

"You say: Galicia is very small. And I say: there is a World of Galicia. Every piece of a land is in itself as the entire World. You may journey from North to South, from East to West, in little time; you may do so over and over again, and yet you shall not travel it whole. And every time you go, you shall come across new things (...) The surface may be small; in depth, entity, Galicia is as great as you wish ... " VICENTE RISCO



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Galicia  pórtico de la gloria

Cubertas: Barro Salgado Santana (Grupo Revisión Diseño)





The Road to Santiago has been, and continues to be, without doubt, the oldest, most covered and most celebrated route of the old continent. Jerusalem and Rome were, for centuries, the two poles of attraction for the European pilgrims and travellers, but neither of them had an established route to get there. Santiago has also shared with them the appeal of walkers and wanderers of all the times but has also created a route, a Road. Santiago and Galicia can be reached in many ways. But the best way of getting there is along the ROAD TO SANTIAGO.

The first pilgrims, in the XI century, only came from the interior of the kingdoms of Galicia and Asturias. However, with surprising speed, Compostela began to attract travellers and pilgrims from other Christian kingdoms, including those from beyond our own frontiers. The first, whose name we know, Godescalco, Bishop of Le Puy, was French, and arrived in Compostela in 951. The influx of pilgrims then began to grow forcefully and, before the century was over, it was deemed necessary to supply accommodation for them. This began to take place in the monasteries such as San Martín de Albelda, San Millán de la Cogolla, San Juan de la Peña, Samos, Sobrado...

There are many reasons and motives given by historians for the fever felt by the Franks to cross the Pyrenees. For some, it was for political motives. The Papacy and Cluny were decided, for reasons of their own safety, in supporting the kingdoms in the north of Spain, thus making a Muslim invasion a more remote possibility. Others came out of curiosity and the lust for adventure. On many occasions the reasons were based on commercial interests or for making cultural exchanges. And sometimes, also, the zeal for robbing and taking advantage of the helpless pilgrims. There is

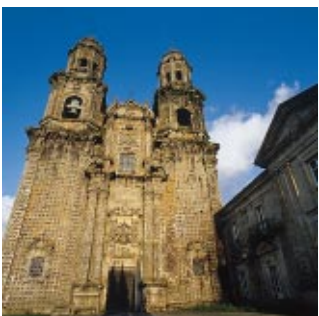


Codex Calixtinus

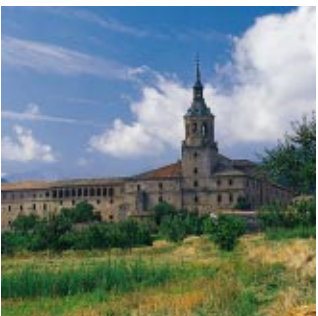
The Road to Santiago



Monastery of Samos



Monastery of Sobrado dos Monxes



San Millán de la Cogolla



Monastery of San Juan de la Peña

no doubt, nonetheless, that in nearly all cases the underlying reason was religious. In the Middle Ages the pilgrimage was a symbol of the life of Christ, an unsafe path towards the eternal home.

The knights of the XV century came to take part in tournaments and discover new lands, although always doing so with the customary gallantry. It was not only the Frankish people who came. Italians such as Giordano de Ribalta boasted of having been three times in Rome and four in Santiago. Jean van Eyck, the Dutch painter portrayed his Annunciation on the inside of the cathedral. The Englishman John Goodyear donated a precious alabaster to the Compostela treasury. And those four boats full of Germans who set off from the port of Hamburg to make an unconventional Road to Santiago by sea. All of these people came before

the end of the XV century, and all of them to worship the relics of Christ's disciple and to give the ritual embrace to the Apostle.

One of the most famous and well-known medieval pilgrims in Compostela was the Frenchman Aymery Picaud, a monk from the French town of Poitou. His fame comes from having written a chronicle of his journey, around 1130, in precise details, with an endless list of advice and recommendations for other walkers. This chronicle, entitled "Guide for the Pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela", is included within one of the most beautiful documents preserved in the Compostela cathedral library: The Codex Calixtinus. This Guide to the Pilgrim is an obligatory reference book whenever talking of the old French Road.

The Guide to the Road to Santiago, by Aymery Picaud, states with a typical French clarity: "There are four routes to Santiago which join into one at Puente la Reina, in Spanish territory...and from there only one road leads to Santiago." The first one led from Arles, close to Marseilles, the only one crossing the Pyrenees via Somport. The other three left from Paris, Vézère and Le Puy, which entered Navarra at Roncesvalles. These were the traditional routes taken intermittently by the pilgrims to Compostela.

Good footwear, short clothing and shoulder cape a stick for support and defence, a gourd for water and wine, a small pouch and a wide-brimmed hat. All these features made up the typical appearance of the pilgrim from the Middle Ages. The "vieira" or scallop shell that was already a feature

of the walkers in pagan mythology was the most important souvenir that the pilgrims brought with them from Galicia, this mollusc being abundant along the coast. The hat, pouch and gourd would later be added to the wear they wore on processions they attended in their home towns and countries. Today's pilgrims return with an album of photos, a scallop shell, a silver censer and, above all, an unforgettable memory of all they have seen and experienced along the Road to Santiago.

Setting Off

monopoly granted by the Archbishop and ratified by the Popes.

The pilgrim or modern non-motorised traveller who takes the Road does not usually wear the classical attire. Nonetheless, there is something special which distinguishes them from the everyday walker, when descending the Poio Pass via Triacastela, or crossing the Arzoea and Melide mountains.

Once it was for the fulfilment of a vow, or to free oneself of a penitence, to fulfil the desire of a deceased relative, or even by judicial order as a punishment. Today it is more common to take the Road in order to relive our past, discover our culture and history, admire the harmony of Romanesque art and architecture, or simply to have the pleasure of taking in the landscapes offered by the Land of Santiago.

Indicator of the Road

Towards Santiago

The modern traveller who goes along the roads of northern Spain from the Pyrenees to Galicia often comes across the sign which indicates the way to Santiago, accompanied by the number of kilometres separating them from Santiago de Compostela. The signs are there for those travelling by car and are placed on the roads closest to the early road. The successive modernisation of the road network, from the old royal ways to the national roads and modern motorways have erased many stretches of the road tramped on by the pilgrims over centuries. On some occasions, however, the present roads do not exactly follow the medieval Road. It is then when those participating in "slow tourism", be it on foot, horseback or bicycle, can retrace the tracks of the ancient way. This original route still preserves, in many stretches, the cobbled paving, the landmarks of the Road, the old inns, the hermitages-refuges, the fountains, the crosses, the old bridges, etc...