

Spain Itinerary – Sept 28 to Oct 8, 2025

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Itinerary

Day 1 – Sun Sept 28

- Muskegon → Chicago (KG 5760, dep 12:05 pm, arr 11:55 am)
- Chicago ORD → Madrid (Iberia IB 342, dep 4:30 pm, arr Sept 29 7:55 am)

Day 2 – Mon Sept 29

- 07:55 — Arrive Madrid Barajas T4.
- 08:50–09:10 — Transfer to Chamartín (Cercanías train):
- 10:04 — Depart Chamartín (AVE 05273, Confort, seat 05B)
- 12:18 — Arrive Ourense.
- 12:32 — Depart Ourense (MD 12694)
- 13:47 — Arrive Sarria
- Check-in: **Albergue O Durmiñento**.
- Afternoon: explore old town.

Note

Daily Summary — Sept 29

The travel into Galicia was a bit of an adventure. My flight into Madrid was delayed, which made me miss my original train. I caught a later one, but even that got interrupted because wildfires had closed part of the tracks, so we all had to switch to a bus for the last stretch. By the time I finally made it to Sarria about 9:30 pm, I was ready to settle in. I checked into my hostel and had a pilgrim dinner with a new friend from Salamanca who arrived around the same time. The meal was classic Galician: caldo gallego, Estrella beer, and roasted pork. Galicia is famous for its rain, but so far the weather has been unexpectedly kind. I also got my pilgrim credential and my very first stamp at the restaurant where I ate dinner.

Days 3–7 – Sept 30 to Oct 4 (Camino Francés – last 115 km)

- Walking total for this section: ~115 km / 71 mi
- **Day 3 (Sept 30):** Sarria → Portomarín (~22 km / 13.7 mi)
 - Route highlights: shaded hamlets around Barbadelo; Ferreiros (Km 100 milestone); Mercadoiro/Vilachá; descent to the Miño River and rebuilt Portomarín (Church of San Nicolás).
 - Cross the Miño River into Portomarín, where the Church of San Nicolás was relocated stone by stone when the original town was flooded for the Belesar reservoir.
 - Overnight: **Pensión Albergue Gonzar**

i Note

Daily Summary — Sept 30

First walking day on the Camino: Sarria to Portomarín, about 22 km. We set out before the sun because my walking partner didn't have reservations and needed to be sure to claim one of the first-come beds. The trail was wrapped in fog almost the whole morning until the sun finally burned through. Along the way we met another pilgrim from Madrid who decided to join us after overhearing Guillermo joke that the village we were passing looked like something straight out of the Resident Evil video game. We stopped for a pilgrim breakfast at Mirador da Brea, then pushed on to Portomarín.

When I got to my hostel, I did the usual Camino routine: shower, laundry in the sink, and then a much-needed nap. Later in the afternoon I wandered through the old town of Portomarín, which was rebuilt stone by stone on higher ground after a dam project flooded the original village in the 1960s. Now I'm back on the albergue patio with a café con leche, enjoying the quiet before heading out for dinner.

- **Day 4 (Oct 1):** Portomarín → Palas de Rei (~25 km / 15.5 mi)
 - Route highlights: Hospital da Cruz and Gonzar; Ligonde; A Eirexe (Igrexa de Santiago); Casanova; arrival to Palas de Rei (San Tirso church carvings).
 - Overnight: **Albergue San Marcos**

i Note

Daily Summary — Oct 1

Dinner in Portomarín last night was Galician pork on a small patio at sunset with Gabriel and Guillermo. They left earlier than I did this morning since they didn't have reservations and needed to find open albergues. I was still up before 7:00 because the dorm room was noisy with snoring and people rustling to leave. I took a wrong turn heading out of Portomarín in the dark but corrected quickly and continued the climb out of town. I stopped at a café for tortilla francesa with cheese (an omelet on bread), a café con leche, and fresh orange juice, which is excellent here. Later in the morning the fog lifted, and the day turned sunny with clear skies.

The Camino passed farms with cows, small villages of stone houses, and stretches of countryside with pine trees, rolling hills, and fields. At one crossroads I met Paul, an older man from Paris, who by coincidence I saw him again this afternoon staying at the same albergue in Palas de Rei.

