

Confraternity of Saint James Pilgrim Guides to Spain

6. Madrid to Sahagún

**John Walker
2010**

Foreword to the Second Edition

In 2000 Marigold and Maurice Fox wrote the first Guide in English to the route from Madrid to Sahagún. This new route was created by the Asociación de Amigos de los Caminos de Santiago de Madrid who published a Spanish Guide to the new route in 1999.

The Foreword to the First Edition stated: "The authors are indebted to the Amigos of Madrid for creating a route so amenable to walkers, well waymarked and almost exclusively on paths, tracks, *cañadas* and a Roman road. Enormous effort and care has gone into designating a route which is scenically attractive and varied, has places of religious and cultural interest along the way and which can be walked by an averagely-fit person without recourse to tent, public transport or taxi. The pilgrim infrastructure is as yet embryonic but the Amigos are encouraging the villagers to provide pilgrims if not with a bed, at least with a "roof and floor" for the night. And the Amigos have made local people along the route aware that they live on a modern pilgrim route and, as a result, pilgrims are well-received."

In the 10 years since the First Edition the route has developed in a number of ways. The waymarking has improved to the extent that walking directions are almost superfluous. The number of albergues has significantly increased and hostels and hotels have been closed or opened. The number of pilgrims using the route has also increased.

This edition takes account of these changes. This is truly a route where you can simply follow the yellow arrows. Therefore walking directions have been kept to a minimum. There is more accommodation available on the route now and up-to-date details are provided. Also illustrations of the elevations for the sections of the route are provided.

This is a very picturesque route with much local interest. Marigold and Maurice Fox did extensive research for the First Edition and provided a comprehensive description of the history, buildings and sights along the route. This has been retained in full. Therefore, rather than being a completely new Guide, this Second Edition is in large part a re-presentation of the excellent information contained in the First Edition.

This Second Edition will be published as one of a series of Guides available in printed form or to download from the Confraternity of St James. Pilgrims who use the Guide are invited to send further information or up-dates on the route to the Editor: johnnewalker-santiago@hotmail.com.

The Confraternity of Saint James in the United Kingdom

The Confraternity of Saint James in the UK is the largest and oldest English speaking association of pilgrims. The Confraternity promotes the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and provides support and services to pilgrims.

Amongst these services are: Practical Pilgrim Days - where around the country they provide an opportunity for potential pilgrims to learn more; a regular members' bulletin; and a bookshop and library. The Confraternity also promotes research and provides a bursary to young people undertaking research into the movement around St James and they offer help to elderly, frail or disabled people who might otherwise be unable to undertake the pilgrimage.

The Confraternity publishes guides to many of the routes to Santiago and also runs two refuges for pilgrims at Gaucelmo (on the Camino Francés) and Miraz (on the Camino del Norte).

See more at www.csj.org.uk.

The CSJ can also provide a Pilgrim Record for members - www.csj.org.uk/how-to-get-a-credencial

Statistics – Pilgrims walking or cycling the route from Madrid

2006	208
2007	247
2008	300
2009	340

(Source: La Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino of Santiago de Compostela)

Internet resources

A lot of information is available on web sites and blogs. Here is a selection:

<http://www.mundicamino.com/>

Information on the routes to Santiago with a section on the route from Madrid.

<http://www.demadridalcamino.org/>

The website of the Association of Amigos of the Camino to Santiago from Madrid. In Spanish. With details of the route and the Guide (Spanish) book available.

<http://www.caminosantiago.org/cpperegrino/cpalbergues/caminomadrid.html>

Another website. The information is not always up to date.

<http://todosloscaminosdesantiago.com/caminodemadrid>

A very helpful and informative website.

http://www.turismocastillayleon.com/cm/turcyl/tkContent?idContent=541207&textOnly=false&locale=en_UK

A new tourist guide in Spanish published by the local authority in the province of Castilla and León.

<http://www.gomadrid.com/madrid-maps.html>

For all maps of Madrid

<http://johnniewalker-santiago.blogspot.com/search/label/Madrid%20Route>

Blog with slideshow of photographs of the route and an account of walking the route.

Accommodation

For a route which passes through so few towns and villages, the frequency and amount of accommodation is quite remarkable and the average walker should secure a bed without recourse to transport. There are now more albergues and these are listed in this Edition. Normally you should have few problems finding a bed but be aware that hostals may be full on Saturday nights or on public holidays or festivals - *Semana Santa* and the period around the Spanish National day, 12th October, in particular. You are strongly advised to book ahead in Cercedilla, or make arrangements to stay nearby, for you will almost certainly start the stage over the Sierra de Guadarrama there.

Hotel/hostal and albergue names addresses and telephone numbers are given in each location. This key provides a rough guide to prices: 70 – 100 euros: (€€€) || 40 – 70 Euros: (€€) || Less than 40 Euros: (€).

Shops, bars, restaurants

There is a fair sprinkling of bars, restaurants, shops, banks, post offices and telephones along the way and these are indicated in the Guide. Note there are stretches particularly in the forest, where these facilities may be fifteen to twenty kilometres apart. There are effectively no facilities crossing the Puerto de la Fuenfría in the thirty-one kilometres between Cercedilla and Segovia. Pilgrims are advised to take food with them on most of the stages.

Water

There are not a lot of water fountains (fuentes) along this route and pilgrims are advised to ensure they have adequate supplies when setting out. Where there are bars water is freely available and some towns and villages have fountains. Fountains in the fields are usually for animals and you should assume the water is not for human consumption unless there is a sign to the contrary. The sign to this effect will say "No Potable" i.e Not Drinkable, or conversely "Potable" – Drinkable.

Buses, trains and taxis

Outside the main towns and off main roads public transport is very infrequent and often inconveniently timed and routed. Colmenar Viejo, Manzanares el Real, Navacerrada and Cercedilla are all linked to Madrid by either frequent buses or rail or both. In practice, you will need transport only in an emergency and this means a taxi: most bars will oblige and obtain one for you. Taxis cost about 1€ per kilometer.

Banks, post offices and pharmacies

These are available along the route but not in every town or village.

Telephone

Public telephones are ubiquitous, with instructions in English.

Tourist offices

There are dedicated offices in the towns and in the *Ayuntamiento* elsewhere.

Pilgrim Credencial and stamp (*sello*)

Members of the Confraternity can obtain from the C.S.J. secretary a pilgrim record or Credencial. This is a document which, when stamped at albergues, churches, monasteries, bars, hotels, hostels, *Ayuntamientos*, police stations etc as proof of passage and presented to the cathedral authorities at Santiago, can help in obtaining your *Compostela* or Certificate of Pilgrimage. You can also obtain a Spanish *Credencial* from the Amigos de los Caminos de Santiago de Madrid at their office at Calle Carretas 14 just off the Puerta del Sol in the centre of Madrid. A credencial and sello is also available in the Sacristy at the Church of Santiago which is located in the Plaza Santiago near the Cathedral and Royal Palace. Pilgrims must be in possession of a Credencial to be allowed to sleep in the albergues along the way.

Getting there

Madrid is easily accessible by bus, train and air.

Getting back

See C.S.J. Guide to the Camino Francés.

When to go

The high *meseta* suffers nine months of severe cold and three months of stifling heat. Avoid the summer (July to early September) when it can be extremely hot - temperatures are similar to those on the Camino Francés between Burgos and León at that time. Long stretches of the route have absolutely no shade and are so lonely are they that there will be no-one to offer help if you need it. Take plenty of water (you may not be able to replenish supplies en route) and wear a hat. Spring or autumn is the best time to make the journey. There are long hours of daylight (shorter in autumn), the weather is cool but it can also be windy and wet so you need to be appropriately equipped. The Puerto de la Fuenfría should be snow-free but bad weather may strike at any time. If necessary, the stage from Cercedilla to Segovia can be walked by road or on public transport. Winter will be severe and bitterly cold with short days and snow on the Sierra de Guadarrama. See the C.S.J. booklet "Winter Pilgrim" by Alison Raju.

Maps

Madrid to Sahagún is contained within the single Bartholemew RV Euro Map, sheet 1/2 North-West Spain, scale 1:300,000 widely available in U.K. bookshops. And so few are the towns and villages in this part of Castile, that a surprising number are shown on the map and, even occasionally, the larger farms too.

Obtainable in Spain and from Stanfords and other specialist U.K. map centres, are larger scale maps in the MOPT series, scale 1:200,000 and even 1:25,000 if you are a lover of maps. The latter are beautifully produced and extremely detailed but each covers only a day's walk!

For map enthusiasts a complete set of IGN 1:50,000 maps of Spain is available for download as PDF files at http://www.ign.es/ign/en/IGN/cartoteca_MapTopo.jsp.

Language

Castillian (Spanish) is spoken all along this route. Most local people speak little English and so pilgrims are advised to learn some basic Spanish in order to ask directions, order food and book accommodation.

Personal safety

Because so little of the Madrid route is along roads, do not forget basic road safety. Make sure you can always be seen - especially in the dark, in twilight and in wet or overcast weather - wear brightly coloured clothing and try always to face oncoming traffic. Walkers should also remember that virtually the entire route is cyclable and that many of the tracks are also used by farm and forestry vehicles, all of which can surprise you from behind.

