

Useful Phone Apps

- Alert Cop – a Spanish Police app to help keep you safe.
- Rome 2 Rio – give you travel options on getting from A to B

Web Links

Online Maps and Guides mostly in Spanish but with good maps.

- Gronze www.gronze.com
- Mundicamino www.mundicamino.com
- Eroski caminodesantiago.consumer.es

Guide Books

- Findhorn Press: John Brierley guides for the Camino Francés & Portugués, Ingles and Finisterre to Muxia.
 - Cicerone: Northern Caminos (including Del Norte and Primitivo).
 - Wise Pilgrim : for Camino Del Norte.
 - Miam Miam Dodo for Camino in France.
- There are numerous guidebooks available, these are the most popular..

Camino Forums

This is the main forum: www.caminodesantiago.me

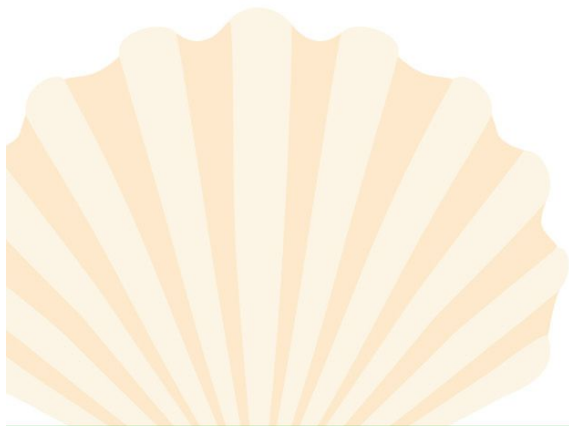
A newer forum: www.urcamino.com

Blogs

- johnniewalker-santiago.blogspot
- agoodwalkunspoiled.blogspot
- clearskiescamino.com
- stingynomads.com/camino-de-santiago/

Watch

- The Camino Voyage movie.
- The movie "The Way" with Martin Sheen.
- Youtube Bray Coastal Celtic Camino and lots of Camino clips.



Become a Member Today

Membership of the Society offers the opportunity to stay connected with the Camino and to "give something back". The Society arranges events and activities during the year.

Membership Benefits

Members can also enjoy:

- Organised Walks - led by experienced mountaineers and veteran pilgrims, we walk ancient pilgrim routes and scenic hiking routes across Ireland, typically on a monthly basis.
- Discount in a number of outdoor stores.

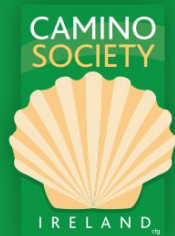
Giving Back and Supporting:

- Volunteer
- In the Camino Information Centre located in St James's Church on James's Street in Dublin 8.
- At one of our information events around the country.
- In Spain – as a member you can represent the Camino Society Ireland as a volunteer. This is sure to be a unique once in a lifetime experience..
- Pilgrim Office Volunteer in Santiago
- As a Hospitalero – in one of the pilgrim hostels.

You will be supporting:

- Camino Companions in Santiago – Facebook: Camino Companions
- Less-privileged pilgrims in need.

www.caminosociety.ie



Camino Society Ireland clg
36 Upper Baggot Street, Dublin 4, Ireland
T: 085 781 9088
e: info@caminosociety.ie
w: caminosociety.ie

AN INTRODUCTION TO



El Camino de Santiago

Information to get you on *Your Way!*



w: caminosociety.ie

Camino Society Ireland

The Camino Society Ireland provide information and not advice, as such this document is intended only as a conversation.

The Society is a voluntary organisation, founded in 1992 by returned pilgrims to 'give something back' to the Camino and to future pilgrims. It fosters an understanding and appreciation of the Camino's related history, art, architecture and music. It issues the only Official Irish Pilgrim Passport and offers an opportunity to all those interested in the Camino to meet and share practical information and experiences. Support the Society and become a member via our website.

