

THE CELTIC WAY TO SANTIAGO – Experience the Journey of your Life

Oviedo is the capital city of the first Spanish kingdom, which commenced the reconquest of Spain from the Muslims. Take time to explore the old city as the hotel we depart from is located right in the heart of it. There are beautiful parks surrounding the old city, fabulous large urban artwork displayed through the city and many little alleys to explore!

Day One:

2.00 PM : The group will meet in the hotel foyer where you will meet Ricardo Guggenheimer, your guide for the duration of the tour and your fellow pilgrims. After a brief welcome meeting and introduction, a 40 minute drive towards the sea will take us to the beginning of our walk. We will follow a delightful path through red and purple bougainvillea with extensive views of the ocean from the rugged Cantabrian coastline, as we walk through chestnut and oak woods and fragrant Eucalyptus Forests. There will be time to have a coffee and wander along the beach at the end of our coastal walk.

The next two nights we will be staying in Luarca. One of the most attractive features of this seaboard town, of an ancient whaling tradition, is its sheltered port sprinkled with small colourful fishing boats. Embraced by a boardwalk full of outdoor restaurants you can sample the delicious Asturian cider and local seafood.

Today's walk total: 5 kms

Overnight: Luarca Dinner

Day Two:

After breakfast, a 20 minute drive westward will take us to the beginning of today's walk. Another beautiful coastal route starting at a very pretty but secluded sandy beach due to it being off the beaten track. The beach is framed on one end by some very attractive natural caves of stunning colours and the tall cliffs carpeted with green pastures on the other, from which we shall continue our walk. Across meadows and green-fields, always with wonderful views to the sea. Our first destination will be an exquisite paella lunch at a small quaint fishing port, and after this we will continue an easy walk along the coast, to end at a nice long sandy beach where you will have time to relax, soak your feet in the ocean and, for those brave enough, maybe a swim!

Today's walk: 16 kms

Overnight: Luarca Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Three:

This morning we will start the day with a visit to a real Celtic settlement, probably the best preserved one in Spain, with several dozens of its characteristic circular dwellings dating to the 4th century B.C. still standing!

After this visit and having had time to roam freely even inside the actual constructions, we will drive a bit further inland, to a region also rich in Celtic history. It stands out not only for its un-spoilt nature. It is for instance forbidden to plant non-indigenous trees there, with all manner of contrasts created by its mountainous landscape, but also for its important ethnographic value consisting of a rich heritage of hydraulic machines, heirs of age-old craftsmanship, mainly centered in iron forges for knife making and all sorts of kitchen utensils. During our walk today, which at times runs by the riverside and others through thick oak, aspen, ash and chestnut forests, we will also visit knife makers workshops, old iron forges and watermills (one of them now a museum) and an old semi-abandoned village, preserved as a live example of traditional architecture. We will have lunch in a lovely spot in one of these villages.

Today's walk: 8 kms

Overnight: Sta. Eulalia de Oscos Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Four:

In this delightful walk we will be surprised with a variety of landscapes and the quaintest of villages. Scenery after scenery of breathtaking beauty will be awaiting you at the turn of every corner. Here we traverse birch, and pine forests, we cross crystal clear rivers among alders, ashes, willows and hazels and we enter tiny hamlets with their perfectly preserved traditional architecture of stone, slate and wood whose only separation from these lively rivers and brooks are the deep green meadows where cows peacefully graze. It is a bucolic picture come alive, a painters dream.

Today's walk: 17 kms

Overnight: St Eulalia de Oscos Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Five:

A 30 minute drive will take us to the Eo fiord and across the other side lies Galicia the region known as "Green Spain". If the tide is low we will walk along the

“Beach of the Cathedrals”, its name is due to its gigantic rock formations fashioned by the waves. We continue our walk along a coastal path visiting numerous beaches on the way. We will have lunch by the beach and in the afternoon take a visit to the famous ceramic factory of Sargadelos, founded in 1804. It was considered to be the most important center in all of Spain for artistic ceramic in the first half of the 19th century. In the case of morning high tide, the day’s schedule will be reversed.

Today’s walk: 9 kms

Overnight: at Finca Goleta Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Six:

Today we will walk the most beautiful stretch of the Camino del Norte in Galicia. An easy walk along open fields and meadows and forests of oak, pine, birch, aspen, eucalyptus...also traversing some very picturesque farming hamlets.