In emergencies the telephone number to call is 112 and, given the isolated nature of some of the stages of this route, it would be wise to carry a mobile telephone.

Summary of the Route

The way from Madrid to Sahagún designated by the Amigos de los Caminos de Santiago de Madrid was never a major historic pilgrimage route but there are documented accounts of pilgrims who passed that way. Regained from the Moors early in the Reconquest, Madrid grew in size and prosperity to become a medium-sized town by the time Felipe II chose it as his capital in the sixteenth-century. Its population and economy grew further and today Madrid is a major, modern, European capital city. With the renewal of interest in the Jacobean pilgrimage in the twentieth-century, especially its huge popularity in recent years, the Madrid Amigos decided to create this route to enable pilgrims from Madrid and central Spain to journey to the Camino Francés without taking transport. The route is about 320kms long and can be walked in about 12 days. However, Segovia, Simancas (for Valladolid) and Medina de Rioseco merit more than a brief visit.

The way is excellently waymarked throughout. So much so detailed walking directions are generally not necessary. Where they are needed Walking Notes have been provided in this Edition. Physically, the route is easy to walk. With the exception of the climb over the Sierra de Guadarrama, there are no hills or gradients of any significance. Graphs of the elevations throughout the route have been included in this edition with the kind permission of <http://todosloscaminosdesantiago.com>.

Remarkably for such a direct route - almost a straight line from Madrid to Sahagún - there is virtually no road walking. The route uses footpaths, *Vias Pecuarías* (VPs), *cañadas*, farm and forestry tracks and even a short stretch of paved Roman road, and the paths are clear and well maintained. As a consequence, the journey is stress-free and one which lends itself to reflection and contemplation, a true pilgrimage route. But the corollary is that there are fewer towns, villages or pilgrims than on other routes with the exception of parts of the Via de la Plata, which the Madrid route closely resembles.

Madrid to Segovia

Pilgrims can start their journey at the church of Santiago in the centre of Madrid, at the Plaza Castilla, in the Paseo de la Castellana (reachable by Metro) or at Fuencarral (reachable by metro) in the

Northern suburb. Very quickly the pilgrim is in open countryside, on a vast treeless plateau with enormous fields of cereals stretching as far as the distant Sierra de Guadarrama. For the first hundred kilometers, the way goes gradually up towards the foothills of these mountains, crossing vast agricultural plateaux, wide poplar-lined river valleys and high granite moorland, and it passes two *embalses*. The camino follows *cañadas* or *Vías Pecuarias*, the ancient drove roads and tracks, here marked by small concrete cubes on which are painted a picture of a cow and the letters VP. Sometimes these are enclosed by drystone walls, sometimes by wire fences - but never by canes from which the word *cañada* is derived.

After the ancient towns of Colmenar Viejo and Manzanares el Real, come the modern holiday towns of Navacerrada and Cercedilla at the foot of the Sierra de Guadarrama, popular recreational and walking centres for *Madrileños*. As the mountains get nearer, the countryside becomes more "alpine" and more wooded so that beyond Cercedilla you are into the vast pine forest which clothes the Sierra de Guadarrama. Cercedilla is the walkers' gateway to the Puerto de la Fuenfría, the pass to Segovia. The walk entails a stiff climb of 650m in eight kilometers followed by a gradual descent through endless pines to within sight of Segovia. Here you leave the mountains behind and there are only a few hills to come. The final stage into Segovia is along the Cañada Real.

Segovia to Simancas

Segovia occupies a dramatic site on a spur between the rivers Clamores and Eresma with its *Alcázar* perched on the point of the spur rather like the "prow" of a ship. From the path out, you can see behind you the magnificent Segovian skyline, its towers, churches, cathedral and *Alcázar* all the way to Zamarramala. The way forward at first crosses a high rolling agricultural plateau and goes through small isolated farming hamlets, but it soon rejoins the valley of the Eresma and follows the river and its tributary, the Voltoya, to its confluence with the Adaja, eighty kilometres on, almost to the Duero. Sometimes the path runs beside the courses of these poplar-lined rivers; sometimes it diverges from them across fields. Santa María la Real de la Niéva, the first place of any size beyond Segovia, stands on a slate plateau above the valley but the way soon descends towards the Eresma again and into an area of low sandhills and pine forest through which the river and its tributaries flow in deep ravines. The pines are not the black pines of the Sierra de Guadarrama but stands of magnificent umbrella pines. The forest is not continuous - vast tracts of pine trees are interspersed with equally vast open spaces, some cultivated, some grazed. The way continues thus through Nava de la Asunción, Coca, Alcazarén, Valdestillas and Puente Duero to Simancas where the pine forest stops as abruptly as it began.

Simancas to Sahagún

Just before Valdestillas, you leave the valley of the Eresma and cross the lands of the Duero, so long the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain and the only major river crossed by the route. Beyond the Duero, the pilgrim enters the Tierra de Campos, the Gothic Fields which extend all the way to Sahagún. The Gothic Fields is archetypal *meseta*, a huge area of virtually treeless plateau, of enormous fields cultivated with cereals. Sometimes the soil is sandy, sometimes chalky but often thin and stony so the camino is frequently lined with heaps of stone and flints rather like cairns guiding the way. In the chalky areas there are steep-sided ravines to cross and many of the villages are spectacularly sited on spurs almost entirely surrounded by chalk cliffs. Why the area should be called the Gothic Fields is unclear. The Visigoths occupied all of Iberia and were not particularly concentrated here - their Spanish capital was Toledo. However, Wamba (Bamba) in the centre of the area has legendary connections with the Visigothic King Wamba. Villages are few in the Tierra de Campos - but those that exist are visible far ahead, their red-brick *Mudéjar* church towers peeping above the skyline - Ciguñuela, Wamba (Bamba), Peñaflor de Hornija, Castromonte and especially the memorable skyline of Medina de Rioseco.

Then comes more *meseta* and the villages of Moral de la Reina, Cuenca de Campos, Villalón de Campos, Fontihoyuelo and Santervás de Campos. Here you join the banks of the river Valderaduey for a few kilometers to Grajal de Campos and the final stretch over the hills to Sahagún.

Stages of the route

	Stage kms	Cumulative kms
Madrid	0	0
Fuencarral	11	11
El Goloso	7	18
Tres Cantos	5	23
Colmenar Viejo	12	35
Manzanares el Real	15	50
Mataelpino	7	57
Navacerrada	7	64
Cercedilla	5	69
Puerto de la Fuenfría	8	77
Segovia	23	100
Zamarramala	3	103
Valseca	5	108
Añe	9	121
Pinilla-Ambroz	6	127
Santa Maria la Real de Nieva	5	132
Nieva	2	134
Los Huertos	4	112
Nava de la Asunción	10	144
Coca	10	154
Villeguillo	7	161
Alcazarén	18	179
Valdestillas	16	195
Puente Duero	9	204
Simancas	6	210
Ciguñuela	6	216
Wamba (Bamba)	7	223
Peñaflor de Hornija	7	230
Castromonte	10	240
Valverde de Campos	9	249
Medina de Rioseco	5	254
Berrueces	8	262
Moral de la Reina	6	268
Cuenca de Campos	8	276
Villalón de Campos	5	281
Fontihoyuelo	9	290
Santervás de Campos	8	298
Arenillas de Valderaduey	8	306
Grajal de Campos	6	312
Sahagún	8	320

The distances between the places are those calculated by the Asociación de Amigos de los Caminos de Santiago de Madrid in their guide - as are the distances in the body of this guide.

The Route

Madrid, capital of Spain, is a modern metropolis famed for its cosmopolitan culture and for its museums of classical and modern art. The site has been occupied from pre-historic times and stands at the crossing of two ancient Roman roads - Toledo to Zaragoza and Toledo to Segovia. At the time of the medieval pilgrimage, Madrid was a medium-sized settlement clustered around a Moorish *Alcázar* constructed in 854 by the Emir of Toledo as a defence against a Christian attack from the north on Toledo. The capture of the *Alcázar* by Alfonso VI of León in 1083 brought the settlement into Christian hands at an early stage of the Reconquest and the repopulation of the town led to a thriving agricultural and commercial economy and a probable doubling of its inhabitants to about 25,000 by the mid-sixteenth century. This, together with its strategic position, good communications and independence from powerful religious and political factions, led to Felipe II's choice of Madrid as the seat of government. Madrid prospered and grew further in population although it was neither a particularly grand town nor an episcopal See (until 1885).

By the end of the twelfth-century there were ten parishes within its walls, one of which was Santiago el Mayor. The Medieval church of Santiago, built over a former Moorish *mesquita*, was demolished by Joseph Bonaparte (brother of Napoléon) to increase the open space around the Palacio Real. The present church of Santiago dating from 1811 is in Calle de Santiago very close to site of the Medieval one. The Medieval street pattern can still be seen to the west of the Plaza Mayor in the former *Morería* or Moorish Quarter. Here there are two *Mudejar* churches with red-brick towers - San Nicolás de Servitás (Plazoleta de San Nicolás) and San Pedro el Real o el Viejo (Costanilla de San Pedro) which is also built on the site of a Moorish *mesquita*.

