



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. There is however a [variation](#) starting at Boimorto that avoids the *Francés* completely until the Santiago airport.

Waymarking: The Confraternity of Saint James says: “Overall it is very good, especially in Galicia and the Basque country, but occasionally confusing in Cantabria and Asturias. Alternative routes for cyclists are often marked as ‘bici’. On some coastal sections the usual yellow arrows may be found alongside the red & white bars of a GR Route (*Sendero de Gran Recorrido*). Some areas very good and include the ceramic EEC type scallop shell on a small concrete post.”

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 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. We recommend checking out the [climate tables](#) on the Online Resources page.

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: There are numerous guidebooks for the *Norte*

Internet links: [The Confraternity of Saint James](#) has a good 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). 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.

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](#)

[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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