

Northern Way



Primitive Way



Inland Way



Lebaniego Way



The Northern Ways to Santiago



galicia

**BASQUE
COUNTRY**



**Cantabria
Infinita**

**Asturias
paraíso natural**



españaverde



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The Northern Ways to Santiago



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The Northern Ways: a gateway to discovery

In 1987, the Council of Europe awarded the Ways of Saint James the status of First European Cultural Route, carefully considering the potential of these routes in raising awareness of European identity, in the valorisation of Cultural Heritage, and the creation of a space where European citizens can enjoy cultural tourism and leisure.

This is, in fact, an entire network of routes that joins European Peoples, from different countries and different realities; routes steeped in the historical and cultural memory of the people.

This capacity for discovery, for combining geography, history, religion and tourism, and the need to offer the essential information required before embarking on the pilgrimage, has moved us, the Governments of the Basque Country, Cantabria, Asturias, Galicia, Navarre and La Rioja, to publish this Guide to the Northern Ways of Saint James.

People, ideas, and culture travelled on the Northern Ways... The pilgrims who followed it helped make Europe a place of shared beliefs and values along the different routes making up these Ways: the Camino de la Costa (Coastal Way, Irun – Santiago), Camino Primitivo (Original Way, Oviedo – Santiago), Camino del Interior (Inland Way, Irun – Vitoria-Gasteiz – La Rioja – Santiago), Camino Baztanés (Urdazubi/Urdaiz – Arre) and Camino Lebaniego (San Vicente de la Barquera – Santo Toribio de Liébana). The monastery of Liébana has been a jubilee pilgrimage site in its own right since 1512 thanks to its relic, the largest piece of the True Cross or Lignum Crucis, a privilege it has shared with Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago de Compostela since the Middle Ages. The Way of Saint James began the construction of Europe, and represents a historical continuity, an attractive human and cultural trend that encourages the strengthening of inherited values such

as democracy and respect for human rights, and thus to ensure we can live together in peace.

In recent years, the communities of northern Spain have networked together to enhance the centuries-old routes of St James' Way, along the northern edge of the Iberian Peninsula. This shared work is the foundation for the achievement of July 2015, when these pilgrimage routes were recognised as part of a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The Northern Ways of Saint James are a first-rate European channel for cultural exchange and offer the perfect chance to enjoy an unforgettable life experience. The Way combines History and histories; there is architecture, art, music, theatre, different cultural and linguistic realities; there is food & drink, landscape and nature; there is leisure and tourism... in short, there is **humanity**, thousands of people walking with an open attitude and a kind heart, people who are keen to meet others, to discover, to communicate and to share.

The Ways of Saint James, and in this case, the Northern Ways, are an opportunity to revive some of the best values a human being can have: living together and sharing with people from different origins, the enrichment that comes with the exchange of cultural identities, respect for human dignity, and a common culture as a guarantee for a peaceful co-existence.



The Ways to Santiago: a thousand years of history for millions of histories

What is it about the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela that has attracted people of all kinds for over a thousand years? What secrets are hidden in the remains of Saint James that even now, in the 21st century, move thousands and thousands of people to embark on a journey of dusty tracks, damp forests and sheer mountains? How have these mediaeval routes survived to this day in such excellent condition? In other words, what is it about these pilgrim paths that seduces those who walk them?

The answers to these and other questions can only be given by those who take thirty days out of their everyday life to throw themselves heart and soul into a journey spanning over 800 kilometres that separate the Pyrenees from Galicia. There are as many experiences as there are people, but only one origin, only one Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, and only one legend of Saint James.

The history of the pilgrimages to Santiago began some two millennia ago, in the year of our Lord 44, when Saint James the Apostle, also known as the Son of Thunder, was beheaded in the Holy Land. His disciples took his body to a boat on the coast of Palestine and set sail. Some time later, they miraculously reached the shores of Galicia, where they carried the remains inland. After coming face to face with the hostile Queen Lupa at whose house they had begged for help, the men buried the apostle in a marble chest, the site of which would remain a secret for eight centuries.

It was not until the year 830 that a Galician hermit found the tomb. Pelayo, as the discoverer of the site was called, informed the bishop of Iria Flavia, Teodomiro, of this, who visited the place in question and ruled that the remains were, indeed, those of Saint James the Apostle. The news of the miraculous discovery



(the nature and rigour of which were questioned from the outset) spread like wildfire all around the Iberian Peninsula, both in those territories that had been conquered by the Moors, and in the free kingdoms of the north. The King of Asturias, Alfonso II the Chaste, was the first to make the pilgrimage to Galicia from Oviedo to pay his respects to Saint James. Without realising it, he actually inaugurated the most primitive of all the Ways: the route that joins the capital city of Asturias with Santiago inland, through Grado, Cornellana, the Puerto de Palo pass and Lugo.

🌻 The reasons behind the discovery

The reasons behind the finding of the body of Saint James, as well as the curious circumstances surrounding the discovery, have been debated for centuries. Did Saint James really go to the Iberian Peninsula to Christianise it not long after the death of Jesus Christ? Is the hypothesis that his body was found 800 years after all trace of it had been lost really credible? Whose remains are venerated in the crypt of the Cathedral of Santiago? Do they belong to Prisciliano, the heretic who fostered the largest congregation of the faithful in Galicia? Or do they belong to a dog or a horse? as Martin Luther claimed, in his fervent thirst for reformation. The variety of theories is as long as it is wide. There are those who uphold that the finding was exploited for political reasons, to give heart and motivation to those who were fighting to recover the different Iberian kingdoms from Muslim hands, land that had been conquered just a hundred years before. The Christian soldiers would not only have further reason to ferociously defend the Cantabrian coast, but they would also have direct help from Saint James himself. This was the case in the battle of Clavijo (La Rioja) in the year 844: in the course of the battle, the apostle suddenly appeared to the men, riding a white horse and brandishing a sword. His intervention, believed to

be bloody and brutal, as shown in the numerous representations of Saint James the Moor-slayer that can be seen in churches all along the Way, was decisive in gaining victory against the Arabs.

Others believe there is a less war-related reason: the Way of Saint James would be an attempt to Christianise an old and sacred pilgrimage route that they walked to see the sepulchre of the Sun and the world of the dead at the Galician coastal cape of Finisterra, the Romans' Finis Terrae. In the early centuries AD, the walkers would head there to get a close glimpse of death, that of the Sun, sinking into the Atlantic waters, and this symbolic experience would give them strength. The fact that the Milky Way points westwards, reinforced the ancient superstitions that allured them to walk in that direction. In fact, this is why one of the most common names for the Way of Saint James is "The Milky Way".

🌻 Europe looks to Jacobsland

Whatever the reason for the finding, just a few years after the remains of Saint James were announced to be in Galicia, thousands of people took to their feet and embarked on the walk to the west of what is now Spain to pay homage. They came from all over Europe, and turned the city of Santiago into a major

reference point, on a par with other holy places for Christianity around the world: Rome, where the venerated remains of Saint Peter were kept; or the Holy Land, where the life of Jesus Christ unfolded. As the pilgrimages and worship of the apostle grew, the church where the remains were kept also had to undergo change.

The modest pre-Romanesque constructions of the Asturian monarchy gave way to the grander Romanesque style, most notably in the Portal of Glory, a masterpiece of medieval art created by Master Mateo. In the 18th century, the growing wealth of the city prompted it to add an impressive Baroque façade to the cathedral, which now faces Praza do Obradoiro.

In the Middle Ages, Europe turned its sights to this remote region in which the remains of Saint James were venerated. In German documents of the time, there are even references to the Iberian Peninsula as 'Jacobslanð', the land of Saint James, or Santiago. This, together with the consolidation of religious orders such as the Cluny order and the establishment of monasteries and convents, meant that there was a surge in the creation of a network of routes that would lead to Santiago de Compostela, and which were perfectly fit for people to walk: the houses were clustered together every few kilometres to make small hamlets and villages; the dreaded rivers could now be crossed, thanks to the construction of bridges;

pilgrims' hospitals provided care for those in need, etc.

All the roads had their purpose. The Inland Way, also known as the Bayonne route or the San Adrian Tunnel route, followed the path of one of the main communication channels between the Cantabrian coast and the plateau (through the Oria Valley) to then go on to connect with the trace of one of the oldest Roman roads, joining Burdigala (Bordeaux) and Asturica (Astorga), which is visible at the Llanada Alavesa, or Plains of Alava.

The Northern Ways (Primitive and Coastal) have different origins. In fact, it is believed that these were the first institutionalised routes to reach the Galician city. Back in around the year 1000, the peninsula was still one big battle ground where the Reconquest hostilities were being fought out, so the paths nearest to the Cantabrian Sea (in a geographically adverse land for the Moors) were the safest and farthest away from the raging war. The wide variety of commercial and fishing ports that dotted the Cantabrian coast also made it possible for people from all over Europe to come by sea and arrive at ports such as Deba, Santander or Avilés, from where they would continue on foot up to the apostle's tomb.

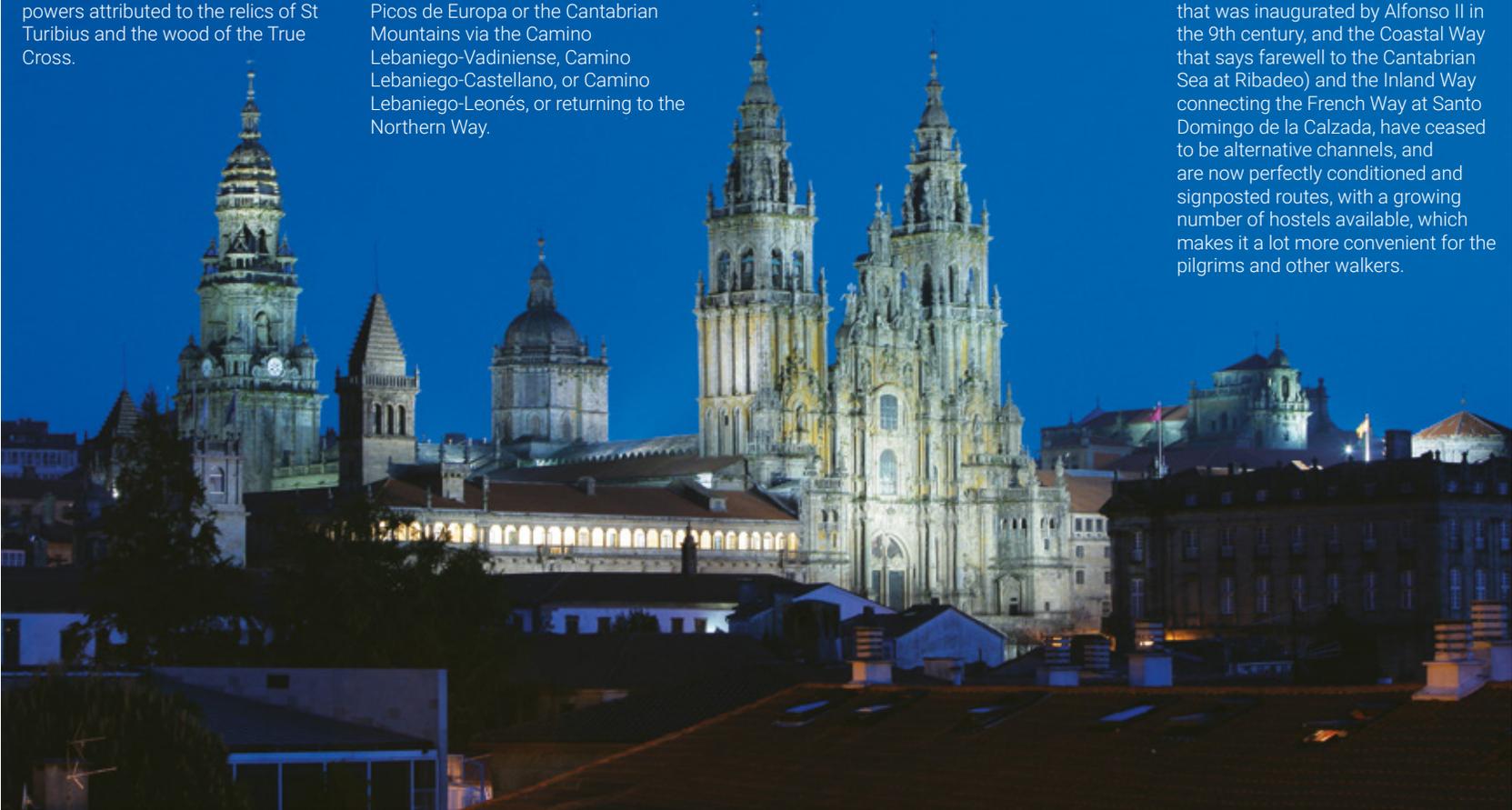
For other pilgrims, a visit to the *Lignum Crucis* in the Monastery of Santo Toribio was not to be missed.

In the Middle Ages, many pilgrims passed through Santo Toribio de Liébana on their way to Santiago de Compostela. The monastery was also a jubilee pilgrimage site in its own right, with miraculous curative powers attributed to the relics of St Turibius and the wood of the True Cross.

Some pilgrims would end their journey here, while many more continued on to Santiago. There were several routes linking Liébana to Santiago, all different and each with its own stamp, some crossing the Picos de Europa or the Cantabrian Mountains via the Camino Lebaniego-Vadiniense, Camino Lebaniego-Castellano, or Camino Lebaniego-Leonés, or returning to the Northern Way.

As the Reconquest advanced south, what was known as the French Way became more established. This route was fully recognised by the early 12th century, as reflected in the Codex Calixtinus.

Compared with the demands of the coastal mountain ranges and the river estuaries, the path that runs through the heart of Castile had a much more even route. These days, the two Coastal Ways (both the Primitive Way that was inaugurated by Alfonso II in the 9th century, and the Coastal Way that says farewell to the Cantabrian Sea at Ribadeo) and the Inland Way connecting the French Way at Santo Domingo de la Calzada, have ceased to be alternative channels, and are now perfectly conditioned and signposted routes, with a growing number of hostels available, which makes it a lot more convenient for the pilgrims and other walkers.



Practical tips

Although the essence of the Way lies in its simplicity (a person walking every day for almost a month), it is wise to bear in mind the most basic aspects of the pilgrimage, both regarding the practical side as well as health & hygiene. The decisions a person makes before leaving home will affect the success of their experience.



Backpack and clothing

The choice of backpack is fundamental. Although the final decision depends on each individual, it is highly recommendable to choose a pack that does not exceed a capacity of 60 litres, it should be ergonomic, cushioned on the parts that come into contact with the body, and have good, strong straps on the shoulders and waist. An inadequate backpack can ruin the pilgrimage. Ideally, the load should not exceed 10% of the person's body weight, i.e. if a person weighs 80 kilos, the backpack should not carry more than 8 kilos.

It is a common mistake to fill the backpack in excess, so it is important to be methodical when preparing your luggage. If you are doing the pilgrimage in summer, you will need no more than three T-shirts, three pairs of socks, three sets of underwear and a pair of trousers (long or short, depending on your preference), a light jersey or fleece, and a raincoat. The latter can be replaced with a rain cape, which is more awkward but very useful for particularly rainy days, and to protect your backpack. In the summer season, a light sleeping bag is more than enough for staying a night at a hostel, some of which will also have blankets available. In the event that the hostels are full, you can always sleep on the floor: for this reason, some pilgrims carry a light mat. Although hygiene is a standard, some people prefer to take a pillow cover of some sort, or even just a spare T-shirt to save for this purpose.



Do not forget a towel for after a shower (or a dip in the sea), and remember to carry several bags to separate clothes and objects inside the backpack, and to protect them against any possible storms. The quieter the bag, the better: at night, any noise in the hostel is magnified a hundredfold.

Two or three days of walking are usually enough for a person to realise what they do not really need (which can always be posted home) and what they are missing (which can be bought along the way) in their backpack.



Other objects

A set of trekking poles, or a good staff, considerably reduce the strain on your knees, particularly when going downhill, and the risk of injury. It is also useful protection against bad-tempered dogs! The Pilgrim's Shell, which is provided in many places, such as the provincial associations of Friends of the Way, are not compulsory but they are ideal for creating a bond with other people who are walking the Way to Santiago. Manners are a must, and respect is present throughout the journey. On the Way, in theory nobody knows anyone else, but everyone says hello.



Footwear

It is just as important to choose appropriate, good quality footwear as it is to get used to walking in it. Try out your boots a few weeks in advance, and get your feet used to them, as they are going to be used an average of eight hours a day for a whole month, if you are walking the whole Way. So it is advisable to prepare yourself physically for the Way in the same footwear that you will be using on the pilgrimage. The choice of suitable socks is also fundamental. There are anti-blisther socks on the market that have had good results, and also trekkers who have their own tricks, such as wearing two pairs of socks: one thick pair and another light pair,

although an infallible remedy for preventing the dreaded blisters has yet to be discovered. Heat, sweat, the different road surfaces and the arduous pace of the Way usually take their toll on your feet, however many preventive measures you take. If you are doing the walk in summer, a pair of light hiking boots, or even a good pair of trainers that hold your feet firmly, will be sufficient. In winter, the harsh elements and rain make it necessary to take other measures, such as water and mud-resistant Gore-Tex boots. Apart from the footwear used on the walk, it is also a good idea to carry a pair of light, comfortable shoes, sandals, pumps or even flip-flops, for those moments of rest or visits to monuments at the end of each day's walk. If you do not pack a pair of flip-flops, it would be advisable to take a pair of plastic socks or slippers for showers at the hostels.



First-aid kit

You should carry a first-aid kit with you for any possible cuts and bruises or other similar injuries that your feet may suffer along the route. A basic first-aid kit should include: iodine, surgical spirit, sewing needle and thread, scissors, plasters, sterile gauze pads, medical tape, aspirin or paracetamol, anti-inflammatory cream, and some kind of anti-diarrhoea medication.

On a preventive level, you should carry sun protection cream, lip balm, insect repellent, vaseline (to prevent rubbing on thighs and feet) and a skin moisturising cream that can be soothing after the efforts of the day.



Hygiene

Your wash bag should include everything you use in your everyday life, but reduced to a minimum: the items that are particular to each sex, toothbrush and paste, a bar of soap (for personal use as well as for cleaning clothes), nail clippers, toilet paper (one roll), and a small towel. Although to a lesser extent than on the French Way, many hostels have a washing machine (some, but not many, even have a tumble dryer) and washing powder available.



Accessories and Documentation



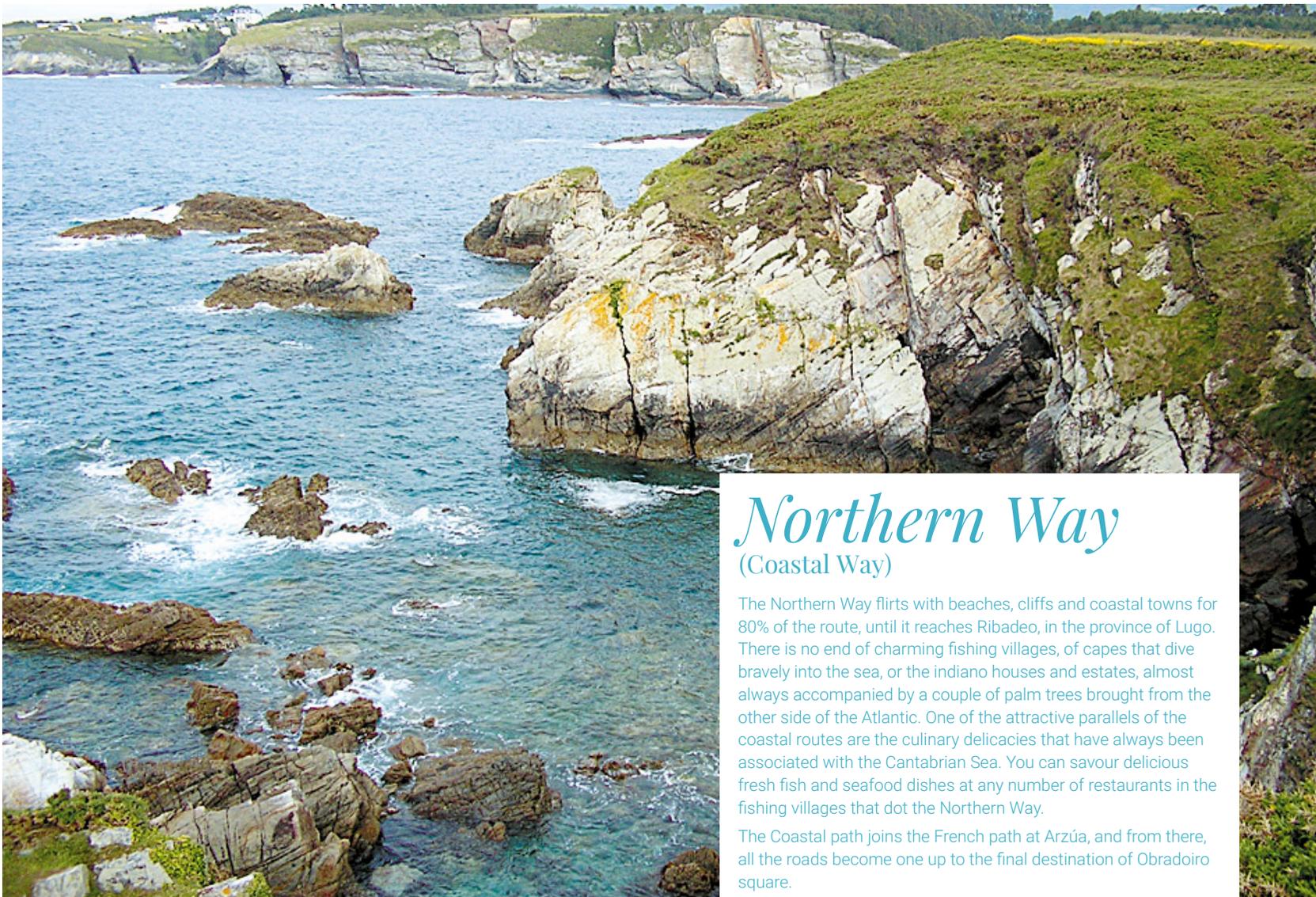
There are some small objects, for example, clothes pegs (half a dozen would be sufficient) or safety pins, that can be of great use on the walk: they can both be used to hang wet or damp clothes on your backpack, and thus take advantage of the walk to dry them in the sun. A cap or hat can become your best ally, as can a penknife, ear plugs, a small torch, the necessary documents (I.D., Social Security or medical insurance card,

credit card, and, of course, your credential). Make sure you keep all these documents protected in a plastic envelope or sealed waterproof bag. It is not advisable to carry too much money in cash: there are cash machines all along the route.



Food & drink

Except for a few specific stretches, the Northern Ways are perfectly supplied with bars and restaurants, where you can eat the usual three meals of the day (breakfast, lunch and dinner). Some hostels have a kitchen and utensils for you to prepare your own food. Even so, it is always advisable to carry a small, light stock in your backpack, with basic food and drink items, such as dried fruits and nuts, cereal bars, something sweet (chocolates, biscuits...), isotonic drinks, energy bars and gels, sugary drinks, etc. There are many towns and villages along the way in which you can fill up on drinking water, so all you need to do is carry a medium-sized flask or bottle, with a capacity of between 0.75 and one litre.



Northern Way (Coastal Way)

The Northern Way flirts with beaches, cliffs and coastal towns for 80% of the route, until it reaches Ribadeo, in the province of Lugo. There is no end of charming fishing villages, of capes that dive bravely into the sea, or the indiano houses and estates, almost always accompanied by a couple of palm trees brought from the other side of the Atlantic. One of the attractive parallels of the coastal routes are the culinary delicacies that have always been associated with the Cantabrian Sea. You can savour delicious fresh fish and seafood dishes at any number of restaurants in the fishing villages that dot the Northern Way.

The Coastal path joins the French path at Arzúa, and from there, all the roads become one up to the final destination of Obradoiro square.



Irún - Hondarrribia > Donostia-San Sebastián (24.6 km)

< Irún - Hondarrribia 0 km > 859.55 km

The start of the Northern Way could not be more laden with symbolism: it sets off at the Santiago bridge crossing the River Bidasoa, the natural border dividing France and Spain, or in Hondarrribia, if you want to cross by boat. Major road and rail networks start and end here, as it is has been a point of reference since the Middle Ages for those who were on the pilgrimage and dreaming of reaching Santiago. This first stage is a perfect synthesis of the constant features that will appear throughout the journey: mountain ranges beside the sea, as is the case with Jaizkibel or Ulía; estuaries that need to be overcome, such as the one in Pasaia; paths with splendid views over the coastline; fishing villages, such as Hondarrribia; and the perfect ending, Donostia-San Sebastian, a city of undeniable natural beauty and charm, the chosen summer residence of kings and queens. This border crossing that makes it possible to overcome the Pyrenees along the coast, has great secular importance, not only for humans, but for the migrating birds who make a stop every year at the Txingudi wetlands.



City Hall Irún



The Bay separates Pasai Donibane from Pasai San Pedro >

Irún (59,673 pop.)

Even as far back as Roman times, Irún (called Oiasso by the Latins) has been a city accustomed to the movement of people and one with a significant commercial tradition. In the Late Middle Ages, the people on the pilgrimage would approach the Church of Nuestra Señora del Juncal to worship the 12th century image of Our Lady, the oldest in Gipuzkoa, and this custom is still practiced to this day.

Hondarrribia (17,092 pop.)

There are over 800 years of history behind this walled town with two sides: one mediaeval, and another coastal, looking out onto the Cantabrian Sea and the Txingudi bay. Possibly its most delightful spot is the Plaza de Armas, or main square, which was governed over by the castle of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, an impressive stone building with hardly any windows. Leaving its old quarter, you will see the odd hint at the pilgrims' Way: the 15th century Chapel of Santiagotxo, dedicated to Saint James the Apostle, as the route moves into Jaizkibel territory. After climbing the mount, we will find the Sanctuary of Guadalupe where a 15th century Black Madonna is kept.

Lezo (6,002 pop.)

Nestled at the feet of Jaizkibel, and at one of the ends of the extensive bay at Pasaia, Lezo has a pretty old quarter in which the Basilica of Santo Cristo stands out. Inside,

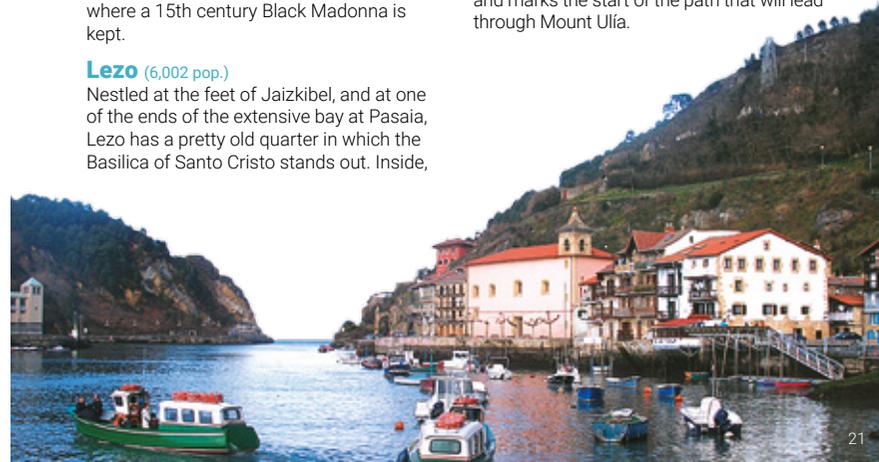
there is an unusual image of Jesus Christ on the cross, crucified and beardless, which was not at all common in that type of sculpture.

Pasai Donibane (2,328 pop.)

It is difficult for anyone who visit this charming little fishing village with its brightly coloured windows to get lost: Pasai Donibane only has one street that runs through the village from north to south. Around this street we will find the village churches, such as the Church of San Juan Bautista, which is particularly worth visiting as it has a fine Baroque altarpiece, small palaces, such as the one in which Victor Hugo stayed at one time, and its highly recommended seafood restaurants.

Pasai San Pedro (3,000 pop.)

Once through the fiord of the inlet, using the boat service available, you come to the neighbouring fishing village of Pasai San Pedro. This was also structured around a narrow cobblestone road. Go on to the harbour to take the steep steps up to the lighthouse of La Plata. This lookout point of breathtaking beauty is set on a rocky crag and marks the start of the path that will lead through Mount Ulía.





Donostia/San Sebastián

(180,179 pop.)

< Irun - Hondarribia 24.6 km > 834.95 km

After arriving at Donostia-San Sebastian, after crossing Mount Ulía, the first sight to behold the eyes is the Zurriola beach, today under the spell of two modern buildings designed by Rafael Moneo, the Kursaal Centre (9). The so-called 'Cubes' (1999) have been one of the most recent projects to be completed in a city that has seen architectural and development excellence become a mainstay for over a

century now. Since the old walls encasing Donostia-San Sebastian were demolished midway through the 19th century, seeing the city emerge as a summer residence for the royal family, the city has undergone an incredible metamorphosis. At this point it went from being a humble fishing village to a provincial capital that looked to European cities such as Paris and Barcelona for aesthetic reference.

The Way of Saint James has been recorded since mediaeval times: many of those who walked to Santiago stopped off at the monastery dedicated to San Sebastian, on the site of what is today the Palacio Miramar. Before the River Urumea was channelled, there was also a Templar's mission next to what is now the bridge of Santa Catalina, which has long

disappeared. The city was a reference point for hikers who avoided the Pyrenees to enter Spain, and its scallop-shaped bay, La Concha, appeared almost as a knowing nod to the pilgrims' emblem par excellence: the scallop shell, making it a location to be captured in the people's photographic memory forever.

1. Church of San Vicente

This Gothic church is the oldest building in the city, having been constructed in the 16th century and having survived the devastating fire that swept through Donostia-San Sebastian in 1813. Its sombre, majestic interior holds a Renaissance-style altarpiece with fine foreshortened figures in movement.



2. Church of Santa María

It was constructed out of the funds provided by the Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas, who traded with the American colonies. The Baroque-style building dates back to the 18th century, and is nestled between Mount Urgull and the *Parte Vieja*, or old quarter. The black sculpture of the *Virgen del Coro*, or Our Lady of the Choir, is worshipped here, as she is the patron of the city.



3. Constitución Square

This arcaded square is the very heart of the old quarter, and was built from scratch after the fire in the 19th century. It is dominated by the former Town Hall building, and the numbers on the balconies refer to the stands that used to be set up in bygone years when bullfights were held here.



4. Oquendo Square

It is in this square, next to the River Urumea, that we find one of the most spectacular monumental settings in San Sebastian, living proof of the city's golden age in the early 20th century. The monument to Admiral Oquendo is flanked by the Victoria Eugenia Theatre and the Hotel Maria Cristina, epicentre of the Film Festival held here in September.

5. Mount Urgull

The smallest of the mounts in San Sebastian used to be a major stronghold in times of war, as it was completely fortified and crowned by the castle of La Mota, whose origins date back to the 12th century. Today it is a park with many interesting paths and hidden monuments amid the green, for instance, the English Cemetery.

6. Cathedral of Buen Pastor

The neo-Gothic cathedral, built in the late 19th century, is the tallest building thanks to its spire, measuring over 80 metres. The modern urban expansion area has built up around the cathedral, forming a perfect square filled with beautiful sandstone buildings.



7. Miramar Palace

Riding on a stretch of land with privileged views over the bay of La Concha, this building has a notable British influence and was opened in 1863 to accommodate Queen María Cristina and her family during their summer holidays.



8. The Wind Comb

"The Wind Comb", Eduardo Chillida's most famous work of art is a perfect clasp for the western side of the bay. The sculptural ensemble, made in his characteristic weathering steel, has, for over three decades now, been particularly radiant on stormy days, when the sea engulfs it with gigantic waves.





After leaving the capital of Gipuzkoa, the Way once again takes on a rugged complexion and this is evident in three mounts: Igeldo, Mendizorrotz and Kukuarri, that accompany the pilgrimage for about fifteen kilometres until the former whaling town of Orío appears. The journey through this exposed mountain range once again offers us veritable treats for the eyes. The lonely farmhouses, the odd cattle farm and the vegetation-ridden paths are the standard here. Orío is another of those villages or towns that boasts ancient pilgrim credentials, with its old quarter on a slope and another estuary that, this time, can be crossed using a bridge. As the route takes us closer to Zarautz, and climbs the Talaimendi hill, we will gradually see the vineyards that provide the fruit for what is locally known as "white gold": txakoli. The next stop is Zarautz, another of the summer gems in the Cantabrian Sea, with one of the best sandy beaches for sunbathing, swimming and surfing.



Mount Igeldo



Zarautz beach ▶

Igeldo (1,027 pop.)

A hundred years ago, Igeldo was a barely developed mountain, with a strong rural nature and populated by the odd farmhouse. It is situated on the western side of the bay of La Concha, enclosing it before starting another coastal mountain range with three, very different, small peaks: the Igeldo itself, Mendizorrotz, which stands at just over 400 metres high, and Kukuarri, at 365 metres, which fade away next to the River Oría. It was from their quarries that tons of rock were extracted and later used to construct the main buildings in San Sebastian and the surrounding area. At the top of Kukuarri there is an image of the Madonna and Child, sculpted by the Orío artist, Jorge Oteiza.

Orío (5,901 pop.)

Long before pontoons were built across the river, those who arrived at Orío had to cross the river by boat. Times have changed, and now two huge structures make it possible to cross the water, but Orío is still one of the towns in Gipuzkoa with the most devotion to the route of the apostle. On the outskirts of the town, you will find the chapel dedicated to San Martín de Tours, with its Romanesque foundations and beautiful views over the sea. The porch here was a great refuge for hikers. The origins of Orío date back to the 12th century, as its Goiko Kale, or old quarter, shows. This is a gorgeous mediaeval hub on a slope, and the houses here form a kind of corridor that leads to the Church of San Nicolás. The Palacio de Iturriaga houses the

Way of Saint James Interpretation Centre in the Basque Country.

Zarautz (23,040 pop.)

Once past the Talaimendi hill, the sea shows its face again, along with the protected biotope dunes of Iñurritza, in Zarautz. The coastal town is one of the jewels of the Basque summer, thanks to its extensive beach (it is the largest in the whole of Gipuzkoa), its promenade and annual surfing competitions. Zarautz stands out for its magnificent tower houses, such as the Tower of Luzea or the Palace of Narros, although it is the Church of Santa María la Real that has most association with the Way to Santiago, being home to the sepulchre of an anonymous pilgrim who asked to be buried in this church in the 16th century. Santa María la Real also holds a major archaeological site with Roman and mediaeval remains.

The Chapel of Santa Bárbara, on a privileged site on a cliff, bids the hiker farewell, as we continue our journey along a sea of txakoli vineyards until reaching the next destination. Hikers can also follow the coastal road, which has been specially prepared for pedestrians, to reach Getaria after about 5 kilometres. A splendid medieval street and the chapel of Santa Bárbara, in an outstanding clifftop setting, bid farewell to walkers, who will cross a sea of Txakoli vineyards until their next destination. Outside the official routes, you have the option of taking the walking-friendly coastal road for 5 kilometres, to Getaria.



Donostia-San Sebastián

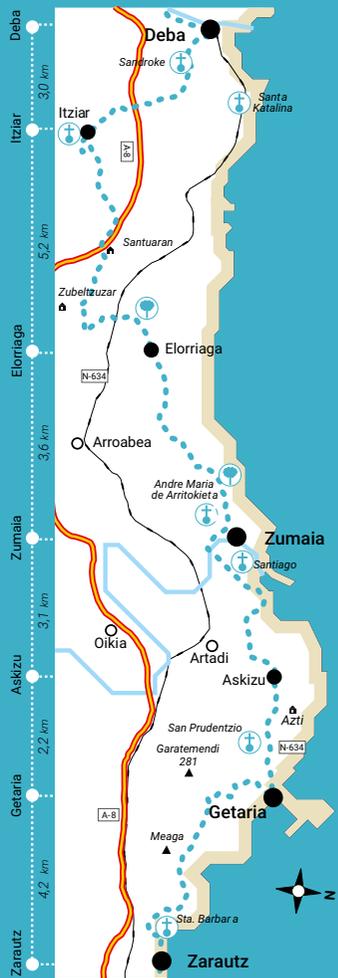
Donostia-San Sebastián

Donostia-San Sebastián

Donostia-San Sebastián

Donostia-San Sebastián

Donostia-San Sebastián



The Way continues across the mount, without losing sight of the Cantabrian waters, and stopping at the main fishing ports in Gipuzkoa. The stage starts and finishes in typical seaside enclaves, but in between it makes a stop at the Itziaz heights to catch a glimpse of the Basque countryside that will become increasingly more familiar in the forthcoming days. The gentle hills of the previous days will give way to more abrupt routes, surrendering to the natural course of the rivers and brooks that start just a few kilometres north of here. In days gone by, both Getaria and Deba were important ports of entry for those arriving by sea, who later continued the route on foot along the coast. There is also no shortage of religious icons, worshipped by the faithful for centuries, both the locals and those visiting from afar, who come to sanctuaries such as the Itziaz, seduced by the stories they have heard about the Black Madonna, one of the oldest and most venerated in Gipuzkoa.



Getaria with "El Ratón" (The Mouse) in the background



Stretch of road between Zumaia and Deba ▶

Getaria (2,791 pop.)

The profile of the birth place of Juan Sebastian Elcano, the first seaman to sail around the world, is characterised by the mount of San Antón, popularly known as the Mouse of Getaria. The sailor's figure is commemorated in several monuments around the town. The Church of San Salvador, one of the finest Gothic examples in the Basque Country, is perfectly integrated into the mediaeval quarter, thanks to the tunnel passing under it. Some of the best grilled fish restaurants in Gipuzkoa are concentrated in the port area.

We leave the town along the steep street of Calle Herrerieta, to continue along the Askizu road, where we can see the Gothic-style Church of San Martin de Tours, until arriving at the Gaintza and Agerregitxiki farmhouses. To the right of the latter, we will once again take the road that, around 600 metres further on, leads to the GI-3392 road. We will continue along this road until we come to the Azti farmhouse, where we will take the path that leads us directly to the district of Askizu.

Zumaia (9,746 pop.)

The Santiago beach welcomes us and, beside it, the house that the painter, Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945), had built, which today has been converted into a museum. Zumaia lies next to the mouth of the River Urola, which is easily crossed to come to the

Church of San Pedro, with its appearance more reminiscent of a fortress than a religious temple. Inside, there is an interesting Renaissance-style altarpiece by Juan Antxieta. Even though the Way leaves the coastline and moves inland, it is worth visiting the Chapel of San Telmo or the Itzurun beach to appreciate the geological treasures that the cliffs on the way to Deba offer: what is known as flysch.

Deba (5,427 pop.)