The Camino de Santiago

The **Way of St. James**, commonly known as **The Camino** or **El Camino de Santiago** (in Spanish) is the name of any of the pilgrimage routes to the shrine of the apostle St. James the Great in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain. In 2018 over 300,000 people walked to the Cathedral in Santiago which is the burial place of Saint James the Apostle. Walking pilgrims take many routes following in the footsteps of pilgrims of the Middle Ages. The most famous route is the **Camino Francés** a journey of c. 800km from the border of France and Spain to Santiago de Compostela.

The **French Way (Camino Francés)**. Historically, most of the pilgrims came from France, from Paris, Vézelay, Le Puy, and Arles and Saint Gilles. The Spanish consider the Pyrenees a starting point. Common starting points are **Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port** or Somport on the French side of the Pyrenees and Roncesvalles on the Spanish side. (The distance from Roncesvalles to Santiago de Compostela through León is c. 775km.)

The most popular starting point for modern day pilgrims is Sarria, 118km from Santiago on the **Camino Francés**, 100km being the requisite distance to be awarded a *Compostela*. Almost 50% of the pilgrims arriving in Santiago start in Sarria making it, by far, the busiest section of all the Caminos.

The second most popular route is the **Camino Portugués**, the **Portuguese Way**, which starts either at the Cathedral in Lisbon (for a total of about 616 km) or at the cathedral in Porto in the north of Portugal (for a total of about 240 km), crossing into Galicia at Valença/Tui.

Some pilgrims start from even further away, though their routes will often pass through one of those four French towns. Some Europeans begin their pilgrimage on foot from the very doorstep of their homes, just as their medieval counterparts did.



Where do you get Information?

If you are contemplating walking the Camino, visit us in our Information Centre at St James's Church on James's Street Dublin 8 or come along to one of the Information Events that we hold in various cities and towns in the 32 counties. Check our website for news of these Information Events and our Information Centre hours.

If these are not viable options for you we suggest you **talk to an experienced Pilgrim**, one that you trust or is recommended to you by a friend. It's much better to learn by others' mistakes! And besides that there is a massive amount of information (and advice) to be found on the www. But beware: listen carefully, if you think you are getting bad advice, you probably are. Most of it is common sense. How far you walk, how much you carry, where you sleep, is down to each individual's personal preferences.

Looking after your body and in particular your feet, is critical to everyone who wants to have a successful Camino. Invest in proper footwear, socks and shoes(boots), go to a specialist outdoor adventure store.

Travel Options

There are a number of different options for you to consider. The traditional way to make the pilgrimage is for pilgrims to walk and carry all they need with them. However these days many pilgrims choose other options. Everyone is entitled to do their Camino their way.

Guided or self guided walks

Perhaps you prefer not to rough it and walk alone for weeks carrying everything on your back. You might choose to book all your accommodation ahead of time and have your backpack transferred each day. If you are unable to carry a heavy backpack – or are unable to walk very long distances over difficult terrain – you can still do the Camino by having your pack transported by taxi or transport services on most of the Camino routes. See the paragraph on "Luggage Transfer" elsewhere in this document.

Make your own travel arrangements

This is the most popular option but not mandatory by any means. This usually means you book your own flight, stay in hostels (albergues) or small hotels. You can carry your own rucksack or you can get it transferred to your next stop for a small fee.

Travel with a Charity

In this case, the charity will usually make all the travel and accommodation arrangements.



Getting there

Flights from Ireland are available for all or part of the year to **Biarritz** (St-Jean-Pied-de-Port or Irun), **Bilbao & Santander** (Camino del Norte & Primitivo), Santiago de Compostela (Sarria, Tui or Ferrol), **Porto** or **Lisbon** (for Camino Portugués), **Lyon**, France (Le Puy). **Seville** (Via de la Plata). **Madrid** and bus or train. There are many ways to get to your starting point, and more than likely, the last leg will mean getting a train, bus or taxi.

