The Pilgrims' Ways to Santiago in Galicia

The English Way
The pilgrimage way to Compostela enjoyed widespread fame throughout medieval Europe. Land and sea alike were furrowed with routes rich in spirituality leading to Santiago de Compostela. The maritime routes drew pilgrims from Scandinavia, Flanders, England, Scotland and Ireland on their way to destinations such as Ribadeo, Viveiro, Ferrol and A Coruña. Blessed by an exceptionally strategic location, the latter two coastal enclaves are the starting points for the two alternative itineraries that make up the English Way. The route from A Coruña to Santiago covers a distance of 74 km, while the stretch linking Ferrol-Santiago is 118 km long.

The pilgrimages from Scandinavia and the British Isles began in the 12th century. One of the most noteworthy episodes occurred in 1147 with the arrival of a squadron of crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. This squadron took part in the conquest of Lisbon, aiding the first king of Portugal in his struggle against the Muslims. Before the fighting commenced, the crusaders from England, Germany and Flanders visited the tomb of Saint James.
The first maritime itinerary recorded between 1154-1159 by the Icelandic monk, Nicholas Bergsson, describes the voyage from Iceland to Bergen (Norway), Aalborg (Jutland), and Vyborg, sailing down the Kiel Channel (which marks the border between Denmark and Germany). This monk continued on foot to Rome, on his way to the Holy Land. Icelandic and Scandinavian pilgrims travelling to Santiago took this maritime route to Denmark, continuing their journey on foot to Roncesvalles, or by boat to the north of the Iberian Peninsula.

During the Hundred Years War that raged between France and England throughout practically the whole of the 14th century and the first third of the 15th century, the British used boats to travel to Santiago. The vessels that were chartered for this purpose would set sail, –with permission from the Crown–, from London, Bristol, Southampton, and Plymouth and would return to England loaded with goods from Galicia. The presence of these pilgrims in Santiago is well-documented by the ceramic pieces and coins dating from 14th and 15th centuries, found during excavations in the cathedral.

Other traces of seafaring pilgrimages can be found in the offerings made to the apostle. The most outstanding is the famous portable alabaster altarpiece depicting the life of Saint James, which was donated to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in 1456 by Father John Goodyear, who was the parish priest of the church of Chale on the Isle of Wight (diocese of Winchester). This work of art, part of the collection of the Cathedral Museum, portrays five scenes in the life of the apostle: his vocation, his preaching in Hispania, his martyrdom in Palestine and the removal of his body by boat to Galicia. Another splendid offering related to the pilgrimages undertaken from the British Isles is the “Pearl cross”. This piece, crafted in gold and silver, displaying enamel work and studded with pearls and gems, was created in Paris around 1375-1400 and donated by King James IV of Scotland (1475-1513). Henry VIII’s divorce (1509-1547) from Catherine of Aragon caused him to break ties with the Catholic church, effectively putting an end to the English pilgrimages.
Whether they were noblemen, princes, clergymen or plain citizens, the pilgrims found refuge in the hospitals along the English Way. From Ferrol to A Coruña, the route was less arduous thanks to the services provided by the religious order of the Sancti Spiritus. Starting in the 14th century, the Franciscan Order opened up their residences in Pontedeume and Betanzos, under the patronage of nobleman, Fernán Pérez de Andrade, “O Boo”.

Along this stretch, which set out from Ferrol, there were pilgrim hospitals run by the Hospitalers of the Sancti Spiritus located in Ferrol, Neda, Miño, Paderne and Betanzos. Another pilgrim hospital dedicated to San Lorenzo, was founded in Bruma, in 1140, and which became part of the Hospital of Santiago in 1175. Along the section of the way leaving from A Coruña, the city offered pilgrims accommodation run by the religious orders of los Ángeles, Santa Catalina and San Andrés, and, as they proceeded along the Way, there were facilities in Sigrás and Poulo. Some of these establishments had chapels and cemeteries, whose archives contain records of the deaths of pilgrims of English, Nordic, German, French and Italian origin. These records indicate just how important the pilgrimage way was for these areas.
Starting in Ferrol, the English Way begins at the docks of Curuxeiras, in the neighbourhood that has sprung up on the site of the medieval port, which dates back as far as the 11th century. King Alphonse VII (1116-1157) sectioned off the land occupied by the original city of Ferrol, granting it special jurisdiction. In the 14th century, however, Henry II gave the cities of Pontedeume and Ferrol to Fernán Pérez de Andrade, “O Boo”, in payment for his services. Ferrol remained a feudal city until 1733, when the Crown was re-established for the purpose of setting up shipyards to build vessels for the navy.