The rural district of Itziaz is the highest point in this stage (400 metres above sea level, with unbeatable views of the coast), dominated by the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora de Itziaz, where one of the seven Black Madonnas of Gipuzkoa are kept. After a steep descent, we reach Deba, a town with a tourist past that, to this day, has conserved lovely holiday buildings on the seafront. Its port was an important commercial hub for things such as the export of Castilian wool to Flanders. Many people who were joining the pilgrimage also passed through here. The polychrome portico at its Church of Santa María is its most prized artistic feature, along with the cloister that was created in the 16th century. The old quarter possesses some hidden surprises in the form of colonial houses bearing their coats of arms, and tower houses, such as the Sasiola.

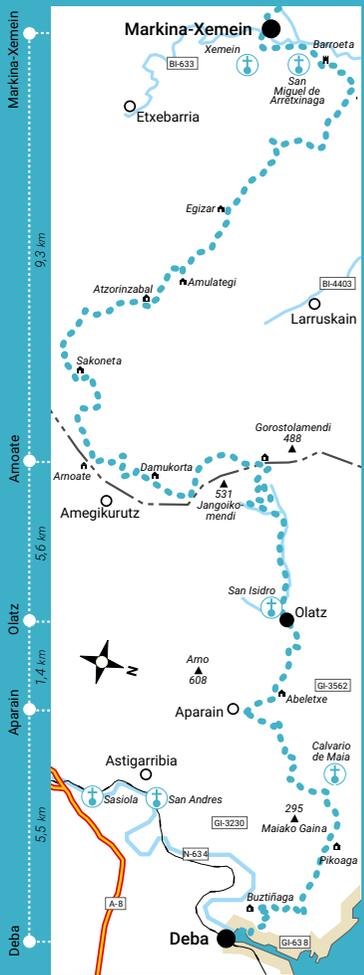




Deba > Markina-Xemein

(21.8 km)

< Irun - Hondarrabia 90.5 km > 769.05 km



The vision of the River Deba becoming one with the sea is the last scene of the Basque coastline that you will see until you come to the border with Cantabria. From now on, the path reveals another side of the Basque Country: mountainous, wooded, shaded, much more taxing, and yet, at the same time, unique and beautiful. You can choose between the Sasiola route and the Calvario route to reach Aparain, where both routes meet, heading in the direction of Mount Arno. This stretch is characterised by dense pine forests, country lanes and an atmosphere that inspires solitude. Few stretches of the Northern Way to Santiago are so far removed from civilisation as this path we are on now, in direct contact with nature. The path finally leaves the Gipuzkoa coast and dives into rural Biscay. The landscape is the same, but the surprises are endless: the noble Markina-Xemein is the ideal reward at this point on the route.



Laranga village (Mutriku)



Barroeta tower (Markina-Xemein) ▶

Valle de Olatz y Mutriku (5,325 pop.)

After crossing the River Deba, go up to the neighbourhood of Laranga de Mutriku and then to the chapel of El Calvario, with splendid views of the coast. Next, head for Aparain and then down to the idyllic little valley of Olatz. A small rural district, with the same name as the river bed, formed by several disperse farmhouses and hamlets, and arranged around the Chapel of San Isidro, will be our only company until we tackle the Arno pass. Despite its modest height (barely 500 metres), this group of peaks is the highest point along the Way as it passes through the Basque Country. Almost without realising it, in these lands we will cross the border between the historical territories of Gipuzkoa and Biscay.

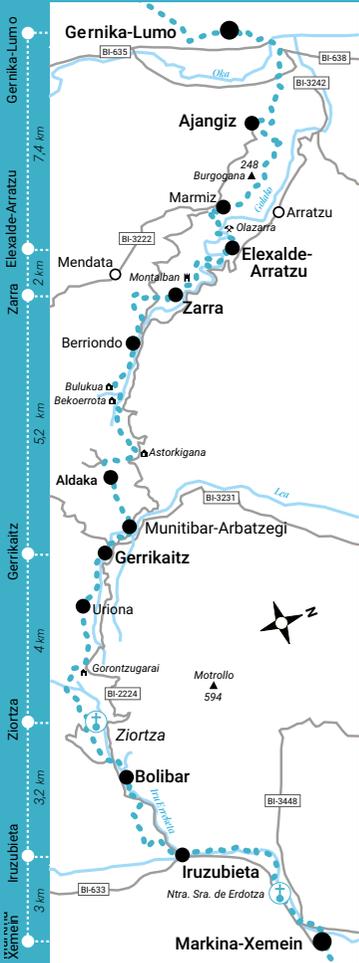
About 5 kilometres from the main pilgrims' Way, Mutriku lies on a hillside that falls sharply over the sea, which in the past made it a port of entry for those on their way to Santiago. At the highest point of this whaling village (evidence of which can be seen by the whale on its coat of arms), the Neoclassical Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción is situated. Beyond this break, Mutriku is known for its narrow

and steep streets, and its magnificent mediaeval historical quarter, with a number of monuments and houses bearing coats of arms.

Markina-Xemein (4,899 pop.)

Markina is the first town in Biscay on the Pilgrims' Way. It is an old mediaeval town that, although it has since lost its walls, conserves its primitive features. It is easy to imagine what it looked like in bygone years, when you look at its urban towers, such as the Ansotegi and Antxia examples, or other rural towers, such as the Renaissance style of Barroeta and Ugarte. The loveliest space in the town is the Goiko Portala square in which the Town Hall (the Palacio Mugartegi) lives side by side with the church of the Carmelite fathers dating back to the 18th century, with a profusely decorated interior. If Markina is known for anything, it is for two other religious temples. Firstly, the Church of Santa María de la Asunción, created in the 16th century and since then converted into the largest church of its kind in Biscay. Secondly, the Chapel of San Miguel de Arretxinaga, a curious hexagonal building with an altar that was built using three huge rocks, and which were arranged to resemble a megalithic monument.





There are few beginnings as stimulating as the departure from Markina-Xemein. Firstly, the idyllic village of Bolibar and later, a religious monument that is one of its kind in Biscay: the Collegiate Church of Ziortza, that has borne witness to the passing hikers on their way to Santiago for over nine centuries. The forests of Gorontzugarai will be the last rural concession before returning to the inhabited dales and clustered hamlets that are the preface to the historical town of Gemika, or Guernica. From now on, the Basque landscape par excellence will make itself known, with its typical farmhouses, pastures and small clusters of houses around a church, and in most cases, a frontón (or open pelota court), with hardly any geographical jolts. The stage will offer transition stretches and every few kilometres, whether in Munitibar or in Zarra, we will come across fountains or roadside bars where we can fill our flasks and bottles, or exchange a few words with the locals. The Casa de Juntas meeting house and the historical Oak of Guernica are the best possible reward for today's stage.



Roman road, Ziortza



Collegiate Church of Ziortza ▶

Bolibar (201 pop.)

The origins of Simón Bolívar, the liberator of several countries in South America, can be traced back to this small, friendly village. The Museum dedicated to him is situated in a typical farmhouse, the Errementarikua, which belonged to his ancestors. The profile of Bolibar is dominated by the cylindrical church tower of Santo Tomás, a mediaeval construction that was rebuilt according to Renaissance criteria, and to this day maintains the characteristic appearance of a temple-fortress.

Colegiata de Ziortza

Legend has it that an eagle carrying a skull in its talons dropped the remains on the top of a hill. This was a sure sign that the collegiate church should be built there, now the monastery of Ziortza, the only religious complex of its kind in the Basque Country. This was an unmistakable sign that the current Collegiate Church of Ziortza, a religious complex that is unique in the Basque Country, had to be built on that site. It is made up of a beautiful cloister, the canons and abbot's houses, and the 15th century church, which houses an exquisite Plateresque high altar. The monastery is still loyal to the norms of hospitality and takes in any pilgrims who wish to spend the night there. In 2015 UNESCO declared it a World Heritage site along with the Northern Ways of St James.

Munitibar-Arbatzegi-Gerrikaitz (462 pop.)

A nice little village formed from the union of neighbouring hamlets and municipalities, it has a Neoclassical church dedicated to Saint Vincent, with an interesting 17th century front. The Chapel of Santiago, situated at the heights of the Aldaka district, is another reference to the Way of Saint James.

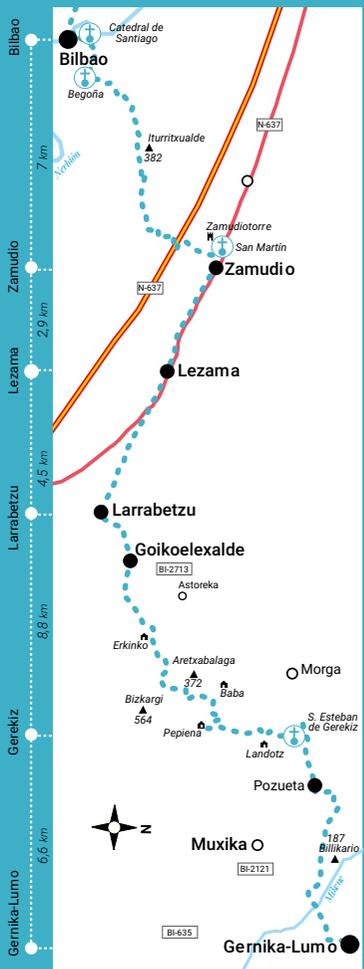
Elejalde-Arratzu (23 pop.)

In the small village of Elejalde in Arratzu, the church of Santo Tomás pre-dates the municipality of Arratzu, and was a required stop for pilgrims on St James' Way from Ziortza to Gemika. Before continuing to Ajangiz, you pass by the neighbourhood of Loiola, now the main village in Arratzu.

Gernika-Lumo (16,595 pop.)

Known the world over for the sad events that took place on 26th April 1937, when Guernica was bombed during the Spanish Civil War, the town is a living symbol of Basque traditions. This is the site of the Casa de Juntas meeting house, the hundred-year old oak tree and the neighbouring church to which the different representatives of the towns of Biscay debated their problems and made decisions, the "fairest" as Rousseau claimed, that affected the community. On Mondays, the entire town takes part in the traditional market, one of the most important and colourful in the Basque Country.

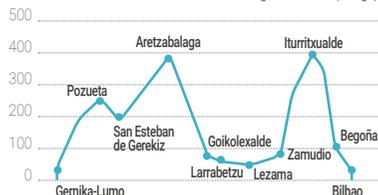




The proximity of another great Basque capital, Bilbao, will raise the hiker's spirits, as the landscape gradually loses its rugged nature and begins to show the work of human hands. Once you leave Guernica, you will come across a series of historical Biscayan towns and villages, all closely linked to the secular tradition of the fueros (or charters) and the old commercial relations between towns. From this point on, but the other way round, the road runs the Route of the Oath, the route that the feudal lord had to take to guarantee the community's rights and liberties. It began in Bilbao, passed through Larrabetzu, Guernica and ended in Bermeo. In spite of the tame landscape, which is most evident in the Txoriერი, the geographical features have not ended, and after overcoming the Mount Bilikario and the heights of Aretxabalaga, the road at Zamudio will lead us to the peak of Iturrizualde, the last hurdle before reaching what was once the industrial capital of the Basque Country: Bilbao. The Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora de Begoña awaits us on the other side.



San Esteban Hermitage in Gerekiz (Morga)



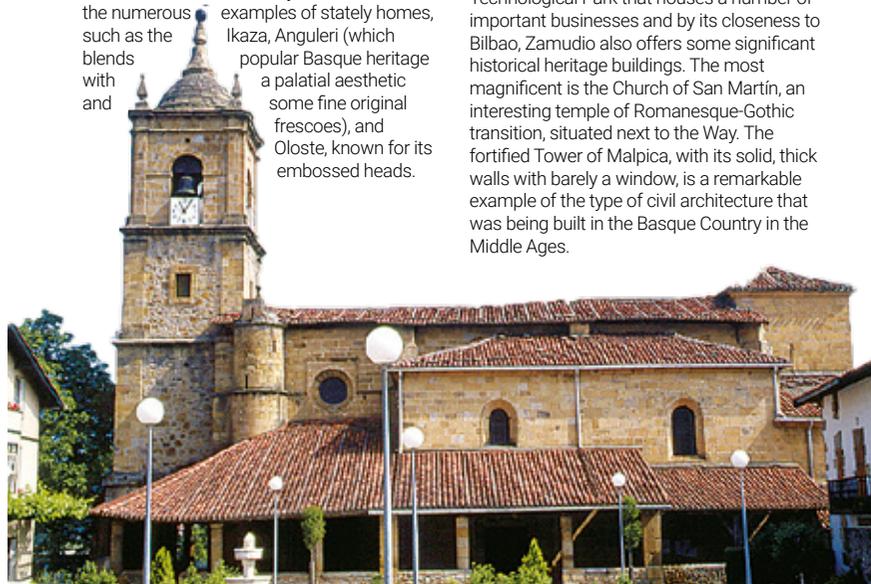
Church of Santa María (Lezama) ▶

Larrabetzu (2,057 pop.)

Founded over six centuries ago in the heart of the Txoriერი Valley, Larrabetzu boasts a lovely historical quarter filled with classical and palatial buildings under the watchful eye of the Church of Santa María de la Asunción, which was built in the 15th century and modified in the 17th century.

Shortly before reaching the centre of Larrabetzu itself, the hiker will come across the district of Goikolexea, one of the two parishes that used to form the town, back in the 9th century. It was here, in this Church of San Emeterio & San Celedonio, built in the Gothic-style, with arcades and an impressive prismatic tower, where one of the oath rituals was carried out in Biscay. Within its walls, you will see an immaculate Flemish altarpiece and remnants of old mediaeval paintings.

Larrabetzu's noble ancestry is also visible in the numerous examples of stately homes, such as the Ikaza, Anguleri (which blends with and popular Basque heritage with a palatial aesthetic some fine original frescoes), and Oloste, known for its embossed heads.



Lezama (2,353 pop.)

The Tower of Lezama is the finest architectural example in this small rural town in which internal battles were once fought between the different lords of the valley as a regular occurrence. This is why it has a certain warlike appearance, but at the same time, an elegant demeanour that merely enhances the nobility of the people who live here. The town was one of the last stops before entering Bilbao, and it is custom to visit the Church of Santa María and the Chapel of Cristo Crucificado, a light, simple and beautiful construction that nevertheless contains much of the grandeur of the Baroque. The Tuscan columns of its arcade have caught (and still catch) the eye of all those who walked (and walk) along the royal road that joined Bilbao and Guernica.

Zamudio (3,183 pop.)

Although it has been transformed by the Technological Park that houses a number of important businesses and by its closeness to Bilbao, Zamudio also offers some significant historical heritage buildings. The most magnificent is the Church of San Martín, an interesting temple of Romanesque-Gothic transition, situated next to the Way. The fortified Tower of Malpica, with its solid, thick walls with barely a window, is a remarkable example of the type of civil architecture that was being built in the Basque Country in the Middle Ages.

After the lonely hikes along the lush green Basque Country, the Way delves deep into the most populated of all the Basque cities: Bilbao. The capital of Biscay is popularly known as 'Botxo', in reference to the hole in which it is situated, lying where several mountains meet. One of these such mounts is the *Avril*, the last obstacle before arriving at the *Basilica of Begoña* to worship the patron. This habit has scarcely changed since the Middle Ages,

1. Basilica of Begoña



The most emblematic and cherished religious symbol in Bilbao is this temple with its Gothic air (its construction went on for several centuries) inside which you will find the patron of the city, Our Lady of Begoña. Its tower is barely a hundred years old: it was reconstructed after the damages it suffered in the First Carlist War.

2. Plaza Nueva



This square is, along with the Seven Streets, one of the main components of Bilbao's old quarter. It is Neoclassical in style and is known for its arcades. Many shops and some of the best tapas bars in Bilbao are found around this square. A lively market is held here every Sunday morning.

3. Cathedral of Saint James



its chapels, and the cloister, a blend of several different styles. In 2015 UNESCO declared it a World Heritage site along with the Northern Ways of St James.

when in this very same place, a chapel was raised with fantastic views over the valley. The *Calzadas de Mallona* steps came down the fortified town that, in those days, was made up of what are now known as the "seven streets", the course of which has been conserved to this day. The Cathedral of Bilbao, dedicated to Saint James the Apostle and with its particular Pilgrims' Gate for those on the Way to Santiago, is the finest example of the

4. Arriaga Theatre

Located in what used to be part of the docks, in the Arenal area, the style of this Neo-Baroque theatre was inspired by the Opera of Paris. It bears the name of the Bilbao composer, Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga, a young talent who died at the tender age of 19.



extent to which the pilgrims' way has seeped into the city. From here on, we go back to the estuary that underwent a radical transformation as a result of the industrialisation that began in the 19th century. The Bilbao of today is a phoenix that came back from the ashes, partially thanks to the impact of the Guggenheim Museum. The city shed its skin and took

5. Church of San Antón

The ensemble comprising this church and the bridge next to it, which was rebuilt after the Spanish Civil War, is one of the classic symbols of Bilbao, and is immortalised in its heraldry. Beside this 15th century church, which was constructed on the site of a former castle, is the Market of La Ribera, currently being completely refurbished.



on new monuments and infrastructure: the underground, tram lines, the Euskalduna conference centre, and the recovery of the river banks as a recreational area, to name but a few. It entered the new millennium with a bang, and a walk around Bilbao and its estuary is enough to fully appreciate this reality.

6. Guggenheim Museum

The Frank O. Gehry-designed titanium building did not only breathe new life into the area around the estuary in Bilbao, it revived the entire city, turning it into a major tourist destination. Its shapes and curves, the diversity of materials that were used in its making, and the versatility of the collections it houses, have all gone to make it a must-see in the new Bilbao.

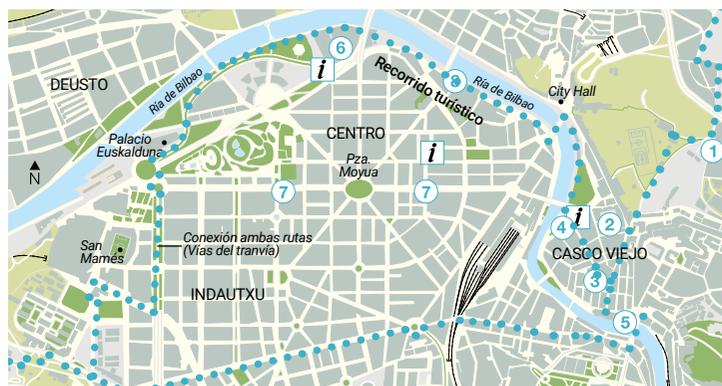


7. Gran Vía Don Diego López de Haro

The staliest and widest of all the streets in Bilbao is this high street lined with major commercial chains. Barely a decade ago, it was closed off to nearly all road traffic; today access is only given to buses and taxis, although the section from the Plaza Moyua to the Plaza del Sagrado Corazón squares is open to traffic, which contributes to this area being filled with life around the clock.

8. Paseo de Urbitarte and Abandoibarra Avenue

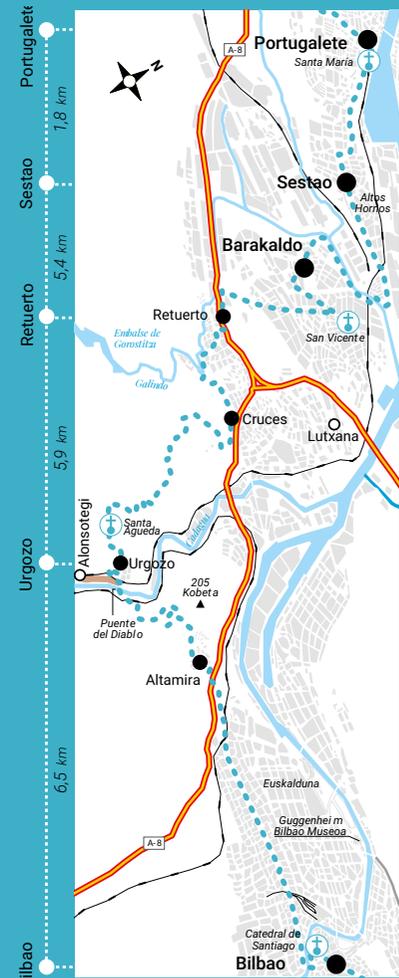
The former Urbitarte dock has now been converted into a delightful walk along the estuary, and has proved to be one of the city's most celebrated development achievements. Firstly, because it is a pleasant area for walking, cycling or simply lapping up the last rays of sun in the evening. Secondly, because many architectural novelties are clustered around here, such as the Zubizuri bridge or the Isozaki Atea tower complex, and many of the most emblematic buildings in the city, such as the Guggenheim Museum, the University of Deusto library, the University of the Basque Country auditorium, the Iberdrola tower and the Euskalduna conference centre.



Hospital de Basurto

Basilica de Begoña

4.5 km



Once the Way reaches Bilbao, it passes through a whole range of different scenery to the sights of the first few days. From now on, and until the Way reaches Portugalete, the most common forests will be made of concrete; the usual paths will be surfaced in asphalt or pavement; and the sounds you hear will be those of the traffic and the modern city. As soon as you get through the Biscayan capital, you climb Mount Kobeta, which encloses the city on the south and gives us a fantastic view of the Nervión Valley that we are about to travel through. The spectacular growth of this part of the Basque Country since the late 19th century has reshaped the countryside that the pilgrims once knew along this part of the route. There are still landmarks like the Devil's Bridge over the river Cadagua, the natural boundary between Bilbao and Barakaldo, the medieval roads and the chapel of Santa Águeda, but the area is now dominated by suburbs and the chimneys left behind by the defunct Altos Hornos ironworks. Off the official route, some pilgrims choose to follow the estuary along either bank to Portugalete, for a shorter and more level walk. Whichever bank you choose, you are welcomed to the town by Bizkaia Bridge, a feat of engineering declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.



Church of San Vicente (Barakaldo)



Bizkaia bridge (Portugalete) ▶

Barakaldo (98,403 pop.)

Although this town on the left bank of the Nervión River dates back over a thousand years (it was founded in 1051 as an *elizate*, an early form of village structure based around the church courtyard, even earlier than Bilbao), it was not until the second half of the 19th century that it underwent a radical change. The proximity of major iron ore mines, such as those in the area of Triano, fostered the creation of large iron and steel businesses that would end up merging with the blast furnace industry of Biscay. In recent years, the land that was once used for mining activity has been reconverted, although Barakaldo has still maintained some identifying features from its distant past, such as the Church of San Vicente, which dates back to the 13th century.

Sestao (27,286 pop.)

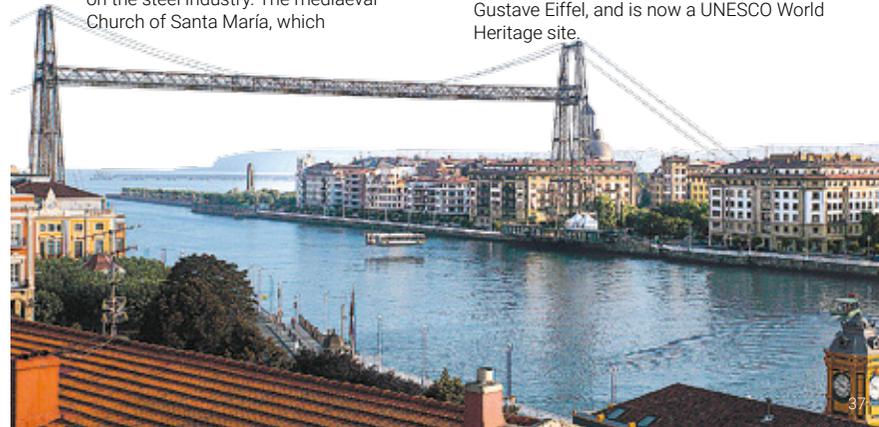
Separated from Barakaldo by the River Galindo, Sestao also bears the brunt of much of the industrial legacy that transformed the left bank. In another era, the town was a haven of wetlands, orchards, vegetable gardens and farmhouses, but today it still heavily relies on the steel industry. The mediaeval Church of Santa María, which

was transformed and refurbished in the 19th century, is its pride and joy, set in a park in which a shoot from the oak tree of Guernica grows.

Portugalete (46,372 pop.)

As is the case with almost the entire southern side of the estuary, the divisions between one town, Sestao, and the other, Portugalete, appear to have been erased over time. In this historical town, it is easy to find the traces of its mediaeval past in the three steep main streets, called La Fuente, Medio and Santa María, or the narrow alleys that run across them. It is precisely one of these alleys that leads to the Basilica of Santa María, which is Gothic in its origins but was rebuilt in the 15th and 16th centuries. One of its altars has an image of Saint James the Moor-slayer at the battle of Clavijo.

The suspension bridge over the Nervión, joining Portugalete and Areeta/Las Arenas, and which also enabled the large cargo carriers to travel inland, is the most important icon in the town. This unique structure – it is the only one of its kind still in use anywhere in the world – was built by Alberto de Palacio, a disciple of Gustave Eiffel, and is now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

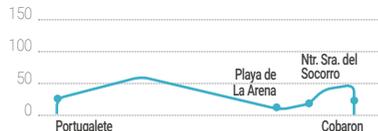




The Cantabrian Sea once again appears on the horizon. After travelling through the lush green lands in the heart of the Basque Country, and passing through its industrial soul, the Way leaves Biscay to be reunited with the salty sea air. The route in this last Basque stage runs smoothly along a comfortable cycle lane that leaves Portugaleta, and passes through Zierbena before reaching the beach of La Arena. The course of the route is essentially flat, with just a few minor slopes, avoiding the heights around it, such as Mount Serantes or Montaña. You will find a mixture of views, including the A-8 motorway or the Supersur motorway. Once past Pobeña, the Northern Way offers us one of its most sublime stretches: the route of the old mining railway that carried goods up to the loading bay at La Arena. Today, all that is left is its memory, and some splendid views of the coastline running parallel to this green route. When you reach the tunnel, now in Cantabria, be very careful along the edge, where severe weather can cause small landslides. Another option is to walk along the shoulder of the N-634 road to Ontón passing by El Haya.



Mining Museum in Gallarta



Muñatones castle ▶

Abanto-Zierbena (9,570 pop.)

Just a few decades ago, these lands were active mining territory, so you can easily come across the marks of those times, from the housing estates and districts set up to accommodate the dozens of workers and their families, up to the mines such as the Corta de Bodovalle. At the Mining Museum in Gallarta, there is a great deal of information about this subject, and it has many of the tools and utensils used in the mines on display, as well as personal stories and testimonies, and its representation in the art world. It is not unusual to find industrial remains in perfect condition, such as the calcination kilns of the José and Lorenza mines.

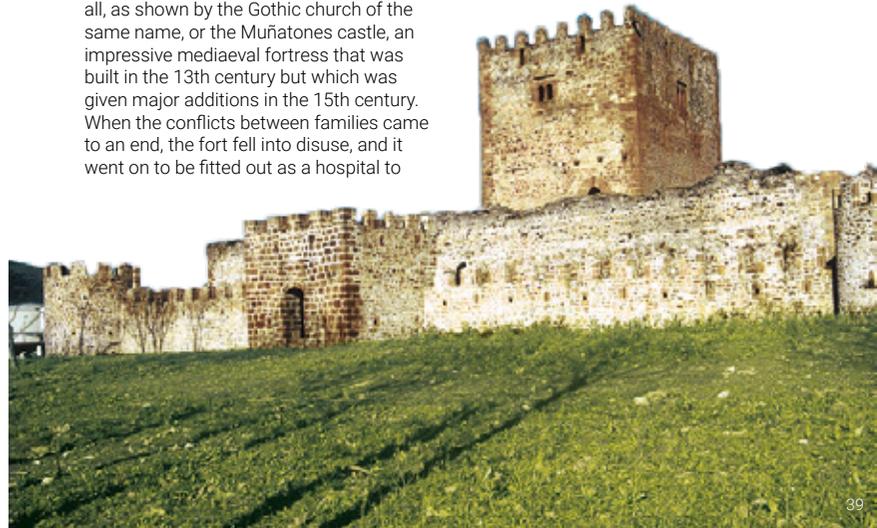
Muskiz (7,449 pop.)

The most famous part of Muskiz is the beach of La Arena, where we once again meet up with the sea that we have not seen since Deba. The town is made up of several districts, among which we should mention the district of San Julián, the earliest of all, as shown by the Gothic church of the same name, or the Muñatones castle, an impressive mediaeval fortress that was built in the 13th century but which was given major additions in the 15th century. When the conflicts between families came to an end, the fort fell into disuse, and it went on to be fitted out as a hospital to

take in the pilgrims who had come to pray at the Chapel of San Martín (one of the blessed protectors of the Way), which is sadly no longer there. Leaving the beach behind, you now reach the chapel of Nuestra Señora del Socorro, built on what was once a charming island and is now connected to the mainland, with holm oaks and bay laurel trees. The neighbourhood of Pobeña is worth a visit, and it also has a pilgrims' hostel.

Cobaron (121 pop.)

The last village on the Northern Way through the Basque Country is also closely linked to the mining fever that broke out in the 19th century. It was at Kobaron that the McLennan company had its offices, and from here they designed their strategies to carry the iron ore to England in the most efficient way possible. The Amalia Vizcaína mine was one of McLennan's, which has since been flooded, and next to it were the calcination kilns that were used for almost 100 years to improve the value of the ore.





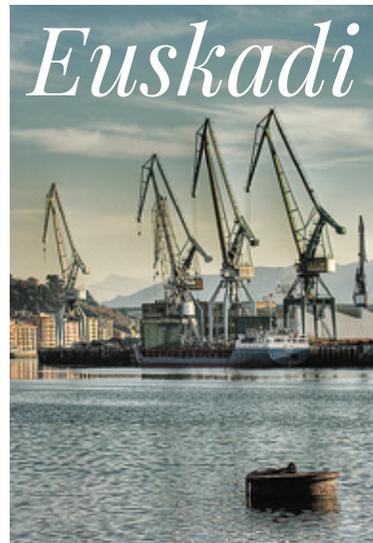
La Marina neighbourhood



Port of Oriz



Church and tower of Malpica (Zamudio)



Sestao shipyard

Euskadi



Deba beach



Church of San Emeterio and San Seledonio (Goikolexa, Larrabet)



San Miguel Hermitage in Arretxinaga (Markina-Xemein)



Gernika tree



Basilica of Santa María (Portugalete)



Oquendo square (Donostia-San Sebastián)



Cloister of the Collegiate Church of Ziortza



Ntra. Sra. del Socorro Hermitage, Pobeña (Muskiz)



Abanto mines



(Kobaron) El Haya > Castro Urdiales (21 km)

< Irun - Hondarribia 202.5 km > 657.05 km

09



The traditional route runs from the hamlet of El Haya to the village of Ontón in Cantabria. Alternatively, you can begin your route through Cantabria by following El Piquillo greenway, which starts in the Basque village Covarón, crossing through an area that has long been marked by the movement of people and goods: the old Roman road, the mediaeval path, the mining railway... This first stage through Cantabria passes through a landscape of valley pastures and mountains scarred by the exploits of the Setares mining company. Mining infrastructure, villages and remains of the railway are all around this land, but they share it with meadows, stables and cattle, offering a unique image of the ways of life that have left their mark on this area of Cantabria for centuries.



Remains of mining structures, Baltezana



Oñate valley ▶

Baltezana (400 pop.)

Although it has been significantly modified by the proliferation of new homes, the rural character of Baltezana, with its clusters of houses spread all along the main road, is still evident. The remains of a funeral stele from Roman times that were built into a wall of the small Chapel of San Juan show just how far back settlements in this area go.

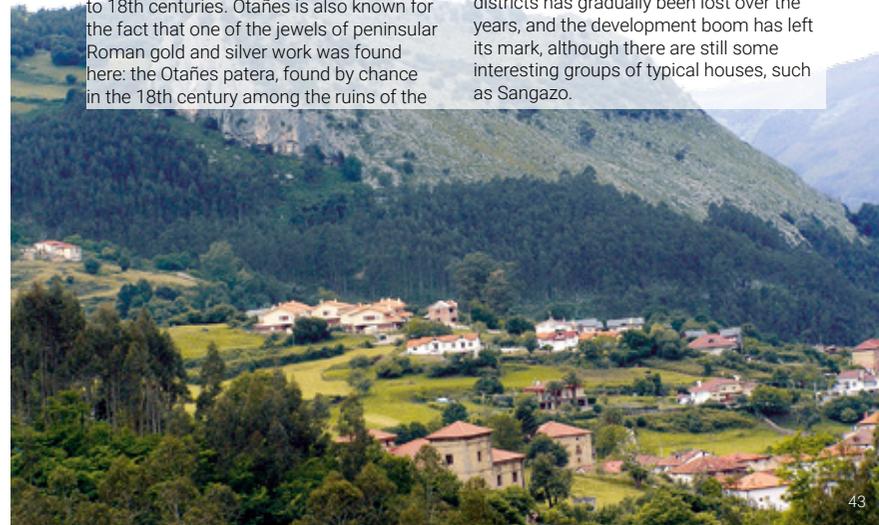
Otañes (680 pop.)

This village is divided into districts that are situated on both sides of the main road, and it has an important tradition of road transport that goes back to ancient times, evidence of which is shown in the Roman milestones along the Pisoraca-Flaviobriga way that were found in this area. Its association with Saint James has left the name of one of its districts, the Hospital district, taken from a building of this kind that was attached to the Gothic Chapel of San Roque. It also has an interesting collection of popular architecture, with colonial houses and palaces from the 15th to 18th centuries. Otañes is also known for the fact that one of the jewels of peninsular Roman gold and silver work was found here: the Otañes patera, found by chance in the 18th century among the ruins of the

Tower of Pico de la Cruz or of the castle. Very nearby, and in its neighbouring land up from the mount, in Setares, the remains of the old mining village have survived to this day. The village has long since been abandoned, but at the time, in 1900, it had up to 1,500 inhabitants. It is a gem of iron mining-related industrial archaeology, which was a crucial sector in the region in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Sámara (2,660 pop.)

To our left, we will leave the huge mass that is La Peña, on the far west of which the Autrigones built a significant fortified town from the Iron Age, and from here we will reach Sámara. The ruins of the 14th century hospital and Chapel of Santa María de Tenedo are located near this town, which is situated at the bottom of a wide valley, surrounded by limestone hills where archaeological settlements abound. In particular, there are some caves with remains from the Palaeolithic to the Recent Prehistory Ages. The rural nature of its districts has gradually been lost over the years, and the development boom has left its mark, although there are still some interesting groups of typical houses, such as Sangazo.

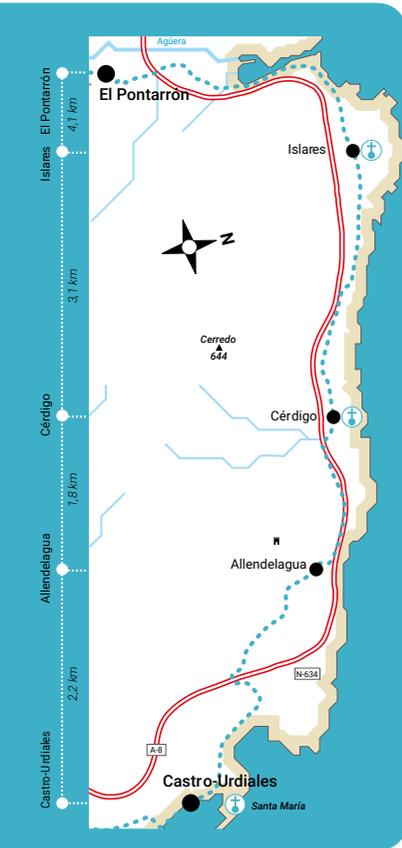


43



Castro Urdiales > El Pontarrón (Guriezo)

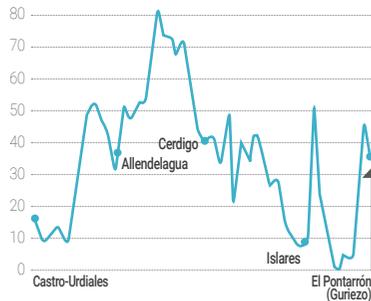
(12.9 km)



After leaving behind the city of Castro-Urdiales and its remnants of a glorious sea-faring and fishing past, the route continues almost directly along the coast on the narrow path amid the foothills of Mount Cerredo and the cliffs. The scenery in this part of the Way, beyond the limits of the N-634 road, remained almost unchanged for centuries, dotted with small villages and groups of houses where the people mostly earned their livelihood from cattle, making the most of the mountain pastures.

The construction of the motorway and the increased population in recent years have changed the area somewhat, but they have by no means taken away the special character of this stretch of land that is as beautiful as it is rough. The views from the right bank of the Oriñón estuary are particularly impressive, with the Candina massif and its colony of Griffon vultures straight ahead.

The original Way included a passage by boat from this stretch of sea, to then continue on foot once at the other shore.



Castro-Urdiales

Port of Arenillas, Islares >

Castro-Urdiales (25,273 pop.)

Castro-Urdiales was built on the ruins of the Roman colony of Flaviobriga, founded during the reign of Vespasian in the second half of the 1st century, in the Portus Amanus territory of the Autrigones. After its moment of splendour during the times of the High Roman Empire, it suffered a long period of decline in the Late Antiquity era, which ended in it becoming just a simple fishing village. When King Alfonso VIII of Castile awarded it the Logroño charter in the second half of the 12th century, this meant the founding of the mediaeval town and it took off as a top economic centre, always hand in hand with its major commercial and fishing port. It was one of the *Cuatro Villas de la Costa* (a federation of the four main ports in the area), and an outstanding member of the *Hermandad de la Marina de Castilla* (a federation of the Castilian navy), together with other Cantabrian and Basque towns and the city of Vitoria, undergoing an intense period of development in the Late Middle Ages. As a reflection of those golden ages, we find the ensemble presided over by the magnificent Gothic-style Church of Santa María de la Asunción, with the castle-lighthouse and the Chapel of Santa Ana, as well as the little streets that make up its historical quarter. Among its many other points of interest to visitors is the group of houses and villas dating back to the late 19th century and early 20th century, and

which are situated in the urban expansion area around the Bilbao road, as well as the impressive municipal cemetery of La Ballena, in Urdiales.

Allendelagua (146 pop.)

The small village of Allendelagua is situated in the shadow of the San Antón peak, on which the building known as the "Templars' Castle" is built. It is really just a small rock castle that has kept part of its wall and tower, and which belonged to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages.

Cerdigo (257 pop.)

Cerdigo, nestled between the hillside of Mount Cerredo and a stretch of coastline that is particularly abrupt, has kept much of its rural character. The most outstanding element in this village is its 13th century church and Romanesque traces. A significant number of buildings from the 16th-18th centuries complete the picturesque ensemble.

Islares (3,179 pop.)

The ruins of the Hospital of Vera Cruz, next to the Chapel of San Roque, bear witness to the passing of the Way of Saint James through Islares. Next to this village lies the small port of Arenillas, which was built in the late 16th century by the town of Castro-Urdiales to control the banks of the Oriñón estuary, which were within its jurisdiction.





