GUIDE TO WALKING THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO (THE FRENCH WAY)

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Hello and welcome to our guide to the Camino de Santiago (The French Way)

Since 2003, we have specialised in arranging self guided walking holidays, cycling holidays and tailor made adventures in the UK, Europe and around the world.

We are delighted to have helped thousands of travellers enjoy authentic experiences, rewarding challenges, active adventures and relaxing breaks since we started out in 2003.

We are proud at Macs Adventure that the Camino continues to be one of our most popular walks, so with that in mind, we have put together this comprehensive guide just for you, our Camino customer.

Our aim is to introduce the Camino de Santiago (or also known as The French Way) and to provide useful information to help you prepare for your journey to Santiago de Compostela.

To arrange a complete walking trip on the Camino de Santiago contact our specialists at info@macsadventure.com, or browse our Camino de Santiago or French Way itineraries on our website.

View the Camino de Santiago on our website

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Who are Macs Adventure?
What is the Camino?

In a nutshell, El Camino de Santiago, otherwise known as the Way of St James, is a network of ancient Christian Pilgrimage routes leading to the tomb of St James in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia (Northern Spain).

History

The Camino de Santiago has existed for over 1000 years and dates back to the 9th Century when the remains of St James the Apostle were first discovered in Northern Spain. It is believed that St James preached the Gospel in present day Galicia and on returning to Jerusalem he was beheaded by King Herod in 44AD. His followers are said to have transported his remains to Northern Galicia where they lay undiscovered until 813. The discovery of his remains in the 9th Century led to the creation of a religious shrine which marks the creation of Santiago the Compostela and the Camino de Santiago. In 907 the first shrine of St James was destroyed by the Moorish army of Al-Mansur, but by the 12th century the Cathedral of Santiago had been rebuilt and was attracting pilgrims from all over Europe.

In 1440 the Codex Calixtinus, the first guidebook of the Camino de Santiago, was published. This guidebook detailed the routes and infrastructure leading to Santiago de Compostela, and is widely interpreted as the first tourist guidebook.

Throughout the Middle Ages the Camino de Santiago remained as popular as pilgrimages to Jerusalem or Rome. Its popularity only began to decrease during the 16th Century with the Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe. Its popularity decreased further with European wars and revolutions in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, which restricted travel and cross-cultural integration.

For most of the 20th Century, the Camino de Santiago remained restricted to the Iberian Peninsula due to the First and Second World Wars, as well as the Spanish Civil War (1936-39).

It was only in the 1980s that the widespread rediscovery of the Camino de Santiago began thanks to the parish priest and academic Don Elías Valiña Sampedro, who dedicated the last 10 years of his life to way marking the Camino Francés.

As well as Don Sampedro, pilgrim associations and local governments have also contributed to the rebirth, of the Camino Francés which has led to rediscovery of various routes through France, Portugal and Spain.

Why walk it?

Today, the Camino de Santiago is still very popular with traditional Roman Catholic pilgrims who travel to Santiago as a demonstration of their faith, however the Camino is not limited to exclusively religion with many people walking the Camino for spiritual reasons.

Many others walk the Camino for a sense of achievement or simply to escape their day to day lives and set themselves in a different path.

Whatever your reason is, we are here every step of the way to help make your journey as hassle free and rewarding as possible.
The Camino de Santiago (or Camino Francés) is one of the world’s greatest pilgrim routes. It starts in France, crossing the border high in the Pyrenees before stretching right across the north of Spain until it reaches Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, north-west Spain.

The whole route takes over a month to walk, and while we would wholeheartedly recommend walking the full way to get the very best experience, we know it is not possible for everyone to take this much time out of their lives.

The route is broken down in five different stages, so in the next sections of this guide we are going to detail the pros and cons of each stage.

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**WALKING THE FULL CAMINO**

Walking the full Camino Francés takes you from St Jean Pied de Port, in the foothills of the Pyrenees to the conclusion of your pilgrimage in Santiago de Compostela. This is a journey for the spirit and soul that millions of travellers complete year after year.

Meeting fellow pilgrims, passing through varying landscapes such as the majestic Pyrenees Mountains, the lush green valleys of Galicia and the immense plains of Sierra de Campos whilst walking into some northern Spain’s most beguiling cities, are just a few of the many highlights.

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**Full Camino: St Jean Pied de Port to Santiago**

The highlights of the full Camino are the dramatic scenery when walking over the Pyrenees, the winding streets and Gothic architecture of Burgos and Santiago Cathedral, not just the building, but the emotion of arriving there.

