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Granja de Moreruela

SLEEPING

Municipal (20, 6€) *Albergue Municipal*, near the church, beside the main road. For the key go to café Tele Club, on the opposite side of the main road at the northern end of the village. Tel 980 587 183

Casa Rural Donde Victor Luna has singles 40€, doubles 60€, triples 80€, breakfast included. Reported to be fabulous! Website

www.dondevictorluna.es Tel 665 874 773

Casa Rural Tío Quico from the main road pass the albergue and turn left on to Calle Dr. Damián González Galindo, it's on the right. Singles 25€, doubles 50€, quadruples 80€. Website www.casadeltioquico.com Tel 695 260 906

INFORMATION

The café **Tele Club** does substantial meals and opens about 07:00. There is a **shop** on the Camino beside the church and a **pharmacy** on the main road at the north end of the village.

WALKING NOTES

Behind the church is a sign which marks the point where the **Camino Sanabrés** divides left from the **Vía de la Plata** to follow a course through southern Galicia to Santiago.

The Vía de la Plata to Astorga

Behind the church is a sign which marks the point where the **Camino Sanabrés** divides left from the **Vía de la Plata** to follow a course through southern Galicia to Santiago. The Vía de la Plata continues north to Astorga and beyond.

9.2km to Santovenia where there are cafés and a butchers shop which also sells groceries on Calle Molinera, left of the Camino after the square.

8.6km to Barcial del Barco

18.3km (4h57m) to:

Barcial del Barco

SLEEPING

Private (14, 10€) *Albergue Las Eras* an Calle Las Eras, ask in Bar Borox, on the

main road. Café / restaurant. Good reports. Tel 675 550 051 Open 12:00

INFORMATION

Cafés.

WALKING NOTES

The Green Route / Vía Verde between Barcial and Benavente is now completed. It follows the route of the old railway line. This is now the recommended Camino route.

8.2km (2h12m) to:

Benavente

SLEEPING

Municipal (12, 5€, March to October)

In the old railway station. The keys from the Tourist Information Office on Plaza Mayor, otherwise there is usually information on the hostel door. Tel 980 634 211

Hostal Avenida has singles from about 25€, it's on Avenida el Ferial. It has a good restaurant. Tel 980 631 031

INFORMATION

This is a large town with all facilities. Several shops along Avenida el Ferial. Café. **Bar La Manga** does food. Pharmacy. The albergue here is reported closed.

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www.viadelaplataapp.com

WALKING NOTES

Leaving the town you need to follow Avenida Donantes de Sangre north to a roundabout where straight ahead you'll see a big Vía de la Plata map. You should see the yellow arrows pointing along the road to the left of the map. This bit is quite poorly waymarked but it's hard to get lost because you just follow the road for about 5km (past a petrol station and café called Camino de Santiago which opens at 08:00) until you see a concrete pillar and a sign pointing to the right on to an unpaved road. From there it's straight ahead to...

8.1km Maire de Castroponce, shop ? on Calle Beneventa, left just before the park. **Café Bar Maire**, to the left at the park,

in the same building as the Casa Consistorial (the one with the flags).

5.9km to Alija del Infantado

21.2km (5h51m) to:

Alija del Infantado

SLEEPING

Private (12, 8€ with breakfast) *Albergue de Alija del Infantado* on the Camino on the left just before the village.

Microwave. Tel 660 068 794

INFORMATION

On or near to the main road (which is also the Camino) a butchers shop, cafés, a pharmacy, a restaurant and banks. Left off the main road down Calle Principal is a small grocery shop. The petrol station on the main road has some groceries and a café which opens at 08:00.

Alija is an interesting little town with a castle, a nice ayuntamiento and a Jewish area (Judería). Also don't miss the anchor (yep, a ship's anchor).

WALKING NOTES

Leaving Alija you have the option of following the road or walking on a path a short distance to the left. Both routes rejoin just before...