El Pontarrón (Guriezo) > Laredo > Colindres

(23.1 km > 27.9 km)

< Irun - Hondarribia 243.3 km > 616.25 km

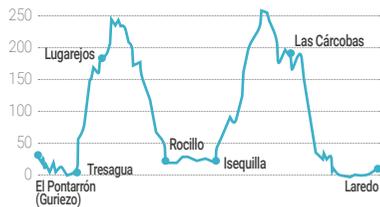


La Salvé beach, Laredo

This stage goes from Guriezo to Laredo. After Laredo, if there is a ferry ("lancha") you can continue along the beach and start the fourth Laredo-Güemes stage at Santoña.

If the ferry is not running (usually from early December to Easter), you can go to Colindres, where there is also a hostel, and start the next stage from there.

This part of the journey runs through areas of spectacular natural beauty, with a whimsical geography going from sheer limestone peaks surrounding the polje of Liendo to the extensive sands of Laredo and the wetlands of the mouth of the Asón in the space of just a few kilometres. These form the largest part of the Santoña, Victoria and Joyel Marshes Natural Park, and important refuges for waterbirds in the north of the peninsula. The human geography in this stage also offers significant contrasts, going from the agricultural, cattle environment of Liendo, to the seaside settings of Laredo and Santoña. At Colindres, which brings both worlds together, you cross the estuary by means of a swing bridge, the Treto bridge, a piece of work from the Eiffel school, and which replaced the former boat that would carry people and merchandise, including those walking the Way to Santiago, to the other side.



Port of Treto, Colindres >

Liendo (1,193 pop.)

The image of Liendo is of a huge karst depression with a flat background, surrounded by abrupt peaks covered in Cantabrian oak trees and dotted with rural districts that have superb examples of popular architecture and historical buildings.

Laredo (11,816 pop.)

In the year 1200, Alfonso VIII awarded a small hamlet situated around the Church of San Martín the Charter of Castro-Urdiales. Thus the town of Laredo was born. It would go on to earn major importance in the history of Cantabria and the Castilian Crown during the Middle and Modern Ages. One of the *Cuatro Villas de la Costa*, it was a member of the *Hermanidad de la Marina de Castilla* and its former port, today the town centre, was the point of arrival and departure for the war fleets and royal delegations. After a period of decline from the 18th century onwards, it recovered its strength in the 1960s thanks to tourism. The old village is particularly interesting. This historical-artistic complex is made up of the village itself, with its orthogonal layout, and the suburb of San Francisco. Everything is dominated by the Parish Church of Santa María, built in the Gothic style and a fine reflection of the late-mediaeval splendour of this village. Inside the church there is a magnificent Flemish altarpiece of Our Lady of Bethlehem, dating back to the 15th

century. Its main tourist attraction lies in one of its beaches, La Salvé, that stretches along over 4 kilometres of coastline and is the natural enclosure of the Asón estuary and the southern shore of the Bay of Santoña.

Santoña (11,257 pop.)

Santoña was known in the Middle Ages by the name of Puerto, reminiscent of a Roman port on the ruins of which the Parish Church of Santa María was built. It was also the seat of one of the most powerful monastic domains in the whole of mediaeval Cantabria. Set in a privileged enclave at the foothills of Mount Buciero and surrounded by sea and marshlands, it has one of the most important fishing ports in the Cantabrian Sea. It has significant military heritage from the Modern and Contemporary eras, with a large number of forts and batteries of all kinds, an eternal reminder of its role as a fortified town and strategic point in the north of the peninsula.

Colindres (7,826 pop.)

Colindres has two clearly defined parts, the high part, which is rural and has many 15th-18th century houses bearing their coats of arms huddled around the Royal Road to Castile; and another, urban part in the area claimed back from the estuary, in a hub of land communication networks and with a major fishing port.





Laredo > Güemes

(36.3 km > 44.85 km)



This stage of the Northern Way begins in Laredo and ends in Güemes. As explained at the end of the previous stage, there are two options for beginning this stage, depending on where you finished the day before: coastal stage and inland stage. If you stayed in Colindres, see the Northern Way from Laredo to Güemes (inland). But if you stayed in Laredo and you can cross to Santoña on the ferry see coastal stage, let's go!

The towns and villages along today's route are: Santoña, Argoños, Helgueras, Noja, Soano, Isla, Bareyo, Meruelo (if you stop at the hostel) and Güemes.

COASTAL STAGE (36.3 km)

From Laredo, you arrive at the 16th century Town Hall, then walk along La Salvé beach, which is over 4 km long, to get the ferry to Santoña.

Santoña, at the foot of Mount Buciero and its wetlands, has two hostels and one required stop, the 13th-century church of Santa María del Puerto, with traces of the transition to Gothic; and the ruins of one of the most powerful monasteries of medieval Cantabria. Go on to Berria beach, where you can take a short cut, crossing the Brusco and walking along Tregandín beach, admiring the architectural beauty of the rocks, until you reach Noja. For purists, the best way to get to Noja is via Helgueras.

After Noja, with notable buildings and all the services of a town, comes Soano, where it is worth walking alongside the Santoña, Victoria and Joyel Marshes Natural Park.

After Argoños, pilgrims will be glad to leave the tarmac and walk through a

forest of holm oaks, ending in Castillo and its imposing church. From there, on to Meruelo, where you can admire the church of San Miguel. In this town, 300 metres from the hostel, you can still see the building which was a pilgrims' hospital for centuries. This is one of the very few buildings on the Northern Way that was in continuous use by pilgrims from the Middle Ages until the 20th century. A few metres further on you cross the bridge of the Solorga neighbourhood, which has spanned the river Campiazo since before records began.

You will now reach the Romanesque church of Bareyo, a gem of the Cantabrian Romanesque style and unusual in its proximity to the sea. Here, pilgrims will go through the town of Güemes, closely associated with the Way.

INLAND STAGE (44.8 km)

From Laredo to Argoños, this is the inland route to take instead of the ferry to Santoña, which we have not yet described. Let's take a look:

This route takes you through villages bordering the Santoña, Victoria and Joyel Marshes Natural Park: Colindres, Treto, Cicero, Gama and Escalante.

The main attraction of this inland stage is its cultural value. It passes by several Baroque period mansions, each with its portico, chapel, coat of arms and tower attached to the house, and monumental churches with Baroque altarpieces by the local workshops that once supplied all of Spain. The old bridge at Treto is also interesting - a fine example of 19th century iron architecture, based on a design by Eiffel.





Laredo > Güemes

(36.3 km > 44.85 km)

Escalante (526 pop.)

Escalante has an unusual urban setting, with terraced houses along some of the streets, maintaining its original appearance of a mediaeval village. There are even older buildings in the complex with Gothic remains, and some houses bearing their coats of arms dating back to the 16th-18th centuries, as well as some typical rural homes from the 19th century. If we head east out of the village centre, on the edge of the marshlands we will find the Franciscan Convent of San Sebastian, and above the convent, on the Montehano peak, we will see the remains of a 14th century castle. Heading west, the late 12th century Romanesque Chapel of San Román has a splendid example of decorative sculpture.

Castillo (591 pop.)

The Castillo landscape is typical of this area of Trasmiera, with small districts in

which some rural groups of houses are still maintained in rows, surrounded by meadows. The tower with a late-mediaeval wall from the Venero lineage, and the Parish Church of San Pedro, from the 15th-16th centuries, are particularly worthy of mention.

Noja (2,635 pop.)

The road enters Noja through Trengandín, after crossing the 16th century bridge at Helgueras. The municipal hospital was built in the first of these districts, and it was here that several pilgrims were recorded to have passed away in the 18th and 19th centuries. Noja is an important tourist town, with several beaches and an extensive range of hotel and restaurants available. In its modern town centre there are still some interesting buildings, such as the Palace of Zilla, the tower-house of Velasco or the Palace of Albaicín, dating back to the 17th, 15th and 20th centuries, respectively.

Escalante Street



< Irun - Hondarribia 288.15 km > via Colindres 571.4 km

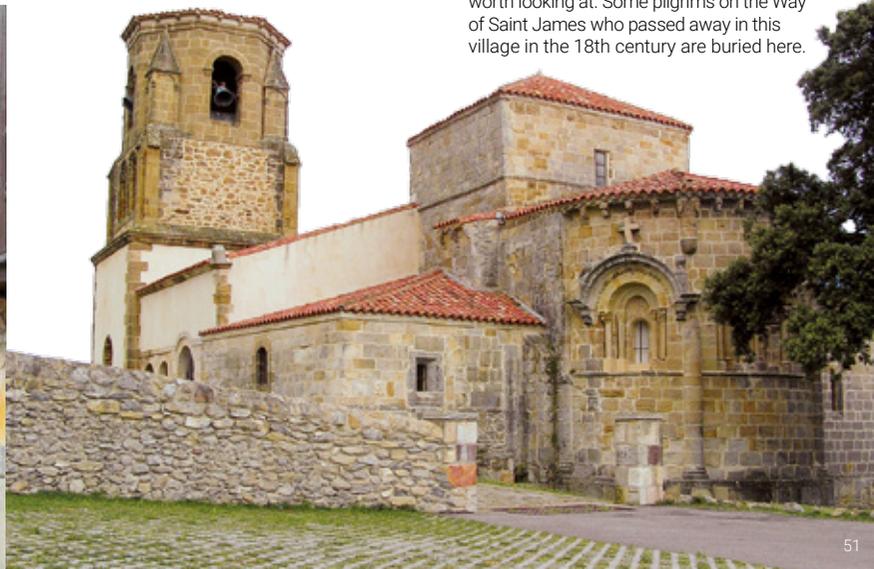
Isla (301 pop.)

The Baroque Church of San Julián & Santa Basiliisa; the parish council hall and the old hospital, with its image of Saint James the Moor-slayer; the Chapels of San Martín, San Roque and San Sebastian; the palatial complex of the Count and Countess of Isla; and the Towers of Novales, El Rebollar and El Cbrahigo, all make up Isla's historical heritage. It is a superb compendium of architecture from the Middle and Modern Ages, set in the heart of Trasmiera.

Meruelo (1,922 pop.)

The Campiazo river runs through the town of Meruelo, the birthplace of figures like Pedro González Agüero, mentioned in the 'Batalla del Salado', and Luis Vicente de Velasco Isla, a hero of Havana whose bravery won the respect of the enemy.

Church of Santa Maria of Bareyo



There is a wide variety of mansions with coats of arms on their façades. Notable examples of religious architecture include the churches of San Mamés and San Miguel, and the chapels of Los Remedios and of Aguachisza. In San Miguel de Meruelo there is another interesting bridge, the medieval puente de Tresojos or "three eyed bridge", referring to its three pointed arches. There is a long tradition of bell manufacture in Meruelo, highlighted in the Bell Museum.

Bareyo (160 pop.)

On a high point outside the village you will see the Church of Santa María de Bareyo, a genuine Romanesque masterpiece on the coast of Cantabria. The building dates back to the early 13th century and has one nave, side chapels and an important architectural collection of capitals, imposts, corbels, and other such features. The Romanesque baptismal font, with its decoration of intertwining palms and lions, is particularly worth looking at. Some pilgrims on the Way of Saint James who passed away in this village in the 18th century are buried here.



Güemes > Santander (17.7 km)

< Irun - Hondarribia 305.85 km> por Colindres 553.7 km

In this stage, there are two options from Trasmiera to Santander: a short stage, taking a boat across the bay, via Somo; or walking around the south side of it, via El Astillero.. As the Way approaches El Astillero, it passes through countryside that has been clearly affected by the indelible mark of late 19th/early 20th century mining, probably the most eye-catching feature of this being the reddish colour of the earth, and even of the water in the estuaries, resulting from the deposits of mining waste from the settling basins.



Archaeological site of San Juan de Maliaño

Somo (1,728 pop.)

Those who decide to cross the Bay of Santander by boat will need to reach the coastal town of Somo. There is a regular boat service to Santander, which also stops at the neighbouring village of Pedreña. Both rely heavily on the tourist sector and their hotel and catering industry related to sea produce.

El Astillero (11,779 pop.)

The birth and formation of this important town is closely linked to shipbuilding and mining. The first of these activities was a result of the Guarnizo shipyard, that was at its heyday in the 18th century, and the second was due to the collection and export of iron ore from Peña Cabarga in the 19th and 20th centuries. Apart from the important vestiges of industrial architecture that are dotted around the southern part of the town, there are also protected nature reserves of the *Marismas Blancas* and *Negras*, or white and black marshlands, both habitat and breeding grounds for many types of bird.

Maliaño/Muriedas (9,563 / 1,124 pop.)

As you go through the town centre of Maliaño and Muriedas, it is worth going off the route to the east and the cemetery of

Alto Maliaño, to visit the archaeological site of La Mies de San Juan. This is the remains of a Romanesque church and necropolis, built over the ruins of a Roman bath of the 1st-4th centuries. An archaeological dig has revealed that the church of San Juan was a station on the Way in the later Middle Ages, attested by the pecten or perforated pilgrim's shell and the Galician and Portuguese coins found on the site. A boat probably used to take pilgrims across the bay between this point and Santander, although it is now inland. Muriedas offers the Pedro Velarde House Museum and the Ethnographic Museum of Cantabria, a must-see for anyone interested in the traditional way of life of rural Spain.

Escobedo (1,417 pop.)

If you take the alternative route via Escobedo you will pass by Castillo del Collado, a late medieval castle which was recently restored. In the neighbourhood of El Churi you can see the cave of El Pendo, -recently declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, along with 8 other Cantabrian caves and 8 more in Asturias and the Basque Country, with paleolithic cave paintings.

Boat dock, Somo



The origin of Santander dates back to Roman times, although its true formation as a town took place in the Middle Ages. It arose in the shadow of the Abbey of San Emeterio & San Celedonio, and was awarded the Sahagún charter by Alfonso VIII at the end of the 12th century, thus commencing a demographic and commercial upturn that would make it one of the most important ports in the Cantabrian in the Middle and Modern Ages. After a period of decline in the 17th century, it

made a comeback in the 18th century thanks to its maritime trade, and became the port of departure for Castilian wools and a point of reference in trade with the American colonies. At the end of that century, it was awarded the title of city, and in the second half of the 19th century, it became one of the destinations for the royal family to spend their summers. In 1941 a horrific fire destroyed much of its historical quarter.

The relationship between Santander and the Way of Saint James can be seen in several hospitals for pilgrims in the Middle and Modern Ages: Santispiritu, Santa María de la Consolación, San Lázaro, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, La Misericordia, etc. There is a chapel

dedicated to Saint James, whose construction dates back to the 14th century, in the former collegiate church where the relics of the martyrs Emeterio and Celedonio are venerated. This is undoubtedly an attractive bonus for those on the Pilgrims' Way through the city.

1. Cathedral



The Cathedral of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción is a complex consisting of several buildings: the 13th century lower church 'Del Cristo', where pilgrims' credentials are processed for St James' Way and the Lebaniego Way; the 13th-14th century Cathedral itself, built over it and on the same plan; and the cloister, added in the 15th century. Inside there are two silver reliquary heads with relics of Saints Emeterius and Celedonio.

2. Puertochico



At the point where the Paseo de Pereda and Calle Castelar streets meet, considered the first urban expansion area in the city and designed in the 18th century, you will find Puertochico. Although its roots lie in a fishing village (at the dock of Molnedo), it is today a mooring area for small leisure boats, keeping up its seafaring soul.

3. Maritime Museum



reproducing different marine eco-systems.

The Maritime Museum is located in a privileged part of Santander, with spectacular views over the bay. It houses some of the most important collections of fishing ethnography in Spain. It also has sections dedicated to maritime history and zoology, as well as tanks and aquariums

4. City Hall

The City Hall square is at the centre of the city and a regular meeting point for locals and visitors alike. The building itself was built on the site of a former Franciscan convent that initially dates back to the early 20th century, although refurbishments carried out in the 1960s have given it its current appearance.



5. Fishing district

Midway through the 20th century, this village was set up at the entrance to the city, next to the new port. The fishermen and their families moved there from their traditional places of residence and work, such as Puertochico and Tetuán, giving way to one of the most typical and attractive areas for tourists in this city.



6. Palace of La Magdalena

Situated on the peninsula of the same name, watching over the entrance to the bay, the Palace of La Magdalena was built by public subscription in 1912 and given as a gift to the royal family for their summer residence. It is a magnificent building, with English, French and regional architectural influences. It is currently owned by the city and is the venue for the summer courses run by the Menéndez Pelayo International University.



7. Gardens of Piquío

The gardens of Piquío were constructed in 1925 on a rocky headland that separated the first beach of Sardinero from the second. They are situated in the heart of the tourist area of Santander par excellence, among the sandy stretches looking out onto the Cantabrian Sea, and such emblematic buildings as the Casino or the Hotel Sardinero.



Puerto pesquero

Faro de la Cerda



This is a very long stage which can be taken in parts, as there are hostels in Santa Cruz de Bezana and Polanco. From Santander to Santillana del Mar the route goes through: Peñacastillo, Santa Cruz de Bezana, Boo de Piélagos, Arce, Requejada, Barreda and Queveda.

From the cultural point of view, the most notable features are the 16th century bridge at Arce, and Santillana del Mar, a medieval museum in itself.

Starting from the centre of Santander, with the Town Hall and former convent of San Francisco to the right, you can explore the town centre's pedestrianised streets, such as Calle Burgos and the beautiful Alameda.

There are two hostels in Bezana, one of which is for pilgrims.

At Puente Arce, you can relax next to the river or have a snack in one of the bars. In Requejada you can also spend the night at the pilgrims' hostel. Afterwards, a walk via Barreda and Campengo to Santillana del Mar brings you through stone buildings to other eras. First, facing you, is the side of the Collegiate Church, the finest example of Romanesque in Cantabria, and to the right, Velarde Palace.



Boo de Piélagos (2,499 pop.)

Very close to this town is a boat service for travellers and pilgrims who wish to cross the River Pas. To the north, and dominating a wide coastal stretch of land, we will see the Sierra de Tolío or de La Picota mountain range, with its splendid fortifications from the Spanish Civil War: over 20 machine gun nests and trenches built by the Republican troops in 1937.

Arce (2,400 pop.)

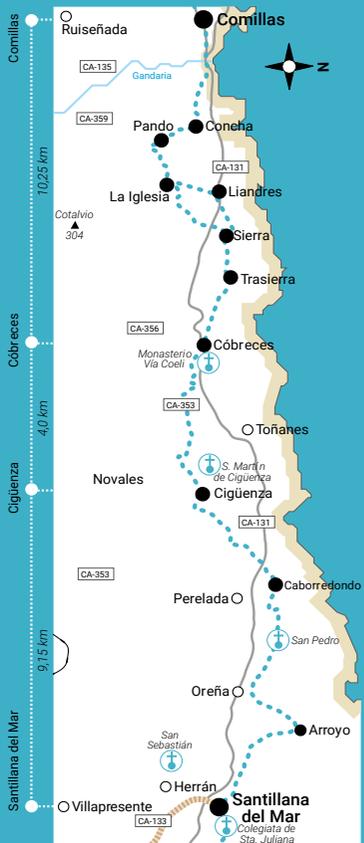
The Santián Cave is extremely interesting, with Palaeolithic paintings in the form of clubs and hands, set vertically and in parallel. Also in Arce you can visit other prehistoric caves, such as Cobalejos and El Mato, and a medieval necropolis near the church of San Julián, in the Velo neighbourhood. Arce's civil architecture includes the so-called Roman Bridge (16th century Renaissance) and the ruins of the castle, Torre de Velo.

Bridge Arce



Boo de Piélagos and Pas, Monte Tolo





At Santillana del Mar, the Way joins up with the route that connects with the French Way, through the valleys of Besaya, Camesa and Pisuerga, making this town a hub of pilgrim communications. When you look around this town, you do not need much imagination to feel like you have gone back in time to the end of the Middle Ages, or the early Modern Era. The same cobbled streets that echoed the steps of those who then rested in the different hospitals for walking pilgrims are laid out today to welcome the modern-day hikers. From here, the route moves westwards, very close to the coast, and winding its way through coastal valleys, where the meadows and green hills almost merge with the sea crashing against the cliffs. The Baroque towers of the Church of Cigüenza and the neo-Gothic pinnacles of the Abbey and Parish Church of Cobreces appear on the stage like milestones to guide our way.



Church of San Martín, Cigüenza



Santillana del Mar >

Cigüenza (90 pop.)

Alongside the traditional houses that make up the small district of Cigüenza, we find the Church of San Martín, with its characteristic two towers on the main façade. A fine example of the Baroque architecture of the highlands, it was built by the "indiano" Juan Antonio de Tagle-Bracho in the mid-18th century, and shows a strong colonial influence.

Santillana del Mar (1,081 pop.)

The town of Santillana arose in the shadow of the mighty Abbey of Santa Juliana, where the relics of this martyr were kept and venerated. During the Early and High Middle Ages, its domains extended along central and west Cantabria, controlling numerous churches and chapels within its jurisdiction. It is known worldwide for conserving the appearance it had in the Modern Era, with two main streets forming a Y axis. At the ends are the Collegiate Church and Main Square, with the 15th century Merino Tower. The first is a fine example of Romanesque architecture in the north of the peninsula, and its cloister is particularly worthy of mention as it has a superb collection of elaborate capitals. Other interesting buildings are the 15th century Tower of Don Borja; the Houses of Águila and La



Parra, from the 16th-17th centuries; or the 18th century Palace of the Marquis of Benemejís, among many others. The Regina Coeli Diocesan Museum dedicated to the Cantabrian religious heritage is also situated in the town centre. If we are talking about museums, we really should go 1.5 kilometres further south to visit the replica of the Cave of Altamira and its museum, situated next to the original. This cave was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985, and is one of the finest examples in the world of prehistoric cave drawing. Its polychrome chamber is considered to be the Sistine Chapel of Paleolithic art.

Cóbreces (596 pop.)

Although the origin of this village goes back to at least the 10th century, when it is mentioned as Caopreces in the Cartulary of Santillana, the history of Cobreces is joined to the history of the Cistercian Abbey of Santa María de Viaceli. This monastic complex was built in the early 20th century in a neo-Gothic style, and has a church, monastery, dairy and hostelry. It is home to one of the few communities of Cistercian monks in the north of the peninsula. The Parish Church of San Pedro Ad Vincula was also built in the same style.



Between Comillas and San Vicente de la Barquera, the road runs entirely through the Natural Park of Oyambre, with 5,800 hectares of protected land of high ecological value. The landscape blends meadows and grasslands with the wetlands associated with inlets: from the marshlands of Zapedo and the River Turbio to the La Rabia estuary; from the marshlands of Rubín and Pombo to the San Vicente estuary; not forgetting its spectacular beaches, such as La Rabia, Oyambre and Merón, to name but a few. The journey through the nature reserve is not only a pleasure because of the beauty around us, but it also acts as a transition between two completely different monumental complexes, both unique in their own style: on one hand, the cosmopolitan and modern face of Comillas, represented by El Capricho, the University and the Palace of Sobrellano; and on the other, the seafaring, mediaeval image of San Vicente, with its fisherman's houses, Gothic church and its castle. This last town is the start of a branch of the route, via Camino Lebaniego to the pilgrimage site of Santo Toribio and across the Cantabrian Mountains to meet the French Way.



Cemetery and University, Comillas



San Vicente de la Barquera >

Comillas (1,943 pop.)

The relationship between Comillas and the Way of Saint James goes back a long way. As far back as the 16th century, a hospital was built on the route for the pilgrims on their way to Santiago. The town began to thrive towards the end of the 19th century, thanks to the patronage of the first Marquis of Comillas. This boosted the construction of more emblematic buildings: the Pontifical University building, converted into an international centre for Spanish language study; the Palace of Sobrellano, a neo-Gothic building with modernist influences; the nearby Chapel-Pantheon, where the remains of the Marquis and his family are kept; and, above all of them, the Gaudi-designed El Capricho, in a style of transition between eclecticism and modernism, and one of the town's symbols. The cemetery is also worth mentioning. It was built around the ruins of a Gothic church, with its monumental gate and crowned by a spectacular statue of the angel of Llimona. As well as being filled with monuments, Comillas is also the gateway to the Natural Park of Oyambre.

San Vicente de la Barquera (3,446 pop.)

This is the most western town of the Four Coastal towns and its glorious mediaeval past is still present today, despite the growth it has undergone in recent years.

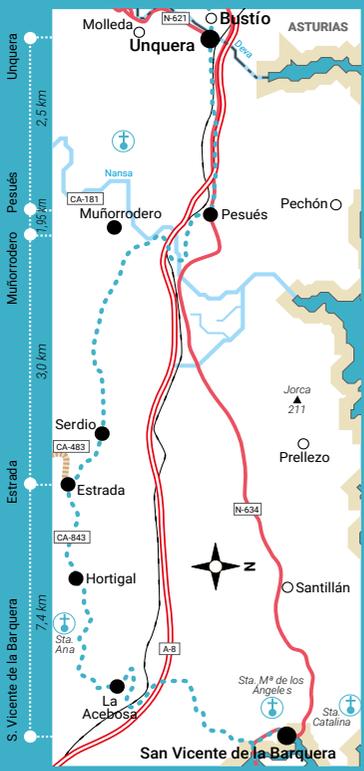
Awarded the status of charter by Alfonso VIII in 1210, it belonged to the *Hermandad de la Marina de Castilla*, and during the Middle Ages it stood out as a major maritime centre, having important trade, whaling and deep-sea fishing activities. The oldest part, with a central road running lengthways with the Parish Church of Santa María de los Ángeles on one end and the King's Castle on the other, was once surrounded by a wall, but today only some of these sections and gates still remain. One of these gates, opening south, is the Pilgrims' Gate, recalling the walkers' passage through here on their way to Santiago. Other testimonies were the hospital that was built in the 15th century next to the church, and the sculpture of Saint James that has been conserved in its interior. The lower part, born out of the mediaeval suburbs, has traditional fisherman's houses that give the village its famous image. This is the image that is forever bound to the Bridge of La Maza, that crosses the estuary with almost thirty eyes. This is the start of the Camino Lebaniego to Santo Toribio de Liébana, another major Christian shrine, which then crosses the Picos de Europa to meet up with the French Way to Santiago: two pilgrimage sites on the same route.





San Vicente de la Barquera > Unquera (Bustio) (16.8 km)

< Irun - Hondarribia 400.05 km > 459.5 km



The last stage in Cantabria leaves the Way parallel to the coast at the exit to San Vicente de la Barquera and heads inland, passing through La Acebosa, Hortigal, Estrada, Serdio and Pesués. It runs through rough landscapes, with small hillside meadows and limestone mountains, many of which are tree-covered. When the route once again heads north and approaches the banks of the Nansa, it comes across the great flat-topped coastal hills that are typically found in this part of Cantabria and eastern Asturias: the hills of Gerra and Pechón, lining the estuary of Tina Menor. We leave behind the coastal Val de San Vicente, with its wild looking coves and small cliff-lined peninsulas. The beach of Berellín and the cape on which the Iron Age castro of Castillo stands, in Prelezo, are two fine examples. From the right bank of the Deva, in Unquera, you can see the Asturian town of Bustio on the other side of the bridge. The journey through Cantabria ends here.



Coastal seas



Unquera bridge >

Estrada (19 pop.)

Presiding over a junction, on a limestone outcrop, we find the Tower of Estrada. This late-mediaeval fortified building from the 14th century is made up of a three-storey tower, its own chapel and a wall with battlements all around it.

Muñorrodero (108 pop.)

A few dozen metres to the south of the Way, sticking closely to the banks of the Nansa, is Muñorrodero. The traditional houses in its square, and the rows of houses in the same style in the district of La Tesna, a little further away, are some of its endearing features. Close to here, in the cemetery, there are still the remains of the mediaeval Church of the Virgen del Hayedo, with Romanesque and Gothic elements dating back to between the 13th and 14th centuries. Back on the road, where the Way passes through this village but on the northern side, is the cave of Fuente del Salín, whose galleries are partially flooded for much of the year. There is also a significant archaeological site here, including several panels of Palaeolithic cave art.

In Muñorrodero the pilgrimage routes divide, some going on the Camino Lebaniego, ending their journey at Santo Toribio or continuing on to the French Way via the Camino Lebaniego-Vadiniense, from Fuente Dé to Mansilla de la Mulas in León; the Camino Lebaniego-Castellano, to Palencia; or the Camino Lebaniego-Leonés, to León.

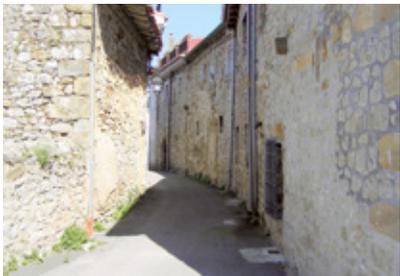
Pesués (379 pop.)

Pesués lies beside the estuary of Tina Menor. This town has an interesting array of typical houses, such as those in the district of La Aldea, and the ancestral homes of El Valledal, from the 18th century. Yesteryear, the estuary was crossed by boat, which has given its name to a place on the left bank. The biological richness of Tina Menor meant that a pioneering company working in aquaculture set up business here in the 1970s, and they are still there to this day.

Unquera (911 pop.)

The last stop of the Way on Cantabrian soil is Unquera, on the right bank of the mouth of the Deva, the estuary known as Tina Mayor. It has major road and rail communications, as the roads running along the coast from east to west met here with the access route towards the Valley of Liébana, which has set the tone for its town development. It has a modern-day appearance, developed along the axis formed by the N-634 road and with some examples of late 19th century/early 20th century buildings. Its development has come hand in hand with tourism, with a growing hotel and catering offer, along with adventure activities companies, encouraged by the natural conditions around them.





Cérdigo street



The Tejo



Ansó estuary and marismas of Santolía



Orión estuary and beach

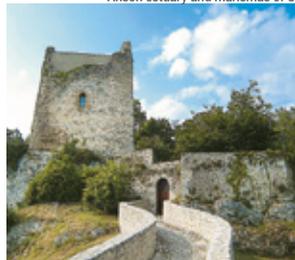
Cantabria



Cóbreces



Cross peak or castle, Oríate



Estrada tower



View of Duente Avios from Ongayo



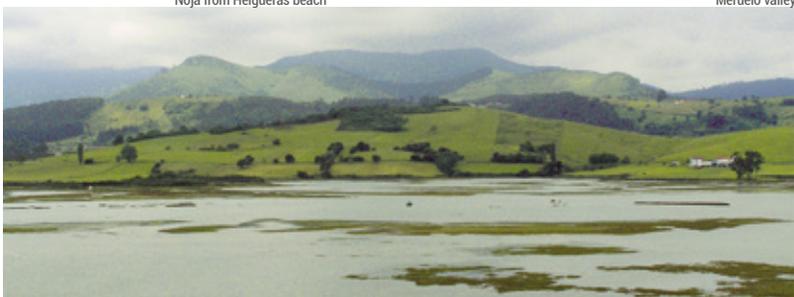
Noja from Helgueras beach



Meruelo valley



Tina Menor estuary, Pesués



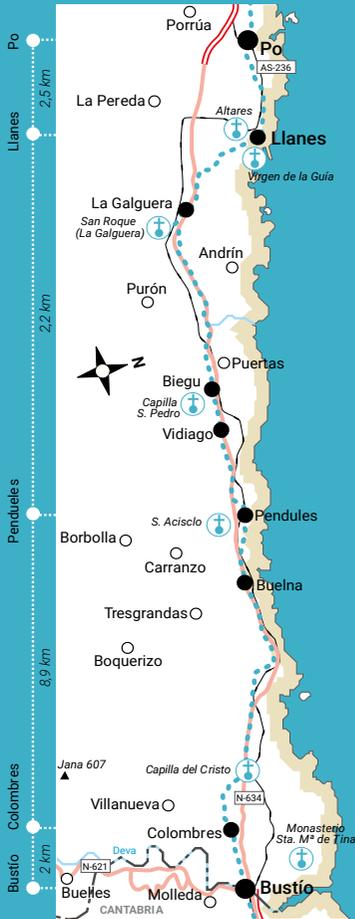
San Vicente de la Barquera estuary



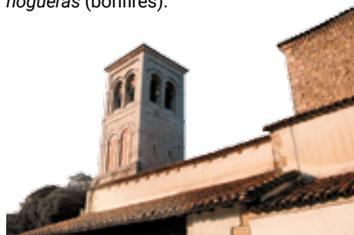
Liendo valley



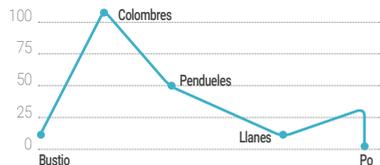
Sámamo valley



The Way of Saint James enters Asturias via the interregional bridge over the Tina Mayor estuary, where the Deva River makes its last stand before sinking into the sea. Bustio is the beginning of the Coastal Way in Asturias. The municipalities of Ribadedeva and Llanes clearly illustrate the effects of widespread emigration to Mexico and Cuba. Peculiar colonial houses and indianos' residences dot the way along a stage where we find rivers, beaches and a characteristically green coastline, with typical limestone cliffs and the nearby Sierra del Cuera guarding the southern flank. The little villages around Llanes and the town itself are important attractions on this stretch. Undoubtedly spectacular are the *bufones* (vents pierced by the sea in the rocks along the coast), the cave paintings at the Cueva del Pindal (Pimiango) or the prehistoric idol at Peña Tú (Puertas). Features of this area are a particular Asturian dialect, with aspirate j sounds, and many ancestral traditions, such as dances, costumes and popular festivals with *ramos* (flower offerings) and *hogueras* (bonfires).



Church of San Acisclo



Emigration Museum, the Indias Archive >

Bustio (183 pop.)

This village on the left bank of the Deva River, close to the Tina Mayor estuary, at the limit between Asturias and Cantabria, was an obligatory stop along the Way of Saint James. It has a fishing port slightly off the actual village, at the foot of the Sierra Plana mountain range, where Pimiango lies.

Colombres (873 pop.)

This quiet village, a stop-off point for the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V during his first visit to Spain, is the capital of the Ribadedeva parish council. It is set on a small promontory and has some spectacular examples of indiano architecture, such as the 19th-century Plaza del Ayuntamiento (Town Hall square) and the Quinta Guadalupe, which houses the Indiano Archive. This house and its beautiful garden belonged to Íñigo Noriega Laso, who emigrated to Mexico and then, in 1906, had the residence built and named after his wife. Also important is the Church of Santa María, which features solid towers and pinnacles. Colombres concentrates the majority of the public services offered by the parish council.

Pendules (161 pop.)

The main attractions in this small village are a lovely beach, the Parish Church of San Acisclo, with a Gothic portal and a Neo-Romanesque tower, and the Palace of Santa Engracia (1870).

Llanes (4,427 pop.)

Llanes was granted a Charter of Privileges back in the 13th century and grew around its fishing and whaling port. It was well known as a stop along the route to Santiago, as evinced by the hospital that existed outside the city walls, of which only the chapel has survived. It has a rich heritage. In the Romanesque-Gothic Church of Santa María, the main portal has archivolt decorated with figures of Saint James and a series of pilgrims. Nearby we can see buildings dating back to the 15th-17th centuries, such as the House of the Cercau, the Gothic Chapel of La Magdalena, the Palace of Gaztañaga and the Palace of the Dukes of Estrada.

The distinguishing mark of present-day Llanes is The Cubes of Memory, an art intervention by the painter Agustín Ibarrola over the gigantic concrete cubes in the port of Llanes. It is a great example of public art and combines essential elements of the artist's work with the historical and cultural past of the town of Llanes.



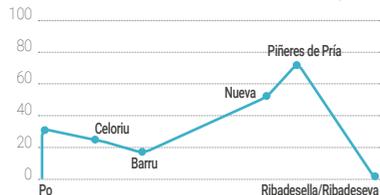


Between Llanes and Ribadesella/Ribeseya there was an old mediaeval road which, though now for the most part covered by tarmac, is still visible on a small stretch between Naves and La Venta. On this stage, we will have the company of another mountain range along the way: the Sierra del Sueve. On the coastline that runs parallel to the Way, green is the predominant colour and we will find ample, golden-sand beaches and disperse limestone formations.

If you have time, we recommend visiting the prehistoric cave of Tito Bustillo, a world-class "cathedral" of Palaeolithic art. At the end of this walk awaits Ribadesella/Ribeseya, a town that has grown protected by the large and safe estuary formed by the River Sella before meeting the Cantabrian Sea. Here is the finishing line for the International Descent of the River Sella, a yearly, world-class kayaking event. The cliffs of this parish council are the centre of the Asturian Jurassic Route, with its famous dinosaur footprints.



Church, Nueva



Sea and mountain, Ribadesella

Barru (123 pop.)

A small village on the banks of an estuary with beautiful seaside landscapes. We recommend visiting the 18th-century Neoclassical Church of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, of impressive appearance and built on a sand beach peninsula.

Nueva (584 pop.)

This village is remarkable for the beauty of its colonial houses and palaces, most of them built in the late 19th century and early 20th century. There are also numerous indiano houses and we recommend visiting the chapel of the old hospital. The Palace of the Count of Vega del Sella (17th and 18th century) had within its walls the Tower of Aguilar de San Jorge, one of the oldest mediaeval towers in the parish council (there are documents dating it back to 1032). On the seaside we find the beach of Cuevas del Mar, named after the veritable caves cut into the rock by the Cantabrian Sea. Today, the parish council of Nueva boasts a great range of tourist services (hotels, village houses, holiday homes, restaurants and tourist apartments) where the pilgrims can refresh themselves and get their strength back.

Ribadesella/Ribeseya (2,796 pop.)

This town was one of Asturias' main ports in the Late Middle Ages. Many pilgrims and merchants entered the region through it. It was founded in the 13th century, and during the Middle Ages it had the Hospital of San Sebastián near the Church of Santa María Magdalena, which was built over a primitive Romanesque temple and had a very interesting main altarpiece. The historical quarter and old fishermen's district, recognised as a historic-artistic site, still includes houses bearing their coats of arms, such as the one where the Impressionist painter Darío de Regoyos was born. Another important building is the Renaissance Palace of the Cutre, which has a Plateresque façade and is now used as the Town Hall. From the upper district of the village we can enjoy a splendid view reaching from the Picos de Europa to the horizon of the Cantabrian Sea. The beach of Santa Marina, also known as "the beach of the Picos de Europa" because a mere 35 km separate it from the National Park of Picos de Europa, is next to the estuary of the Sella River and forms a wide shell with golden, very fine sand. It is surrounded by early 20th century villas.





This stage has two clearly defined stretches. The first one, up to La Isla, is genuinely coastal. It runs through meadows and cliff sides, always protected by the shade of El Sueve. This mountain range is the home of a significant number of indigenous asturcón horses. The villages and hamlets in the area are paradigmatic of the eastern-central coastline of Asturias. The second stretch veers slightly away from the coast, through inland valleys and quiet paths of soothing rusticity. Along the way we will see mountains, fertile plains, rivers and brooks, and monuments big and small where one can feel the heartbeat of the Way of Saint James's history. Among the architectural gems to be discovered in this part of the Way are the Roman bridges of Bueño; the villages Pernús and La Llera, full of examples of traditional vernacular architecture, with many barns and hórreos, and most of all, the pre-Romanesque church of San Salvador de Priesca, added in 2015 to the UNESCO World Heritage site as part of the coastal Way of St James.



