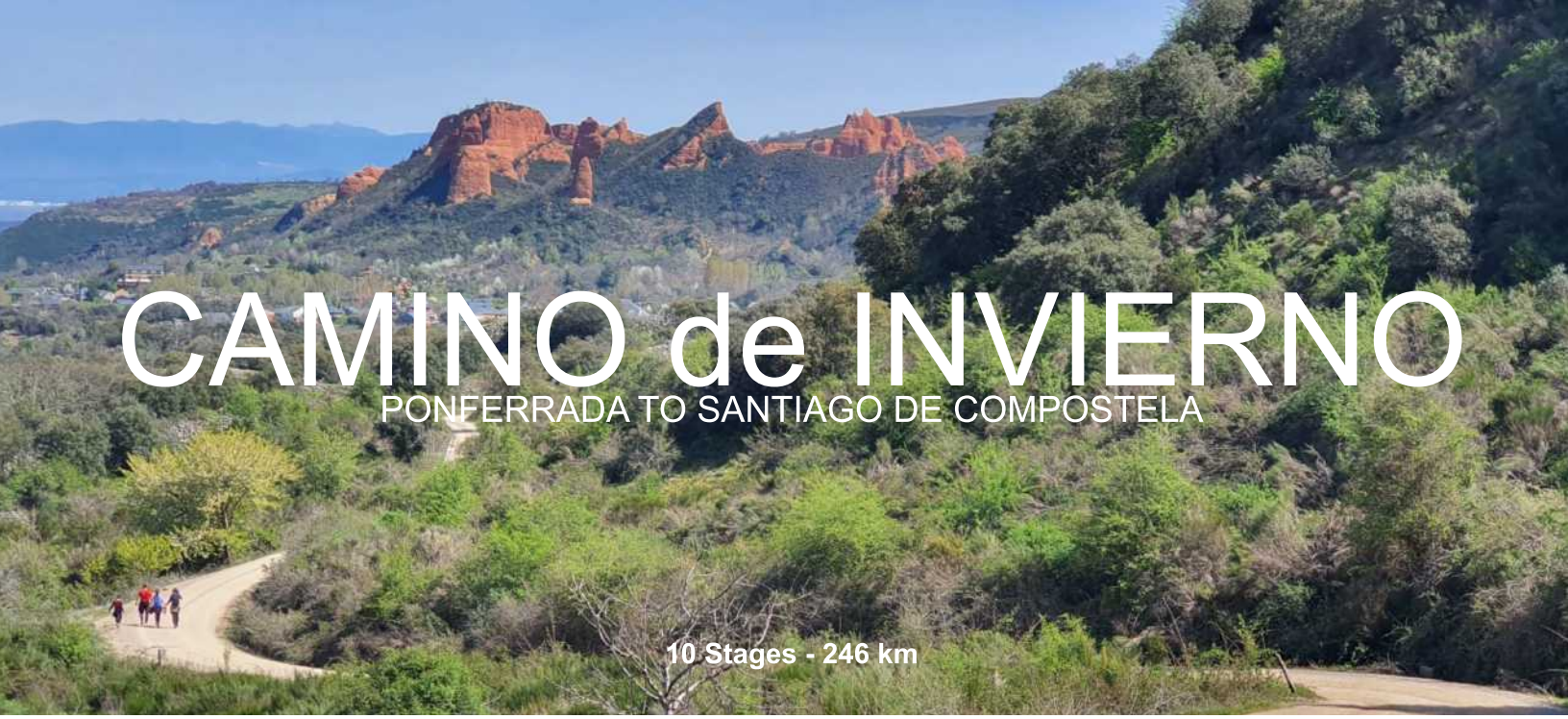


CAMINO de INVIERNO

PONFERRADA TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

10 Stages - 246 km

When most people think of the Camino de Santiago, they usually are picturing the most popular route, the Camino Francés which begins in the Pyrenees and is the most popular pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela.

The Camino de Invierno is a variant of the Frances that offers travelers a unique opportunity to get away from the crowds that walk the last 113 km from Sarria whilst providing a challenging and rewarding physical journey.

In the past many pilgrims chose this route to bypass the snowy pass at o'Cebreiro hence the name Camino de Invierno or Winter Way. Bypassing busy Sarria the last town where you can start in order to get your Compostela Certificate that you have made the pilgrimage to Santiago, the invierno starts in Ponferrada and is about 60 km longer than the regular route.

This Camino is so much more than a simple bypass, it's a more challenging route, with longer stages and fewer pilgrims. It is an adventure that will reward you with memories that will live on forever….

I hope this guide of the Camino Frances is helpful to you in your planning and whilst you are on your way.

Wishing you a Buen Camino!!

Guide Index

Why walk the Camino?	Page 3
When to go	Page 3
Physical preparation	Page 3
Guide Books, Maps and Apps	Page 4
Finding your way	Page 4
Lodging	Page 5
Eating and Food	Page 7
Tipping	Page 7
Getting there and away	Page 7
Safety, Health & Insurance	Page 8
Money	Page 8
Business Operating Hours	Page 8
Cell Phone and Wifi Service	Page 8
Pilgrims Passport -Credencial	Page 9
Camino Packing Guide	Page 10
What to Pack for your Camino	Page 10
Luggage - Backpack Transfer Service & Storage	Page 10
Camino Packing Checklist	Page 12

Camino de Invierno Stages

Stage 1 Ponferrada > Villavieja	Page 15
Stage 2 Villavieja > Sobradelo	Page 16
Stage 3 Sobradelo > A Rua	Page 16
Stage 4 A Rua > Quiroga	Page 17
Stage 5 Quiroga > Monforte de Lemos	Page 17
Stage 6 Monforte de Lemos > Chantada	Page 18
Stage 7 Chantada > Rodeiro	Page 18
Stage 8 Rodeiro > A Laxe - Bendorio	Page 19
Stage 9 A Laxe - Bendorio > Ponte Ulla	Page 19
Stage 10 Ponte Ulla > Santiago de Compostela	Page 20

Camino Getting Ready to Go: The Basics

Why walk the Camino?

People from all over the globe and all walks of life walk the camino for many different reasons. Whilst many people still walk the Camino de Santiago for religious or spiritual reasons, according to the Pilgrims Office in Santiago de Compostela statistics of 2021, a full 36% walked for a religious or spiritual purpose, 20% were simply looking for a new challenge or adventure, and for the rest, it was a mix of them both. Whilst the majority of people walking are between the ages of 30 and 60, both sexes are represented in a pretty equal number across all. It's not unusual to see people in their late 70's or 80's walking it.

Many walk in order to get away from their everyday lives and get back in contact with nature.

If you are just looking for a new challenge, remember it is no walk in the park. Pilgrims generally walk between 20 and 30 kilometers every day for about a month. Walking these distances every day can be very difficult. Apart from the physical toll it takes, it can also be mentally exhausting to just walk.

