



ADVENTURES
in good company



ON THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

Trip Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Walking hotel to hotel with no transfers, so you have the satisfaction of covering the entire distance
- Learning the history and practicing the traditions of the Road
- Receiving your Pilgrim passport at the beginning and the Compostela certificate at the end
- Enjoying the local food: hearty "caldo gallego" soup, almond cake, cheese, octopus, and empanadas and tasting the regional white wines

Phone: 877-439-4042

Outside the US: 970-833-3132

Email: info@goodadventure.com

TRIP AT A GLANCE

Location:	Madrid, Spain
Activities:	Hiking
Arrive:	Arrive at our trip hotel anytime before 5 p.m. on Day 1
Depart:	Our trip ends after breakfast in Santiago de Compostela on the last day

Trip Overview

The Road of Saint James (El Camino de Santiago) has many traditions. In addition to being a pilgrimage route for Christians wanting to visit the tomb of Saint James, many experts believe that pre-Christian people traveled it into the setting sun to the "end of the earth". There are also Celtic traditions, Goddess traditions, even traditions having to do with the lost city of Atlantis. This intertwining of traditions is one of the most interesting aspects of the Road: there is something there for almost everyone, but not always what people expect at the outset of their journey. Pilgrimage lore says that while a pilgrimage of any sort is by nature an intensely personal experience, the best way to complete this journey is in a small group of like-minded people. The year 2021 is a holy year on the Camino. A Holy Year means that Saint James Day, July 25, falls on a Sunday. It is the only time that the Door of Mercy (also known as the Porta Santa) is available to enter the cathedral through. There are additional cultural activities and celebrations along the way. Maximum group size: 10

Rating

This trip is designed for women who are interested in traveling a traditional pilgrimage route on foot, who are able to enjoy walking four to six hours each day on consecutive days and want to experience the community of the Camino de Santiago. No previous hiking experience is required. The trip is rated 3. Prior to beginning the trip, participants should be engaging in aerobic conditioning, such as walking vigorously up hills, jogging, cross country skiing or stair stepping for 30 - 45 minutes at least 3 - 4 times a week. **Rating:** 1 2 **[3]** 4 5.

What's Included

- A local English-speaking guide and an Adventures in Good Company guide (If there are fewer than 8 on the trip, there will not be an AGC guide)
- Nine nights lodging in twin/double rooms with private toilet and shower
- All dinners (except 1) and breakfasts from dinner on the first night to breakfast on last night
- Your Pilgrim passport and shell
- Luggage transfer during the walk
- Public transportation from Madrid to Ponferrada

Not included: Travel to and from Madrid, transportation from Santiago back to Madrid at the end of the trip, guide gratuities, beverages, 1 dinner, lunches and travel insurance. Most lunches will be at cafes where you can order an empanada/sandwich or eat your own picnic bought the day before.

OUR ITINERARY

Below is the itinerary we have planned for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Our trip starts at 5 p.m. when we meet at our hotel in Madrid. We will have our trip briefing that is as detailed as our jet lag allows us to stay awake for; fortunately we can always finish up the next morning. We will then walk to dinner where we start getting to know each other as we enjoy the first of many dinners together. (D)

DAY 2

We leave Madrid on the public bus this morning, bound for Ponferrada and the beginning of our trip. The Cebreiro pass, which is the gateway to Galicia, is the last big climb on the Road for pilgrims who are coming from France. Our private bus will meet us at the Ponferrada bus station and transfer us partway up the pass, allowing us a warmup walk for the last 2 - 3 miles as we enjoy the green hills and views back down the valley. At the top of the pass our guide will recount the legend of Cebreiro's church and see the "pallozas", a Celtic style stone and thatch dwelling almost unchanged for more than two thousand years. We then transfer to Sarria where we have our first dinner and night on the road. (B, D)

DAY 3

We're going to start today with our only bus transfer, a short one that will have us start walking at the 105-kilometer marker. Walking the last 100 kms (62 miles) and stamping our pilgrim passport entitles us to an official pilgrim certificate at the end of the trip. Today we'll walk through tiny stone hamlets with slate roofs, often following lanes between stone drywalls that thread their way through oak and chestnut forests. Our destination is Portomarin: when the original town was flooded by a reservoir built in the 1960's, the entire town, including one of the original churches, was relocated to the top of a hill above the water.

Walking: about 9.5 miles, more down than up (B, D)

DAY 4

Again, today we pass through small stone villages where time seems to have stopped. Some of the older people still wear traditional clothes and we may be greeted with "Buen Camino" (Good Road), the traditional greeting for pilgrims on the Road. We will start seeing eucalyptus trees today. While not native, they were introduced more than 100 years ago and now look like part of the landscape.

Walking: about 15 miles, rolling terrain with some ascents (B, D)

DAY 5

Today we leave the province of Lugo and enter Coruna province. The change is apparent in the use of tile on the roofs (instead of slate) and more eucalyptus and pine; the oak and chestnut trees almost disappear. After we finish our walk, you have the opportunity to try octopus at a lunch spot, a Galician specialty! Typically, it's washed down with local white wine sipped from ceramic cups. If Octopus isn't your favorite, don't worry there's also a delicious salad option among other food.

