

## *Spain & the Camino*

### *11 – 27 September 2018*

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#### ITINERARY

##### **Day 1 – Tuesday Sep 11th**

Arrival into Santiago de Compostela from wherever you are in the world.

Overnight at Hotel Altair or Hotel Moure.

##### **Day 2 – Wednesday Sep 12th    Santiago de Compostela – O Cebreiro**

Welcome to your Camino journey! 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, Sabela our local guide 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 3 – Thursday Sep 13th    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 4 – Friday Sep 14th 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. Your dinners and breakfasts are created by the owner / chef Javier – truly delicious!*

#### Day 5 – Saturday Sep 15th 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 6 – Sunday Sep 16th Portomarin to Lestedo (20 Km)

Sabela 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 7 – Monday Sep 17th 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 celebrate our shorter day with a wonderful lunch in restaurant called Casa Alongos in Melide. They use very fresh, local produce and have created a delicious menu for us – all vegetarian, vegan and providing alternatives for those with dietary restrictions. They also have organic wine, juices and teas. 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 8 – Tuesday Sep 18th 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 cowbells 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 an *empanada*, a light crusty pastry-pie filled with beef or tuna. Your hotel for the next 2 nights is a haven of tranquillity and an ideal place for rest and to spend time in a beautiful, natural environment.



△ Overnight: *Pazo Xan Xordo, Rural Inn*

## Day 9 – Wednesday Sep 19th 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 and transferred back to Pazo Xan Xordo.

△ Overnight: *Pazo Xan Xordo, Rural Inn*



## Day 10 – Thursday Sep 20th Rua to Santiago de Compostela (19 Km)

Sabela 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 Obradoiro Square in front of the immense Cathedral de Santiago is an exciting moment! After enjoying a joy filled celebration of what you have just accomplished, we then amble to our hotel for a well-earned rest! Tonight we celebrate our camino journey with a wonderful dinner in a fabulous local restaurant.

△ 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 11 – Friday Sep 21st Discover the Spiritual Heart of Santiago de Compostela

After a leisurely breakfast, we will then enjoy a private walking tour of the town and 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*

## **Day 12 – Saturday Sep 22nd      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 four nights. Dinner is at the hotel tonight and every night.

△ *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 13 – Sunday Sep 23rd      Galician Cooking Class**

This morning you have a treat in store ~ 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 swim in their infinity pool or relaxing, reading or just watching the world go by throughout the lovely grounds of this wonderful rural inn. Dinner at the hotel tonight.

△ *Overnight: Quinta de San Amaro, Salnes*

#### Day 14 – Monday Sep 24th

#### Route of the Mills

Today you'll enjoy a lovely walk which runs alongside the Amenterira River. 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 kilometre length. Stroll through picturesque rolling countryside in a landscape dominated by lush green pastures and ancient forests. 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 & delicious picnic lunch before driving back to Quinta de San Amaro...or perhaps even walking back?

△ *Overnight: Quinta de San Amaro, Salnes*

#### Day 15 – Tuesday Sep 25th

#### 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 Minô River. Stroll the narrow streets and shop for typical textiles such as embroidered tablecloths, the most exquisite bed linen, clothes – 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 !

Return to Quinta de San Amaro for dinner.

△ *Overnight: Quinta de San Amaro, Salnes*

#### Day 16 – Wednesday Sep 26th

#### 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 this wonderful town.

△ *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 17 – Thursday Sep 27th

#### 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.

Buen camino!

Important Note:

Whilst every effort is made to adhere to this itinerary, please keep in mind that this is adventure travel in 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, let go and let the magic of the Camino take over...

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

Buen camino!



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