Walking for a month and getting away from it all can truly change one's outlook on life. Some people may find that their values have shifted after having walked a Camino.

No matter what your reason is, walking a Camino can be a life changing experience!

When to go:

When the best time to go is one of the biggest questions one will encounter when planning a Camino. A typical camino usually lasts anywhere from 7 to 33 days depending on route and one's own walking pace. Giving yourself a few rest days in between and at the end of your walk will also determine how long you should plan your trip for and are highly recommended.

Weather wise the best time of the year to walk are Spring - April through June and Fall Mid September to early November.
The worst time to walk is August as not only can the weather on some of the routes be very hot, but August is also the major holiday month in Spain, which makes finding accommodations much more difficult no matter what route you are on, specially on the last week stretch of the Camiino Frances from Sarria on words as it is very popular and can be near to impossible to find accommodations on in August. Even if you are not walking the Frances it is something to consider as the Norte, Primmitivo and Via de la Plata all merge into the Frances towards the end.

If you want solitude and don't mind the cold, rain or snow then the winter months are a good time to enjoy the camino. Services and albergues will be fewer so you may have to resort to staying in a Hostal every now and then but usually there will always be one Albergue open at the end of each stage. There is a list of albergues that gets updated regularly available online published by Aprinca click here to get it.

Physical preparation:

Preparing yourself physically for the Caminos stresses on your body is near to impossible, but as long as you are in a reasonably healthy state and are used to walking a few kilometers a day you should be able to make it all the way to Santiago.
Walking 10 to 30 kilometers for 6 to 8 hrs a day is not easy, but it also is not the hardest thing in the world as long as you follow a few simple rules.

Before you head out on your camino be sure to walk at least 5 to 10 kilometers every other day before setting out. Do a trail day hike in the woods with all the gear. Test your backpack and make sure it is a good fit. If you can stand a full day hiking without a problem you should be ready. But remember:

- Wear proper fitting and well broken-in footwear.
- Make sure your backpack weighs as little as possible. (aim for less than 10% of your body weight)
- Walk at your own pace… it is not a race.
- Listen to your body.
- Know your limits.

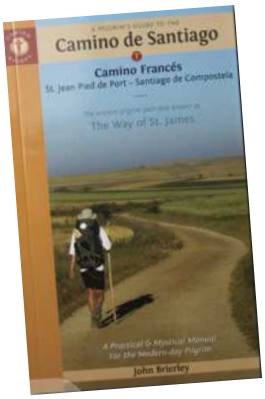
Listen to your body and know your limits… I have seen countless pilgrims half my age push themselves too far, not get very far…Don't be one of them!

Aches and pains will happen, but as long as you pay attention to them and don't try to ignore the messages your body is sending you should, you will be fine. It's when you don't pay attention to the warning signs and just keep on pushing yourself beyond your limit day after day that your body will finally let you know it has had enough and prevent you from going any further, taking day or two break so that your body can heal is way better than having to break off your camino or breaking yourself…

Know when to stop and rest, pace yourself…remember it is not a race!

Guide Books, Maps and Apps:

Guidebooks such as Wise Pilgrim or John Brierley's guides are great help If you want to know more about the route you are on and its history. Most guidebooks include extensive information about the towns and villages you will pass through and also have detailed maps and route profiles so that you will be able to see what to expect ahead. The only real negative about guidebooks is that they tend to weigh a lot.. Usually more than 2 or 3 tshirts!
For this reason I recommend smartphone app such as Buen Camino, Gronze or Camino Ninja instead, as they provide much os the same information and don't weigh you down, but also give you the added benefit of having a live map so that you always know exactly where you are, which is very helpful when you are wondering if you are actually still on the correct route.



Book Guides:

A Pilgrim Guide Series
Wise Pilgrim Series

Apps for iPhone:

Buen Camino
Camino Ninja
Wise Pilgrim
Camino Tool

Gronze

Apps for Android:

Buen Camino
Camino Ninja
Wise Pilgrim
Camino Tool

Gronze

Finding your way:

Whilst guidebooks and maps will help you plan your journey, you really don't need them as getting lost on the Camino is virtually impossible, not only because there are many apps to help you navigate the route, but because a priest called Elías Valiña drove across the whole north of Spain on his Citroën GS packed with yellow paint, painting bright yellows arrows to indicate the right way at the various tricky crossroads along the trail leading to Santiago.

Nowadays the arrows have become an ubiquitous symbol of the camino… and can be found everywhere from t-shirts to bandanas.

Soon you will become an expert at spotting the arrows that are basically everywhere from official markers to trees on rocks and pavements…

If you don't see them for a while, it is usually a sign that you missed one and that you are no longer on the camino!

Lodging:

There are some amazing places to stay along the camino in Spain ranging from simple rustic country houses to ultra modern 5 star luxury hotels.

Hotels and Hostales range from 1 to 5 stars, and Albergues the most common lodging used by pilgrims on the camino come in three categories: Municipal, Private and Donatio, and finally there are Pensiones which is considered better than an Albergue but not as nice as a Hostal.

The only real distinctions between Hotels and Hostales that the later have fewer than 10 rooms. Some Hostales are as good as 5 Star hotels. There are also Casa Rurales or Posadas, which are more like a B&B's and are usually only found in more rural areas.

My favorite place to sleep are the Paradores Nacionales which is a government run hotel chain that usually are found in fantastic historic locations. They are a bit more pricey than Hostales, but definitely worth splurging for every now and then.

If you want the most authentic Camino walking experience, you definitely will want to stay in Albergues as often as possible. The dorm room style accommodations usually sleep anywhere from 4 to 40 people, and cost anywhere from €8 to €20 for a bunk bed per night. They are the cheapest option when walking the camino.

Albergue Municipales require you to have a *Credencial de Peregrino* in order for you to stay and don't accept reservations or credit cards. The Credencial is a Pilgrims passport you get for your pilgrimage, that gets stamped wherever you stay and proves that you are a pilgrim. You always have to show your credencial and passport when checking in.
You cannot reserve a bed but you can call after 1 PM and usually they will let you if they have beds available…

Most also require you to bring a sleeping bag or sleeping bag liner and your own towel as no blankets are provided or towles. Some charge €1 extra for disposable sheets.

There is usually a curfew and lights go out at 10 pm and you have to leave by 8 am the next morning, and will not be able to stay a second night unless it is an emergency.

Municipal Albergues are usually run by the town or city they are in and are usually quite basic in their offerings. In Galicia most albergues are run by the Xunta de Galicia and are usually very nice and modern

A few of the Albergues along the camino are donation based, which means that they are funded by the donations that pilgrims give. Many people believe that they can get away with leaving no or very little money… and because of this they are becoming fewer and fewer due to the fact that some pilgrims equate a donation to being free.