**Check our website for more info about the Camino**
The first stretch of the Camino Francés is one of sheer beauty. Undoubtedly the toughest stage of the whole Camino de Santiago, but one filled with rewards.

Walk through the high mountains and deep valleys of the Pyrenees, before crossing through undulating plains and olive groves. The day is packed with wildlife as you encounter wild horses and spot large birds of prey every kilometre or so. You will get a great sense of achievement at reaching the summit and the even greater one as you arrive at your accommodation in Roncesvalles, knowing you have conquered the toughest part of the trip.

The rest of the week’s walking is gentler, for much of it you follow old Roman roads which wind through farmland and forest, always framed by the hills of the Navarra region.

All the towns you stay in are delightful, but the highlight of this week’s walk are Pamplona and Logroño.

Pamplona: It’s perfect for a Hemmingway moveable feast, as you wander around the city, exploring and nibbling at a different pintxo in each bar.

Logroño: It’s the capital of La Rioja, but it’s so close to the border with the Basque Country that it retains much of the custom and culture. The Calle Laurel (Laurel Street) is a thin, small street running through the heart of the city which has nothing but pintxo bars on it, each serving their delicious speciality, which should be paired with any of the fantastic wines on offer.

This section is perfect for:

Those looking for a stand-alone experience on the Camino de Santiago. Also, if you think you might one day walk the whole route, then it’s best to start at the beginning. Despite some tougher walking, it is an excellent insight into the culture of the Basque Country, there are some great cities and delightful towns, and the food is outstanding.

Book the first stage of the Camino
Stage 2: Logroño to Burgos

The second stage of the Camino is a little shorter and easier going, but it still provides enough challenge and highlights to make it an excellent standalone walking holiday. The first few days are spent walking through La Rioja, so you will see many vineyards and hidden little churches on the route.

Each village you walk through on this quiet section will have a small town square and church and inevitably make you want to live in this peaceful part of the world with its slow pace of life.

On your third night, you will stay in Santo Domingo de la Calzada, which is definitely a hidden gem on the route. Small winding streets suddenly open up into grand Plazas (squares) lined with beautiful architecture. The Cathedral is well worth a visit and if you fancy a bit of luxury, upgrading to stay in the Parador is a great idea, worth it for the feel of staying in a building so old and grand.

The rest of the trip winds through forest and farmland, passing through the joys of the Oca mountains, giving a different feel to the end of your journey.

Then you get to finish in the gothic masterpiece that is Burgos (UNESCO World Heritage Site). The Cathedral is one of the finest examples of Gothic architecture in all of Spain. It looms large on the skyline, dominating the city. It is also well worth getting a bit lost in Burgos exploring its beautiful streets and discovering hidden restaurants serving the best in Castillian food.

This section is perfect for:

Those looking for a snapshot of the Camino with some flatter, easier walking than section 1. The trip is bookended by two great cities and the towns along the route have enough charm and interest to make them hugely enjoyable.

Stage 2: Logroño to Burgos

Walking through the fertile wine country of La Rioja, into Castile y Leon, to the glorious city of Burgos is a wonderful part of the Camino. A shorter section with terrain that is not difficult to navigate, so one that would be ideal to fit into a week’s holiday.

Grade

Comfort

Start/Finish Logroño/Burgos

Distance 119 km

Duration 7 Days & 6 Nights

Availability February – Mid November
Stage 3: Burgos to León

There is one word that dominates this stage. Meseta. It is a word that any pilgrim will have heard. The Meseta is a long flat section through the plains of northern Spain. While flat does sound appealing to many walkers, this is a section that people often skip when taking the full trip.

While we would suggest that it is perhaps not the greatest section to walk as a standalone trip, it fits perfectly in the overall arc of the full Camino.

Crop field dominate the landscape on the first part of this stage and there are not many trees in view. However, there are some marvellous villages and fascinating ruins, the people are friendly, the unique culture in this area is fantastic. The Meseta also performs a significant part of the full journey to Santiago.

This is the section where the spiritual element comes to the fore. Pilgrims begin to internalise more, to think about themselves and their reasons for taking the trip in the first place. The Meseta is where the strongest bonds are formed with your fellow walkers and plays a massive part in the whole Camino experience. Starting in Burgos is a pleasure, and finishing in León is a grand finish to any trip as you could ask for. It has a similar gradeur to Burgos, but León comes alive at night.

