

## Spain & the Camino

26 September – 11 October 2017

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### ITINERARY

#### Day 1 – Tuesday Sep 26th      Santiago de Compostela – O Cebreiro

Welcome to Spain! Santiago is the capital of Galicia and this lovely region in north-west Spain is a dreamy spiritual land featuring rolling emerald green hills covered in mist, medieval castles, "pazos" (beautiful, historic manor houses, many converted into small, charming hotels), stunning coastline with coves and sandy white beaches spotted with quaint fishing villages and the belief in meigas (witches). The Galicians have their own language distinct from Spanish, called "Gallego" which resembles a mix of Portuguese and Spanish.

Upon arrival, our vehicle will meet you to transfer to O Cebreiro, a beautiful village located on the top of a mountain, and on the Galician side of the León-Galicia border. Surrounded by heather and forests of oak and boasting wonderful views, the village is famous for its primitive, circular thatched-roofed huts called pallozas (pre-Celtic in origin) and a tiny chapel where one of the famous legends on the Camino is said to have taken place.

The history of O'Cebreiro has always been closely tied to the Way of St. James. O'Cebreiro was the birthplace of Don Elias Valina San Pedro, a dedicated priest and scholar who devoted his life to the Camino de Santiago, in both academic and practical ways (he was responsible for painting many of the ubiquitous yellow arrows on rocks and trees that mark the Camino de Santiago for pilgrims).

△ *Overnight: CTR Ambasmestas Rural Inn*

*The Ambasmestas is a unique home-style village, retaining its original stonewalls and structure.*

#### Day 2 – Wednesday Sep 27th      O Cebreiro – Triacastela (21,2 km)

This morning after breakfast, we pick up your Pilgrim's Passports (credenciales) at the church of O Cebreiro, where we begin our Camino. Enjoy wonderful views of the valleys and mountains around you as you follow the trail. Your day starts with a steady climb to the Alto do Poio, the highest point of the Camino de Santiago in Galicia. Your destination is Triacastela (a village meaning "three castles"). Although there are no castles remaining, there is an 18th century church still standing.

As you approach Triacastela, veer towards the hamlet of Vilabella and to your lovely rural accommodations just off the Camino.

△ *Overnight: Casa Pacios, Vilabella (Triacastela), Rural Guesthouse*

*Casa Pacios is a romantic and isolated 15th century country house surrounded by chestnut and oak woods at the foot of a valley. Located just off the Camino de Santiago.*



**Day 3 – Thursday Sep 28th      Triacastela – Sarria (17,3 km)**



From Triacastela there are two options to walk to Sarria; on paved roads via the monastery of Samos, or the more picturesque trail via the hamlets of San Xil and Furela. We recommend you walk the latter. In Furela a lovely carved capital can still be seen, dedicated to San Roque, one of the patron saints of the pilgrimage. Upon arrival in Sarria (the antiques capital of Galicia), transfer to the wonderful Rectoral de Goian, your tranquil rural inn and home for the next two nights.

△ *Overnight: Rectoral de Goian, Goian (Sarria), Rural Guest House*

*This unique 18th century country inn has been beautifully restored. Formerly the rectory of the Goian parish church, the house is situated 8 km from the Camino de Santiago. Breakfast features wonderful home-made jams and conserves.*

**Day 4 – Friday Sep 29th      Sarria to Portomarin (21 Km)**

A short transfer from the Rectoral de Goian will take you to Sarria where you will commence your walk. Today's section of the Camino is one of the most picturesque. Walk through bucolic countryside, traversing enchanted forests and small patches of farmland to the banks of the Miño River. En route to Portomarin you'll pass the 100 km marker (only 100 km until Santiago de Compostela) - a milestone for pilgrims who travel the Camino.

Portomarin is a picturesque village with an interesting history. Most of the old buildings of the town (including the Romanesque Church of San Juan) were moved stone by stone to higher ground in the 1960's when the Miño river was dammed to create the Belesar reservoir. Transfer back to the Rectoral de Goian.



