

CAMINO DE SANTIAGO: CAMINO FRANCÉS



About the Author

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The Way of St Francis: From Florence to Assisi and Rome

CAMINO DE SANTIAGO: CAMINO FRANCÉS

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by The Reverend Sandy Brown

CICERONE

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Dedication

To my wife, Theresa: the easiest, smoothest, lightest-footed, most carefree and fun pilgrim with whom I've ever had the pleasure to share a path.

Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1004/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency, although naturally we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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Front cover: Lonely signs like this one point the way for pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago (photo: Rod Hoekstra)

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The statue atop Monte do Gozo (Stage 32) celebrates the visits to Santiago of Pope John Paul II and St Francis of Assisi (photo: Rod Hoekstra)





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A talented team of co-contributors put together everything good in this book – Roxanne Brown Nieblas's accommodation listings, Rod Hoekstra's photographs, Mike Wells's descriptions of several routes – while any error, omission or head-scratcher belongs to me. It was Joe Williams and Jonathan Williams of Cicerone who pushed to make a new-generation guidebook, following in the trailblazing footsteps of Cicerone author Alison Raju, a true Camino pioneer. Siân Jenkins, Andrea Grimshaw, Georgia Laval, Clare Crooke, Caroline Draper and the rest of the Cicerone team did the artful work of coaxing it onto the printed page. David Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson's landmark tome, *The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago*, was a trusted source along with several others. The inspiration to take on this project comes from happy memories of pilgrim friendships formed over 14 pilgrimage walks. Sebastian, Martin, Jacqueline and Andreas were my frequent and favorite companions until I first walked with my wife, Theresa Elliott, in 2014.

Symbols used on maps

	main route		distance marker		lighthouse
	alternative route		alt distance marker		castle
	main route (alternative stage)		footbridge		viewpoint
	start point		bridge		point of interest
	finish point		building		transmitter station
	start/finish point		bus stop/bus station		summit
	alternative start/finish point		railway station		international boundary

Facilities

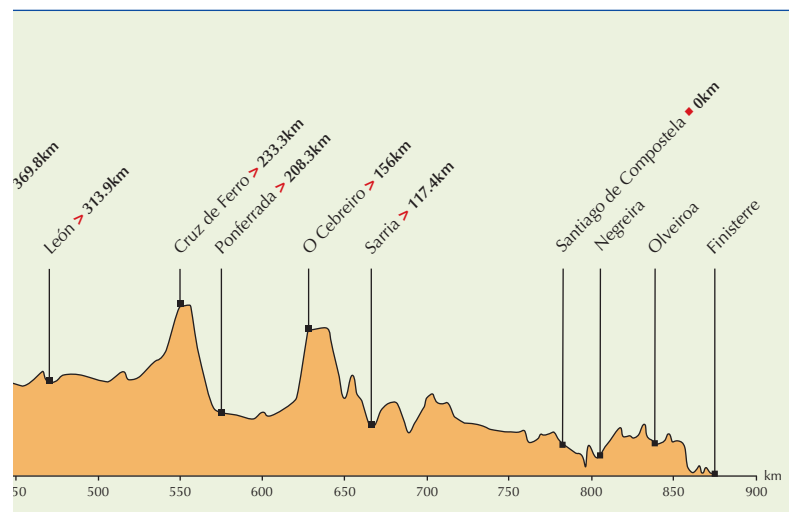
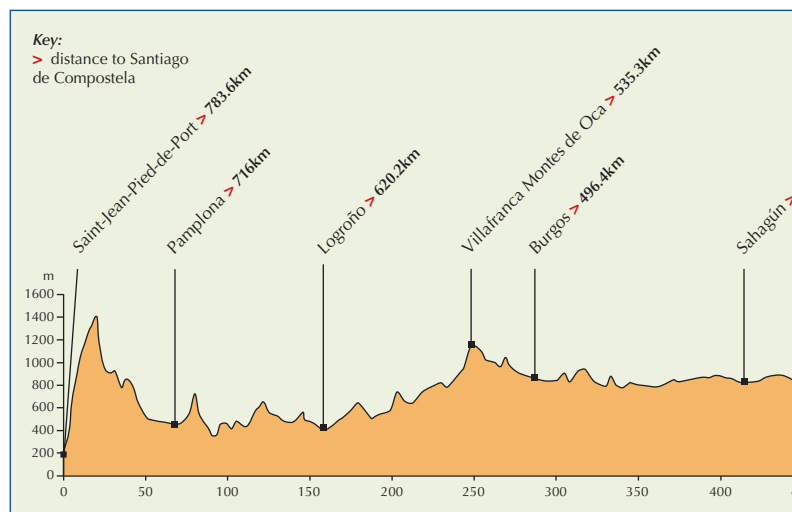
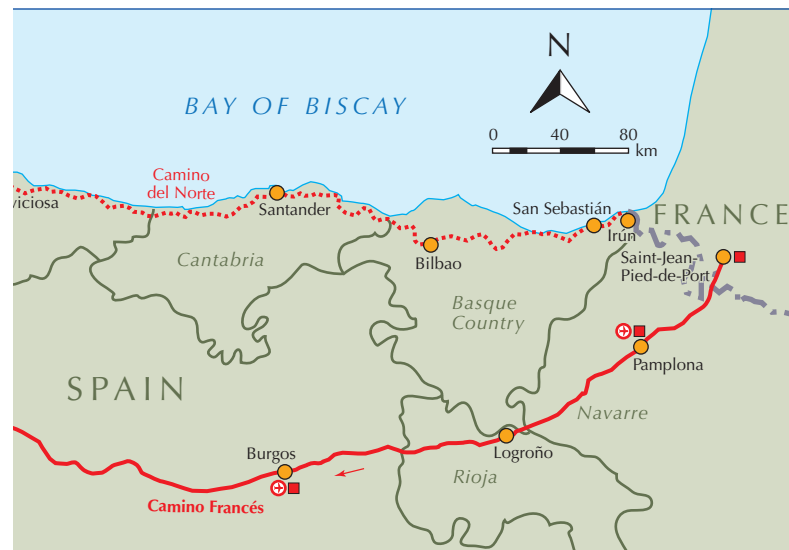
	Accommodation
	albergue
	albergue/hostal
	hotel or hotel/pension
	casa rural
	camping
	Catering
	bar
	restaurant
	café
	supermarket/groceries
	bakery
	vending machine
	public toilets
	ATM
	post office
	drinking water tap
	rest area
	pharmacy
	hospital
	medical clinic
	tourist/pilgrim information
	church/cathedral/monastery
	laundrette

