

Walk Spain

Camino de Santiago



Picos de Europa mountains – medieval Oviedo – rugged Galician coast - Santiago de Compostela - fishing villages - sandy beaches rural culture – delicious food – carefully paced – charming small hotels

Travel a lesser known branch of the Camino de Santiago along the beautiful coast of northern Spain.

Explore a stunning combination of mountain ranges, wild coastline, thick forests and untouched villages.

Stay in a variety of carefully chosen and beautiful small hotels.

Walk in gorgeous scenery using Pura's detailed maps and walking notes.

Enjoy the beautiful cathedral at Santiago de Compostela.

This is a Pura *handmade* holiday with an activity rating of *medium* and a comfort rating *first*.



Walking part of the Camino de Santiago



"You've managed to create a holiday that is varied, challenging and relaxing. Tremendous!" Clare T

Holiday Itinerary

Do you want to get off the beaten track?

The northern branch of the Camino de Santiago is a stunning combination of mountains and coastal scenery. Each has its own distinctive and well-preserved cultural identity.

Although our route along the coast of Asturias and Galicia is far prettier than the main 'Camino Frances', it attracts few visitors.

Do you like to explore at your own pace?

With our self drive holidays, we include your car hire, accommodation, walking notes, maps and local information as well as a day of private guiding to start your holiday.

This means that you travel equipped to make the most of each day with the luxury of choosing your own agenda day to day.

Do you like to combine activity and comfort?

Spend the day exploring the mountains or coast as actively as you want. In the evening settle down in your very comfortable hotel and enjoy delicious meats from the mountains or wonderful fish and seafood from the coast.

If this sounds like you, then this could be the culture and walking holiday for you, read on.

Day 1 | Picos | **arrive in the Picos de Europa**

Collect your car at the airport and drive an hour to your charming hotel near the coast of the Picos de Europa National Park. Settle in this afternoon.

You travel along the Camino not only with maps and driving directions but also with information to help you explore. This information ranges from our favourite restaurants to the best beaches.

Because you are traveling through some fairly remote areas of Spain you will find that few people speak English. This is not a problem as locals are friendly and also we send you with vocabulary sheets to get you started.

Throughout this holiday you stay in very comfortable small, family run hotels and inns.

Day 2 | Picos | **walk on Roman roads**

Your Pura guide comes to meet you this morning and take you out into the mountains.

You can choose what to do today but there is a beautiful walk into the central Picos which we recommend.

Walking up a steep initial section, you make it up to the top of a ridge from where you have views of the high peaks to the South and the sea to the North.

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Taking the high Roman road across the Picos.

In Roman times, the Picos were inhabited by much feared tribes. As hard as they tried, the Romans could not cope with the guerilla tactics used in the mountains.

In the end they decided to simply drive a road diagonally across the range from north west to south east. With this access, they finally managed to exert a degree of control.

You will walk along sections of this amazingly well preserved Roman road.

It is rare to come across other people walking up here despite the views and the history surrounding you.

There are several of us at Pura who consider this to be one of the most beautiful walks in Europe.

Walk up to 12km, 6hrs, \blacktriangle 950m, \blacktriangledown 450m

As well as giving you a great insight into the area, being with one of our guides helps you get the most out of your holiday.

Over the course of the day you will also have the chance to discuss the rest of your holiday so your guide can help plan your time. (b)

Day 3 | Picos | **walk the Cares Gorge**

For each of the areas you are visiting, Pura Aventura has a series of detailed walking notes and hiking maps.

Today you might like to walk the famous walk in the Picos: the Cares Gorge.

The walk starts you uphill on a winding, gravelly path before levelling out and leading into the gorge opening up ahead. The path runs along the wall of the gorge, cut into the rock, narrowing to two metres or so at times.

The path is fairly level, so the river starts off far below you at the bottom of the gorge.

As you head further into the gorge the river rises to meet you. Towards the end you pass through a series of short tunnels and over bridges as the path criss-crosses the river below.

The far end is a great place to have your picnic lunch on the banks of the river just before it heads downstream into the gorge. Enjoy the reverse spectacle as you return.

Walk up to 22km, 6hrs, \blacktriangle 250m, \blacktriangledown 250m (b)



Towards the far end of the Cares Gorge.