Albergues are a nice place to meet and hang out with fellow pilgrims seeing most pilgrims are exhausted from the day's walk. They are very nice and quiet after 10 PM… Except for the occasional snorer, so bring earplugs!

Private Albergues are a bit more expensive and more comfortable than the Municipal ones, they accept reservations and don't have strict curfews, provide blankets and sheets, and some even provide you with a fresh towel, but it is a good idea to bring your own as some charge you €1 or €2 to rent one.

If you are walking with another person, getting your private room is not much more expensive than getting two bunks at an Albergue, but you will be missing out on the camaraderie that develops when staying at them which is a big part of the camino experience.

Most albergues have a kitchen where one can cook, most private albergues will offer a communal dinner and basic breakfast at an additional charge.

Most hotels provide laundry service, private albergues usually have washers and dryers, municipal ones mostly only offer some kind of hand washing facility and drying line. Washing machines can cost anywhere from €5 to €6 and Drying about €2 to €4.

One question that arises with pilgrims who have never walked the camino before is whether or not it is necessary to make reservations for their accommodation in advance. The answer is simple, you can improvise and look for accommodation on arrival, or you can book ahead from home, it all depends on what kind of experience you want to live, since having accommodation previously reserved on the Camino de Santiago has its advantages, but it also has some disadvantages.

The main advantage of booking accommodation in advance is that you avoid having to search for a place to sleep at the end of a long day's walk, and that you are also able to forward your baggage ahead and don't need to carry it. But by doing so will also be less flexible to spontaneously change your plans and the adventure factor of your trip will be gone.

In the holiday season and in August when most of Spain takes their Summer vacation, it is a good idea to book ahead one or two days in advance, as it can be quite difficult to find space. But as long as you stay flexible or don't mind paying a few euros more for a place to sleep you can always grab a a bus or taxi to the next larger town and stay there and then backtrack the next morning, but rest assured you will never be left out on the street without a place to sleep at night.

Accommodation Prices range:

Albergue Municipal:	€8 to €15
Private Albergue:	€10 to €20
Donativo Albergue:	€8 to €12 Donation
Hostal:	€15 to €50
Hotel:	€30 to €150
Parador Nacional:	€70 to €350

Hotel Booking Sites and Apps:

Bookings.com
Hostelworld.com
Hotels.com
Trivago.com
Agoda.com
Paradores.es
Gronze.com

NOTE: If you are walking a camino in the winter be sure to get the Aprinca list of Albergues that are open click here to get it.

Eating and Food:

Spain has some of the best restaurants and food of Europe, but if you stick to eating the Pilgrim Menu and eating in the albergues along the camino every night you would never know…

Most albergues offer a communal dinner in the evening, which is a nice way to spend your evening meeting and exchanging stories with your fellow pilgrims after a long day's hike. While it is a nice experience, most of the time the menu is the same no matter where you go: soup, salad, a main dish usually consisting of some kind of meat that comes with french fries and then a desert of flan or tarta santiago… and plenty of red wine and casera to wash it all down with. Usually the meal will cost about 12 to 15 Euros and while this is not much, after a few evenings you will notice that not only are all places serving you the same basic meal …. it all pretty much tastes the same…

You can usually do way better for the money eating out at any restaurant in town….!

Most albergues offer very basic breakfast of toast, jam and coffee that costs you way more than a good coffee and croissant and fresh orange juice in a bar. Spain has fantastic cafe's in most any town or village along the camino where you can get good cafe con leche for about 1.20 € to 2.50 €, starting as early as 6.30 AM in the morning. If you are hungry for a snack a slice or Tortilla or a Bocadillo de Jamon or Queso will usually hold you over till the next meal and will only set you back 3 or 4 euros.

During lunch hours from 1 till 4 pm most restaurants serve a "Menu del Dia" which usually includes a starter, main dish and dessert and includes a drink (wine) and bread…. Sometimes they even include a coffee. A decent menu will usually run anywhere from €10 to €15 ,but you get so much food that you usually will not have to eat dinner and usually the food is exceptional.If you are not all that hungry you can also order a ½ Menu.

Finding a good restaurant or cafe is easily done using Google Maps or asking the host at your albergue or hotel.

If you don't feel like eating out, most Albergues have a kitchen where you can cook your own meal. Supermarkets can be found in most villages. In big cities you will find chain supermarkets such as Gadis, Euroski & Carrefour. But remember that supermarkets are closed on Sundays so you need to stock up the day before.

Tipping:

In Spain, tipping is entirely optional and it's not very common as wait staff get paid well and don't make their living off of tips.

You may see people leaving the small leftover change at cafés and bars. At an expensive restaurant it's nowadays common to leave about a 10% tip, but most of the time, you won't see anyone other than tourists leaving a tip.

If tipping is a regular custom for you, your tip will be kindly appreciated. However, don't feel that you must do so. This is particularly true if the service was bad or not even particularly good.

Getting there and away:

Getting to your starting point along the Camino Norte is pretty easy. San Sebastian - Iruna is well connected to other international airports. Iberia and Vueling are the major Spanish airlines serving these cities from Madrid, but Ryan Air and Easyjet offer very inexpensive flights from many cities in Europe.. Getting into town is pretty straight forward as both are on the bus or taxi.

AIR: There are several cities with airports that you can fly into along the Camino Norte other than San Sebastian/Donostia - Irun; Bilbao, Santander, Gijon - Oviedo.

RAIL: Getting to your starting point by rail is pretty straightforward. The main train line between Madrid and Pamplona are on the AVE high speed service, to get to Roncesvalles you need to switch to the bus service which runs several times every few hours in the summer and once a day in winter.

Renfe is the Spanish Rail line that runs trains from Madrid. As of 2021 there are several new low cost choices such as IRYO and Ouigo that may serve Santiago soon. If you travel from Madrid North you will be leaving the Chamartin Train Station which is reachable via the Madrid Metro. There are various different train services : AVE is the high speed rail service. Usually it is a bit more expensive than the rest.

Most larger towns along the camino are well connected by the Renfe Cercanias rail, which are slower and less expensive, but usually run several times a day.

If you plan on leaving Santiago de Compostela by rail at the end of your Camino, be sure to book your train ticket well in advance as it is not unusual for the trains leaving Santiiago to get fully booked days ahead, especially during long weekends and holidays. For timetables and reservations:
RENFE
Ouigo
IRYO

BUS:Buses in Spain are very reasonable and pretty much every little town on the Camino Frances has a bus stop that will get you to the next larger city.
Avanza and Fliixbus are the major bus companies operating in Spain. In Galicia Monbus runs the intercity lines. Tickets can be purchased on the bus. If you are traveling long distance you will need to book the ticket in advance.
The Santiago bus station is now conveniently located next to the train station.