Relief in meters

2800–3000
2600–2800
2400–2600
2200–2400
2000–2200
1800–2000
1600–1800
1400–1600
1200–1400
1000–1200
800–1000
600–800
400–600
200–400
0–200

MAP SCALES

Route maps at 1:100,000
Town maps at 1:12,500 unless
otherwise stated (see scale bar)





ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

Section	Overview	Places	Distance	Time	Page
Section 1	Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port to Pamplona: Steep Pyrenees then gentle foothills leading to Pamplona	Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port – Roncesvalles – Zubiri – Pamplona	68km	3 or more walking days	51
Section 2	Pamplona to Burgos: Low ridges and broad valleys through vineyards and grain fields until a mountainous crossing	Pamplona – Puente la Reina – Estella – Los Arcos – Logroño – Nájera – Santo Domingo de la Calzada – Belorado – San Juan de Ortega – Burgos	220km	9 or more walking days	73
Section 3	Burgos to León: The broad and flat Meseta with little shade and few services	Burgos – Hontanas – Boadilla del Camino – Carrión de los Condes – Terradillos de los Templarios – Bercianos del Real Camino or Calzadilla de los Hermanillos – Mansilla de las Mulas – León	183km	7 or more walking days	127
Section 4	León to Sarria: The fertile Bierzo region between climbs to Cruz de Ferro and Alto do Poio	León – Hospital de Órbigo – Astorga – Foncebadón – Ponferrada – Villafranca del Bierzo – La Faba – Triacastela – Sarria	196km	8 or more walking days	165
Section 5	Sarria to Santiago de Compostela: Forests, dairy farms and eucalyptus plantations in undulating countryside	Sarria – Portomarín – Palas de Rei – Arzúa – O Pedrouzo – Santiago de Compostela	117km	5 or more walking days	217
Section 6*	Santiago de Compostela to Finisterre or Muxía: Galician farmlands opening out to the dramatic Costa da Morte	Santiago de Compostela – Negreira – Olveiroa – Finisterre – Muxía	91 or 87km	3 or more walking days	253
* Additional stages beyond Santiago to the Atlantic coast					