Day 4 | Oviedo | **walk along the coast**

The coast of northern Spain is defined by rolling hills breaking off into the sea to reveal hidden sandy coves and beaches.

What makes this stretch of coastline so unusual and special is that you can see the high mountain peaks, some up to 2,600m, whilst standing with your feet on the sand.

Today's walk takes you along the undulating cliff tops with time to walk on the beaches. There is a section of amazing blowholes which are spectacular if the swell is strong enough. Walk 10km, 3hrs, \blacktriangle 50m, \blacktriangledown 50m

Change hotels this afternoon as you drive west for around one hour to the lovely town of Oviedo.

Your hotel is just outside the labyrinthine old city. (b)

Day 5 | Oviedo | **explore medieval Oviedo**

Stroll round the medieval quarter of Oviedo, with its gothic cathedral, market squares and pedestrian streets surrounded by historical buildings.

Try one of the great restaurants in town before spending the afternoon exploring the nearby pre-Romanesque churches of the Naranco hill. (b)

Day 6 | Ribadeo | **visit fishing villages**

Move hotels again today as you continue your journey along the beautiful Asturian coast to the west.

Take time to explore lovely villages en route.

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The Camino de Santiago

Many people think of the Camino de Santiago as being just one fixed route across northern Spain.

There is one main route (the *Camino Frances*) but this is supplemented but any number of paths all feeding into it along the way.

On this holiday you follow the *Camino del Norte* or northern Camino which follows the north coast of Spain until it drops down to join the main camino about 100km from Santiago.

What is the difference between Caminos?

Walking the route was originally a penance - it was very dangerous indeed. Pilgrims tended to carry lots of money and were therefore a target for robbers.

As a result, pilgrims tended to choose a route that avoided mountains in favour of flat, open landscapes.

For the stretch covered by this holiday, the *Camino Frances* tracks to the south of the mountains along the very flat, open and windy plains of Leon.

The *Camino del Norte* follows a rugged coastline dominated by high mountains and is therefore infinitely more scenic.



Coquille St Jacques (St James/Santiago), symbol of Christian pilgrims.

What is the significance of the Camino?

The road to Santiago was really the inter-European cultural highway.

With some estimates of 12th century pilgrim numbers as high as 500,000 annually, the path was an incredible conduit for cultural exchange.

Its impact ranged from architecture to art, language to law. Passports, guidebooks, souvenirs, indeed the very concept of tourism originate from the Camino.

You will see the character of the landscape and the villages change as you reach the province of Galicia.

Visit one of the area's stunning beaches before settling in your hotel outside the town of Ribadeo.

Use your local information to find the quietest beaches, prettiest villages and best restaurants. (b)



The rugged coast near Ribadeo

Day 7 | Ribadeo | *walk through forests*

Spend today inland exploring some of the most traditional rural regions of Spain.

Today's walk follows a circular route on ancient paths between small abandoned hamlets and some villages where you find a rural way of life which has almost died out in Europe.

You also see traditional buildings such as granaries on stilts known as "horreos" and the "Cortines": circular enclosures made of high stone walls built to protect the beehives from the brown bears' sweet teeth.

Enjoy a day walking through an area of forests, valleys and rivers. Traditional architecture uses black slate which stands out against the green surrounds. Walk 15km, 5hrs, ▲ 500m, ▼ 500m (b)

Day 8 | Lugo | *biosphere reserve*

Change hotels today as you drive south towards central Galicia, land of forests and mist.

Along the way, return to the Grandas area where you were walking yesterday. Enjoy a short walk through forests alongside a river to a pretty waterfall.

Walk 5km, 2hrs, ▲ 100m, ▼ 100m



Your small hotel near Ribadeo

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What is a Pura Self Drive Holiday?

At the heart of the concept is an independent holiday with the guesswork taken out.

What is included?

What Pura do is book your cars and hotels so that you have the basic structure of your holiday set out.

We then give you the information to fill the days in a way that suits you best.

That means that you travel with detailed information about the areas you are visiting. This ranges from advice on the best beaches, market days, our favourite restaurants, what to do on a rainy day, etc.

You also have a series of walking scale maps with our own walking notes. You will invariably have more walking notes than days to walk so you can choose which ones to do and which ones to save for a return visit.

