



## When it comes to epic walks, nothing quite beats the Camino de Santiago

### ■ Gerry LENNON

**IF YOUR** idea of a holiday in Spain means sun, sea, sangria, two weeks on the Costa del Sol, sunbed during the day and nights spent in Irish bars with karaoke machines and cheap drinks promotions — think again.

There is an alternative way to see Spain — walk The Camino.

The famous pilgrimage routes of Camino di Santiago stretch for 650 miles across northern Spain and can take up to five weeks to complete.

Although it is a pilgrimage, I can highly recommend the

Camino experience and it is really enjoyable and truly uplifting.

**I think it will be hard to ever go back to a traditional Costa holiday having had this experience.**

The idea of walking 163km over six days may not be everyone's idea of fun.

It was tough at times but ultimately very rewarding and although a "pilgrimage" it is not overtly religious, with people from all walks of life and religious persuasions taking part.

### Popular

There is also a Dublin connection — the way of St James starts at James Street Church beside Guinness's brewery where you can obtain your pilgrim's passport.

You will have this stamped at every stop along the way.

**Our Camino took us from Santiago to Finisterre and on to Muxia.**

This particular Camino has become popular in recent years and is the only one that starts in Santiago.

Approximately 130km long, it takes you from the city across the rolling landscape of Galicia out to the Atlantic coast and the famous Cabo de Finisterre lighthouse which ancient pilgrims believed was the end of the world.

**You will pass through small rural villages, cross ancient Roman bridges, and walk along forest tracks, green pastures and rolling hills.**

On the third day you will walk through the pine groves across Mount Alto and then get your first glimpse of the ocean.

### Trail

At the end of your trail you can swim in the clear blue Atlantic sea and ease away those aches and pains.

From Finisterre your path takes you along the Costa del Morte (Death coast) to the beautiful vil-

lage of Lires on the estuary and another chance to have a swim.

**The last stretch of our Camino ends in Muxia, a beautiful fishing village with stunning beaches.**

Everywhere we went we were greeted by warm locals, and sampled some of the best and most inexpensive sea food I have ever experienced.

Local dishes, including lentil stews, fried pork and eggs and Galician casserole, are all home-made with top quality local produce and reasonably priced — expect to pay between €10-€12 for a three course meal with wine.

Local beer (Estrella Galicia) averages €1.20 a bottle in most bars and the local Albarino wine is easy on the palate and on the pocket.

**At the end of your Camino make sure you have enough time to spend in Santiago de Compostela.**

I would suggest at least two days.

This vibrant university city is a foodie's paradise.

Explore the UNESCO-listed old town with its cobbled streets and famous cathedral.

Take the "Camino de Vino"

along Rue Franco packed with tapas bars and restaurants and sample the local seafood dishes, washed down with Albarino wine or beer.

Ultimately the Camino is

any-  
thing

you want it to be.

**A five-week marathon or a week or 10 days' walk.**

There is a great sense of camaraderie and you will meet interesting people along the way.

### **Rules**

You can join in the conversation or stay on your own — there are no hard and fast rules.

You can have a lot of fun along the way.

I will be back to do another leg of this famous walk.

● **Aer Lingus fly to Santiago twice a week in peak season. For further information log on to [CaminoWays.com](http://CaminoWays.com).**