Most camino waymarks are variations of a scallop shell or a yellow arrow or both

GENERAL INTRODUCTION



Façade of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

To walk on the Camino de Santiago is to set sail on a river of time. Every ancient church tower, every proud castle, every silent ruin, every rusting, ringing bell has a story to tell the passing pilgrim. These landmarks are the rugged and rounded boulders in the river, silently testifying to the hands that long ago placed them here. The river itself is the thousand-year stream of pilgrims – men, women, children even – who set out toward the far west of Spain to start a new chapter, to remember a lost loved one, to release a burden, to lift a prayer, or to savor an adventure. Pilgrims over this wide estuary of many channels have hardened under their feet a firm path in the soil that beckons the traveler of today to join the procession and be forever changed.

Of the Camino's many tributaries, the Camino Francés is its most legendary, its most traveled and most revered. The 'French Way' begins on the French slopes of the Pyrenees Mountains, where nervous and excited pilgrims receive a stamp on their pilgrim passports in red-roofed Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port. After an early morning start they walk – or cycle or ride on horseback – up, down and through the green mountains and foothills to Pamplona. Their feet, hardening with the miles under them, carry them across the Alto del Perdón ridge into the wide valleys of fields and vineyards in western Navarre and La Rioja. Days later, on a windswept hilltop overlooking historic Burgos they pause to peer out over the vast Meseta, the vacant

A family sets out from Nájera on an early Camino morning (Stage 9)



farmland plain leading to historic and energetic León, where images of pilgrims like them from hundreds of years before gaze down from the tall glass walls of its Gothic cathedral. Two days later pilgrims are climbing to the Iron Cross – Cruz de Ferro – where they can pass by unmoved or leave a burden or a token or a tear. Then the yellow arrows point them through the Bierzo valley of vineyards and castles and wines before they pass across the Serra do Courel mountain threshold at O Cebreiro into emerald Galicia and its crowning city, Santiago de Compostela. Damp with sweat and sore of foot, there will be songs and dancing, tears and smiles at this end point, and afterward laughter and joy if the smoking *botaumeiro* swings above

them at pilgrim mass. Soon they continue to the coast or they head to home, spirits soaring with hard-earned memories of walking and wonder.

The Camino is both a maker and storehouse of memories. Camino families and friendships form and imprint themselves on the heart. Vistas and sunsets color the mind. The pulsing rhythm of a million steps beats like a drum in the bones. The taste of wine recalls the vineyards of jade and purple. The smell of bread evokes the green or golden fields of grain. The cross atop a tower at home recalls the brick towers in Spain where storks make their nests. The memories may fade over time, but the Camino always owns a deep place inside every pilgrim's heart.

WHAT MAKES THE CAMINO FRANCÉS SPECIAL?

When someone says, 'I'm going to walk the Camino,' they mean the Camino Francés – the main one, the big one, the first one to return after a hiatus of centuries. Other walks hold treasures, too, but this walk is incomparable. Its fame may be because of the allure of Santiago, although as wonderful and historic as that Galician capital is, most experienced pilgrims will tell you it is the journey itself that is the star. The unique blend of ordeals, experiences and traditions make it more than a trip. They make it truly a pilgrimage.

A pilgrimage is a journey of meaning, a passage toward transformation that seeks something deeper than a mere hike. As Phil Cousineau wrote in *The Art of Pilgrimage*, 'What matters most on your journey is how deeply you see, how attentively you hear, how richly the encounters are felt in your heart and soul.' By its nature, the Camino Francés touches a person deep inside.

For one thing, the Camino Francés is a *journey fraught with difficulty: an ordeal*. 'The ordeal is the central, magical stage of any journey,' wrote anthropologist Joseph Campbell. Any pilgrim who arrives at Praza do Obradoiro in Santiago de Compostela on the Francés has overcome adversity. She has experienced thirst, hunger, blisters, tendonitis, illness, injuries, hangovers, loneliness or emotional challenges, not to mention wind, sun, rain or snow. He has walked over hills and mountains, crossed rivers, eaten strange foods – and all of this without his usual circle of family and friends.

The Camino Francés includes the *carrying of a burden and the burden's*

WHAT MAKES THE CAMINO FRANCÉS SPECIAL?

release. At Cruz de Ferro, a tall iron cross near the highest point of the walk, pilgrims may leave a stone or other small token that represents a burden from which they seek release. Many pilgrims imbue this moment with great meaning and find in it a release from grieving, loss or failure. They time their arrival at sunrise as a symbol of the new life they hope to receive after letting go of the weight.