There are three documented accounts of eighteenth century pilgrims who passed along parts of the route between Madrid and Sahagún created by the Amigos. Nicolas Albani (Viaje desde Napoles a Santiago de Compostela 1743) went from Madrid to El Escorial, then from Segovia to Valladolid along the Amigo's route before diverting to Palencia, "losing himself" and joining the Camino Francés at San Nicolás de Moratinos near Sahagún. In 1750, the Frenchman, Santiago Baza and the Italian, Juan Dano, who were in trouble with the law in Oviedo, also travelled from Madrid to El Escorial and then along the Amigo's route as far as Medina de Ríoseco.

At the northern edge of the Medieval town in the Plaza de Santiago, very close to the church of Santiago, is the church of the Comendadoras de Santiago of 1668, the church of a monastery founded in the early sixteenth-century by Iñigo Zapata y Cardeñas. Inside is a retablo of Santiago Matamoros by Lucas Jordán (1695) and a statue of Santiago Peregrino by Antonio Pereda (1660). The church is a fitting place to start your pilgrimage and you can obtain your first *sello* here.

Accommodation

All the facilities of a capital city. Hotels and hostels in all price brackets.

Tourist Offices

Nowadays there are Information booths at Madrid Airport and the main bus and train stations.

The Municipal Office of Tourist Information is at Plaza Mayor, 3. Telephone 913 665 477.

Street maps of the city are available at tourist offices and in the receptions of hotels and hostels.



Church of Santiago and St John in the Plaza de Santiago.

Setting out from Madrid

Walking notes

The route plotted by the Amigos starts at the Church of Santiago in the Plaza de Santiago near the Cathedral and Royal Palace. Waymarking with yellow arrows begins at the Plaza Castilla, in the Paseo de la Castellana, 6.5 kms from the Church. The waymarked route goes from there past Fuencarral, 11kms from the Church, on the way to Tres Cantos, 23 kms from the church. There is a metro station at both the Plaza Castilla and Fuencarral.

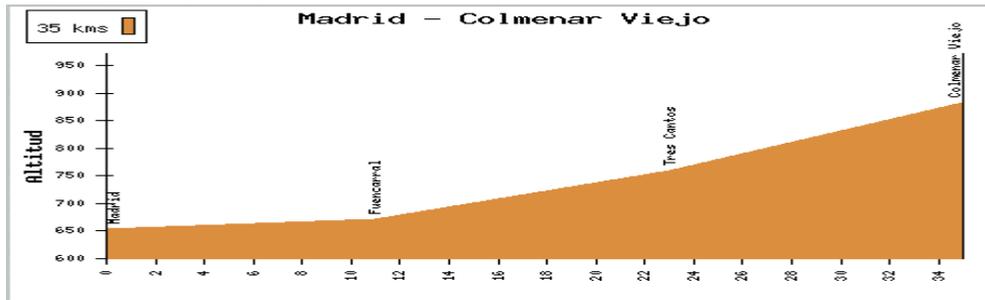
If you decide to walk from the Church of Santiago simply follow a map of the City until you see the first yellow arrow on the lampstand outside of the Rodilla Restaurant in the Paseo de la Castellana.

You may decide to take the Metro to this point. There are a number of exits from the Metro station. The easiest way to locate the starting point is to face in the direction of the two 'leaning' towers which dominate the area so that you can see on the left hand side of the road beyond them three huge modern glass office blocks. Move over to the left hand side of the road and the Rodilla Restaurant is situated on the left beyond the two leaning towers (*see photo*). The route is well waymarked from this point.



If you decide to depart from Fuencarral, take the metro, line 8, to the Fuencarral terminus. Facing the exit steps from the metro, go diagonally right across a small car park (keeping the metro wall to your left) and left through a small passage to Calle Braille. Turn right to the junction with Calle Anastasia López and left up to the junction with Calle de Sant Cugat de Valles. Cross over Calle de Sant Cugat de Valles onto a small tarmac road. This is the Paseo de las Alamedillas which leads to a small park where you will pick up the yellow arrows.

Much of the way to Colmenar Viejo now follows the "Antiguo Camino del Pardo" and the early part is dominated by the huge walled estate of Monte El Pardo, former royal hunting ground and residence of General Franco. For a considerable distance before reaching Tres Cantos the wall will be on your left and eventually the railway line will be on your right. On the edge of Tres Cantos there is a footbridge crossing the motorway. Follow this if staying in Tres Cantos for the night. If simply seeking water or provisions this may be a long detour. There is a regular bus service to and from Madrid and returning there may be a good option for the first night.



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11 kms to Fuencarral (from the Church of Santiago)



Both sets of towers remain in view.

12 kms to Tres Cantos – a small industrial town with banks and a pharmacy.

Accommodation

Holiday Inn Express Hotel (€€€) Ronda De Poniente 16 (Euronova, 3) 28760 Tres Cantos Tele: 918 039 900 www.hiexpress.com	Hotel VP Jardín de Tres Cantos (€€€) Avenida de los Encuartes, 17 28760 Tres Cantos Tele: 918 064 999 www.vphoteles.com	Hostal Tres Cantos (€€) Avenida Viñuelas (Parq. Tecnológico), 17 28760 Tres Cantos Tele: 918 037 117 www.hostaltrescantos.es
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Walking notes

Much walking to Comenar Viejo in open countryside. No Fuentes. Follow Calles de las Huertas and Santa Ana into the centre.

12 kms to Colmenar Viejo - an ancient hill-top town, with a *casco antiguo* crowned by the splendid Gothic church of the Asunción de Nuestra Señora and several chapels and hermitages. The church was founded by the Mendoza family, the powerful lords of much of the lands around Manzanares el Real, including Colmenar el Viejo. Their wealth and patronage is clearly visible in the size of the church and in the magnificence of its architecture, carved portals and *retablo mayor*. There are banks, shops and a pharmacy.

Accommodation

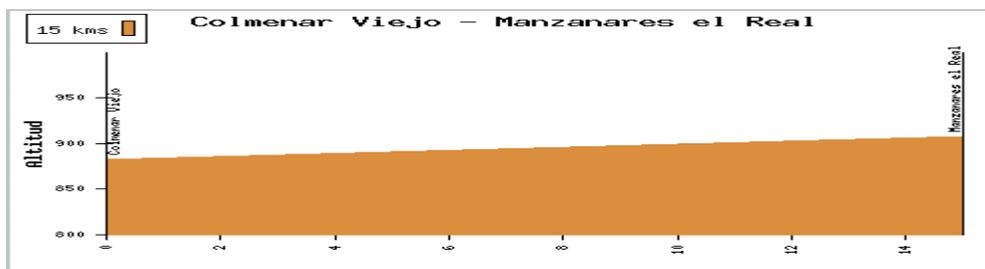
Hostal El Chiscon (€€) Calle de los Frailes, 89 28770 Colmenar Viejo Tele: 918 452 847	Hostal Chabeli (€?) Boteros, 6 28770 Colmenar Viejo Tele: 918 451 165 Mob: 0626 882 237
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Walking Notes

Follow the arrows from the church of the Asunción de Nuestra Señora in Calle Isabel la Católica. Soon the town stops and you are out on rocky granite moorland. Ahead stretches the white camino and, in the far distance, the Sierra de Guadarrama to which you are heading. From here to Manzanares el Real the way largely follows walled *cañadas*, excellently waymarked, easy walking with only the occasional rocky scramble. In Spring there is an abundance of wildflowers.



Walk towards the mountains you will eventually cross.



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15 kms to Manzanares el Real - a delightful town with a long history. Vestiges of Druid, Roman and Visigothic civilisations remain in the area, but the town itself was founded in 1248 after the Reconquest, by citizens of Segovia. When Alfonso X incorporated it into his kingdom, it became El Real de Manzanares, reaching its zenith in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries under the powerful Mendoza family who were awarded estates in the area for services to the crown. Diego Hurtado de Mendoza received El Real de Manzanares from Juan II at the end of the fourteenth century and proceeded to build a castle - its ruins, the Castillo Viejo, lie beside the camino. But it was the grandson of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, the first Duque del Infantado, who built the present castle in the late fifteenth century around a thirteenth century hermitage whose *Mudéjar* apse is visible in the castle walls. The castle is a superb example of Castilian military architecture extended and embellished as a residential palace under the second Duque del Infantado by Juan Gúas. But the Mendozas occupied the castle for less than a hundred years. Family quarrels caused it to be abandoned and it lay in ruins until the first restoration works in 1914. It was declared a Historical Art Monument in 1931. The castle is now owned by the Comunidad de Madrid, the Regional Council and used for public functions, conferences, exhibitions and so forth and can be visited - conducted tours only. Also to be seen are the hermitage of Nuestra Señora de la Peña Sacra and the fifteenth-sixteenth century church of Nuestra Señora de las Nieves.