Santiago de Gobiendes



Church of San Salvador, Priesca >

Vega (92 pop.)

Huddled on a hill, halfway between the beach and the mountains, this hamlet has very interesting rural buildings and good examples of Asturian hórreos. The Chapel of La Magdalena dates back to 1772. On the beach we can see the remains of the mediaeval bridge that used to cross the Regatu del Acebu brook, and nearby is the Gorge of Entrepeñes, an impressive formation of sharp quartzite rock pinnacles dating back to the Ordovician. Both the beach and the gorge have been recognised as a Natural Monument in Asturias.

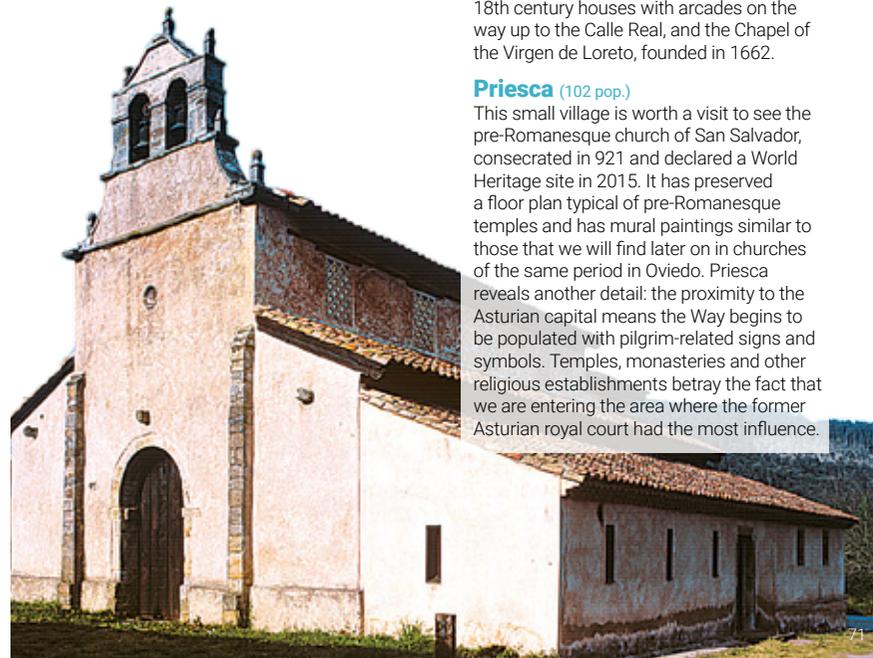
Colunga (1,167 pop.)

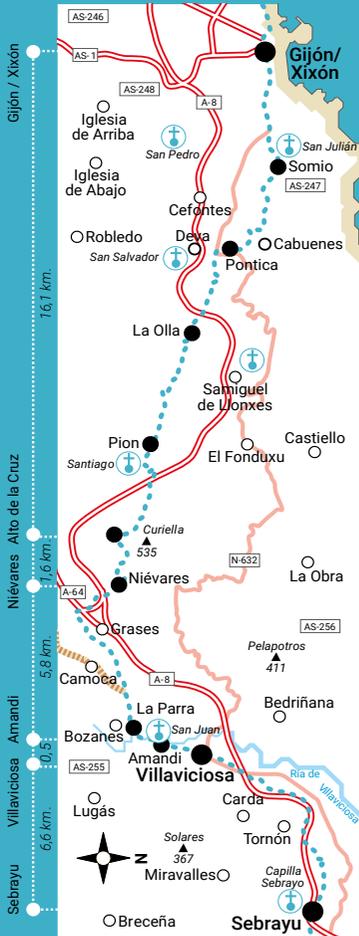
Colunga is the capital of a concejo (county) of the same name, and home to the Chapel of Santa Ana, which was built in the second

half of the 16th century and used to have an adjacent pilgrims' hospital. The village dates back to the 13th century and the first historic record of the parish council appears in the "Colunca" parchment, the oldest one from the Asturian Middle Ages. Today, it is the biggest and most commercially active town in the area and has all convenient amenities. The historical quarter, with houses huddled together and irregular street patterns, has preserved an important monumental heritage, including beautiful Asturian colonial houses, such as the house of the Pablos family (Modernist building from 1910) and that of the Alonso de Covián family, an example of Asturian Renaissance architecture. It is said that Carlos V stayed in the latter after disembarking at Tazones in 1517. Other important sites are the 17th-18th century houses with arcades on the way up to the Calle Real, and the Chapel of the Virgen de Loreto, founded in 1662.

Priesca (102 pop.)

This small village is worth a visit to see the pre-Romanesque church of San Salvador, consecrated in 921 and declared a World Heritage site in 2015. It has preserved a floor plan typical of pre-Romanesque temples and has mural paintings similar to those that we will find later on in churches of the same period in Oviedo. Priesca reveals another detail: the proximity to the Asturian capital means the Way begins to be populated with pilgrim-related signs and symbols. Temples, monasteries and other religious establishments betray the fact that we are entering the area where the former Asturian royal court had the most influence.



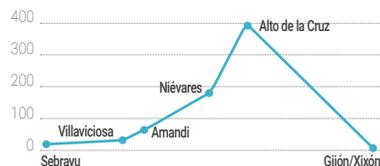


We now enter the central coastal area of Asturias. Villages and hamlets with hórreos punctuate the mounts and valleys of the parish council of Villaviciosa, where we can find old river mills. Following that are the gentle flat terrains of the Gijón/Xixón coast area, always with the sea as a backdrop.

It is at Casquita where the Way branches out to either Gijón/Xixón or Oviedo. On the route to the former we will go through villages like Pion, with its Parish Church of Santiago, and Deva, with remains of a pre-Romanesque temple. We will also admire the Universidad Laboral, a college built in the 20th century, which boasts a tower of Graeco-Latin inspiration and proud figure. We must also pass through the residential district of Somio. After that, once we have crossed the Piles River, we will get to the beautiful beach of San Lorenzo and follow the promenade to its very end, which will see us into the Cimavilla quarter, both a fishing port and the original population centre of the town. In Gijón/Xixón, the most populated town in Asturias, we can enjoy a vast array of services.



Branch, Casquita



Church of San Juan, Amandi ▶

Amandi (743 pop.)

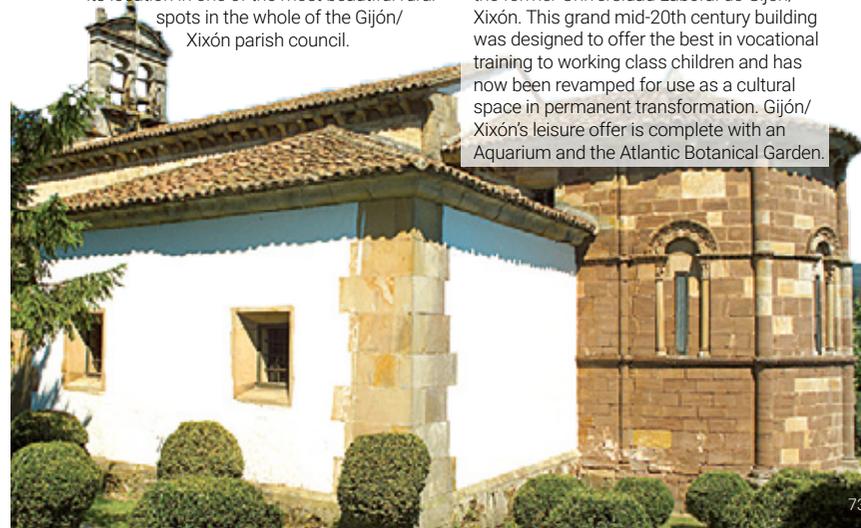
This village is just outside Villaviciosa and has a temple that is especially delicate and beautiful in comparison with the abundant number of Romanesque buildings in the area: the Church of San Juan de Amandi. Its apse is magnificently elegant, as are the columns, impostes and bays, beautifully decorated with mouldings. The interior has a set of great mural arches supported by adjoining columns which, in turn, are supported by smaller columns rammed into the ground.

Deva (706 pop.)

A few kilometres away from Gijón/Xixón is this village where the Church of San Salvador stands out. The only elements remaining from the original temple are the arches, the consecration stone plaque and a sparsely decorated capital. This monastic church was founded around the year 1000. But, aside from the artistic interest, this temple offers the visitor the added value of its location in one of the most beautiful rural spots in the whole of the Gijón/Xixón parish council.

Gijón/Xixón (259,867 pop.)

The Cantabrian Sea has been the key element in the history of Gijón/Xixón and its surroundings for more than 5,000 years. Its Roman and pre-Roman past is evident in the Campa de Torres (which dates back to 490 BC or earlier and was one of the main fortified settlements in northern Spain) and the Campo Valdés baths (a late 1st-century AD public building). The fishing village which occupied the valley in the 15th century was a base for whale fishing and smaller fish trade, and also had a primitive hostel. The biggest development drive came in the 18th and, above all, 19th century, with manor houses, palaces such as Revillagigedo (18th century) and Valdés (17th century), and chapels such as Los Remedios and La Trinidad. Among the numerous museums in the town, the most relevant are the Jovellanos Museum, the Barjola Museum and the Nicanor Piñole Museum. We should also highlight the Laboral Ciudad de la Cultura creative community on the site of the former Universidad Laboral de Gijón/Xixón. This grand mid-20th century building was designed to offer the best in vocational training to working class children and has now been revamped for use as a cultural space in permanent transformation. Gijón/Xixón's leisure offer is complete with an Aquarium and the Atlantic Botanical Garden.





Gijón/Xixón

(259,867 pop.)

Gijón/Xixón is the biggest town in Asturias. It is a modern, dynamic city, open to the sea and surrounded by rural and natural landscapes of exceptional beauty and environmental value.

The city of Gijón/Xixón has a long history which at least dates back to the castros

period, when an Astur settlement was built at Campa de Torres, very close to the Way of Saint James. It was inhabited between the 7th century BC and the 1st century AD. When the Romans conquered the region, the settlement moved to the Cerro de Santa Catalina, a peninsula which is now the location of the traditional

fishermen's quarter of Cimavilla, generally considered as the origin of the modern Gijón/Xixón, which gradually developed and, from the 19th century, thanks to its port and industrial activity, became the driving force of the Asturian economy.

The Way of Saint James crosses the

< Irun - Hondarribia 514.25 km > 345.3 km

parish council of Gijón/Xixón from east to west. This gives us the opportunity to discover the charms of its rural area and the vibrant nightlife of a city which has been focusing for years on promoting a high-quality type of tourism with world-class cultural, sports and natural attractions.



1. Cimavilla quarter

This typical fishermen's quarter is the original nucleus of the city. It has been recognised as a historic site and has many cultural heritage elements, such as the Roman baths of Campo Valdés (1a), the Baroque palaces of Valdés and Revillagigedo (1b) (now used as an art centre), the 19th century Town Hall building (1c), and the birthplace of the famous Enlightenment-period writer and politician Jovellanos (1d), now a museum. Its streets and small squares have an unmistakable seaside flavour and are full of vibrant restaurants, cider bars and terraces. In the upper part of the quarter is the Cerro de Santa Catalina park, which offers spectacular views over the Gijón/Xixón coast and is dominated by Eduardo Chillida's sculpture "In Praise of the Horizon" (1e).



2. Beaches

Gijón/Xixón has five urban beaches and a further five in the rural part of the parish council. The most outstanding of the urban beaches is the 3-kmlong San Lorenzo, a favourite tourist spot offering all manner of services. Also important are the Poniente and El Arbeyal urban beaches. Crossing the coast of Gijón/Xixón is a very pleasant coastal walk. Of special interest is the section linking the Cimavilla quarter with the La Nora beach. This stretch is 10.3 kmlong and offers spectacular views of the coast and a surprising collection of modern sculptures.



3. Laboral, City of cultura

The former Universidad Laboral de Gijón/Xixón, built in the 1950s, is the largest 20th century Spanish construction in terms of surface. After comprehensive refurbishment, it now hosts the innovative Laboral Ciudad de la Cultura complex, with a Centre of Art and Industrial Creation, a monumental theatre and several educational spaces. Other interesting spaces are the gardens and the old church, now an exhibition hall with an exceptional elliptical dome. The tower offers an excellent view of the city of Gijón/Xixón.

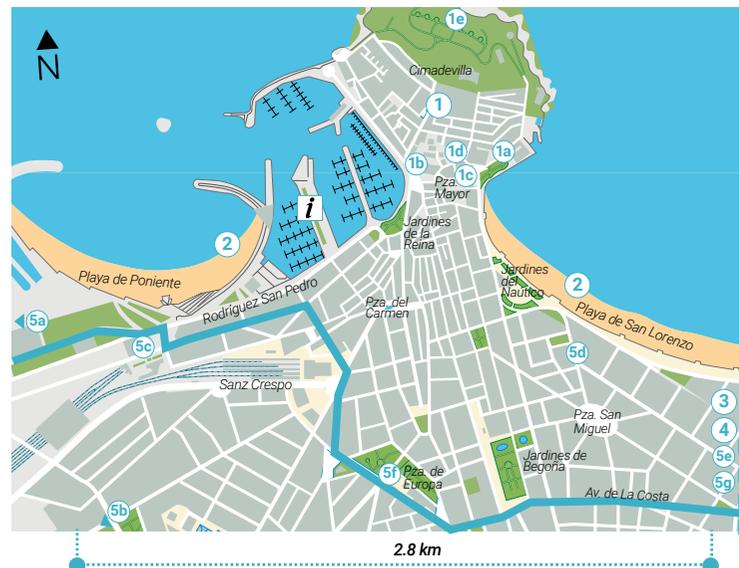


4. Atlantic Botanical Garden

Using the North Atlantic as a *leit motiv*, it allows us to discover the flora of the Cantabrian Sea region. It has integrated the Jardín de la Isla, a historical garden more than 150 years old, and La Carbayedá del Tragamón, an exceptional natural forest with trees more than four hundred years old.

5. Gijón/Xixón Network of Museums

At the Museum of Campa de Torres (5a) we can learn all about the castros culture and the nearby castro, and there is another modern exhibition hall dedicated to the Roman settlement of Veranes (5b). The Railway Museum (5c) and the Museum of the Capua Citadel (a working class district) (5d) show how important industrial activity was in the development of the present-day city, whereas the Museum of the People of Asturias (5e) gives us the opportunity to find out about traditional Asturian societies. Finally, local 19th and 20th century artists like Nicanor Piñole (5f) or Evaristo Valle (5g) have museums specifically dedicated to them.





This stage starts off at the biggest town in Asturias and crosses the third biggest (Avilés). The Xixón districts of El Natahoyo, Cuatrocaminos and La Calzada mark the beginning of the route.

We will then reach the heights of Monte Areo, between the parish councils of Gijón/Xixón and Carreño. Here there is an important burial mound necropolis where we will find funeral elements (e.g. dolmens) dating back three to five thousand years. The La Llana mount is the entrance point to Carreño.

Along the way we will cross villages and hamlets with hórreos typical of this parish council, as well as old palaces and churches. As we pass the Trasona reservoir and gradually approach Avilés, we will be accompanied by the large factories that are characteristic of a historic town.



Avilés estuary



Avilés (75,744 pop.)

This town, originally populated by sailors and peasants, once had a hospital (originally located on Calle Rivero) where mediaeval pilgrims could rest a while. In the 18th century, it had less than 1,000 inhabitants and only one textile mill. We can get a clear picture of this by visiting its old quarter, recognised as a historic, artistic and monumental site. In it we will find the Palace of Ferrera (18th century), the fountain of the seven spouts (17th century) and the Church of San Francisco, which was once part of a 13th century Franciscan convent and underwent successive transformations over the years. Also outstanding are the Church of San Nicolás and the Old Church of Sabugo, both originally Romanesque. Other significant buildings are the palaces of Llano Ponte, Valdecarzana and Camposagrado. Particularly characteristic of Avilés are the houses with arcades of the Ferrería, Galiana and Rivero streets. It was here that Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, Military Governor of Florida (16th century), had his residence.

Avilés is now a modern town. In the first half of the 20th century, it underwent a spectacular population growth linked to an industrial boom which made it a reference in the European steel industry.



Piedrasblancas (9,500 pop.)

This is the most populated town in the municipality of Castrillón. It has grown considerably since the 1970s. Its most important buildings are the 19th century Old Town Hall, the parish church and the early 20th century schools. Within the parish council and close to Piedrasblancas there are two temples with pre-Romanesque remains: San Martín de Laspra and the Church of San Cipriano at Piarnu. The first record of San Martín de Laspra's foundation can be found in King Alfonso II's testament. On one side of the façade, it has a pre-Romanesque window which can be dated to the 9th or 10th century. The modern temple is the product of renovation works in the 18th century. The tower, built in 1787, is one of the most important examples of Asturian rural architecture.

The only element remaining from the original San Cipriano temple is a double-arched window which, although not dated, is undoubtedly pre-Romanesque and was probably made in the 10th century. Its geographic origin is also uncertain, but it may have come from one of the Early Middle Ages temples nearby.



On this stage we will go back to a seaside setting, as the route runs parallel to the western Asturian coast. Pilgrims will see quite a variety of landscapes and places. Towards the end of the stage in Soto de Luiña, you will need to wade past small rivers, such as the Aguilar and the Esqueiro. But you will also have the opportunity to cross the bridge over one of the most important rivers in Asturias: the Nalón, which, at its mouth, meets the San Esteban estuary.

The Nalón estuary features striking scenery, with splendid views from the village of Palacio, in Soto del Barco, a small settlement that grew up around the medieval tower of Soto. It is also a special experience to follow the Way to La Concha de Artedo beach and the magnificent church of Santa María in Soto de Luiña, the end of this stage, and added to UNESCO's World Heritage list in 2015 as part of the Coastal Way.



Church of Santa María, Soto de Luiña



Palace of Los Selgas in El Pito, Cudillero ▶

Muros de Nalón (1,335 pop.)

This lovely village owes its name ("Walls") to the ruins of a Roman building (which no longer exists) in the area now occupied by the parish church and the main square. It used to have a hospital, now also disappeared. It is worth mentioning the remains of the 16th century Plateresque Palace of Valdercarzana. There is also an 18th century parish church with interesting Baroque altarpieces. Muros de Nalón has splendid viewpoints over the sea. From Espíritu Santo, perched on a cliff, we can see from Cape Peñas to Cape Vidio. This village also has a number of very beautiful and peaceful beaches.

Selgas Palace

This palace, in "El Pito", is considered the Versailles of Asturias. It consists of a late 19th century main building and two small pavilions, all surrounded by spacious

French and English style gardens, and accompanied by a small school museum. A visit to the palace lets you reconstruct the life of the Asturian haute bourgeoisie in the late 19th - early 20th century, thanks to the luxuriously decorated rooms in period style, where an exceptional art collection is on show, including paintings by Goya and El Greco.

Soto de Luiña (426 pop.)

This small village is home to a heritage site of great value, recognised as a World Heritage site in 2015, consisting of the parish church of Santa María (an 18th century building with five impressive Baroque altarpieces), and Casa Rectoral (originally one of the last great pilgrims' hospitals, built in Asturias in the Modern Era and now a cultural centre). In Soto de Luiña there is a public pilgrims' hostel in a former school, built by returned migrants, of great architectural quality.

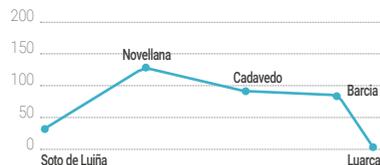




This stage of the Way of Saint James is characterised by the constant contrast between mid-range coastal mountains and valleys. We will cross the Esva River, a typically large clear Asturian river, perfect for trout and salmon fishing. We will also have a chance to see a different, heretofore unseen face of Asturias: the villages of the western coast, where the predominant colours are the white and blueish grey of the slate rock. Towards the end of the stage we will arrive in Luarca, a village combining both a stately and a seafaring tradition. To a great extent, its social and cultural life revolves around the latter. This area is heavily influenced by the practice of cow transhumance. In the houses up in the brañas (summer pastures in the hills) people lead a different way of life with deeply rooted traditions. An ethnographically important feature is the cattle trail running through the Sierra de Las Palancas, on the border between Cudillero and Valdés. Part of the route will go along this trail where the seafaring and cattle herding traditions meet.



Barcia



Countryside of Regalina >

Cadavedo (369 pop.)

Cadavedo is just a kilometre from the main route of St James' Way. HVad a very important role in the economy of the Asturian western coast during the Middle Ages and the Modern Era. Back then, it was one of the main whaling ports of Asturias and had particularly strong links with the Coastal Way of Saint James. The natural setting of the village is one of great beauty. The Campo de la Regalina, between the beaches of La Ribeirona and Churín, hosts one of the most typical romerías (local pilgrimages) in Asturias. It has been held every year since 1931 on the last Sunday of August. Cadavedo is also noteworthy for its beautiful indiano houses dating back to the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Barcia (555 pop.)

The village of Barcia has a privileged position on a flat terrain between the coastal plains, the communal mountain pastures, and the peak of San Antonio de Concilleiro, where we find an old chapel and a viewpoint offering a great sight of the coast and some of the nearby villages. Barcia is the official toponym of the quarter of El Hospital (a former pilgrims' hospital). Not far away from the village we can enjoy some of the beautiful and less crowded beaches of the Valdés parish council.

Luarca (3,935 pop.)

This old mediaeval village was originally a small whaling port that remained active until the 17th century. The village gradually grew around that port, in terms of both population and importance. Luarca is the capital of the Valdés parish council and can be divided into different zones: embracing the port, the mediaeval fishermen's districts, such as La Pescadería, La Carril and El Cambaral; more inland, the bourgeois Luarca, with its 19th century palaces. The hospital used to be located near the Old Church of Santa Eulalia, where beautiful Baroque altarpieces have been preserved. But the star monument here is the Palace and Chapel of the Marquis of Ferrera, dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. It is more commonly known as the Palace of La Moral and comprises three buildings connected via passages. Old *indiano* houses and stately houses bearing their coats of arms are dotted all over this beautiful village, a well known tourist destination in the western coast of Asturias. Luarca has two very natural and very charming urban beaches. From there we can see the marina and fishing port of the village. The latter was an important fish trading centre in the past.

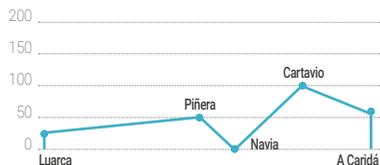




The landscape on this stage of the Way of Saint James is typical of the inland areas near the Asturian western coast, tempered by the flat coastal plains. It is a land of beautiful beaches and rich architectural heritage. The beach of Barayo and its surroundings offer an image of nature at its purest. The Navia estuary leaves a peculiarly beautiful mark on the area and acts as an element vertebrating the landscape. In Navia we can also sample the venera, a typical almond-based dessert created as a homage to pilgrims. Along the way we will find a series of very charming fishing villages, such as El Porto/Viavélez. We will also have the opportunity to get acquainted with the culture of the castros, fortified settlements which concentrated the population of this region before the Romans occupied it.



Church of Santa María



Castro de Coaña ▶

Navia (3,916 pop.)

Navia is located on the estuary of the same name. It was granted a Charter of Privileges by King Alfonso X the Wise around 1284. It was an obligatory stop, a place to rest and a river-crossing point for travellers to Santiago. This is yet another village originally created as a whaling port. There are various and very interesting vestiges of its mediaeval past, such as the remains of the former city walls or a number of emblazoned manor houses, like the house of the Marquis of Santa Cruz or the House of Coaña, both from the 17th century. In the urban expansion area, built on reclaimed marshlands, there are numerous late 19th century and early 20th century palaces and colonial houses, like the Palace of Arias and the Casino. There is a rather interesting promenade and a coastal path that starts in the village itself, leads to the beach of Navia and then continues along the coast of the Navia municipality. There is also a very beautiful natural space in the beach of Frexulfe.



Coaña (177 pop.)

This parish council concentrates a wide variety of interesting sites. Aside from its beaches and mountains, there are important archaeological remains like the castro of Coaña (a walled settlement on a hill on the left bank of the Navia estuary), the castro of Mohias (at the top of a 70 m high hill on the right bank of the Ortigueira brook) or the Discoid Stele. In the mid-18th century, pilgrims travelling to Santiago arrived in Coaña crossing the Navia estuary by boat, more specifically into the area around Barqueiros (El Espín). This service was employed by foot travellers, horse riders and carriages. It cost four *maravedies* per person and eight per horse and rider (one *maravedí* would be equivalent to approximately 0.10 EUR of present-day money). In 1370, Álvaro Pérez de Coaña founded a hospital dedicated to Saint Anne in the village of Jarrio (parish council of Folgueras).

Cartavio (210 pop.)

This village is halfway between the rivers Navia and Porcia. For centuries, it was an obligatory stop on the Way of Saint James. The Parish Church of Santa María was founded in the 10th century. The only original elements remaining are two inscriptions dating back to the 10th and 12th centuries, respectively. It also has very interesting Baroque altarpieces.



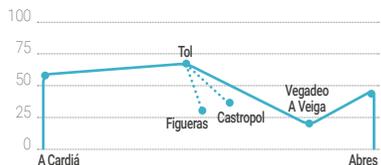
A Caridá ▶ Figueras (17 km) / Castropol (19 km) / Abres (31.5 km)

< Irun - Hondarribia 664.15 km > 195.4 km

And so we come to the end of the Northern Way in Asturias. The coastline around Tapia and the Eo estuary give shape and personality to this stage of the Way of Saint James. If we cast our thoughts back to the landscapes of the Asturian Coastal Way, we will observe one of the most nuanced landscape units in Northern Spain. We are back to the beautiful landscape of the western Asturian coastline, dotted with small, sometimes hard to reach coves, pretty meadowlands open to the Cantabrian Sea and fishing villages with steep, narrow streets and lots of charm. At Valdepareas we can visit the castro of Cabo Blanco. It is one of the largest in Asturias and has fantastic views over the coast. At Tol, we will have three optional routes. The first two involve continuing towards either Castropol or Figueras, where travellers used to cross the river by boat to Ribadeo. The third option is to go down to Vegadeo/A Veiga following the road leading to Abres, the last Asturian village in the route to Santiago before entering Galicia.



Vegadeo



Castropol ▶

Castropol (461 pop.)

It is the capital of the parish council and is located on a promontory on the banks of the Eo estuary. Its white, slate-roofed houses are huddled close together. It was originally a castro type of settlement, and then founded as a puebla or village (Pola de Castropol) by the bishop of Oviedo in the early 14th century. In the Middle Ages, it housed a hospital. Castropol has a pretty town centre where we can admire the 15th century Parish Church of Santiago Apóstol (which holds a nice set of Baroque and Neoclassical altarpieces) and palaces such as Santa Cruz de Marcenado and Valledor, with rich 17th century façades. From the village, we can get a boat to cross the estuary to Ribadeo, like the pilgrims of days of yore.

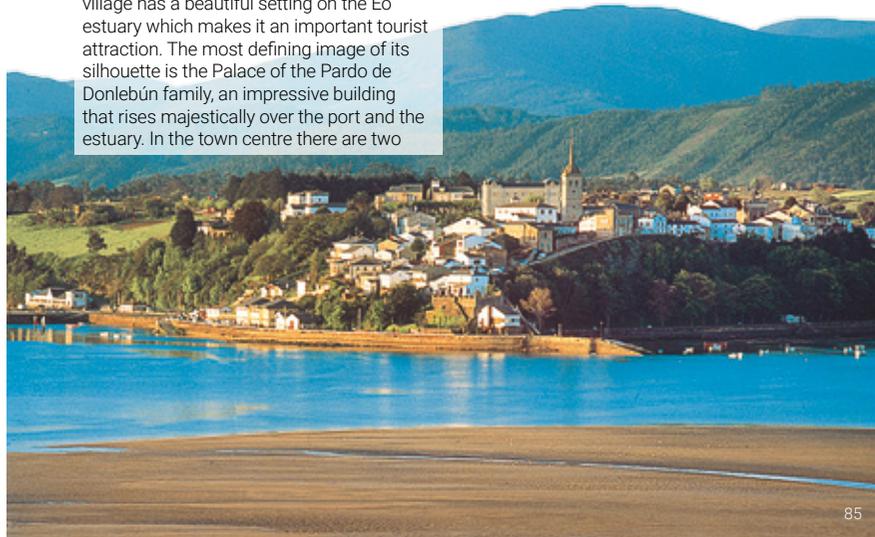
Figueras (563 pop.)

The village of Figueras is the most populated centre in the municipality of Castropol, but not its capital. This fishing village has a beautiful setting on the Eo estuary which makes it an important tourist attraction. The most defining image of its silhouette is the Palace of the Pardo de Donlebún family, an impressive building that rises majestically over the port and the estuary. In the town centre there are two

early 20th century Modernist villas designed by a disciple of Gaudí. We can find clues of its strong ties to the Way of Saint James in several place names that make reference to the Apostle: the Santiago quarter, the Santiago brook, the Parish Church of Santiago.

Vegadeo/A Veiga (2,753 pop.)

This town used to be very important for pilgrims, as it was easier to take a detour and head here than it was to cross the estuary. It still has splendid houses of noble origin, such as the Town Hall (dating back to the second half of the 19th century) or the House of Villamil, which has a beautiful façade with symmetrical balconies and balustrades. In the Town Hall square there is an 1881 fountain with a statue of the goddess Ceres. At Piantón we can find the Church of San Esteban (which was originally founded in the 12th century and has a set of Baroque altarpieces) and a stone bridge built to replace a previous Roman bridge.





Bustio inland port



Church of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, Barru



Llanes by night



Barru beach



Vega beach



Church of San Cristobal



Church of Pitu, Cudillero



Hermitage of Deva



Viewpoint with amazing cliffs



Gijón/ Xixón sports marine



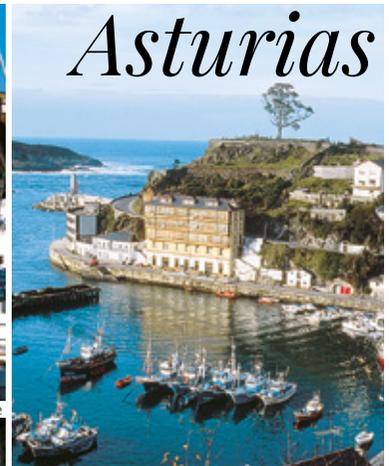
Llano Ponte palace



Cabo Blanco, El Franco



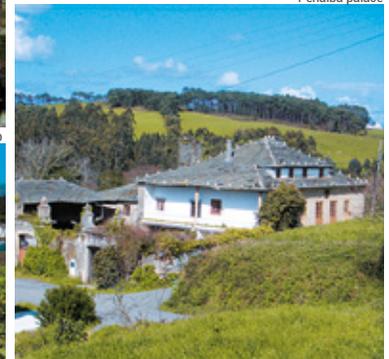
Navia and estuary



Luarca



Peñalba palace



Compositorio palace in Piñera, Navia



The northernmost route of all those that have historically been travelled is the Way that entailed putting a foot on Galician soil, in the port of Ribadeo, and then seeking out the gentle old mountains inland, and so the route continued, up hill and down dale, without any major obstacles but with plenty of forests, until ending the day at dusk in the town of Lourenzá. However, not everyone did, or does, all this: there were small groups of people that did not like to set sail on the Asturian shore and cross the estuary, and so, to avoid this, they would leave the Principality of Asturias at Vegadeo and continue heading upriver along the comfortable banks of the River Eo, which is wide at this point and has many reed beds. The route now reaches Santiago da Ria de Abres and then turns to the west and climbs gradually, on tarmac roads and a landscape which is now very different. They would stop at Trabada and then they had to prove their worth, overcoming the gradients that led to Lourenzá.

Ribadeo (9,929 pop.)

Ribadeo was born and grew up as a town looking out over the sea, slightly into the estuary that is formed by the Eo as it flows into the Cantabrian. At this point, you could even go around this estuary and spend a day doing so (going via Vegadeo) or, alternatively, pay the ferryman. There are written testimonies stating that they used to be terrified crossing this stretch of water, as they said it was never calm. The historic quarter of Ribadeo begins by the sea and continues up the hillside to the centre and Plaza de España, with the tourism office; a bandstand; the Town Council in a mansion, Pazo de Ibáñez; and a tower, Torre de los Moreno. On one side, we have the convent of Clarisas, well known for their confectionery.

A Ponte (9 pop.)

After a long climb that leads us to small, charming hamlets, such as Vilela, the route crosses A Ponte. Before doing so, it passes in front of the Chapel of Carmen. A Ponte could be described as just another hamlet if it was not for the fact that, apart from its fine bridge and interesting Church of Nosa Señora das Virtudes, this place is steeped in history: it was here that the rural population fiercely stood up to Napoleon's invading troops.

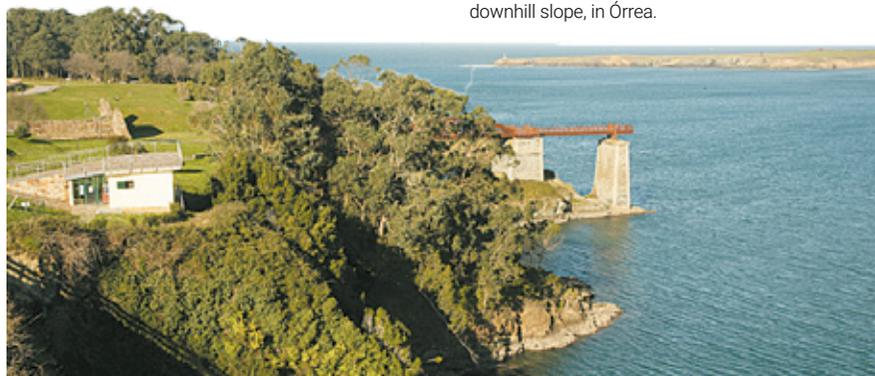
Two Ways pass through Lourenzá: the Northern Way itself, and a secondary branch that comes from Asturias via San Tirso de Abres, a small town by the River Eo. Both will arrive at a great town that was born and grew up in the shadow of its monumental monastery of San Salvador, considered one of the most beautiful in all Galicia.

Trabada (1,178 pop.)

Those travelling via San Tirso de Abres will first go through Igrexa, with a rest area and children's playground, and the simple chapel of San José; and then Trabada, a village in a valley noted for its large castro, its churches, and El Pazo de Terrafeita, a traditional mansion (now a hotel). Those who chose San Tirso de Abres, passed by Igrexa, with its rest area and playground, and before the simple chapel of San José to get to Trabada, a small town in a valley that is characterised by its huge castro, church and pazo, or ancestral home (today used for rural tourism). It is a peaceful place where you can take advantage to have a rest, as after this valley, the climb beyond is pretty tough. With the Chapel of Santo Estevo behind us, and the bandstand at its side, the ascent comes to an end when the church dedicated to Saint Mark appears before our eyes. Make sure you don't miss the fine examples of popular architecture on the downhill slope, in Órrea.



Abres bridge, Trabada





Abadín > Vilalba

(20.6 km)



A completely flat 20.6 km stage of the Way. You are walking through the comarca of Terra Chá, a vast plain (the largest in Galicia, together with the comarca of A Limia, in Ourense) that covers several municipalities of Lugo province. This area, together with the upper reaches of the river Miño, was declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2003, with the name "Terras do Miño". After Abadín, the route passes through the parishes of Castromaior and Goiriz. First, cross the river Arnela by a medieval bridge. Pontevella will surprise you with another splendid medieval bridge with three arches over the river Batán.

The lay of the land takes travellers through areas of wetlands, such as the one that appears after As Chouzas. There are charming examples of vernacular and religious architecture on every side: country houses, monumental crosses, and stone structures for washing clothes in the river. You arrive at Vilalba, the heart of Terra Chá, famous for its cuisine, especially San Simón cheese, and free-range chickens and capons. This village was first settled in the 13th century on a crossroads presided over by the Torre dos Andrade (15th century), a monument that is now an official Parador hotel.



Santa Maria, Abadín >

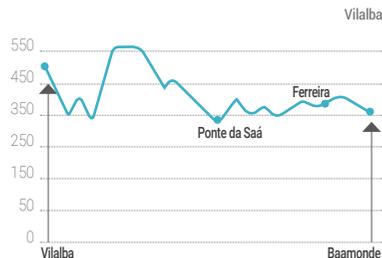




From Vilalba, the Way continues, following possibly-medieval roads and Royal paths that were already documented in the 17th century. Cross the small bridge over the river Labrada to reach the village of Penas Corveiras, and then A Cova. Landscapes dotted with authentic vernacular architecture accompany you on the route through the villages of Seara, Sabugueiros, Gabin, Castro and Regovide.

At 6.7 km from your starting point, you arrive at San Xoándo Alba. Walk on the right side of the local road C-634. Go past Torre-Pedrouzos, Costián, Coutado, and Goiriz, and here, go down towards the river Labrada. Cross the river on the magnificent medieval bridge of Saa, built of thick slate slabs, with several arches in different sizes.

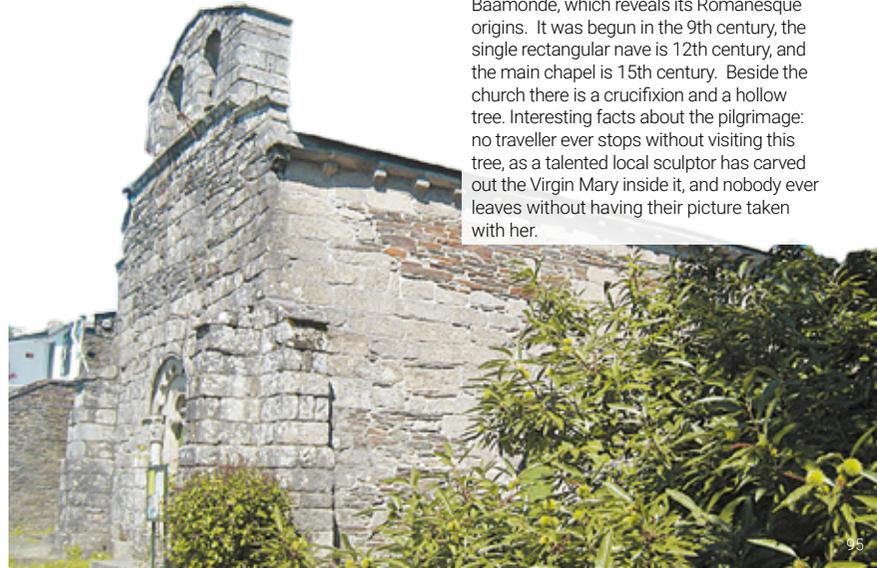
Go down towards Casasnovas and then enter Fonte Pequena. From As Penas, continue on to Pigara, a parish in the municipal area of Guitiriz, where you can try the water in Fonte das Verrugas. The river Ladra offers enchanting scenery and meanders where, in the warmer months, you can have a refreshing dip in the shade of the birch trees. Continue walking parallel to the road C-634 and go into Baamonde, a village in the municipal area of Begonte.



