

Spain: Landscapes from the Camino de Santiago

Tour-Only Itinerary

Soak up the rich history and cultures of northern Spain as you explore scenic local paths and highlights from the Camino de Santiago. Our local team has selected from over 50,000 miles of trails lacing the Iberian Peninsula to curate the very best of this trail network. Starting in the heart of Basque Country, a walk along the Camino's Northern Way brings you the spectacular coastal scenery of Cantabria—returning each evening to relax in historic accommodations. Walk the most idyllic segments of the Camino's French Way, visiting the charming, thatched huts of O Cebreiro, tasting traditional Galician *orujo*, and exploring a local vineyard perched above the Ribeira Sacra Canyon. Enjoy a scenic slice of the Camino's Finisterre Way as you walk among fragrant pines and eucalyptus into the city of Santiago de Compostela—where you'll spend an opulent evening at the incomparable Hostal dos Reis Católicos, located on the Plaza del Obradoiro next to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Along the way, your local Country Walkers leaders will enthrall you with tales of the Camino de Santiago and the ancient cultures of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, Basque Country, and beyond.



Highlights

- Stay in historic Spanish paradors for your entire trip, richly historic landmark buildings converted into luxury hotels with spacious rooms.

- Walk among a remarkably diverse array of landscapes, from rural coastal fields and cliffs to mountain villages and deep valleys and gorges.
- Hike the steep vineyard-laden slopes in Ribeira Sacra's spectacular Canyon de Sil, then enjoy a wine tasting and lunch with the family that runs the winery.
- See how a local shepherd and his border collie corral their rare Xalda sheep during a fascinating sheep-herding demonstration.
- Sample the beloved beverages of Galicia, including distilled apple cider and the Celtic-influenced Queimada, and learn how they are prepared.

On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Air Packages include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate (with challenging sections) with an average of 4 to 10 miles per day. Maximum elevation gains and losses during the walks range from 500 to 1,900 feet. There are daily ascents and descents that can be steep in sections and challenging due to uneven footing. The terrain is varied— dirt roads, paved, cobbled street, sandy and rocky coastal paths, and single-track hiking trails with loose stones or gravel, rocks, and roots. Some trails are exposed to the sun, making the level of difficulty more challenging during warmer weather.

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 61°/46°, May 67°/51°, June 74°/56°, July 79°/59°, August 80°/60°, September 76°/57°, October 67°/52°

Average Rainfall (in)

April 85, May 60, June 35, July 22, August 24, September 42, October 86

DAY 1

Join your *Spain: Landscapes from the Camino de Santiago* tour. Hike Quebrada Natural Park. Travel to Santillana del Mar

Costa Quebrada. 3 miles, easy to moderate. Travel to Santillana del Mar

If you arrive in Bilbao early, there may be time for you to visit the Guggenheim Museum before you meet your leaders at 12:00 p.m. in Bilbao, Spain. Please have lunch before we meet or get some quick *tapas* at the *tabernas* close to our hotel, as lunch today is on your own.

Your leaders will be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for walking. Hiking shoes are required.

Travel one hour and 20 minutes to the outskirts of Santander and the heart of the Natural Park of Costa Quebrada in Spain's stunning Cantabria region. Here, dramatic cliffs, arches, islets, and coves tell a

dramatic and unique story of the interplay of coastal rock formations and the ebb and flow of the tides. This is a spectacularly scenic corner of Spain.

Begin your Spanish amble on an easy scenic coastal trail along open pastures on a gravel road. Soon, the breathtaking Covacho beach appears, where crystalline waters kiss at a spit of sand that reaches out to a rocky islet. There'll be time to admire this remarkable vista before continuing to the Playa de Arnia. Here, magnificent rock formations rise just offshore. Some form parallel striations just above water and others rise up to massive walls.

Your walk traces a single-track pathway along one of the most impressive coastal vistas in Northern Spain, the Senda del Litoral. This stunning trail is an alternative route to the Camino Norte, one of the many pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela from points north.

At trail's end, you travel to one of Spain's most beautiful villages, Santillana del Mar, rubbing shoulders with many Camino pilgrims who overnight here. Before settling into your first parador – part of Spain's network of historic buildings gloriously restored into stunning hotels – join an illuminating walking tour of this eighth-century town. Stroll among the ochre-hued mansions and palaces as your leader regales you with legend and lore.

Back at your parador, get acquainted with your travel companions over a welcome drink. Then, head to the hotel's formal restaurant for a dinner of delectable regional specialties, paired with local wine.