Manzanares el Real is now a major tourist centre for *Madriileños* with lakeside sporting and recreational facilities and many kilometres of footpaths long and short in the mountains of La Pedriza. Walking is a long tradition in the area - the Cañada Real Segoviana of 1273 from Gibraltar to Soria passes nearby and between Manzanares el Real and Cercedilla, the camino from Madrid to Sahagún makes use of the great Sendero de Largo Recorrido GR10 from Valencia to Lisbon (600 kilometres). While the town is not on a historic pilgrim route, pilgrims passed through. The town's tourist literature contains a picture of a very nineteenth century looking pilgrim crossing the Sierra de Guadarrama with a hat covered in scallops, a long staff topped by a gourd, plus-four style trousers and his possessions carried in a sack over his shoulders.

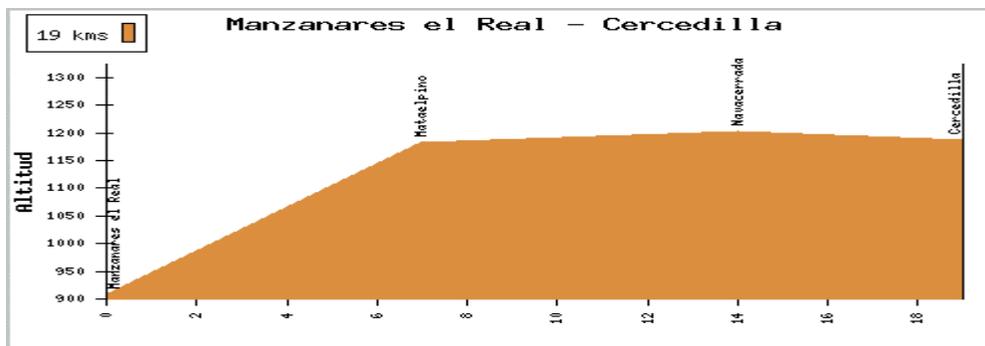
The town has many facilities: shops, banks, post office, pharmacy, medical centre and an albergue.

Accommodation

Hotel Parque Real (€€) Calle Padre Damián, 4 28410 Manzanares el Real Tele: 918 539 912	Hostal El Tranco (€) Calle Tranco, 4 28410 Manzanares el Real Tele: 918 530 063	Hostal El Yelmo (€) Avenida de la Pedriza, 65-67 28410 Manzanares el Real Tele: 918 530 655
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Walking notes

From Manzanares el Real the way now runs north-westwards along the foothills of the Sierra de los Porrones, the southern edge of the Parque Regional La Pedriza.



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7 kms Mataelpino - a bank and shop.

Accommodation

Hotel las Gacelas (€€€) Paseo de San Sebastián, 53

28490 Becerril De La Sierra
Tele: 918 538 000

7 kms to Navacerrada - set in a bowl above the small Embalse de Navacerrada. From the *embalse* there is a good view of the Sierra de los Porrones. The church of the Navidad de Nuestra Señora, probably seventeenth century, and a few surrounding houses are all that remains of the old village. The town has a bank, post office and pharmacy.

Accommodation

Hotel La Barranca (€€€) Ctra. Pinar de la Barranca, s/n 28491 Navacerrada Tele: 918 560 000	Hotel rural Las Postas (€€€) M-601 28491 Navacerrada, Tele: 918 560 250	Hotel Nava Real Restaurante (€€€) Calle de las Huertas, s/n 28491 Navacerrada Tele: 918 531 000
Hostal Residencia Doña Endrina (€) Avenida de Madrid, s/n 28491 Navacerrada Tele: 918 560 200	Hostal Mayte (€) Paseo de los Españoles, 15 28491 Navacerrada Tele: 918 560 297	

Walking notes

To leave Navacerrada, turn right up the Calle de la Iglesia and take Calle de Abel which goes steeply uphill through the more affluent outskirts of the town. Turn right at the top for 200m and, at an electricity post, left and scramble up two very steep sandy banks through pinewoods onto the *carretera*. The path way is marked all the way to Cercedilla.

5 kms to Cercedilla - like Navacerrada, a collection of *urbanizaciones* and holiday houses though it is larger and has an old centre. There are a couple of hermitages and the parish church of San Sebastián. The town is another popular walking centre for *Madrileños*. There is a frequent train service to Madrid as well as all other facilities.

Accommodation

Hostal La Maya (€)
Calle de la Carrera del Señor, 2
28470 Cercedilla
Tele: 918 521 267

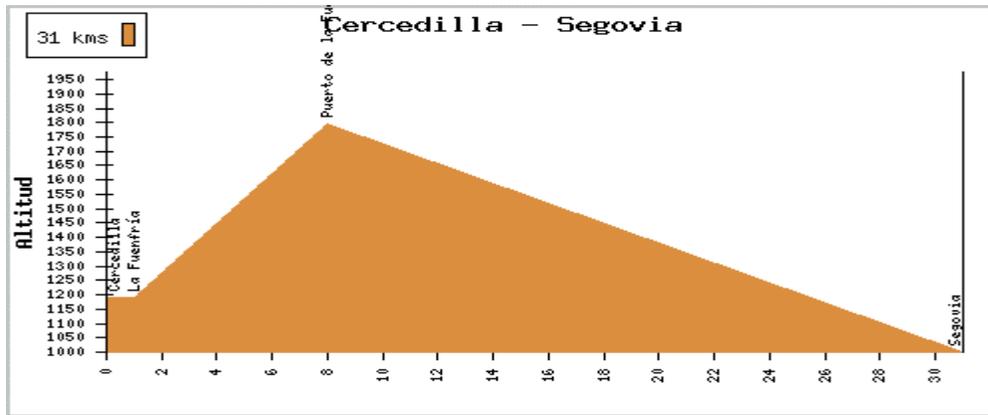
Hostal Aribel Longinos (€)
Calle de Emilio Serrano, 71
28470 Cercedilla
Tele: 918 521 511
(Follow signs to the Renfe station
– the hostel is beside it)

Albergue Villa Castora (¿72 beds?)
Carretera de las Dehesas, s/n
Tele: 918 520 334 || 918 522 411
918 521 267
alb.juv.villacastora@madrid.org

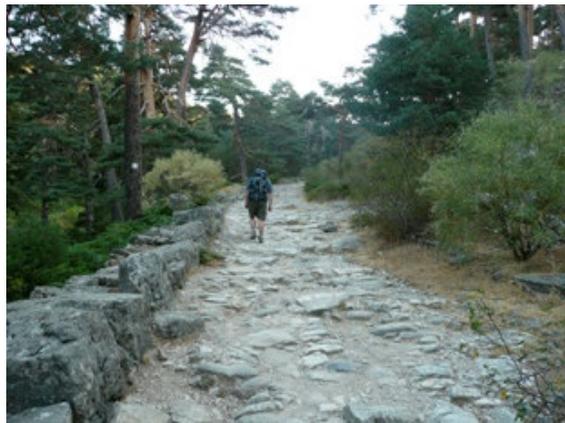
Walking Notes

Pilgrims will almost certainly stay in Cercedilla or begin the next stage to Segovia here. The route through Cercedilla is well waymarked. The way crosses the thickly wooded Sierra de Guadarrama and is 31kms long. The first 8kms, a steep uphill climb of around 650m to the Puerto de la Fuenfría (1796m), the pass over the mountains, is a mountain walk in mountain conditions. Some of this is on the old roman road, the Calzada Romana. In winter the pass will almost certainly be blocked by snow. After this it is downhill all the way to Segovia. Pilgrims will probably see recreational walkers or mountain-bikers but otherwise the area is devoid of villages or farms. Take food and ample water although there is at least one working fuente after Puerto de la Fuenfría. The way is very clear and excellently waymarked in the mountains and

on the descent. The walk is exceptionally wild and beautiful - scenically the high point of the Madrid route.



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A pilgrim walking up the Calzada Romana.

8 kms from Cercedilla to the peak of the mountain at Puerto de la Fuenfría.

23 kms to Segovia. Of Iberian origin, Segovia became an important Roman town in 80 B.C. at the junction of two important military roads. The town was a bishopric under the Visigoths, then occupied by the Jews and by the Moors until the Reconquest in 1085. The town was a favoured residence of the Castilian monarchs, the meeting place of the *Cortes* (parliament) and Isabel la Católica was formally proclaimed Queen of Castile here. But Segovians had no love for Carlos V and enthusiastically embraced the rising of the *Comuneros* in 1520 in which the Romanesque cathedral was totally destroyed. From the Middle Ages to the mid-seventeenth century, the northern *meseta* was the most densely populated and richest part of Spain with an economy based on cereals and livestock. Sheep provided Segovia with its greatest period of prosperity as an important centre of wool manufacturing from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, only to decline as a result of, amongst other reasons, the severe fiscal regime of the House of Austria. The city then became somewhat of a backwater and even today retains a village-like atmosphere. The old town is a collection of *barrios*, small villages each grouped around its Romanesque church, and rocky *cuestas* reach almost to the "prow" of the *Alcázar* on the northern and south-western sides.

Segovia's long history has bequeathed the city with a heritage rich in monuments - the city is a World Heritage city. Strangely though, the only major Roman legacy is the monumental aqueduct brilliantly engineered such that the huge granite blocks of which it is constructed are held together without mortar. Dating from the reign of Augustus and restored by Trajan as well as by the Catholic Kings to repair the damage caused by the Moors, the aqueduct was in use until modern times. The Jews left a small *Judería* to the east of the present cathedral and a small synagogue; the Moors laid the foundations of the *Alcázar*; and the Christians built the "*Iglesias Porticadas*", the distinctive galleried, Romanesque churches, the cathedral and the *Alcázar* itself.