Leaving the Paseo de la Marina behind, the route winds its way to the Church of San Francisco, located between the old quarter of the city and the section known as La Magdalena, laid out in a Neo-classical plan. The Franciscan convent was founded in the 14th century by Pérez de Andrade. In 1757 the medieval church was replaced by a
temple of the Enlightenment period, with a floor plan in a Latin cross over a rectangle, three naves separated by pillars, covered with barrel vaulting and a dome resting on pendentives in the transept. The high altarpiece bears magnificent images of the Virgin Mary, Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, created in 1790 by the sculptor José Ferreiro.

The urban layout of Ferrol was determined by the Arsenal, built between 1750-1775, based on designs by Joseph Petit de la Croix, Sánchez Bort, Francisco Llobet and Jorge Juan y Santalicia. The Arsenal consists of a rectangular harbour bounded by ashlarwork docks built on islets and directly on the seabed. The buildings on land include the military warehouses and facilities, one of the most outstanding of which is the Sala de Armas, –the armoury–, which today is used as Military Training Quarters, designed by J. Petit de la Croix, in the fashion of a palace of the French court. The area forms a rectangle of six parallel streets, crossed at a right angles by nine side streets. The main streets run through two square-shaped plazas.
One of the most significant buildings as far as the pilgrimages are concerned is the Hospital de la Caridad –today the “Torrente Ballester” Cultural Centre– which was erected in 1780 to aid and shelter the sick, the poor and the pilgrims. The most important church is the Concathedral of San Julián designed in 1763 by Sánchez Bort, and laid out in a Greek cross around a dome. The façade boasts a balanced design of walls and openings. In the interior the architectural elements stand out over the decorative features.

Rúa Real leads on to Amboage Square, where the Church of the Virgen de los Dolores stands. Continuing along the same street, we find the Praza de Armas and the City Hall built in 1953. The Way continues as far as the Praza da Constitución and Cantón de Molín, eventually coming to the Church of As Angustias, another of the Neoclassical churches to be found in Ferrol.

From here the Way heads out towards the suburbs of Recemil and Caranza. The A Gándara industrial park tells us that we are
approaching Narón. The Way continues along the Avenida del Mar, which runs parallel to the ría (inlet) and turns off towards Neda. In Rúa da Pena stands the monastery of San Martiño de Xubia ("O Couto"), founded in the late 8th century and rebuilt in the 12th century, when it was a priory belonging to the Cluny Abbey (Burgundy).

The church was built around the year 1132 with a ground plan of three naves, separated by pillars and semicircular arches. The head of the church holds three apses covered by barrelled vaulting and a quarter sphere dome. The corbels on the exterior bear extraordinary sculptures depicting heads of monsters,
bovine animals, donkeys and other profane images. The 12th century portal is protected by a 18th century porch. The bell tower dates from the same period.

The route continues on until it merges with the way of O Salto, passing the tide mill of As Aceas de Lembeie, and then crosses the bridge over the Xubia River and enters Neda. Here the pilgrim can enjoy the modern hostel built on the banks of the Xubia River. Sites worth visiting include the Church of Santa María, begun in 1721, and the pilgrim hospital of Sancti Spiritus (15th century), the remains of which are affixed to the Town Hall. The Clock Tower dates from 1786. The Way takes us down Rúa Real, flanked by the arcades of buildings dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, and on to Rúa do Castro, as far as the Church of San Nicolás (14th century).