For timetables and reservations:
AVANAZA.com
MONBUS.com
FlixBUS.com

Taxis are available almost anywhere along the camino. If you need you can call one to pick you up along the camino if you become tired or can not walk any more. Many times they advertise their services and telephone numbers with small signs or stickers along the camino.

Safety, Health & Insurance:

Spain is a very safe country, but petty crime still happens, so beware of your belongings at all times even in the albergues. Always carry your passport and cash on you, do not leave them in your hotel or albergue dorm when you are not there.

Doctors, dentists and Hospitals and Clinics in Spain are of international standards and are much less expensive than the USA. Most big cities have hospitals and smaller towns have emergency clinics that are called Ambulatorios. Most every town and village will have a pharmacy that can pretty much always be spotted from afar because of their neon green cross. Bigger towns usually have at least one that is open 24 hrs and its location will be posted at ones that are closed as “Farmacia de Turno”.

It is a good idea to have travel insurance with emergency repatriation coverage in case needed.

The **Emergency Services Telephone** number in Spain is **112**

Money and ATM’s:

Spain and runs on the Euro. Credit Cards are accepted at hotels and most restaurants. Use banks to exchange money as exchange houses usually charge very high exchange rates. ATM’s work very well and even the smallest towns usually have a bank and ATM. La Caxia and Unicajal charge the lowest ATM fees, Santander, if you use Charles Shwab Debit Card you pay no withdrawal fee, which can be as high as €7 to €8

Calculate on spending at least anywhere between €30 to €60 a day.

Business Operating Hours:

Spain runs on EST European Standard time which is 1 hr ahead of GMT, but beware that Spain is famous for its sesta time, which means that from 1.30 to 4.30 pm most all shops CLOSE for 3 hrs, but restaurants, bars and cafes stay OPEN!.

To most first time pilgrims this is very confusing. It is also worth noting that most municipal albergues will not let you check in till after 1.30 pm even if you arrive early some will not even store your luggage, they lock the front door at 10 pm and you must leave by 8 am.

Monday - Friday:
SIESTA time: 1 pm- 3.30 pm
Stores: 9 am - 1 pm - SIESTA - 3.30 pm - 8.30 pm
Banks: 8 am - 1 pm
Restaurant: Lunch 1 pm - 4.30 pm, Dinner 8 - 12pm
Cafes: 6 am - 8.30 pm
Bar’s: 9 am - 1 am

Saturday: In small towns and villages many shops and supermarkets close at 1 pm

Sunday: Most all shops except for some clothing stores and big shopping malls. *Supermarkets are closed on Sundays,* so be sure stock up on Saturday.

Albergue Municipal: Check in is usually only allowed after 1.30 pm - Door Closed 10 pm - Check out 8 am

NOTE: A very high percentage of small businesses in Spain close for summer holidays in August. Alternatively, some take the first 2 weeks of September off.

Cell Phone and Wifi Service:

Most every cafe, bar and albergue and hotel in Spain offer free wifi. If you need to ask for a password ask for the “clave”
If you have an unlocked cellphone simply buy a local prepaid SIM Card from Movistar, Vodaphone or Orange upon arrival at the airport in Madrid and add call minutes and data as needed. It will save you a lot of money in data and roaming charges in the long run. A 30 day unlimited call and text plus 15 gb data cost about €10 to €20.

Pilgrims Passport - Credencial & Compostela Certificate:

Every pilgrim on the Camino should carry his Passport and also a Pilgrims Passport or Credencial, which serves as proof that you are a pilgrim and also that you have walked the Stages The Credencial is like a passport that gets stamps at every Albergue or Hotel with their stamp, their unique stamp and date of passage which serves as proof that you have walked that Stage. In Municipal Albergues and Pilgrims Albergues it is required, so it is a good idea to get one before you leave as many times it is quite difficult getting one along the way.

In order to get your Compostela Certificate that states that you have completed your pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela you need to **get 2 stamps a day on the last 100 kms of Camino**. Most bars and restaurants along the camino will also offer stamps making this requirement a pretty fun experience, and will bring back good memories when you go over them them years later

When you arrive in Santiago de Compostela you can get a very pretty Pilgrims Certificate with your name written in latin issued for free at the Pilgrims Reception Office which is located just below the Plaza of the Cathedral. For an extra 3 euros they will give you an official distance certificate, in case nobody believes you walked so much.

It is a good idea to get a Credencial before you set out on your walk as they are not always easy to find. The gift shop in Roncesvalles does sell them but sometimes they run out.

You can purchase a Credencial in advance from Casa Ivar and they will send it to you, else the Tourist office or Cathedral at your starting point are your best places to try to get one.

Camino Packing Guide

What to Pack for your Camino:

Two of the biggest mistakes people make when setting off on the Camino is overpacking and overthinking what they will need for a long walk on the Camino. I myself was very guilty of this on my first camino, this is why I am including a basic packing checklist as a guideline for you to follow so that you do not make the same mistake..

Weight is your biggest enemy when walking, if you don't pay attention to how much you are carrying in your backpack sooner or later your body or feet will pay the price…
A good rule of thumb is that **your pack should not weigh more than 10%** of your body weight. If you stick to that rule you will definitely have a much more pleasant and easy walk.

One thing you should know, that I didn't in my first week of the camino, was that there are washing machines or laundromats most anywhere you will stay along the way, so having clean clothes is never a problem, so you can pack way less than you think you need, as you can wash your clothes every few days.

Many "pro" pilgrims only pack one extra change of clothes and do a quick hand wash upon of their t-shirt and underwear and socks upon arriving at wherever they are staying; whist this is a great strategy if you want to walk with the least amount of weight and clothes, you will be forced to do your wash every day and will be worrying if your clothes will be dry by morning.

I personally recommend having 3 sets of underwear and t-shirts and socks, and 1 pair of long or convertible pants and some short pants, that way you don't have to be washing every day and get more time to explore and relax.

As far as footwear I highly recommend that whatever you decide to take boots or trail runners, you walk at least 100 km in them before you start your walk, that way you will not have as many problems with blisters and sore feet. High quality hiking socks are the second most important blister prevention tool, I can't stress this enough… do not use cheap tube socks… you will pay the price in blisters!

Having a pair of flip flops will make the walk to and from the showers in the albergues more pleasant and also give you feet some fresh air and relief after a long day's walk. I personally like to take two pairs of shoes either 2 trail runners or a pair of boots and trail runners, just so I can give my feet a break and change every now and then.

As far as sleeping bags go, most Municipal Albergues require you to use one or to use a sleeping bag liner as they do not provide blankets. Most provide you with disposable sheets that really are terrible, so taking a sleeping bag or liner for the summer months is recommended, as it will weigh you down.