The Camino offers an experience of awe. Pilgrims arriving in Santiago may or may not be impressed by the contents of the silver reliquary said to hold St James's bones. Either way, Santiago Peregrino greets them at the cathedral tower and in the altarpiece statue that receives every hug or prayer, no matter how ambivalent. If they are still unconvinced, they may be impressed by the hand-shaped imprint on the stone of the Santiago sculpture at the Portico of Glory, an imprint carved out one gentle touch at a time by millions of nameless and forgotten pilgrims before them who wanted to do more than just look. And if all of that leaves them untouched, at the noontime pilgrim mass when the smoking *botaumeiro* censer swings from the ceiling, every heart finally is transformed at the sight of the crowd of joyful adult children armed with a sea of shimmering smartphone cameras. Along the way, amazing and historic churches emblazoned with golden altarpieces adorn the walk even as Nature offers its testimony in the unexpected colors of sunrise, the waving fields of grain, and the precious purple blossoms on mountain carpets of heather.

The Camino Francés offers a *temporary identity and a transformation*. From

cemeteries. Alpine-like white stucco homes with steep roofs fill the villages, while regional cuisine features hearty meats and stews, fish grilled over hot coals, *tolosa* bean dishes, Idiazábal sheep's cheese, *txakoli* wine and sweet Basque apple cider.

The Camino's pathway through this region is relatively sparse of pilgrims, although the numbers increase at Roncesvalles, Pamplona and then just afterward at Puente la Reina, where pilgrims who've crossed the Somport Pass of the Camino Aragonés join the stream.

PLANNING

- 1 Winter walkers are required to cross the Pyrenees on the Valcarlos Route over the Ibañeta Pass. On shoulder seasons, watch weather forecasts to see if a Route Napoléon crossing is allowed. Always confirm your plans at the pilgrim office in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port.
- 2 Many pilgrims ease into a Route Napoléon crossing with an intermediate stay at Refuge Orisson, 8km up the hill.
- 3 Because of its historic significance and ease of accommodation, most pilgrims who start in France will overnight at Roncesvalles. A second overnight is common at Zubiri or Larrasoña, with a third night in Pamplona or just afterward at Cizur Menor.

- 4 Pilgrims will find Pamplona a hectic and preoccupied place during the Running of the Bulls (July 6–14), when the world converges on its grand festivities. Otherwise, it's well worth an afternoon, evening or a full rest day spent enjoying the lively city's food and wine and catching an impromptu outdoor folk dance with the locals in Plaza del Castillo.

WHAT NOT TO MISS


Some albergues, like Beilari in Saint-Jean and Refuge Orisson, help pilgrims get acquainted over the shared evening meal. Nationalities of all pilgrims staying at its albergue are announced at the nightly Roncesvalles Pilgrim Mass where priests offer a pilgrim blessing. Pamplona's vibrancy is on display in its pedestrian-filled streets each evening, and a pause or overnight in this Navarran capital is worth the extra time. Pamplona Cathedral houses remains of the royalty of Navarre and the adjacent diocesan museum has many important pieces from Pamplona and the surrounding countryside.

STAGE 1

Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port to Roncesvalles

Start	Pilgrim office, 39 Rue de la Citadelle, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port
Finish	Roncesvalles, Church of Santiago
Distance	24.7km (23.8)km via Valcarlos variant)
Total ascent	1565m (1485m via variant)
Total descent	795m (715m via variant)
Difficulty	Hard (moderately hard via variant)
Duration	8¼hr (7¾hr via variant)
Percentage paved	58% (72% via variant)
Albergues	Gîte Hunto 5.3; Orisson 7.7; Roncesvalles 24.7 (accommodation on variant: Arnéguy 8.6; Valcarlos 11.0)

Famously difficult for its exhausting climb and seemingly endless descent, the stage can be broken up with an overnight at Refuge Orisson. Plan food carefully, since Orisson and a food van at the summit are the only food options along the way. Unsurpassed mountain views are constant on clear days, but on cloudy or rainy days the climb, coupled with a sloppy trail, can turn the stage into a slog. The lower and less-steep variant through Valcarlos is mandatory in winter and also offers a pleasant walk with a quick downhill from the Ibañeta Pass into Roncesvalles.