Leaving Neda behind, the route passes through O Regueiro, O Puntal de Arriba and Conces, and then enters Fene, an industrial town, known for the ASTANO shipyards and workshops. On leaving this town, the route joins the road known as the Camino Real skirting the Vilar do Coto industrial park and enters Cabanas. A turn-off earlier on the way leads to an old mill and to the Church of San Martiño do Porto, with its beautiful Baroque portal. Cabanas, located on the banks of the Eume estuary, offers the pilgrim the chance to relax on A Madalena Beach, before continuing along the promenade and crossing the bridge into Pontedeume.

Constructed by Fernán Pérez de Andrade in the 14th century, the bridge over the Eume River is 600 m in length and built of 79 arches.
It was formerly the site of a chapel and a pilgrims’ hospital with a total of twelve beds.

Some of the attractions in Pontedeume are the Convent of Santo Agostiño, the Chapel of As Virtudes, the Keep of the Andrade Castle (14th century), the Church of Santiago (18th century), the birthplace of Bartolomé Rajoy, who was Archbishop of Santiago from 1751-1772, and the Town Hall, affixed to the Ulloa Tower (17th century).

After leaving Pontedeume, the pilgrim can take the turn-off to visit the Romanesque Church of San Miguel de Breamo (late 12th century). This church, with a cross-shaped ground plan, stands on an elevation offering sweeping views of the rías of Betanzos, Ares and Ferrol. The Way takes pilgrims to Barro, As Pedridas, Cermuzo, A Xesta and Buíña, passing through the villages of Viadeiro and Bañobre. After crossing the single-arched medieval bridge over the Baxoi River, the route leads to Miño by way of the Camino Real until it reaches the Market Square. The pilgrims’ hostel is located on the waterfront.
The route leaves Miño by way of Rúa Real and leads to the train station. It crosses over the railway tracks and once again follows the shoreline, which is an ever-present feature along the initial sections of the English Way. From here the pilgrim reaches the bridge, Ponte do Porco, spanning the estuary of the Lambre River. The construction of this bridge, bearing lancet arches, was commissioned by Pérez de Andrade in the 14th century. The way then winds deep into the woods until it reaches the Pazo de Montecelo and the Church of San Pantaleón das Viñas, which still preserves its Romanesque porch with semicircular archivolts resting on two pairs of columns.

The Way then descends only to climb up again at a place called Barreiro, in the direction of Matacabalos, passing through Porto and Chantada. A little farther on, the pilgrim reaches the tiny village of Souto with its Romanesque church that was rebuilt in the 19th century. The way crosses over flatlands and then descends towards Betanzos. This stretch gives the pilgrim lovely views of the Ría de Betanzos and its marshlands. The village of Gas has an old fountain.
with a cross. The Way then continues to A Rúa and on to the Romanesque Church of San Martiño de Tiobre. Next on the route is the Pazo de O Barral, after which the Way descends the slope of O Sabugueiro and reaches the village of Caraña. This itinerary leads the pilgrim to the Sanctuary of Nosa Señora do Camiño (Os Remedios) belonging to the parish of Tiobre. This Renaissance church, laid out in a Latin cross, was built by García de Velasco between 1568-1599. The façade exhibits a classical arrangement with three semicircular arches and medallions depicting the Virgin Mary and Child and Saint Anne in the spandrels.
The upper section has a large window that is topped off with a pediment divided in the centre by a medallion representing the image of the Holy Father. The interior is covered with star-shaped vaulting in the high altar chapel and the transept, and a wooden ceiling in the nave. Two Baroque altarpieces adorn the transept and there are early 17th century mural paintings in the presbytery representing the miracles of the Virgin Mary. These paintings were part of a pictorial series covering the entire surface of the high altar chapel.

The pilgrim then crosses the Mandeo River over A Ponte Vella bridge which leads into Betanzos, the ancient capital of one of the seven provinces belonging to the Kingdom of Galicia. Access is gained through the Arco da Ponte Vella, one of the gates that formed part of the medieval city wall. Rúa Prateiros leads to the Porta de Vila and the bustling Hermanos García Naveira Square.