The large student population means that the city has a great atmosphere in the evenings. The bars and plazas come alive with the vibrant chat of the student population and makes for a fantastic city in which to spend a couple of nights.

This section is perfect for:

As part of the overall route, it is essential and plays a vital role, but taking a week off work to walk this stage might leave you feeling a little disappointed. Burgos and León are fabulous, but in the bit in between lacks the charm of the other sections.
Stage 4: León to O’Cebreiro

This section of the Camino offers some of the most beautiful scenery on the route. Once you reach Astorga, after your second walking day, you are entering the hills of Galicia, delightfully green and rolling, with views stretching as far and wide.

Ponferrada is home to the grandest castle of the Knights Templar which is worth exploring, and Villafranca del Bierzo is bursting with architectural wonder, from medieval archways to beautiful little churches. It is also home to a natural history museum that is well worth visiting.

This section has the second most climbing on the whole route, but again, this is something that should be enjoyed rather than feared. Walking up to once abandoned villages and the atmospheric Cruz de Ferro, are well worth the effort.

Also, if you have been carrying a stone with you (to represent your worries or burdens), you can deposit it at the Iron Cross and continue on your way unburdened, both physically and spiritually.

The other climb sees you arriving at your final destination on this week’s your, the tiny village of O’Cebreiro. This ascent is a short, sharp shock! Steep, but over quite quickly.

This section is perfect for:

People who are looking to experience some beautiful Spanish towns and villages, full of historical interest. The walking also gets progressively more attractive as you walk and will provide a great experience as a standalone trip.

Stage 4: León to O’Cebreiro

Walk from the wonderful city of León to O’Cebreiro enjoying an endless succession of beautiful churches and buildings on the route. This part of the countryside is characterised by broom, heather, oak trees and conifer plantations.

This section is perfect for:

People who are looking to experience some beautiful Spanish towns and villages, full of historical interest. The walking also gets progressively more attractive as you walk and will provide a great experience as a standalone trip.

Read more about it on the blog

Grade

Comfort

Start/Finish
Leon/O’Cebreiro

Distance
153 km

Duration
9 Days & 8 Nights

Availability
February - Mid November
Stage 5: O’Cebreiro to Santiago
(or the more popular Sarria to Santiago)

Pilgrims celebrate receiving their Compostela in Santiago. The final stage is the glory leg of the trip and the most popular by far. Though, most people tend to start this adventure from the town of Sarria, as this is 100 km away from Santiago which makes it the shortest trip possible to still get your Compostela certificate at the end of the walk.

The walk takes you through Galicia and showcases the unique charms of the people of this part of the country. Galicians are very relaxed and have a slightly less enthusiastic take on life than the rest of Spain. People mainly attribute this to the amount of rain in Galicia, which does mean that you should always pack a waterproof, but it also means that the landscapes are lush and green. The hills of Galicia are one of the most charming places to walk passing through charming villages which are all buzzing with the excitement of pilgrims coming to the end of their trip.

This is an incredible sociable section of the walk. There can be an undecurrent of mild annoyance for some people who have walked the full route.

You suddenly find yourself surrounded by crowds of ‘final stagers’, while you have put in the time to do the whole journey, but it is a chance to tell your tale to a new and rapturous crowd and inspire them to go back and walk the entire route from the start. The walking is not too difficult on this stage, and you will spend much of it chatting with other pilgrims.

The real draw of this stage is reaching the finish line. Santiago de Compostela is a beautiful city, and when you see its spires in the distance, your heart soars. In the city, there is a lovely feeling of togetherness as you visit the multitude bars and restaurants and attend the pilgrims mass at the stunning cathedral. There is also an incredibly grand Parador right beside the cathedral if you want to spend your last night in luxury.

You get to experience the joy, the camaraderie and the feeling of completion, without taking a full month to work it.

Stage 5: O’Cebreiro to Santiago (or Sarria to Santiago)

Walk the last 100 km of the Camino Frances from Sarria to Santiago de Compostela. Our most popular Camino; this trip earns you your Compostela as you will have walked over 100 km.

Grade
Comfort
Start/Finish Sarria/Santiago de Compostela
Distance 113 km
Duration 7 Days & 6 Nights
Availability February - Mid November

Book the last stage of the Camino
Getting to the start

Travelling to Spain is very straightforward with their national airline Iberia offering a wide network of flights from across the globe. Both the UK and Europe have a wide selection of low-cost carriers which serve the country.