*Flight Schedules and Spanish airport destinations are subject to change.



Travel within Spain

Spain's network of train and bus services is one of the best in Europe and there aren't many places that can't be reached using one or the other. By European standards, prices are relatively cheap. Spain is crisscrossed with a comprehensive network of rail lines on RENFE the national rail line. The RENFE website is easy to use.

Almost every bus schedule in Spain is available on the **Movelía** website (www.movelía.es). Main Bus Companies in Spain, all with nationwide services, and English-language version websites.

- ALSA bus (alsa.es)
- Monbus (monbus.es)
- Avanzabus (avanzabus.com)
- The international Rome2Rio phone or browser App is a great way to research your travel options.

Biarritz Airport to St-Jean-Pied-de-Port

Taxi services

- www.expressbourricot.com/en/
- www.biarritzairporttransfers.com

It's cheaper to share the taxi if you can find other pilgrims...you can book these online or look out for other pilgrims on your flight.

You can also get a local bus from Biarritz to Bayonne and from there a train to St Jean..

Santiago Airport to Sarria

To get to Sarria from Santiago airport get a bus to Lugo (about 2 hours) and another bus from the same Bus Station in Lugo to Sarria (30 minutes).

Where do I Stay? Accommodation

In Spain, France, and Portugal, pilgrims'hostels have beds in dormitories all along the common routes. They provide overnight accommodation for pilgrims who hold a pilgrim passport (credencial see below). In Spain this type of accommodation is called a refugio or albergue, both of which are similar to youth hostels or hostelerías in the French system of gîtes d'étape.

Staying at pilgrims'hostels(albergues) usually costs between €6 and €15 per night per bed, although a few hostels known as donativos operate on voluntary donations. (Municipal Albergues cost €6, while private Albergues generally cost between €10 and €15 per night). Pilgrims are usually limited to one night's accommodation and are expected to leave by eight in the morning to continue their pilgrimage.

Pilgrims can stay in whatever accommodation they wish, 5 star Parador Hotels, Hostels, Albergues or just camp under the stars. Only private Albergues may be booked in advance.

Luggage Transfer

For pilgrims who who are unable to carry their own luggage, transfer services exist which charge from €4/€5 per day to pick up luggage at one accommodation and deliver to the next. The service is available at most private albergues or hotels and can be reserved in advance. Remember that you should still have water, snacks and a medical kit with you while you walk. Here are details of some of the companies that provide the service:

www.elcaminoconcorreos.com

www.caminofacil.com

www.jacotrans.com

Credencial del Peregrino and the Compostela

The Credencial or **Pilgrim's Passport** will give you access to the organised system of pilgrim accommodation in France and Spain. You can obtain this document from the **Camino Society Ireland** or from the first albergue you stay in. It is also available from some churches, Cathedrals or tourism offices in Spain. When you register at the albergue, you will receive a stamp (sello) in your passport and this is often a souvenir of your pilgrimage with delightful stamps from all the different places you've stayed in. Stamps can also be obtained in churches, cafes, bars, hotels, tourist offices and so forth. You will need to present the stamped credencial at the Pilgrim's Office in Santiago in order to earn the **Compostela**, a certificate of completion given to all pilgrims who walk the last 100km or cycle the last 200km to Santiago. Once you have gained your Compostela you might want to get your name included in the Irish Book of Pilgrims...

check www.caminosociety.ie for details on how to do this.

NB: Buying the unique **Irish Pilgrim's Passport** helps fund the **Camino Society Ireland**, who in turn provide information (like this document) and support for all Irish Pilgrims. For more information on how to join the **Camino Society Ireland** and how to obtain a pilgrim passport (credencial), visit the website here: www.caminosociety.ie

Pilgrims' Mass

Each morning around 11am people start to make their way to the Cathedral. It fills quickly and by noon, at busy times of the year, it is standing room only. At the stroke of noon the cantor intones the entrance antiphon such as "*Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*" and to the sound of the great organ 1000 voices repeat, "All people praise the Lord". The procession enters. Many of the priests are still wearing their walking boots under their vestments. A long list of the countries from which pilgrims have arrived in the last 24 hours is read. The Mass which follows is deeply moving, with different accents and languages contributing. For the pilgrims there is a profound sense of gratitude, relief and celebration that the journey has ended.