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2

Travel to Asturias. Walk the coastal Camino Norte. Cheese tasting and lunch at farm

Coastal Camino Norte; 3-6 miles, easy to moderate, 400-ft. elevation gain and 600-ft. elevation loss

Enjoy a hearty breakfast, then travel 40 minutes to one of the most magnificent coastal regions of the Principality of Asturias. Here, you follow an invigorating footpath along the Camino Norte, one of the most spectacular segments of the Camino. Your seaside route traces open pastures and a series of cliffs, where you might meet sheep, cows, and horses. As your walk gets underway on flat trails, you pass

several green pastures, sea caves, and tiny villages before arriving at an overlook that affords sweeping views of the sea. Continuing on, after short shuttle, you pause for lunch at a local cheese farm. Here, owner Aurelio tends to goats and makes cheese in the traditional way. After a visit of his laboratory and farm, you sample his cheese and savor some local specialties during a cozy picnic lunch.

If there's time, avid walkers may continue to walk another two hours from Mirador de la Boriza, or the "stairway to nowhere," where you climb concrete steps for fantastic vistas of Llanes. Alternately, take a short ride to Llanes, a charming village overseen by the long, limestone ridge of the spectacular Sierra del Cuera. Explore on your own here, perhaps seeing the town's medieval tower and the Gothic Santa María del Conceyu church, before you gather with the rest of the group for short trip to the hotel.

Later, gather at your next stunning parador in Cangas de Onís, gateway to the soaring mountains known as the Picos de Europa. Enjoy local Asturian dishes and Spanish wine for dinner in the hotel restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3

Walk along Sella River to Cangas de Onís. Shepherding demonstration

Cangas de Onís; 4-7 miles, easy to moderate. 4 miles, easy, optional loop above Cangas de Onís

Start your day with a pleasant, easy walk along the Sella River, perhaps catching glimpses of morning kayakers or swimmers in the waters below. Your destination is the center of Cangas de Onís, renowned for its perfectly preserved Roman arched bridge. This was the site of the pivotal Battle of Covadonga in 722, the conflict that jumpstarted the *Reconquista* and established the Kingdom of Asturias. If you wish, take an optional 4-mile walk above the village through forests and tiny hamlets.

After your included lunch at a local "llagar," you retrace your steps back to the parador to meet a local shepherd, his border collie, and his rare Xalda sheep. Your new friends demonstrate the fine art of shepherding, an amazing display of how these highly trained dogs communicate with both humans and sheep.

On your return from lunch, there'll be time to explore your historic parador and its beautiful natural setting.

There is time to take a dip in the river before dinner at your leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4

Walk the coastal Camino Norte. Travel to Villafranca de Bierzo in Castilla y León

Camino Norte; 4 miles, easy to moderate, 250-ft. elevation gain. Travel to Villafranca de Bierzo

After a bountiful breakfast, travel to a gorgeous overlook to admire panoramas of mountains and sea. From here, you descend to the beach through misty pine groves, lush heather, and fields strewn with rocks. You will walk Camino Norte, past a few scenic ocean views with dramatic cliffs, before you gather with your group for a typical Asturian lunch. Before you bid farewell to this region, learn why the Asturian Cider Culture achieved global recognition as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. Then, travel by shuttle to Castilla and León. We'll break up the three-hour drive with scenic stops along the way.

At the end of today's journey you arrive in Villafranca de Bierzo, the region's "Little Compostela." Dripping with medieval and Jacobean character, this charming town is one of Spain's official Assets of Cultural Interest for its enormous complex. It also historically welcomed pilgrims who were too ill or injured to continue to Santiago de Compostela. During a walk next morning, discover its 16th-century castle and the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria. At the Church of Santiago the Apostle, step through the Door of Forgiveness, which offers those injured pilgrims the same indulgence they receive at the door at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

The remainder of the day is free for you to relax by the pool, take a sauna, or unwind with a glass of wine at an outdoor terrace. This evening, enjoy local dishes from Castilla and León, accompanied by local wine from Bierzo in the hotel restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

Walk into Galicia from Las Herrerías to O Cebreiro on the Camino

Frances. Travel to Monforte de Lemos. Celtic Queimada demonstration

Las Herrerías to O Cebreiro; 3 -5 miles, moderate, 2,000-ft. elevation gain. Travel to Monforte de Lemos

After breakfast, start your day with walking guided tour of Villafranca de Bierzo.

Then travel to the next trailhead in the hamlet of Las Herrerías. Today's walk along the Camino Frances delivers you to the spectacularly scenic and culture-rich region of Galicia, where you leave behind Mediterranean vegetation for countryside that evokes the British Isles – verdant pastures and ancient gray granite stone. Begin on the flat terrain of a lush valley. Then ascend up gentle slopes along a path bordered by moss-covered stone walls and shaded by chestnut trees. After you pass through the village of Fada, the wooded area opens to vistas of forest along the Atlantic coast.

Walk through the village of Laguna de Castilla and, soon after, cross the border from the province of León into Galicia. Your walk ends in the town of O Cebreiro, with its panoramic views over the province and the Royal Saint Mary's Church, built on the foundations of a pre-Romanesque church. Perhaps most importantly, you pause for a lunch of Galician specialties at an ancient hostelry. A Roman road predated the Camino here, and the *pallozas*—prehistoric stone homes—provide evidence of earlier people in the region.

