

El Buen Camino

A 9-Day Pilgrimage

Suggested Pilgrimage #1 (7 nights/9 days)

Life is a book. Those who do not travel read only one page! (St. Augustine). Far more than just experiencing a new land or seeing new sights, our Pilgrimage along El Camino de Santiago de Compostela (The Way of St. James) takes us through the spiritually rich and beautiful countryside of Galician Spain where we will reflect, come closer to God, and gratefully consider the sacrifices and dedication of those who have gone before. As we walk on holy ground, behold sacred shrines and experience timeless works of art regarded as the most awe-inspiring and important of the world – we will renew our commitment to the roots of our Christian faith. The services and meditations we celebrate along the way will draw us together as a community. They will remind us of our blessings and the call to stewardship as followers of Jesus Christ.

Day 1: Departure from the USA

The Way of St. James was one of the most important Christian pilgrimages during the Middle Ages, together with those to Rome and Jerusalem. Legend holds that St. James's remains were carried by boat from Jerusalem to northern Spain, where he was buried in what is now the city of Santiago de Compostela.

Our pilgrimage begins with an overnight flight to Madrid, Spain.

Day 2: Madrid

History is in a manner a sacred thing, so far as it contains truth; for where truth is, the Supreme Father of it may also be said to be (Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, pt. II, III, 6, p. 479).

Welcome to Madrid, the capital and largest city. After arriving, we meet our Faith Journeys representative and enjoy a panoramic tour of the city and explore Buen Retiro Park, founded in 1631, where we will see the immense Royal Palace of Madrid. In the early evening we check into our hotel accommodations, enjoy dinner and meet for a short service of Compline before turning in for the night.

Day 3: Sarria

You call us, Lord, to leave familiar things and to leave our "comfort zone". May we open our eyes to new experiences, may we open our ears to hear you speaking to us and may we open our hearts to your love. Grant that this time spent on pilgrimage may help us to see ourselves as we really are and may we strive to become the people you would have us be. Amen (Pilgrimage Prayer, Jenny Child)

We start our day by traveling to the Episcopal Cathedral in Madrid to receiving a blessing and pilgrimage gifts from the Bishop of Spain, The Rt. Rev. Carlos Lopez-Lozano. There will be time for some private prayer and reflection before boarding leaving Madrid to start the El Camino. We board our motorcoach and travel to Sarria. Before we start our walk, we visit the Monastery of Samos, one of the most important Monasteries of Spain (because of its influence on the history and culture of the region). In the middle ages it was the wealthiest and most powerful monastery on the Spanish peninsula and educated the sons of nobility along with maintaining an important pilgrim's hospice, pharmacy, forge and many farms. It was severely damaged in a 1536 fire, rebuilt over the next 200 years. In 1951, a fire destroyed the library and monastery refectory. In the evening we enjoy dinner and an overnight stay Sarria (our home for the next few nights)



Day 4: Sarria to Brea to Ventas de Naron

I sing of his elegance with words that groan, and I remember a sad breeze through the olive trees (Federico Garcia Lorca – well-known writer of modern Spain).

Today, after breakfast, we head towards Brea to visit the Church of San Salvador and our first walking day on the Camino. From Brea, we'll walk to Ventas de Naron (24.1 km-approx. 15 miles) through the beautiful Galician countryside to Ferreiros where we will see the Church of Ferreiros, the Church of St. Nicholas in Vilachá, and the Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows in Portomarin, also stopping in Gonzar to visit the Church of Santa Maria, Ventas de Naron to visit the Chapel of Santa Magdalena. There will be many opportunities to stop, rest and have something to drink along the way. In the early evening, we return, by motorcoach, to Sarria for dinner, Compline and overnight.

Day 5: Ventas de Naron to Melide

By a small sample we may judge of the whole piece (Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, and pt. I, I, 4, p. 25).

After breakfast we'll transfer by motorcoach to Ventas de Naron where we will begin our walk to Melide (26.7 km-approx. 16.5 miles) stopping in Ligonde to visit the Church of Santiago, the Church of San Xulian do Camino, the Church of Vilar de Donas, which was once part of the Villar de Donas Monastery and derived its name from being a women's-only monastery. It was passed on to the Order of Santiago and became a very special place where the most important members and leaders of the order were buried. We will continue to the Snow Church in Furelos, then over the hill to Melide. Here, we visit the Church of the Holy Spirit and the Church of St. Mary. From Melide we return, by motorcoach, to Sarria for dinner, a service of Compline and overnight.

Day 6: Melide to A Salceda

The angel appeared to me to be thrusting the spear of fire into my heart and piercing my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and left me all on fire with a great love of God (St. Teresa of Avila).

We depart Sarria, this morning, after breakfast and head for Melide where we will begin our walk to A Salceda (25 km-approx. 15.5 miles) visiting, along the way, the Parish Church of Santiago, in Boente, and crossing the little town of Arzua. Later in the day we transfer to Santiago de Compostela, by motorcoach, for check-in before dinner, Compline and overnight.

Day 7: A Salceda to Santiago de Compostela

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (James 3:17-18)

This morning, after breakfast, we transfer, by motorcoach, from Santiago de Compostela to A Salceda where we will begin the final stage of our track to Santiago de Compostela (25.8 km-approx. 16 miles) stopping by As Barrosas, where we visit St. Lazare Chapel, and Santa Irene where we visit the Hermitage. Today we walk through beautiful green country side, farms and forest to Monte do Gozo, the "Hill of Joy" where the pilgrims get their first views on the three spires of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. In the early evening, arrive in Santiago de Compostela for dinner, Compline and overnight.



Day 8: Santiago de Compostela

Know this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience (James 1:3).

Today we start by making our way down the narrow streets of the city to the shrine of St. James in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela known in English as the Way of St. James and in Spanish as the Camino de Santiago. The cathedral, built on the spot where the remains of the Apostle James were said to have been found, borders the main plaza of the old and well-preserved city. We receive our Pilgrim Certificates and have the opportunity to attend the daily Pilgrim's Mass. Following the service, we join together to celebrate Eucharist with the others in our group. We'll enjoy a 4-hour guided tour of the city. The remainder of the day is at leisure to relax or visit the city. We might explore sites near the cathedral including the Praza do Obradoiro, the expansive square named after the workshops set up during the construction of the cathedral in the 11th century, the Colexio de San Xerome, witness to Santiago's status as a seat of learning since the late middle ages, or the Paxo de Raxoi – an elegant neoclassical palace and former seminary which today houses the regional government of Galicia. On the north side of the square is the Hostal de los Reyes Católicos, a Renaissance building commissioned by Isabella and Ferdinand in 1499 as a pilgrims' sanctuary. At the end of the day, we will enjoy a celebratory farewell dinner and a final service of Compline, before spending out last night together in Spain.



Day 9: Depart for Home

We will let the power of the holy shrines, priceless relics, and spiritual marvels of Spain settle over us, then like other pilgrims of other times, go back to our lives with renewed faith and readiness.

Following breakfast, we leave our hotel and head for the airport to return to the U.S., our home, families and faith communities.

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This is a very flexible itinerary. *Except for confirmed appointments, the places of interest and the sequence of sightseeing might be changed if necessary or desirable*

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