Santa Maria, Abadín >

Vilalba (14,645 pop.)

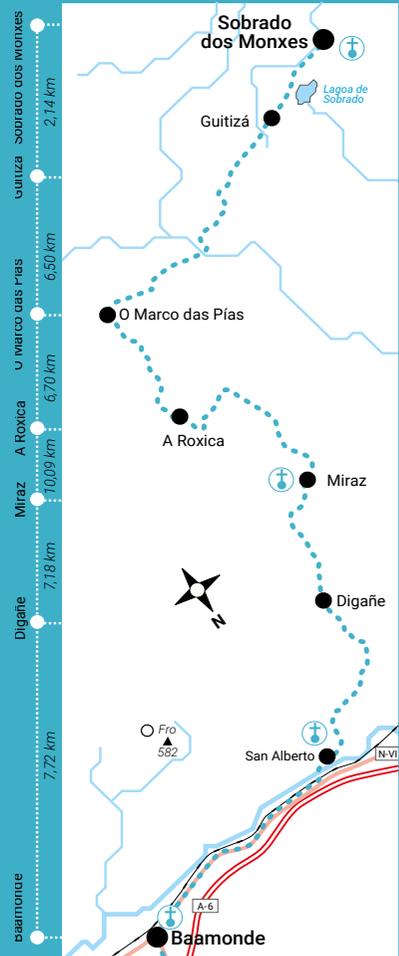
The Way enters Vilalba through an industrial estate, where the hostel is located, after leaving behind the 17th century bridge of Martiñán with its granite parapet. A large, busy roundabout means we have to take the long way round to get to the bridge. In Vilalba, the capital of A Terra Chá, the entire route is marked with bronze shells on the ground, indicating the Way along narrow streets up to a square, which is actually the heart and soul of the town. On the left there is an impressive tower that once belonged to the then powerful house of Andrade; today it is one of the buildings that houses a Parador hotel. In front we can see the unfussy Church of Santa Maria, and the ground is paved all over. The whole ensemble appears in complete harmony. The Way then follows one of the neighbouring streets downhill to a delightful stroll by the river in the shade. Further on, a completely abandoned hamlet gives the area an almost ghostly feel.



Baamonde (370 pop.)

That is the end of the ups and downs. The Way tends to go downhill, but this is hardly noticeable. Meadows, small woods, peaceful places, no major population centres... all these are the name of the day while the Way makes its way south, repeatedly entering and leaving the municipality of Guitiriz. The magnificent bridge of Saa, in Vilalba territory, has been restored without changing its original mediaeval layout: two semicircular arches and a dozen "aliviadoiros", or type of spillways, were constructed so that the pressure of the rainwater would not affect the bridge's stability.

Baamonde comes under the municipality of Begonte and is the typical town that sprung up around a crossroads. It continues like this to the present day, with a hostel now occupying a stagepost building where the stage coaches stopped. The most important element is the church, Santiago de Baamonde, which reveals its Romanesque origins. It was begun in the 9th century, the single rectangular nave is 12th century, and the main chapel is 15th century. Beside the church there is a crucifixion and a hollow tree. Interesting facts about the pilgrimage: no traveller ever stops without visiting this tree, as a talented local sculptor has carved out the Virgin Mary inside it, and nobody ever leaves without having their picture taken with her.



A pilgrim once wrote about the following stage: "When you leave the main road, you enter the nothingness, and you continue like that until you reach Sobrado dos Monxes". He was not talking about absence, but about the presence of nature above all things. This is its defining element. There are hardly any villages along the route, just a few scattered houses, even fewer than normal in north-west Spain. The route passes fairly close to the church of Santa Leocadia de Parga, so if you have the time and energy, this is a recommended short side trip.

The last stretch before Sobrado dos Monxes goes through several villages. Santiago de Compostela is now just over 85 kilometres away. Here you can see animals grazing freely. The Northern Way first becomes a track and then further on it transforms into a much wider road, so asphalt or tarmac could be considered the main characteristic of this stage, the first part of which runs through Lugo territory, and the second, through A Coruña.



Church of San Alberto



San Alberte

After several kilometres on the road, passing the milestone showing just 100 kilometres to Plaza del Obradoiro in Santiago, the route takes a left turn, avoiding the railway track, and crosses the bridge of San Alberte de Parga, medieval in origin and remodelled in the 18th century. It has recently been reinforced, while the complex excavation inside it has revealed a slender, elegant structure, and an insight into medieval building techniques.

The bridge leads to a spring with water reputed to have miraculous properties. Next to it, the Gothic church of San Alberte de Parga (13th century) is another example of impeccable restoration of a country church, which can now be enjoyed by residents of nearby San Breixo, and everyone who passes by. There is a recreational area next to it, which is small but sufficient for a rest before continuing the Way.

Miraz

In Miraz there is another rest area, the last one before the long, magnificent ascent, spectacular in its own right, as well as for the views.

Laguna de Sobrado

After a long stretch in which unrefined nature borders the Way the whole time, an enormous artificial lake measuring 10 hectares appears in sight. To be more exact, this is the work of the religious community at the local monastery, who built it between the years 1500 and 1530. For almost five hundred years now, it has stored water there from several brooks, with a depth of between 1.5 and 4.5 metres. Today it is a major ecological refuge (dragonflies, frogs, ducks and even otters turn up here, surrounded by willows, alders, birch and ash trees) and a delight for the eyes. We must add to this that it is the only place in Galicia

where you will find an endemic species of algae, the *Nitelle flexilis*.

Sobrado dos Monxes (1,911 pop.)

The lake announces the arrival at Sobrado dos Monxes, a village that was born and grew up in the shadow of a huge monastery dedicated to the Holy Saviour in the 10th century and to Saint Mary after that. It used to be the most important monastery in Galicia in mediaeval times, after having been abandoned in the early 12th century. In more recent years, general decline and the confiscations of the 19th century have left it in ruins. A regiment of soldiers fighting off the Carlists at the nearby mountains of O Bocelo had to seek refuge here. One of the walls even suffered a cannonshot during the conflict, which lasted several days. Obviously there are no marks of that combat except in documents, as in the middle of the last century, the religious community returned to Sobrado, they rebuilt the monastery from 1954 and it is still there (formally since 25th July 1966) as a cultural and devotion centre. Its three cloisters are quite interesting, as is its church, which was finished at the end of the 17th century and consecrated in 1708.

The monks today did not turn their back on the Way, quite the contrary, and they prepared the meeting house as a place for accommodation. Practically all those who arrive here on the pilgrimage enter by the main building, as there is a pretty and well-stocked shop at the entrance selling all kinds of products: from books about meditation and reflection, to wine made by the monks and delicious jams.



The Northern Way approaches Arzúa with imperceptible uphill and downhill slopes. It is a particularly shady section, always travelling through forests or along the edges of the woods, and it has two clearly defined parts: before arriving at the Corredoiras crossroads, there is an equal mix of dirt tracks and tarmac, whereas the second part is mostly tarmac. Three small churches are worth mentioning here. The first of these is Cardelle, which was restored not long after the Holy Year of 2004, and where people who have made a promise to Our Lady go to, as there is still a tradition of walking round the outside of the church on one's knees, whilst praying. Another is in Sendelle, a 12th century Romanesque church, simple and well conserved. And now a warning for this stage: traffic is very busy at the Corredoiras crossroads, so you really have to be careful.



Boimorto path



Sobrado Monastery >

Boimorto (2,125 pop.)

The Northern Way leaves behind the monastery at Sobrado, heading in a south-westerly direction. Soon afterwards, at Pontepedra, there is a recreational area beside a water source. From there on, the Way is excellent and very easy to walk, until you reach the Church of Cardelle. There is nothing particularly amazing about it, but every last corner is a pleasant and charming image. There is another, bigger, recreation area before Corredoiras. The crossroads warns us that Vilanova, where we find Boimorto, is near. This town offers all types of services and a milestone that tells us that a Roman road once passed through here.

The bridge leads to a spring with water reputed to have miraculous properties. Next to it, the Gothic church of San Alberte de Parga (13th century) is another example of impeccable restoration of a country church, which can now be enjoyed by residents of nearby San Breixo, and everyone who passes by. The leisure area beside it is small but makes a good place for a rest before continuing on the Camino.

Arzúa (6,219 pop.)

The home straight in more sense than one: because the Northern Way is about to merge with the French Way at Arzúa; and because the curves and bends are few and far between from Boimorto onwards. In the last few kilometres, you will come across a pretty little hamlet, O Viso. After this, you enter Arzúa, which has a small park, known as the gardens, where hikers from the two pilgrims' routes often meet at sunset to exchange experiences. Someone from the village will almost certainly bring up that this

was the home of Alonso Pita da Veiga, who in 1525 imprisoned the French king, Francis I, during the battle of Pavia.

There are two places of worship next to the gardens. One of them is the current parish church that was built in the 19th century and dedicated to Saint Mary. It is tall and solid, with a basilica-style layout and two church bells from 1825 and 1869. Inside it has a high altarpiece dating back to 1872.

The other is more modest in size: the Chapel of A Magdalena, which used to belong to a hospital run by the Augustinians, and which has since been converted into a 21st century cultural centre. The Augustinians had already gone to Santiago de Compostela in the 17th century, although the chapel continued to fulfil its religious duties up until the confiscation of Mendizábal in the 19th century.

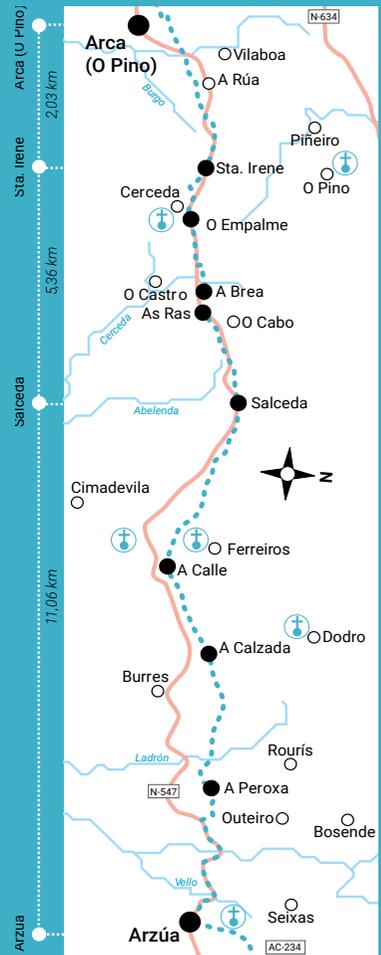
It is worth pointing out that Arzúa is also the cheese-producing capital with its own designation of origin: Arzúa-Ulloa.



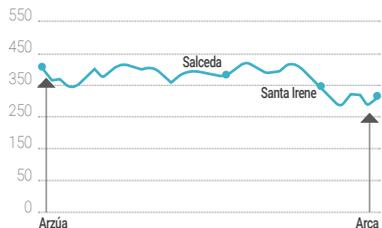


Arzúa > Arca (O Pino)

(18.4 km)



A short stage, so much so that some prefer to go the extra mile and go straight to Monte do Gozo. This enclave, just outside Compostela, is that typical place that is somewhere between symbolic and magical, from where you catch your first glimpse of the cathedral towers, and where in bygone years, he or she who saw them first would be named "king of the pilgrimage". Monte do Gozo has the largest hostel in Galicia. It is a spacious complex with all amenities, including a place for macro-concerts! Whatever you do, at this stage of the Way, tiredness is inevitable and clearly visible, and adding almost forty kilometres extra to your journey today may not be advisable if you are not sure you can do it, particularly because after Pedrouzo there is a steep climb. You will not really see any villages as such in this stage; the route passes by the odd cluster of houses, some of which make up one of the thousands of traditional hamlets in Galicia.



Church of Pedrouzo ▶

Salceda (165 pop.)

The Way reaches Salceda, a group of houses that stretch all along the road. Up until now, we have mainly travelled through rural areas, but at this point we are getting closer and closer to the asphalt roads. The route does not run along the road itself, but in parallel to it, on another level, along a dirt path. This is the prelude to a small climb into the forest once more, where the eucalyptus trees reign supreme, and which is generally considered to be a stopping-off point for a deserved rest.

O Empalme (83 pop.)

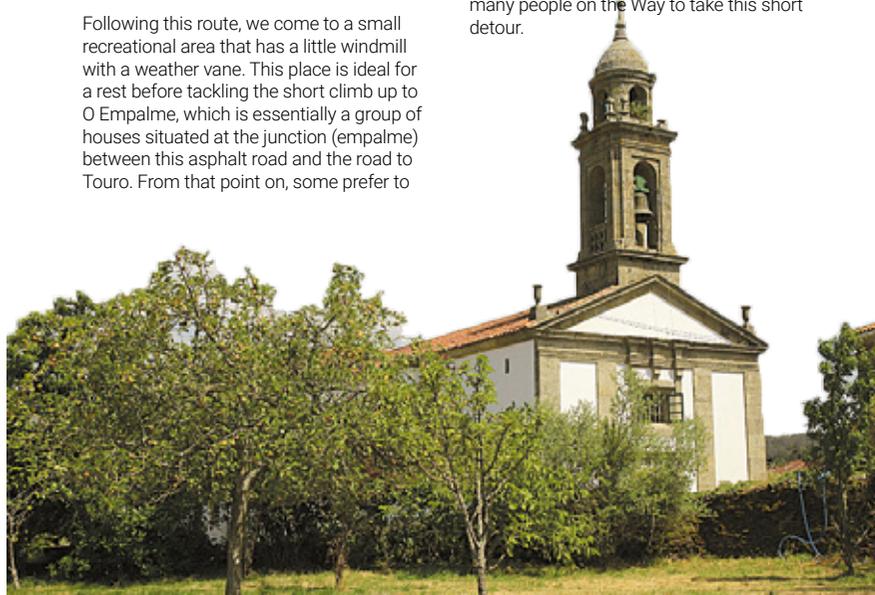
The path follows a gentle, shady ascent and then you go down again almost without realising it, with the main road just a few hundred metres away. At some point you have to cross the busy main road, but be careful as there are no traffic lights or zebra crossings.

Following this route, we come to a small recreational area that has a little windmill with a weather vane. This place is ideal for a rest before tackling the short climb up to O Empalme, which is essentially a group of houses situated at the junction (empalme) between this asphalt road and the road to Touro. From that point on, some prefer to

continue along the main road, but this is a mistake: the Way means you have to pass over to the other side of the tarmac (be careful, there is a crossroads on a slope) before entering another forest. The cross marks an area where the gradient changes, and extra care should be taken. Eventually you have to choose: straight ahead towards the hostel of Santa Irene (visible in the distance) or through the tunnel to a spring and a beautiful church, before going back to the main road and the hostel.

Arca (O Pino) (597 pop.)

The Way now passes by another hamlet that is well known on the French Way: Arca. Houses dotted around the rural landscape, peace and quiet in the air, and in the distance we have Pedrouzo, the capital of the municipality of O Pino. The Way approaches it through a dense forest, but the fact that it has a hostel is a reason for many people on the Way to take this short detour.





This stage is characterised by a first stretch that drops gently until it reaches Amenal. From there on, the Way climbs through a steep slope amid an industrial estate that was built on what used to be a dense eucalyptus forest. We reach the highest part of the mount, where the A Lavacolla airport is situated, and after going round the airport along a path, and crossing the old road, we once again start a descent.



Lavacolla Chapel

A Lavacolla

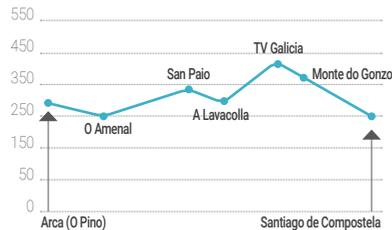
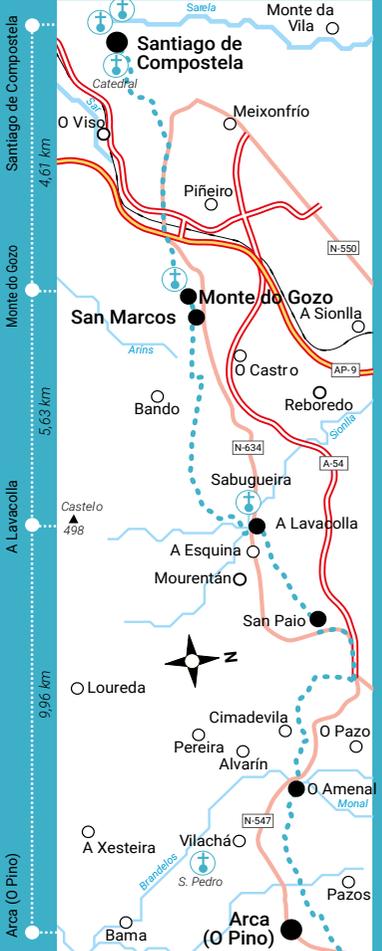
So, continuing gently downhill, the Pilgrims' Way comes to Amenal (there is a small tunnel to protect hikers who no longer have to cross the main road) and once again starts the ascent that will lead it to A Lavacolla. The detour around the airport leads to the friendly little Church of San Paio, a former parish church that was built in stone and refurbished not that long ago. Its next stop is the new church at A Lavacolla, situated beside a lovely bandstand with well-cared for surroundings; this is a very good place to get your breath back and, as custom makes law, most people stop here on the church steps for at least a minute or an hour. From here on, the final descent begins along the left flank of a main road with very little traffic, and along a path on which you will have to walk single file. You can almost smell Santiago in the air.

Monte do Gozo

The first part of this stage slopes gently downwards to O Amenal. There are records of Mount Monxoi or Monte do Gozo since

the Middle Ages. It has been mentioned in thousands of documents related to the pilgrimage, and it had never been inhabited. Not, that is, until the Jubilee Year of 1993, when everything changed and a huge reception complex was built there for the hundreds of thousands of people who were expected to make the pilgrimage, something which back then still seemed to be a somewhat Utopian idea. But Utopia came true, and hundreds of thousands of hikers did, in fact, come to this complex where they found shelter, a place to sleep and good service. The hostel is the largest in Galicia and is a hive of activity, even in low season.

The city's expansion has meant that hotels and buildings are now very close to Monte do Gozo. So the last stretch up to the Cathedral of Santiago travels through a built-up area, crossing the motorway over a bridge and entering Santiago de Compostela, our goal.



Monte do Gozo >



Santiago de Compostela

(95,612 pop.)

Our goal is Santiago de Compostela. They say that you arrive at Obradoiro square, where the cathedral's Baroque façade rises up over the Pórtico de la Gloria, with your strength at its lowest level and your spirits at their highest. In just the Holy Years, over 35 million pilgrims arrived here throughout the 20th century, moved primarily by faith, and then considering other non-religious

motives since the Jubilee Year of 1993 put the Way on everyone's agenda.

The road enters Compostela along the street of San Pedro, on the outskirts, and reaches the Porta do Camiño, leaving behind two contrasting buildings: the old monastery of San Domingos de Bonaval, which is today the Museo do Pobo Galego

(Museum of the Galician People), and the avant-garde Galician Centre of Contemporary Art.

It rises again inside the former city walls, via Casas Reais, arriving at the highest point, Plaza de Cervantes, where the old Town Hall is still intact. And then down again for about 100 metres, to Plaza de

the city who, in the 12th century, turned the city into a point of reference for Christianity. A capital has been conserved in this palace with the oldest known representation of the empanada gallega (traditional Galician pasty), and the guided tours also lead to the cathedral roofs.

Once past this little tunnel, you come out at Obradoiro square. To the right, the great hospital that the monarchs Isabel and Fernando had built to care for pilgrims, now the *Hostal de los Reyes Católicos*, part of the National Parador Network. Opposite is the Raxoi Palace, in a French-influenced 18th-century style. It was built by a powerful church figure, Bartolomé Rajoy y Losada, and is currently the Town Hall. On the left is the college of San Xerome, the university vice-chancellor's office. A great end of stage and end of pilgrimage.



1. Cathedral

One of the best known churches in the whole world, since the tomb of Saint James the Apostle was discovered in the 9th century. The Romanesque cathedral was begun in 1075. Work then stopped until 1100 when Archbishop Gelmírez was able to restart it. It was not until 1168 that the prestigious Maestro Mateo started work again. The cathedral was consecrated in 1211. The addition of a Renaissance cloister and the construction of the Baroque façade, which is actually a stone curtain from that era that practically encircles the whole building, have changed its original appearance. It holds the greatest ever Romanesque sculpted work of art: the Pórtico de la Gloria, by the aforementioned Maestro Mateo.



2. Monastery of San Martiño Pinario

Founded by the Benedictine monks in the 10th century, it went through a thousand and one vicissitudes until it became the most important monastic centre in the whole of Galicia. Most of the current building dates from the 16th to the late 18th century. It occupies 2.2 hectares, no less, and its ensemble is a blend of Baroque and Neoclassical, with Renaissance elements. Its grand façade, compared with the cathedral's Acebechería façade, does not go unnoticed. Inside, there are two cloisters. Parts of the monastery can still be visited.



3. Hostel of the Reyes Católicos

The Latin inscription on the upper frieze of the portal states that the Catholic Monarchs ordered its construction in 1501 to welcome and shelter the great multitude of pilgrims coming to Compostela. Also from the 16th century is the massive chain that joins the building with the rest of the Obradoiro square, a legacy of a dispute between the Town Hall and the hostel's managers. Inside there are four courtyards and an overhanging Gothic capital that was declared a national monument in 1912.



4. Palace of Gelmírez

It is situated to the north of the cathedral, very nearby. It was ordered to be built by the then powerful archbishop Diego Gelmírez for his own purpose. Since the first stone was laid in 1120, it has undergone a number of changes (it only had two storeys up until the 18th century), but they have not marred its magnificence in the slightest. Particularly worthy of mention are its mediaeval kitchen and synodal hall (13th century) with its unusual vault: its corbels, the architectural elements that hold up the ribs of the arches, are decorated with scenes from a mediaeval banquet.

A Inmaculada, on various levels. To the left is the northern façade of the cathedral; to the right, an enormous building of granite blocks, home to the Seminario Mayor, San Martiño Pinario, the largest monastery in Galicia and the second largest in Spain, after San Lorenzo del Escorial.

If we continue straight ahead, we will pass under an arch that belongs to the only civil Romanesque building in Galicia: the Palace of Gelmírez. He was the first archbishop of

5. Alameda

Although the great 19th century park with its array of monuments, and set beside the old quarter, goes by the name of Alameda, it is actually made up of three very different parts: the Alameda pass itself, the A Ferradura walk, and the oak grove of Santa Susana. It is the main city garden and the views of the cathedral from here are stunning. The chapel of Santa Susana, the church of Pilar, the bandstand, and the dovecot, are just some of the most distinguished components.





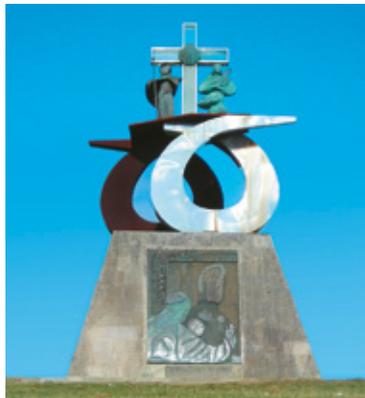
Plaza de España, Ribadeo



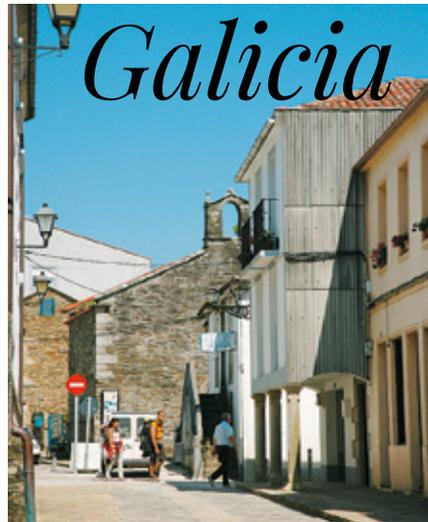
Mondoñedo



El Tejo



Monte do Gozo



Arzúa



Salceda



O Ribeiro



Sobrado Monastery



Calvario, Baamonde



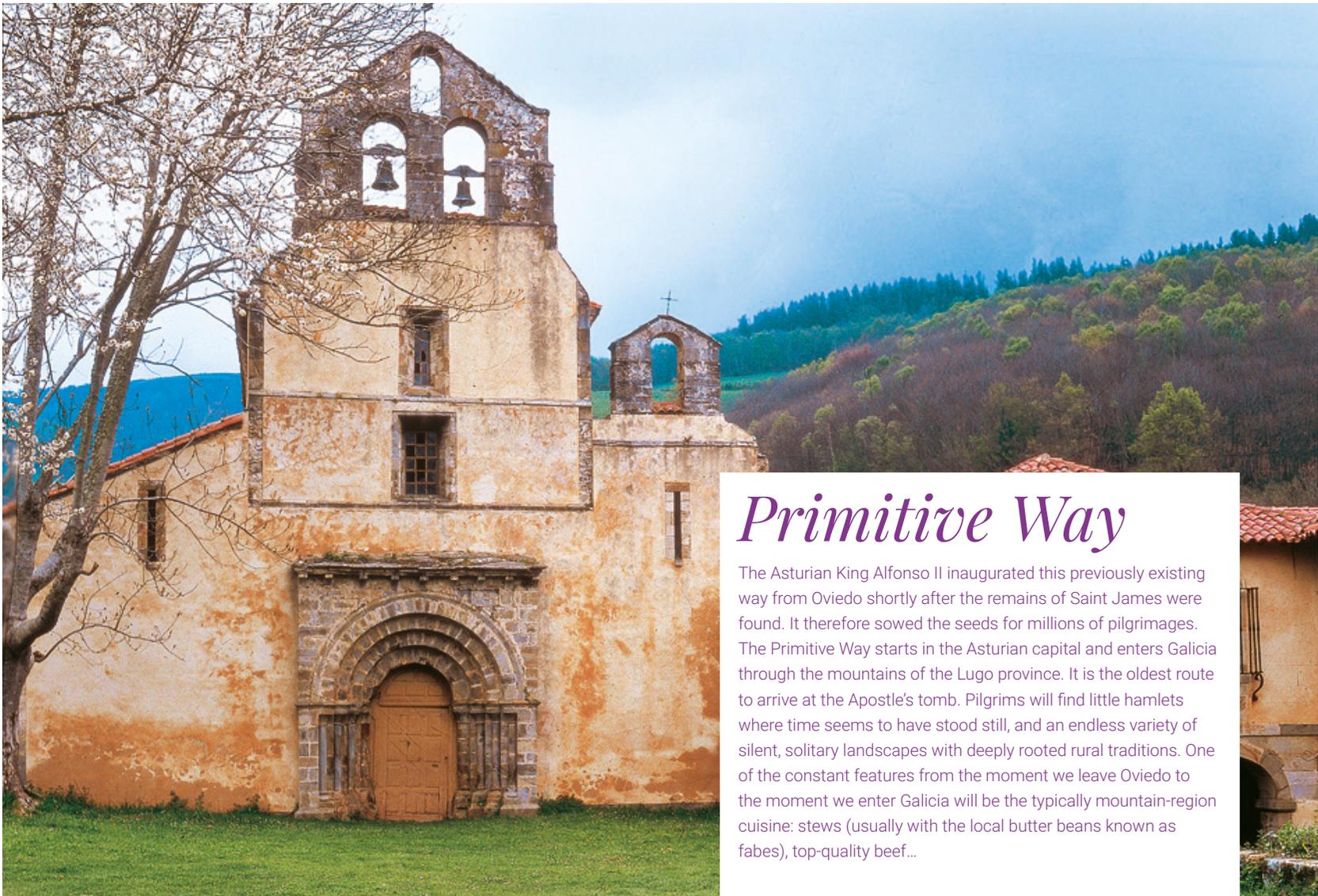
Lourenza



Chapel of Lavacolla



Sanabria Lagoon



Primitive Way

The Asturian King Alfonso II inaugurated this previously existing way from Oviedo shortly after the remains of Saint James were found. It therefore sowed the seeds for millions of pilgrimages. The Primitive Way starts in the Asturian capital and enters Galicia through the mountains of the Lugo province. It is the oldest route to arrive at the Apostle's tomb. Pilgrims will find little hamlets where time seems to have stood still, and an endless variety of silent, solitary landscapes with deeply rooted rural traditions. One of the constant features from the moment we leave Oviedo to the moment we enter Galicia will be the typically mountain-region cuisine: stews (usually with the local butter beans known as fabes), top-quality beef...



Sebrayu > Vega (Sariego) (23.7 km)

Via A Proba de Burón > 369.4 km
Via San Xoán de Padrón > 368.3 km

From Irún and up until now, the Coastal Way has been running parallel to the Cantabrian Sea, but past Villaviciosa the pilgrims' path will branch out into two routes. One will continue along the coast to the Eo estuary (which marks the limit with Galicia) and will then go down to Santiago. This is the Northern Way. The other branch will steer away from the Cantabrian Sea and go up the mountains heading for Oviedo, a key city in the Way of St James. This is the so-called Inland Northern Way or Primitive Way. The stretch between Sebrayu and Oviedo serves as a link between both.

This is one of the most important areas of the Asturian Middle Ages. The valley of Valdediós and its surroundings are exceptionally rich in historical and artistic elements. Even the smallest hamlet has preserved some artistic treasure of historical vestige of past eras. The history and art-packed landscape of this region is further enhanced by the mountains and valleys that guard it as if it were a huge reliquary looking up at the skies from the road.



Landscape and church, Narzana



San Salvador de Valdediós ▶

Villaviciosa (6,385 pop.)

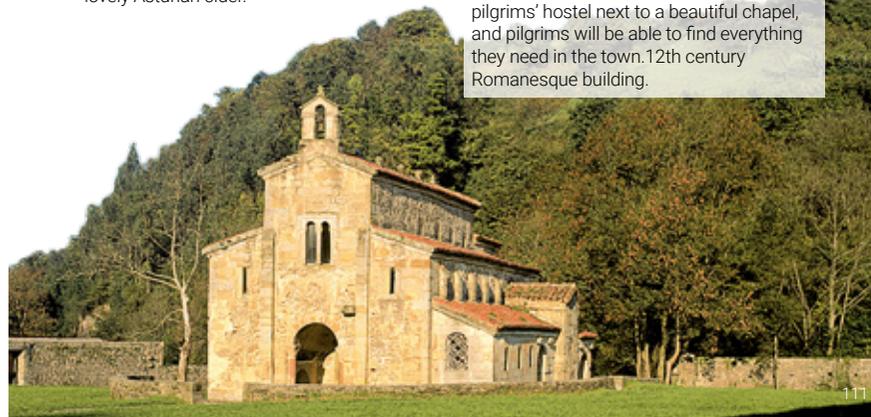
In 1270, Alfonso X the Wise founded the Puebla de Maliayo, which in time would be known as Villaviciosa, meaning "fertile village". In 1517, the young prince Charles of Ghent (the future emperor Charles V), came to take over the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, anchored his ship opposite the fishing village of Tazones, made it up the estuary, disembarked at Villaviciosa and stayed in the village for four days before pursuing his travel by land to Valladolid. The old port village had walls to protect the houses with their coats of arms, and the narrow cobbled streets where the hospital was situated. The "Fertile Village" still preserves the 13th century Church of Santa María de la Oliva (featuring two Romanesque portals), the 17th century Old Convent of San Francisco, a number of Renaissance palaces and numerous examples of indiano architecture. The estuary of Villaviciosa is an important environmental site. It has been recognised as a Natural Reserve and serves as a refuge for many waterfowl species. La Villa, as it is commonly known in the region, is also the heart of Asturias' cider country, and we must not leave without having a drop of that lovely Asturian cider.

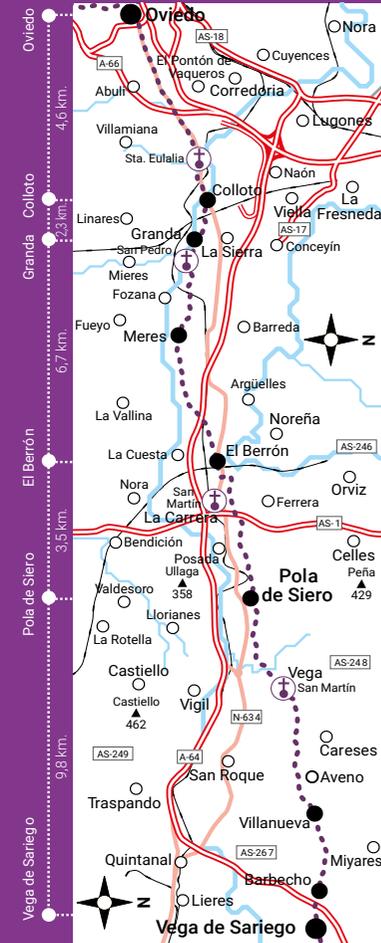
Valdediós (5 pop.)

Officially, St James' Way does not go through Valdediós, but it does pass nearby, with well-signed paths to guide you to this important heritage site. In this tiny hamlet between the mountains is the must-visit Cistercian Monastery of Santa María de Valdediós, founded in 1200, and next to it, the small but delightful pre-Romanesque temple of San Salvador, also known as El Conventin ("The wee convent"). It was founded under the patronage of Alfonso III and consecrated in 893 by seven bishops, according to an inscription in a marble plaque embedded into the outside part of the chevet. This temple is particularly relevant because it was the last great example of a style about to give way to new, powerful tendencies, namely Romanesque art. The latter would soon prevail and pave the way for the first European fusion style, one which Asturias would heavily contribute to.

Sariego (159 pop.)

St James' Way goes through the concejo (county) of Sariego on its way to Oviedo. This is an area of broad meadows and pastures dotted with architectural gems like the Romanesque churches of Santiago and San Román. In the capital, Vega, there is a pilgrims' hostel next to a beautiful chapel, and pilgrims will be able to find everything they need in the town. 12th century Romanesque building.



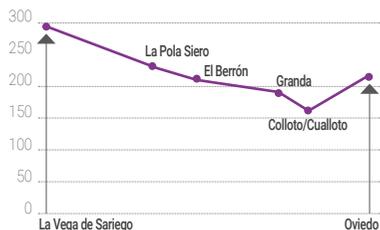


After passing Sariego, pilgrims will cross the municipality of Siero through surprisingly flat and accessible lands in comparison with the otherwise mountainous Asturian landscape. As is usually the case when we approach a big town (in this case Oviedo, the capital of Asturias), the landscape becomes increasingly less pretty and more urban and industrialised.

However, in the old quarter of Oviedo, travellers will feel they have gone back in time to the Asturian Middle Ages. The phenomenon of pilgrimage was crucial for the cultural and demographic growth of Oviedo, as well as for the creation of new services and for the transformation of a royal and ecclesiastical town into somewhat of a universally known urban centre. Let us not forget that the Cathedral of San Salvador and its Holy Chamber were a major pilgrim destination in the Middle Ages (not as massive as Jerusalem and Rome, but almost as important as Santiago de Compostela).



General view, Oviedo



Colloto bridge ▶

La Pola Siero (12,830 pop.)

This town was built over the old Hostel of San Pedro for “pilgrims and paupers” and founded with the authorisation of King Alfonso X in the 13th century. It has had an important role as a trading post ever since the 18th century, when the Baroque Palace of the Marquis of Santa Cruz de Marcenado was built. We must also mention the increasing significance and activity of its cattle market, nowadays considered the most important establishment of its type in Spain and one of the most important in Europe.

Colloto/Cualloto (3,375 pop.)

It used to be on the old mediaeval road from La Pola Siero to Oviedo, and it is the last village we will find before entering the Asturian capital. A mediaeval bridge originally built by the Romans will help us cross the Nora River. Another noteworthy site is the Church of Santa Eulalia, with a Romanesque triumphal arch.

Oviedo (187,846 pop.)

The capital of the Principality of Asturias was not just a stop, but also a destination, in the large-scale pilgrimage phenomenon

that got a large part of the European population on the road. In the Late Middle Ages, going on a pilgrimage to the Cathedral of San Salvador de Oviedo and its Holy Chamber, where several sacred relics were kept, became a reason to visit the capital of the Asturian kingdom. Many of those pilgrims followed the French Way and, after visiting the remains of San Isidoro in León, took a detour up the Pajares mountain pass and down to Oviedo before following their way to Santiago. In the 9th century, the Asturian King Alfonso II the Chaste travelled from his court in Oviedo to a place called Iria Flavia (in the present-day village of Padrón) to visit the recently discovered tomb of the Apostle Saint James. This was surely the first pilgrimage to Compostela. News of the discovery of Saint James's tomb echoed throughout Europe, and the “Field of Stars” or “Campus Stellae” that Santiago de Compostela was named after, and in which the Asturian monarch ordered that a church be built to hold the saint's relics, became one of the most important pilgrimage centres in the Christian world.



Oviedo, the capital of the Principality of Asturias, is nowadays an open, modern town of great international significance. Some of its main tourist attractions are the old quarter, including the Cathedral/Holy Chamber and the Campoamor Theatre, the venue of many important cultural events. It has an impressive monumental heritage with World Heritage sites like Santa María del Naranco, San Miguel de Lillo and San Julián de los Prados.

There are records of the foundation of Oviedo dating back to 761, when the presbyter Máximo and his uncle the abbot Fromestano settled on a hill called Oveto and built a basilica dedicated to Saint Vincent. Asturias forged the first links with the Way of Saint James in the early 11th century, with the pilgrimage of King Alfonso II the Chaste to Compostela. This was the beginning of the oldest pilgrimage route to Santiago, the one that connects Oviedo and Santiago through

the inland regions of western Asturias.

This route was frequently used between the 11th and the 13th century, and later. During that period, the cult of San Salvador de Oviedo was a powerful magnet attracting numerous pilgrims who

took a detour from the French Way at León and came to Oviedo to venerate the relics kept at the Holy Chamber. There is a popular saying that goes like this: "He who goes to Santiago but not to San Salvador, visits the servant and forgets the lord."

The last element to be completed in the mid-16th century was the late-Gothic style tower. The only remaining original element is the Holy Chamber, dating back to Alfonso II the Chaste.

5. Old quarter
This historic and monumental site is one of the most dynamic parts of the town and comprises the Cathedral, the Town Hall, the Church of San Isidoro, the Church of San Tirso, the Monastery of San Pelayo, the Convent of San Vicente (which houses the Archaeological Museum of Asturias) and squares such as Plaza de Alfonso II, Plaza de Trascorrales, Corrada del Obispo and Plaza del Paraguas. We can also see the Fontán market, built in 1882.



4. La Foncalada
This 9th century fountain was built during the reign of Alfonso III the Great (866-910). It is the only remaining example of a civil building for public use from the Early Middle Ages. It surrounds a spring of drinking water that flows from the very ground. The water falls into a pool covered by a stone structure. In the pediment there is a bas-relief of Alfonso III's Victory Cross with the alpha and omega symbols hanging from its arms.

