

Announcing Ribadiso Welcome Service 2020!

Wondering how to best give back to the Camino?

The **Ribadiso Welcome Service** may be the place for you. We invite you to consider volunteering at the historic albergue at Ribadiso, offered to members of American Pilgrims on the Camino by the Galician government once again this year. Ribadiso is located on the *Camino Francés* about 40 kilometers before Santiago de Compostela in the verdant Galician countryside. This small village includes the public albergue, a private albergue, a pilgrim pensión, a bar where pilgrims can eat next to the public albergue and another two bars that also serve food a short walk away.



Volunteering at Ribadiso is a unique experience. Volunteers are expected to care for pilgrims by welcoming them to the albergue and being available to assist them during their stay. Because of the way albergues are managed in Galicia, volunteers have a fair amount of free time to engage with the local population, explore or work on their own projects.

What do volunteers at Ribadiso do?

Volunteers at Ribadiso welcome pilgrims, *i.e.*, greet them, offer them a glass of water, show them to their bunks, answer their questions, provide information about the immediate area and Santiago, offer a listening ear to pilgrims who wish to tell you about the joys and sorrows of their journey and help resolve problems (within reason), such as “I’m having my backpack carried by a service, and it hasn’t arrived yet. Can you help me find it?”

What do volunteers at Ribadiso NOT do?

Ribadiso volunteers do not clean the albergue, but they are expected to help staff with light housekeeping, such as removing disposable sheets from bunks after pilgrims leave in the morning and light sweeping of the albergue. Volunteers do not register pilgrims, collect fees, cook for pilgrims, or hold prayer services or other spiritual get-togethers.



What is the albergue like?

The albergue, originally a 15th century pilgrim hospital, is located on the banks of the River Iso and is widely considered to be one of the most beautiful albergues on the entire Camino. It has 60 beds, plus 4 additional beds reserved for handicapped pilgrims and a large camping area for pilgrims who carry their own tents. The albergue has ample bathroom and shower facilities, plus coin-operated washers and dryers and abundant clotheslines.

Ribadiso is part of the network of albergues in Galicia, all of which are operated by the Xacobeo, the regional government agency in charge of Camino matters in that region. Unlike albergues in most other parts of the country, the Xacobeo contracts with local people who register pilgrims, accept their fees and clean the albergue.

Who pays my expenses?

Expenses for travel to/from Ribadiso, food and incidentals while you are there are your responsibility. American Pilgrims on the Camino provides a stipend to each team to cover the cost of hard candy, water cups and clothespins that we ask volunteers to make available for pilgrims. There is no shop or market in Ribadiso, but supplies and groceries can be purchased in Arzúa, which is 3 kilometers away.

Where will I stay?

Volunteer accommodation is in a comfortable, well-furnished two-bedroom apartment at the albergue. The apartment has its own kitchen and bathroom, a sitting area and a dining table. Only volunteers in the program may stay in the apartment and only during their time of service.

When could I go?

American Pilgrims will provide volunteers in 2020 from May 15th to October 15th. Volunteers must commit for 15-day periods, either the first or second half of the month. A maximum of two volunteers are needed for each period.

Who is eligible to volunteer?

Volunteers must be members of American Pilgrims on the Camino and be in good health and physical condition. Volunteer hospitalero training or experience in the former or current welcome programs in Santiago is helpful but not a requirement. Spanish language skills are highly recommended – unless you are serving with a Spanish speaker. Abilities in other languages are a plus.

Is this a fit for me?

Because the paid staff handles the mechanics of operating the albergue, you will have several hours of personal time, especially in the morning before the albergue opens at 1:00 PM.

If you thrive on the intense experience of being “on” 24/7 while multi-tasking, organizing a meal and a spiritual service, this is NOT for you. We recommend instead that you become a trained *hospitalero* and serve at one of the albergues of the Spanish Federation or other organization.

How do I apply?

If you would like to know more or apply for the Ribadiso Welcome Service, please contact **Ribadiso@americanpilgrims.org** with questions or to request an application. The application process includes a telephone interview with the program coordinators. **Completed applications must be received by February 20, 2020.** Interviews will take place and volunteers will be selected and notified no later than April 1, 2020.