Total day’s walk: 16 kms

Overnight: Finca Goleta Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Seven:

After breakfast, we will embark on the second stage of our journey towards the Celtic lands of Galicia. Our first stop is at the city of Lugo in order to see its magnificent 4th century Roman walls-probably the world’s best preserved-enclosing the city. It is possible to walk the entire length over 2kms around the old town on its 15 metre high ramparts. We will have lunch in Lugo and from here we continue to Sarria. It is from this town situated in a fertile valley, where we will link with the pilgrimage route, which takes us the last 112kms, to the legendary shrine of the Apostle James the Greater in Santiago de Compostela.

No walking today as travelling by private coach

Overnight: Sarria Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Eight:

From today onwards, our daily routine changes considerably as from now on we will be walking all the way until we reach the steps of St James Cathedral in Santiago. On this first day of our pilgrimage, we will start our walk straight from our hotel in Sarria.

Today's path traverses a centenary oak and chestnut forest with specimens of over 500 years old and then continues along fields and meadows and a few hamlets of strong rural atmosphere in which life seems to have changed very little in the last couple of centuries.

We end our day's walk at Portomarin after crossing the Mino, Galicia's most important river. This small town was inaugurated in 1962 when the old one was flooded in order to make a reservoir. Their Romanesque church-fortress and some of their best buildings were transported stone by stone up to their new emplacement. Here we will have lunch then rest until the following day.

Today's walk: 23 kms

Overnight: Portomarin Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Nine:

We leave Portomarin early in the morning to resume our westward route towards Palais de Rei. Another wonderful day on the trail meeting and talking with other pilgrims or taking the opportunity to have some quiet time and walk on your own.

Today's walk: 23 kms with optional additional 2.5 kms

Overnight: outskirts of Palas de Reis Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Ten:

From Palas de Rei the Camino runs along country lanes between pines, oaks, poplars and eucalyptus plantations passing through various small villages with their typical slate constructions and one of the most beautiful early gothic bridges in the whole Camino.

We stop for lunch at the town of Melide where we will be able to sample one of Galicia's most celebrated local dishes: the "pulpo de feria" consisting of octopus cut up and cooked with salt, paprika and olive oil.

After lunch we will walk just a further 7kms along country paths and a luxuriant forest of oaks and eucalyptus.

Today's walk: 24 kms

Overnight: the outskirts of Arzua Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Eleven:

We resume our walk from where we left the previous day. First we reach Arzúa, the last important town before Santiago de Compostela. Arzua is famous for its cheese called “breast cheese” due to its shape and that it is prepared with fresh pasteurized cow milk.

From here the rest of our walk runs through vegetable gardens and orchards until we get to an oak grove. We pass through the last villages of the Camino which still preserve this taste of ancient rural life with its smell of barn and their cows, hens and dogs roaming muddy streets.

Today’s walk: 23 kms

Overnight: the outskirts of Santiago Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Twelve:

The first third of this stage before Santiago runs through woodlands until we reach a major road which immediately brings us back to modern civilization informing that we are coming close to our destination.

Two important landmarks here before the end of our pilgrimage are the river of Lavacolla where pilgrims would traditionally wash themselves before entering Santiago and Mount of Joy so called because from here pilgrims could for the first time see the tall spires of the Cathedral of Santiago as they would drop on their knees and cry of joy.

This evening we will have our farewell dinner after walking into the Cathedral located in the old town and visiting the Official Pilgrims office to receive your certificate to say you have completed the ancient pilgrims trail from Sarria to Santiago de Compostela.

Today’s walk: 19 kms

Overnight: Santiago Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day Thirteen:

This morning you will have a guided tour of the Cathedral with a local tour guide. The remainder of the day is free to explore Santiago de Compostela one of the most beautiful and intact of Spain's old cities, which someone once called a

symphony in stone.

Overnight: Santiago Breakfast

Day Fourteen:

Tour finishes after breakfast.

Sharon's experience travelling the Camino

Having been so very lucky to have travelled the world experiencing many different types of holidays I would have to say walking the ancient pilgrims' route, the Camino Reale to Santiago de Compostela offers a little bit of everything that you have ever wanted out of a holiday.



