2 from LÉON to SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA 300kms

Camino Journeys - Spain

INFORMATION, MAPS, ITINERARIES, PLACES TO VISIT
CAMINO JOURNEYS
An Illustrated Guide
PART 2: From Léon to Santiago de Compostela

An introduction to the Camino.
We walk 300 km of the ancient pilgrim’s path in Spain.

Almis Simans
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INTRODUCTION: CAMINO JOURNEYS: An Illustrated Guide

A walking journey from Léon to Santiago de Compostela

Why This Book Was Written

This book is our invitation to you to join our team on a journey along the Camino to Santiago de Compostela in North Western Spain.

This illustrated guide will help you familiarize yourself with the historical and cultural aspects of this historic pilgrim path. We begin in the ancient city of Léon, and make our way both on foot and occasionally by public transport through towns and villages such as Hospital Órbigo, Astorga, El Acebo, Ponferrada and O Cebreiro before arriving in Santiago de Compostela.

We will look at what to pack and the clothes and footwear to make your journey as comfortable as possible.

Even if you aren’t planning to walk the Camino yet, this guide will show you what’s it’s like to be on one of the world’s Great Walks.

Good walking!    Almis Simans
Travelling the Road to Santiago de Compostela, where the remains of St James are said to be buried, is one of the oldest and most interesting journeys in Europe. Pilgrims on the road to Compostela are as taken with the journey as with the destination. These days, going on pilgrimage is a unique and challenging opportunity to depart from our usual lifestyles and experience the world beyond the horizon.

Walking gives us the chance to slow down, to appreciate the world through which we normally race. The physiological benefits of long distance walking are many, including an increased sense of well-being. Pilgrimage also gives us the opportunity to participate in an ancient religious and spiritual tradition.

Throughout history, from all over Europe, pilgrims have walked to the saint’s tomb at Santiago de Compostela, passing by and stopping at shrines along the way. As well as the famous clergy and rulers who journeyed to Santiago, there were many simple folk who managed to obtain the money and the energy to undertake this perilous route.

This section of the Santiago pilgrimage begins in the historic city of Léon and covers a total distance of 310km to Santiago de Compostela, a classic medieval city with its cathedral as its focus. Once in Santiago there are a number of rituals to perform before we can say we have walked the Camino.
The Camino: from Léon to Santiago de Compostela
# ITINERARY OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Arrive in Léon, Spain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explore Léon and obtain Pilgrim Passport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Walk to Villadangos del Paramo</td>
<td>20km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Walk to Hospital de Órbigo</td>
<td>15km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Walk to Astorga</td>
<td>17km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Walk to Rabanal del Camino</td>
<td>18km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Walk to El Acebo</td>
<td>16km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Walk to Ponferrada</td>
<td>18km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Walk to Villafranca del Bierzo</td>
<td>25km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Walk to O Cebreiro (&amp;taxi)</td>
<td>15km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Walk to Triacastela</td>
<td>23km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Walk to Sarria</td>
<td>25km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Walk to Portomarín</td>
<td>25km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Walk to Palas de Rei</td>
<td>24km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Walk to Arzua (&amp;taxi)</td>
<td>15km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Walk to Lavacolla (&amp;taxi)</td>
<td>19km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Walk to Santiago de Compostela</td>
<td>14km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Explore Santiago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Explore Santiago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Return to Madrid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## MAPS FOR THE JOURNEY:

Although the Camino is well marked, having a map and compass is always a good idea.

We used the book of maps published by Pili Pala Press. It’s small and concise and makes checking on progress easy.
His local bishop issued him with pilgrim’s clothes, consisting of a long dress of rough texture and dark colour, a leather bag hung at the waist to hold food and money, a wide-brimmed hat to prevent sunburn and finally a stout staff with a metal point. The staff represented Faith, the dress, Hope and the bag, Charity. The pilgrim was told that to receive indulgences (remission of sins) he had to visit the great cathedral on his arrival in Santiago and hug the apostle.

The pilgrim would be issued with a pilgrim’s passport, a document which would allow access to the hospitality of churches and monasteries along the way. The bishop then blessed him against the perils of the voyage and the temptations of the devil. Together with others the newly blessed pilgrim would set out on the journey of a lifetime.

We would continue this historic tradition in a slightly altered format – we would collect our pilgrim stamps as we walked along the Camino for final acknowledgement at the Pilgrim Office in Santiago.
DAY 3: LÉON TO VILLADANGOS 20 KM

Route: Léon to Villadangos del Paramo
Well, it was time to set off. It turned out to be a rainy day, so we put on our Gore-Tex-type coats and trousers. We left our main bags in the lobby for the luggage transport service and walked out into the rain.

Because we hadn't paid it much attention yesterday, we decided to have a closer look at the Puerta del Perdón at San Isidoro before leaving Léon. Above the actual door were some interesting stone carvings, now quite weathered. This is the first ‘Door of Forgiveness' on the Camino.

Leaving Plaza Isidoro, we followed the scallop shell signs and yellow arrows through the streets to the Parador San Marcos. Nenad suddenly remembered that he had left his fleece in the cupboard back at Boccalino and hurriedly returned to retrieve it. Meanwhile we decided to wait in the luxurious lobby of San Marcos, out of the rain.
Camino profile: Léon to O Cebreiro – with thanks to www.Godesalco.com
The warm day was verging on becoming hot. From time to time we would spread out along the path.
We left the alberge and walked along the main road, past new and old habitations. Still it remained an interesting hamlet. And only one white dog was to be found. We walked out of Foncebadón and back into the wild pass.
From Manjarin we continued walking in the mist and rain. Sometimes the mist lifted, giving us glorious views of the surrounding mountains. This was wild, remote country.

It was good to sometimes just stop and appreciate the surroundings. The moderate wind and occasional showers evoked a romantic, yet sobering effect.

There was a fairly level section through clumps of heather and broom before we descended quite steeply to the wonderful village of El Acebo.

The road was paved and relatively easy to walk on.

At the entrance to the village stood the tiny refugio we had stayed at years ago. I marveled at its compactness. How ten pilgrims with packs could have comfortably fitted into that one room was still a marvel.

I don’t think El Acebo had changed much over those years, still a lovely place.
Rosemary noticed a handwritten sign on the bar, “limonada casera” - homemade lemonade. Sounded perfect, so she ordered one. The woman at the bar seemed a little surprised, and asked Rosemary if that’s what she really wanted.

It was Rosemary’s turn to be surprised when the woman took a bottle of dark red liquor off the shelf and poured her a large glass. It wasn’t bad, and tasted of berries, but was definitely alcoholic – not what she’d had in mind for the middle of the day!
Pilgrim passport with stamps
CLOTHES FOR THE CAMINO:

So what did we wear? Firstly no cotton clothing, as it holds moisture (perspiration) and takes a long time to dry. We followed the principle of layered clothing: close to the skin – a T shirt or shirt, mostly synthetic, may contain a little wool or cotton for smoothness; layer two can be a vest or shirt with shorts or travel trousers. Then an outer shell jacket made from a breathable material such as Goretex. Same for the overpants. Also a broad brimmed Goretex hat for the sun and the rain. It all worked well.