When I arrived in Palas, I tried pulpo a la gallega (octopus), another Galician specialty. It was good, though not something I'll seek out at home. At the albergue I showered, washed my clothes in the sink, and took a short nap. I'll likely take a short walk around town this evening, but I'm sore from the day's walk.

- **Day 5 (Oct 2):** Palas de Rei → Arzúa (~29 km / 18.0 mi)

- Route highlights: Leboreiro’s Romanesque church; Melide (pulpo); Boente (Igrexa de Santiago); Ribadiso da Baixo with its medieval bridge and riverside albergue; entry into Arzúa (local cheeses).
- Overnight: **Cruce de Caminos Arzúa**

Note

Daily Summary — Oct 2

I set out in the morning with Carlos, who had stayed in my hostel. He is from San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. In the next village we stopped for breakfast of scrambled eggs with tomato, onion, and ham, which was excellent and kept me fueled for the walk. Carlos shared that he was walking the Camino because his partner of 19 years passed away from cancer in May. It was something his partner had wanted to do, and Carlos is walking in his memory while thinking about what comes next in life.

We walked together until Melide, where he stopped since he is dividing the Camino into shorter stages due to leg issues. Passing through Melide, I saw many restaurants serving pulpo in different forms—including one advertising pulpo pizza—but I didn’t stop since I had already tried pulpo the previous day and it wasn’t the right time for a meal. From there I continued with Pedro from Málaga for a while. His English was limited, so we spoke in Spanish, which was a challenge for me but good practice. Later I stopped at a café for fresh orange juice and some ibuprofen. My legs were sore since this was the longest stage.

I finished the day walking with Miriam from Ohio, who has been walking from France for the past 30 days. She shared that she is unsure about returning home because she is re-evaluating her marriage. Many pilgrims seem to be reflecting on big life changes—relationships, careers, and personal direction. The Camino passed through Ribadiso, where I crossed its medieval stone bridge and walked past the riverside albergue, one of the most scenic spots on this stretch.

In the evening I had dinner in an outdoor square with Guillermo, a Turkish American named Volkan I met in the hostel common area, and a group of people Guillermo knew from his hostel. Arzúa is known for its cheese, so we made sure to order a local cheese appetizer to start the meal.

• **Day 6 (Oct 3):** Arzúa → O Pedrouzo (~19 km / 11.8 mi)

- Route highlights: eucalyptus/pine lanes; Santa Irene chapel and fountain; Amenal; entry into O Pino municipality (O Pedrouzo).
- Overnight: **Albergue REM**

Note

Daily Summary — Oct 3

This morning my muscles were stiff and sore, so I started slowly. Many walkers passed me, including Miriam from yesterday. After a few kilometers I stopped for breakfast and saw Guillermo and his friends again before they moved ahead. Fortunately, once my muscles warmed up I was able to walk more comfortably and keep a steady pace.

Much of the walk passed through eucalyptus groves, the tall trees giving shade and their distinct smell carrying on the breeze.

Later I ran into Volkan from yesterday, who was walking with Dee, an Irish woman he had met the day before. We then came across three older women walking together—two cousins from Canada whose husbands had passed away, and one from Australia who said her husband had “decided to be old” and didn’t come along. They had their packs sent ahead and were taking shorter stages, but they walked at a surprisingly fast pace.

I joined Volkan, Dee, and the three women for lunch before we parted ways since we were all staying in different villages that night. I had chorizo and Spanish tortilla, a classic egg and potato dish that is both simple and very tasty.

At the hostel that evening, I discovered Pedro from Málaga in the bed next to mine. Encounters like this are common on the Camino—people’s paths crossing again and again along the way.

- **Day 7 (Oct 4):** O Pedrouzo → Santiago (~20 km / 12.4 mi)

- Route highlights: Lavacolla; Monte do Gozo (viewpoint often foggy); San Lázaro entry to the city; Praza do Obradoiro.
- Collect Compostela certificate in Santiago.
- Overnight: **Pensión Rúa Nova** (Rúa Nova, 4, Santiago de Compostela).

Note

Daily Summary — Oct 4

Rain fell steadily throughout the day, but it was my sore left ankle and right knee that slowed my pace. The group I’d been having dinner with started later and eventually overtook me, and we stopped together for a café con leche before parting ways.