Leave nonessentials at home, take a critical look at your packing list and off-load (or substitute) these items. Remember that each liter of water is equivalent to 1 kg of weight, and the fancy water bottle you use also adds weight.

After each trip, make a list of gear you carried but didn't use. If a piece of your kit makes the list after three consecutive trips, leave it behind next time (exception: first-aid supplies).

Luggage - Backpack Transfer Service & Storage:

You can always tell a true pilgrim from the rest as they most always are lugging their big backpack along as opposed to strolling along with a small day pack. Many short term or weekend pilgrims opt not to walk with their backpacks and have their luggage forwarded on from one stage to the next as they walk the Camino.

Using the luggage transport service is a good option if you have any physical ailments or problems or simply don't want to burden yourself with a large backpack.,

One thing to keep in mind is that you need have to have a specific location (hotel or private albergue) to send your luggage to, so you will need to make a reservation at a hotel or private albergue, as Municipal Albergues do not accept reservations or luggage (they are on a first come first served basis) and will not accept your bags if you are not there.

The cost per bag is anywhere from €5 to €12 depending on service and time of year. In the summer most routes offer this service, in the winter months the service is limited and more expensive.

If you have an onward trip that doesn't involve backpacking after you arrive in Santiago de Compostela an option is to send your non backpacking luggage to the Correos in Santiago or else send it to Casa Ivar in Santiago for safe keeping till you arrive. Once you finish the Camino you will be able to pick up your suitcase in the office that Correos has next to the Cathedral of Santiago (Rúa do Franco, 4). They store them for up to 45 days so you can walk the Camino calmly and worry-free. There is a small per day fee that they charge, but you will have the peace of mind knowing your luggage is safe and sound.

If you stay at the Seminario Menor, they have lockers on the ground floor where you can leave your backpack for several days for only €2.

If you just want to leave your backpack somewhere for a few hours while exploring Santiago the Pilgrims House offers free backpack storage.

For more information on all of these these services visit:

Transport:
Correos
Jacotrans
Caminofacil

Storage in Santiago:
Casa Ivar
Pilgrims House

Bar Mar Albergue Bag Servicehttps://goo.gl/maps/LvKpBSEZ23npYbDYA

NOTE: On the Camino de Invierno, Manuel the owner of the Bar Mar Albergue does luggage transfers.

Camino Packing Checklist

☐ Hiking Backpack		28L to 40L - ca. 10% of your body weight when full

CLOTHING:

☐ 3x T-Shirts		Merino or Quick Dry Wicking Synthetic. Avoid cotton (Heavy & Slow Drying)
☐ 1x Long sleeve shirt		For protection from sun and cold.
☐ 1x Long Hiking Pants		Or Convertible Pants - Flexible and Light and fast drying
☐ 1x Hiking shorts		
☐ 3x Underwear		Ex Officio Wicking - Fast Drying
☐ 1x Sweater - Fleece		Polartec or Smartwool
☐ 1x Warm Down Jacket	W	From October to May
☐ 1x Light Rain Jacket		For in town or light drizzles and windy Stages
☐ 1x Backpacking Poncho		Over backpack type will keep you and your backpack dry!
☐ 1x Hat or Wool Cap		Sun / Cold protection
☐ Gloves	W	From October to May

FOOTWEAR:

☐ 1 x Hiking Boots		Be sure to break them in well before setting out on your camino!
☐ 1x Trail Runners		For summer months and asphalt sections.
☐ 1x Flip Flops		For albergue showers and airing feet
☐ 3 x Good Hiking socks		

IMPORTANT: Your feet expand and flatten out considerably from walking many hours a day, so it is a good idea that you purchase your footwear one size larger than you normally would. I also recommend taking 2 pairs of shoes, either one boot and one trail runner or two sets of trail runners as it is nice not to have to wear the same shoes all the time, especially after a long days walk..

Next to your well worn in shoes, your socks are going to be the most important protection against blisters and sore feet, so be sure you use good quality hiking socks, not the cheap 10 pack tube socks… they will make a big difference. I recommend Wigwam and SmartWool brand socks, they may be a bit more expensive at first but you will not be paying the price later.

SLEEPING:

☐ Sleeping Bag	W	Required in some Albergues.
☐ Sleeping Bag Liner	S	For warm weather instead of Sleeping bag
☐ Pillow Case		Also can double as a laundry bag.
☐ Earplugs		To get rest in Albergue

BATHING:

☐ Quick Dry Towel	Most albergues don't offer towels
☐ Toiletry Kit	Toothbrush, Razor, Travel Size Toothpaste, Soap + Shampoo,

HIKING GEAR:

☐ Hiking Poles	They will give you extra support on downhill and on the uphill sections
☐ Knee Support Braces	If you have problems with your knees I recommend taking a pair
☐ First Aid Kit	Ibuprofen, Vaseline, Compeed, Band Aids, Blister & BandageTape
☐ Sunscreen S&W	
☐ Lip Protection	
☐ Water Bottle/Camelback	750cc to 1L Remember that each liter of water is 1 more kg you carry!
☐ Headlight / Flashlight	For early morning start - Night in dorms
☐ Phone	Chargers, Cables and Adapters
☐ Camera	Chargers, Cables, SD Card, Batteries
☐ Headphones	
☐ Watch - Fitness Tracker	Charger

NON ESSENTIAL EXTRAS:

☐ Hiking Umbrella	For sun and rain / drizzle
☐ Swiss Army Knife	
☐ Gaiters	Keeps gravel and mud out of boots and pants
☐ Power Bank	For extra charge for phone and other electronics
☐ Compression Sacks	Keep things organized and save some space in your backpack
☐ Backpack Rain Cover	
☐ Guide Book - Apps	I recommend apps over books as it can weigh as much as 3 t-shirts!
☐ Small Day Pack	Small bag or backpack for shopping - sightseeing trips

NOTE: If you forgot anything or need to replace any hiking gear, Decathlon is a major sporting gear chain that has large outlets in Sevilla, Merida, Caceres, Salamanca and Ournese. They stock pretty much anything you may need for hiking at very reasonable prices. You can also buy on Amazon.es and ship to their drop boxes that are available in most big cities in Spain.