SAINT-JEAN-PIED-DE-PORT (ELEV. 190M, POP. 1580) 
(783.6KM)

This charming, red-roofed, medieval village serves proudly as a sub-regional capital, tourist destination, and pilgrimage starting point. The original town on a nearby site, Saint-Jean-le-Vieux, was destroyed in 1177 by Richard the Lionheart and historians point to a 12th c. deed by King Sancho VII (Sancho the Strong) of Navarre as the official founding of Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port at its current location. The name derives from its two patron saints, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, and its position at the *pied* (foot) of the *port* (mountain pass). As gateway to two of the most easily passable transits over the Pyrenees – the Puerto de Ibañeta (Valcarlos Route) and the Route Napoléon – the town has served alternately as a military stronghold, invasion point, pilgrim staging location, and recreational hub for modern vacationers.

The **Porte St-Jacques** (St James Gate) in the upper village is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, celebrating the town's historic role as confluence-point for Europe-Santiago

pilgrimage itineraries and starting point for the Camino Francés route to Santiago de Compostela. The town's oldest buildings stand below, between there and the banks of the Nive River which is crossed on the Roman bridge, the **Pont d'Eyheraberry**. Its oldest church, **Notre-Dame-du-Bout-du-Pont**, near the **Porte d'Espagne** (Spanish Gate), was built by Sancho the Strong to commemorate his military victory over the Moors in 1212. The walled **citadel** above town was heavily fortified against Spanish invasion beginning in the 17th c., allowing its garrison of 500 French troops to storm down the valley in case of a Spanish invasion. In the early 20th c. the French military abandoned the fortress, which now houses a school.

Saint-Jean is best enjoyed in a slow walk among shops along the scenic **Rue de la Citadelle**, the old town's main street. A short climb to the citadel and a stroll with an ice cream cone along the banks of the Nive River make for a charming afternoon. At dinner enjoy a glass of the celebrated red and rosé wines of the Irouléguy grape or the beloved local apple ciders first noted by Sancho the Great in 1084. Other local specialties include the *fromage de brebis* cheese, trout omelets and Bayonne ham.

Note that the phone numbers in the following accommodation list require the French prefix (+33).

- 🏠 **Beilari** **DRB**CS 4/18, €33/-/-, 40 Rue de la Citadelle, www.beilari.info/en, tel 559 372 468
- 🏠 **Gîte Buen Camino** **OPDR**CWS 3/15, €16/23/46/-, 30 Rue de la Citadelle, www.facebook.com/pg/gitebuencamino, tel 663 261 202
- 🏠 **Le Chemin Vers L'Etoile** **OPDR**BCKWS Z 5/20, €17/-/-, Rue d'Espagne, www.pelerinage-saint-jacques-compostelle.com/en/gite, tel 559 372 071
- 🏠 **Municipal Saint-Jean** **OPDK**BWS Z 3/32, €10/-/-, 55 Rue de la Citadelle, www.st-jean-pied-de-port.fr, tel 559 370 509
- 🏠 **Refuge Accueil Paroissial** **DRB**C 2/14, €20/-/-, 43 Rue d'Espagne, Maison Kaserna, www.saintjeanpieddeport-paysbasque-tourisme.com, tel 559 376 517
- 🏠 **Auberge Accueil Pelerin** **OPDK**BWS 6/28 & 2/4, €10/-/-, 55 Rue de la Citadelle, www.aubergedupelerin.com, tel 559 370 509
- 🏠 **Azkorria Gîte d'Étape** **OPDR**GBWS 2/8 & 3/6, €28/-/80/-, 50 Rue de la Citadelle, www.hebergements-pays-basque.fr, tel 559 370 053
- 🏠 **Gîte Compostella** **PDR**KS 3/13 & 7/16, €13/15/30/45, 6 Route d'Arnéguy, tel 559 370 236
- 🏠 **Gîte Izaxulo** **PDR**WS 2/14 & 3/6, €19/-/70/-, 2 Avenue Renaud, www.gite-izaxulo.com, tel 684 331 205
- 🏠 **Gîte Makila** **PDR**GBWS 3/12 & 2/4, €27/-/60/-, 35 Rue de la Citadelle, <http://makila-saintjean.com/fr>, tel 663 101 346
- 🏠 **Gîte Ultreia** **PDR**GBWS 2/11 & 2/4, €22/-/56/-, 8 Rue de la Citadelle, www.ultreia64.fr, tel 680 884 622