NB: For security concerns, pilgrims are not permitted to enter the Cathedral with rucksacks. There are several left luggage (consigna) facilities nearby and at the **Pilgrims Office**, in the post office (Oficina de Correos, 4 Rúa do Franco) and in **Keepiz Lockers** (see keepiz.com)

The Botafumeiro – Holy Smoke!

The *Botafumeiro* (literally "smoke spreader" in Galician) is one of the most famous and popular symbols of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. This is a huge censer that swings across the transept of the Cathedral through a pulley system pulled by eight men called tiraboleiros. It weighs 53 kgs and measures five feet in height. It is suspended from a height of 20 metres and can reach a speed of 70 miles per hour.



The Celtic Camino

The Cathedral of Santiago has agreed to grant a Compostela to pilgrims who complete the 75km Camino Ingles route from A Coruña to Santiago, as long as they have already completed a certified 25km pilgrimage in their country of origin. A Coruña has many historical links to Ireland, including being the main port of disembarkation for Irish pilgrims in medieval times.

This provides Irish pilgrims with a great opportunity to do part of the Camino at home before starting Camino Ingles in A Coruña.

Check out www.caminosociety.ie/celtic-camino for suggested routes and further information.

How much should you budget for the Camino?

Pilgrims who need to watch every cent can do the Camino on a daily budget of about €15/€20. This will mean staying in the 'donativo' albergues – and giving a donation of about €5 to €10 (*please*, give a donation if you can!): not eating in restaurants or cafe-bars: buying wine, beer or cold drinks in supermercados or markets: preparing your own food in the albergues or eating mainly bread and pasta for a month.

If you don't want to stay in the albergues, prefer to eat in restaurants, and can afford hotels, visits to the museums and Cathedrals – your pilgrimage could cost about €100 a day: €3 for breakfast: €5–€10 for lunch: €10–€15 for dinner: €30–45 for a hotel room: plus extras such as wines, beers, cold drinks, sweets, museum and Cathedral entry fees. For a middle-of-the-road traveller daily expenditure will include the cost of a bed, breakfast, lunch, dinner, drinks: the cost of washing and drying clothes in some shelters. They estimate an average cost of €30 to €40 a day.

Many small cafe-bars, grocery shops, markets, small hostals and all albergues do not accept credit cards so you will need sufficient cash available to pay for these. Most villages and towns have ATMs.

Sleeping Bags

Even though you will be sleeping indoors in a bed or bunk-bed, if you are planning on staying in the pilgrim shelters you will need either a sleeping bag or a sleeping bag liner. Most pilgrim hostel owners insist that you have a 'sack' of some description. Some shelters don't have blankets. Albergues and monasteries in high places can be chilly at night so you will need a sleeping bag for colder times of the year, but a sleeping bag liner will suffice for the warm, summer months.

Backpacks

Most Camino pilgrims only need a small pack to carry their clothing and toiletries. Unless you are planning on camping along the way you do not need a heavy duty, steel framed or military-type backpack. The guideline is to carry no more than 10% of your bodyweight.

Travel Insurance

Is always advisable and make sure you bring your European Health Insurance Card, EHIC, (formerly the E111), it gives you access to reduced cost medical treatment.

Camino Holy Year

Whenever St. James's Day (25 July) falls on a Sunday, the cathedral of Santiago declares a Holy or Jubilee Year. The next Holy Year is 2021, when pilgrim numbers usually increase significantly!