Culture, history, scenery, culinary delights- fabulous wine, beer and cider plus the opportunity to meet new people from all walks of life. Meeting new people is one of the real highlights as each day brings different people, different stories - everyone is so friendly, it feels like all the troubles of the world are left behind, a walk of peace. As you make new friends you [get to hear their stories and why they are walking the Camino.](#)

The sooner you [immerse yourself into the Spanish way of life](#) the quicker you will really start to enjoy yourself. The Spanish live so very much in the moment, and the Latino influence means feelings are expressed so openly and people are not afraid to express love or frustration. They are a proud nation, staunch in their beliefs. They come across as nonchalant but in fact are still rather traditional when it comes to the crunch. Their flamboyant personalities certainly set the scene for some [wonderful experiences along the trail.](#)

Each day brings its own surprise! One never knows what is around the next corner. Some days you will be walking amongst many people and the next day you might be totally on your own for a couple of hours. There is no set pattern. Before long your body gets into a rhythm and time just disappears.

“ Who knows
whom we might
get talking to along
the trail today? ”

A typical day starts with a leisurely breakfast around 8.30 a.m. with [Ricardo our guide](#) going over the map for the day and giving us all a history lesson. We head off around 9.30 a.m. hearing cries of “Buen Camino” from the owners of the “casa” we have just stayed in for the night. Part of you may want to stay and spend more time in these magnificent dwellings and explore all of the antiques and wonderful gardens. The other part of you will want to get [back on the trail and explore what is in store today.](#)

It may be another famous [Ricardo](#) and [Sharon](#) picnic where they gather fresh food from the markets, or maybe a lovely old Spanish man or woman you meet along the way to be photographed with. Who knows whom we might get talking to along the trail today? Maybe the dog we met a couple of days ago will find us again and walk with us today? Will we be walking through the wild flowers and old oak tree forests? I wonder if I might have some more of the Santiago cake with coffee today... just another treat... its okay, I will walk it off!



Many wonderful surprises pop up every day but the night-time offers lots of adventure as well. Arriving a little weary into our accommodation each night we freshen up, rest a while, write our journals and then the evening begins with a fabulous three course home cooked meal with lots of Spanish wine and [much laughter and conversation about the days walk](#) and adventures. Ricardo is always looking out to see if there might be something special on in the village we are staying in and before we know it we have been invited to a private concert in one of the hamlets. Oh my goodness, just incredible... a guitarist, grand pianist and singer. Wow, memories you will take with you forever!!



There have been [many names given to the Camino](#), such as a walk to have all your sins forgiven, the walk of fertility - which is the pagan belief, the walk of love and the walk where you follow the Milky Way.

What I find so wonderful is it can be anything you wish it to be. For me I believe it is indeed a pilgrimage whereby you set your intent on an outcome before you leave and quite miraculously things unfold as you walk. It is an opportunity to reconnect with your past - a truly magical connection which will play itself out in whichever way it is meant to. [Walking on ancient land draws you into the energy where so many have walked before.](#)

“ *My senses
were heightened
as I connected
with my past...* ”

The very first time I [walked the Camino](#) I had a guide in spirit walking with me. I had done absolutely no research on the walk as I had decided at the last moment to join a friend for one week on the Camino. My spirit guide's name was Joseph and he was dressed in a brown robe down to the ground drawn in with a rope belt around his waist. He was there to walk with me which was very comforting. I realized not too long after he made himself known to me that he was a monk. Many things were revealed to me as I walked. My senses were heightened as I connected with my past.

Your [dreams can be very profound when walking the Camino](#) which is another indication of memories being brought back to you by those in spirit. Maybe if you are trying to work something specific out then often the answer is revealed to you through the dreamtime. [This is all accelerated when walking on ancient land.](#)



Walking at a constant pace with just your thoughts as your physical body goes through the motions allows you to face many aspects of your life head on.

It gives you time to think things through, let go past hurts, see the situation for what it really is with the end result being clarity and vision with a way forward.

I have seen some amazing results with the [clients who have toured with me](#). Often not until they return home, settling back into daily life and putting into practice their new found understanding or goals. Their confidence levels are lifted to new heights as they recognize their true potential having let go whatever fears they held before.