6. Archaeological Museum of Asturias
It is housed in the 16th century former Benedictine Monastery of San Vicente. This building is very much part of Oviedo's history. For example, it was here that local priest and man of letters Benito Feijoo (1676-1764) wrote his entire corpus of works. Not surprisingly, the museum focuses on archaeological findings in Asturias.



7. Fine Arts Museum of Asturias
It houses the largest public collection of art in Asturias, comprising paintings, sculptures, drawings, engravings, photography, and applied/industrial arts. It occupies three buildings in the Oviedo old quarter, right by the Cathedral: the Velarde Palace (1767), a masterpiece by the architect Reguera, the House of the Oviedo-Portal family (1660), designed by the Cantabrian architect Melchor de Velasco, and a 1940s building.



1. Church of San Julián de Los Prados



The pre-Romanesque Church of San Julián de los Prados, built during the reign of Alfonso II the Chaste (791-842), is the oldest and biggest pre-Romanesque building still standing. Its most striking features are the stucco paintings based on Roman-inspired motives, which decorate the inside walls and vaults, the blind arches along the central apse, and the latticework covering the bays.

2. Pre-Romanesque monuments of the Naranco mountain



Santa María del Naranco: The Palace of Ramiro I (842-850) in the Naranco mountain is peculiar in that its function is not certain (it may have been a palace, a church, a royal pavilion, a hall for meetings with royal advisors...). It is also the most significant building of European pre-Romanesque art.
San Miguel de Lillo: This church was ordered to be built by Ramiro I and approximately a third of the original construction has survived. During the Late Middle Ages, part of it collapsed and the chevet was reconstructed to its current appearance. The primitive portal and one stretch of the original nave have survived.

3. Cathedral of San Salvador and Holy Chamber



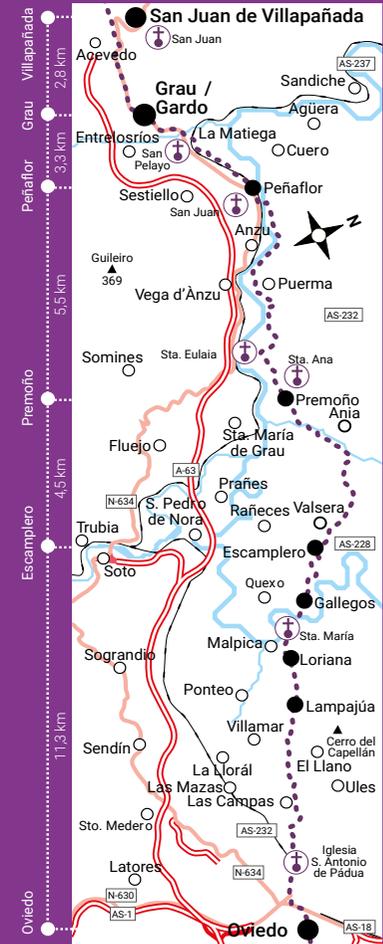
The origins of the Cathedral of Oviedo are in a basilica that King Alfonso II the Chaste (791-842) ordered to be built and dedicated to San Salvador. In the 14th century, the pre-Romanesque/Romanesque basilica was demolished and the building works of the Gothic style cathedral started.



Hotel de La Reconquista

Catedral

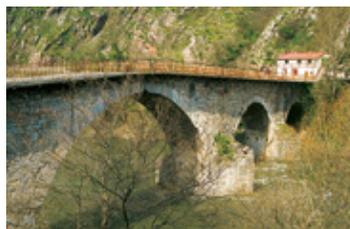
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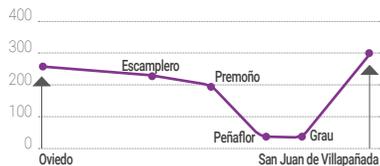
This stage starts by the image of El Salvador at the Oviedo Cathedral, with urban landscapes (Oviedo's old quarter) and country landscapes (the southern slopes of the Naranco mountain) both in view.

We will cross the Nora River via the mediaeval Gallegos bridge. This is documented to have existed in the 13th century, but the present-day structure seems to date back to the 15th century. We will then enter the parish council of Las Regueras, which became independent from Oviedo in 1380. On the road to Grau/Grado we will see the typical landscape of central Asturias and the Nalón River valley: fertile plains and hills, brooks, villages and hamlets that go back in time and show us a glimpse of the past.

At the end of the stage we will reach San Juan de Villapañada (traditionally known as *Lleñapañada*), where we will find a hostel, a successor of the hospital that the Order of Malta had here in the Middle Ages.



Peñafior bridge



Carmen Chapel, Llampaxuga ▶

Premoño (88 pop.)

This hamlet, nowadays sparsely populated, used to have a hospital that operated up until the 18th century. The remains of that hospital are the 15th century Chapel of Santa Ana and the actual building housing the hospital, the so-called House of La Portalada.

Peñafior (122 pop.)

The parish of San Juan de Peñafior has a Romanesque bridge over the Nalón whose existence is recorded in documents dating back to 1144. It connects the parish councils (which unites the concejos of Candamo, Las Regueras y Grado) and has had great strategic importance, as it is the natural pass between the central and western parts of the region. Heavy battles to secure its control took place between the Spanish and French troops in the early 19th century, during the Peninsular War.

Gráu/Grado (7,176 pop.)

The first historical and archaeological evidence of Grado date back to Roman times. It is a typical example of a village designed along an important route, and in the 10th century it started to grow as

the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela became increasingly more important. Despite its protracted history (which we could consider as starting in the 13th century, when King Alfonso X granted Grado a Charter of Privileges), there are few architectural remains attesting to the past splendour of the village, although it has preserved the primitive, unmistakably mediaeval street pattern in the old quarter, and fragments of the former 13th century city walls.

Gráu/Grado has a rich trading tradition. Its markets are well known and appreciated throughout Asturias due to the quality of the products being sold, (vegetables, cheeses, spelt bread), the jovial yet businesslike atmosphere and the variety of arts and crafts available (basketry, wood-carving, jet...).

In the San Pelayo quarter we can visit the Ethnographic Museum, where we can get acquainted with the traditional culture of the central-western region of Asturias. If we cross the old quarter, we will find the 17th century Palace of Valdecarzana and the 18th century Baroque Chapel of Dolores.





This area has a strong pilgrim tradition, as it is a crossroads for the inland route to the coast. In El Freisnu we find a sanctuary visited with great devotion by the locals. Fierce fighting took place nearby during the Peninsular War, as the area was an important junction where two routes met: the Way of Saint James and a branch line of the Vía de la Mesa (a traditional road between Asturias and northern León).

On this stage we will see palaces and colonial houses typical of rural Asturias, as well as *hórreos* and bread silos in the peculiar style of the central regions of Asturias. It is a peaceful route with hills, valleys and fertile plains along the rivers of Cornellana and Salas.

Salas has a significant monumental heritage, including Neolithic burial mounds and Bronze Age remains. The Romans occupied these lands too, as evinced by the numerous gold mines.



Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Freisnu



San Salvador de Cornellana >

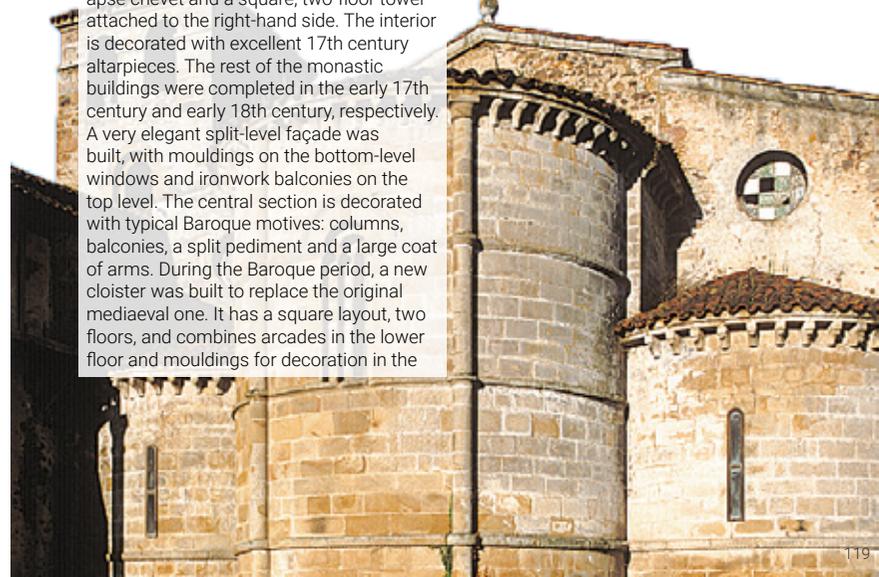
Cornellana (564 pop.)

In this village we will find one of the most important monasteries of Asturias: San Salvador de Cornellana. It was founded in 1024 by the infanta Cristina, King Bermudo II and Queen Velasquita's daughter, who retired to the convent after her husband Ordoño died. When she passed away in 1122, her descendants donated the monastery to the Cluny monks so they could found a Benedictine establishment. Throughout the centuries, the monastery acquired vast amounts of land in the parish council of Salas, and kept them until the monks had to abandon it in 1835. The architectural site of San Salvador de Cornellana includes the church and the adjacent monastery. The Romanesque Church of San Salvador, reformed in the second half of the 17th century, has a basilica ground plan with three naves separated by cross-shaped pillars, a three-apsed chevet and a square, two-floor tower attached to the right-hand side. The interior is decorated with excellent 17th century altarpieces. The rest of the monastic buildings were completed in the early 17th century and early 18th century, respectively. A very elegant split-level façade was built, with mouldings on the bottom-level windows and ironwork balconies on the top level. The central section is decorated with typical Baroque motives: columns, balconies, a split pediment and a large coat of arms. During the Baroque period, a new cloister was built to replace the original mediaeval one. It has a square layout, two floors, and combines arcades in the lower floor and mouldings for decoration in the

top-floor balconies. Two Romanesque doors have also survived from the original building.

Salas (1,517 pop.)

This beautiful village was recognised as a historic site in 1994. Its heritage includes a series of buildings located in the very centre of town, such as the Collegiate Church of Santa María (built in 1549 and one of the main examples of Renaissance Asturian architecture), the 15th-16th century Tower and the mid-16th century Palace of the Valdés family. Just outside Salas we find the pre-Romanesque temple of San Martín. A number of valuable stone plaques and archaeological remains originally found in the temple are now kept in the Tower Museum, a must-visit place for art lovers. We also wholeheartedly recommend a little stroll around the peaceful streets of this lovely village, where colonial houses and small noble palaces are abundant.



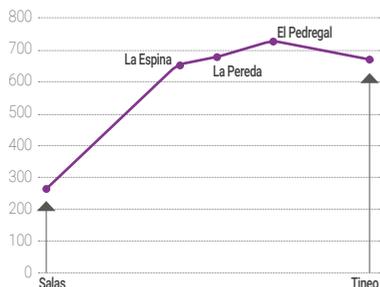


The Way of Saint James enters a cattle herding zone full of colonial houses, manor houses, watermills, junction crosses and chapels attesting to people's devotion in the past. All these elements have had a great deal of importance in the western regions of Asturias.

The first part of the ascent to La Espina is thick woodland, whereas the final, flatter stretch will offer splendid views of Tineo. The traditional search for gold in the rivers of the Tineo parish council is nowadays more a leisure activity than a way of life. The true riches of this parish council are in its oak and beech forests. Centennial trees, legends and roads to Compostela are some of the gems in this municipality.



The road passing through La Espina



Tineo ▶

La Espina (285 pop.)

This is the last village of the Salas parish council that the Way of Saint James runs through. It was originally a braña (or fell) where cattle herders went up in the summer, and a crossroads traditionally considered as the entry point to western Asturias. In the Modern Era it had a hospital founded by the general inquisitor Fernando Valdés Salas. Nowadays it boasts a good number of renowned catering establishments.

Tineo (3,524 pop.)

Tineo is one of the oldest towns in Asturias (it dates back to the Bronze Age castros period), and one of the most important in western Asturias. Tineo was founded as a village during the reign of Alfonso IX, who established it as an obligatory stop on the pilgrims' route between Oviedo and Santiago de Compostela. The town of Tineo is a typical example of a hill settlement designed along an important route, although its present-day aspect is significantly different to the original one.

Tineo can be divided into three different urban spaces: the lower quarter (Fondos de la Villa), the upper quarter (El Pico or Cimadevilla) and, in between them, an urban district combining mediaeval and 19th century buildings. The lower and upper quarters are both typically rural, with numerous service structures such as *hórreos*, bread silos, stables, barns and mills. The urban district used to have an important Franciscan monastery dating back to the 13th century, but nowadays the only remaining part is the church, which serves as the Tineo parish church. It also houses a very interesting Museum of Sacred Art with religious artifacts from several nearby churches. Also noteworthy are the Palace of the García de Tineo family and its circular tower (both date back to the 13th century) and the 16th century Palace of the Merás family.

The present-day hostel has replaced the historic Hospital of Nuestra Señora de Mater Christi, founded in the 13th century. There are still remains of it in the Calle Mayor. It is thought that it was the most important Asturian hospital along what we nowadays refer to as the Primitive Way.



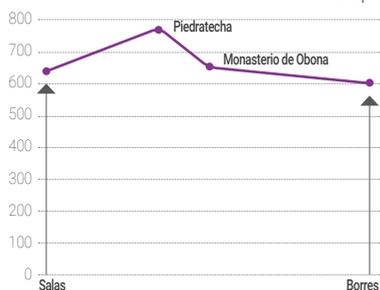


This stage is dotted with chapels which evidence the pilgrims' devotion for Saint James. The entire route runs through mountain ranges and hillsides, as we enter the heart of traditional western Asturias. The peaceful, solitary route and the mid-range mountain landscapes, with numerous hamlets and country houses along the way, invite the traveller to stop and soak up the scenery.

In this area, people speak a distinct western variety of the Asturian language, and we will also find a very peculiar popular architecture with specific characteristics: big *hórreos* and bread silos, water fountains to help travellers quench their thirst... We will also be entering the Sierra de Palo, rich in folklore and ancient legends about Asturias' mythological beings. This is a land of mist, dolmens and ancestral traditions where we must be particularly careful to follow the road signs.



El Espín



Church of Borres ▶

Obona (64 pop.)

In this village we find the Monastery of Santa María la Real at Obona. Its origins are uncertain and doubts have been raised about the authenticity of the foundation document, which states that the monastery was established in 871 by Adelgaster, King Silo's son. Other documents certify it existed in the 10th century and in the 12th century it was an important Benedictine centre. Alfonso IX visited the monastery and immediately conferred upon it the privilege of being an obligatory stop for pilgrims heading to Santiago. This caused the official route to be altered and increased the monastery's economic and cultural control over the area. In its heyday, the Obona monks employed very innovative agricultural and livestock farming techniques and taught Philosophy and Theology.

In the 12th century, the monastery comprised the church, the cloister, the convent buildings and a hostel. It has undergone several alterations over time and the oldest remaining building is the church, a 12th century Romanesque temple which has been preserved more or less intact. Its structure combines Benedictine architecture and Cistercian aesthetics, with no decoration and absolute austerity on the walls. It has a basilica ground plan with three five-section naves and a three-part chevet preceded by a single straight section. The main chapel is much larger than the side chapels. Alteration works started in the 17th century. It is divided into two floors, each of them with a different conception: profiles with mouldings and long pilasters on the lower floor, and quadrangular bays on the upper floor. The founders of the monastery were buried in the original cloister, but in the 16th century their remains were moved to the inside of the temple. Obona was very important in the past as a hostel and as a place of meditation and

prayer. It also used to house numerous works of art, all of them are now gone, except for a peaceful-looking Romanesque Christ carved in wood.

Borres (72 pop.)

This village boasts the hostel (a former pilgrims' hospital) with the very earliest written reference anywhere on St James' Way. It is mentioned in a document from 889 whereby the Asturian King Alfonso III donated it to what was then the basilica of Santiago de Compostela. At present there are no services in Borres except for a bar-restaurant and the hostel itself, so any supplies must be purchased at Campiello.





Borres > Berducedo

(28.5 km/ alternative: 27 km)

< Oviedo 85 km> via A Proba de Burón > 234 km



The Way branches out at this point. The left-hand branch line goes to Pola de Allande and the right-hand one, to the Fonfaraón mountain range, also known as Los Hospitales. Both lines converge 12 km later at the Palo mountain pass.

If we choose the first option, the landscape is somewhat more civilised, with hamlets and country houses dotted along the way. *Hórreos*, colonial houses, manor houses and old chapels can be seen throughout this stage. This area bears witness to the important contribution of *indianos* who emigrated to America and then returned to Asturias. A few kilometres away from Pola de Allande we will find remains of the *castros* culture in the castro of San Chuis, on a hill over the village of San Martín de Beduledo.

Those who opted for the Los Hospitales route must bear in mind that they will not find any hostels or inhabited places along the way. To follow the historic route of Los Hospitales, which while demanding is considered one of the most beautiful on the Spanish Way, take the right-hand fork before entering the village of Samblismo.



Cienfuegos palace ▶

La Mortera (49 pop.)

This village has preserved significant heritage sites, such as the remains of the Palace of La Mortera and the Chapel of San Pascual. It has a bar/shop where we can purchase supplies before setting off again, or stop and enjoy a meal of local produce.

Pola de Allande (425 pop.)

Pola de Allande was founded at some point between 1262 and 1268. Until the 19th century, it was a small village concentrated on the left bank of the Nisón River, next to the Way of Saint James. Its monumental heritage includes the impressive Palace of Cienfuegos or Peñalba, located on a hill that dominates the village. It was originally built in the 15th century, but it has undergone subsequent refurbishment works and the only remaining Gothic elements are in the lower level.

It has an L-shaped floor plan and three robust towers without battlements which confer a monumental air upon the whole structure. *Indiano* architecture takes up a significant part of the urban landscape in Pola de Allande. The best examples are the House of Las Veigas or the Ramos-Valledor Villa, designed by the architect Ignacio Álvarez Castela; the Cantabrian-style Villa Rosario; the Neoclassical Villa of Ramos Ron; and the Olalla-Valledor family manor house, inspired by Basque countryhouses. We must not forget the Parish Church of San Andrés (completed in the 16th century, but with clearly Romanesque reminiscences from the original building) and the Town Hall building (1907).

Lago (4 pop.)

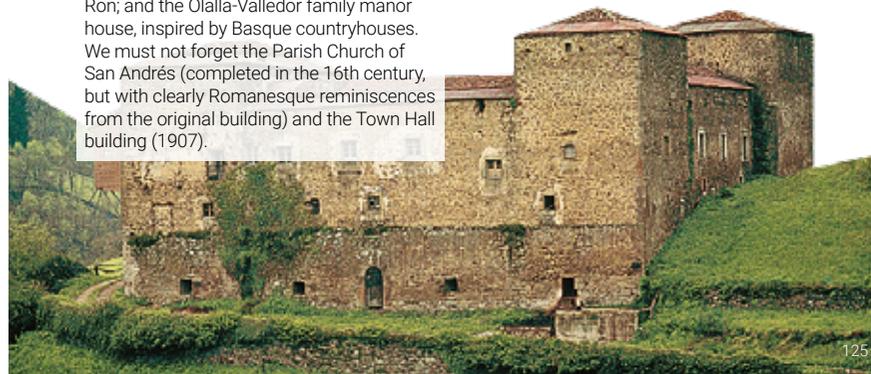
This hamlet has an interesting church with a 16th century belfry and is located next to a yew tree, a very common species in Asturias. This one in particular is literally attached to one side of the church and has been recognised as a Natural Monument. It is 9 metres high and its trunk has a perimeter of 5.6 metres.

Montefurado (1 pop.)

This village was originally a hospital and in its chapel there is a peculiar carved-wood image of Saint James, a fine example of popular handicraft.

Berducedo (100 pop.)

This village had a hospital house until 1980. A slate plaque from that building can now be found on the façade of the local doctor's house. The parish church dates back to the 14th century. In the vicinity of the Way of Saint James route we will find the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora de Bedramón. It is at the top of the Peak of Bedramón (on the Berducedo crest, altitude 940 metres), in the parish council of San Martín del Valledor. It was rebuilt after the Spanish Civil War with a rectangular floor plan, a raised chevet and a pillar-supported portal. It has many devout followers.

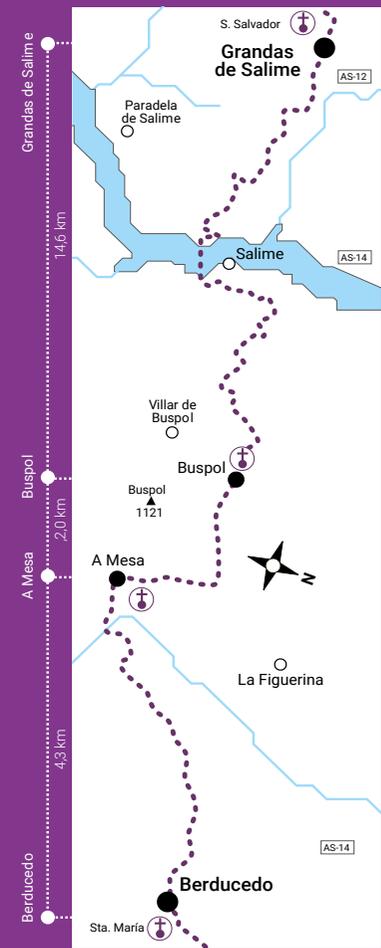




Berducedo > Grandas de Salime

(20.9 km)

< Oviedo 113.5 km > via A Proba de Burón > 205.5 km



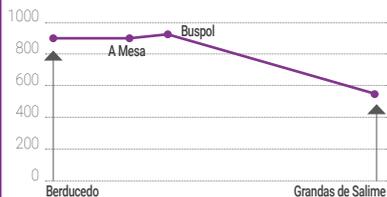
On this stage we will feel like we are in a supersized world. The high mountains, the valley of Navia and the vastness of the Salime reservoir will give pilgrims a feeling of silence, pleasant isolation and universal peace.

The route includes the ascent to the Palo mountain pass, with a distinct zig-zag section at the beginning. The reservoir can also become an obstacle: if we are not certain that we can cross it by boat, we must take a detour in the last downhill section and head towards Murias down a trail. This is an alternative route to the one that used to run through Salime and will give us a chance to walk over the Salto de Salime, an exceptional work of modern engineering built in the mid-20th century.

This is one of the richest sections ethnographically. Aside from the rural heritage, there is also the Ethnographic Museum of Grandas, which is singularly important in its field.



Grandas



Santa María, Buspol >

A Mesa (17 pop.)

This village has an interesting late 17th century parish church dedicated to Santa María Magdalena. It also has a hostel.

Grandas de Salime (456 pop.)

The structure of this village follows the layout of our route, which proves how important the Way of Saint James has been throughout its history. It was recognised as an obligatory stop in the Charter of Privileges granted in 1222 by King Alfonso IX. Civil architecture buildings include the 16th century House of Román, in the Calle del Carmen. It is divided into different sections and volumes joined together by a majestic central courtyard. The building shows two clearly differentiated outside sections: to the left, two arched portals, one of them with the family coat of arms embedded at the top; to the right, the chapel, with a decorative three-sided slate roof at the entrance.

An interesting sight in Grandas de Salime is the Church of San Salvador, originally dating back to 1186, although it has Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque elements. The most noteworthy aspects of the church are the portal and the 18th century main altarpiece. The other main focus of interest in the village is the Ethnographic Museum, a pioneering venue in the Principality of Asturias located in the former Presbytery House. It houses an exceptional collection of typically rural Asturian objects and painstakingly recreated models of commercial spaces such as a grocer's, a barber's and a tailor's, or the various rooms in a traditional peasant's house.





Grandas de Salime > Alto de El Acebo

(14.2 km)

< Oviedo 134.4 km (Borres-Berduceo 28.5 km) > 184.6 km



The last Asturian stage of the Primitive Way to Santiago starts at Grandas de Salime and for the most part follows the main road, although it occasionally veers off on to small but well signposted paths and trails.

During the ascent to the Alto del Acebo, pilgrims will pass Bustelo del Camín, the last Asturian village before reaching the summit of the mountain pass (1,030 metres). Abundant archaeological remains, including megaliths and cave paintings, have been discovered in this area. There was also a significant population in the castros period, as evinced by the ruins at the castro of Chao de San Martín (4th century BC).

The landscape is mountainous, very rural, and very much steeped in the past. The buildings are those typical of western Asturias and almost invariably have slate roofs. Along the way, pilgrims will be able to contemplate rural churches, chapels, oratories, country houses and castros.



Castro (41 pop.)

Near this village is the castro of Chao de Samartín. Because there are long-term excavation works in progress, the site is covered by canvas, but underneath lie the remains of a society that two thousand years ago reached the highest level of urban sophistication recorded so far in the area. It is well known that the castro was already a fortified settlement in the 4th century BC. The huts, protected by solid walls, had a single room, were roofed with vegetable materials and the construction was sometimes circular, sometimes rectangular with curved corners. Outside the walls, a deep moat protected the whole perimeter, but a gap was left on the southern flank for the gates. The inhabitants of the settlement were farmers who prepared their food with pottery utensils made without a

potter's wheel. They also made iron and copper tools (metalwork remains have been found on the site). When these lands were conquered by the Romans, the way of life of the people at Chao de Sanmartín changed radically. Their privileged location near the gold mines of the region meant lots of trade and activity. The drive to sanitise the streets and squares led to the installation of piping and sewers. The story of this community came to a sudden end in the 2nd century, when a violent earthquake devastated the settlement. It was never occupied again.

Padraira (13 pop.)

As we leave this village, we will see the Chapel of San Lázaro, the remains of a former lepers' hospital.





Town center of Villaviciosa



Castro



Valdecarzana palace



Nuestra Señora de Bedramon



Marqués de Santa Cruz de Marcenado palace



Santa Ana Chapel



Vega



Salas tower



A Mesa



La Foncalada, Oviedo



Asturias

San Pelayo Monastery



Santa María de Bodenava



La Mortera



Santa María la Real Monastery, Obona



Alto do Acevo > Paradavella

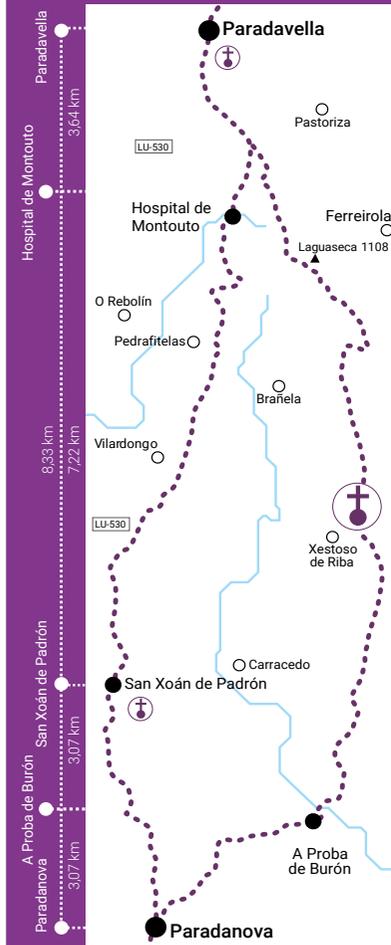
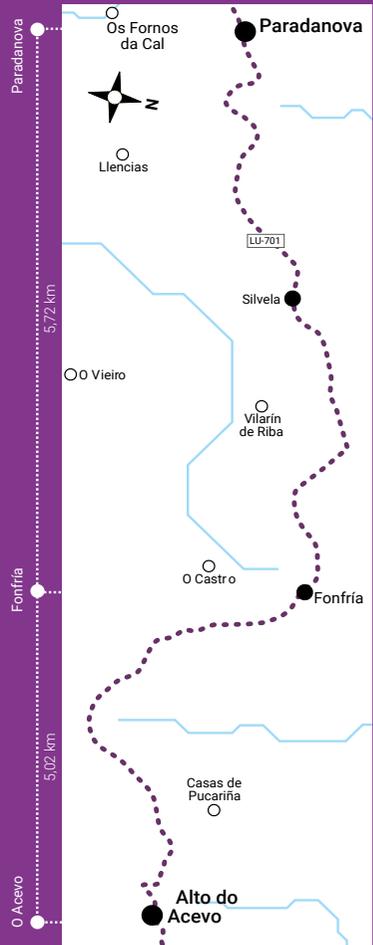
(24.7 km via San Xoán de Padrón > 25.8 km via A Proba de Burón)

< Oviedo 148.6 km > via Borres-Berduceo 28.5 km > 170.4 km

The Autonomous Community of Galicia starts just where you commence your descent from the heights of O Acevo, which has most probably been quite difficult: a small, symbolic plaque says so. Whoever walks this route will travel through an extensive wind farm, and from that point on, the descent is gentle and continuous, with small inclines that break the monotony on the way to A Fonsagrada, our point of reference along with Lugo. It is not hard to deduce that this is real mountain country, and there are times when you have to walk in single file, still others when the path widens to become a comfortable track. On the pilgrimage through this stage, both the landscape and the small towns and villages take pride of place.



Along the A Fonsagrada route, the uphill and downhill slopes will be more gentle (except the first) than if you choose the old and sparsely populated A Proba de Burón, as in the latter case, you first have to descend considerably before climbing a beautiful but long slope uphill, which in turn has two phases: the first section is much longer and has a lower gradient; and the second section is much shorter but it requires greater effort due to the sloping terrain. In any case, whoever walks these highlands of the province of Lugo has to accept that there are not going to be many people about, wherever they go. Moving on, the street names in A Proba de Burón do not leave anyone indifferent, as they recall people associated with the former Soviet Union.





Alto do Acevo > Paradavella

(24.7 km via San Xoan de Padrón > 25.8 km via A Proba de Burón)

< Oviedo 148.6 km> via Borres-Berduceo 28.5 km> 170.4 km

Fonfría (29 pop.)

The uphill (rare) and downhill (more common) pace that characterises the Primitive Way in this first stage leads to a small hamlet called Fonfría. The name means that you should only refresh yourself with water from its fountain in summer, as it comes from deep into the ground and is notable for two things: for being pure and crystal-clear; and for the fact that the water is freezing cold, which gave the hamlet its mediaeval name of Frigidam Fontem [cold fountain]. There was once a hostel in Fonfría, and people habitually point to a group of ruins as being the place where travellers stayed in bygone times. Today it is worth mentioning for two reasons: for its beautiful entrance, at 166.956 kilometres from the tomb of the Apostle, and for the chapel of Santa María Madalena, a fine example of simplicity and with one single nave, which belonged to the Order of Saint John. An interesting fact: to protect it from the sun and rain, but above all from the cold, its narthex ended up being completely covered, so the modern belfry is somewhat isolated in the middle of the building.

Paradanova

Paradanova (19 pop.)

The Way reaches Paradanova, leaving behind the mount of Penoucos (999 metres above sea level) and the hamlet of Silvela (with its chapel of Santa Bárbara do Camín). The road is now a path winding through the bushy hill, and crossing the main road several times. In Paradanova there was a large pilgrims' hospital, which was still in use in the early 20th century. At that point, the pilgrims' way splits in two: one branch continues to the left in the direction of A Fonsagrada, and the other follows the right hand road (the main road) only to leave the tarmac just as it enters that town, heading for the heights and then descending. It is advisable to bear in mind a couple of points to this respect: If you choose the left hand route, there will be a hostel for you to sleep at. If, on the other hand, you choose the right, there are no hostels, so the stage will be long. The same could be said about places to eat, as if you go the Fonsagrada route, there are restaurants on the way, but the traveller will find no such establishment on the other route.

However, the landscapes on the right are undoubtedly more breathtaking, with the Ancares mountain range as the ideal backdrop; besides, if you choose this second option, you will only walk on tarmac for barely a hundred metres.

A Fonsagrada (3,838 pop.)

If you choose to take the Fonsagrada route, which can already be seen from Paradanova, you have to continue along the dirt track on the left, and then take on a short but steep ascent that will enable you to stop in front of the Fonte Santa fountain that gives the town its name, next to one of the sides of the huge parish church. It was in that fountain that the Virgin Mary appeared on numerous occasions, expressing a desire for there to be a town built on that spot, to the detriment of A Proba de Burón, which had been the main population centre up until then. So says local legend, but there is another, particularly in A Proba de Burón, claiming that their neighbours' ancestors stole their image of the Virgin Mary and moved it to the fountain at the top of the mount.

A Fonsagrada is one of those typical towns that grew up around a main road, a stop-off point for those going from one place to another. Today, as you leave the town, you can enjoy its delightful park where you can take some time out before continuing your walk. Moreover, this is the place where you will find the ethnographical museum, which is a fine example of what neighbours can achieve together, as it was actually their neighbours who had the idea, assumed the task and financed it.

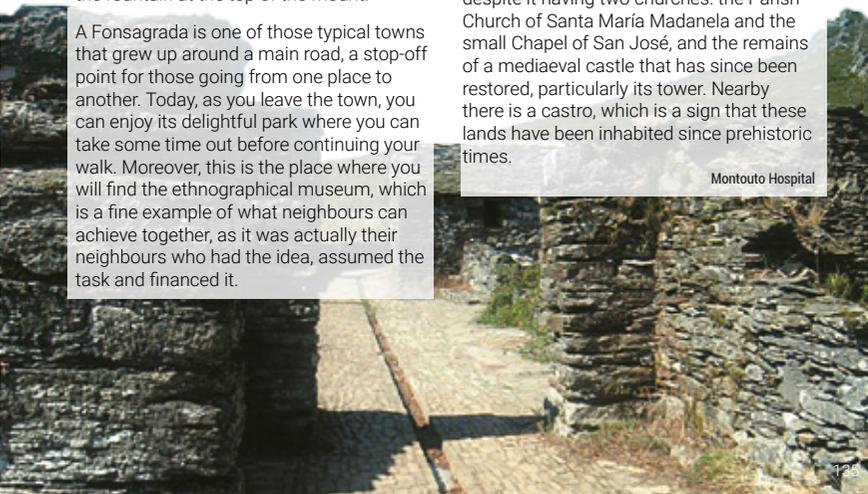
Hospital de Montouto (15 pop.)

The two branches meet at Hospital de Montouto. In other words, at what is still left standing of a place that, in mediaeval times, received people who were walking the Way, and which remained open until well into the 20th century. What is still visible are several consolidated buildings with a Neolithic dolmen at the back, and a burial mound that presumably had another dolmen inside at the front. There are some splendid views here, and it is a good place to rest because from here on, the route is long and leafy until it reaches Paradavella.

A Proba de Burón (130 pop.)

If, at Paradanova, you choose to continue along the main road, a few metres away you will see a plaque that suggests you turn right and go around A Fonsagrada, and once at the top, you will then go downhill for three kilometres along a lovely path in the direction of a deep valley. There you will see A Pobra de Burón, the former main population centre in these mountains of Lugo, which gradually lost its influence despite it having two churches: the Parish Church of Santa María Madanela and the small Chapel of San José, and the remains of a mediaeval castle that has since been restored, particularly its tower. Nearby there is a castro, which is a sign that these lands have been inhabited since prehistoric times.

Montouto Hospital





Paradavella > Castrovverde (20.4 km)

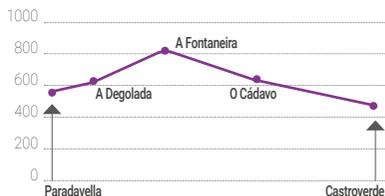
< Oviedo 174.4 km> via Borres-Berduceo 28.5 km> 144.6 km



The excellent views continue in this stage, except at the very beginning, when the route runs through a dense forest. There are still very few outstanding villages or towns, except the small service centre of O Cádavo, capital of the municipality of Baleira, with a lovely, well-looked after hostel. So those who are walking the Way have no choice but to continue going uphill and downhill constantly, on a stage that can be hard, but always pretty. As the route passes through many shady areas, even in the hottest days of the year, the sun never hits too hard, as the way travels almost always through small forests. As for vegetation, scrubland and indigenous trees abound, with a large number of *carballos* (oak trees), although the area has also been reforested with pine trees. An interesting piece of historical data: Napoleon's troops came here in the early 19th century, unusually far from all communication.



A Degolada
A Fontaneira ▶



A Degolada (37 pop.)

After the great downhill slope to Paradavella (do not miss the Church of San Juan with its Neoclassical altar) at the entrance to which the road has already become merely a path, the route heads for the mountains of A Lastra, passing the hamlets of Calzada, A Degolada (with its chapel) before crossing the main road. The name of A Degolada is unusual, and in English it means something on the lines of 'cut-throat'. In fact, verbal tradition has it that this was the place where executions were carried out by beheading.

A Lastra (79 pop.)

Now with the downhill slope in full swing, we arrive at the hamlet that shares its name with the mountain range. The most interesting thing about this hamlet is its church, which was immaculately restored not that long ago, with a beautiful coffered ceiling and sculptures dating back to the 18th century. Outside, it has a slate-tiled roof and a belfry.

A Fontaneira (109 pop.)

Down the mountain we come to A Fontaneira, another small village that awoke with a start one morning in 1809 when Napoleon's soldiers marched in. It has another church that was restored practically at the same time as the church in Lastra, with just one nave and two icons: one of Saint James on horseback and another of the Divine Shepherdess, which is particularly worshipped in this area.

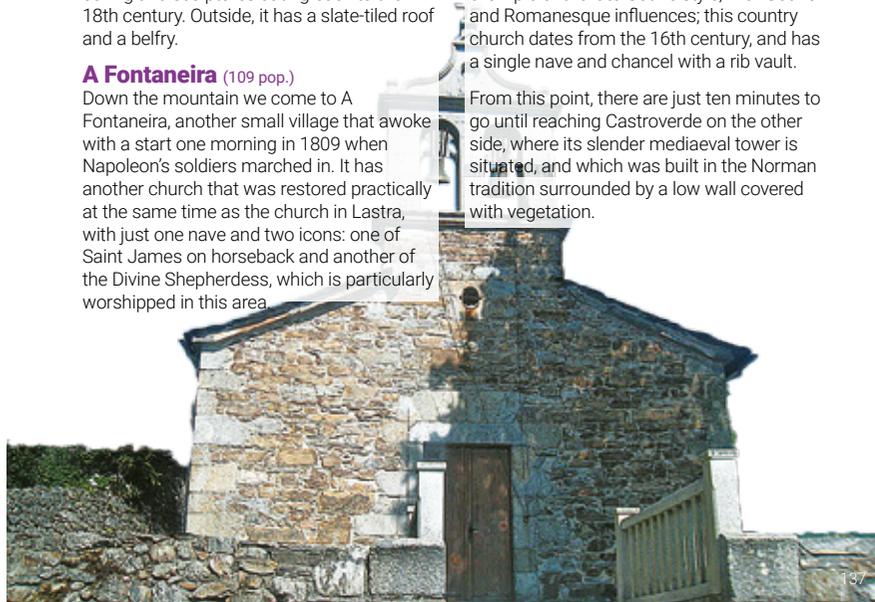
O Cádavo (342 pop.)

