



## WOMEN'S CAMINO DE SANTIAGO (SEMI-GUIDED)

Spain

18 days | 17 nights

### OVERVIEW

*"Walk Your Way" This semi-guided walk allows you the freedom to walk independently but with some guided support. We provide you with an itinerary, maps, the locations of your accommodation and any transfer details. You choose what time you start and finish each day. Eva, your guide, will be walking the same sections as you but not necessarily with you. She'll be the last of the group members to start the trail each day, so you can walk at your own pace knowing Eva is on the trail behind. You may choose to walk with your guide 'Eva' on days of interest or the entire journey.*

Join women walkers in northern Spain on a reflective trip of a lifetime along the Camino de Santiago.

You will follow the 'Way of St. James' from Sarria through beautiful countryside to Santiago de Compostela. Walking the French Way (Camino Frances Route) pilgrimage trail, a distance of approximately 120km over 8 days. Then from the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, journey onwards to Finisterre and the end of the world. Here, free yourself of life's burdens, and let go of the past as past pilgrims have for 1000 years.

On this semi-guided trip you will experience challenge and learn about spiritual history, culture and traditions along the way. You will complete 2 Caminos, walk 200km and be eligible for two Compostelas.

Enjoy walking with just a daypack and have your main luggage transferred daily to your overnight accommodation. At each village you will stay in varying casa rurales accommodation, dine on traditional pilgrim meals, and have time to rest, relax and reflect. Pilgrims and connection seekers, come and immerse yourself in 1000 years of Christian history. Bring your boots and your day pack for our reflective women's only walking tour on the Camino de Santiago.

### DETAILS

- Type: Women's Trips semi-guided
- Adventure: Women's Camino de Santiago
- Destination: Santiago de Compostela, Spain
- Group Size: Max 12 plus leaders

### ITINERARY

#### Day 1 | Arrive at Madrid

Settle into your hotel in the heart of Madrid and rest after your long flight. Your Camino de Santiago Tour for women starts today. Catch up at the end of the day with your fellow travellers to enjoy dinner in a Spanish restaurant and if you're tempted, some delicious churros and chocolate.

Meals Included: n/a

Walking Distance: n/a

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## Day 2 | Explore Madrid

Today is a free day to explore beautiful Madrid. Walk through the streets of the centre, marvel at the grand plazas, take a walk in the magnificent Parque de El Retiro, right next to the Museo Nacional del Prado, then sample some traditional Spanish food. There is so much to see and do here.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: n/a

## Day 3 | Explore Sarria

Today we will enjoy a private transfer to the train station where we make our way to Sarria, the starting point of your walking journey on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. Our accommodation is right on the Camino. Spend the evening preparing yourself for your first day of walking, explore Sarria, then enjoy dinner with the group.

Sarria is a busy, modern town with plenty of shops to stock up on any last minute walking snacks, restaurants and bars to have a coffee, or a glass of Spanish wine. You're now in the region of Galicia, its origins are Celtic so the countryside may remind you of Ireland. It was an important medieval centre for pilgrims and remnants of its ancient past can still be seen in the old quarter along Rua Major. The church of Igrexia de Santa Maria has an ancient pilgrim's mural. If you follow the Camino route to the top end of town you will see the ancient convent Monasterio da Madalena, the ruins of the castle and the medieval bridge Ponte Aspera that crosses the River Celerio. Nowadays the town is bustling with peregrinos, from those that started their Camino in France, to pilgrims like you, who walk the final 100 kilometres to Santiago de Compostela to qualify for their Compostela.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: n/a

## Day 4 | Walk Sarria to Morgade

Today's the day we've been waiting for! After breakfast we'll begin our walk to Morgade. It's time to finally get onto the Camino and on our way to Santiago.

This first stage is a great introduction as it follows sheltered woodland pathways and quiet country roads which pass through hamlets and small villages. The scenery along the Way is wonderfully green and lush and very rural. The trail climbs and falls as it passes through tiny hamlets full of history. When we reach Morgade, we will have a transfer back to our hotel in Sarria for the night.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: 12km

## Day 5 | Walk Morgade to Portomarin

In the morning, we'll be taken back to yesterday's finishing point at

Morgade to begin our walk to Portomarin.