△ *Overnight: Rectoral de Goian, Goian (Sarria)*



**Day 5 – Saturday Sep 30th      Portomarin to Lestedo (20 Km)**

Your trip leader will drop you off in Portomarin to commence the day's stage. Passing through small villages decorated with cruceiros (carved stone crosses that mark the way to Santiago) and containing only three or four houses, you'll meet other peregrinos on the trail. But although you share your quest and a sense of camaraderie with fellow pilgrims from around the world, there are always moments of solitude to contemplate this special journey.

△ *Overnight: Rectoral de Lestedo, Lestedo, Rural Inn*

*This former rectory belonging to the parish church of Lestedo was lovingly restored five years ago. The charming house is situated in hamlet right on the Camino de Santiago.*

**Day 6 – Sunday Oct 1st      Lestedo to O Coto (13 Km)**

Today you'll enjoy a short day of walking. After departing Palas de Rei stop to admire the tiny 12th century church dedicated to St. Julian – one of the many Romanesque treasures along the Camino. The undulating countryside is studded with meadows and forests of eucalyptus and pine as you approach O Coto-Leboreiro, where we will have lunch in a charming restaurant right on the Camino.

We have a treat...at the end of our walk today we will experience a mini cooking class in the art of creating the simply delicious "tortilla de patata" (potato omelet). This, along with other regional dishes is what we are sharing for lunch in the garden. Afterwards, enjoy a restful afternoon at your rural inn; the expansive garden is perfect for a session of yoga, meditation or a lazy siesta.



△ *Overnight: Rectoral de Lestedo, Lestedo, Rural Inn*

### Day 7 – Monday Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>

#### Coto to Arzua (18 Km)

We start walking where we finished the day before. The first town you'll pass through is Melide, featuring a wonderful square and church and a good pilgrims' atmosphere. Here, other pilgrims' trails merge with the "Camino Frances".



Trace the Camino as it weaves along country lanes and ancient stone pathways called *corredoiras*. Farmers tend their fields and the chimes of cow bells accompany the sounds of your footsteps. In this area of rural Galicia it is not uncommon to see villagers still using scythes to work the land. At lunch, be sure to try the creamy cows' cheese from Arzúa and *empanada*, a light crusty pastry-pie filled with beef or tuna. Your hotel tonight, the beautiful and isolated O Muino de Pena is located right next to a gushing stream and mystical forest; perfect for a stroll or refreshing swim.

△ *Overnight: O Muino de Pena, Rua, Rural Inn*

*Housed within a renovated water mill, this rustic hotel enjoys a stunning location surrounded by lush green vegetation, just a short drive from Rua. Highlights include a traditional-style lounge with fireplace and an excellent restaurant.*

### Day 8 – Tuesday Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>

#### Arzua to Rua (19 Km)



Today's section of the Camino will take you past vegetable patches, meadows, forests and tranquil villages with curious names such as Xen, Ras and Brea. In the village of Santa Irene, you can stop to visit the small Romanesque chapel dedicated to the saint of the same name, St. Irene. Finish walking for the day in Rua (from where there are only 19 km left until arriving in Santiago). Here, you'll be picked up in Rua, and transferred back to O Muino de Pena. After dinner tonight Javier, your host, will prepare a very traditional *queimada*, the ancient "fire drink" of the Galicians. This traditional warm drink made with flamed *orujo* (a local liquor made from grapes), lemon, sugar and coffee beans. The brew is lit in a big clay pot and while it is stirred (until the flame turns blue) a traditional incantation or purification spell is read (dating back to Celtic times) once very popular with Galicia's "meigas" (witches).