Transport in general in the country is reasonably priced, quick and efficient therefore getting to the start and getting home from the finish of your Camino should be simple! The rail network reaches the main towns, and the expanding high-speed network makes travelling even quicker from Madrid. Visit RENFE for timetables and fares.

Buses in Spain are generally very reliable connect almost all of the country’s towns and villages, many of the more rural areas are only accessible by bus. Visit ALSA, Monbus and Avanzabus for timetables and fares.

For those of you that are planning to start your journey on the French side from St Jean Pied de Port, France has one of the most extensive train networks in Western Europe, therefore travelling within France should not pose too much difficulty. The rail network reaches the main towns, and with the TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse, “high-speed train”) it makes travelling even quicker from the major French cities. Visit SNCF for timetables and prices.

Below is some information regarding your travel options to/from the Camino de Santiago. You may also find www.skyscanner.com and www.rome2rio.com useful resources to assist with your travel planning.

HOW TO GET TO/FROM ST JEAN PIED DE PORT

Biarritz Airport (55 km)

If flying from the UK, low-cost airlines such as EasyJet and Ryanair offer direct flights to Biarritz from London Stansted & Gatwick. Flybe also provides a direct service from Birmingham. If you’re coming from Europe, then please look at the Biarritz airport website to see what airlines suit you best.

From Biarritz airport you can reach St Jean Pied de Port by firstly taking the airport bus (Line C) to Bayonne (30 mins). You can view timetables and fares at Chronoplus. From Bayonne, you can catch the mountain railway to St Jean Pied de Port (1h 30min). Schedules and fares can be viewed at SNCF. If travelling from overseas, the best option is to fly into London or Paris and catch a low-cost flight to Biarritz.

Alternatively, take the TGV from Paris to Bayonne (5h), then take the mountain train to St Jean Pied de Port as above.

HOW TO GET TO/FROM LOGROÑO

Bilbao Airport (140 km)

If flying from the UK, low-cost airlines such as EasyJet and Vueling airlines offer direct flights to Bilbao from Manchester, London Stansted & Heathrow. If you’re coming from Europe, then please look at the Bilbao airport website to see what airlines suit you best.

From Bilbao, you can easily get to Logroño (1h 45min) by bus with ALSA.

If travelling from overseas the best option is to fly into Madrid and catch and Iberia or Vueling flight to Bilbao and travel as above. Alternatively, take the train from Madrid (4h) with RENFE.
Getting to the start

HOW TO GET TO/FROM BURGOS

Madrid Airport (160 km)

If flying from the UK, low-cost airlines such as EasyJet and Ryanair offer direct flights to Madrid from Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, London Stansted, Luton & Gatwick. Other carriers include Iberia and BA. From outside the UK, you can fly to Madrid direct with many European and International airlines. Check the Madrid Airport website to see what airlines suit you best.

From Madrid, you can easily get to Burgos (3h) by bus with ALSA or by train with (3h 30 min) with RENFE.

Bilbao Airport (140 km)

If flying from the UK, low-cost airlines such as EasyJet and Vueling airlines offer direct flights to Bilbao from Manchester, London Stansted & Heathrow. If you’re coming from Europe, then please look at the Bilbao airport website to see what airlines suit you best.

From Bilbao you can easily get to Burgos (2h) by bus with ALSA or by train (2h 30min) with RENFE.

HOW TO GET TO/FROM LEÓN

Madrid Airport (330 km)

If flying from the UK, low-cost airlines such as EasyJet and Ryanair offer direct flights to Madrid from Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, London Stansted, Luton & Gatwick. Other carriers include Iberia and BA. From outside the UK, you can fly to Madrid direct with many European and International airlines. Check the Madrid Airport website to see what airlines suit you best.

From Madrid, you can easily get to León (4h - 5h) by bus with ALSA or by train in less than 3 hours with RENFE.

León Airport (8 km)

León has an airport offering a limited service to and from Barcelona with Air Nostrum. If travelling from overseas, you may prefer to fly into Barcelona and catch an internal flight to León.

HOW TO GET TO/FROM O’CÉBREIRO

Santiago Airport (165 km)

If flying from the UK, low-cost airlines such as EasyJet and Ryanair offers direct flights to Santiago from London Stansted and London Gatwick. If you are coming from Europe, then please look at the Santiago airport website and check what airlines suit you best.