I walked for a while with a German man who had started his Camino in France and later saw him again as I entered Santiago. I also came across a Danish woman I’d met a few days earlier who had also begun in France. For both of them, reaching Santiago was a major moment after weeks on the trail.

I stopped at a restaurant for caldo gallego, a warm Galician soup that was a welcome break from the rain. When I reached Monte do Gozo—the traditional first viewpoint of Santiago—the fog was thick enough that I couldn’t see the city below. The final stretch into Santiago wasn’t very scenic, following the highway for a while, but entering the

old town was something special. Catching the first clear glimpse of the cathedral as I approached was still inspiring.

The main square was filled with pilgrims celebrating the end of their journeys—some, like me, having walked just five days, and others who had been on the road for more than a month.

I checked into a proper hotel at last. The room was small but felt like luxury after the albergues. After a much-needed nap to rest my legs, I explored the old town and cathedral in the evening light.

Dinner was at a tapas restaurant where I had the best scallops I've ever tasted, along with excellent Spanish wine. Later I joined Guillermo from Salamanca, two British men, and three women from the Basque Country for a tapas crawl that took us to several local bars. We stayed out late, in true Spanish fashion. In the early hours of the morning we parted ways. Even though we'd only known each other a few days, the hours walking, talking, and going out in the evenings made it feel like much longer.

Day 8 – Sun Oct 5

- Full day in Santiago.
- Overnight: **Pensión Rúa Nova**

Note

Daily Summary — Oct 5

After staying out late the night before, I slept in and took things slowly. The day turned into a cycle of naps and small outings. I went to a laundromat to finally do a proper load of laundry—up to now everything had been washed in hostel sinks and dried on railings or lines. Having a full set of clean clothes again felt like a luxury.

While waiting for the laundry, I stopped at a nearby café for a café con leche, fresh-squeezed orange juice, and an excellent toast layered with tomato, avocado, and egg.

I decided to stay in Santiago for a third night and to visit Finisterre as a day trip instead of an overnight. I wasn't sure I wanted to spend hours on a bus, but several Spanish pilgrims I'd shared drinks with the other night insisted it was worth it. The hotel also recommended a guided tour instead of public transport, which would save time and include more stops along the coast.

I met Carlos from San Miguel de Allende for lunch—he'd arrived a day later because he split the longest stage into two due to leg pain. We discovered we'll be on the same train back to Madrid tomorrow and made plans to have breakfast together before departing. In the afternoon, I wandered through the old town again, toured the cathedral, and picked up my Compostela certificate, the official proof of completing the Camino de Santiago.

Later I met up with Volkan, the Turkish American I'd walked with earlier in the week. He had never attended a Catholic Mass—or any Christian service—and was curious, so we went to the Pilgrim's Mass inside the cathedral. It was crowded and standing-room-only, and eventually we slipped out a side door for tapas. Dee from Ireland stopped by briefly; both she and Volkan are heading out tomorrow—she on a direct flight to Ireland from Santiago airport and he by train to Italy before continuing on to visit his parents in Turkey.

Day 9 – Mon Oct 6

- Finisterre tour
- Overnight: **Hotel Rúa Villar** (Santiago).

Note

Daily Summary — Oct 6

I booked a guided day tour to the coast. We visited Muros, Ézaro waterfall, the Finisterre lighthouse (“the end of the world”) and the village of Finisterre, Muxía's Sanctuary of A Barca, and Ponte Maceira with its 14th-century Romanesque bridge. Muros was my favorite stop—a historic fishing village built up the hillside.

In Finisterre I had a pizza and a beer at an outdoor table overlooking the harbor. At Ézaro, the waterfall setting was beautiful, and it made me think a small boat tour out on the ría would be a great way to see this coast; something to consider for a future trip. Back in Santiago I rested, then walked up to Parque da Alameda for sunset—first over the University of Santiago and then across to the cathedral from a distance. Dinner was on a street-side table along my hotel's cobblestone street: a Galician meat-and-cheese board with a glass of vino tinto.