The city offers one of the most interesting groups of historical and artistic buildings in Galicia. Traces of its feudal past, of late medieval, Renaissance and Baroque styles can still be seen in its streets and squares, churches, convents, altarpieces and chapels. Some of the most outstanding civil buildings are the Bendaña Palace (15 – 18th centuries) and the Town Hall (18th century). The Gothic churches are of particular interest. The Church of Santiago (15th century), commissioned by Fernán Pérez de Andrade, “O Mozo”, bearing the image of Saint James the Knight, on its porch, is laid out with three naves and three apses. One of the chapels, that of Don Pedro de Ben, is a Renaissance jewel and houses one of the most representative
altarpieces of the Galician Renaissance period, created by the sculptor Cornielles de Holanda (16th century).

Another Gothic church, the Convent of San Francisco (14th century) contains the famous sepulchre of Pérez de Andrade, “O Boo”. The church boasts a lovely head with a lancet arch and an outstanding collection of tombs of nobles in the apses and transept. The third of the Gothic churches, Santa María de Azougue (14th century) is laid out with three naves and three apses, and the high altar features a Baroque altarpiece in which fourteen Spanish-Flemish reliefs (16th century) depicting the life of the Virgin Mary and the Passion of Christ can now be seen.
In Hermanos García Naveira Square, in addition to the fountain of Diana, stands a monument erected in homage to these benefactors, who are portrayed in this sculpture. Betanzos boasts some magnificent buildings, such as the **Church of San Domingos** (17th century) and its Baroque bell tower constructed between 1700-1714 by Fernando de Casas Novoa, the Archives of the Kingdom of Galicia, dating back to the times of Charles III (1775), and the Municipal Library (17th century).

After leaving this square behind, the route continues along O Rollo Street until it reaches the old bridge of As Cascas, spanning the Mandeo River. Leaving the town centre behind it, the route passes through the villages of Coto, Campoeiro and Xanrozo, and heads into the town of **Abegondo**. The pilgrim then travels through Limiñón, crossing over the bridge, past the Church of San Esteban de Cos, taking the road leading to the village of Meangos. The Way winds
past houses and the nearby Church of Santiago de Meangos until it reaches Presedo bridge. After crossing this bridge the pilgrim arrives at the Church of Presedo. The Way continues through woodlands past the village of Leiro.

The English Way now heads in the direction of Francos, bringing pilgrims to Boucello, Villardel, site of the ancient and now abandoned Hermitage of San Paio, before continuing on to the Church of Santo Tomé de Vilacoba. Not far from here lies the village of Monte, where the Way takes travellers through the woods before coming to Fontela, Vizoño and A Malata. Eventually the pilgrims reach the spot marked as kilometre 42.702, where the two routes from Ferrol and the city of A Coruña converge.
The port of A Coruña was one of the destinations of the vessels packed with pilgrims originating from England and Flanders. These vessels were guided into the port by the Tower of Hercules, a Roman lighthouse dating from the 2nd century and built by the Lusitanian architect, Cayo Servio Lupo, who hailed from Aeminio (Coimbra). The lighthouse was restored in 1788 by the military engineer, Eustaquio Giannini.

This itinerary begins at the Church of Santiago, founded by King Alphonse IX in the early 13th century, and whose construction was begun by disciples of Master Mateo. The North porch depicts the image of the Lamb of God holding the archiepiscopal cross, sculpted around 1220-1225. The interior was renovated in the 14th century to create a single nave. The main façade boasts a 15th century Gothic porch with images of Saint James and Saint John on the jambs as well as a splendid rose window. The atrium was the venue of City Council meetings during the late Middle Ages. On the inside there are magnificent images of the Virgin de la Leche (1873) and Saint James (1791), both sculpted by José Ferreiro.