3.6km to La Nora del Río to the right of the Camino, café.

Official waymarkings will urge you to walk through the village while an outrageously big yellow arrow will direct you on to a path beside a river. Your choice. Either way you will end up walking beside this river for the next ten or so kilometres.

5.1km to Quintana del Marco, café **Bar la Plaza**, opens 10:00, left over the bridge, pharmacy.

12.7km to La Bañeza

23.0km (6h14m) to:

La Bañeza

SLEEPING

Municipal (36, 10€) *Albergue Monte Urba*, signposted to the right shortly after entering the town. On Calle Bello Horizonte. The keys can be had from numbers 20 or 6 on the same street - but

check on the door first for updated instructions. Laundry facilities, kitchen. Excellent hostel with lots of photos from the local Camino Association's various pilgrimages. Tel 649 332 087

INFORMATION

La Bañeza is a big town with all services. Big Mercadona supermarket on the Camino past the albergue. To get to the town centre turn right at Mercadona.

WALKING NOTES

6km to Palacios de la Valduerna. Bakery and pharmacy, both on the Camino.

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14.6km to Celada. Café / restaurant **Quiñones**, 100m to the right on Calle Cuesta just where you arrive in the village.

3.9km to Astorga. In Astorga the Vía de la Plata joins the Camino Francés.

25.1km (7h01m) to:

Astorga

SLEEPING

Private (13, 14€, April to October)

Albergue My Way, to the left of the Camino a little before entering the old town. Laundry facilities. Communal evening meal. Breakfast. Private rooms. Tel 640 176 338 Open 12:00

Municipal (161, 7€) Albergue de Peregrinos Siervas de María, on the left just after you struggle up the hill through the town walls, on Plaza San Francisco. Kitchen, laundry facilities. Excellent facilities. Website

www.caminodesantiagoastorga.com Tel 618 271 773 Open 11:00

Private (10, 29€, March to November)

Só Por Hoje, to the left of the Camino from Plaza España. Laundry facilities, microwaves. Communal evening meal (Brazilian). Private rooms. Tel 690 749 853 Open 13:00

Private (105, 14€, April to October) San Javier, on the Camino near the cathedral, on Calle Portería. Kitchen, laundry facilities. Breakfast. Wood burning stove when it's cold. The noise from the wooden floor in the dorm can make sleeping difficult. Tel 987 618 532 Open 11:00

INFORMATION

Astorga is a large towns with all facilities available on or near the Camino.

Supermarket on Plaza de Santocildes.

Tourist Office on the square beside the cathedral. Also on Plaza de Santocildes there's a good outdoor shop called **Huracán** run by a Swiss gentleman.

Hotel Astur Plaza on Plaza Mayor does a good pilgrim menu. **Restaurante Gaudí**, in Hotel Gaudí, on the same square as Gaudí's Episcopal Palace, is reported excellent and does a special price for pilgrims. **Cubasol** is popular with the locals for tapas, it's on Calle Señor Ovalle, with your back to the Ayuntamiento it's to the right (not open evenings). Several **cafés** around Plaza Mayor open early. Fiestas Astures y Romanos 25 July with lots of dressing up and fake battles, Santa Marta 25 August.

If you're continuing on the Camino Francés you can download our free guide from here www.caminoguide.net

About this guide

This guide covers the **Vía de la Plata** from Seville to Granja de Moreruela and the **Camino Sanabrés**, which branches from the Vía de la Plata and arrives in Santiago through southern Galicia. For simplicity's sake we (incorrectly) use the term *Vía de la Plata* or just *Vía* to refer to the combination of these two routes.

I started writing this guide after I can back from walking the Vía de la Plata from Seville to Santiago via Astorga in the winter of 2009, and finished it after returning to walk the Camino Sanabrés in 2012. It has been updated and republished every year since then (except 2021). Preparing for my walk I had been unable to find any reliable information in English about the routes and accommodation along them. This didn't deter me and I managed fine with a print out of accommodation from a Spanish website and some Google maps of the towns with the route roughly sketched on them. However, if I hadn't been able to access information in Spanish I would have been lost, and I probably wouldn't have even attempted this walk. Based on this experience I decided to try to make information more widely available in English.