Things to know about walking the Camino

- Money: Small café-bars and village shops don't accept credit cards. ATMs work well in most large towns and cities.
- Make copies of all your documents and email them to yourself.
- You will not be allowed to take your walking pole home as hand luggage.
- Almost every pilgrim refuge is staffed by volunteers for the sole support of pilgrims from all over the world.
- Refuges are not a right but a privilege and should be treated as such.
- "Donativo" does not mean free - give a generous donativo soon after you arrive, so you don't forget.
- Some refuges only open in May and close again in November.
- Sleeping bags or liners are essential. Most refuges have blankets but they insist that pilgrims have their own 'sacks'. In summer a sleep liner will do and a lightweight sleeping bag in winter.
- "Will I find a bed in May, June, July, August etc?" It is first come, first served. When you reach a refuge you secure a place by placing your pack outside the door. Some refuges only open after 2pm so you might have a long wait if you get there early. Once inside, you secure a bed by rolling your sleeping-bag out on the bed. In Galicia some refuges do not accept pilgrims who have walked less than 20km. Most refuges vacate at 8h00 - 8h30.
- The bed closest to the bathroom is the noisiest!
- Only a few refuges offer basic food - usually dinner and perhaps bread and coffee for breakfast. Pilgrim Menus are offered in most villages and towns. You can buy food in supermarkets to cook in the refuges. Most refuges have electricity but they don't all have kitchens or utensils.
- Washing clothes: Take 8 Plastic pegs and a 2m-nylon cord to use as a wash line. Useful when it rains and you can string it across the bars of the bunk beds. Take 8 large safety pins to pin damp clothing onto the backpack so that it can dry during the day whilst walking.
- Take toilet paper. Remove the inner tube & flatten it. Most Albergues run out so be prepared.
- Post Offices in Spain: Most are open from 8:30 - 20:30 on working days and 09:30 - 14:00 on Saturdays. Parcels sent ahead will take 3 - 5 working days. Charges are ± €5 for up to 2kg to €12 for up to 20kgs.

Pilgrim and Albergue Etiquette

- Learn a little of the language before you go - especially the 'polite' words of greeting, please and thank you. You will be a guest in a foreign land so don't expect them to know your language.
- YOU are the foreigner so do not criticize the people, their way of life, their food, their religion etc.
- A bed in a church or municipal refuge is a privilege not a right and should be treated as such. Give a generous donation; be gracious and helpful to the hospitalero and other pilgrims.
- Use water sparingly and mop out the shower after using it.
- Put phones and alarms on vibrate or turn them off at night, do not disturb or wake up your fellow pilgrims.
- When leaving or walking through a village very early in the morning, do so quietly. i.e. soft voices, carrying those clicking sticks aloft.



- Do NOT litter!
- Do NOT pick the farmers crop!
- Be a good ambassador for Ireland.
- Find out what time the doors close, and be back in the albergue by then.
- If you plan to leave early, prepare your things the night before, to minimize the racket. Rattling plastic liner bags or shining your headlights around the room is bad manners.
- If you are able-bodied and have a lower bunk, and an elderly or obviously suffering pilgrim arrives, give them your lower and take the upper.
- Don't prance around the albergue in your skivvies.
- Don't leave your litter on the floor. Wash up what you dirty. Clean up after yourself.
- Take short showers to save a little water for later arrivals.

- Use just one bunk. The surrounding bunks are not your clothes line.
- The chair is there for everyone to sit on. It is not yours for pack storage just because you got there first.
- The space under the bunk generally is shared by both occupants. Save half for the other pilgrim.
- Wear earplugs so the unavoidable disturbances by others will not drive you to distraction.
- No alarm clocks that others can hear.
- Don't put your backpack on the bed, it's been put down on the floor, in bars, on the street, in fields, near fountains etc.

*Thanks to all the wonderful people who contributed to this document.
Thanks to Wise Pilgrim Guides for the use of their map.*