The high point of the day (660m) at Pina dos Corvos has wonderful views over the reservoir and surrounding countryside. From here, begin your descent, crossing the Mino Reservoir over its modern bridge into Portomarin.

Portomarin has been inhabited for thousands of years and its importance grew with the popularity of the Camino in the middle ages. At one time it had three orders of Knights: the Knights Templar, the Knights of St John and the Knights of Jerusalem, which may explain the castle like edifice of the 12th century Romanesque Iglesia San Nicolas church which still stands in the square at the centre of town. Portomarin was previously divided by the Rio Mino, but it flooded in 1960 to create the Mino Reservoir. Every historic monument was moved brick by brick to the town that stands on the hill today; you can see pictures of the old town in some of the bars and cafes that line the main street.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: 11km

## Day 6 | Walk Portomarin to Ventas de Naron

This morning we walk out of Portomarin to Ventas de Naron.

The path gently leads us uphill however, the gradient is never too steep. The path crosses and runs parallel to the main road to Gonzar, though you will spend most of your days walking on woodland tracks and quiet roads. Tonight our accommodation is in a lovely Casa Rural (Farm house) that serves delicious food. A favourite is the locally sourced, Spanish cheese, served amongst other delicious goodies at breakfast.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: 13km

## Day 7 | Walk Ventas de Naron to Palas de Rei

After breakfast we will be transferred back to Ventas de Naron to begin our walk to Palas de Rei.

A climb to start the day takes us to Sierra Ligonde, today's high point at 720m. The walk is then downhill to Ligonde and Eirexe and onto A Calzada.

We detour to the National Monument, Vilar de Donas where the Knights of Santiago are buried, worthy of a visit. A gentle climb now takes you through several small hamlets to Alto Rosario, a good vantage point on a clear day and then its down into Palas de Rei, Palace of the King. This village has little to remind you that it was once home to a king. Today it's a small country town with plenty of services available. Our accommodation is right on the Camino, relax and enjoy.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: 12km+ side trip to Vilar de Donas



## Day 8 | Walk Palas De Rei to Melide

From our accommodation, we step out onto the Camino at Palas De Rei to Melide.

Today's walk is mostly on paths through quiet woodland, crossing over the main road to Arzua several times, guiding you through six river valleys to reach a high point of 515m at Coto. On route you will pass through Melide, a busy town founded in the 13th century which has many historic buildings and churches including the Capilla de San Pedro and San Roque, standing next to a 14th century stone cross said to be the oldest in Galicia. Melide is also famous for Pulpo Gallego, octopus cooked Galician style and reputed to be the best in Spain, perhaps try these specialities for lunch. We rest up this afternoon in anticipation of a big walking day tomorrow.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: 15km

## Day 9 | Walk Melide to Salceda

From Melide we start our walk through Castañeda and onto Salceda. After a short distance we arrive at the now familiar Ribadiso where we can see the Hospital San Anton, one of the oldest pilgrim hospitals in existence.

Leaving Ribadiso we follow the country road on an uphill climb through the outer suburbs before entering Arzua. Arzua with a population of around 7000 is the last large town before we reach Santiago. The 14th century Capilla de la Magdalena is the town's main monument. Arzua is most famous for its local cheese, Queixo, a smooth creamy cheese made from cow's milk which most restaurants feature in some way and is definitely worth trying. Tonight we stay in a restored 19th Century property in Salceda.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: 29km

## Day 10 | Walk Salceda to O Pedrouzo

This morning after a sleep in and breakfast and possibly a morning pool swim, we enjoy a shorter walking day.

The majority of today's walk to O Pedrouzo is through wonderful pine and eucalyptus scented woodland. The path is mostly level, passing through three shallow river valleys with a gradual climb up to Alto de Santa Irene at 404m. The country lanes and woodland paths pass through small hamlets. The final section climbs to a main road, into eucalyptus woodland to A Rua and then to our destination O Pedrouzo. O Pedrouzo /Arco do Pino is a small yet busy town with shops, restaurants and bars and the staging point for the last section of the Camino before entering Santiago de Compostela.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: 8km

## Day 11 | Walk O'Pedrouzo to Santiago

For some of us, today marks the final day of walking the Camino Frances. We will walk from O'Pedrouzo to Santiago.