An amazing journey whereby your outer world is [satisfied with the scenery, history/culture, food and wine, walking and exercise, socializing](#) with a wonderful array of people while your inner world is nurtured as you learn more about yourself.

Recommended Reading List



- **Walking in Spain** – by lonely planet
- **A Travellers History**
- by Juan Lalaguna

A short but concise History of Spain.

- **A Journey of the Spirit**
- by Shirley MacLaine

A very good read about finding your spirit or past whilst walking the Camino.

- **Off the Road**
- by Jack Hitt

A very humorous account of his own pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.



- **Walking the Camino**
- by Bethan Davies & Ben Cole

A step-by-step practical guide on the last 560 kms of this Camino. Taking us from the French/Spain Pyrenees border to Santiago.
A very good read.

- **The Field of the Star**
- by Nicholas Luard

An account of his own personal reasons for his Camino. A must read.

- **The Pilgrimage**
- by Paulo Coelho

A beautifully written book from a spiritual perspective.

- **The Year we Seized the Day**
- by Elizabeth Best and Colin Bowles

Recommended by a happy customer.

About Spain



Currency:

The official currency used in Spain is the Euro.

Best way to exchange money:

In the past, the best place to exchange money was a bank ATM machine but some banks are now adding around a 3% fee on to foreign ATM withdrawals.

Make certain your bankcard is of the four PIN number type; this is the standard in Spain. ATMs in Spain are compatible with the Cirrus or Plus system. If you have any doubts about the usability of your ATM card, contact your bank prior to leaving. You might also want to check with your bank to ask about their fee structure on international exchanges.

Bank ATM machines can be found in the lobby area of both the Madrid and Barcelona International Airports and in all major cities throughout Spain. When travelling the Camino you have plenty of opportunity to access an ATM at the slightly larger towns.

Credit Cards are another way to exchange money in Spain, either through withdrawing cash or by making a purchase. It is a good idea to check your credit card policy for fees related to international exchanges and cash money withdrawals. Even with fees, credit card purchases usually provide a better rate of exchange than a street cambio (exchange) vendor does.

Using a Travelcard is a great option. You can now load your travelcard up with a selection of currencies before you leave home and when in each specific country you can withdraw the currency of that card without incurring any further exchange rate fees. You still have to pay the local ATM fee.



Best time to travel:

Traditionally the hottest time in Spain is July/August and August is when the local Spanish people like to holiday as well. Travelling the Camino Trail is fabulous in many different months for different reasons. Starting with the month of April where for those who do not like the heat this is perfect and of course far less people. May, June and early July are very popular months to walk as it is becoming warmer and it is also before the main European and American summer holidays. Late August, September and October are also very nice months to walk the Camino trail. With weather patterns changing and moving we have found that the warmer weather is still here at this time but not the soaring heat. Please remember that northern and southern Spain have quite different climates so if you are doing further travelling pre or post your walk then please take this into account.



Local Transport:

Public transport is generally very good in Spanish cities, most of which have efficient bus and rail systems. If you plan to remain within the principal Spanish cities, public transportation will likely prove far more convenient and pleasant than driving.

Intercity Rail: They operate a wide range of services and fares. Their fastest trains, the AVE, are among Europe's best with their slowest travelling about the same speed as a bus.

Buses: The local bus services in Spanish cities run from around 0600 until between 22:00 and midnight, when a more expensive night system comes into operation. Most buses don't have a lot of seats, opting instead for maximum standing room. Urban buses are quite slow although some major cities provide dedicated bus lanes. Most towns have a bus terminal. Keep in mind that when waiting at a bus stop, the bus may not always stop for you unless you indicate you wish it to.

Taxis: You should only use taxis that display a special license. They are of a very high standard as they are governed by strict legislation. They display a green light when they are free (libre). They can be

flagged down or found at a taxi rank and are metered but have a set price for certain journeys. Tipping is a customary 5-10%.

They are also very reasonably priced.

Metro: There are metro lines in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. They offer the fastest way to get around these cities and are unsurprisingly crowded during rush hours. Special tickets are available including a cheap day return, a metro card allowing three / five days unlimited use, and weekly and monthly passes. A map (plano del metro) showing the lines in different colours can be obtained from the ticket offices or from the area guides on this site.