To help you make the best choices, at the start of your trip you spend a full day with a Pura guide.

How tailored is it?

Here in the UK we tailor the itinerary to your needs as closely as possible.

Of course, once you are actually on holiday you can choose to stick to the letter of the itinerary or change it as you go along.

Your Pura guide also helps you map out the best possible holiday according to weather forecasts, local festivals, your energy levels, etc. They can also help you make any calls you need to book optional activities. Think of it as a bit of fine-tuning.



Freedom and flexibility without the guesswork.

What about the cars?

The cars we book for you are good sized small cars – Seat Ibiza or VW Golf type things. Because you are generally going into mountain environments, we make sure that the cars are suitably powerful.

And hotels?

The hotels we use are generally small and family run. The standard varies from luxurious, boutique style to simple, comfortable rustic type places. Rooms are en suite.

We always believe that when you wake up you should know where in the world you are so we place character, location and comfort at the top of the list.

If you want uniformed staff, look elsewhere!

Have lunch in the village of Santa Eulalia before continuing your journey to your next hotel, a XVI century water mill inside a Biosphere Reserve.

Total driving time between hotels is around two hours.

This afternoon walk along a tree-shaded river within the reserve. (b)



Take time to read and relax.

Day 9 | Lugo | walk, Miño River or relax

Spend today relaxing. There are forest trails within the hotel grounds, some 20 hectares in total. You can also ride bikes along the riverbank or take a boat out onto the Miño River.

An alternative is for you to drive down a short distance to pick up the main Camino de Santiago. This area is considered to be the prettiest stretch of the Camino.

The path follows ancient trails passing small hamlets and magic "corredoiras," the traditional Galician pathways lined with oak and chestnut trees. You also enjoy views of wide open countryside.

Walks along the Camino de Santiago are all very well marked by official signs as well as a yellow arrow sprayed on walls and pavements. Take a taxi back to your car at the end of the walk. Walk 17km, 4hrs, ▲200m, ▼300m (b)



Day 10 | Lugo | walk a stretch of the Camino

Walk for a few hours along the last stretch of the Camino de Santiago. You pass the 100km marker on this path so you may witness the excitement of pilgrims building.

Walk through pretty woodlands, valleys and green countryside; cross over a reservoir to the pretty village of Portomarín. Walk 16km, 3hrs, ▲200m, ▼300m (b)

Day 11 | Santiago | explore Santiago

Travel west today as you change hotels for the last time. Stay in a friendly, relaxed hotel just outside the city of Santiago de Compostela. The drive should take you a couple of hours.

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The distinctive rural architecture of Oscos.



A lovely stretch of the Camino near Sarrios

This afternoon make your way into the city centre to take in the atmosphere in the Plaza del Obradoiro where pilgrims finish their long journey. (b)



The cathedral at Santiago

Day 12 | Santiago | **explore the Rias Baixas**

Today explore the southern part of the Galician Atlantic coast, the Rias Baixas, a group of estuaries famous for exquisite seafood, wine and scenery.

It was here that the Prestige tanker grounded a few years ago, its oil threatening to enter the Rias Baixas.

Some of the most memorable images were of the local fishermen and women out in small boats with pots and pans scooping oil from the surface of the water.

Incredibly enough they actually managed to keep the oil out and were able to continue harvesting their shellfish so vital to the economy of this region.

Explore a series of small fishing villages and take time to enjoy a relaxed lunch over the freshest seafood. (b)

Day 13 | Santiago | **the end of the Earth**

Complete your holiday with a visit to Europe's most westerly point – Finisterre.

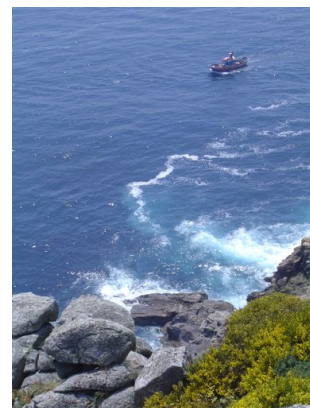
The end of the Pilgrimage is actually beyond Santiago, at the water's edge. Pre-Christian populations also came here on pilgrimage.

They walked to the coast at the end of their lives, believing that the Atlantic was the gateway to the afterlife.

