

WAY OF SAINT JAMES

Abstract. *Santiago de Compostela is a Spanish World Heritage town of historical and religious importance. It is best known as the ending point of one of the most important cultural itineraries of Europe, the Way of Saint James. However, for many visitors, Santiago de Compostela is not just the ending point of an astonishing journey, but also a good place for starting something completely new.*

The Saint James' Way has been one of the main pilgrimage ways of Christianity since the Middle Ages. It has experienced a great revitalization since the 1980's – particularly in holy years, beginning by 1993. Actually, the recovery of this route is part of the strategies for distinguishing this destination implemented from the Xunta de Galicia, the regional executive. Besides, there has been intense work done in the Compostelán local administration. The results are unquestionable as to the success reached, at least if measured by the arrival of visitors or the increase in accommodation offer. However, some facts cast a shadow over this bright perspective. The exhaustion of the formula used since 1993 — excessively based on promotion— the inability to generate dynamism in the territories along the different routes or threats of overcrowding and deterioration of the way are the most quoted issues and the ones to be dealt with in the years to come.

Introduction. The pilgrimage to Santiago soon became the most outstanding and most profoundly experienced religious phenomenon of the Middle Ages, a fact that was recently recognized by the European Parliament, which designated the Way the First European Cultural Itinerary, and by UNESCO, which declared it a World Heritage route.

The discovery of the tomb of the Apostle James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John the Evangelist, changed the appearance of a small Roman settlement in the northwest Iberian Peninsula that, with the passing of the centuries, had become a necropolis; it was also a turning point in the spiritual history of a continent that soon set about building a road in order to reach the precious relic.

Also known as Saint James, Santiago de Compostela is a small town in Galicia region of northwestern Spain. It has been a popular site for religious pilgrimage for centuries. Santiago de Compostela is also the ending point of one of the most important cultural itineraries of Europe, the Way of Saint James. This well-known 780 kilometers long scenic route has excellent facilities available for trekking to Santiago de Compostela, through the mountains and hills of northern Spain, and past several interesting monuments and sights of cultural and historical importance.

The most popular sight of the city is the supposed tomb of Apostle Saint James, which has been a highly popular pilgrimage site for almost a thousand years. The tomb is located inside a spectacular cathedral which is interesting also from an architectural point of view, and because it hosts a popular museum. It is here the thousands of pilgrims, who walk the route of Saint James, end their journey, to get a special certification in a daily ceremony organized at mid-day.

More cultural attractions. Apart from the mythic magnetism related to religion, Santiago de Compostela has also other interesting features. It is a lively university town with vibrant nightlife in Santiago de Compostela, and good facilities for shopping in Santiago de Compostela available. Many visitors enjoy also the interesting art galleries and museums of the city, offering particularly good coverage of religious subjects. If you want something totally different, you can test the lovely courses offered for golf near Santiago de Compostela.

The Way of St. James has existed for over a thousand years. It was one of the most important Christian pilgrimages during medieval times. It was considered one of three pilgrimages on which a plenary indulgence could be earned; the others are the Via Francigena to Rome and the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Legend holds that St. James's remains were carried by boat from Jerusalem to northern Spain where he was buried on the site of what is now the city of Santiago de Compostela. There

are some, however, who claim that the bodily remains at Santiago belong to Priscillian, the fourth-century Galician leader of an ascetic Christian sect, Priscillianism, who was one of the first Christian heretics to be executed.

The Way can take one of any number of pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela. Traditionally, as with most pilgrimages, the Way of Saint James began at one's home and ended at the pilgrimage site. However a few of the routes are considered to be main ones. During the Middle Ages, the route was highly traveled. However, the Black Plague, the Protestant Reformation and political unrest in 16th-century Europe resulted in its decline. By the 1980s, only a few pilgrims arrived in Santiago annually. However, since then, the route has attracted a growing number of modern-day pilgrims from around the globe. The route was declared the first European Cultural Route by the Council of Europe in October 1987; it was also named one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites.

History. The discovery, which took place around the second or third decade in the 9th century, was the logical end of an oral and written tradition that, after Jesus' death, placed St. James the Greater as an evangeliser in the land of ancient Hispania, as suggested by the *Breviarum Apostolorum* in the 6th-7th centuries and texts signed by the Anglo-Saxon Bede *Venerabilis* and the Asturian Beato de Liébana in the 8th century. The historical fact of the beheading of the Apostle by Herod Agrippa in the year 44 AD is followed by explanations provided by the *Codex Calixtinus* or the *Legenda Aurea* regarding his transfer to this corner of Europe, where he had preached the teachings of Christ. St. James' lifeless body was brought by two young disciples in a boat led by angels, which crossed the Mediterranean and sailed up the Portuguese coast as far as the Roman port of Iria, located in the province of Gallaecia. There, after a series of miraculous events, St. James was finally buried on Monte Liberum Donum, in a place vaguely designated as *Arcis Marmoricis*.