The galleried churches constitute a local architectural style and although the largest concentration is found in Segovia itself, many examples also occur in villages throughout the provinces of Segovia, Soria, Rioja and Navarra. The purpose of the porticos is not known. One theory is that they were meeting places

- for local municipal affairs and governance - the villages of north-eastern Castile were governed under *fueros* awarded after the Reconquest or perhaps for the weavers' and merchants' guilds. There are about a dozen of these churches, all of a similar design - rounded apse, sturdy belltower and a small portico usually on the south side but sometimes on three sides and often with fine capitals. Each is of interest. San Justo contains splendid Romanesque frescos of Christ Pantocrator and the Passion in the semi-dome of the apse. San Esteban has the finest and tallest belfry - "Reina de los Torres Españolas" and San Millán and San Martín are the largest and grandest overall. San Martín has a curiosity 'though for pilgrims - a very worn and weathered capital of the fight between Roldán and Ferragút on the north portico and inside, in the Capilla de los Herreros, are statues of Santiago Apóstol and Santiago Alfeo.

The cathedral, to designs by Juan Gil de Hontañón and, on his death, by his son Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón, is the last great Gothic cathedral in Spain. In design and grand conception the cathedral is similar to Salamanca cathedral by the same architects. Work began in 1525 and was completed in about 1590. The cathedral has a vast apse, all spikes and crockets, a plain west façade and a high belfry. Inside there is the usual central arrangement of *capilla mayor*, choir and retrochoir and the outer aisles and ambulatory are lined with small, dark chapels, each behind its firmly-locked grille. One, mid-way along the south aisle, is the chapel of Santiago with a *retablo* of the Life of Santiago, including Santiago Matamoros, the Calling of the Apostle by Christ, the Martyrdom of Santiago, the Translation of the body from Palestine to Galicia and so on. There is also a cloister (the Hontañóns are buried here) and a cathedral museum.

The *Alcázar* perches like a stately ship on the "prow" of a crag high above the Clamores and Eresma rivers. Originally a simple Roman and later Moorish stronghold, after the Reconquest it served to defend the new frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain. Successive monarchs transformed the simple fort into a grand late-Romanesque-Gothic palace. The building seen today reflects the complete rebuilding by Juan II and Felipe II's addition of the slate-roofs and spires. In 1862 the *Alcázar* almost completely burned down. Rebuilding of the exterior to a faithful copy of the original was completed in 1896 but refurbishment of the interior was delayed until 1951. Interestingly, the interior refurbishment is not necessarily a copy of that destroyed; where possible, the restorers have taken original ceilings, furniture and furnishings of contemporary date to those destroyed from other buildings in the province and installed them here. For example, the *Mudéjar* coffered ceiling in the chapel comes from the village of Cedillo de la Torre. Also in the chapel is a *retablo* of Santiago Matamoros.

This is a large town with all facilities including rail links.

Accommodation – many hotels and hostals at all prices – rooms also available around town – this is only a selection of those available:

Hotel Acueducto (€€€)
Avenida del Padre Claret, 10
40001 Segovia
Tele: 902 250 550

Hotel Las Sirenas (€€)
Calle de Juan Bravo, 30
40001 Segovia
Tele: 921 462 663

Hotel Infanta Isabel (€€€)
Plaza Mayor, 12
40001 Segovia
Tele: 921 461 300

Hotel Los Linajes (€€)
Calle del Doctor Velasco, 9
40003 Segovia,
Tele: 921 460 475

El Hidalgo Hostal (€)
Calle de José Canalejas, 5
40001 Segovia
Tele: 921 463 529

Hostal SotoPalacio (€)

Calle de Segovia, 15
40154 Segovia
Tele: 921 485 100

Hostal Juan Bravo(€)
Calle de Juan Bravo, 12
40001 Segovia
Tele: 921 463 413

Accommodation may be provided to pilgrims at the Carmelite Convent:
Convento de los PP. Carmelitas
Alameda de la Fuencisla, s/n
Tele: 921 431 349 || 921 431 961

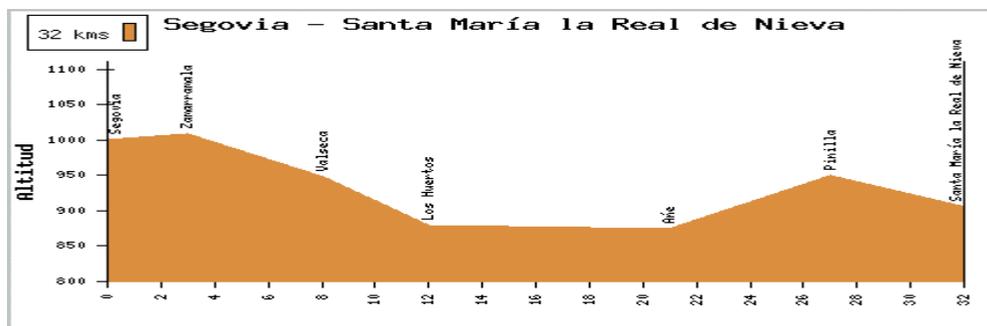
Walking notes

To leave Segovia, cross the Plaza Mayor diagonally left and follow Calle de Marqués del Arco past the cathedral and along Calle de Daoiz towards the *Alcázar* to Plazuela de Juan Guás following it round to the top of the Calle del Pozo de la Nieve. You will see arrows on the way leading you to the distinctive 12 sided church of the Vera Cruz on the Carretera de Zamarramala on the northern edge of the city. The church was founded by the Knights Templar (1204-8) on the site of a Roman temple and its design is modelled on the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. To the basic twelve-sided structure are added three Romanesque apses and a sturdy square Romanesque belfry. Inside is a double-storey twelve-sided chamber, replicating the exterior in which intending knights kept vigil with their weapons on the altar.

The route is well waymarked.



Church of Vera Cruz leaving Segovia.



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3 kms to Zamarramala - a shop and bar.

5 kms to Valseca - a bar and bakery. Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción.

4 kms to Los Huertos - set in poplars in the valley of a tributary of the Eresma. It has a bar and shop and a large church also dedicated to Nuestra Señora de la Asunción set in poplars in the valley of a

tributary of the Eresma.

Walking Notes

A kilometer or so after Los Huertos you pass, to your right, the small squat and heavily-buttressed **Ermita de Nuestra Señora**. The exterior of the building is rather ordinary, but the interior is very beautiful and lovingly cared for. There is a fully enclosed small west porch, a shelter for the pilgrim against rain and sun and perhaps even for the night. Continue downhill to the rails of the now-disused Segovia to Medina del Campo railway.

Be vigilant for waymarks. The route follows the line of the disused railway to the right of the fence. Keep straight on for approximately 2kms to the road bridge. Turn left over the railway and follow the arrows.

9 kms to Añe with bar. **NB:** There is a small albergue here but there have been reports that it is unsuitable for use. Further information would be helpful.

6 kms to Pinilla-Ambroz. There are no facilities.

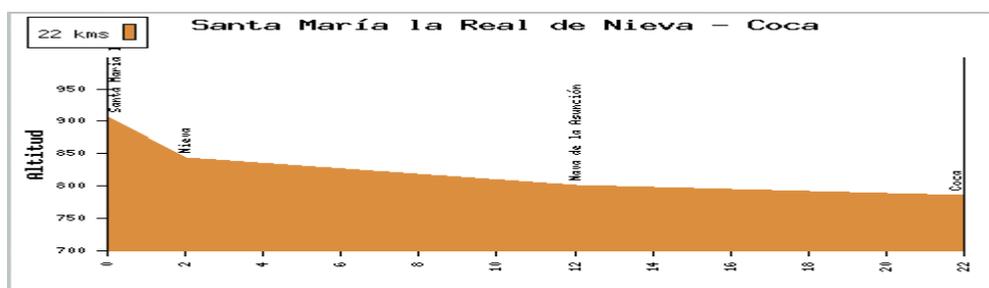
5 kms to Santa María la Real de Nieva - an old village dominated by its church of Nuestra Señora de la Soterraña. Though sadly disfigured by new residential building, the village has a charming old centre with an arcaded central *plaza*. The Gothic church is a delight. Formerly the church of a Dominican monastery founded in 1393 by Enrique III and his wife, Catherine of Lancaster, it has a finely carved north portal and a lovely white limestone Romanesque-Gothic cloister with recently restored capitals. There are bars, restaurants, shops, banks, a post office and buses to Madrid, Segovia and elsewhere.

Accommodation

Hostel Avanto (€)
Santa María la Real de Nieva
Tele: 921 594 223

Hostel Real (€€)
Santa María la Real de Nieva
Tele: 921 594 462

Albergue de Peregrinos de Santa María la Real de Nieva (6 beds)
Calle Fuensanta, 1
Tele: 921 594 667 || 619 772 412



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2 kms to Nieva - bars, shops and buses to Segovia and Coca. The village is an attractive blend of slate and brick houses with pantile roofs, their small gardens enclosed by slate walls. But its jewel is the Romanesque-*Mudéjar* church of San Esteban. It has a pure *Mudéjar* brick apse and tower and a Renaissance south portico. The interior has been restored.