Communication:

Public telephones are either coin or card (tarjetas telefónicas) operated. Telephone cards can be purchased in post offices, newsagents and kiosks or tobacco stores (estancos) that have the sign Tabacos outside.

Cabins and other phones have been adapted to take the euro currency but you're best off buying a phone card (from a kiosko or tabac). Phoning within Spain is cheaper after 6pm and all weekend for metropolitan and inter-provincial calls.

One of the best (and cheapest) ways to keep in touch while travelling is to sign up for a free internet email address that can be accessed from anywhere. Gmail (www.gmail.com), Yahoo Mail (mail.yahoo.com) and Hotmail (www.hotmail.com) are the best choices. Once you've set up an account, you can use these sites to pick up and send mail from any internet café or hotel with internet access.

Email and internet access is available at internet cafes (more commonly referred to as cybercafés in Spanish) in most towns and resorts. Prices vary; in cities hourly rates can be as little as €2, rising to around €6 in some smaller towns. A good selection of the places we stay at have WIFI but not all of them due to the remote location when walking the trail at times.

The Spanish country code for calling is +34

Banking Hours:

Banking hours are normally 8.30 - 13.30 Banking in Spain is considerably different from other places.

Many expats take the advice of their solicitor on which bank to use - OK, but, in Financial and Legal matters it is essential that you are fully understood by the bank staff and that you fully understand what they tell you.

Electricity:

230V/50Hz (European Plug)

Tipping:

Tipping is not as common in Spain as it is in other European countries however it is at your discretion.



Public Holidays:

- **January 1** New Year's Day.
- **January 6** Epiphany.
- **April 22** Easter Friday.
- **May 1** Workers' Day.
- **August 15** Assumption of the Virgin.
- **October 12** National Day.
- **November 1** [All Saints' Day](#)
- **December 6** Constitution Day
- **December 8** Immaculate Conception
- **December 24** Navidad. Christmas Eve (Night) is far more important than Christmas Day in Spain. Shops may close early on Christmas Eve, though most will be open in the morning.

Major Events:

Running with the Bulls

Every year from July 7th-14th thousands pack into Pamplona to start Spain's most famous bull-running fiesta to honour Navarre capital's patron saint, San Fermin. Spain stages more than 3,000 fiestas (festivals) each year but the 7 days of bull-running are the favourite in terms of spectacle and excitement.

The 'Tomatina' Tomato Fight

La Tomatina is a food fight festival held on the last Wednesday of August each year in the town of Buñol in the [Valencia](#) region of [Spain](#). Tens of thousands of participants come from all over the world to fight in a brutal battle where more than one hundred metric tons of over-ripe tomatoes are thrown in the streets.

The Seville Tapas Fair

In February, the city of Seville devotes itself completely to catering for lovers of this way of eating by hosting the annual Tapas Fair. The Seville Tapas Fair is one of those occasions when, although as many as 50 restaurants and bars officially participate in the Festival.



Shopping:

Spain is a very modern country with all the types of shops you might expect to find back home. Clothes are often cheaper than you'll find in other European cities, while the huge department store El Corte Ingles will sell just about anything you ever wanted.

If you are after something traditionally Spanish to take home to your friends and relatives, then consider the following:

Leather (*piel*) - nationwide, particularly Andalusia. The Sol area of Madrid is good too.

Lace (*encaje*) - Catalonia has a strong tradition in [lace-making](#)

Furniture (*muebles*) - Valencia. It even has its own [international furniture fair](#) . However shipping back could be costly!

Toys (*juegetes*) - Alicante has a tradition of fine toy making.

Shoes (*zapatos*) - Alicante and the Balearics are the main sources of Spain's finest shoemakers.

Without a doubt the shoes and handbags are great value throughout Spain...leave room for them in your suitcase.

Visa Requirements:

If you are travelling on a New Zealand or Australian passport then a visa is not required to enter Spain for a maximum stay of up to three months. If you are travelling on any other type of passport please check with your local travel agent.

Visa requirements can change without notice so please check with your travel agent at time of booking flights.

Vaccinations:

You do not need any vaccinations against illness to travel to Spain.

VAT:

If anything you are purchasing is + vat (value added tax) then this is 16%