Today's route will be busy as pilgrims commence the last stage of their journey into Santiago. The pilgrim's mass at Santiago Cathedral begins at midday, so if you are keen to attend mass you will need to leave early if you want to arrive on time. However, there's no need to rush, there will be an opportunity to visit the Cathedral tomorrow.

The first section of today's route passes through eucalypt forests, quiet roads and pathways. The track runs alongside the airport and you will see many crosses of twigs used by pilgrims to decorate the fence. Around the halfway point, we arrive at Lavacolla village, where pilgrims traditionally washed to purify themselves before entering Santiago. Lavacolla literally means to wash your tail.

We then start the final climb to Monte Gozo, Mount of Joy, you will sight the stunning Cathedral de Santiago spires. Enjoy the view before we descend into the suburbs of Santiago. The final section of the Camino Frances is well signposted into the old quarter. Take in the wonderful historical buildings and narrow shop filled alleyways, until you finally reach the Praza Obradoiro and the ancient Cathedral. Take a moment and a deep breath, feel the achievement of having walked over 100 kilometres.

We spend the next 2 nights in one of the finest and oldest hotels in the world – Parador Santiago.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: 19km

## Day 12 | Santiago de Compostela Rest Day

Today is a free day to explore Santiago de Compostela. You have the whole day to enjoy and explore historic Santiago with its many enticing tapas bars and restaurants. You can attend the midday pilgrim's mass and look around the famous Cathedral of St James which forms the city's heart. From here you can watch the joy of the steady stream of pilgrims arriving into the square as they finish their epic journey.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: n/a

## Day 13 | Walk Santiago to Negreira

This morning we leave the pilgrim city to Negreira. We leave the hustle and bustle of the city behind us, through the green park space where we will see our first Camino Finisterre way marker. We will walk country lanes through villages and picturesque forests. We'll meander through hamlets and enjoy the peace and quiet of quiet country roads. A highlight is the Ponte Maceira, a Roman bridge spanning the Rio Tambre. To keep it interesting there will be a



variety of walking paths through forests and fields and on quaint country roads. Get lots of rest tonight we have a big day ahead.

Meals Included: Breakfast  
Walking Distance: 22km

### Day 14 | Walk Negrira to Olveiroa

This morning we leave Negrira and head to Olveiroa.

Pace yourself, this will be the longest and most challenging day that we will experience on either Camino. It might be the most challenging day but all of your hard work is rewarded with beautiful scenery through oak, beech and chestnut forests, through typical Galician hamlets as we climb across Mount Arco before descending into Olveiroa.

Meals Included: Breakfast  
Walking Distance: 31km

### Day 15 | Walk Olveiroa to Cee

This morning we leave Olveiroa to go to Cee, where we catch a first glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean.

Today has a much shorter distance than yesterday, but packed with lovely vistas and sights including wind turbines and historic stone bridges before we climb into the village of Logoso. This is a good place to have a coffee, use the facilities, or grab something to eat, because it's the last stop before our destination. At the fork in the road, we turn towards Finisterre where we will catch a glimpse of the cape before we make a descent into Cee.

Meals Included: Breakfast  
Walking Distance: 18km

### Day 16 | Walk Cee to Finisterre

Today is the day we arrive in Finisterre, to the ancients, the end of the Earth. It will seem like a stroll as we hug the coast through fishing villages and through forests to make our final descent, then make our way along the sandy beach to Finisterre. From here we can continue on to Point Zero at the Lighthouse.

Congratulations! You have completed two Caminos and therefore you are eligible for two Compostelas. Enjoy your afternoon by celebrating with your fellow walkers or take some time to explore Finisterre. It has many harbour side restaurants and cafes serving locally sourced seafood and Galician specialities.

Meals Included: Breakfast  
Walking Distance: 16km

### Day 17 | Muxia and Madrid

Today a private transfer will collect us and take us to Muxia (Moo-shee-ah), an alternative final destination that also sits at edge of the

Atlantic Ocean. You may remember Muxia from the movie "The Way" where pilgrims scatter ashes from passed loved ones or mementos. We don't encourage you to throw things into the ocean but perhaps you have been carrying a pebble with you along your journey to symbolise the burdens you have been carrying. Now is a great time to let those burdens go and feel a sense of peace and freedom.