The Way now proceeds on to Puerta Real, not far from María Pita Square (1860-1912). The eclectic City Hall was built between 1908 and 1912 by Pedro Mariño. The route continues on to los Cantones, via the Avenida de la Marina, with its arcades and emblematic verandas (19th century). The route travels along Sánchez Bregua and Linares Rivas Streets until it arrives at Cuatro Caminos and continues down Fernández Latorre and Pérez Ardá Streets to the district of Eirís. The route coincides with the Camino Real de Castilla, leaving behind the borough of A Coruña, and entering Culleredo through the village of O Portazgo. The route follows the
sea promenade in O Burgo (former port of the Orden del Temple). Pilgrims will be able to admire the Romanic Church of Santiago and the Acea de Ama mills, originally built by the monks of Sobrado in the 12th century. It then carries on towards Alvedro. The Way runs down to the medieval bridge of A Xira, crossing the River Valiñas into the municipality of Cambre and passing through the parishes of Sigrás and Anceis. In Castro de Sigrás, it is possible to make out the outline of a Pre-Roman settlement, on whose slopes a pilgrim hospital was built. Also visible is the Romanesque Church of Santiago de Sigrás, altered in 1600. This church still preserves the medieval rectangular apse with a semicircular arch of triumph resting on half-columns and the nave walls with prismatic buttresses. The interior holds an image of Saint James in a seated position (17th century) and the Virgin of the Rosary by José Ferreiro (18th century).

It is worth taking the detour to the municipal capital to visit the Church of Santa María de Cambre, built in a Latin cross ground plan with three naves and an ambulatory, and finished ca. 1200. There is a “hydria from the marriage at Cana”, a jar which may have been brought from Jerusalem, possibly by a knight-templar from Santa María del Temple.

From here the Way heads towards Sobrecarreira and the 17th century manor house at Anceis, before crossing the northern section of the borough of Carral and the parish of San Martín de Tabeaio and the villages of Corpo Santo, Belvis, Sergude and Cañás. It then enters the municipality of Abegondo, passing the villages of San Xoán de Sarandóns, Desabanda, the parish church of Santa María de Sarandóns and O Rueiro before once again entering Carral, where it goes through O Peito and As Travesas. The Way continues through Mesón do Vento as far as kilometre 42.702, in the municipality of Mesía. The next stop on the Way is at Bruma, where remains of the former medieval pilgrims’ hospital can be seen, closely connected to the Hospital of Santiago.
From the Chapel of Bruma the route leads to the municipality of Ordes, passing through Seixo, Cabeza de Lobo, and crosses the parish of Ardemil to proceed to the villages of Carreira, Mámoas and Carballeira. After a stretch through the woodlands, the route reaches the village of A Rúa with its Church of San Paio de Buscás.

The pilgrim leaves the mill of Trabe behind and crosses the bridge of O Cubo and continues on to Outeiro de Abaixo. A tree-lined path brings the pilgrim to the Church of San Xiao de Poulo in Outeiro de Arriba.

The pilgrim travels through Senra and Calle, where there is a modest 16th century house that bears a plaque commemorating the visit of Philip II in 1554. The Way continues on to Carballo and the village of Casanova.
The Way crosses the bridge of Ponte Pereira, possibly of medieval origin, and penetrates into the woods leading to the village of Carrás. Along this stretch there are meadows with a myriad of springs, which, at times, render the route impassable. It then travels past the village of Baxoia to reach Sigüeiro, a town of medieval origin (12th century) and capital of the municipality of Oroso. Here the pilgrim must take the Calle Real to the bridge—also of medieval origin—over the Tambre River.
After crossing the Sigüeiro bridge over the Tambre, the pilgrim finds himself in the municipality of Santiago. The route runs parallel to the river and leads to the Church of Barciela, continuing on to the fountain known as the “Fonte do Inglés”. It skirts the industrial park of Tambre, going down the Vía Galileo and Rúa do Tambre. The Way soon reaches Meixonfrío, site of a former inn where pilgrims and travellers would stop to rest. Not far from this spot is the wayside cross called the “Cruceiro da Coruña” in the vicinity of which there stood a pre-Roman hill-fort and a roadside shrine, where, according to tradition, each passing pilgrim would lay a stone on the already existing pile.