Decatlon.com

Amazon.com

Rei.com

W= Recommended in Winter S = Recommended in Summer

Camino de Invierno Stages

Start

Ponferrada

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C,S,P*
Population: 67.384
Province: Leon
Region: Castilla-Leon

Getting there: Train - Bus
Stage Scenery: Very nice scenery!! Ghost towns, stone villages, mountains pass.
See & Do: : Visit old town. Visit Templar Castle or the Energy Museum

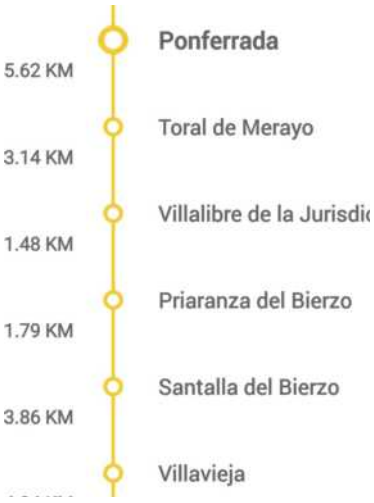
Ponferrada A big city. Nice old part of town and Templar castle. Nice Energy museum on the outskirts

Stay: Alda Centro Hotel
Eat: El Bodegon Good Tapas!

Stage 1

Ponferrada > Villavieja

Services: *A*
Population: 12
Province: Leon
Region: Castilla-Leon



Stage Distance: 16 kms
Stage Difficulty: Easy Nice walk, Last 2 km steep uphill.
Stage Scenery: Very nice scenery once you get out of Ponferrada.Small villages, mountains.

Villavieja: Beautiful village with a very nice castle about 1 km out of town. NO SERVICES - NO FOOD

Stay: Albergue Municipal**** W&D,B,K,D
Eat: NO FOOD, NO BAR, NO SHOP!!

Stage 2

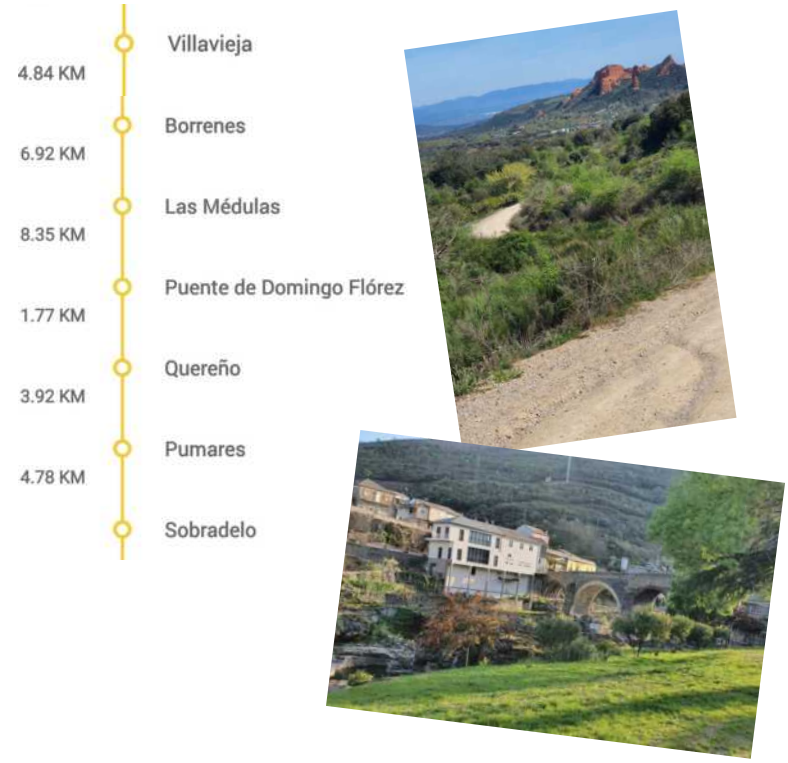
Villavieja > Sobradelo

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C*
Population: 26
Province: Lugo
Region: Galicia

Stage Distance: 29 kms
Stage Difficulty: **Easy**
Stage Scenery: Very nice scenery!
Las Medulas

Sobradelo: Small village on the Sil river.
One or two restaurants and a few places to stay.
Super friendly owner at Bar Mar Albergue.

Stay: Bar Mar



Stage 3

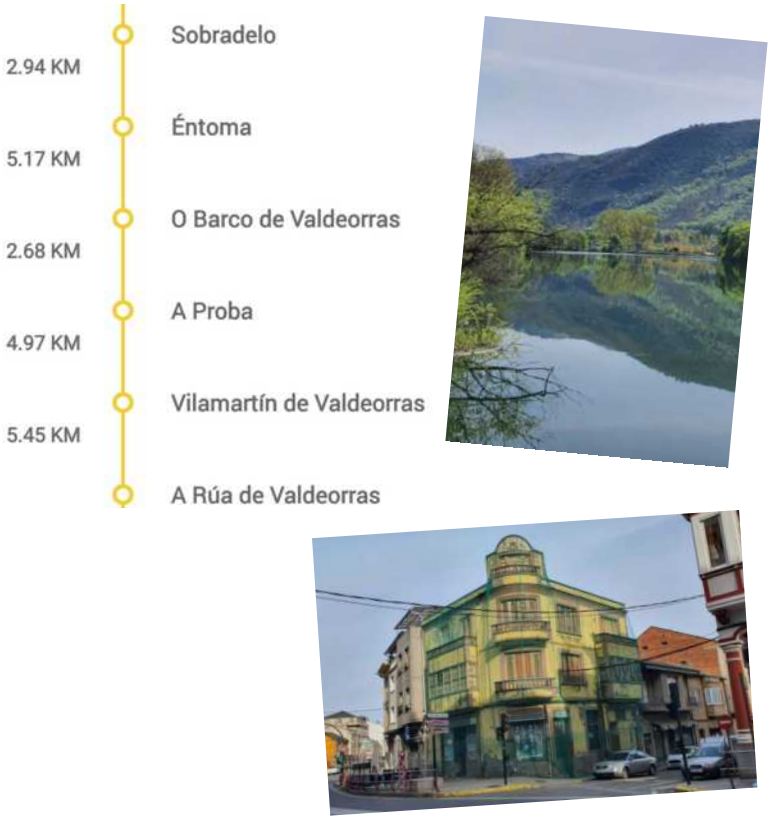
Sobradelo > A Rua

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C,P*
Population: 643
Province: Lugo
Region: Galicia

Stage Distance: 21.7 kms
Stage Difficulty: **Easy**
Stage Scenery: Beautiful countryside and river.

