 'horreos', typical barns of the region that dot this beautiful countryside. We will also start to see more signs that we are nearing Santiago, including many pilgrim villages. Crossing the River Iso we arrive to Arzua where the Camino Frances (French Way) that we have been following, and Camino del Norte (North Way or Camino Primitivo) meet - Arzua is also known in the region for its local soft cheese. Today we pass many pilgrim sites including pilgrim Guillermo Watt's memorial; he died here whilst on the pilgrimage and his shoes can be found in the stone wall. We can also stop at Santa Irene chapel to see statues of Saint James. We arrive to the small village of El Amenal and our hotel for the night. Today our walk covers 27.5 kilometres and takes approximately seven and a half hours. The terrain is rural paths and local village roads. The total ascent and descent is approximately +400/-480m.



Accommodation: Amenal Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Arrive in Santiago de Compostela

Today we complete our pilgrimage. We pass through the village of Lavacolla, where traditionally pilgrims would wash and change into their best clothes for the final stretch of the walk. From here we ascend the final hill to Monte Gozo, from where we finally see Santiago Cathedral in the distance. We are now just five kilometres from Santiago's historic centre and the end of our pilgrimage. As we walk the last hour of the trail we share the emotions and sense of achievement of thousands of pilgrims, ancient and modern from all over the world, as we complete the trail and claim our 'Compostela', our pilgrim's certificate. Our last walk covers 17.5 kilometres over approximately five hours. The terrain is unmade paths and roads, with a total ascent and descent of approximately +180/-230m.



Accommodation: Rosa Rosae (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Free day in Santiago; optional visit to Cape Finisterre

This morning we take a guided walking tour of Santiago including a visit to the magnificent cathedral, a stunning architectural landmark with Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque features. We also visit the important local squares, churches and buildings around the cathedral. The afternoon is free to wander the city's narrow streets discovering some of the city's other architectural treasures, and enjoy the local food and wine. It is also possible to take an optional excursion to Cape Finisterre.



Accommodation: Rosa Rosae (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Tour ends Santiago

Our tour ends today, after breakfast, in Santiago.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCE

Day 2	16km
Day 3	19km
Day 4	9km
Day 5	22km
Day 6	22km
Day 7	22.5km
Day 8	27.5km
Day 9	17.5km

Walking grade

Moderate

Trek details

9-day trek with between 3 and 6 hours walking a day. The route is on the well-defined Camino Frances and reaches a maximum altitude of 1482m. We are accompanied for most of the journey by a support vehicle which also transfers our luggage. We have graded this trek as moderate.

Max walking altitude (m)

1482



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 10



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)



Accommodation

10 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

Sarria - Visit to Samos Monastery €10 Leon - Cathedral & San Isidoro entrance €9 Santiago - Visit to Cape Finisterre €30 - 50

Clothing

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

We recommend you bring walking boots with ankle support- leather or fabric are both fine. Make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

Bring one main piece of baggage and a daypack for carrying personal items during our walking days. Total allowance: 20kg (subject to you flight luggage allowance) plus a 25-30 litres daypack. Main baggage will be transported between nightstops.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle, torch, sunblock, sunhat, sunglasses and insect repellent. Gaiters and walking poles may be useful. You may also wish to bring binoculars.

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 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

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.

Accommodation and service levels in Spain are generally very good. We try to use smaller, family-run hotels and pensions that might not offer the same luxuries as larger chain-style hotels, but they do provide a warm welcome, a comfortable place to stay and the chance to gain a better understanding of local life. One thing to be aware of in Spain is that breakfast tends to be a smaller affair, often just fruit juice or coffee and a pastry.

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.

Maximum altitude (m)

1482

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.