I started by making the guide available as a free download from my website, www.ViadelaPlataGuide.net. Thanks to

the positive feedback and encouragement I received from other pilgrims who used it I decided to try publishing it on Amazon (with the addition of maps). This has enabled me to bring the information to a far wider audience.

I set out to create a source of the essential information someone will need to walk the Vía de la Plata in the traditional way, and this book is still basically that, the *essential information*: distances, pilgrim hostels, places to buy food, places to eat, and notes about those places where the yellow arrows may not be sufficient for you to find your way.

PILGRIM ALBERGUES (HOSTELS)

The following information is given about pilgrim albergues: whether it is private, religious, etc., how many people it sleeps, the cost and opening dates (if none are given then it's open all the time), its name. This is followed by a description of how to find the hostel and any other relevant information.

Some of the hostels on this Camino are basic. However, unless otherwise stated, all of them have the following:

- Electricity
- Beds with mattresses
- Toilets
- Showers with hot water
- Drinking water
- Heating (possibly not be very effective and may not be switched on)

If the guide says 'Laundry facilities' it means there's a washing machine and drier. If this isn't mentioned then the laundry facilities available are probably a sink where you can hand wash clothes.

Many hostels are not adequately heated and during the cold months (a period which varies according to latitude and altitude but means approximately November to March) it will be cold in those hostels. This underlines the necessity of having a good sleeping-bag. Not all hostels have a kitchen. Where the hostel has one and it is in working order, it's mentioned.

If you're first to arrive many hostels will be locked with a contact telephone number stuck to the door. For this reason having a mobile phone is essential. If you need to ring for the key and you don't speak Spanish try the following: *Estoy aquí a la puerta del albergue de peregrinos, ¿puede Usted abrirme la puerta?* – which means I am here at the

door of the pilgrim hostel, can you open the door for me? The ideal response would be *sí, sí, cinco minutos / diez minutos* – yes, yes five minutes / ten minutes. However, the likelihood is the reply will be somewhat more verbose in which case the best thing to say is *no entiendo español* – I don't understand Spanish. And hope for the best. Don't let it worry you if you speak no Spanish, the person answering the phone is expecting calls like yours and even if you completely fail to understand anything they will hopefully assume you are waiting for them at the albergue door.

ROUTE INFORMATION, DISTANCES AND TIMES

Information about the route and things you will meet between hostels are given in this format:

4.5km to Piñeiro, cafés.

Distances given in this format are NOT cumulative.

The **total distance** and **estimated walking time** between places is given in the place name heading. The total distance given here is the one you should use when calculating the distance between places.

The estimated walking time is calculated using the **Munter Method**. This method considers 1km walked = 1 unit, and 100m climbed = 1 unit. The time needed to walk this distance is the number of units divided by 4 (4 being kilometres walked per hour by an average walker over the course of a day). eg. *Walking 10km on flat terrain would take about 2h30m. Walking 10km with ascents totalling 200m would take about 3h00m (10+200/100)/4=3*. This is an estimate and is there to give you an idea of the difficulty of the terrain. If you don't find it helpful feel free to ignore it.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES

The following information is given about facilities available in towns and villages:

- café / bar generally they serve food of some description during meal times (14:00 to 16:00 and 20:00 to 22:00)
- shop, for food and a variable range of other essentials
- bank, meaning an ATM / cash machine
- pharmacy

Albergues are listed first, followed by

other accommodation, in the order in which you will encounter them (assuming you're walking from Seville). Please remember the following

If the guide doesn't say that there's a shop / restaurant / café / water source / bank / pharmacy (etc., etc.), then **assume there isn't and plan accordingly!**

Likewise, always assume there is no place to buy food or drinks between villages and that some villages have no facilities of any type.