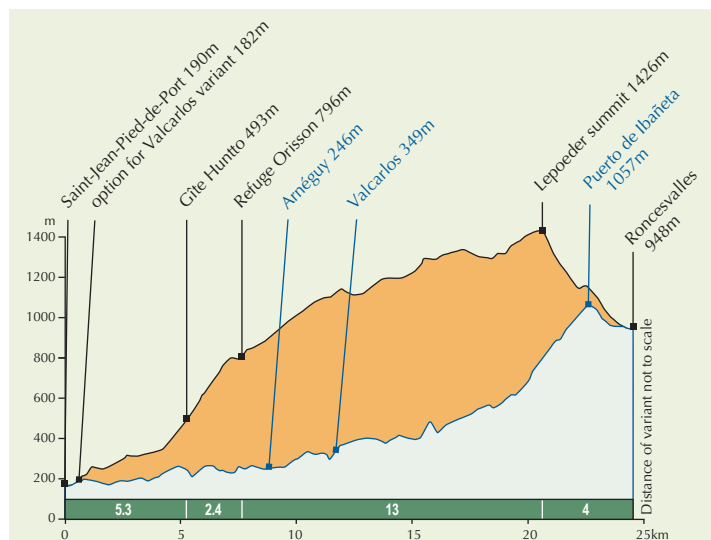
- 🏠 **Sur le Chemin au Chant du Coq** **PDK**B 2/12 & 2/3, €10/30/35/-, 36 Rue de la Citadelle, <http://chemingarazi.canalblog.com>, tel 674 310 283
- 🏠 **Zuharpeta** **PDR** 1/15 & 4/85, €18/-/48/-, Rue Zuharpeta, <http://gitezuharpeta.wifeo.com>, tel 559 373 588
- 🏠 **Camping Municipal Plaza Berri** **DW**S 53/160, €11/-/-, 7 Avenue du Fronton, www.saintjeanpieddeport-paysbasque-tourisme.com, tel 559 371 119

Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port





A pilgrim pauses with an ice cream cone on the Nive River bridge in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port (photo: Rod Hoekstra)



Route Napoléon

From the pilgrim office, follow Rue de la Citadelle downhill as it crosses the river and continue to the Porte d'Espagne (Spanish Gate). Pass the blue 'route-condition' sign, making certain it reads 'Ouvvert,' which confirms the way is open across the high pass (if marked 'Fermé' turn right toward Valcarlos, the only safe route – see below) and go straight ahead up the asphalt road which quickly becomes steep. Follow signs to Refuge Orisson, passing a few private gîtes among hayfields and pastures. **Gîte Zazpiak Bat** 7/18, €25/-/-, 13b Rue du Maréchal Harispe, www.gite-zazpiak-bat.com, tel 632 769 898. **La Coquille Napoléon** 1/10 & 2/4, €18/-/46/-, Route Napoléon, <http://lacoquillenapoleon.simplesite.com>, tel 662 259 940. **Gîte Antton** 3/14, €36/-/-, Route Napoléon, www.gite-antton.fr/en, tel 665 195 073. After a time, note the white, horizontal buildings on the ridge above, which comprise

5.3KM GÎTE HUNTTTO (ELEV. 493M, POP. 0) (778.3KM)

Ferme Ithurburia Huntto 4/17 & 5/10, €15/45/55/70, Route Napoléon, www.gites-de-france-64.com/ferme-ithurburia, tel 559 371 117

A few hundred meters past Huntto turn left onto a two-track footpath that climbs very steeply on jagged gravel. After several switchbacks the path returns to the asphalt road at **Gîte Kayola (1.3km)**, an overflow facility for **Refuge Orisson**, just above **(0.8km, café)**.

2.4KM ORISSON (ELEV. 796M, POP. 0) (775.9KM)

Refuge Orisson 4/28, €38/-/-, Chemin de Compostelle RD428, www.refuge-orisson.com, tel 559 491 303

After Orisson continue uphill less steeply on asphalt, surrounded by pastures of sheep, cattle and horses. Soon the turn-off for the **Virgin statue (3.8km)** is marked on the left. Continue upward past a food truck **(3.5km)**, if luck, fate or grace provides, and come to the low stone memorial called **Cross Thibault (0.2km)**. After the cross the way turns off the asphalt, following a single-track path of red dirt and jagged gravel, crossing into Spain near the **Roland Fountain (0.7km)** and climbing now more steeply to the **Bentarte summit (0.4km)**. Continue on undulating road to **Refugio Izandorre (2.6km)**, a stone hut prior to