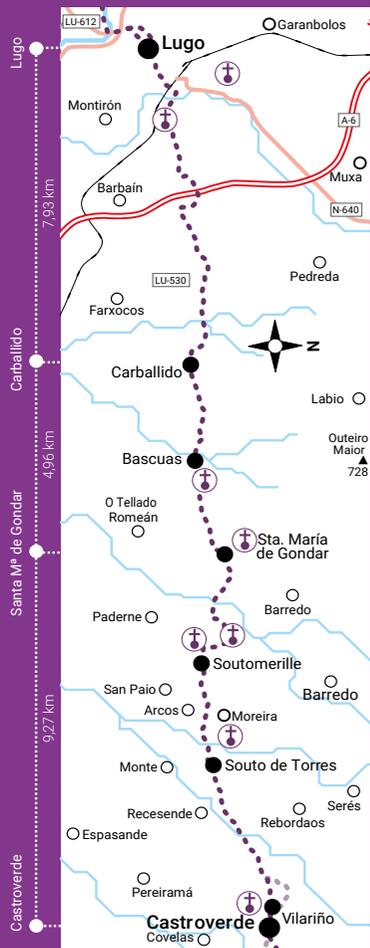
One of those prolonged descents leads to O Cádavo, capital of the essentially rural municipality of Baleira. This is a small village, with amenities and a very friendly hostel. Nearby is Campo da Matanza, where according to popular tradition, King Alfonso II fought a Moorish army until the fields and the rivers ran red with blood.

Castrovverde (2,802 pop.)

Another prolonged ascent and then another similar descent to first come to a recreational area and then the centre of Vilabade. This is a well-known village with a main square on the official Way. On one side is an impressive mansion, Pazo de Vilabade, now a hotel, adjacent to the very striking church. This is all that remains of a Franciscan monastery, and was declared a national monument in 1979. It is a rare example of the late Gothic style, with Gothic and Romanesque influences; this country church dates from the 16th century, and has a single nave and chancel with a rib vault.

From this point, there are just ten minutes to go until reaching Castrovverde on the other side, where its slender mediaeval tower is situated, and which was built in the Norman tradition surrounded by a low wall covered with vegetation.

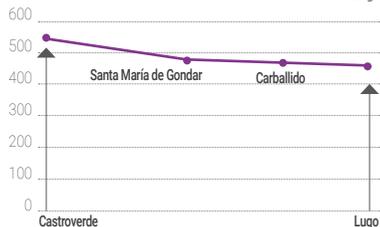




From Castroverde onwards, the gradients cease, at least until the city of Lugo, and all that is left ahead of us is a path, generally a wide one, going in and out of woods. After leaving Castroverde behind, the route passes through a small tunnel on the right, and the tarmac ceases when there is slightly more than 124 kilometres left before arriving at the Apostle's tomb. Before Santa María de Gondar lies Nadela, a hamlet that would go unnoticed if it was not for the interesting cross beside the Way, and which tradition has converted into a stop-off point and photo opportunity for hikers.



Stretch of road on the outskirts of Lugo



Gondar >

Santa María de Gondar (84 pop.)

After a climb, you reach what in Galicia is known as a "corredoira", a traditional path whose width originally matched the cow wagons. The corredoira leads to the Church of San Tomé, with a graceful floor plan and a lovely stone cross facing the slopes until the route reaches Lugo. Now what we mostly find are small hamlets, with the main road at just a few hundred metres on our left. Thus we leave Santa María de Gondar and its crystal-clear waters flowing from its fountains, one at the entrance and another at the exit, although the latter is considered the finer example.

Lugo (98,134 pop.)

Santa María de Gondar is 12.9 kilometres from Lugo. The city is on a plateau on the banks of the river Miño. This was the natural route for travel between the coast of Galicia and the meseta of Castile. Lugo was founded by the Romans in 15 BCE with the name Lucus Augusti. Its Roman city wall was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000. This fortification, with a circumference of over two kilometres (2117 m) is the only completely intact Roman city wall in the world. The wall encloses the entire historic quarter, and ranges from 8 to 10 metres high, with a continuous walkway along the top.

From Lugo, the Way of St James continues to Santiago de Compostela following Roman road XIX which connected Lucus Augusti to Bracara Augusta via Iria Flavia through inland Galicia. A constant presence on the Way in the province of Lugo are the spectacular 100-year-old chestnut trees.



If any city has a strong, solid and long-standing relationship with the Way of Saint James, that city is Lugo. King Alfonso II crossed the old Roman camp of Lucus Augusti when he was marching from Oviedo on the way to Compostela. You will even find that the gates where pilgrims arrived and left are clearly identified.

In fact, the capital of the province is defined by its numerous Roman remains, the most important of which are the city walls that stretch over almost three

kilometres, and which have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A walk up through land that now forms part of the urban environment leads to the wall, before going through Saint Peter's gate, the very same gate that Alfonso II the Chaste passed through in his day, as a plaque beside the boundary stone recalls.

The route through the old quarter is signposted and leads us along a quaint, busy street (on which we will find the post office) to the Plaza de España, the square

that houses the Town Hall. We then go down a few steps dedicated to the memory of Luis Pimentel, the poet, leaving the episcopal palace on the right, and arriving at a square dominated by the cathedral with its Neoclassical façade. The cathedral is actually Romanesque, and work began on its construction in 1129 under maestro Raimundo de Monforte, but both the Baroque and Neoclassicism have left their mark. In addition, both the ambulatory (the passage that runs behind the high altar so

that visitors do not pile up and to ensure the tour goes in the same direction) and its chapels are considered Gothic art, with a clear influence from the Cathedral of Burgos. In other words, from the 14th century.

In front of the cathedral we see another gate in the city walls, the Gate of Santiago, and we move towards the River Miño, which is crossed by means of a Roman bridge.

1. Roman walls



They were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000, and measure over two kilometres long. You can walk along the entire walls on the top section, arriving and leaving at the same point, given its circular nature. They were built in the second half of the 2nd century in a city that was then considered to be strategic, so this was intended to be a defence system against the so-called barbarians. There are ten gates in the walls that give access to the historical quarter of Lugo, five of which are contemporary.

2. Wall Interpretation Centre



It was opened in 2008 in a four-storey building dating back to the 18th century, and forming part of the historical quarter. Each floor is dedicated to a different period, so it is clearer to see how the city grew from the Walls.

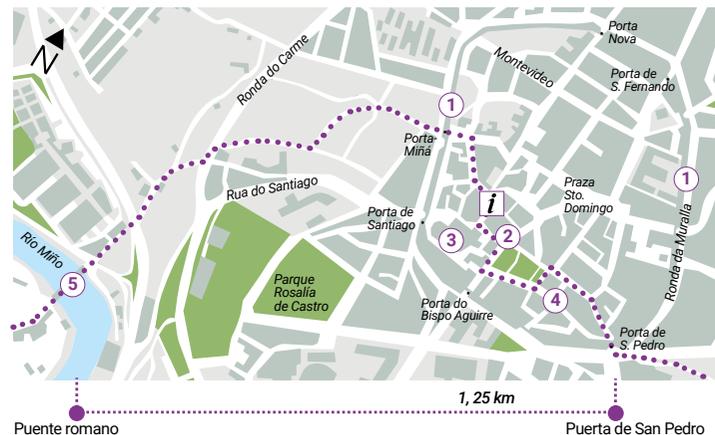
3. Cathedral

Construction work began in the year 1129, replacing another temple dating back to the times of the famous bishop Odoario (8th century). It is situated within the Roman walls, and is a blend of several architectural styles, with a Romanesque and Gothic interior, and a Neoclassical main façade. The same Romanesque style can be seen at the north door, with an icon of Christ in Majesty. Inside there are three naves on a Latin cross-shaped floor plan. The high altar piece has four veined pilasters crowned with bronze capitals. Among its chapels, we should particularly mention the Baroque style of Nosa Señora dos Ollos Grandes, the much venerated San Froilán and Santa Lucía.



4. Casa do Concello

This is the Town Hall, a fine example of Galician Baroque, heir to another building dating back to at least the 16th century, although its origins probably go back even further. Records have it that the current building was commissioned to be built in 1736 and the old building to be demolished, which was already in a state of ruin. The split level façade has a colonnade below and was finished in 1744. A curious fact: in 1865 documents have recorded that a clock needed to be installed in that same façade because, as the records state, the cathedral clock "was always fast"; furthermore, it was believed that this object would give the city a certain status. That clock has been in place since 1874.



5. Roman bridge

Although the bridge has undergone modifications in the 12th, 14th, 18th and 20th centuries, much of this bridge over the River Miño was built by the Romans. It formed part of what was known as the Vía XIX, the Roman road that connected Lugo with Bracara Augusta (Braga, in Portugal). It measures four metres wide and 104 metres long, and has fine ashlars and shale.





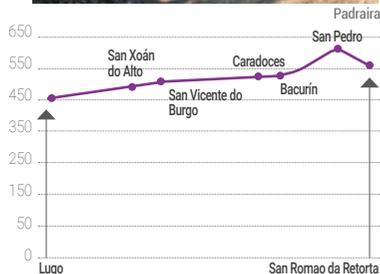
Lugo > San Romao da Retorta (18.8 km)

< Oviedo 216.9 km > via Borres-Berduceo 28.5 km > 102.1 km



A flat stage, except for a small climb between modern housing developments once we have left the River Miño behind us. It is flat and completely monotonous.

The destination is an ancient crossroads that is reached from San Romao da Retorta, a small population centre. In general, the Primitive Way runs along a very narrow path at the side of the main road, so even if there is not much traffic, you still need to be careful.



San Romao da Retorta ▶

Bacurín (66 pop.)

After Lugo, we reach the small Church of San Matías, with its single nave and built with ashlars in a wonderful spot to take a rest. The next stop is the hamlet of Seoane, followed by a lovely fountain with benches that was restored in early 2005 and called Ribicás. However, perhaps the most noteworthy place in this area is the church dedicated to San Vicenzo, with its tall belfry and skylight. To the left, a few hundred metres off the route, is another church: San Martiño de Poutomillos. A little further on and slightly off the route, the church of Santalla de Bóveda is a must-see. Its origins are linked to a Roman temple on the site, dedicated to the goddess Cybele. All of these churches lead to the attractive and well-kept village of Bacurín.

San Romao da Retorta (102 pop.)

There is a small church in San Romao da Retorta that is undoubtedly Romanesque (13th century), and which underwent major architectural changes in the 18th century, Galicia's golden age in which thousands of churches and chapels were restored.

Not far away is a full-size replica of a Roman milestone, reminding you that you are close to Roman road XIX.

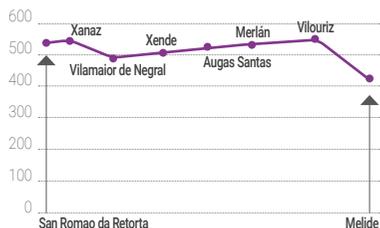




This stage starts as the previous one finished, with no gradients, and it will continue like that for many kilometres. However, once past the single-arch Roman bridge, almost 75 kilometres from Santiago, everything changes and walkers will be required to climb the steep O Careón mountain, replete with windmills. When you reach the milestone that tells you there are only 65.224 kilometres left, at this point you will be entering the province of A Coruña. The path goes down to Melide along a dirt track with gorgeous views, and passes in front of an outstanding *hórreo*. It runs past the small Church of Santo Estevo de Vilamor that has been kept in very good condition, and crosses the rivers Furelos and Grande at A Ponte de Pedra and Lamela, respectively.



Padraira



Santa María, Buspol ▶

Xanaz (Guntín) (5 pop.)

A bit further on from San Romao we come to Xanaz, a hamlet of pretty, well-kept houses, with a fountain from 1928 and an interesting church at the exit: the Church of Santa Cruz da Retorta, which has a marvellously decorated north door. It also has a roof made with local slate, and an excellent cross.

Xende (13 pop.)

After passing Seixalbo, a hamlet at the other side of a small wood, we have to cross the Bieita brook. We have to be careful here as if it has rained a lot, it would be better to make a small detour along the main road, in fact, there are now yellow arrows painted here by anonymous hikers who recommend this alternative route. Something similar happens when we reach milestone 76.660, as farming in the area has modified the way. Further on, simple churches at Aguasantas and Merlán (the latter with a lovely atrium held up by columns and pillars), salute the route.

Melide (7,538 pop.)

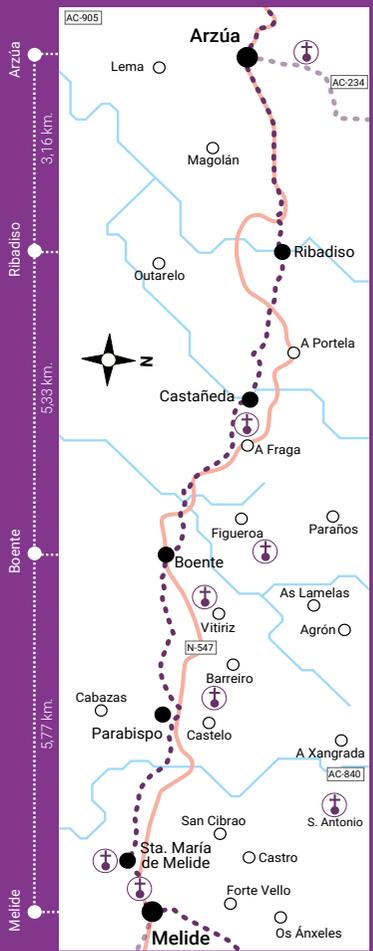
Melide is a small town touched by two Ways: the Primitive Way, known here as the *Camiño de Oviedo*, and the French Way, which usually has more hikers. Born in the shelter of an old *castro* (which went on to be a castle), it was first mentioned in documents from the 10th century. In the year 1212, a year after the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela was consecrated, Alfonso IX, the king of Galicia and León, granted these lands to the Archbishop of Santiago. There is now nothing left of its castle and walls, as they were both brought down by the peasants who rose in arms in the second half of the 15th century, leading a social movement known as *Os Irmandiños*. The ashlar from the fortress were, actually, used to raise the Church of Sancti Spiritus, which still conserves the sepulchres of Leonor de Mendoza and Inés

de Castro, both wives of the most powerful and feared lord in the region at the time, Lope Sánchez de Ulloa (15th century).

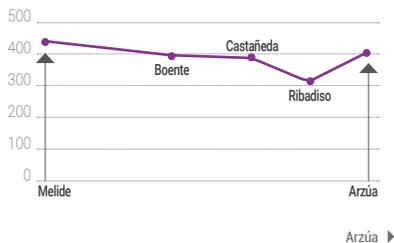
Interesting elements to point out are the Romanesque gate of the Church of San Pedro (moved at the time and literally crammed into the Chapel of San Roque, at the entrance of the French Way), the Gothic cross beside it and which is considered to be one of the oldest in Galicia, the aforementioned Church of Sancti Spiritus or Santo Antonio and, on the outskirts, the Church of Santa María de Melide with its impressive wall paintings. Not forgetting, of course, the old hospital, which was recovered and reconverted into an excellent local museum of ethnography and archaeology.

And of course, the former pilgrims' hospital, which has been restored and is now an excellent local museum, with good ethnography and archaeology sections.





At Melide, the number of pilgrims per kilometre increases considerably at any time of year; it is not surprising to find that the Primitive Way joins the French Way here, the latter being better known and more used, turning this spot into a major connection point with the rest of Europe. There is no great distance between the aforementioned town and Arzúa, which means the walk is more relaxed and you can take in the splendid landscape around you at your leisure. It is still an area of rolling hills, with no real flat sections, but none of the slopes should cause any great problem to any kind of walker. There is very little tarmac, a lot of dirt track, and plenty of shade, which your feet will thank you for, as will the rest of your body. There are two particularly interesting points on this path from a historical point of view: one is the hamlet of Castañeda, and the other is the enclave of Ribadiso.



Boente (147 pop.)

The Way leaves Melide, rising to what used to be a castro (a prehistoric fortified village) that was Christianised with a small temple. It then drops, crosses the main road and passes by the beautiful Church of Santa María. From there on, we enter a forest that we will not leave until we reach a fountain and once again walk on asphalt, which we then have to cross. The Way reaches Boente which, following a deep-rooted Galician custom, is divided into two: Arriba and Abaixo (or Upper and Lower), although both parts are practically joined together. The church here is worth a visit.

Castañeda (154 pop.)

Nowadays, Castañeda is just another village, but in mediaeval times it was a well known place because this was the site of the lime kilns that worked day and night to build the Cathedral of Santiago. As we pass it, we can see two beautiful country houses on the right, one at the same level as the Way, and another up the hillside. Both are in immaculate condition.

Ribadiso (10 pop.)

The Way rises again through a forest, and then comes down amid trees and pastures where the cattle will no doubt be grazing. The River Iso runs below. There is a bridge over the river that was built hundreds of years ago and which leads to a small cluster of buildings that make up one of the last old hostels to close its doors, well into the 20th century. The spot is truly idyllic.

Arzúa (6,219 pop.)

Pop. 4,729 / From Ribadiso there is a tough climb of three kilometres. The Way keeps away from the main road at all times, and enters the town of Arzúa along a parallel path to the asphalt.

See stage 32 of the Northern Way (page 98).





Ribadiso



Castroverde



Puerta de Santiago, Lugo



A Fonsagrada



Castroverde



Church of Santa Maria



Castañeda



Bacurín



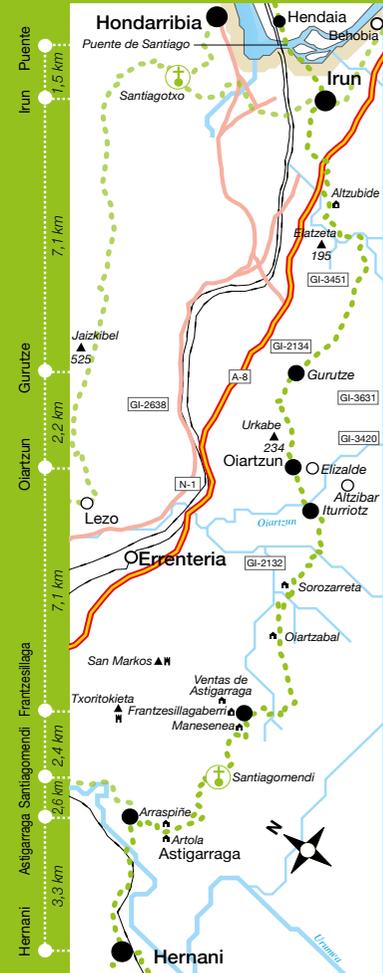
Paradanova



Inland Way

(Bayonne route, Alavés Way, San Adrian Tunnel route)

Those who were aiming to cross the feared Pyrenees by the only pass on the coast, would go to the French town of Bayonne, and from there, they would follow the coastline until arriving at the frontier of the River Bidasoa. Then they had to cross the mountains and dales to then go through the epic San Adrian tunnel in the mountains of Aizkorri. Before joining the French Way, those who were on the pilgrimage would stop at the Old Cathedral in Vitoria, whose restoration works inspired Ken Follett in the follow-up to his best seller 'The Pillars of the Earth'. On the plains of Alava, the landscapes change 180°, the green meadows give way to dry fields, and then when we reach La Rioja territory, they change again, making this route a highly varied one. This is also evident in its cuisine: meat is king and the vegetables are first class (the Gipuzkoa towns of Ordizia and Tolosa have important weekly markets), not to mention the wines of Álava and La Rioja.



The mouth of the River Bidasoa in the bay of Txingudi will be the walkers only contact with the Cantabrian Sea. The route starts here that will lead us through the inland villages and towns of Gipuzkoa, cutting through valleys and climbing small mounts, such as the Santiagomendi, which offer us fantastic views over the Basque countryside. The walk will oscillate between the rural innocence of the old farmhouses set amid the pine forests and pastures; the newly-built industrial estates, and the access roads to the main city in the historical territory, San Sebastian. Although the hiker will find numerous appealing distractions, such as the Peñas de Aia (rocky crags that point southwards), several megalithic monuments and, from January onwards, the Astigarraga cider breweries, the promise of even more impressive landscapes will spur them on.



City Hall Astigarraga



Hermitage of Santiagomendi, Astigarraga ▶

Irun (59,673 pop.)

Irun was one of the main focal points of the Romanisation of the Basque Country. Its privileged situation, beside a natural corridor that overcomes the Pyrenees by sea, has been a determining factor in the history of this frontier city. The Chapel of Santa Elena, built in the 10th century but transformed in the 14th, is particularly special as it has been a place of worship for over 2000 years: inside, the foundations of a Roman temple are buried underground, along with several tombs from the same period. The Parish Church of Nuestra Señora del Juncal is another of the essential references for those on the pilgrimage.

Oiartzun (10,211 pop.)

The Arditurri mines, situated in the lands of Aiako Harria (Peñas de Aia), were one of the most powerful reasons why the Romans settled in the bay of Txingudi. The iron ore hidden deep within them was patiently extracted until very recently. Oiartzun is the town that lies at the foothills of Aiako Harria (Peñas de Aia), a pretty

little rural town in an important residential enclave, which has some noteworthy buildings, such as the Church of San Esteban, a typical example of a monolithic Basque Gothic style that appears to be impregnable. Those on the walk will also come across the 17th century Town Hall building, or tower-house of Iturriotz, in the district of the same name, which is a fine example of a stately building in a rural environment.

Astigarraga (5,901 pop.)

The areas around Oiartzun and Astigarraga are populated by over five hundred enigmatic megalithic monuments. The cromlech of Oieleku (in Oiartzun) or the menhir of Txoritokieta (Erreterria) are perhaps the finest examples of these prehistoric structures. Shortly before arriving at the cider-making town of Astigarraga, the route climbs up Mount Santiago, crowned by a modern-looking chapel (although its origins are mediaeval) of the same name. In the town itself, it is easy to see the gems dotted around its pedestrianised old quarter, such as the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, the Palace of Murgia or the Ergobia bridge, which was built over the River Urumea.





As we leave Hernani, we have to choose between the section described below (which we shall call the Oria route), that starts off gently, or the Saiatz option, which is more beautiful but also more demanding. If you choose the Oria route, you will travel from valley to valley, and from river to river (Bidasoa, Oiartzun and Urumea) until you reach Andoain, where another two main rivers meet: the Leizaran and the (larger) Oria rivers. Traces of the latter will follow us for a couple of days. From here on, we will be seeing some historical villages and towns associated with the Royal Road, that path that was the main point of connection between the Castilian plain and Europe for centuries. The marks of progress and industrial development will be more than evident along this route.



Church of San Martín de Tours, Andoain



City hall and Church of San Juan Bautista, Hernani ▶

Hernani (20,013 pop.)

Following the course of the River Urumea, but going upriver, the profile of the Parish Church of San Juan Bautista will soon be visible, in the heart of Hernani. The historical quarter of this town that was once heavily enclosed by city walls, is set on a hillock. The Baroque front of the aforementioned church stands out for its beauty, as does the Town Hall, an unusual building dating back to the late 19th century, whose façade bears the mark of several different architectural styles, from Romanesque to Renaissance.

Urnieta (6,169 pop.)

The last stop before leaping into the valley of the River Oria is Urnieta, a town surrounded by green pastures and permanently under the watchful eye of Mount Adarra. The Church of San Miguel is located in what was the original town centre, and the passing of pilgrims had a lot to do with the foundation of this church. It has a portico dating back to mediaeval times. The Chapel of Santa Leocadia must have been constructed around the same time: throughout the centuries, many people walking the Royal Road have slept the night under its portico.

Andoain (14,827 pop.)

The importance of this town lies in its location beside the River Leizaran that reaches this spot from Navarre, passing through a dense valley before giving its waters to the Oria. At its high point, enclosing one of the sides of the Goiko square, we find the Baroque-style Church of San Martín de Tours, which, together with the Chapel of Santa Kurutz (with its beautiful Gothic sculpture of Christ), is the town's most treasured heritage.

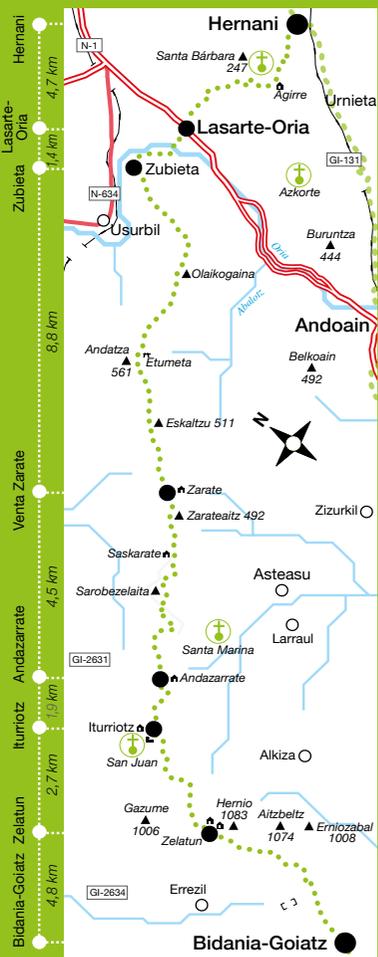
Villabona (5,768 pop.)

Once the heights of Aduna and the Chapel of Santa Gurutze are behind us, we once again meet up with the River Oria at the Zubimusu bridge.

Anoeta (1,996 pop.)

The Way stays close by the course of the river, leaving the Church of San Martín de Tours at Amasa far in the distance, and passing by Irura before throwing itself wholeheartedly into Anoeta, another rural town that is arranged like most towns that grew up alongside the old Royal Road. It has a splendid 16th century church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist.





The other alternative, the Saiatz option, which leads us towards the Aizkorri mountain range, the natural frontier between Gipuzkoa and Álava, climbs the mountains that enclose the Oria Valley on the west. What is most spectacular about this route are the views, both of the Cantabrian coast in the distance, and of the main natural landmarks in the historical territory, such as Mount Hernio or Saiatz. After the digression of the first towns, such as Hernani or Lasarte-Oria, for several kilometres the route will abandon the built-up areas to plunge into pine and oak forests, paths that are always in the half-light, and green hills with just the odd lonely farmhouse. There will be several kilometres along which the typical Basque landscapes will take the place of the monumental heritage, which is fairly modest in these inland domains.



Aerial perspective of Hermio massif



Hernani (20,013 pop.)

See second stage 2A

Lasarte-Oria (18,494 pop.)

Lasarte-Oria, a town with a weighty history but which did not gain autonomy until the late 20th century, hides a Baroque surprise under its industrial exterior. We are referring to the Convent of Las Brígidas, a pale-coloured religious complex that was founded in the late 17th century. In the town centre, we can also see the 16th century Church of San Pedro, which is modest but has a charming colonnade.

Zubietza (297 pop.)

The Aizpurua farmhouse was the meeting place for the leaders who would go on to agree on the reconstruction of San Sebastian after the fire that destroyed the city in 1813, during the War of Independence. The Church of Santiago is proof of this residential enclave's pilgrim connection, here in the foothills of Mount Andatza.

Zizurkil (2,935 pop.)

After travelling through the pine forests of the Andatza, we reach the Venta Zarate inn, a traditional meeting place on the transhumance routes that used to run along this historical territory.

Aia (1,938 pop.)

At the spot where Aia meets Asteasu, we will find the Iturriotz inn, a beautiful 16th century farmhouse with a gabled roof and wooden framework.

Errezil (608 pop.)

Always under the watchful eye of Mount Ernio, on whose rocky peak we will find a cross-filled cemetery, the path leads up to the Chapel of San Juan de Iturriotz, in the lands of Errezil. This simple chapel, with its rectangular floor plan, is praised for its fresh spring waters (some even believe they are miraculous) and it is here where the community meetings known as the Juntas de Saiatz took place, in which the decisions were made that affected the nine villages in the Union. The bare fields of Zelatun will be the next and most demanding goal, before starting our descent.

Bidania-Goiatz (514 pop.)

Born out of the union of two municipalities, Bidania and Goiatz, those on the Way will find a lovely little farmhouse here dating back to the 16th century. This is known as the Goienetxe house and it bears the coat of arms on its façade. Other interesting buildings for the hiker to take in are the impressive Tower of Goiatz and the Parish Church of La Asunción or the Church of San Bartolomé, where the steps up to the choir take most people's breath away.





(Oria) Tolosa > Zegama (35.2 km)

Irun 45.5 km > 717.6 km

3A



It is hard to find so many historical villages and towns in such a short distance anywhere on the Way to Santiago. Tolosa, Ordizia and Segura make up an irresistible trinity in a day's walk that will be marked by the ups and downs of the most active valley in Gipuzkoa. The path runs parallel to the River Oría and the N-1 road, with a couple of tough climbs that will always be compensated with fantastic views of the valley. Food will always be present in the many lively traditional markets and in the typical high quality products from the region, such as Idiazabal cheese. There are also some surprises here that appear to have been stuck in time, such as the Igartza complex in Beasain. Wherever the walker chooses to spend the night, he or she will undoubtedly experience a wealth of sensations.



Monumental complex of Igartza, Beasain



Leatherbacks on the banks of Oría river ▶

Tolosa (19,041 pop.)

Centuries ago, Tolosa was the perfect fortress: a walled-in island situated in the centre of the River Oría. If you arrive at this town on a Saturday, you will see its traditional market. Its old quarter has kept its ancient appearance, along with a wide variety of charming little palaces and, of course, the Parish Church of Santa Maria, whose walls protected the town.

Alegia (1,760 pop.)

Alegia was also sculpted to the whims of the River Oría, giving it a half-moon shape. It has kept the Gothic portico of its Church of San Juan Bautista. Inside, the walker will find a sleek Gothic statue of Christ, one of the best of its kind in Gipuzkoa.

Legorreta (1,485 pop.)

Bridges were one of the main pillars on which the old Royal Road was built. An example of this is found in Legorreta, where the bridges are the backbone of the town and the surrounding area, giving access to the main religious landmarks, such as the Parish Church of San Salvador or the Boundary Cross of Santa Cruz.

Ordizia (9,488 pop.)

This town goes back more than 700 years, and to this day has kept the style that mediaeval town planners designed for it, along with its narrow streets. It is also worth mentioning the classical architecture of the main square, the Plaza Mayor, where the Town Hall is situated, and where the traditional market is held every Wednesday.

Beasain (13,863 pop.)

Despite the growth it has undergone in the last fifty years, Beasain still maintains the marvellous architectural complex of Igartza, a small monumental district that has been conserved just the way it was conceived in the 16th century.

Olaberria (945 pop.)

Those walking the Way will almost definitely leave the course of the River Oría to approach Olaberria, which offers unbeatable views of the two giants that mark this region: Mount Txindoki (1,348 metres) and Aizkorri (1,528 metres).

Idiazabal (2,333 pop.)

Situated at the foothills of the Etxegarate pass, this town is famous for its cheese, which bears a Designation of Origin of the same name, as well as a magnificent Romanesque portico at the Church of San Miguel.

Segura (1,498 pop.)

The historical town of Goierri is a real gem in itself, with its almond-shaped centre and its huge Gothic Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción.





You will need plenty of energy on this stretch to climb Murumendi, one of the most important geographical features in the Gipuzkoa section. The paths will continue to show the most rural side of this historical territory, keeping away from the villages in the Oria Valley and approaching country districts that are unmistakably Basque. The importance of chapels in giving shape to such rugged and dispersed regions will also be evident. There are many references to magical Gipuzkoa, in Ezkio-Itsaso, the land of controversial Marian apparitions; to mining, in Zerain and Mutilloa; or to idyllic Gipuzkoa, that can be felt in the air in this almost purely natural environment. Soon the green meadows will give way to the yellow cereal fields on the other side of the Aizkorri mountains. Zegama rests at the feet of this rocky giant.



Railway viaduct, Ormaiztegui



Calcination furnaces, Zerain ▶

Santa Marina

This idyllic concentration of farmhouses is a district that comes under Albiztur, situated next to an old transhumance route that left from the Aralar pastures. Its association with the Way is evident in the Santa Marina Haundi farmhouse, which since its creation in 1558, was a hospital dependent on the Church of Santa Marina. Traces of its Romanesque front can still be seen today.

The route enters the municipal area of Beasain through the old village of Astigarreta, passing next to the Chapel of San Gregorio and the Church of San Martín.

Ezkio-Itsaso (622 pop.)

Coming down Murumendi, you will soon see the Andra Mari de Kixkitza chapel, a simple place of great worship. The Church of Santa Lucía, situated in the fields of Anduaga, recalls the Marian apparitions of the early 20th century. The Igartubeiti farmhouse in the Ezkio district is a lovely 16th century construction that has been restored and converted into a museum, which reveals the secrets of the Basque farming exploits.

Ormaiztegi (1,300 pop.)

The birthplace of the Carlist General Tomás de Zumalakarregi still remembers him, over a century and a half after his

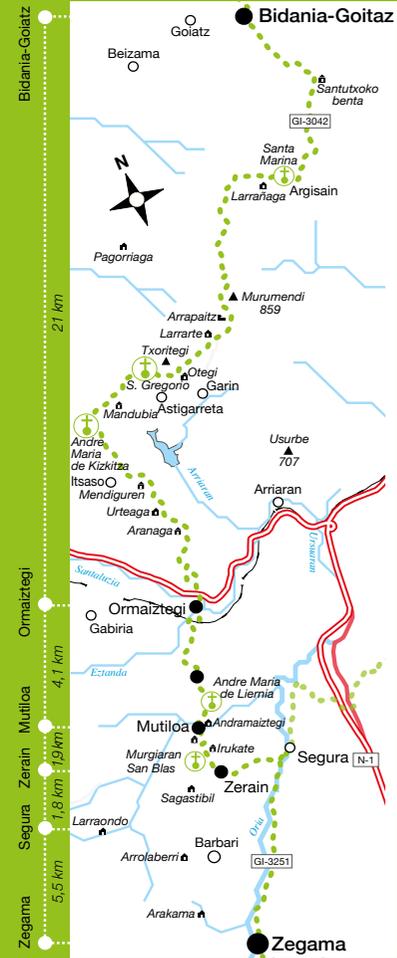
death. The Iriarte Erdikoa farmhouse in which he lived has been converted into a complete museum that tells of his life and achievements. Very close by we will find the Parish Church of San Andrés, with its interesting mediaeval front and baptismal font dating back to pre-Roman times. As you leave the town, you will discover the spectacular iron viaduct that was built midway through the 19th century by Alexander Lavaley.

Mutilloa (244 pop.)

The Andra Mari de Liernia Chapel, associated with fertility rituals, is another of the magical references that this part of Gipuzkoa makes to pilgrims. In the past, Mutilloa excelled in mining activities and the railway that connected the mines with Ormaiztegi. The village's horizontal profile is only broken by the tower of the Church of San Miguel, with its interesting altarpiece, the work of Felipe de Azurmendi.

Zerain (258 pop.)

Also associated with iron ore in the past, Zerain has been revived thanks to an initiative put forward by the young people living there. The Church of Santa María, with its enigmatic baptismal font, and the Jauregi farmhouse are just two of its most outstanding monuments.





Gipuzkoa bids us farewell; Álava welcomes us, and both territories bring out their finest. There are few frontiers as stunning as the San Adrian Tunnel, a cave that has been dug into the rock by water and the passing of time. For almost ten centuries, it was a popular place for travellers and merchants who were coming and going from Castile. Now it is hikers who climb the Aizkorri peak or passers-by on their way to the Alava plains. Once you have made your way through the shapely mediaeval roads, you arrive at a completely different environment. The Alava plains have little relation to the voluptuous valleys of Gipuzkoa. Here the terrain is tame, there are dry crops in abundance, and the villages slip dozily into the landscape, dotted with Baroque and Renaissance mansions.



Zalduondo, with the Aizkorri mountain in the background



Tunnel of San Adrián or Lizarrate ▶

Zegama (1,521 pop.)

The last stop before taking on the Aizkorri mountain range is this town that is closely linked to its neighbouring Segura and to the economic benefits of the Royal Road. The Church of San Martin de Tours is like a lighthouse for pilgrims arriving from Arrolaberri, and inside it houses General Zumalakarregi's mausoleum. An array of modest chapels, such as San Bartolomé and Sancti-Spiritus, accompany the climb that gradually seeks out the highest point of this section.

Parzonería de Altzania

The hillsides that rise up to the Aizkorri ridge are communal lands shared by several municipalities in Gipuzkoa and Alava. In these frontier enclaves, the San Adrian Tunnel (or Lizarrate) arises as one of the most spectacular natural monuments in the entire Pilgrims' Way. Used since the 10th century, and inhabited by a hermitage of modern construction, the cave was for centuries the main passing point for those travelling to France from the plateau, and vice versa.

Zalduondo (198 pop.)

Once through San Adrian, a mediaeval stone path passes amid a lovely beech grove, managing to climb just a few metres more before starting the definitive descent towards Zalduondo. This town is similar in importance to Zegama, above all for those pilgrims and merchants who were going to cross the mountain range. It stands out for its Palace of Lazarraga, a shining example of Renaissance art that today houses an ethnographic museum, and for being a regular stop-off point for those on the Way. The Baroque altarpiece at the Church of San Saturnino de Tolosa also pays homage to the pilgrims' apostle.

Ordoñana (45 pop.)

The lovely walk amid the gentle outlines of the plains leads us to Ordoñana, where you can continue to trace the marks left here by Romanesque art, as is the case with the front of the Parish Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción. An interesting fact: the Chapel of San Millán bears a distinctly Baroque Castile & León coat of arms on its façade.

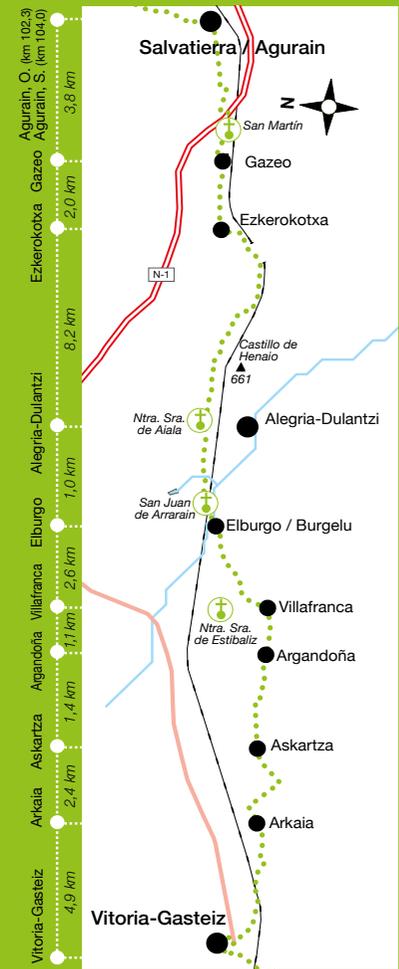




Salvatierra/Agurain > Vitoria-Gasteiz

(27.4 km)

< Irun, Oria: 102.7 km / Saiatz: 111.3 km > 660.4 km



Walkers can breathe easy here: the Alava dales continue for around fifty kilometres on a completely tame terrain. No slopes, no mountain passes, the journey to Vitoria-Gasteiz is a pleasant walk with very few urban concessions, just a drop of solitude and some enchanting places of worship. This corner of the Basque Country bears more resemblance to the open fields of Castile. We are also passing through one of the most versatile areas, artistically speaking: the plains have a place for prehistoric representation, such as the dolmens, Sorginetxe has one of the most fascinating examples in the Basque Country; there are Roman traces, such as in Arcaya; mediaeval, as in the Sanctuary of Ntra. Sra. de Estibaliz; or Renaissance, for example the small palaces in Salvatierra.