Almost eight hundred years later, continuing with the tradition, a hermit saw heavenly lights that led him to a sacred place, whose history was shrouded in mystery during the disintegration of the Roman Empire, the creation of the Swabian kingdom and the Visigoth domination. The hermit notified Teodomiro, the bishop of Iria, about the discovery and, later on, King Alfonso II had a small church built, which he left in the care of Benedictine monks. Before the end of the 9th century, Alfonso III commissioned the construction of a larger basilica, worthy of the phenomenon that was beginning to move the European faithful.

The news coincided with an important political moment for the consolidation of the kingdom of Asturias-Galicia, where the discovery had taken place. Once the Moor troops had been expelled from the north of Spain, it was essential to repopulate the territory and set up a solid network linking with the rest of Europe for the movement of people, goods and ideologies. A decisive factor regarding this huge task was having a religious centre on a par with Rome or Jerusalem, which, to a certain extent, made the emergent kingdom "independent" from Charlemagne's extensive empire.

The pilgrimage to Santiago has never ceased from the time of the discovery of St. James' remains, though there have been years of fewer pilgrims, particularly during European wars. During the war of American Independence, John Adams was ordered by Congress to go to Paris to obtain funds for the cause. His ship started leaking and he disembarked with his two sons in Finisterre in 1779, where he proceeded to follow the Way of St. James in the opposite direction, in order to get to Paris overland. He did not stop to visit Santiago, and came to regret this during the course of his journey. In his autobiography, he gives an accurate description of the customs and lodgings afforded to St. James pilgrims in the 18th century, and mentions the legend as it was then told to travelers: " I have always regretted that We could not find time to make a Pilgrimage to Saint Iago de Compostela. We were informed ... that the Original of this Shrine and Temple of St. Iago was this. A certain Shepherd saw a bright Light there in the night. Afterwards it was revealed to an Archbishop that St. James was buried there. This laid the Foundation of a Church, and they have built an Altar on the Spot where the Shepherd saw the Light. In the time of the Moors, the People made a Vow, that if the Moors should be driven from this Country, they would give a certain portion of the Income of their Lands to Saint James. The Moors were defeated and expelled and it was reported and believed, that Saint James was in the Battle and fought with a drawn Sword at the head of the Spanish Troops, on Horseback. The

People, believing that they owed the Victory to the Saint, very cheerfully fulfilled their Vows by paying the Tribute. ...Upon the Supposition that this is the place of the Sepulcher of Saint James, there are great numbers of Pilgrims, who visit it, every Year, from France, Spain, Italy and other parts of Europe, many of them on foot.

French Way. The pilgrim route par excellence has two branches, depending on the pilgrims' point of entry from France.

Map 1



Source: <http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

The main French Way: Having reached Saint Jean Pied de Port (France), the pilgrims travel 774 kilometers in Spain, passing through the provinces of Navarre, La Rioja, Burgos, Palencia, Leon, Lugo and A Coruña. At an average of 20-25 kilometers daily, it usually takes about 30 days to reach Santiago.

The route began to be signposted with yellow arrows in the eighties, thanks to the parish priest of O Cebreiro, Elías Valiña, and the Association of the Friends of the Navarre Way. This first symbol is now accompanied by milestones and each region's institutional signs.

Roncesvalles – Pamplona – Puente La Reina – Estella – Logroño – Nájera – Santo Domingo de la Calzada – Burgos – Castrojeriz - Carrión de los Condes – Frómista – Sahagún – León – Astorga – Ponferrada and then they enter Galicia via O Cebreiro – Samos – Sarria – Portomarín – Palas de Reis – Melide – Arzúa – Santiago de Compostela.

Aragonese Way. It enters Spain from France via Somport, in Aragon, and continues through the provinces of Huesca, Zaragoza and Navarre before reaching -after 6 days and 167 kilometres- Puente La Reina, where it joins the French Way.

Map 2.



Source: <http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

Somport – Canfranc – Jaca – Sangüesa – Lumbier – Puente La Reina.

Primitive Way. The first devotees from Oviedo, the capital of the Asturian kingdom, followed the ancient route that, according to tradition, led King Alfonso II the Chaste to the Apostle's tomb, in the first third of the 9th century.