Even if there are shops and cafés never assume they'll be open.

The text of this guide is not sprinkled with reminders to always make sure you're carrying enough food and water. It is up to you to plan your walking day in advance, and sometimes several days in advance, taking account of availability of places where you can restock and other factors such as public holidays and opening times.

OPENING TIMES

Bear in mind that shops in rural Spain usually open from about 09:00 until about 12:00 and again from about 17:00 until about 20:00. They are usually closed, or have greatly reduced opening times, on Sundays and Mondays and on public holidays. Outside of these opening times some basic food is sometimes available from the local petrol station.

The note about public holidays above also applies to cafés. Cafés don't always open in the morning and if they do it's rarely before 08:00. **When it says in the guide that a café opens early that means about 08:00.** Also cafés often close one day a week *por descanso*, it's often Monday. Restaurants server lunch from about 14:00 until about 16:00 and then dinner from about 20:00 until about 22:00. Unlike on busier Caminos you will rarely find establishments which serve food outside these times.

PHONE NUMBERS

Spanish phone numbers have nine digits. You always dial all nine. Numbers beginning with 6 and 7 are mobile numbers, 9 and 8 are fixed line. The **WhatsApp messaging app** is (almost) universally used in Spain and is very useful for contacting accommodation, etc.

WAYMARKINGS

Waymarkings are basic but functional. Everywhere you will find **painted yellow arrows** like on other Caminos. However, it's important to note that the arrows are sometimes far less frequent than on other Caminos and are sometimes only to be

seen at points where there's a change of direction. So basically, if you don't see any arrows, keep going straight, but keep your eyes peeled.

Besides yellow arrows you will also see **official waymarking**. This varies by region and sometimes by village. In **Extremadura**, as well as the yellow arrow, the Vía and the Roman Road are marked by blocks on the ground with a coloured tile on one side and a representation of the arch in Cáparra on the top pointing in the direction which you must follow. The tiles are coloured yellow (for the Camino) or green (for the Roman road) or bi-coloured where the Vía follows the Roman road.

In parts of **Castilla y León** you'll see stone pillars with the name of the Vía written in Latin and Arabic scripts - a reflection of the fact that this route was used by Mozarabic Christians from Andalusia.

In **Galicia** you'll find the ubiquitous concrete bollards with the shell symbol on a tile pointing, with its flat end, in the direction to follow, and the "distance to Santiago", which is best ignored.

In certain places you may find that several different kinds of waymarking co-exist and occasionally they may point in contradictory directions. **If in doubt, as a general rule, you should follow the yellow arrows.** This is not to say that the other waymarkings are wrong, just that the yellow arrows are painted by people who have walked the Vía recently and they are most likely to indicate the best walking route. The yellow arrows are also the waymarkings which are most likely to be up-to-date in the event of minor route changes.

Walking in summer

The extreme summer heat in southern Spain makes June, July, August and September the most difficult and dangerous time to walk the southern sections of this Camino (south of Salamanca). In recent years several people have died on the Vía while walking or cycling in hot weather. You should not attempt the southern sections of the Vía in summer unless you are used to and comfortable walking in temperatures of 40C and higher. Also, many bars and albergues take their summer holidays at this time.

North of Salamanca is a different matter. The climatic conditions which prevail here are largely similar to what you

would encounter on the Camino Francés.

ABOUT ME

This guide is about the Camino not about me, but since people sometimes ask, my name is Gerald Kelly, I'm Irish. I started walking Caminos in 2004. I first walked the Vía in 2009 – Seville to Mérida in February, didn't meet a single pilgrim. I've been back most years since then. My hobbies are walking, technology (especially open source software), languages and walking.

EMERGENCY

The emergency services number for Spain is **112**. Also please consider installing the **AlertCops** app. It's available for Android and iPhone.

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