

(May 27 – You may want to go early to explore Madrid, Barcelona or Lisbon with the great train system.)

## Mar 28 – Arrive Sarria

We begin our adventure in Sarria, high on the ridges of the Galicia peninsula of Spain. It is the largest town we will see as we begin our pilgrimage. By ancient Galicia standards, Sarria is a new city. But yet, it is charming in its “new” way. Sarria is known for its impressive churches and monasteries, most dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Use your free time to explore and see the city’s wonders such as the church O Salvador, which is located on Rúa Maior. Equally important is the Convent of A Madalena that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was used as a pilgrim hospital by Italian monks of the Order of the Blessed Martyrs of Jesus. Sarria is a city with a rich artistic history and is now considered a capital of antiques. From furniture to art, people flock to Sarria.

You will have the afternoon and evening to relax and explore to prepare for the journey that lies ahead. Sarria is a foodie haven, so enjoy some of the local cuisines. The specialty is a stew called cocido which is a mixture of wild game and seafood. Bear in mind this is the starting point for many on this pilgrimage so you may meet others who are there for the same reason as you.

Overnight: Sarria 4 star hotel Alfonso

### SARRIA TO PORTOMARIN (6H30, 23KM +422M -477M)



Summary: Expect a calm walk through pretty villages under the shade of oak trees, along quiet country roads. The beautiful Romanesque church of Barbadelo is worth a visit (580m).

## Mar 29 – Sarria to Portomarin

**B**

Following a hearty breakfast, we set out through Ponte Ribiera on what is about a peaceful 13 ½ mile walk through pretty villages and peaceful hamlets. As we exit town, we pass the Magdalena Convent and then head along quiet country roads that are shaded by oak trees. You will see a constant reminder that you are on the right path by the scallop shell symbols along the way. The shells are found on trees, roads and signs, pointing the Way. Medieval pilgrims wore the shells while traveling the path to symbolize their journey.

Along the way, you will spot many Galician traditional ‘hórreos’ (granaries). As we pass through the tiny town of Barbadelo, make sure to take time to see the beautiful Romanesque church in the village of Barbadelo with its incredible baroque altar. Other small hamlets we traverse include Rente, Serra, Peruscallo, Morgade, Mercadoiro and Vilache. Each provides an opportunity for you to rest, have a snack or look around.

As we make our final steps to Portomarin, you will see a set of ancient steps and a structure known as the Chapel of the Clouds... this is the best and traditional way for pilgrims to enter Portomarin. The town has many cute shops and restaurants but you should take time to visit the church of the Knights of the order

San Juan. It is both a temple and a fortress. Once located in the Miño River Valley before it was flooded as a dam reservoir, the structure was moved stone by stone and reconstructed here.

If you really want to go local this evening, try a traditional meal of fried eels!

Overnight: Portomarin We stay in Poussada de Portomarin

#### PORTOMARIN TO PALAS DE REI (6H15, 25KM +520M -325M)



**Summary:** Today the Camino will cross the river Miño and rise uphill steadily. You will pass Gonzar and the Romanesque Church of Santa María, Castromaior before Eirexe where the Romanesque portal of the church features a sculpture of Daniel and animals, as well as Santiago de Peregrino, also worth viewing.

### May 30 – Portomarin – Palas de Rei

When we leave Portomarin, your Camino will cross the river Miño (Galicia’s longest river) and begin a steady slope uphill towards the Serra de Ligonde. Today’s venture will cover about 15 miles through varied terrain. We’ll start in shaded forests and then go along some paved roads past hamlets such as Gonzar, Hospital de la Cruz and Ventas de Narón. Hospital de la Cruz was named after an old hospital for pilgrims which no longer exists. It is believed to be the site of a massive Christian – Moorish battle in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

There are several churches worth stopping at along the way, but perhaps the one you should not miss is the Romanesque Church of Santa María in Castromaior and the Romanesque church in Eirexe, with its portal featuring a sculpture of Daniel with animals, as well as Pilgrim Santiago. We end today’s journey in the town of Palas de Rei. Among the places you should take in is **Castillo de Pambre** which is the most complete Medieval Fort in Galicia, dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Your evening is free. When dining, you may want to enjoy some of the soft cheeses the area is known for.