Details of the corbels of Ntra. Señora de Aiala



Sanctuary of Ntra Señora de Estibaliz ▶

Salvatierra/Agurain (5,031 pop.)

Visibly the most important town in the region, Salvatierra was, and still is, an important mediaeval borough, whose identifying features have survived over time. There are two churches, San Juan and Santa María, that were both also fortresses; an arcaded square; a wall that still shows some traces of its existence; and a main street that the hikers will walk along, just as the pilgrims did seven centuries before.

Gazeo (34 pop.)

Modest enclave in the Alava plains that has somehow managed to save some beautiful Gothic pictures in its Church of San Martín de Tours, which date back to the 14th century and which remained hidden for centuries.

Ezkerokotxa (45 pop.)

The paths on the Way are practically the same as those of the Roman Astorga-Bordeaux road. Ezkerokotxa has the Church of San Román, a collage of several mediaeval trends offering Romanesque (on the front), Gothic (most of the building), and a Renaissance stone altarpiece.

Alegria-Dulantzi (2,873 pop.)

Although the Way goes round the town of Alegria-Dulantzi, the tower of the Neoclassical Church of San Blas can still be seen in the distance. It passes alongside the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora de Aiala, from the 13th century, with its magnificent statue of Our Lady dating back to the 14th century and a lovely four-arched portico on the outside.

Elburgo / Burgelu (177 pop.)

The roots of the Chapel of San Juan de Arrarain go back to the 12th century, which makes it one of the oldest in the historical territory.

Argandoña (40 pop.)

Another of the villages associated with the historical "Roman Way" is Argandoña, which displays its mediaeval Church of Santa Columba, with its lovely capitals. Close to the village, up on a hillock, we will find the Sanctuary of Virgen de Estibaliz, the patron of Álava. Its Romanesque door, as well as the sculpture of Andra Mari (12th century) and the baptismal font are particularly worth the visitor's attention.

Arcaia (76 pop.)

The Latin mark can be seen in the old thermal baths set beside the Pilgrims' Way. On the horizon, we can now see Vitoria-Gasteiz.



Vitoria-Gasteiz has been watching people travelling past for centuries. Its privileged location has encouraged this situation, as it is in the heart of the Alava plains and next to a commercial corridor popularised by the Romans: the Bordeaux-Astorga road. Those on the Way will find a modern, cosmopolitan and innovative city, famous for its quality of urban life. This is evident in its extensive

pedestrianised areas, a whole world of green spaces both inside and outside the town (there is good reason why the European Commission has awarded Vitoria-Gasteiz the title of European Green Capital 2012), new means of public transport, such as the revived tram and a whole network of museums.

Beyond this new city, the capital of Alava is steeped in history. It has the most valued mediaeval quarter of all Basque towns, an almond-shaped layout and wayward streets that stand to attention as they pass by the Cathedral of Santa María. Restoration work on the cathedral has been going on for over a decade, but this has not had a negative effect at all, quite the contrary. One successful initiative going by the name of

'Open for Works' has enabled thousands of people (Ken Follett among them) to see the ins and outs of this charismatic temple, and the image of the city has been portrayed way beyond its own city limits. It is in places such as this, the Church of San Miguel, or the La Burulleria square, where you can really feel that there are still some parts of the Basque Country in which time, fortunately, has not changed anything.

1. Cathedral of Santa María



This glorious Gothic cathedral was raised on the foundations of a primitive Romanesque church. The portico, whose figures have conserved the original 15th century polychromy, is one of its most prized features. The restoration works are open to the public, and this provided a source of information for the writer, Ken Follett, when he was writing 'World Without End', the sequel to

his best-seller 'The Pillars of the Earth'.

2. Virgen Blanca Square



It is in this spacious square, dominated by a group of sculptures recalling the War of Independence, that the two faces of Vitoria meet: the Gothic mediaeval quarter, and the urban expansion zone of the 19th century. To the north, the streets are mostly narrow and winding, bearing the names of the trades

that were practiced there: *Cuchillería* [knifemakers], *Herrería* [blacksmiths]... To the south, an orderly grid of pedestrianised streets and a lively commercial area.

3. Fray Francisco de Vitoria Walk

Next to the La Florida park, we find the Walk of the same name, and this will turn into the La Senda Walk, until it passes the railway line, and then it becomes the Fray Francisco de Vitoria Walk. This is one of the most personal and attractive walkways in Vitoria, lined with trees and stately houses, such as the Palace of Ajuria-Enea, the Lehendakari's residence.

4. Church of San Miguel

It presides over the Virgen Blanca square and houses the venerated sculpture of the patron of Álava, as well as a stunning Baroque altarpiece by Gregorio Fernández.



5. España Square

The ideas of the Age of Enlightenment left a deep mark on the city, and we can see evidence of this in the Neoclassical space provided by the España Square, the square that houses the Town Hall; or Los Arquillos, a curious architectural solution to hide the imbalance between the mediaeval hillock and the new city.



6. Casa del Cordón (Rope house)

This "rope-house" is the most emblematic of all the Vitorian palaces. The Gothic style building proudly displays a Franciscan rope on one of the doors, hence the name. Do not miss the star-shaped vault in its noble hall.



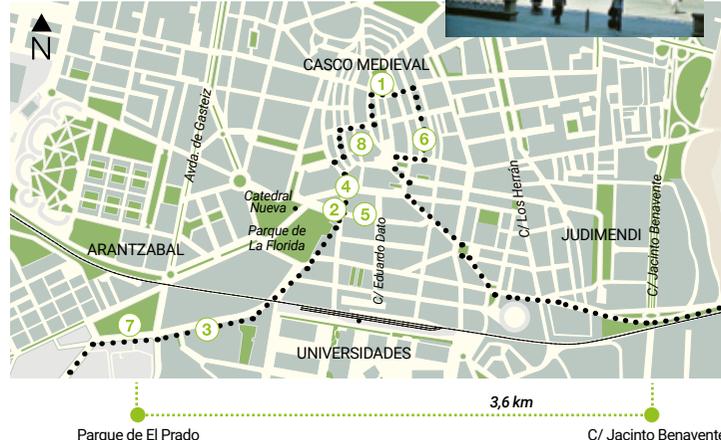
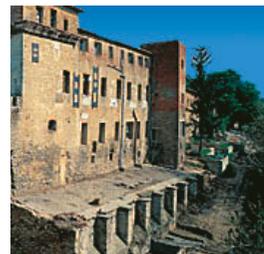
7. El Prado park

The Alava capital is one of the cities with most square metres of green space per resident in the whole of Europe. Its Green Belt has almost 50 kilometres of paths for pedestrians and cyclists, and in addition, it has wooded areas like El Prado, a park that has been tended to lovingly since 1832.



8. The Wall

Next to the Cathedral there is a stretch of the old wall that surrounded and protected the small hamlet on which what is now Vitoria-Gasteiz would go on to be built.





Vitoria-Gasteiz > La Puebla de Arganzón

(22 km)

< Irun, Oria:130.1 km / Saiatz: 138.7 km > 633 km

The gentle, peaceful landscapes of the Alava plains come to an end. After more than fifty kilometres amid gentle landscapes, the mountains of Portillo de San Miguel indicate the change in pace. Once we say farewell to Vitoria-Gasteiz and leave behind its urban and industrial frame, the path plunges once more into cereal fields alongside the N-1, passing humble, friendly villages as it has on previous days. The Romanesque art in this corner of the Basque Country still has a few surprises in store in Armentia and Villanueva de la Oca. We are close to leaving the Basque lands, but before we will go through Treviño county, an enclave of Burgos in the heart of Álava.

Armentia (241 pop.)

Integrated in the lands of the Alava capital, and bordered by a lovely residential area, Armentia has one of the most important Romanesque monuments in the Basque Country. The Basílica de San Prudencio (also the patron of this Historical Territory) was built in the 12th century, although it underwent serious refurbishment in the 18th century. The most prized mediaeval treasure is found in the atrium, where all kinds of tympanums, chrisms and effigies were carried.

Simón de Anda y Salazar, former Governor of the Philippines. The palatial house where he was born is still standing. It was built in the Baroque style in the 18th century with an eye-catching elephant carved into the main plaque. Another of its outstanding elements is the Church of San Esteban from the 15th century, which is easily recognised by its characteristic belfry.

Villanueva de la Oca (8 pop.)

Once past the Portillo de San Miguel, we enter Burgos territory through the County of Treviño, a Castilian island that geographically forms part of Alava. Villanueva de la Oca is set in a sheltered dale and it is the first village we see after our descent. The fresh spring at the entrance, decorated with the quintessential pilgrims' emblem, the scallop shell, tells us that the village is open to hikers, which is reiterated in the Romanesque portico on the Church of San Pedro.

Gometxa (47 pop.)

A modest style town next to the N-1, it has a noteworthy Church of the Transfiguration, a Neoclassical and monolithic construction in which it is still possible to trace elements dating back to the Middle Ages, such as its baptismal font.

Subijana de Álava (44 pop.)

Built in the foothills of Mount San Miguel, Subijana de Álava was the birthplace of



Villanueva de la Oca



Basílica de San Prudencio, Armentia ▶





The continual ups and downs of the early days on the Way are once again the main feature of this long stretch of almost thirty kilometres. We once again travel through the valley on the route south, in search of the French Way, which can also be reached by Armiñón through Miranda de Ebro. Once we arrive in Briñas, we will be taken aback by the image of four rivers that have a bearing on the day's hike: the Zadorra, Ayuda, Inglares and lastly, the mythical Ebro. There will be villages and towns with walls around them, set at the bottom of valleys, modest hill passes, and a rather tough peak when we leave Salinillas de Buradón, the Portillo de la Lobera mountain. At the end, the landscape suffers another radical transformation: here we see La Rioja Alavesa, a land of tidy vineyards that calm the landscape.

La Puebla de Arganzón (529 pop.)

On its way south to pass onto the Ebro, the River Zadorra passes by a village with a wall around it, La Puebla de Arganzón, which was built on what was once a busy crossroads. Its Gothic Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción is a fine example of the importance of this village in the Late Middle Ages.

Burgueta (48 pop.)

The final digression of the County of Treviño comes with this village, where the houses are arranged around the main road. The Church of San Martín, although it was built according to rural Baroque principles, has a mediaeval front with beautiful Romanesque capitals.

Estavillo (107 pop.)

Raised up on a hillock, Estavillo is slightly away from the Pilgrims' Way, which does not prevent us from seeing the outline of its church, also dedicated to Saint Martin. This church is from the 15th century and has a spectacular altarpiece created according to Renaissance styles.

Berantevill (475 pop.)

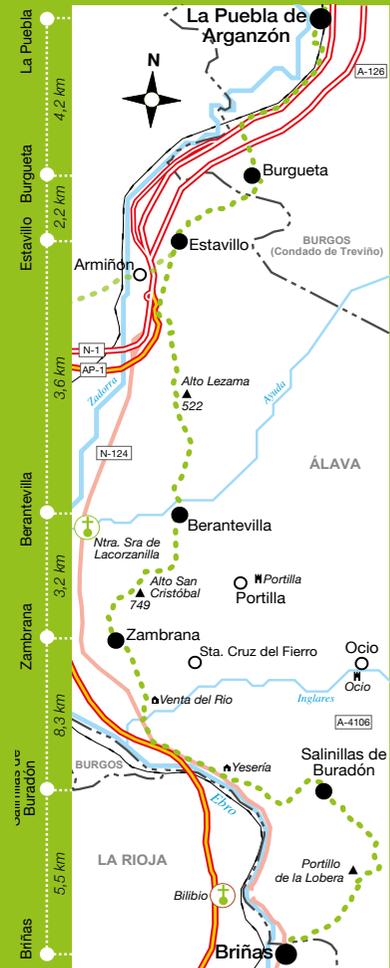
There are a number of palatial houses with splendid coats of arms in this village, similar to the one in Zamudio. The Church of Asunción de Nuestra Señora is an interesting element, particularly due to the size of its belfry.

Zambrana (415 pop.)

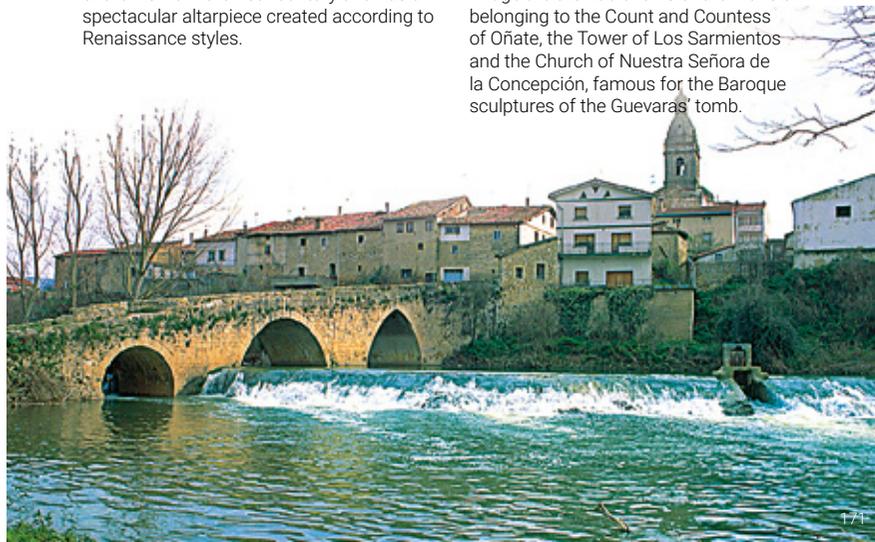
Another geographical feature, San Cristóbal, serves as a prologue to the village of Zambrana, a major commercial hub between Castile, La Rioja and the Basque Country. Its urban layout leads directly to the Church of Santa Lucia, with clear Romanesque influence.

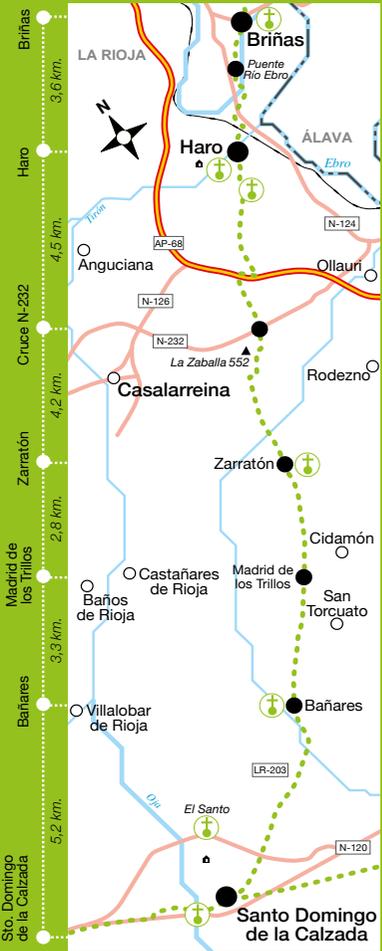
Salinillas de Buradón (108 pop.)

A chance to catch your breath before tackling the ascent of the Portillo de la Lobera mountain. This village, set in the foothills of the Toloño mountain range, is protected by a beautiful mediaeval wall. Particularly interesting sights in this village are the noble ruins of the mansion belonging to the Count and Countess of Oñate, the Tower of Los Sarmientos and the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, famous for the Baroque sculptures of the Guevaras' tomb.



Entrance with a basket arch, Church of San Martín

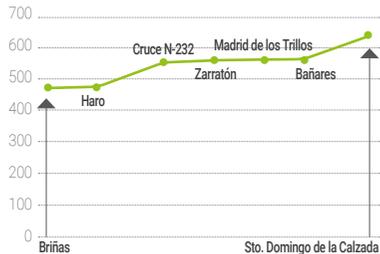




A day of change and transformation for the Way, which now leaves the Basque Country and enters La Rioja. The river channel of Las Conchas de Haro marks the border, and now the landscape changes and even the weather is different. We're walking through vast vineyards, neatly delineated market gardens, and gentle hills alongside the river Ebro. With the mountain range of Toloño, an offshoot of the Sierra de Cantabria, behind you, the route goes south, and another range, the Sierra de la Demanda, appears on the far horizon. This route is transitional, with no difficult stretches, although you may find the sunshine uncomfortably warm - after going through the wine-making town of Haro there are few trees and very little shade. The roads are dry and dusty, sometimes ochre and sometimes pale, until they meet up with the French Way.



Plateresque facade of the church of Sto. Tomás, Haro



Briñas, with Toloño's mountain behind ▶

Briñas (260 pop.)

Among the wide meanders of the Ebro and close to the spectacular pass of Las Conchas de Haro, Briñas is a tranquil, attractive village, gathered around the imposing silhouette of La Asunción, its Baroque church. A few kilometres after Briñas, as you walk beside the Ebro, you'll see the medieval bridge with Gothic arches that was the main link between the village and Haro for five centuries. After crossing the bridge, you begin to notice the presence of fermenting grapes - wine is very important to this region.

Haro (12,291 pop.)

Considered Spain's wine-making capital, Haro has just over 12,000 inhabitants, but despite its modest size, it is officially a city. This is partly due to the wine boom of the late 19th century, when the district around the station (barrio de la Estación) was built, now home to world-famous wineries. Plaza de La Paz is Haro's main square, where the old and new parts of town meet. Some of the more notable older buildings include the church of Santo Tomás, with its slender Renaissance tower and its portico with figures of James the Apostle and other saints; and the "horseshoe" (Herradura), a set of streets and squares known for their tapas bars.

Zarratón (328 pop.)

The parish church of La Asunción will soon come into view. Like many others in the area, it was built in the 16th century in a Plateresque-influenced style, and boasts

a beautiful Flamboyant Gothic doorway. Zarratón was famous for its dances - some of the oldest in La Rioja - and its country chapels. The Way of St James passes in front of one of them, the Ermita de San Andrés, on its way to the next stop.

Bañares (324 pop.)

Another village interrupts the smooth plain of La Rioja Alta to display a Romanesque gem that seems to continue the theme of the French Way. The Ermita de Santa María is a country chapel with a beautiful 12th century façade and Chi Rho depicting the bull of St Luke and the lion of St Mark.

Santo Domingo de la Calzada (6,780 pop.)

You have now reached the most popular of all the Ways of St James. The paths meet in this town, which has become one of the most famous on the road to Compostela. It is famous for a traditional proverb, "Santo Domingo de la Calzada, where the chicken crowed after it was roasted", referring to a picturesque local legend. In honour of the story of the miraculous chicken, which is too long to recount here, its Cathedral is the only Christian church in the world with a henhouse inside it. The magic of Santo Domingo de la Calzada, named after a Castilian saint who built a bridge here to cross the river Oja, is also apparent in the old town centre, with historic buildings, the longest city walls in La Rioja, the pedestrianised main street, and the lovely 18th century arcades of the City Hall.

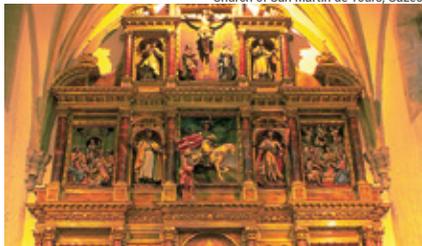




Confluence of the rivers Oria and Leitzaran, Andoain



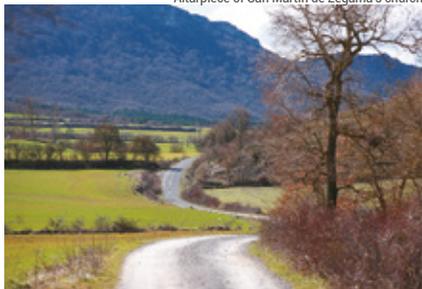
Church of San Martín de Tours, Gazeo



Altarpiece of San Martín de Zegama's church



Gometxa



Path between Gometxa and Subijana



San Adrián's medieval road



Berantevilla



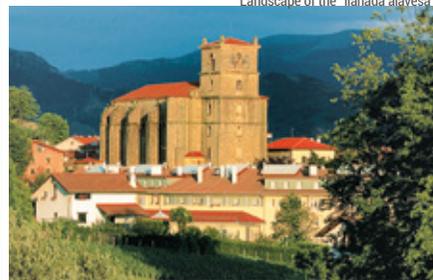
Inside the cathedral, Santo Domingo de la Calzada



Church of Ntra. Sra del Juncal, Irun



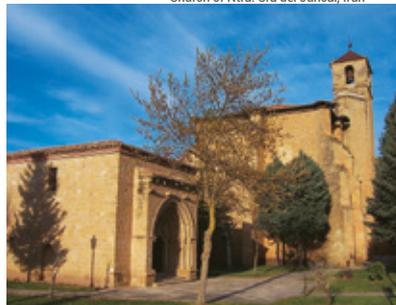
Landscape of the "lanada alayesa"



Church of San Esteban, Oiartzun



Zerain, with the hamlet of Jauregi in the foreground



Parish church and hermitage of Santa Cruz, Bañare



Salinillas de Buradón

Euskadi



Lebaniego Way (Cantabria)

The history of the arrival of a fragment of the Holy Cross at the monastery of Santo Toribio has been lost in the mists of the Early Middle Ages, although it was probably brought here by the Hispano-Goths fleeing the Arab-Berber invasion of the year 711. The relic soon began to attract pilgrims on their way to Santiago as well as to Liébana itself, and the monastery became so popular as a pilgrimage site that Pope Julius II granted Santo Toribio Jubilee privileges in 1512. The pilgrimage route in honour of the Lignum Crucis splits from the Coastal Way in Muñorrodero, heading inland into Liébana through much of western Cantabria. From the hills and highlands of the coast, with their pastures and cultivated woodlands, to the foothills of the towering mountains of Picos de Europa National Park, the route to Mount La Viorna shows every aspect of inland Cantabria. This route has the additional incentive of the superb cuisine offered in the regions it passes through, with beef specialities, and bean and chick pea stews, all washed down with a drop of eau-de-vie.



San Vicente de la Barquera > Cades

(28.5 km)

< San Vicente de la Barquera 0 km > Santo Toribio 72 km



The first kilometres of the route from San Vicente de la Barquera to El Hortigal go through the gentle hills and meadows of Oyambre Natural Park. The path continues westwards, punctuated by the stately towers of Estrada and Cabanzón, until it reaches the river Nansa, running beside it past Cades. The Camino Lebaniego follows a beautiful mountain trail to Muñorrodero, where the pilgrims going to Santiago de Compostela split off from those going to Santo Toribio de Liébana, following the yellow arrows and red arrows, respectively.

The Nansa riverside walk, 7 km long, is shaded by the varied trees of riparian woodland, with picturesque wooden walkways and bridges, three anglers' refuges with fireplaces, and the viewing point at Mirador del Poeta is just a few metres from the path, one kilometre before the end. The path ends at Camijanes.

A little further on, before you go into the deep gorge that the river Lamasón has carved between the limestone boulders of Macizo de Peñarrubia and Sierra de Ozalba, we recommend turning off to the east to visit the nearby cave of El Soplao, a geological wonder and one of the region's top tourist attractions. Beyond the rugged sides of the gorge, another turn to the east brings you to Lafuente, the end of the stage, in the shadow of the peaks of Arria.

The stage ends in Cades, with a modest hostel next to the bar, where they keep the key. It's a good idea to call ahead and check there is room, as the number of beds is limited.

Camijanes (102 pop.)

On arrival in Camijanes, on the right bank of the River Nansa, the route turns east to cross the river over the Tortorio bridge, leaving behind the traditional mountain houses all grouped together in rows and facing south. The hump-backed bridge dates back to the late 18th century and has one arch.

Cabanzón (131 pop.)

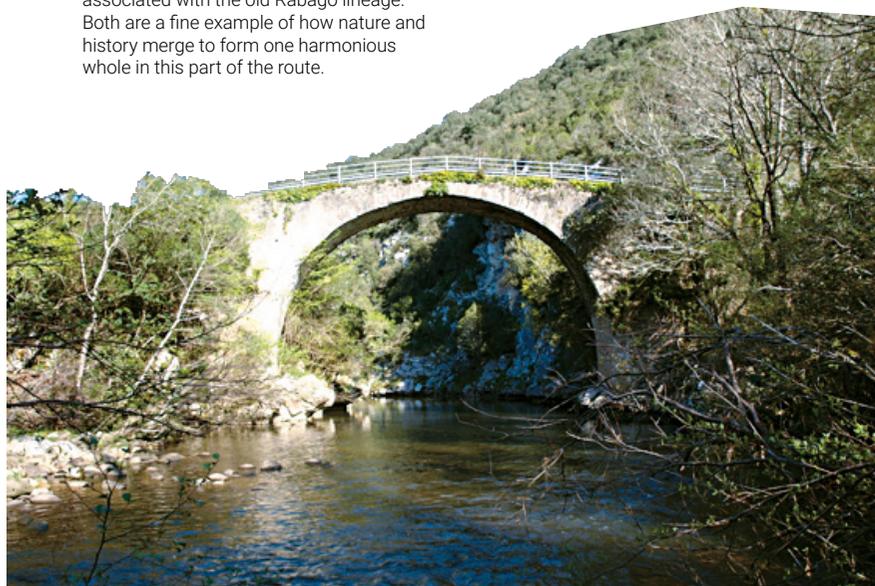
Apart from the Baroque Church of Santa Eulalia, with its 18th century Solomonic altarpiece, this village is known for having two remarkable elements that rise up to the skies: the Encinona and the Tower of Cabanzón. The first is a magnificent hundred-year-old specimen of Quercus ilex L. (holm oak) measuring 10 metres high. The tower is a defensive construction from the end of the Middle Ages, bearing witness to the area's stately past, and associated with the old Rábago lineage. Both are a fine example of how nature and history merge to form one harmonious whole in this part of the route.

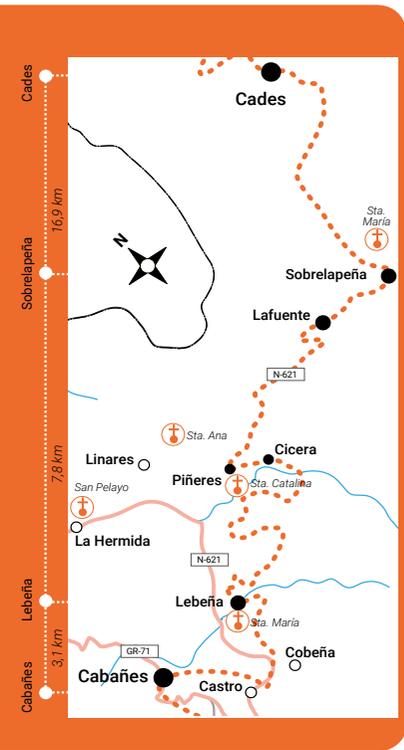
Cades (73 pop.)

Cades is synonymous with metalwork and the ironworks that gave their name to the valley and municipality through which this section of the route passes: Herrerías. There, beside the Nansa, feeding on its waters, we will find an interesting palatial estate dating back to the 18th century, with a stately home bearing its coat of arms, a chapel, hórreo or granary, mill and blacksmith's. This last component has been completely restored and is open to visitors. It is a joy to be able to see how the iron is worked, just as it was in the pre-industrial world of the Modern Era.



Tortorio bridge over the Nansa river ▶





You leave Cades in the direction of Sobrelapeña, after negotiating the steep gorge carved out by river Lamasón. Leaving Cades, go by Sobrelapeña towards Lafuente, where as well as a hostel, you'll find one of the gems of Cantabria's Romanesque art: The church of Santa Juliana, an official Cultural Asset. It dates from the late 12th and early 13th centuries, in the Romanesque style with proto-Gothic influences, such as pointed arches. The route takes a right turn towards the neighbourhood of Bustio to come to Collado de Hoz, with a fabulous panoramic view of the Lamasón valley. Here you begin a 1.8 km descent to Cicera, with a pilgrims' hostel open all year.

At this point the path divides: one branch is the PR-S3 long-distance path, which climbs to the Collado Arcedón mountain pass. When it reaches the brañas (high mountain pastures), the path turns right and continues along a forest trail to Lebeña. The Mozarab church of Santa María de Lebeña was built in 925 by Christians fleeing Arab territory, and is one of the finest examples of Spanish pre-Romanesque architecture.

The other way to Lebeña is a traditional path called Canal de Francos, with views from the cliff of La Hermida. To take this route you will have to leave Cicera near the church and go down through the last few houses to the brook, taking the former Canal de Francos until you reach the meadows at the top of the pass (Collado). A forest path runs from the first mountain hut you see, and will take you down to Lebeña.

Continue on to Allende by the road, and then take another forest trail to Cabañes. The hostel is the first building on the right.



Lafuente (31 pop.)

After crossing the River Lamasón and moving further into the valley of the same name, the road reaches Lafuente, where the first stage ends. There, the Church of Santa Juliana, which was built next to the road, has been watching over the Way since the late 12th century. Very near to this rural Romanesque gem we will find an inscription dated 1625 under one of the sculptures that make up the *Pareja de Lamasón*, or "the Lamasón Two", reminding visitors of the fleetingness of life, with its unsettling phrase "so many pass that do not return"

Cicera (63 pop.)

The most southerly village in the municipal area of Peñarrubia, a traditional crossing place for several routes, 500 MASL and surrounded by the Peña Sagra mountains. The Cicera, a stream and tributary of the Deva, runs through it and forms the Agüera Riocicera gorge, which runs laterally in relation to the Hermida. Notable built heritage includes the church of San Pedro, in the highlands Baroque style (17th-18th century). The Churrigueresque main altarpiece features a 16th century St Peter and a 17th century St Anthony. You will find a hostel and a bar here, as well as interesting stone mansions, remains of

the windmills that were once plentiful, and the hydraulic equipment of the Fuente de Sotronco or Santronco.

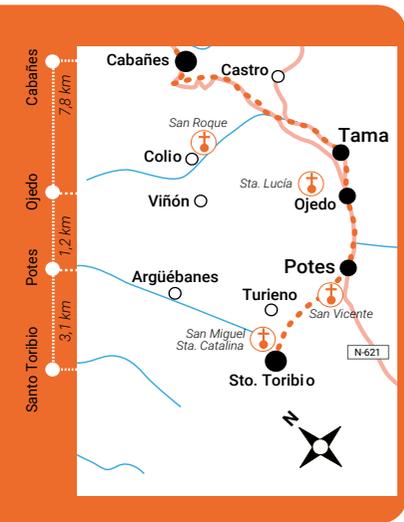
Between Cicera and Piñera, a road takes you to the top of Mount Santa Catalina or Hozarco, at 750 MASL, where a viewing point is "dangled" over the void in the Hermida gorge, with spectacular views. Next to the viewing point are the ruins of an early medieval fortress, Bolera de los Moros.

Lebeña (93 pop.)

According to legend, in the early 10th century the Count and Countess of Liébana, Alfonso and Justa, built the church of Santa María de Lebeña to house the remains of Santo Toribio, conserved in the monastery that now bears his name - as they still are today. As divine punishment for the profanation of the saint's tomb, the servants sent to disinter him and the noble couple were all struck blind, and only recovered their sight after abandoning their plans and donating all their possessions in Liébana to the monastery, including the new church. This gem of pre-Romanesque art reveals the influence of Visigoth, Asturian and Andalusian styles, and is a must-see on the route to Mt La Viorna.



Church of Santa Juliana, Lafuente ▶



From Cabañas to the crossroads to Allende, a path on the left will lead you to El Habario and its millennial chestnut trees, and goes on to Pendes, where you can gather your strength with a nibble of the local cheese, *quesucos de Liébana*, before going to the country chapel of San Francisco.

The path leads on to Tama, with a notable church with Romanesque elements. It's also worth doubling back 1500 m to see the Visitors' Centre of Picos de Europa National Park, as well as a couple of roadside bars along the way. As you return to Potes, you can avoid the road by taking the Campañana path, which runs parallel and ends in the village centre.

The hostel at Potes is managed by the Pilgrim's Reception Office in the Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos (where they keep the key). It is in an excellent location with views of the imposing Infantado tower, the most iconic building in Potes and one of the finest in Cantabria, forming a picture-postcard scene with the Picos de Europa in the distance. This is a 15th century fortified tower house which belonged to Orejón de la Lama, later passing to the Marquis of Santillana and Duke of Infantado. It dominates the historic town centre, which is a designated Historic-Artistic Site and a good starting point for visiting other places of interest, such as the bridges, the mansions with coats of arms, and the Roman stone streets of the old town, where you will also find wines, tapas, and plenty of restaurants offering the local speciality, *cocido lebaniego*.

From Potes, you can walk to the monastery of Santo Toribio de Liébana (4.2 km and finally see the *Lignum Crucis*, the largest piece of the True Cross,

brought from Jerusalem by St Toribius. The monastery dates from the 13th to the 18th centuries, combining the Gothic and Baroque styles. The 15th century Puerta del Perdón (Door of Forgiveness) is opened on Jubilee years - any year when 16 April, the feast of St Toribius of Liébana, falls on a Sunday.

In Santo Toribio, at the end of the Camino Lebaniego, there is a hostel for groups of pilgrims, and it is a starting point for the Camino Lebaniego-Vadiniense to Santiago de Compostela via the French Way. It is very important to mention the other two branches of the Camino Lebaniego which meet up with the French Way: the Castile branch, towards Palencia, and the León branch, towards Mansilla de las Mulas.

Ojedo (583 pop.)

The Late-Romanesque front that adorns the entrance to the parish church of Ojedo, situated next to the route but having been built in fairly recent years, acts as a reminder of the village's mediaeval origins. Its lost Monastery of San Salvador is mentioned in writing as far back as the 11th century.

Potes (1,523 pop.)

Where the River Deva and River Quiviesca meet, there lies the town of Potes, at the centre of Liébana and the site of an important regional market, which has its origins in the 13th century, and which is held every Monday. The historic town centre was almost totally destroyed during the Civil War and restored years later. It boasts many examples of very fine civil and religious built heritage, particularly the Infantado tower and the former church of San Vicente. The tower is now the permanent home of an exhibition of codices relating to the monk Beato de Liébano and his milieu, and the church houses the Centro de Estudios Lebaniegos (Centre for Liébana Studies), Pilgrim's Reception Office, and Tourism Office.

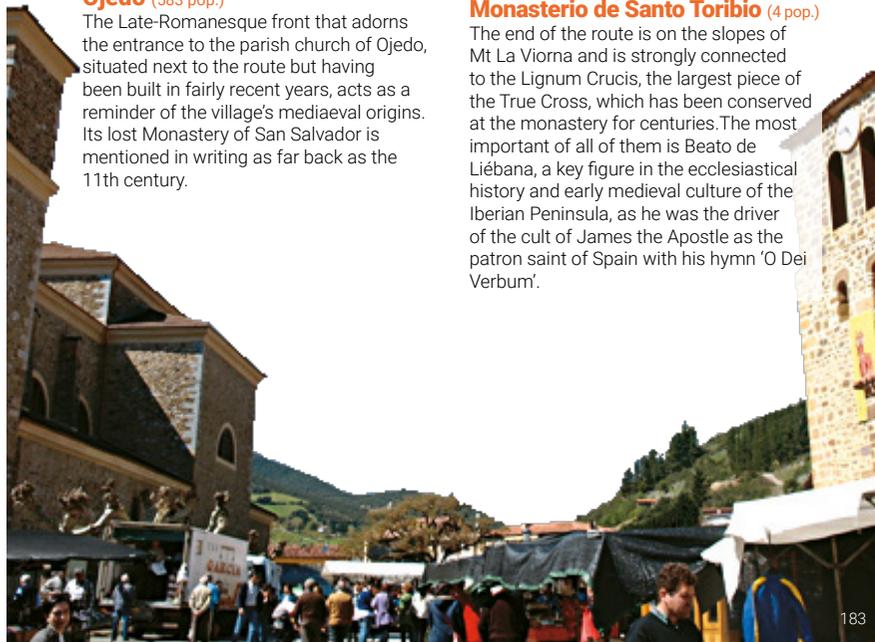
Monasterio de Santo Toribio (4 pop.)

The end of the route is on the slopes of Mt La Viorna and is strongly connected to the Lignum Crucis, the largest piece of the True Cross, which has been conserved at the monastery for centuries. The most important of all of them is Beato de Liébana, a key figure in the ecclesiastical history and early medieval culture of the Iberian Peninsula, as he was the driver of the cult of James the Apostle as the patron saint of Spain with his hymn 'O Dei Verbum'.



Interior monasterio Sto. Toribio de Liébana

Market day in Potes ▶



Cantabria



*The Northern
Ways to Santiago*



-  Northern Way
-  Primitive Way
-  Inland Way
-  Lebaniego Way



**BASQUE
COUNTRY**



Asturias
paraiso natural

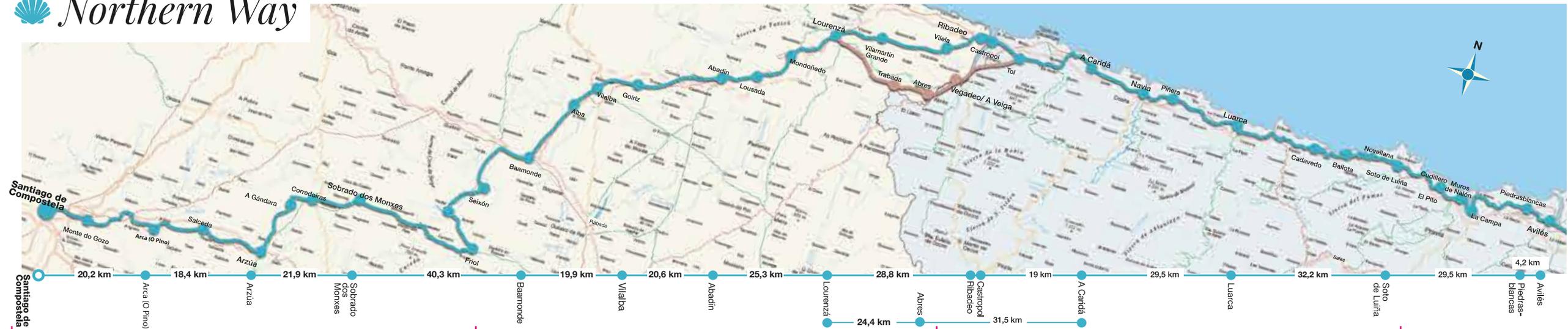
Cantabria
Infinita

galicia





Northern Way





The Northern Ways to Santiago



-  Northern Way
-  Inland Way
-  Primitive Way
-  Lebaniego Way