Walking: about 9.5 miles, more down than up (B, D)

DAY 6

On the outskirts of Melide we pass a pretty church and, not far from that, a fun stepping-stone bridge. Then our road becomes a series of ups and downs through forest and farmland to Castaneda. This is where medieval kilns burned the limestone that long-ago pilgrims brought from near Cebreiro, their way of contributing to the construction of the Cathedral. After Castaneda, a steep descent takes us to Paradise Bridge, a play on the name of the Iso river. Our lunch spot is by the river, so you will have a chance to dabble your feet in the water before we climb to Arzua, a town known for a smooth cow cheese and delightful local restaurants. Dinner is on your own tonight so you can peruse options from casual Italian pizza to small town fine dining.

Walking: about 9 miles (B)

DAY 7

The trail from Arzua is mostly forested and rolling, though lots of hamlets. We pass several memorials to pilgrims who died on the Road just a day from Santiago; some pilgrims leave a pebble, a flower, or even a note. With any luck we'll have another chance for Arzua's cheese at a factory shop just off the Road. We'll ascend a small pass and take a rest stop at the top before our last descent.

Walking: about 12 miles, rolling with a moderately big up and down towards the end (B, D)

DAY 8

Many pilgrims walk directly from Rua to Santiago, but we'll take it easy the last two days, so we have time to enjoy the scenery and not feel rushed on our way into Santiago. Today includes a forest where you might feel that magical creatures are hiding behind the trees, even if you cannot really see anything specific. We ascend our last real hill and go around the runway of the Santiago airport, inexplicably built on top of the ancient route. In medieval times, pilgrims washed in a stream in Lavacolla, perhaps for the first time since they started their journey (somehow the name in Spanish is explicit without being naughty).

Walking: about 7.5 miles, rolling with a moderate ascent (B, D)

DAY 9

At Monte del Gozo we get our first sight of Santiago and fulfill our last pilgrim traditions before reaching the city (you should bring a stone from your home for one of these traditions). After our time in the countryside, it is quite a shock to return to a city - but soon we are in the medieval quarter, following the traditional route to the Cathedral square and the end of the Road right in front of the Cathedral. After celebrating our arrival with photos and hugs, we'll get our pilgrim certificates and then have most of the afternoon to wander.

The old part of Santiago is great for strolling or people watching, with a lot of sidewalk cafes and gift shops. Don't miss the traditional jet, silver, or enamel jewelry, often with Celtic symbols. We will probably see other pilgrims we have met during our journey, all with different reactions about having reached their destination. It's traditional though certainly not obligatory to attend mass - we might get to see the huge botafumeiro incense burner swing in front of the main altar, almost touching the roof on both sides. At night, a celebration dinner full of memories and maybe plans to return to Santiago someday.

Walking: about 7 miles, gently rolling, part on city streets (B, D)

DAY 10

You are free to leave anytime today. There are a number of options from here. If you have to return home, then the easiest way to get back to Madrid is by train or plane. But if you have time for more adventures, the Santiago airport offers flights to other European cities. Or perhaps you want to continue walking - some pilgrims continue on to the sea and then up the coast, a route that has fewer people and is also full of historical significance. (B)

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

Getting There

You will be flying into the Madrid Barajas International Airport (MAD). From there you can get to the city center (Sol) and trip hotel by taking the Commuter train (Renfe) (Line C-1). Detailed instructions will be provided. Taxis are also available at the airport. **Please note: This trip begins in Madrid and ends in Santiago de Compostela.**

If you are returning to Madrid, you have 2 options:

- **Train:** The train from Santiago to Madrid takes anywhere from 5.5 to almost 11 hours, including an overnight option. The schedule can be found at: <http://www.renfe.com/EN/viajeros/horarios.html>. If you are looking too far in the future, your date may not show up on schedules now but this will give you an idea, understanding it may change.
- **Airline:** Your other choice is **flying from the Santiago airport**. The airport is about 20 minutes from the city and the flight takes about 50 minutes. Both Iberia and RyanAir have flights from Santiago (SCQ) to Madrid (MAD). The best website for looking at your options is: <http://www.skyscanner.com>.

If you would like assistance with airfare, we recommend contacting our AirDesk Partner, [Exito Travel](#). Start by submitting this [form](#). Just fill in your dates and destinations, including any additional notes about preferred carriers, class of service, possible stopovers, etc., and an agent will typically respond via email within a few hours. If you prefer to call, the number is 800-655-4053; be sure to tell them you are traveling with Adventures in Good Company.

Please note: Most of the international airlines are in-network for Exito, so they do not charge extra for their services (and often have access to discounted rates). When necessary, processing fees out-of-network carriers are minimal at around \$35-\$50 per ticket.

Accommodations

We will be staying in double occupancy rooms with ensuite bathrooms in different types of accommodation, typically mid-range family-run hotels that are chosen for their hospitality or proximity to the path. Limited single accommodations are available for an additional cost. If interested and available select this option when you register.

Travel Insurance

We recommend that you purchase a travel protection plan to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, visit www.travelexinsurance.com or call 1-800-228-9792 and reference location number 06-0331.

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CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellation charges reflect the many expenses Adventures in Good Company cannot recover if you cancel, even if you must do so due to illness, injury, or personal emergencies. These fees are not meant to be punitive. The charges made reflect the expenses Adventures in Good Company has incurred in administering your reservation and planning for your participation. We recognize that the majority of those who cancel their reservations do so out of necessity. Please note that we do not make any refunds for any unused portion of your trip, not arriving, arriving late, or leaving the trip early.

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