Accommodation

Casa Rural El Molino (¿€€?)
Parque, nº 4
Nieva
Tele: 921 594 715 || 680 763 842

Hotel El Molino** (¿€€?)
 Calle Posadas, 4
 Nieva
 Tele: 921 594 475

10 kms to Nava de la Asunción - larger than Santa María la Real de Nieva and more modern, with many red-brick buildings including the huge church of La Asunción de Nuestra Señora, originally late-*Mudéjar* but since much rebuilt. There are shops, bars, restaurants, banks, a post office, and buses to Segovia and elsewhere.

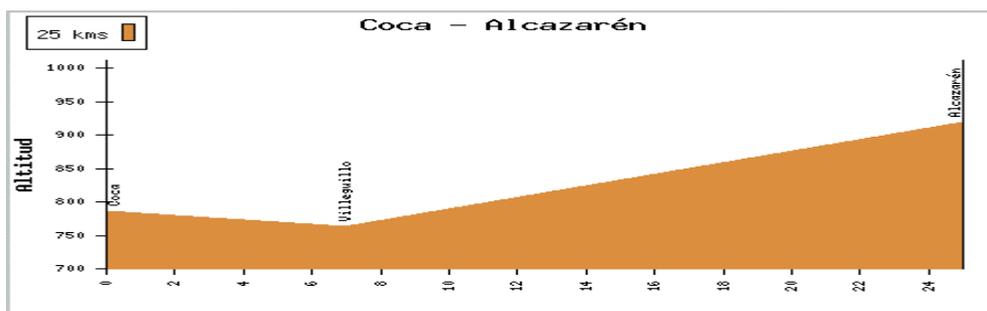
Accommodation

Albergue de Peregrinos
 Plaza de Toros de Nava (4 places)
 Plza José Mata
 Tele: 921 580 036
Key from Margeurita at the Pasteleria (Bakery) Rosana, Elías Virseda, 21
Tele: 921580 993

10kms to Coca - the Iberian *Cauca*, the birth place of the Emperor Theodosius I (though he is also claimed by Itálica). Today it is famous for its extraordinary fifteenth century Gothic-*Mudéjar* red-brick castle, a truly fantastic creation of crenellated towers and turrets arranged symmetrically around double square walls. The castle was built by Moors on the orders of Bishop Alonso de Fonseca who had been given permission to build by Juan II. The Gothic church of Santa María La Mayor is of particular pilgrim interest. High above the *retablo mayor* is a statue of Santiago Peregrino with staff, gourd and scallops. A marble grave slab on the chancel floor is carved with scallop shells and a fanciful adaption of the sword of the Order of Santiago. There are also two fine marble tombs of members of the Fonseca family, the owners of the castle. Coca retains a short stretch of its medieval walls and the Arco de la Villa, the town gate and the *Mudéjar* Torre de San Nicolás. There are bars, restaurants, shops, banks, a post office and buses to Segovia.

Accommodation

C.T.R. La Resinería (¿€€?) Calle Los Cinco Caños, 2 Coca Tele: 921 586 534 921 586 006	Casa Rural La Era (¿€€€?) Avenida de Icona, 26 40480 Coca (Segovia) Tele: 921 586 153 667 114 300	Refugio Municipal de Coca (4 beds) Avda de Juan Pablo II, 42 Tele: 921 586 011
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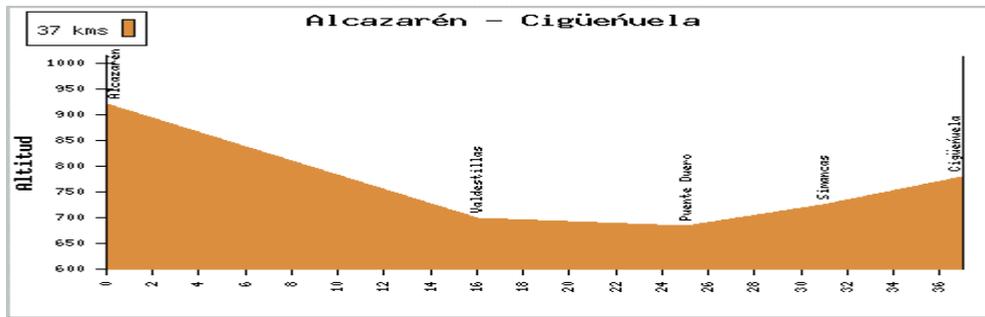
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7 kms to Villeguillo - There is an imposing red-brick church of San Pedro Apóstol with an evening Mass and warm welcome for pilgrims. There is a bar which does lunches and even late lunch for pilgrims. Albergue: Phone mayor first for key and directions. The albergue is on the opposite edge of the village, so it is suitable for pilgrims with horses or donkeys. The albergue is modern with a fully equipped kitchen with fridge and microwave. There are 2 bathrooms.

Accommodation

Albergue de peregrinos de Villeguillo
 (20 beds), Paraje de El Terrero

Tele: 921 583 104 || 921 583 077
 677 534 266 || 921 583 102
 638 154 916



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18 kms to Alcazarén - bars, restaurants, shops and buses to Olmedo and Valladolid. Ruined *Mudéjar* red-brick church of San Pedro. Restored *Mudéjar* church of Santiago. Follow the arrows into Alcazarén. Turn right at the Monument to the Discovery of America. This leads to the church, Iglesia de Santiago Apostle, with the albergue, an old house, right beside it. To collect the key continue on across the Plaza Mayor to Bar Pepin. Key may also be available at Bar Real (just down the street from Pepin). Bar Pepin is very helpful and does meals. Albergue at Alcazaren is in half a rundown house with enclosed yard, in need of maintenance, but it is free. Key opens the metal door at the side of the building.

Accommodation

Hostal El Puente (¿€?) Ctra. de Madrid Tele: 983 609 234 983 609 154	Albergue de Alcazarén (4 beds) Plaza Mayor, 6 Tele: 983 609 002 983 609 025 610 530 025 921 566 363
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5 kms to "Brazuelas". Follow the camino and after an easy walk on a clear sandy path through the woods you exit at "**Brazuelas**" - a picturesque, ochre walled complex of farmhouse, broiler houses, farm buildings, a chapel, *palomars* and a private ethnographical museum. It is also the mid-way point on the camino between Madrid and Sahagún. This is marked by a modern pilgrim *Cruceiro* with Jacobean sculptures around the base, including the Translation of the Relics of Santiago and the tomb of the Apostle in the crypt of Santiago Cathedral.

9 kms to Valdeestillas - bars, restaurants, shops, banks, a post office, buses and RENFE - Medina del Campo to Valladolid suburban service. There is the Gothic church of Nuestra Señora del Rosario.

9 kms to Puente Duero - a neat and tidy modern town with lots of low brick houses and small workshops which line the Cañada de Valdeestillas, the way into the town and to the Duero and the picturesque medieval bridge over the river known locally as *pucelana*. There are bars, restaurants, shops and buses to Medina del Campo and Valladolid. The albergue is located at the entrance to Puente Duero. Do not cross the bridge rather follow Left into Calle Aniago. The Albergue is a wooden building on the right past an orchard. It is helpful if you telephone ahead and warn the Hospitalero that you are coming. 10 beds in small rooms, well equipped.

Accommodation

Albergue Peregrinos de Puente Duero (10 beds), Calle Aniago, 4 (before crossing the bridge) Tele: 678 318 188 ajovas@yahoo.es
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6 kms to Simancas - the Roman *Septimanica* on a major crossing of Roman roads, and an episcopal see since 927 and an important defensive site along the line of the Duero - is a picturesque old hilltop town grouped around the church of El Salvador with its huge Romanesque tower and its castle. Originally Moorish and then taken by the Christians, the castle was rebuilt by Alfonso III in "château-style". In 1545, Felipe II designated it the "General Archive of the Kingdom" which it remains today - some thirty-two million documents in fifty-two rooms. The documents held here are the historic ones - there are others of more recent date in Ministries in Madrid. There are bars, restaurants, shops, banks, a post office and two frequent suburban bus routes to Valladolid.

Detour: There are regular buses from Simancas to **Valladolid** - the nearby capital of Spain's largest province, Castile-Leon. It is a large thriving city with an airport providing links to the UK and the rest of Spain. There is a wealth of history in this medieval town where King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella married in the 15th century and where Christopher Columbus died in 1506.

Valladolid has many sites worth visiting, including the cathedral commissioned in 1580 by King Felipe II. The Museo Nacional de Escultura (National Sculpture Museum) houses a magnificent collection of intricately carved and painted religious sculptures and the building itself is an impressive example of Spanish Renaissance architecture.

One of Spain's most famous sons, writer and poet Miguel Cervantes, author of Don Quixote, lived and wrote in Valladolid for many years, and his former home has now been turned into a museum.