After lunch on your own, the stunning snowcapped mountains of León serenade you as you travel to Monforte de Lemos. Upon arrival at your next parador, take time to stroll the beautiful gardens or have a swim in the pool. This evening, gather to learn about the Celtic tradition of Queimada, a blend of distilled spirit and citrus that is sometimes served with an incantation. Later, retreat to a private room in the parador and dine on exquisite Galician cuisine with an excellent wine from the Ribeira Sacra wine growing region.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Hike the vineyards of Ribeira in Canyon de Sil. Traditional Pottery and typical lunch at Galician home.

Canyon de Sil; 5 miles, 700-ft. elevation gain and loss, easy to moderate

Once you have enjoyed a leisurely breakfast, take a short drive to the Canyon de Sil, a deep, dramatic gorge considered the most spectacular vista in Galicia. Its walls soar some 1,500 feet above its river, creating a unique micro-climate that allows olive trees and grape vines to grow in abundance. Your walk begins above the cliffs through ancient chestnut and oak forests, then traverses the pathways of steep vineyards. Pavement, steps, and ramps point the way as you explore an environment where it's as challenging to prune the vines as it is to harvest the grapes. Machinery cannot manage these slopes, so it is all done by hand.

After a revitalizing hike, you take a short shuttle to tour a traditional pottery studio, concluding your visit with a tasting of local wine accompanied by local farm products. Later, return to your parador to unwind before you reconvene for a walk to Monforte de Lemos and a guided city tour. Here, the local guide will explore the old Jewish Quarter, a warren of cobbled lanes, such as Calle Zapaterías, where craftsmen and men of letters opened shops and offices. Dinner is on your own this evening, perhaps in town after your tour concludes.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7

Walk into Santiago de Compostela on Camino Finisterre.

Arrival in Santiago de Compostela. Camino Finisterre to Cathedral; 5 miles, easy to moderate, 600 ft. elevation gain and 400 ft. elevation loss

After breakfast, travel west past Santiago de Compostela. You arrive in Roxos to begin your final walk to the revered city, the most beautiful approach for its Fluvial Path along a tranquil stream and its well-preserved ancient mills. The Camino Finisterre leads you through Galicia at its most remote. You pass through fragrant eucalyptus forest, traverse rolling pastures and open fields, and stroll through tiny villages unchanged by time. Though you are surrounded by such sylvan beauty, the city and its sublime Cathedral are not far away.

Once in Santiago de Compostela, you make your way through the Old Town to the venerated Cathedral. Narrow granite-cobbled streets loop past the Plaza de Cervantes with its small statue of the writer, and on to the Plaza de Obradeiros, overlooked by the Cathedral's main façade. The grand plaza is crowded with pilgrims who have walked for weeks or even months. After the lunch at your leisure, meet a local guide for

a walking tour of Santiago de Compostela, including entrance to the Cathedral. Construction of this Cathedral, now a UNESCO World Heritage site, began in 1075 over the remains of a pre-Romanesque church. Expansion and embellishment continued from the 16th through the 18th centuries as it gained importance as an Episcopal see and place of pilgrimage—the third most important destination for Christians after Rome and Jerusalem

After time to absorb the ornate splendor, you step into your final parador, the spectacular Hostal de Reies Catolicos, with its privileged location right on the plaza. Once you settle in, explore more in the lively pedestrian Old Town, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in its entirety for its wealth of historical buildings.

This evening, gather at your parador for a very special farewell dinner in an elegant private room we've reserved for the occasion. Toast your spectacular week in Northern Spain and dine on a delectable meal of local specialties.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8

Santiago de Compostela. Your *Spain: Landscapes from the Camino de Santiago* tour concludes

After breakfast, bid farewell to your travel companions and depart at your leisure by the hotel's check-out time of 11:00 a.m. The hotel can assist with transportation arrangements.

If you wish, early morning, you may plan to attend the daily mass at the Cathedral, a breathtaking gathering, both for the Cathedral's grandeur and for the sense of accomplishment and emotion in the pilgrims who have arrived here from the many Camino routes. The *peregrinos'* final steps lead to the statue of Saint James at the Cathedral's entrance.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

	Air Package	Tour Only
Exceptional boutique accommodations and historic Spanish paradores	✓	✓
16 on-tour meals: 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 5 dinners	✓	✓
Local leaders with you throughout tour	✓	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓	✓
Roundtrip airfare	✓	
One extra night in Bilbao, at boutique 4-star Miro Hotel before and one extra night in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, at a 5-star historic parador	✓	
Airport car service for arrival and departure	✓	
Pre- and post-tour breakfasts	✓	
Business-class upgrades available	✓	