

# Galicia & the Pilgrims' Way

## 7 Night Parador Tour - Half Board

### Your itinerary

The following pages contain general information about your car or motorcycle tour and the locations where you will stay. The order in which they appear may not be the order your hotels have been confirmed for you - for your individual itinerary please refer to your holiday documentation.



León





**Maps and route planning** To help plan your trip we provide you with an excellent map of Spain. It's also useful to go to travel websites such as Google maps, [viamichelin.com](http://viamichelin.com)\* or [www.theaa.co.uk](http://www.theaa.co.uk).

\*Motorway tolls, where applicable, are indicated on this site.

**Hotel directions** With your travel documents is an information sheet for each hotel which has been booked for you giving directions together with some further details.

**Arrival** Unless stated, you will be expected to arrive at each of the hotels pre-booked for you by 6pm each day. This should allow time for a fairly leisurely drive between overnight stops but if you find you will be arriving later than this please ring the hotel so your room is held for you.

This tour is on a half board basis, with breakfast and set menu dinner included.

The itinerary takes you through some of northern Spain's very varied scenery, allowing you to see the spectacular Picos de Europa mountains, the green countryside of Asturias and some of the charming fishing villages and unspoilt beaches along the coast.

There is also a great deal of history in this region with some magnificent old buildings and monuments, particularly in the cities of León and Santiago de Compostela, which have attracted pilgrims since the Middle Ages. With its long coastline Galicia is also a seafaring land, with Vigo being home to Spain's largest fishing fleet. There are many charming coastal villages with fine beaches, rocky coves and restaurants serving excellent fresh seafood. The land is also relied on for producing wine and there is some beautiful vine covered countryside.

## Cangas de Onís

From Santander or Bilbao you may like to stop at the pretty medieval village of Santillana del Mar or the fishing village of **San Vicente de la Barquera**. It's also worth taking a small detour into the lovely coastal resort of Ribadesella.

**Arriondas** (5k from Cangas) is the starting point for many white water sports on the Rio Sella. The annual kayak festival is held here at the beginning of August with participants from all over the world. **Covadonga** (14k from Cangas), the birthplace of the reconquest of Spain from the Moors has an impressive monastery and the shrine of La Santina - the patron saint of Asturias, is in a nearby cave. **Cangas** is a lively town with an ancient bridge and a good choice of shops, bars and restaurants.



The Roman bridge at Cangas

## Ribadeo



Ribadeo

A short detour from the N632/N634 takes you to the attractive traditional fishing villages of Cudillero and Luarca. Ribadeo itself is a beautiful Galician fishing and farming village with a number of bars and restaurants, and you can buy some of the popular local ceramics. There are boat trips along the river Eo and many lovely beaches nearby.

## Santiago de Compostela

You may like to stop at **Vilalba** to see the town and its castle, part of which is now a Parador. Santiago de Compostela is Europe's greatest pilgrimage centre. There is a huge amount to see in this city, founded in 813 after the supposed discovery of the tomb of St James. The impressive cathedral is a major attraction and the city itself is beautiful with squares and narrow streets filled with appealing shops, taverns and bars.



Santiago cathedral

## Baiona

A worthwhile stop is **Pontevedra**, now inland but once a port, where Columbus's flagship was built, with some charming streets and medieval squares - or take a detour into Vigo, a vibrant city and fishing port. There are also some lovely beaches locally, known as the Rias Baixas. **Baiona** has excellent beaches and has long been a popular holiday resort. It was here in 1493 that Columbus brought news of the discovery of the New World. A replica of La Pinta, one of his 3 ships, can be seen in the harbour.



Baiona harbour



## Luintra



Near Ourense are the beautiful river Sil **Canyons** which can be viewed from the river in a catamaran. There is a part called the Riveira Sacra which has many interesting religious buildings and monuments and a pretty landscape where some fine white wines are produced. As well as the historic Parador at Nogueira de Ramuín, the area around **Luintra** is charming with some wonderful walks and scenery, particularly near the river Sil.

## León\* or Villafranca del Bierzo



Originally a Roman settlement, León is a lively university city with wide boulevards, pedestrian squares and many architectural treasures such as the twin towered cathedral with its sculptures and very beautiful stained glass windows - it is equally impressive at night when it's illuminated.

Surrounded by mountains, **Villafranca del Bierzo** was one of the last stopping places on the Pilgrims' route before reaching Santiago. At the entrance of the village is the 12thC Romanesque church of Santiago and the Puerta del Perdón gate is to the side of this. Pilgrims who could not continue to Santiago de Compostela because they were ill or too frail were given a blessing here.

\* While refurbishment is being completed on the Parador in León, the Parador in Villafranca del Bierzo is offered as an alternative.

## Cervera

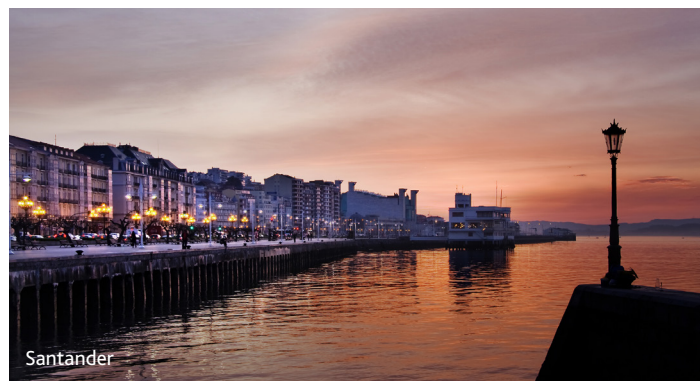


Cervera is in an excellent position to explore the breathtaking scenery of the surrounding lakes and mountains. It's also a good base for seeing

some of the Romanesque architecture of the region, which is considered to be the most abundant in Europe. The nearby town of Aguilar de Campóo has some good examples of this and has some picturesque medieval houses with bold coats of arms. The town sits in a green valley below a ruined castle dating from the 11th century and near a man made lake (Embalse de Aguilar de Campóo) with beaches and watersports.



## Santander & Bilbao



Standing along the north shore of a great bay of stunning natural beauty **Santander** is one of the most traditional holiday resorts of northern Spain where many of the Spanish themselves choose to holiday, escaping the more arid inland areas. There is a superb sandy beach, modern leisure amenities and an attractive promenade laid out with flower borders and trees, popular with the locals who stroll along it in the early evening and at weekends. The city has wonderful restaurants and shops plus a variety of nightlife and entertainment.



Over recent years **Bilbao** has been transformed into a vibrant modern city with plenty to entice tourists. The top visitor attraction is the **Guggenheim** museum with its striking modern architecture which is spectacular both inside and out. There are permanent art displays and regular temporary exhibitions held here which are well worth a visit. There is much more to see (and best explored on foot) - the atmospheric Casco Viejo old quarter with its maze of cobbled streets filled with shops, cafés and restaurants; remarkable buildings, bridges, squares, lovely parks, museums and art galleries. Shopping is also excellent and there is a large colourful Sunday market.