Day 10 – Tue Oct 7

- 11:48 — Depart Santiago (AVE 04314, Confort, seat 4D, Booking Reference: KYC3XB).
- 14:50 — Arrive Madrid Chamartín.
- Evening tapas crawl in La Latina or Malasaña.
- Overnight: **Petit Palace Plaza Mayor**

i Note

Daily Summary — Oct 7

I met Carlos for breakfast at a café on the walk down to the station since we were on the same train. We took the AVE high-speed rail back to Madrid. After checking into my hotel, I rested for a bit—my left ankle and right knee are still sore. By coincidence, a friend I worked with in Grand Rapids and now lives in Las Vegas was in Madrid the same night. I had been coordinating with her husband, so she didn't realize I was there until she recognized me on the street—it was a fun surprise. We spent the evening sampling a few tapas spots, ending the night with churros y chocolate at Chocolatería San Ginés.

Day 11 – Wed Oct 8

- **08:30 am** — Arrive at Madrid Barajas T4 (recommended 3 hrs before departure)
- From Petit Palace Plaza Mayor:
 - Walk ~5 min to Sol station.
 - Take Cercanías C3 or C4 northbound to Chamartín (~10 min).
 - At Chamartín, transfer to Cercanías C1
- Madrid → Chicago ORD (Iberia IB 341, dep 11:35 am, arr 2:15 pm)
- Chicago → Muskegon (KG 5775, dep 6:00 pm, arr 7:50 pm)

i Note

Daily Summary — Oct 8

I walked to Sol Cercanías station and took the Cercanías to the airport via a transfer at Chamartín. Getting through the airport was smooth, though I have heard at other times passport control can be backed up. I stopped by the lounge for yogurt and a cappuccino, then boarded and took a good nap on the plane.

I really enjoyed this trip and plan to do it again—possibly the Camino Portugués next time. I don't see myself doing a full 30-day walk, but I could see adding a few more days beyond the “minimum” in the future.

Packing List

Documents & Money

- Passport
- Flight & train tickets (digital copies on phone)
- Credit + ATM cards
- Euro cash
- Priority Health card

Pack Setup

- REI Trail 40 backpack with built-in rain cover
 - *Pack worked well, a little larger than I needed.*
- 1 small dry sack (for electronics/passport)
- Plastic bags + a couple lightweight packing cubes (organization, laundry separation)
- Ultra-lightweight Eagle Creek packing cubes
 - *Nice to keep pack organized in hostels*

Clothing

- 2 Patagonia Capilene Cool Daily tees (short-sleeve, quick-dry)
 - *Quick dry fabric was a must*
- Smartwool Merino 150 Quarter Zip (long-sleeve thermal, doubles as evening shirt)
- Patagonia R1 Air Pullover (light fleece mid-layer)
 - *Was the perfect fleece for this trip*
- 1 lightweight rain jacket (waterproof, breathable)
- 1 REI Sahara Stretch Convertible Pants (trail use, doubles as shorts)
- 1 Prana Stretch Zion Pants (town/exploring Spain)
- 1 lightweight shorts (backup rotation)

- 3 pairs quick-dry underwear (2 ExOfficio + 1 Smartwool synthetic/merino)
- 3 pairs hiking socks (merino blend)

Footwear

- Altra Lone Peak 9 Trail Running Shoes
 - *These shoes were very comfortable and trail running shoes such as this are by far the most common Camino footwear. However, my ankles might have appreciated a bit more support from a light hiking shoe such as a Hoka Speedgoat*
- Xero Shoes Z-Trail EV Sandals (evenings / backup)
 - *These are nice light sandals, but simple flip flops would have been sufficient for use around the hostel ### Toiletries*
- Toothbrush + small toothpaste
- Dr. Bronner's Organic Liquid Soap – 2 oz (body + laundry)
- Travel deodorant
- Razor + small shaving cream
- Quick-dry towel (Pak Towel)
 - *The size I took was functional but a bit too small*
- Sunscreen (50 ml to start; can buy more in Spain if needed)
- Lip balm with SPF

Health & First Aid

- Walgreens blister pads (Compeed-style hydrocolloid)
 - *A necessity ... I was able to share with a few others who did not bring, had a small blister on my toe myself*
- Ibuprofen / acetaminophen / citalopram / ambien
 - *Had just the right amount of ibuprofen, but could have brought more*
- Hand sanitizer
- Tissues

- Earplugs + eye mask (for noisy albergues)
- Disposable contact lenses (a few as glasses backup)

