



Fostering the enduring tradition of the Camino

Camino del Norte

General Description: Also known as la *Ruta de la Costa* (the Coastal Route), the Camino del Norte originated when Moslem occupation of Spain extended northward sufficiently to threaten the traditional *francés* route. Starting in Irun on the French-Spanish border and traveling through San Sebastián/Donostia, Bilbao, Santander, Gijón, Ribadeo (where it turns southwest away from the coast) and Mondoñedo to Arzúa where it joins the [Camino francés](#) — 825 km from Irun to Santiago de Compostela.

Waymarking: Waymarked with yellow arrows although sketchy in places. Often also waymarked with the red and white bars of a GR route, the Senderos de Gran Recorrido in Spain. And although one is not likely to be confused about the correct general direction (westward), be warned that the ceramic scallop shells found from time to time use the hinge of the shell to point the way while in Galicia the rays point in the 'correct' direction.

Terrain: The Camino del Norte has many ascents and descents as it crosses the rivers that drain northward toward the northern Spanish coast. All of this makes the del Norte more difficult than one might expect. Although there are often impressive views of the sea, in many places the route is not within sight of the water. The amount of walking that is on roads is similar to the francés. The portion of the Camino del Norte in Galicia is very tranquil.

When to go: Along the coast it is unusual to encounter the fiercely hot conditions of the meseta in the summer; instead one finds weather created by the sea. It can be quite wet. Late May through early October is probably the best interval. Climate charts for [San Sebastián](#), [Santander](#), [Oviedo](#) and [Santiago de Compostela](#).

Accommodation: There are not many pilgrim-specific facilities in the eastern stages of the route although there are more in the western parts of the route. Galicia is well-provided in this respect. In the height of the summer season, the north coast is a destination for vacationing Spaniards and accommodations will be even harder to find, especially near the more popular sites and beach areas.

Guidebooks: Dave Whitson and Laura Perazzoli: [The Northern Caminos: Norte, Primitivo and Inglés](#). Confraternity of Saint James: [Los Caminos del Norte, A: Ruta de la Costa, 1: Irún-Villaviciosa](#) (2013), [Los Caminos del Norte, A: Ruta de la Costa, 2: Villaviciosa-Gijón-Arzua](#) (2010) and [Los Caminos del Norte Introduction](#) (2013).

Internet links: [The Confraternity of Saint James](#) has an overview of the Camino del Norte. One section of [Jacabeo.net](#) is concerned with the Camino del Norte. (Spanish) As always, [MundiCamino](#) is a good source. Click on your language and then the route. (Multiple languages) There is a site maintained by [Peter Walker](#) that has good material on the [Camino del Norte](#). The [Xunta de Galicia](#) has a section with extensive information on that portion of the

[Camino del norte within Galicia](#) including history, tourism, albergues, other services and Santiago itself. And the site santiago-compostela.net has a good overview and a huge collection of photographs.

Video links: Video links: From the Camino video series produced by the Spanish television channel TVE:

[Camino del Norte, part 1](#), 0:27:04, Spanish, 2004

[Camino del Norte, part 2](#), 0:27:51, Spanish, 2004

The organization *Where Is Asturias* has two videos on the part of the *norte* within Asturias: [The Coastal Route in Asturias](#) and [The Route of Saint James Familiarization Trip](#).

Other remarks: Far fewer pilgrims than the Camino *francés* but not a solitary experience like some routes. The use of the Basque form of place names for road and public signs in Guipuzcoa and Viscaya is increasing.

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