



Fostering the enduring tradition of the Camino

Camino *francés*

General Description: Far and away the best known and most traveled of the routes. Three of the main routes through France feed into the *francés* north of the Pyrenees and a number of the routes in Spain join the *francés* at various points along its length. 774 km (from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port) or 749 km (from Roncesvalles) to Santiago de Compostela. Starting typically in either Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in France or in Roncesvalles in Spain and traveling through Pamplona, Puente de la Reina, Logroño, Burgos, León, Astorga, Ponferrada and Sarria to Santiago.

Waymarking: Extremely well marked with painted yellow arrows as well as plaques and signposts, the latter usually with stylized scallop shell symbols.

Terrain: Quite varied terrain beginning with the ascent and/or the descent of the Pyrenees, then passing through the rich vineyards of La Rioja, the vast *meseta* (the high, flat, exposed tableland between Burgos and León), then into the Montes de León before crossing the high pass of O Cebreiro into the province of Galicia where many river valleys are crossed.

When to go: The route is traversed at all times of the year primarily because there are at least minimal services available year round. However there is very likely to be snow in the winter months and early spring in the Pyrenees, the Montes de Oca (east of Burgos), the Montes de León and in Galicia. Most of the route, but especially the *meseta*, is extremely hot in the summer months of July and August. Climate charts for [Pamplona](#), [Burgos](#) and [Santiago de Compostela](#).

Accommodation: Among all the routes, the Camino *francés* has without question the most highly developed infrastructure with plentiful sleeping accommodations of all types—pilgrim albergues and *refugios* operated by associations and governmental units and as private businesses, *hostales*, small hotels and several high-end hotels in the Spanish government's parador system. Some camping in the summer. Food options are plentiful. Generally facilities are only rarely further apart than 10 km.

Courtesy of Arlène Mourier and David Yates, this is the link to a file with every albergue (note only albergues) on the *francés*:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/761of2pdr70maor/AlberguesCaminoFrances.pdf?dl=0>

Additions, corrections and deletions can be sent to Arlène via the e-mail address of the Old Pueblo (Tucson) local chapter of American Pilgrims: OldPueblo@americanpilgrims.org.

Guidebooks: There are numerous guidebooks on the Camino *francés*, too numerous to do all the authors justice. We would invite you to close this page and then look at our Books page under Resources.

Internet links: The Camino *francés* being far and away the most popular route, there are countless web sites devoted to it. We suggest closing this window and finding our Internet Resources page under Resources. The Confraternity of Saint James has a brief overview. The [Xunta de Galicia](#) has a section with extensive information on that portion of [the Camino francés](#) within Galicia including history, tourism, albergues, other services and Santiago itself. [Godesalco](#) has a most interesting and useful route planner for the Camino *francés*. One can download an elevation profile as well as a customized file containing stages.

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

[Camino francés, part 1](#), 0:27:02, Spanish, 2004, Somport-Jaca-Puente la Reina-Estella-Logroño

[Camino francés, part 2](#), 0:26:59, Spanish, 2004, Logroño-Burgos-Frómista-Carrión de los Condes-Sahagún

[Camino francés, part 3](#), 0:27:39, Spanish, 2004, Sahagún-León-O Cebreiro-Sarria-Santiago de Compostela

Other remarks: The Camino *francés* is far and away the most traveled of all the routes. This could be a positive or a negative depending on the time of year and your desire to be with other peregrinos. In the summer months and especially in the period leading to and following Santiago's Feast Day, July 25th, accommodations will be quite stressed, particularly in the last 100 km.

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