△ *Overnight: O Muino de Pena, Rua, Rural Inn*

### Day 9 – Wednesday Oct 4<sup>th</sup>

#### Rua to Santiago de Compostela (19 Km)

Your guide will transfer you back to Rua to walk the final 19 km into Santiago. Excitement mounts as the trail brings you closer to Santiago de Compostela. Walk through rolling terrain towards Lavacolla, where medieval pilgrims traditionally bathed in the river to purify themselves before arriving in the holy city of Santiago. From here you'll begin to ascend the Monte del Gozo ("Mount of Joy"), the point where pilgrims first catch sight of the spires of the Cathedral of Santiago, these days surrounded by the bustling city of Santiago de Compostela.

Arriving in the Obradoiro square, in front of the immense Cathedral, is an exciting moment, and after performing the traditional pilgrim rituals inside the Cathedral, check in to your hotel for a well-earned rest! Tonight we celebrate our arrival in Santiago with a wonderful dinner in Santiago.

△ *Overnight: Hotel Altair, Santiago de Compostela, (3 star)*

*Perfectly located in the old quarter of Santiago de Compostela (a brief stroll from the Cathedral), this small hotel combines the structure and wonderful granite stone of the original building, with a minimalistic, avant-garde interior.*

## Day 10 – Thursday Oct 5<sup>th</sup>

### Discover the Spiritual Heart of Santiago de Compostela

After a leisurely breakfast, enjoy a private tour of the magnificent Cathedral with a local art historian. You'll also explore the narrow streets or rúas of the Old Quarter, where the vibrancy, history and magic of Santiago de Compostela come alive. Your historical visit will end in time for pilgrims' mass at noon in the Cathedral (where you might be lucky enough to see the Botafumeiro, the giant incensory swung by the priests high above the nave during Mass).

Enjoy lunch today in a unique "gastronomic space" located within the Abastos fresh produce market. Here, the talented young Chefs prepare delicious dishes utilizing ingredients found only in the adjacent market stalls. The rest of the day is free to explore this wonderful UNESCO designated city. Later in the evening, be sure to stroll around the old quarter as you celebrate your last night in Santiago. This vibrant university town has a plethora of bars and restaurants serving fresh seafood. If you are lucky, you might also catch a boisterous and spontaneous performance of traditional Galician minstrels called the Tuna; university students who dress in medieval garb including doublets, puffy shirts and tights and play the guitar, bandurrias and lutes in the plazas of the old quarter. Dinner will be your own tonight.

△ *Overnight: Hotel Altair, Santiago de Compostela, (3 star)*

## Day 11 – Friday Oct 6<sup>th</sup>

### Santiago to Finisterre, the "End of the Earth"

After breakfast, farewell Santiago de Compostela and travel to Cape Finisterre (or "Fisterra" as it is known in the local language gallego). Finisterre is the final destination for many pilgrims on the Way of St. James ( a further 90 km walk from Santiago). In the times of the Romans and Celts, Finisterre was considered to be the farthest edge of the north westerly land mass and was described as "the end of the earth" (in Latin "finis terrae" means "end of the world")



After visiting the lighthouse, and passing through the small coastal villages of Corcubión and Carnota, you'll continue your journey in this beautiful and seldom visited region of Galicia. Here, the imprint of different cultures from the era of the Celts right down to the Modern Ages have all left their mark on the Galician culture. From Celtic Castros (Hill-forts) to the Dolmens left here by the region's first inhabitants, the ability to work stone with the enviable expertise and craft of the master mason never seems to have been a

secret in these parts.

Next stop is the spectacularly-located Castro de Baroña, an excavated site of an ancient Celtic fortress settlement. Situated on a highly exposed and rugged outcrop of land, the remains of the settlement are connected to the mainland by a narrow sandy stretch of beach on the wild Galician coastline. After pausing for lunch, drive to Quinta de San Amaro, your lodgings for the following three nights. Dinner at the hotel.