The route enters the city centre of Santiago passing by the administration building of the Xunta de Galicia in San Caetano and the **monument to the pilgrim**, consisting of a moving image sculpted in bronze by José María Acuña. It continues along the streets of A Pastoriza, Basquiños and Santa Clara, leaving behind the monumental **Convent of Santa Clara**, whose Baroque façade was built in 1719 by Master Simón Rodriguez. This façade, with its interplay of volumes and chiaroscuro contrasts sharply with the austere lines of the Carmelite Convent, completed in 1792 according
to designs by Brother José de los Santos, and erected opposite the Convent of the Poor Clares.

Loureiros Street leads to the Porta da Pena, one of the ancient gates providing access to the walled city between the 12th and the 19th centuries. Shortly thereafter, the pilgrim comes to San Martiño Pinario Square, dominated by the façade of the monastic church (16th century). Nearby stands the Museo das Peregrinacions (Pilgrimage Museum) and the Church of San Miguel dos Agros (18 – 19th centuries). San Martiño Pinario is a huge historic and artistic complex (16 – 18th centuries), boasting magnificent Baroque and Neo-classical altarpieces in the church and a fine collection housed in a different rooms of the old monastery which may be visited by the public.

Now the route continues along the Rúa da Troia, site of the famous student boarding house immortalised in the novel, “La Casa de la Troya” by Pérez Lugín. This street later joins the Rúa da Acibechería, bringing the pilgrim face to face with the north façade of the Cathedral of Santiago.
After visiting the Cathedral, the place where pilgrims first arrive and meet, they can enjoy a tour of the city of Santiago in all its historic splendour, taking in the diversity and dynamic appearance it offers today.

The modern-day city of Santiago de Compostela evolved from a small settlement of monks who were the custodians of the tomb of the Apostle at the time of its discovery, around the year 820. The city underwent spectacular development during the Middle Ages, thanks to the popularity of pilgrimages in Europe, which made it, along with Jerusalem and Rome, one of the three great centres of the Christian world.

Between the 15th and the 19th centuries, the city alternated between prosperity and decadence, in keeping with the fluctuating pulse of the history of Galicia, Spain and Europe. Pilgrimages became less and less important, but Santiago consolidated its position as a centre of culture, learning and spirituality thanks to the founding of the University and the city’s Renaissance and Baroque heritage, mirrored in most of its major historical monuments and buildings.

In the Cathedral

The Cathedral of Santiago, whose construction began in the year 1075, is one of the great European monuments from both an artistic and symbolic standpoint. From its Romanesque origins, it evolved through a number of styles, although the Baroque elements are perhaps the most outstanding, culminating in the façade of O Obradoiro (1738-1750). A tour of the naves and its Museum reveals an interesting and varied heritage both in content and significance.

During his visit to the cathedral and surroundings, the pilgrim usually carries out a ritual that takes him to the chapel of the main altar, in keeping with the tradition, to ‘embrace’ the Apostle Saint James—a sculpture of Romanesque origin—and next, to visit the crypt where his remains are buried. A visit to the Portico of Glory is also part of the ritual, as is attending the pilgrims’ mass at 12 noon, where the swinging of the botafumeiro, hanging high up in the nave of the transept surprises and delights the visitor.

After his visit to the Cathedral, if the pilgrim has all the required credentials justifying his pilgrimage, on foot, on horseback or by bicycle, he may go to the Pilgrims’ Office to ask for the compostela, the document accrediting his pilgrimage, which is granted by the Cathedral Chapter. From this moment on, the city of Santiago de Compostela belongs to the pilgrim to enjoy and to treasure.
The historic city

Santiago has enjoyed steady growth since the mid 20th century. In addition to the gradual rebirth of the pilgrimages, which keep its traditional spiritual significance alive, the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago has become a growing tourist and cultural attraction.

In recent years, Santiago, the administrative capital of the autonomous region of Galicia, has seen the construction of a number of important cultural and tourist infrastructures and it has succeeded in projecting an international image as a European oriented historic and cultural centre. Proof of this are the thousands of visitors that flock to the city every day throughout the year.

Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, Santiago is anxious to maintain its thousand year old tradition of harmony, spirituality and progress through the historic tradition of its Pilgrims’ Way.
1 Cathedral-Holy Door- Xelmírez Palace
2 Raxoi Palace
3 Reis Católicos Hotel
4 College of San Xerome
5 Church of San Fructuoso
6 Fonseca College
7 Cabildo House
8 Conga House
9 Parra House
10 Convent of San Paio de Antealtares
11 Monastery of San Martiño Pinario
12 Church of San Martiño Pinario
13 The Dean’s House. Pilgrims’ Office
14 Vaamonde Palace
15 Bendaña Palace
16 Church of Santa María Salomé
17 Convent of San Francisco
18 Convent of Carme
19 Convent of Santa Clara
20 Church and former hospital of San Roque
21 Gothic House. Pilgrimage Museum
22 San Domingos de Bonaval. Museum of the Galician People
23 Galician Centre of Modern Art
24 Faculty of History and Geography
25 University Church
26 Church of San Fiz de Solovio
27 Convent and Church of the Mercedarian Mothers
28 School of As Orfas
29 Church of San Miguel dos Agros
30 Church of Santa María do Camiño
31 Church of San Bieito do Campo
32 Convent of Santo Agostiño
33 San Clemente College
34 General Chapel of Ánimas
35 Chapel of Santiago
36 Church of El Pilar
37 The Collegiate Church of Santa María a Real de Sar

Camiño Inglés
Map of Santiago’s historic centre
One of the most striking characteristics of the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago is the hospitality offered. From the very beginning of the pilgrimages to Santiago, there have been religious, political and social institutions and organisations, as well as a myriad of anonymous people whose primary goal was to serve the pilgrim.

Modern-day pilgrims also enjoy these privileges, which go hand in hand with the historical significance of the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago. The Galician public network of pilgrims’ hostels, which are found all along the Galician itineraries, and in many cases, in important historic buildings, came into being in the early 1990s, in keeping with the traditional vocation of providing pilgrims with help and assistance.

This public network of accommodation is free-of-charge and the regulations governing the system stipulate that they are to be used first by pilgrims travelling the Way on foot, and secondly by those travelling on horseback and bicycle. Reservations are not permitted and the beds may not be booked ahead and are given out on a first come, first served basis for a one night stay only.

However, pilgrims and other travellers have a range of alternative accommodation options. There are a number of religious and municipal centres also serving the pilgrim, especially during busier periods. In recent times a wide-range of modern hotels and rural tourism establishments has cropped up along the different routes which have added to the diversity of the services and attractions to be found along the Way.
Neda
- Newly constructed building*
- O Empedrón, s/n. Neda
- 28 beds
- Parking spaces for bicycles
- Distance from next hostel: 23 km (Miño)

Miño
- Newly constructed building*
- As Marismas, s/n. Miño
- 22 beds
- Parking spaces for bicycles
- Distance from next hostel: 38 km (Bruma, Mesía)

Bruma
- Rehabilitated country house*
- Hospital de Bruma, s/n. Mesía
- 22 beds
- 10 parking spaces for bicycles
- Stabling for 6 horses
- Distance from next hostel: 43 km (Monte do Gozo, Santiago de Compostela)

Monte do Gozo
- Newly constructed complex*
- Monte do Gozo
- Santiago de Compostela
- 800 free beds
- 1,968 paying beds
- 100 parking spaces for bicycles

San Lázaro (pilgrim’s hostel)
- Purpose built construction*
- San Lázaro, s/n
- Santiago de Compostela
- 80 paying beds
- Parking for bicycles

* Accommodation with disabled and special needs facilities.
Town Councils

Route starting from the city of Ferrol

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Tel.: + 34 981-336700
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Betanzos
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Route starting from the city of A Coruña

Abegondo
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A Coruña
Pza. María Pita, 1
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Services
Emergency Service

Medical emergencies
061

Emergencies
(general, free of charge and international)
112

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The discovery of the Tomb of the Apostle Saint James the Greater at the beginning of the 9th century soon brought about a stream of travellers making the pilgrimage to the site, which is today the Galician city of Santiago de Compostela. This vast influx of pilgrims from all over Europe led to the creation of a network of itineraries, known collectively as the Camino de Santiago or the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago.