13.0KM LEPOEDER SUMMIT (ELEV. 1426M, POP. 0) (NO SERVICES) (762.9KM)

The highest point of the Route Napoléon, the Lepoeder Pass holds considerable history. Ruins of a first c. Roman tower celebrating the conquest of Aquitaine can be seen today atop nearby Mount Urkulu, once standing guard over the Via Traiana Roman road. Napoléon's armies used the pass on their way to Spain, and during WWII pilots and soldiers crossed the pass to escape Nazi rule in Vichy France.



Griffon vultures keep a watchful eye over pilgrims as they near the Lepoeder summit (photo: Rod Hoekstra)

Now begin the long downhill, mostly through thick forest. After crossing the Arranosin brook on a wooden bridge (3.8km) come to the back side of the **Roncesvalles** complex. Climb between the stone buildings onto a wide stone walkway, passing through arches, by the church, museum and hotel and onward to the albergue.

4.0KM RONCESVALLES/ORREAGA (ELEV. 948M, POP. 30) 🏠🚶🚗🚲🚴 (758.9KM)

At the mountain doorway to Spain, Roncesvalles (Basque: Orreaga) has been an important and influential pilgrim hostel virtually since the beginning of the Camino Francés. Due to continual bad weather, the original pilgrim hospital at the Ibañeta Pass was moved in 1132 to the more protected vale where it currently resides. For centuries, monks, after appropriate religious services, tended to the health and well-being of every pilgrim man, woman and child. Important buildings include the elegant **Real Colegiata church**, consecrated in 1219 and restored in the 1940s. This Gothic masterpiece houses the **Virgin of Roncesvalles**, a 13th c. wood and silver statue from Toulouse, sheltered under an ornate silver baldachin canopy. The **Chapter House** holds the tomb of Sancho VII and the nearby museum houses religious relics and articles relating to Roland and Charlemagne. The tower of the 13th c. **Chapel of Santiago** holds a bell rung in the evening for centuries to help guide pilgrims down the mountainside to a safe harbor among the monks. A pilgrim mass is shared each evening (Mon–Fri, 8pm; weekends and holidays 6pm). Tour of the monastery complex available after mass.

These and all following phone numbers require the '+34' prefix for Spain, unless otherwise indicated.

STAGE 1 – SAINT-JEAN-PIED-DE-PORT TO RONCESVALLES

🏠 **Albergue de Roncesvalles-Orreaga** 🏠🚶🚗🚲🚴 3/183, €12/-/-, Calle Única, www.alberguederoncesvalles.com, tel 948 760 000

🏠 **Casa Sabina Hostería** 🏠🚶 4/10, €-/45/55/-, Carretera de Francia, <http://casasabina.roncesvalles.es>, tel 948 760 012

🏠 **La Posada Hotel** 🏠🚶🚗🚲🚴 20/53, €-/55/65/75, Carretera de Francia, <http://laposada.roncesvalles.es>, tel 948 790 322

🏠 **Hotel Casa Beneficiados** 🏠🚶🚗🚲🚴 16/32, €-/57/67/95, Calle Nstra. Señora de Roncesvalles 14, www.hotelroncesvalles.com, tel 948 760 105

Valcarlos variant (mandatory in winter and during inclement weather)

Leave Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port by the Porte d'Espagne gate then turn right at the option (0.5km) on Route D301 out of town through **Uhart-Cize**. Join the D933 main road and after **house 33 (1.3km)** fork right on a quiet country road crossing the Arnéguy River. Follow this frequently turning, well-waymarked route that undulates along a series of country lanes, crossing the unmarked Franco-Spanish border just before a large shopping center at **Venta Peio (5.4km, supermarket)**. Then follow the winding track through woods to

8.6KM ARNÉGUY/ARNEGI (ELEV. 246M, POP. 234) 🏠🚶🚗🚲🚴 (774.2KM)

The presence of this village on the Arnéguy River is attested to since 1284, although most of its buildings are 17th c. or later, including the Église de l'Assomption (17th–19th c.). In WWII the town demarcated the extreme southern border of occupied France.

