

"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

the Road
to Santiago

Cubertas: Barro Salgado Santana (Grupo Revisión Diseño)



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 left from Arles, close to Marseilles, the only one crossing the Pyrenees via Somport. The other three left from Paris, Vézelay 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 coastline. The hat, pouch and gourd would later be added to the image, becoming an emblem and safeguard of the pilgrim. There was a district in Santiago called Concheiros, the name still in existence today. It was the spot where the scallop shells were sold, or imitations in metal, with a sales



Cross at the beginning of the Road to Santiago in Roncesvalles

Setting Off



Pilgrim

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 Arzúa 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.

In the past, on leaving Compostela to return home, the pilgrim would offer their clothing, with all their travelling equipment, to a sanctuary, or they would keep them, and wear them 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.



Pilgrims



Censers



Indicator of the Road

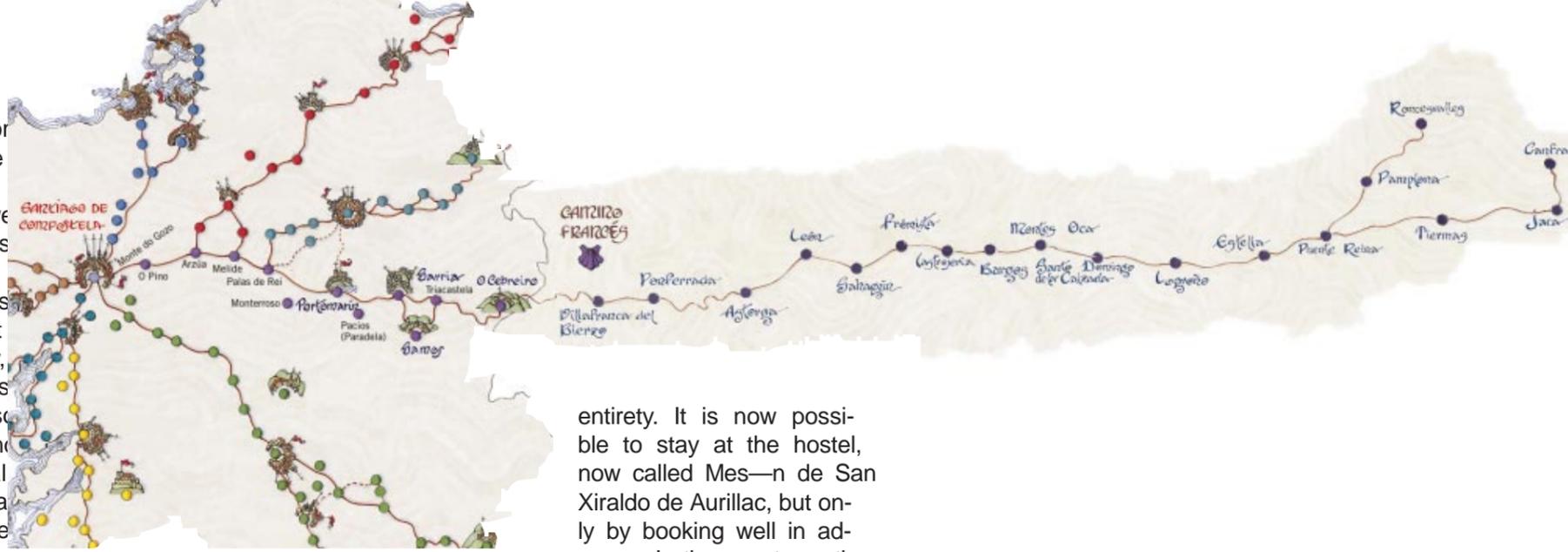
Towards Santiago

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...



Pilgrims

Whatever our reason for travelling to Galicia, if we want to do it by following the Road to Santiago, we must enter Galician lands by the N-VI national road, climbing the Pedrafita pass. Alternatively, if we want to enter by the old way, with beautiful landscapes all around us, we can do so via Vega de Valcarce and Herrer'as. The medieval pilgrims entered along a way which crossed the mythical villages of A Faba and Lagoa de Castilla, until seeing, just before reaching Cebreiro, the illustrated landmark marking the Galician boundary, 152 kilometres from Santiago by the walkers route.



The French Road

entirety. It is now possible to stay at the hostel, now called Mes—n de San Xiraldo de Aurillac, but only by booking well in advance. In the sanctuary the Holy Grail is exhibited, the heraldic symbol of Galicia, whose legends inspired the literary content of Wagner's Parsifal. The town of O Cebreiro preserves an interesting series of Ópallozas, pre-Roman dwellings which were inhabited until not that long ago in time. One of them has been converted into the Ethnographical Museum while others attend to the pilgrims, especially French pilgrims, who have been reformed in order to attend to pilgrims. The next twelve kilometres run between the Os Ancares and O Courel ranges, with magnificent mountain landscapes, forming the highest stretch of road in Galicia. The pass through villages, now almost totally abandoned, such as Li—ar do Real, today Li—ares, Veiga de Forcas, the

O Cebreiro



Os Ancares

O Courel

Sanctuary of O Cebreiro
Cross
Holy Grail
Pallozas