If you’re travelling from overseas, you have a few options. You can fly into London and catch a Ryanair or EasyJet flight to Santiago. Alternatively, you can fly into Madrid and catch an internal flight with either Ryanair or Vueling airlines. Otherwise, take the bus from Madrid which will take approximately 5 hours. Bus timetables and fares can be viewed at ALSA.

From Santiago de Compostela you can easily get to O’Cebreiro (3h 15 min) by bus with ALSA.

Note: On the ALSA website, O’Cebreiro is called ‘Piedrafita de Cebreiro’, and from here it is a 5 km walk uphill to the village of O’Cebreiro. We would highly recommend that you take a taxi up to the village from Piedrafita do Cebreiro.
Getting to the start

HOW TO GET TO/FROM SARRIA

Santiago Airport (100 km)

If flying from the UK, low-cost airlines such as EasyJet and Ryanair offer direct flights to Santiago from London Stansted and London Gatwick. If you’re coming from Europe, then please look at the Santiago airport website and check what airlines suit you best.

From Santiago de Compostela you can reach Sarria by taking a bus to Lugo (2h 15 min) with ALSA, then catch the local Monbus to Sarria (35 mins).

Alternatively, we can arrange private transfers from Santiago de Compostela airport. Prices start at £130 per vehicle (1-4 passengers) and must be pre-booked in advance.

If you’re travelling from overseas, you have a few options. You can fly into London and catch a Ryanair or EasyJet flight to Santiago and travel as above. Alternatively, you can fly into Madrid and take an internal flight with either Ryanair or Vueling airlines. Otherwise, take the train from Madrid which will take approximately 7-8 hours. Timetables and fares can be viewed at RENFE.

HOW TO GET TO/FROM SANTIAGO

Santiago Airport (100 km)

If flying from the UK, low-cost airlines such as EasyJet and Ryanair offer direct flights to Santiago from London Stansted and London Gatwick. If you’re coming from Europe, then please look at the Santiago airport website and check what airlines suit you best.

If you’re travelling from overseas, you have a few options. You can fly into London and catch a Ryanair or EasyJet flight to Santiago. Alternatively, you can fly into Madrid and catch an internal flight with either Ryanair or Vueling airlines. Otherwise, take the train from Madrid which will take approximately 7-8 hours. Train timetables and fares can be viewed at RENFE.
Eating & Drinking on the Camino

WHAT TO EAT ON THE CAMINO

The route to Santiago is filled with wonder. There are sights and sounds to lose yourself in; there are glorious hills and ice-blue rivers and the most fantastic, generous and welcoming people.

There is no doubt that whatever stage of the Camino Frances you walk, you will enjoy your time on the route. While this pilgrimage is a journey of the mind and body, there is a particular part of the body that many people are rightly concerned with, their stomach!

WHAT DO I EAT ON THE CAMINO?

Getting sufficient food and drink on the Camino is not something that anyone should worry about. On the full Camino Frances you will pass through four regions of Spain, all with distinct regional variations on food.

PILGRIMS’ MENU – MENÚ DEL DÍA

Just about everywhere you will stop along the route will have a small selection of restaurants, so that you have a choice. However, on every stop, in every location, you can eat the Pilgrims’ Menu or Menú del Día. These meals are a very affordable, very generous meal that most pilgrims tend to flock to. For between 10-15€ you will have a choice of 3-course meal including wine, water, and often a coffee too. There is always a vegetarian option, and if you have any other culinary requirements, the staff will be more than happy to advise.

WHY DO WE NOT INCLUDE THE PILGRIMS’ MENU?

Some companies include it on their trips, however, here at Macs Adventure, we don't do that for a couple of reasons.

- Firstly, we believe in getting an immersive experience on your trip, experiencing all there is to indulging in the local specialities and eating where local people eat. The Pilgrims’ Menu is always tasty, but it is made with feeding many people in mind, not with a culinary experience.

- The other reason why we don’t include the menu as a part of our trip, is that after a week of Pilgrims Menus it can become a little repetitive.

Most of Spain does not start eating until around 20:30h. It is a bit of a cultural adjustment for many of us, but well worth getting into the rhythm of this. The Pilgrims’ Menu is often served earlier, so if you are hungry before 20:30h, don’t worry you will still be able to eat.

CULINARY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CAMINO FRANCES

There are a few places on the route where we would certainly encourage you to explore instead of choosing the Pilgrims’ Menu.