The heyday of the pilgrimages took place between the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries with the granting of specific spiritual indulgences. This trend, however, has endured to a greater or lesser extent over the course of the centuries. Since the mid 20th century the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago has been experiencing an international rebirth, which combines its spiritual and socio-cultural tradition with its tourist appeal, and once again it has become a melting pot for all types of peoples and cultures.

Traditionally the Pilgrims’ Ways are at their busiest during the Holy Years, held at intervals of 6, 5, 6, and 11 years –the next will be in 2010–, but any time is ideal for following the Way towards its ultimate goal: the city of Santiago de Compostela.
Throughout its twelve hundred year history, the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago has given rise to an extraordinary spiritual, cultural and social vitality. Thanks to the existence of the Way, the first network of assistance in Europe came into being and monasteries, cathedrals and new urban centres were founded.

A new culture was born from the convergence of peoples of diverse backgrounds, based on the free exchange of ideas, artistic and social trends, in addition to a socio-economic driving force which boosted the development of a number of areas in Europe, especially during the Middle Ages. The mark left by the Way and by the pilgrims on the city of Santiago de Compostela can be clearly seen from an endless number of public and private testimonies, in the different art forms, and also, for example, in the publication of over one thousand books worldwide, which in recent decades have extolled the virtues of this Way, a work of art and the heritage of all Europeans.

The main routes of the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago were declared the First European Cultural Itinerary (1987) by the Council of Europe and a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in the stretches travelling across Spain and France (1993 and 1998, respectively). In 2004 it also received the Prince of Asturias Award for Harmony from the Prince of Asturias Foundation.
According to ancient legend, the Iberian Peninsula formed part of the lands where the Apostle Saint James preached Christianity. After he was beheaded in 44 AD, tradition says that his disciples took the body of the saint by boat to Galicia, one of the Spanish lands he preached in.

The difficult times during the early years of Christianity and the fact that most of the northern part of the peninsula was sparsely populated would have meant that the exact location of the burial site would have fallen into oblivion. However, around the year 820 remains were found which were attributed by the ecclesiastic and civil authorities to be those of Saint James the Greater. This event, which took place in remote Galician woodland, would give rise to the founding of the present day city of Santiago de Compostela.

Santiago became the attractive goal of a pilgrimage that would, over the centuries, lead pilgrims from all walks of life and via the most diverse itineraries, to the tomb of the only apostle of Jesus, along with Saint Peter in Rome, who is buried on European soil.
The diverse origins of these pilgrims gave rise to a total of six European ways leading to Galicia.

The busiest and most important itinerary from a socio-economic, artistic and cultural view, is the route known as the French Way, which enters Spain across the Pyrenees and Galicia via the mythical hills of O Cebreiro.

However, there are five other itineraries that have also earned a place for themselves in the history of the pilgrimages to Santiago.
They are the **Original** and **North Ways**, of great importance in the early pilgrimage days, with two major routes that enter Galicia via Asturias, from the Basque Country and Cantabria; the **English Way**, followed particularly by pilgrims, who from northern Europe and the British Isles arrived at ports such as A Coruña and Ferrol; the **Portuguese Way**, which was used by pilgrims travelling from Portugal up through Galicia’s south-western region; and the **Southeast Way**, used by pilgrims who, on their way to Santiago from the south and centre of the Peninsula, followed the popular Vía de la Plata, between Mérida and Astorga, continuing on into the territory of Ourense to Santiago de Compostela.
There are two other routes whose symbolism is believed to be closely linked to the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago: the Fisterra-Muxía Way, used by a number of medieval pilgrims, who after worshipping at the tomb of the apostle, were enticed to undertake the journey to Cape Finisterre, the westernmost point on earth known at the time; and the route known as the Route of the Sea of Arousa and the River Ulla, recalling the itinerary, which according to tradition, was taken by the boat bearing the mortal remains of the Apostle to Galicia (1st century).
Die Jakobus-Pilgerwege in Galicien

Der Englische Pilgerweg