

IMPORTANT: Important information for anyone planning to walk the Camino November through March

The Lepoeder Pass (Route Napoleón) will be officially closed from 1 November 2015 to 31 March 2016. From 1 November to 31 March, all pilgrims will be required to follow the Valcarlos route from St. Jean Pied-de-Port to Roncesvalles, unless express authorization to use the Route Napoleón is given by the Emergency Agency of Navarre. Local authorities have the option to close the route after this interval if weather conditions dictate the need.

Given the increasing number of interventions by emergency teams to rescue pilgrims attempting to cross the mountains in winter, as well as the recovery of the bodies of pilgrims who have died in the attempt, authorities have declared that the Lepoeder Pass on the Route Napoleón is closed to pilgrims from 1 November to 31 March.

This decision was made after consulting with town officials of the village of Lusaide-Valcarlos; the Association of Friends of the Camino de Santiago in Navarre; the Departments of Culture, Tourism and Institutional Relations and Rural Development, Environment and Local Government; the General Council of Pyrenees-Atlantiques and the Provincial Police of Navarre, after consultation with the Navarra Emergency Agency, which coordinates rescue efforts throughout the region.

The route is well marked, but it can nonetheless be difficult to follow in adverse weather conditions. While great effort is constantly being made to improve waymarking and the incorporation of new technologies such as emergency GPS tracking and localization, the number of rescue interventions by emergency personnel, both professional and volunteer, continues to increase, often motivated by imprudent or poorly-informed pilgrims who undertake the crossing without adequate physical preparation and/or the necessary equipment for confronting the difficulties of this route.

The situation is particularly serious in the winter, with very difficult conditions for rescues, including situations of risk for life-saving teams, given the terrain and climate of the area, and the serious difficulties of access, location and evacuation.

For this reason, passage through this variant of the Camino de Santiago in its first stage in Navarre is restricted. **From 1 November to 31 March, all pilgrims are required to follow the Valcarlos route from St. Jean Pied-de-Port to Roncesvalles, unless express authorization to use the Route Napoleón is given by the Emergency Agency of Navarre.**