A Rua: Small town with most all services

Stay: Hostal Niza
Eat: O Toño Meson - Fantastic Menu



Stage 4

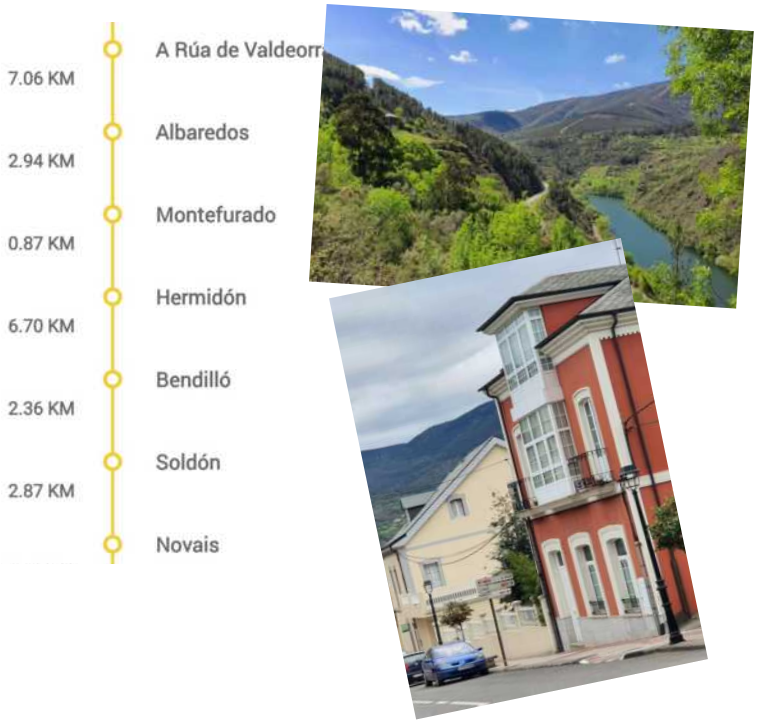
A Rua > Quiroga

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C,P - Rail,Bus*
Population: 13.343
Province: Lugo
Region: Galicia

Stage Distance: 29.3 kms
Stage Difficulty: Easy
Stage Scenery: Beautiful scenery! Small villages,

Quiroga: Very nice town.Very clean and quite fancy.

Stay: Albergue de Quiroga
Hotel Estanco - Splurge
Eat: A Botica



Stage 5

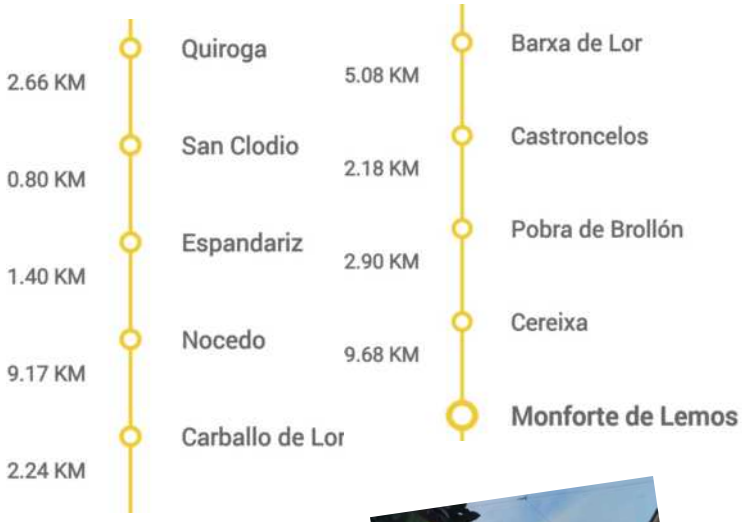
Quiroga > Monforte de Lemos

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C,P*
Population: 1.416
Province: Lugo
Region: Galicia

Stage Distance: 21.6 kms
Stage Difficulty: Easy Good paths all the way.
Stage Scenery: Rural, rolling hills.

Momforte de Lemos: Nice medium-sized town with castle. Fantastic Train Museum,

Stay: Albergue Santiago 15 W&D,B,K
Parador Nacional - Splurge
Eat: Bar La Polar



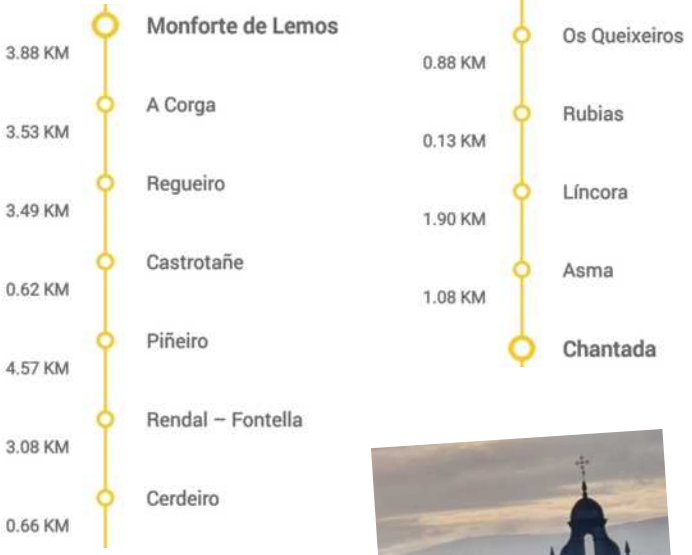
Stage 6

Monforte de Lemos > Chantada

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C,P*
Population: 3.443
Province: Lugo
Region: Galicia

Stage Distance: 29 kms
Stage Difficulty: Difficult
Big down & up last 5km
Stage Scenery: Very nice!!!

Stay: DPaso Hostel**** W&D,K



Stage 7

Chantada > Rodeiro

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C,P*
Population: 3.443
Province: Lugo
Region: Galicia

Stage Distance: 25 kms
Stage Difficulty: Easy Easy walking all the way, winding on and off the main road.
Stage Scenery: Rural rolling hills.

Stay: Pension Carpinteiras ***W&D,K,B,R

Stage 8

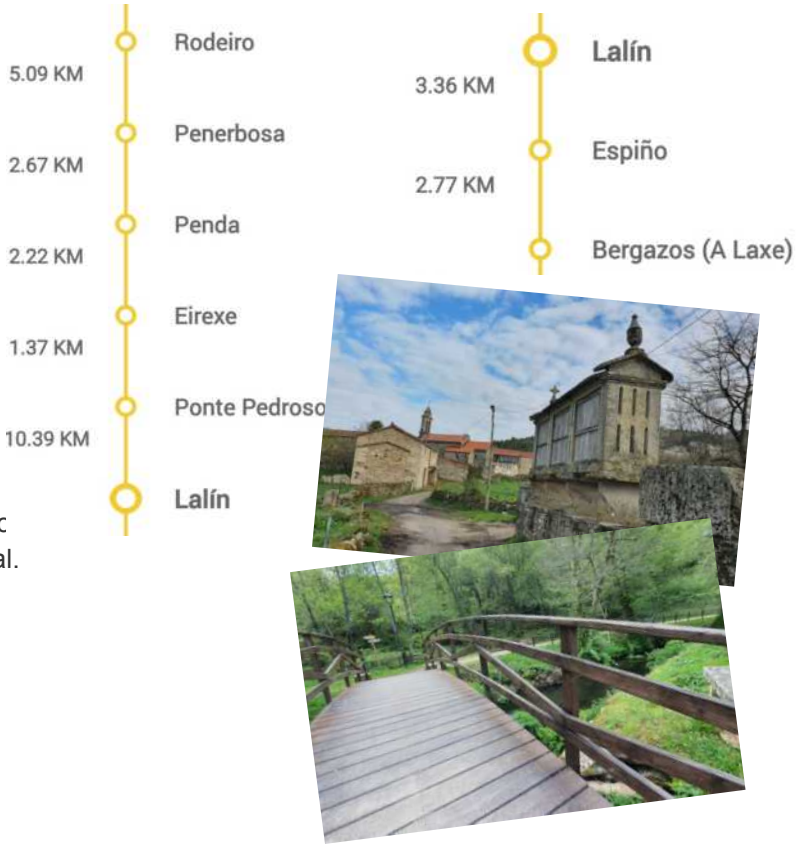
Rodeiro > Laxe - Berganzos

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C,P,Ti*
Population: 6.053
Province: A Coruña
Region: Galicia