Electronics

- iPhone + USB-C cord
- EU Plug adapter
- AirPods
- 13 MacBook Air (with power bank/cord)
 - *There were times I'm glad I had this, but for next time will not bring as it was not worth the weight*

Other

- Sunglasses
- Hat
- Clothesline for drying
 - *I didn't end up using as albergues each had either a rail or line to use. But the weight was minimal and it could have come in handy*
- Sleep sack / liner (for albergues)
 - *This was nice as albergue bedding sometimes was minimal*
- Nite Ize gear tie 6" x 2 *I didn't use, but weight was minimal and could have come in handy*
- 2 x 1 L bottles (Smartwater style — bring 1 from home, buy 1 in Spain)
- pen
 - *more useful than I had thought, Pilgrim credencial requires some writing, customs form on flight back to U.S.*

Trip References (Bookings & Contacts)

Flights

- **Sep 28 — ORD → MAD (Iberia IB 342)**
 - Booking reference / ticket: ETKT494 2300390565/01-02 (from confirmation)
- **Oct 8 — MAD → ORD (Iberia IB 341)**
 - Booking reference / ticket: ETKT494 2300390565/01-02 (same ticket)
- **Positioning flights (MKG → ORD)**
 - **MKG → ORD (Denver Air Connection KG 5760)** — Booking reference: AAZXSG
 - **ORD → MKG (Denver Air Connection KG 5775)** — Booking reference: AAZXSG
- **Sep 29 — Madrid Chamartín → Ourense → Sarria (AVE 04375 + MD 12646)**
 - Booking reference: **48GF6P6V** | Ticket no.: **7516601904563**
- **Oct 7 — Santiago → Madrid Chamartín (AVE 04314, Confort seat 4D)**
 - Booking reference: **KYC3XB** | Ticket no.: **7983901902236**
- **Renfe notes**
 - **Combinado Cercanías** included on both Renfe bookings (use code printed on the ticket at Cercanías machines).

Lodging

- **Sep 29 — Sarria: Albergue O Durmiñento**
 - Address: Calle Mayor 48, 27600 Sarria, Spain
 - Phone: +34 600 86 25 08
 - Booking.com Confirmation: **6103.134.828** | PIN: **5586**
- **Sep 30 — Portomarín: Pensión Albergue Gonzar**

- Address: Rúa do Peregrino 24, 27170 Portomarín, Spain
- Phone: +34 683 58 02 70
- Booking.com Confirmation: **5222.020.161** | PIN: **2336**
- **Oct 1 — Palas de Rei: Albergue San Marcos**
 - Address: Rúa Cruceiro 10, 27200 Palas de Rei, Spain
 - Phone: +34 982 38 07 11
 - Booking.com Confirmation: **6000.902.246** | PIN: **7261**
- **Oct 2 — Arzúa: Cruce de Caminos Arzúa**
 - Address: Rúa Cima do Lugar s/n, 15810 Arzúa, Spain
 - Phone: +34 604 05 13 53
 - Booking.com Confirmation: **6336.672.796** | PIN: **1337**
- **Oct 3 — O Pedrouzo: Albergue REM**
 - Address: Avda. de la Iglesia nº7, 15821 O Pino (O Pedrouzo), Spain
 - Phone: +34 617 78 86 35
 - Booking.com Confirmation: **6475.800.457** | PIN: **7342**
- **Oct 4–5 — Santiago de Compostela: Pensión Rúa Nova**
 - Address: Rúa Nova, 4, 15705 Santiago de Compostela, Spain
 - Phone: +34 981 95 80 09
 - Reservation: **#6216069981** (via Booking.com)
 - **Check-in / key pickup:** Hotel Rúa Villar, Rúa do Vilar 8–10 (24h reception);
Phone: +34 981 519 858
- **Oct 6 — Santiago de Compostela: Hotel Rúa Villar**
 - Address: Rúa do Vilar 8–10, 15705 Santiago de Compostela, Spain
 - Phone: +34 981 519 858
- **Oct 7 — Madrid: Petit Palace Plaza Mayor**

- Address: C/ Mayor 46, 28013 Madrid, Spain
- Phone: +34 915 42 69 99
- Booking reference: H-867N8NVNLG3T (Capital One Travel, Confirmation 102-19517563)
- Reservation: Check-in Oct 7 at 2:00 p.m., checkout Oct 8 at 12:00 p.m.