🏠 **Hôtel Le Clementenia** 🏠🚶🚗🚲🚴 9/18, €-/46/60/-, Le Bourge D933, www.hotelclementenia.com, tel +33 524 341 006

Ascend gently along the side of the Luzaide valley and pass through the hamlets of **Bachoa (0.8km)** and **Ondarolle (1.5km)**. Turn right on a steep path down to the river and cross a narrow bridge back into Spain. Climb very steeply into

2.9KM VALCARLOS/LUZAIDE (ELEV. 349M, POP. 390) 🏠🚶🚗🚲🚴 (771.3KM)

The epic poem 'Song of Roland' records the Battle of Roncesvalles in 778, most likely here at Valcarlos where the great French King Charlemagne's friend, Roland, was defeated by the Basque army. Notwithstanding the defeat, Charlemagne's name is imprinted in the town's French and Spanish moniker ('Valcarlos' means Valley of Charles or 'Carlos' the Great). On July 25, 1813, some 11,000 English and Portuguese soldiers were subdued by 40,000 soldiers of Napoléon's army, resulting in over 600 dead. The modern town remembers its ancient roots in prominent families' coats of arms on the white stucco façades of their homes.

🏠 **Albergue de Luzaide/Valcarlos Municipal** 🏠🚶🚗🚲🚴 2/24, €10/-/-, Plaza de Santiago, <http://luzaide-valcarlos.net>, tel 948 790 117

Leave the village along the N-135 main road, ascending gently through forest, then **fork left (2.7km)** onto a narrow road and drop to pass through tiny **Gainekeleta (0.8km)**. Cross the river and fork right on a riverside path, eventually climbing to reach the N-135 again **(1.1km)**. At a **gravel trail (2.0km)** branch left and climb very steeply through forest into the Pyrenees. Briefly rejoin the main road at the **Guardian House (2.7km)**, then continue up through the forest to reach the top of

10.7KM PUERTO DE IBAÑETA (ELEV. 1057M, POP. 0) (NO SERVICES) (760.6KM)

Puerto de Ibañeta, one of the lowest crossing points of the Pyrenees, is closely linked to the 778 defeat of Charlemagne's rear guard. A 1967 memorial stone commemorates Roland who died in the battle. The pass was the original site of the monastic pilgrim hospital moved across the pass to today's Roncesvalles. The modern chapel of San Salvador and the summit cross replace historic buildings long since fallen into ruin.

Continue on the forest trail, now downhill and parallel with the main road, to emerge beside the large complex of monastic buildings in **Roncesvalles** (see Roncesvalles info above).

Interior view of the 13th c. Real Colegiata church at Roncesvalles monastery (photo: Rod Hoekstra)



STAGE 2

Roncesvalles to Zubiri

Start	Roncesvalles, Church of Santiago
Finish	Zubiri, Plaza Mayor
Distance	21.8km
Total ascent	535m
Total descent	960m
Difficulty	Moderately hard, due to long downhill stretches on loose rock
Duration	6¼hr
Percentage paved	19%
Albergues	Burguete 2.9; Espinal 6.5; Viscarret 11.7; Linzoain 13.7; Zubiri 21.8
Note	Food establishments open at Roncesvalles no earlier than 7am, so if you plan to leave earlier either buy food the night before or wait until Burguete for breakfast.

The brief challenge of a couple of 100m climbs is overshadowed by the long and sometimes steep descents on this mostly downhill stage. Concrete paths are often available to make for better footing, but they can be slippery when wet. Overall, however, a pleasant, wooded stage with occasional views and frequent village cafés for refueling and rest.

From the church at **Roncesvalles**, look for the famously photographed 'Santiago de Compostela 790' sign and pick up a pathway to its right. Follow this gentle path under trees, through the **Sorginaritzaga Forest** ('Oakwood of Witches – where nine witches were burned at the stake in the 16th c.) and along pastures to the town of **Burguete**.

2.9KM BURGUETE/AURITZ (ELEV. 894M, POP. 243) (756.0KM)

Two streams flank the main road through this town of graceful 16th–18th c. homes emblazoned with family coats of arms. Ernest Hemingway lodged here between binges while fishing local streams in 1924–25 and describes the town in his novel *The Sun Also Rises*. The 16th c. **San Nicolás de Bari church** was destroyed several times over the centuries by fire (including one set by the French in 1794) and was most recently reconstructed in the 20th c.

🏠 **Hostal Burguete** 📍 20/32, €-35/51/71, Calle San Nicolás 71, www.hotelburguete.com, tel 948 760 005