Pamplona has an amazing culinary scene. You can eat and drink in the same places that Hemmingway used to haunt in the 1920s by visiting Cafe Iruña on the main Plaza del Castillo.

The main draw in Pamplona is a first introduction to pintxos. With all pintxos, make sure you order from the blackboard rather than just from the bar as this is where many of the tastiest morsels hide. Once you get to Logroño (food and wine heaven) there’s so many places you can choose from. You can read the separate blog post about eating in Logroño.

The final part of the Camino takes part in Galicia, and it’s the most popular. Rachel, one of our Destination & Adventure Specialists wrote a blog post about the food in the last stage of the Camino. Enjoy!

Read more about what & where to eat and drink on the Camino
How fit do I need to be?

You will have a more pleasant experience if you do some hill-walking or aerobic exercise in the months prior to your Camino adventure! If your plan is to cycle the Camino, you should be comfortable cycling 100km per day.

**TRAINING TIPS**

If you do not currently enjoy a reasonable level of fitness, it may take many months of training to reach a suitable level of fitness to enjoy the Camino. It is essential to start slowly and gradually increase your fitness. Try to exercise for between 30 and 45 minutes, three times per week (walking, running, cycling or swimming) and go for longer walks or bike rides on the weekends, which should include some hills.

**SQUEEZE IN EXTRA WALKING**

- Switch all or part of your work commute. Park further away from the office, get off the train at increasingly earlier stops, or use public transport in the morning then walk home in the evening.

- When catching up with your friends or family, invite them for a walk. Bring them a takeaway coffee (in a reusable cup of course) and turn the countryside or local park into your moving café.

- You will need to get used to carrying a rucksack, so for your walks switch your work bag/handbag for your rucksack.

- It’s not a task! Walking is fun, great for the mind and body.

**You must consult your doctor before embarking on this trip if you answer yes to any of the following questions:**

- Have you got a heart condition?
- Do you frequently lose your balance, faint or have spells of severe dizziness?
- Have you got high blood pressure?
- Are you taking any prescription medication?
- Are you pregnant?

Read our blog for more training tips.
WHAT TO PACK
FOR YOUR CAMINO ADVENTURE

This kit list is a suggestion, and of course many items are down to personal preference. We hope you find the following suggestions useful when considering what to take on your trip. They are based in our own experiences and you may find other solutions will work equally well.

RECOMMENDED CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

As a general rule, no matter the distance and difficulty of your Camino, you should travel light. The less you carry the more you will enjoy the experience.

Planning what to take with you will largely depend whether you are going to be carrying everything you need or using our baggage transfer service.

BOOTS OR WALKING SHOES?
Keeping your feet happy and comfortable is essential. You have two choices when it comes to footwear. Traditionally boots were the only option but recent advances have meant walking shoes are becoming more popular.

Whichever you choose, ensure that they are comfortable and well-worn in. Check out our blog on “Top tips when buying walking boots”.

SOCKS
There is no point spending money on good boots or shoes and then not using the right socks. We would always recommend wearing just one pair of good quality walking socks. Again ask for advice in a specialist outdoor retailer.

Take a minimum of two pairs on your trip (preferably three). Personally our team swear by both Smartwool and Bridgedale. A great tip to prevent blisters is to coat your feet with Vaseline each morning and then put on your socks, this stops rubbing and blisters appearing.

RUCKSACK
Aside from your main bag, you still need a backpack to carry spare clothing, food and water as well as your overnight things where there is no baggage transfer or simply when walking from day-to-day. There are numerous models on the market, ideally yours should be 30-40 litres, comfortable and have a waistband.

WALKING POLES
Walking poles on the Camino are becoming more popular. Our team use them and recommend them. A pair is best but many walkers start with just one. Leki Makalu anti-shock poles are some of the best although there are numerous brands on the market. Check out our blog post on “The benefits of walking poles”.

CLOTHING
Our team generally walks in a loose fitting pair of comfortable walking trousers, shorts/zip-offs are great in summer. This, combined with a fleece and a breathable waterproof jacket and trousers take care of most weather conditions. Important: a good sun hat which covers the back of your neck is essential in the summer. Sunblock is vital even during cloudy and windy weather! A waterproof jacket and trousers are highly recommended if you are travelling to a destination where the weather can be inclement!

WATER CARRIER
A large water bottle is essential. Keeping hydrated is a key part of enjoying your day on the trail. Hydration systems with a reservoir in your pack and a drinking tube are becoming more popular and to tend to ensure you drink regularly. For more information visit our “Example kit list for the Camino de Santiago”.