Accommodation

Hotel Simancas (€€) Ctra. Nacional 620 Tele: 983 590 363	Hostal La Abuela (€) Ctra. Nacional 620 Tele: 983 590 375
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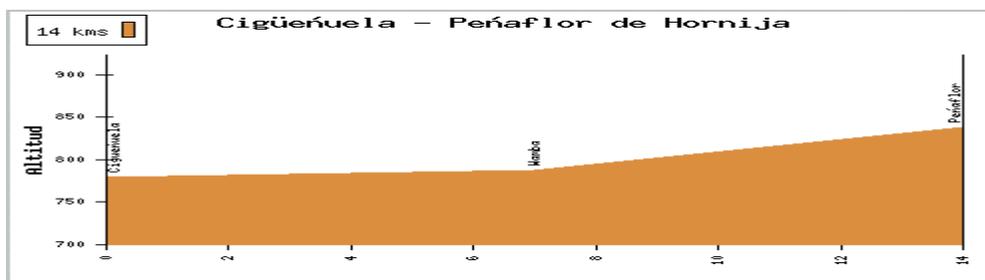
6 kms to Ciguñuela - bars, shops, a pharmacy and occasional buses to Torrelobatón and Valladolid.

Accommodation

Albergue de Peregrinos La Casa del Maestro (16 beds) Calle Las Eras, 24 Tele: 983 593 000

Walking notes

At Simancas you leave the pine forests and the lands of the Duero for the Tierra de Campos, the Gothic fields. From here to Sahagún is *meseta*, a vast tree-less plateau, sometimes chalk, sometimes sand, enormous fields and enormous skies.



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7 kms to Wamba (Bamba) - bars, a butcher, bakery and occasional buses to Torrelobatón and Valladolid.

Wamba is a beautiful limestone village, well-restored and very reminiscent of villages in Northampton or the Cotswolds. Go up Calles Zapico and de la Cruz to the far end of the village where, to the right, is a large cobbled *plaza*, Calle de la Iglesia and the church of Santa María (or Nuestra Señora de la

Asunción). The church is well worth a visit for it is one of the gems of the Madrid to Sahagún route, visually pleasing, historically interesting and unusual. The village of Wamba takes its name from the Visigothic King Wamba. Some sources say that Wamba was elected successor to King Recceswinth here in 672 and that he took the oath of allegiance on the tomb of his predecessor who is buried in the church. However, there is no evidence of Recceswinth's burial in the church and the locals dispute this story which occurs in other villages (in the province of Zamora).

The church of Santa María dates from 928. In the twelfth century it became a Commandery of the Hospitallers of Saint John who established a monastery. The church now consists of a square Mozarabic east end (from the church of 928); a Romanesque tower and west end from the twelfth-thirteenth century church; and a later Classical-style south portico. Inside is a nave, two aisles and three square apses. There are Mozarabic horseshoe arches in the apses and the chancel arch with round-headed Romanesque arches and capitals along the nave. By the south door is a Roman-Visigothic font from Córdoba. There is a tenth century Romanesque bas-relief of a cross and tenth century pre-Romanesque wall paintings around the apse. A statue of San Roque Peregrino with scallop shells is in a niche along the south wall. Attached to the north side of the church, and reached through a door in the north wall, is a *Capilla Mozárabe* which has a single column and palm vaulting reminiscent of the famous palm vaulting of the Ermita de San Baudilio de Berlanga. There are fourteenth century wall paintings in the chapel. Finally, off the now-disappeared former cloister is a charnel house full of gruesome skulls and bones - the victims of pestilence and war.

Walking notes

Peñaflor de Hornija can be seen from a long distance. There are 2 ravines to cross just before the village. In inclement weather it is possible to avoid the climb up the old cliff track into Peñaflor by taking the left fork at the base of the cliff. This path will lead you around the base of the spur and rejoin the camino on the opposite side.

7 kms to Peñaflor de Hornija - primarily a sheep-farming village, a picturesque collection of old limestone buildings and some new brick houses. There are two beautiful churches - the ruined Romanesque San Salvador and the Gothic parish church of Santa María, whose imposing tower is visible across the plateau. There are bars, shops, banks and a post office.

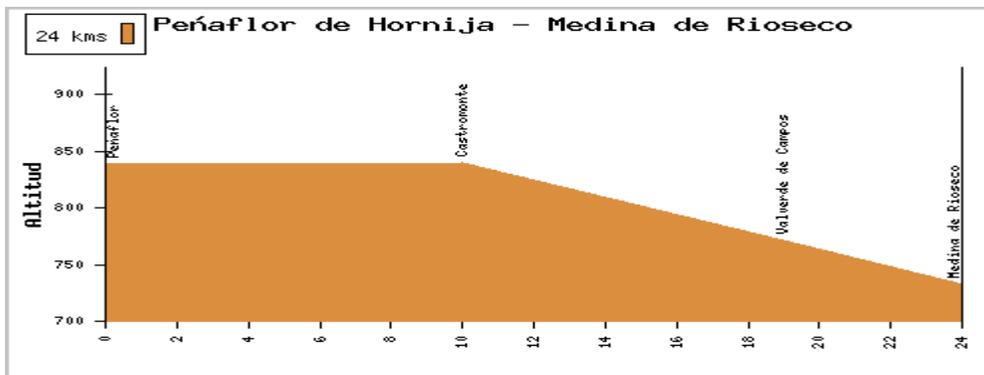
Accommodation

Albergue Municipal de Peñaflor de Hornija
(appears to be on the floor of the sports centre - more information needed)
Plaza Mayor, 1
Tele: 983 565 102

10 kms to Castromonte - two bars, a shop, a *fuenta*, the delightful Plaza de la Constitución and the imposing church of la Purísima Concepción with its slender spire. The albergue is at the entrance to the village, in a restored village school. There is a sign on the front wall: "GRVPO ESCOLAR VALVERDE - MONTE 1930" The key is held by Pepe, telephone 625 866 627. Check with him that the hot water is turned on. This albergue has been renovated to a high standard and is very well equipped, with a kitchen and washing machine.

Accommodation

Albergue (30 beds)
Tele: 625 866 627



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5 kms to Medina de Rioseco. Medina de Rioseco is a quiet town with some pleasant *plazas* and the main street is lined by shady arcades. Medina de Rioseco is the main town of the Tierra de Campos, the Gothic Fields. Historically its economy was founded on sheep and cereals, still economically important today. Apart from sheep and cereals, Medina de Rioseco is known surprisingly as *Ciudad de los Almirantes* - the City of the Admirals - surprising for the city is some two hundred kilometres from the nearest sea. Alonso Enríquez made the city the admiralty headquarters of Castile on April 19th 1424! The admirals financed a grand Convent of San Francisco, consecrated in 1520, though only the conventual church which contains the tombs of the Enríquez family remains, but it is now closed. A second grand church, the *Herrera*-style church of Santa Cruz was (in 1999) closed for restoration with the intention of turning it into a sacred museum - one hopes with better luck than the previous restoration when the vaulting collapsed. This leaves two churches for the pilgrim, both well worth seeing.

First the church of Santa María de Mediavilla, a Gothic hall church dating from 1490 - 1520 (open winter 11-13 hrs and 16-18 hrs; summer 11-14 hrs and 16-19 hrs; closed Monday). Besides fine *retablos*, grilles and the polychrome and gold stucco funerary Capilla de los Benavente, the church possesses a very fine organ and a very fine organist. Some of Medina de Rioseco's renowned *pasos* are also to be found here.

The second is the Church of Santiago. If you see no other church interior on your pilgrimage from Madrid to Sahagún, this you should see. The church of Santiago is a Renaissance church of 1533 designed by Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón. The west front (with scallop shell escutcheons) is, however, severely Classical and the south portal, by Miguel de Espinosa, florid Gothic-Plateresque. There is a statue of Santiago Peregrino in a niche above the south portal and tiny scallop shells on the posts around the south terrace. Inside, the gilded *retablo mayor* by Joaquín Churriguera is stunning. Although gilded high Baroque Rococo may not suit all tastes, it is worth concentrating on the painted panels between the gilt for here is probably assembled the most complete series in Spain of paintings of the Life and Legend of Santiago. And unusually, the *retablo* is well-lit and easy to study.

The panels are arranged broadly as follows:

Top panels: Santiago Matamoros at the Battle of Clavijo.

Centre panels: The Translation of the Apostle's body from Palestine to Padrón. The refusal of Queen Lupa's oxen to move the body. The foundation of the church (later cathedral) at Santiago de Compostela. The burial of the Apostle. The appearance of the Virgen del Pilar to Santiago Apóstol at Zaragoza.

Bottom panels: Jesus calling the Apostles at the Sea of Galilee. The Ministry of Santiago in Palestine.

Surrounding the *retablo* are representations of the twelve Apostles.

NB: Accommodation - there is no albergue at this time, although there are reports that one is being constructed. The Sisters at the Monasterio de Santa Clara provide clean and comfortable rooms cheaply.

