



Fostering the enduring tradition of the Camino

## *Ruta del Túnel*

**General Description:** This diagonal route from Irun to Santo Domingo de la Calzada probably had its beginnings prior to the arrival of the Romans on the Iberian Peninsula. It was the Romans however who constructed the St. Adrian's tunnel high up in the Montes de Urquilla, giving the route its name. In the 13th century the route became more popular for French pilgrims as the coastal route became dangerous due to Norman attacks on the coast. 211 km from Irun on the French-Spanish border to Santo Domingo de la Calzada where the route joins the [Camino francés](#).

**Waymarking:** From Irun to [St. Adrian's Tunnel](#) the path is waymarked with yellow arrows, although sparsely in places. Beyond the tunnel there are angle irons painted yellow and black and yellow arrows.

**Terrain:** Like all of the routes that leave the northern coast headed south to join the Camino francés, the *Ruta del Túnel* has to climb some serious ridges. In the case of this route, there is one stretch of 8.5 km over which there is a climb of some 1150 m — a 13% grade!

**When to go:** Weather on the *Ruta del Túnel* is a product of the mountains and the sea and as such can be harsh, even in the summer. There is always the threat of wet weather between irún and St. Adrian's Tunnel. The higher reaches will be snowed up in the winter. To avoid snow and heat, late spring and the autumn are the recommended seasons. Climate tables for [San Sebastián](#) and [Vitoria](#).

**Accommodation:** There are now a number of pilgrim-oriented facilities on the *Ruta del Túnel*. There are also hotels, *hostales agroturismos* (rural bed and breakfasts) and the occasional *fonda*.

**Guidebooks:** Confraternity of Saint James: [Los Caminos del Norte, B: Tunnel Route](#) (2010) or in the form of a [downloadable PDF file](#). There is an important [update from 2011](#) to the CSJ guide. Please make a donation if you take advantage of the download. [Download a PDF](#) with extensive notes by Doug Martin (2011).

**Internet links:** The [Confraternity of Saint James](#) has an overview page for the *Ruta del Túnel*. The site [santiago-compostela.net](#) has an overview and a huge collection of photographs, although it is not clear when these date from.

**Other remarks:** The *túnel* is a natural water-carved passage which was a key element in this route. As a path for pilgrims, the route waxed and waned through the centuries, largely driven by circumstances elsewhere. Although this is little travelled route today there are reminders of former popularity in the form of *ermitas* and *hospitales de peregrinos*.