△ *Overnight: Quinta de San Amaro, Salnes, (3 star)*

*Surrounded by lush vineyards, this lovely family-run hotel is located in the heart of the Rias Baixas wine region. Combining both avant-garde and rustic décor, this ancestral home features a cosy living room with fire-place, several cosy reading corners and a wonderful restaurant serving traditional Galician cuisine with a modern twist.*

## Day 12 – Saturday Oct 7<sup>th</sup>

### Galician Cooking Class

This morning you'll participate in an exclusive Galician cooking class at the Quinta de San Amaro. Your class commences with a wonderful trip on a fishing boat to the Ria de Arousa estuary and the nearby Atlantic Islands of the Galicia National park where the best Spanish seafood comes from. This hands on class takes place in the private kitchen and home of the owners of the Quinta de San Amaro and is accompanied by the best local albariño wine. It is such a fun day !

Rest of the day at leisure, with time perhaps for a relaxing massage in the hotel's treatment room or a stroll through the lovely grounds. Dinner at the hotel tonight.

△ *Overnight: Quinta de San Amaro, Salnes*

**Day 13 – Sunday Oct 8th****Route of the Mills**

Today you'll enjoy a lovely walk which runs alongside the Amenterira river side. Known locally as the "Water and Stone Route" or "Route of the Watermills", this leisurely trail traces the riverbank and passes a plethora of historic watermills along its seven kilometer length. Stroll through picturesque rolling countryside in a landscape dominated by lush green pastures and ancient forest. The walk ends at the Monastery of Santa Maria in Armenteira. Built in the mid 12th century, this medieval Cistercian monastery has been fully restored in recent years.

Enjoy a well earned picnic lunch at the end of the walk before driving back to Quinta de San Amaro...or perhaps even walking back.

△ *Overnight: Quinta de San Amaro, Salnes*

**Day 14 – Monday Oct 9th****Shopping in Valença and lunch in Pontevedra**

This morning you'll visit Valença, a charming Portuguese market town located on the Spanish/Portuguese border and overlooking the Minho river. Stroll the narrow streets and shop for typical textiles (such as embroidered tablecloths and the most exquisite sheets) – all uniquely located within the old fortress walls.

Continue to Pontevedra – and perhaps pause for an aperitif in the lively main square (a great place to people-watch) before enjoying a light lunch of local seafood. Pontevedra is located on the Portuguese Camino and you will no doubt see several of the beloved yellow arrows that most recently guided you to Santiago de Compostela!

Return to Quinta de San Amaro for dinner

△ *Overnight: Quinta de San Amaro, Salnes*

**Day 15 – Tuesday Oct 10th****Transfer to Santiago**

After a very leisurely breakfast, a private transfer will take you from your home at La Quinta to Santiago, which is about an hours drive.

The rest of your day is at leisure to revisit your favourite places ...and perhaps explore new ones in the wonderful town of Santiago de Compostela

△ *Overnight: Hotel Altair or Hotel Moure, Santiago de Compostela,*

*Perfectly located in the old quarter of Santiago de Compostela (a brief stroll from the Cathedral), these two small hotels combine the structure and wonderful granite stone of the original building, with a minimalistic, avant-garde interior. They are sister properties and two doors away from each other.*

**Day 16 – Wednesday Oct 11th****Transfer to Santiago airport**

Transfer to Santiago airport to catch your onward flight or your return flight home.

It's time to farewell the mystical land of Galicia and our camino journey together.

Vuen viaje !

**Important Note:**

Whilst every effort is made to adhere to this itinerary, please keep in mind that this is adventure travel in a remote parts of Spain. There may be changes to this itinerary - from the hotels we use, to the places we visit & due to circumstances outside our control like weather, road conditions and last minute changes to government policy.

Journeys of the Spirit will do everything possible to ensure a memorable and exciting trip for you whatever situation presents itself, however it is highly recommended to take your lead from the locals and let go and let the magic of the Camino take over...

We thank you in advance for your flexibility and your open mind.



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