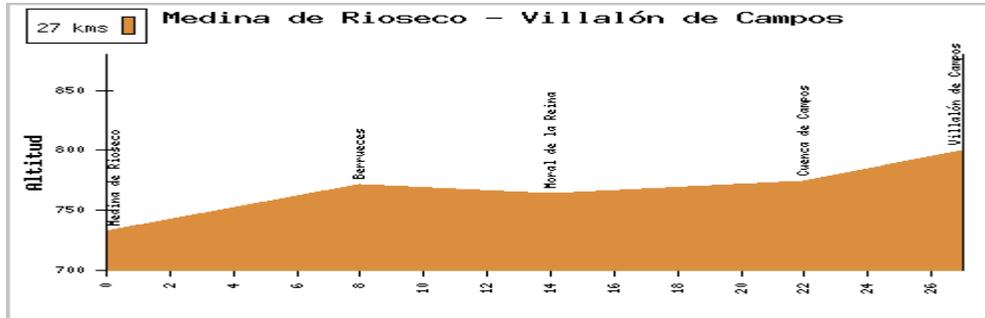
Accommodation

Hostal Duque de Osuna (€) C/Castilviejo, 16	Hostal la Muralla (€) Plaza Santo Domingo, 4	Hostal Castilla (€) Avenida Juan Carlos I, 10
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47800 Medina de Rioseca
Tele: 983 700 179
<http://www.hostalduquedeosuna.com/>

47800 Medina de Rioseca
Tele: 616 740 925

47800 Medina de Rioseca
Tele: 983 700 078



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As you follow the arrows out of Medina de Rioseca a new way along the canal is marked.
This alternative route is highly recommended.

Walking Notes - alternative route

The way out of Medina de Rioseca is well waymarked and the original route goes to Berrueces and Moral de la Reina. However there is a new, well marked route along the canal which is a highly recommended alternative. Follow the arrows out of town then turn Right at the canal and keep straight on following the canal for approx 8 kms. The path is straight and signed with arrows, bollards and occasional bird watchers notice board. Continue past the old weir, until the arrows show you when to exit at the third bridge. Then for approximately 8 kms follow the straight track across the country to Tamariz. There are more bird guides and a viewing "hide" which can provides shelter. Tamariz is a tiny farm village with a stunning part wall of an old castle, Franco signs still visible on buildings and a friendly bar. From Tamariz carry on to Cuenca de Campos, approximately 6 kms.

This alternative route bypasses Berrueces and Moral de la Reina.

8 kms to Berrueces - no facilities. Church of San Pedro Apóstol.

6 kms to Moral de la Reina - a bar and shop.

8 kms to Cuenca de Campos - shops, a bar, post office and buses to Valladolid and León on the *carretera*. Red-brick *Mudéjar* church of Los Santos Justo y Pastor and second Gothic-*Mudéjar* church of Santa María del Castillo.

Accommodation

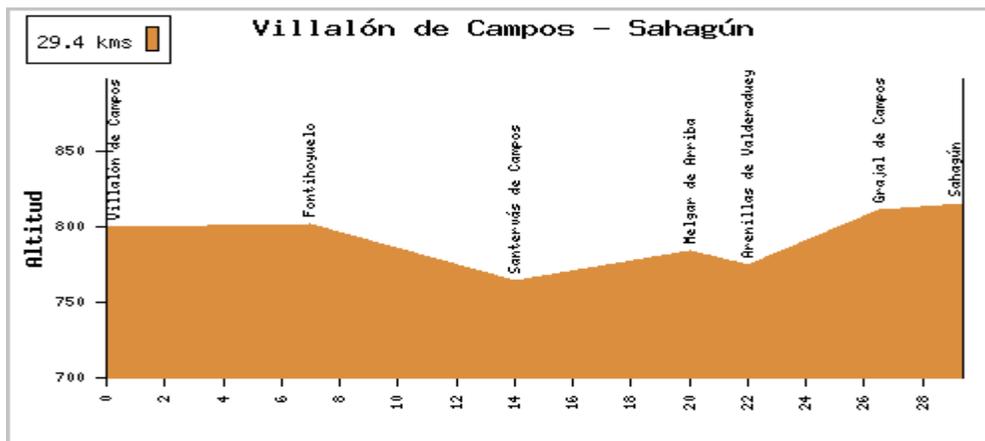
Albergue Municipal de Cuenca de Campos (30 beds)
Calle Domingo Vero, 3

Tele: 983 740 006

5 kms to Villalón de Campos - bars, restaurants, shops, a post office, banks, a tourist office and buses to Valladolid and León. Gothic-*Mudéjar* church of San Miguel and the *Rollo de Justicia*, for which the town is known. The Gothic-Renaissance *Rollo*, a National Monument, was carved by stone masons from Burgos Cathedral and is richly covered with scallop decoration. A second *Mudéjar* church - the red-brick church of San Pedro - has a south portico similar to that of San Lorenzo in Sahagún. There are adobe buildings, one with a fine *Mudéjar* window (in Plaza San Juan) and old arcaded streets.

Accommodation

Hotel Venta del Alón (€€) C San Juan, 6 Villalón de Campos 47600 Tele: 983 740 951 e-mail: ventadelalon@ventadelalon.es web: ventadelalon.es	Hostal Peña (€) Rúa, 6 Villalón de Campos Tele: 983 740 823	Hostal Bécares Villalón de Campos Tele: 983 740 167
Albergue Municipal de Villalón de Campos (28 beds) Tele: 983 740 011		



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9 kms to Fontihoyuelo - no facilities.

12 kms to Santervás de Campos - albergue, a bar and shop. Twelfth-century *Mudéjar*-Romanesque church of Los Santos Gervasio y Protasio. The church was originally associated with the Cluniac Benedictines but the monks left after a disastrous fire which destroyed all the *Mudéjar*-Romanesque church except the fine apses and tower. The outer two apses are red-brick *Mudéjar*, the central one is stone-Romanesque. The nave and west end have been rebuilt - externally in "neo-*Mudéjar*" style and internally in Classical style which grates somewhat with the *Mudéjar* east end. The church has been well-restored. Inside is a twelfth century Romanesque painted wooden *Cristo* which was damaged in the fire but has been restored and repainted and, in the south apse, a Romanesque font.

Accommodation

Albergue Municipal de Santervás (24 beds) Carretera del Cementerio, s/n Tele: 983 785 196

6 kms to Melgar de Arriba - shops, a bank and pharmacy.

Accommodation

Albergue Municipal de Melgar de Arriba (5 beds)
Plaza Mayor, s/n
Tele: 983 785 003

2 kms to Arenillas de Valderaduey - no facilities. The Ermita del Cristo del Humilladero.

4 kms to Grajal de Campos - bars, shops, buses and RENFE with trains to Palencia to León. Grajal de Campos is picturesquely grouped around the arcaded Plaza Mayor and the church of San Miguel with a *Mudéjar* south portal. There are two castles - the imposing square sixteenth century military fortress with huge round corner towers, and the castle-palace of the Marqueses de Grajal, built around 1540 in imitation of that in Alcalá de Henares which abuts the Plaza Mayor.

3 kms to Sahagún (i.e. San Facundus) - bars, restaurants, shops, banks, a post office, RENFE (Palencia to León) and occasional buses.

It is hard to believe that Sahagún was once the place of the principal and most powerful Cluniac - Benedictine monastery in Spain, renowned for its pilgrim hospitality. The monastic buildings were destroyed by fire in the nineteenth century and the stones auctioned off. All that remains is the tower and part of the north apse, north transept and north vault. The upper seventeenth century section of the south portal of the Chapel of San Mancio, also part of the monastery, is now incorporated in the triumphal Arco de San Benito across Avenida Doctores Bermejo y Calderón. Sahagún possesses several red-brick *Mudéjar* churches. The finest of these are: the restored Romanesque San Tirso; San Lorenzo, also Romanesque (open for Mass at weekends only); and the Gothic-*Mudéjar* La Divina Peregrina, originally the church of a Franciscan monastery. In the museum of religious art in the Monasterio de Santa Cruz is the *Virgen Peregrina* after which La Divina Peregrina is named.

Accommodation

Hospedería de las Madres Benedictinas (€€) Monasterio de Santa Cruz en Sahagún (León) Tele: 987 780 078	Hostal Escarcha (€€) c/ Regina Franco, 12 bajo 24320 Sahagún (León) Tele: 987 781 856 636 178 233	Hostal La Codorniz Restaurante (€€) Arco, 84 24320 Sahagún (León) Tele: 987 780 276
Hostal Restaurante El Ruedo (€€) Plaza Mayor, 1 24320 Sahagún (León) Tele: 987 781 834	Albergue de las Madres Benedictinas Avenida de los Doctores Bermejo y Calderón, 8 (Monasterio de Santa Cruz) Tele: 987 780 078	Albergue de peregrinos Viatoris Travesía del Arco, 25 Tele: 987 780 975 679 977 828
Cluny Calle Arco, 87 (Iglesia de la Trinidad) Tele: 987 781 121 987 782 117		

For full details of Sahagún and the way forward along the Camino Francés see the C.S.J. guide to the Camino Francés.

THIS GUIDE IS ALSO GIVEN ON THE STRICT UNDERSTANDING THAT PILGRIMS USING IT WILL SEND COMMENTS HELPFUL TO FUTURE PILGRIMS TO johnniewalker-santiago@hotmail.com.