Our transport will then take us back to Santiago de Compostela where we will catch the train back to Madrid.

Meals Included: Breakfast  
Walking Distance: n/a

### Day 18 | Farewells and departures

Today marks the end of your Camino de Santiago Tour for women. We hope that you have enjoyed your walk with us and you're sure to have some amazing memories, stories and fun anecdotes to take home with you.

Meals Included: Breakfast  
Walking Distance: n/a

## INCLUSIONS

### Travel

*Luggage transfers daily to accommodation (up to 20kg per person)*

*Train from Madrid to Sarria including transfer to station*

*Train Santiago to Madrid including transfer to station*

### Meals

*All meals as per the itinerary*

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### Accommodation

*12 nights casa rurales accommodation (twin share)*

*3 nights hotel in Madrid (twin share)*

*2 nights Parador in Santiago (twin share)*

*(Accommodation will change based on each days finishing location)*

### Activities

*Professionally semi-guided walk by our local guide*

*Free day in Santiago de Compostela to rest or explore*

*Free day in Madrid to rest or explore*

### Safety

*Our experienced local guide walking the entire trail with you*

*Group First Aid kit and emergency communication device*

## Environmental

*Small group guided experience*

*Leave No Trace principles*

## Big Heart Extras

*Big Heart Adventures designed ioMerino hiking top*

*Big Heart Adventures designed head sock*

*Big Heart Adventures journal*

*Guided pre-departure training walks and or program (trip specific)*

*Discount card for pre-departure purchases at Exurbia*

*A charity contribution to our Give Back program*

*Pilgrims Passport*

*Spanish phrasebook*

*Camino Guidebook by John Brierley*

## EXCLUSIONS

- International and domestic flights
- Travel arrangements to the start and from the end of the tour
- Comprehensive Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Meals and drinks not stated on itinerary
- Items of a personal nature

## FITNESS REQUIREMENT

- A moderate level of fitness is required to walk the trails on this trip
- You will be walking pack free (day packs only)
- You will walk on a variety of surfaces on undulating trails
- We walk 8 consecutive days on this adventure
- Our longest walking day is up to 31km
- Trail rating: Moderate

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Eligible Past Traveller Discount applies if you've travelled with us on any of our guided tours which were 5 days duration or longer
- Read terms and conditions before booking
- Itinerary and price subject to change at any time
- Travel Insurance is recommended. Get a quote from Covermore or Go Insurance
- Note weather, group member welfare and a range of

circumstances outside our control can mean last minute changes to our itinerary are necessary once on tour

- A limited number of single rooms are available on a first-come basis
- Please contact us before booking any flights. Depending on flight arrival and departure times extra nights accommodation may be required at own expense
- A minimum number of travellers are required for this trip to depart so ask someone to join you. If minimum numbers aren't reached, we may decide to still go or we will provide a full refund
- Training walks start 8 weeks prior to departure. We recommend you attend these walks to maximise your enjoyment and for the groups welfare when away
- Rooming is twin share
- As this is a semi-guided walk, you will be responsible for your own wellbeing
- If you have additional needs please connect with us, we're committed to being inclusive and accessible

## ADVENTURE LEADERS

Our experienced and knowledgeable local guide is with you for the journey. Our team is qualified, experienced and super friendly. We will ensure you have a fun and connecting adventure.

## PACKING LIST

A detailed packing list is provided prior to travel

- Gear you will need:
- Rainproof jacket and pants
- Daypack (35 litre approx.)
- Water bottles/hydration kit (min 2Ltrs)
- Personal medications
- Clothing suitable for walking that is quick drying and breathable – consider merino/synthetic clothing
- Sun protection such as hat, sunglasses and sunscreen, insect repellent
- Sleeping attire

## ACCESSIBILITY

Requires following trails carrying a day pack on uneven surfaces. Accommodation and transport includes stairs. Please talk to us about your accessibility needs before booking