Stage Distance: 28 kms
Stage Difficulty: Easy Easy walking all the way, winding on and off the main road.
Stage Scenery: Open landscape with rolling hills.

Berganzos: Small village where the Camino de Invierno And the Via de Plata meet. Fantastic Albergue Municipal.

Stay: Albergue Municipal Laxe
Eat: Maria Jose - Good Food



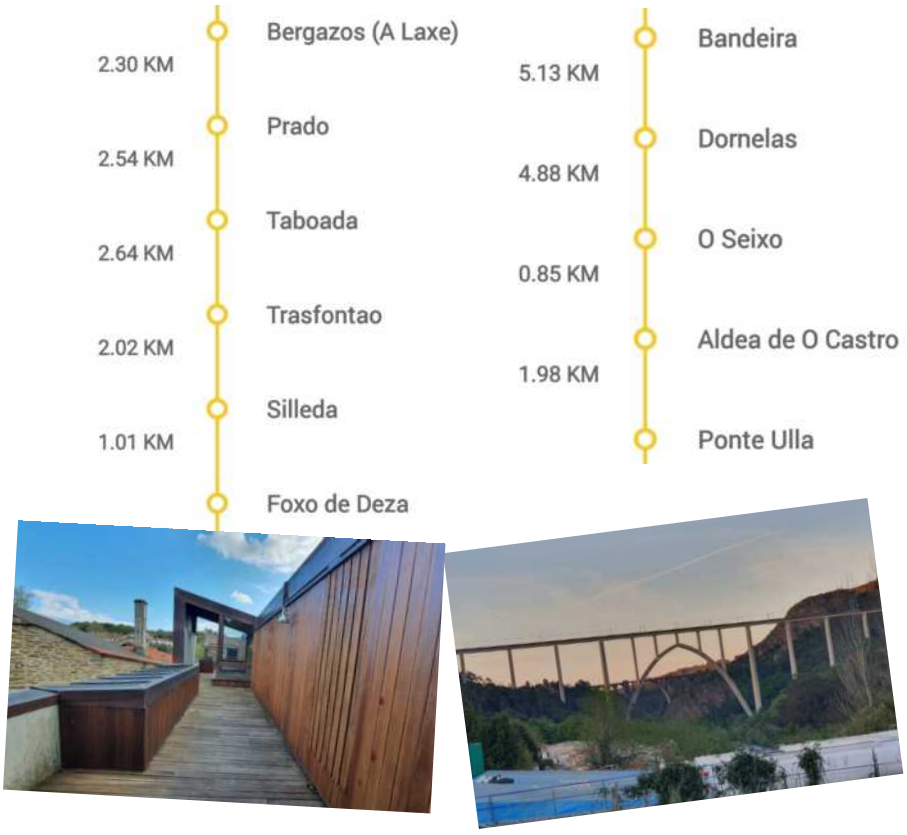
Stage 9

A Laxe - Bandeira > Ponte Ulla

Services: *A,H,S,R,B,C,P,Ti*
Population: 6.053
Province: A Coruña
Region: Galicia

Stage Distance: 28 kms
Stage Difficulty: Easy
Stage Scenery: Rural with rolling hills. Steep downhill before Ponte Ulla

Stay: O Cruzeiro
Eat:O Cruzeiro Restaurant - Good Menu



Stage 10

Ponte Ulla > Santiago de Compostela

Services: *A,H,Pa,S,R,B,C,P,Ti, - Bus,Train,Air*
Population: 96.000
Province: A Coruña
Region: Galicia

Airport: SCQ

Stage Distance: *19.7 km*
Stage Difficulty: Easy
Terrain: Mostly flat but with some hills
Walking Surface: Road, Walking Path, Streets
Scenery: Villages, Hilly Countryside

Highlight of the Day: Arriving in Santiago de Compostela
Getting Compostela - Meeting up with fellow pilgrims again

Worthwhile Seeing and doing:
Pilgrims Mass at the Cathedral
Cathedral Museum
Portico de la Gloria Tour
Pilgrims Museum
Coffee at the Parador
Tea in garden at Costa Vella Hotel
Visit the Pilgrims House
Sunset on the Cathedral Plaza
Walk to Finisterre!

Don't miss:
Get your Compostela Certificate at the Pilgrims Reception Office!
Eating at A Horta d'Obratorio
Pilgrims Mass

Places to Stay:
Albergue Seminario Menor***** W&D,B,K,V,S 15 min walk to Cathedral Cheap single rooms
Seminario Mayor*** B,L,D By Cathedral - Pilgrims get when asking when reserving
Hotel Alda Aligia**** W&D,B Central - Cozy rooms.
Parador Nacional Hospital Real**** B,L,D By Cathedral - Splurge
Hotel Costa Vella *** B Center - Hotel with very nice garden
Hospederia Talea Decent small hotel in center

Places to Eat:
A Horta d'Obradoiro (Michelin Guide Recommended) Reservation needed
Casa Manolo - Good for groups
Enxebre - Close to Cathedral - Parador
Cafe Bar DA CA - Locals eat here - Cheap and good. Close to Seminario Menor
Masa Pizza by the slice
Abastos 2.0 Tapas and Seafood (Michelin Guide Recommended)
A Porta Verde Vegan

Places to Relax: Cafe La Morena - Great Coffee and Breakfast
Cost Vella - Nice Garden - Quiet Spot
Pilgrims House - Luggage storage - Quiet Spot - Camino Debrief

Shop: Decathlon in City Center for hiking gear.

Services Codes: A= Albergue **H**= Hotel **Pa**= Parador **S**= Supermarket **R**= Restaurant **B**= Bar **C**= Cafe **P**= Pharmacy **Ti**= Tourist Info **W**= Washing Machine **W&D**= Washer-Dryer **B**=Breakfast **L**=Lunch **D**=Dinner **K**= Kitchen **V**=Vending Machine
**** = Fantastic Worth a visit!

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