Self Guided Walking Trips & Cycling Trips – Call +44 (0)141 530 3639 UK Office or (720) 487-9898 US Office
macsadventure.com 15
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is the Camino way-marked?
Way-marking is excellent. The routes are generally marked by two main symbols: a yellow arrow or seashell. It’s very easy to follow with every turn and twist of the route being clearly marked.

Do I have to speak the local language?
Having some knowledge of Spanish will certainly enhance your trip (see next page for some useful Spanish phrases and words). The local people will appreciate it!

What if I can’t walk a stage?
If for any reason you feel unable to walk on any day there are several options available. Public transport may be available to the next stop or you can ask your hotel reception to call a taxi.

What is the food like?
One of the greatest parts of any Camino is passing through varied and interesting places which come with a distinct cuisine. While on the Camino path even the smallest of villages will have a small restaurant, bar or shop to pick up provisions.

There’s also the ‘Menu del Dia’ (Menu of the Day), which is great value for money and normally include a starter, bread, main course, dessert and half a bottle of local wine for between 8 and 12 Euros.

What time is the Mass in Santiago de Compostela?
There are two different times for Mass in Santiago. There is a midday Mass and one at 1930. Both times can be busy so arriving early is recommended. The service is conducted in Spanish, however, it is highly recommended that you attend to celebrate your wonderful achievement.

Can I access drinking water on the route?
Yes, drinking water is pretty easy to come by. The tap water in Spain is safe to drink, though often not particularly pleasant, however, there are many opportunities to purchase drinking water along the route. There are also water fountains scattered along the route, which you can find in your guidebook. During stage 1, there is even a wine fountain! I kid you not.

Visit our blog for more FAQs about the Camino
PLEASANTRIES
Hello - Hola
Good morning - Buenos días
Good afternoon - Buenas tardes
Good night - Buenas noches
Yes - Sí
No - No
Please - Por favor
Thank you - Gracias

FOOD & DRINK
Breakfast - Desayuno
Lunch - Comida
Dinner - Cena
I'd like..., please - Quisiera..., por favor
How much is it? - ¿Cuánto cuesta?
Cheers! - ¡Salud!
Enjoy your meal - ¡Que aproveche!
Could I have the bill please? - La cuenta por favor
I'm vegan - Soy vegano (male) / vegana (female)
I'm vegetarian - Soy vegetariano / vegetariana
I'm gluten free - Soy celíaco/celíaca
Do you have gluten free options? - ¿Tenéis menú para celíacos?
What time is breakfast/dinner? - ¿A qué hora es el desayuno?/la cena
How much is it? - ¿Cuánto cuesta?

CYCLING
My bike is broken - Se me ha estropeado la bici
A puncture - Se me ha pinchado una rueda de la bici
A broken chain - Se me ha roto la cadena de la bici
Brakes don’t work - Los frenos no funcionan
Where is a safe place to leave my bike? - ¿Cuál es el sitio más seguro para dejar la bicicleta?
Where can I buy cycling equipment? - ¿Dónde puedo comprar accesorios para mi bicicleta? / ¿Dónde puedo comprar material de ciclismo?

HIKING
What time do you collect our bags? - ¿A qué hora recogéis las maletas?
Where do we leave our bags in the morning? - ¿Dónde dejamos las maletas por la mañana?
My name is ... and my booking is with Macs Adventure - Me llamo ... y tengo una reserva con Macs Adventure
I don't speak Spanish - No hablo español
Do you speak English? - ¿Habla inglés?
Where is the nearest...? - ¿Dónde está el ... más cercano?
Supermarket? - Supermercado
Bank? - Banco
Bus stop? - Parada de autobús
Pharmacy? - Farmacia
It hurts here - Me duele aquí
I am a pilgrim - Soy un peregrino
Where can I stamp my pilgrim’s passport? - ¿Dónde puedo sellar mi credencial?
I’m lost - Me he perdido
Can you tell me how to find my hotel? - ¿Podría indicarme dónde está mi hotel?
Where is the Camino? - ¿Dónde está el Camino?
Where can I find drinking water? - ¿Dónde hay fuentes de agua potable?
What’s the WiFi password? - ¿Cuál es la contraseña del wifi?
Do you sell blister plasters? - ¿Tenéis tiritas para ampollas?
Where is the toilet? - ¿Dónde están los aseos?