Overnight: Palas de Rei Complejo la Cabana

## PALAS DE REI TO ARZÚA 7H30, 29KM +493M -661M



*Summary; The Camino trail continues downhill, passing the village of Casanova and the delightful village of Leboeiro. You should take a break in the lively market town of Melide (454m), where you should try octopus, Galicia's most classic dish, in one of the many 'pulperías'. The Camino crosses several streams and follows a forest track bringing you to the village of Boente and the church of Santiago. Next is the pretty medieval hamlet of Ribadiso and finally the town of Arzúa (389m), famous for its local cheese. In Arzúa, you should visit the churches of Santa María and A Magdalena.*

### May 31 – Palas de Rei - Azúra

Today will be your longest hike, traveling about 18 miles. The good news is that today is mostly downhill. Our path will take across the border between the province of Lugo and La Coruña. We will be passing through the village of Casanova and the delightful village of Leboeiro. You should take a break in the lively market town of Melide, where you should try octopus, Galicia's most classic dish, in one of the many 'pulperías.' After Melide, you will notice that the Way will start becoming more crowded as we merge with the Primitive Road

The scenery here can be breathtaking as we follow the Castasol River, crossing several streams. We'll make our way along a forest track of eucalyptus and oak, bringing us to the village of Boente and the church of Santiago where the parish priest enjoys beckoning travelers to come in for a visit. Next is the pretty, medieval hamlet of Ribadiso and finally the town of Arzúa which connects to the Camino in the North. During your free evening, you should visit the churches of Santa María and A Magdalena.

Overnight: Arzúa Casa Teodora

## ARZÚA TO AMENAL (5H30, 23KM +360M -486M)



*Summary; Today's walk you will be passing through woodland, sleepy villages and along streams. The chapel of Santa Irene, with its unique statues of Santiago, is worth a visit. Other than that, the rest of the route to Rúa/O Pino is on a good and quiet country road. Rúa (310m) is one of the quietest points before Santiago de Compostela.*

### Jun 1 – Arzúa to Amenal

(B)

Today's Camino will take us for about 14 miles through pretty woods, sleepy villages and across streams for most of the day. This is an easy trek and one that can be enjoyed by stopping for drinks and snacks in

the various scenic hamlets along the way. You'll notice that the closer you get to Santiago, the more joyous everyone's spirit is and the more social the other pilgrims have become.

In the town of Santa Irene, the chapel of Santa Irene is worth a visit. It is said Irene was murdered here but that the image of the Saint inside the shrine has healing powers. The nearby fountain is claimed by some to be the Fountain of Eternal Youth.

The lovely hamlet of Rúa is an overnight spot for many but we will continue on along country roads and forest tracks to Amenal.

Overnight: Amenal Hotel Amenal

#### AMENAL TO SANTIAGO (4H20, 17KM +268M -249M)



*Summary: The next point of interest is Lavacolla, where traditionally pilgrims washed themselves in the river before reaching Santiago de Compostela. Rows of tall eucalyptus trees line your journey to Monte do Gozo ("Mount of Joy" 368m) and it is from here that you can catch your first glimpse of the Cathedral of Santiago. After arriving in the city (264m, population 80,000), you can explore its UNESCO World Heritage Site architecture and delight in the wonderful atmosphere of this spiritual and cultural mecca.*

### Jun 2 – Santiago de Compostela.

Savor every moment of the last 10 miles of our epic pilgrimage. We will stop in Lavacolla on the outskirts of Santiago where for centuries pilgrims would come to wash in the waters on the river in preparation for their arrival in Santiago de Compostela. A shaded path of rows of tall eucalyptus trees line your journey to Monte do Gozo or Mount of Joy. From here we will catch our first glimpse of the spires of the cathedral in Santiago. With time permitting, we attend the Pilgrim's Mass.

From here, we will be entering the city of Santiago and make a short walk to the historic part of Santiago and the Plaza del Obradoiro which is the town's main square. We must register our arrival with the Pilgrims' Office to make our pilgrimage completion official. We will then we enter the Cathedral itself to be a part of the Pilgrim mass. Held at noon, the mass begins with the reading out of the number of pilgrims who have been received in the Pilgrims' Office in the last 24 hours, where they come from and where they started their pilgrimage. We then collect our certificates of completion.

Afterward, we can check into the 5 star San Francisco Monumento, a historic hotel that will give you well-deserved pampering after your journey. We have the afternoon to explore quaint pedestrian streets of this gem of an ancient city which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Known for its architecture and delightful atmosphere of spirit and culture, you will find not only pilgrims but also locals and students, enjoying a few bites and socializing over a glass of wine in the many bars, restaurants and cozy cafes.

Overnight: San Francisco Monumento -- 2 nights in this deluxe hotel loved by all. (B)

**Jun 3** – Explore on own or join on or optional Finisterre Day Tour!

From Santiago to the end of the world! Traditionally, pilgrims used to finish their Camino journey in Cape Fisterra, where they burned their clothes and admired the sun setting over the Atlantic Ocean. If you rather get to the end of the world in comfort, we have the perfect Finisterre day trip for you (Fisterra in Galician).

Our **Finisterre Day Trip** will take you from Santiago de Compostela to the fishing village and Cape, stopping along stunning parts of the Costa da Morte, such as the fishing village of Muros, Carnota (home to the biggest granary in Galicia and the largest sandy beach), the Ézaro waterfall (the only river in Europe reaching the sea as a waterfall) and the village of Muxía, famous for its charming sanctuary by the Atlantic. - €60

Overnight: San Francisco Monumento (B)

**Jun 4**– After breakfast, depart for airport.

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