Explore the so-called *Death Coast* with its characteristic fishing villages, fierce sea and rugged coastline. (b)

Day 14 | travel | **return home**

Leave your car and fly home from Santiago. (b)



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Space for your notes and questions for us

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Holiday Information

Pura Handmade

This holiday is unique to us.

We have designed and deliver this holiday using our own people and carefully selected local suppliers to create a *Pura Handmade* holiday.

You are looked after by a Pura team on the ground in the Picos and they are always on hand in case you need them.

The route followed takes you through some really quite stunning scenery as you travel between little known mountain ranges and a remote coastline.

Pura have invested a great deal of time in searching out the best small hotels en route.

The selection of walks we provide are designed to give you an insight into the landscapes and culture of the region. Do not expect to see other tourists for much of this journey.

How long?

14 days as described, but can be tailored to you. We suggest a 10 day minimum to appreciate the region.

How active?

Entirely up to you. Since you have the freedom of your own car, you can take the holiday at your own pace.

Walking is the main activity but you can also relax on the beach, explore cultural and historic sites, canoe, or ride bikes or horses.

How comfortable?

Small inns and hotels with 12 rooms or less combining character and comfort.

How independent?

With your own car, you're completely independent and flexible but with support available if you need it. We provide you with all the maps, walking notes and local information you will need.

You have a Pura Aventura guide for a full day. We usually include this on your first full day to help you plan your time.

Why the Camino de Santiago?

The region around the end of the Camino has a unique mix of culture, scenery, food and accommodation.

The northerly branch of the Camino is very quiet in comparison with the busy Camino Frances to the south.

The coastline of Cantabria/Asturias/Galicia forms one of the most unspoilt areas of Spain. It provides a unique and beautiful mix of nature and culture.

How responsible?

Pura Aventura is passionate about the places it visits. To help preserve the integrity of these destinations we:

- Keep groups small to minimise environmental impact.
- Work with local guides so that our holidays are more interesting for clients and more beneficial locally.
- Work directly with local businesses and organisations to directly benefit local economies. We use small, locally owned hotels and restaurants.

Pura Aventura actively supports the Spanish mountain conservation charity www.quebrantahuesos.org.

Weather

The north of Spain is generally known as 'Green Spain.' Precipitation levels are high and conditions can be variable. The warmest & driest months are July-September. You should still be prepared for occasionally cool conditions in the mountain areas, and the chance of rain at any time.

Seawater is cool and locals swim from Mid June to end of September. May tends to be showery but is also one of the most beautiful months to visit. June and September are probably the best months all around and October is changeable but benefits from the beautiful autumnal forests. July and August are holiday time for Spanish and everything is more busy, but never crowded.

Altitudes range from sea level to 2,500m. In Spring & Autumn temperatures range between 10°C - 18°C; in summer 12°C - 28°C.

Not based in the UK?

We are very happy to discuss your requirements if you are not travelling to and from the UK. Please call us on **+44 1273 676712** between 9am and 6.30pm weekdays.

Where do I fly to?

Asturias: Easyjet has direct flights from London Stansted. It also has indirect flights via Madrid from most places in the UK. 1 hour drive to Picos.

Santander: Ryanair has direct flights from London Stansted. 1 hour drive to Picos.

Santiago de Compostela: Ryanair has direct flights to London Stansted, East Midlands & Liverpool.

Not quite right?

If this holiday's not quite right for you, call us to discuss your ideas or consider:

Walk Spain: Pyrenees Self-Drive Independent walking and activities without the guesswork. Stay in stylish but friendly small rural hotels.

Walk Spain: Picos Inn to Inn Walk independently through the Picos while your bags are taken ahead.

Prices & departures

2011	May - Oct £1,275pp guide price
Prices include	Twin/double en suite hotel accommodation; breakfasts; car hire for 1 driver; one day private Pura Aventura guide; walking notes, local information, and maps.
Not included	Flights; activities; personal expenses.
Please note	As a tailor made holiday, prices depend on season, hotels and your final choice of itinerary. Please contact us for a personalized quotation.

The guide price quoted is per person based on two people sharing. The price quoted is intended to be a realistic guideline for you but prices can vary according to length of stay, season and activities requested. Please call us for a definitive quote.

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