Map 3.



This route from Oviedo to Santiago was a safe itinerary that was frequented until well into the 10th century, when the present-day French Way was consolidated from León, the new capital of the kingdom. However, thereafter it was still an important alternative, especially due to the spiritual value that was attributed to visiting Oviedo's Holy Chamber of the Savior, as well as the Cathedral of Lugo, with its permanent exhibition of the Holy Sacrament.

Source:

<http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

Oviedo – Tineo – Grandas – A Fonsagrada – Lugo – Palas de Reis – linking with the present-day French Way.

North Way. Almost immediately after the discovery of St. James' tomb in the 9th century, pilgrims began following the Asturian-Galician ways in order to reach Santiago, since the Castilian plateau –which would be subsequently crossed by the French Way- was still occupied by the Moors.

Map 4. Santiago Via the Northern Way



Map 5. Santiago Via the Northern Way (coastal)



Source: <http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

This route enabled the pilgrims, who had come overland from France or disembarked in Basque, Cantabrian or Galician ports, to combine the traditional visit to the Savior in the Cathedral of Oviedo or continue along the Asturian coast as far as the Ria del Eo. The itinerary passes through:

Hendaya – Donosti – Zarautz – Geurnika – Bilbao – Laredo – Santander – Santillana de Mar – Comillas – Llanes – Ribadesella; there are two branches from here on: inland, via Oviedo

(where it joins the Original Way), or coastal, via Avilés and Luarca, entering Galicia via Ribadeo – Mondoñedo – Vilalba – Lugo – Sobrado – Santiago.

Portuguese Way. There are numerous routes, depending on the pilgrim's starting point in Portugal, but the main itinerary starts in Oporto and enters Spain via Tui.

The international Valença do Miño-Tui Bridge has facilitated the crossing of the River Miño, but some branches still cross the river by boat. Other Portuguese routes reach the Spanish border via Chaves, Bragança and, inside Galicia, join the Via de la Plata (Silver Road).

Map 6.



The 116-kilometre Galician itinerary passes through:

Tui – Porriño – Redondela (where the other routes meet) – Caldas de Reis – Padrón – Santiago

Source:

<http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

English Way

The European pilgrims that travelled by ship to the Iberian Peninsula's northern coast, especially the British, disembarked in A Coruña or Ferrol, thereafter heading for Compostela along the following routes:

Map 7.



Ferrol – Pontedeume – Miño – Betanzos – Abegondo – Ordes – Santiago.

A Coruña – Culleredo – Cambre – Carrall – Ordes – Santiago.

Source:

<http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

Silver Way

The Vía de la Plata is the longest Jacobean route, as a prolongation of the Roman road that crossed the western Iberian Peninsula from south to north, linking the cities of Emerita Augusta (Mérida) and Asturica Augusta (Astorga).

Map 8.



After the conquest of Seville and Cordoba in the 13th century, this south-north was spontaneously reused by Jacobean pilgrims from Andalusia and Extremadura. Some continued as far as Astorga, joining the French Way. Others headed towards Compostela via the route from Puebla de Sanabria to Ourense, which was shorter and straighter, while some crossed northeast Portugal and entered the south of Ourense province towards Verín.

Source: <http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

Arousa Sea and Ulla River Jacobean Itinerary. Map 9. Jacobean Route to Santiago (via Sanxenxo)

his sea-river route via the Ria de Arousa and the River Ulla commemorates the arrival, by sea, of St. James' body in Galicia, the region where he had preached. According to tradition, the boat entered the "ria" and sailed up the River Ulla, arriving at the Roman city of Iria Flavia (Padrón), as remembered today by a sea-river procession to Pontecesures and Padrón.

Map 10. Jacobean Route to Santiago



(via Ribeira)

Sanxenxo – O Grove – Cambados – Vilanova and Vilagarcía de Arousa – Catoira – Pontecesures – Padrón – Santiago; or entering via Ribeira – A Pobra – Boiro – Rianxo – Pontecesures.

Source:

<http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

Map 11.

Finisterre Way

If all roads lead to Santiago, the Finisterre Road is the only one originating in the holy city. The visit to the Holy Christ of Finisterre and the



Sanctuary of A Barca, in Muxía, surrounded by the impressive landscape of the ancient Land's End (finis terrae), is a ritual followed by many pilgrims to round off the Jacobean pilgrimage.

Santiago – Negreira – Mazaricos – Vimianzo – Dumbría – Cee – Corcubión – Finisterre – Muxía.

Source: <http://santiagoturismo.com/camino/>

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