It would be useful to know some Basque and Galician phrases as the first stage of the Camino goes through the Basque Country and the last one ends in Galicia. Read this blog post for some phrases in Basque and Galician.
What to expect?

ACCOMMODATION

Your accommodation will be a mixture of city and rural hotels and hostels all with private rooms and en-suite facilities. They all offer a warm welcome to walkers, traditional hospitality and delicious local food.

ROUTE NOTES & MAPS

We provide a detailed information pack and guide book once your Camino is booked. A travel pack including route notes, local information and maps will be waiting for you at your first accommodation.

BAGGAGE TRANSFERS

We can arrange for your bags to be transferred from your accommodation as per your itinerary and moved onto your next overnight accommodation. This is an additional cost and is an option as part of the booking process.

By booking baggage transfers you can relax and focus on enjoying your Camino, walking each day with just a small day pack.

SUPPORT

24/7 Emergency telephone support from our office and local partners in the event you need assistance.

PILGRIMS’ PASSPORT

The Pilgrims’ Passport is issued by the Church of St James. We try to include this in your package on arrival when possible. Alternatively, you can easily obtain one at the start of your walk in the Pilgrims’ Office or the local church in town.

At the end of the walk in Santiago you can obtain your Compostela Certificate (only if you have walked at least the last 100km).

FOOD

A local continental breakfast is included each morning which will normally consist of tea/coffee, juice, bread, pastries, cereal, yoghurt, cold meats and cheese. From time to time, you may be offered hot options, and equally on occasion, breakfast offerings may be somewhat simpler (coffee, bread and orange juice).

Lunch and dinner are not included so you are free to choose from the available options. You can buy lunch from the local supermarket at your overnight stop or you can stop at many of the cafes en-route. Dinner is available either at your accommodation or nearby restaurants.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Our Camino Itineraries are developed to suit the majority of pilgrims but our Camino experts can of course tailor them to suit your needs.

We can add rest days along the way and include additional nights’ accommodation at the start and end of your walk.

We are also able to arrange taxi transfers for you in Spain (bookable in advance as a supplement). Please get in touch to enquire about how can we help with transfer arrangements.
HOW TO BOOK YOUR CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

3 DIFFERENT WAYS TO MAKE A BOOKING

ONLINE
Visit the Camino de Santiago tour pages on our website.
Select the trip you require and hit “book now” to choose dates.
You will be able to select your options and extras at the next stage before finalising your reservation.
All of our tours are available at www.macsadventure.com

BY PHONE
We love to chat. Call us and we can answer any questions you might have before booking on the phone.
+44 (0)141 530 8886 (UK)
1-866-355-1037 (US Toll Free)
720 487 9898 (US Local Number)

BY EMAIL
Email us at info@macsadventure.com with your trip requirements and we will get right back to you.

HOW THE BOOKING PROCESS WORKS

1. Get a quotation – We will tailor make an itinerary & quotation.

2. Provisional booking – Once a deposit is paid we’ll get to work securing your tour arrangements. I’m working on this just now.

3. Confirmed booking – Once we have confirmed your booking, you can make your travel arrangements, and begin the countdown.

4. Travel – Relax and have fun. We’re here for any support you may need.

5. Share – Enter our #MacsMoment contest, plus we will send you a link on your return to let you review your trip online.

BOOKING TERMS
All bookings are subject to your Booking Terms which are available on our website, just look under “About us” or visit http://www.macsadventure.com/about-us/contact-booking/booking-conditions/. You’ll get prices for the dates you wish to travel on by visiting our website too.
USEFUL RESOURCES

MAPS & GUIDEBOOKS

A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino de Santiago (Camino Francés): St. Jean Pied de Port - Santiago de Compostela: The Ancient Pilgrim Path also known as the Way of St James - John Brierley
ISBN: 978-1-912216-00-0

Camino de Santiago Maps Ninth Edition: St Jean Pied de Port - Santiago de Compostela (Camino Guides) - John Brierley
ISBN: 978-1-912216-03-1

RECOMMENDED READING

The Pilgrimage - A contemporary Quest for Ancient Wisdom. Paulo Coelho

The Journey in Between: A Thru-Hiking Adventure on El Camino de Santiago - Keith Foskett

RECOMMENDED WATCHING

Documentary - 6 Ways to Santiago - http://caminodocumentary.org/

The Way - 2011 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSVZKWcgw6c