

Walk Through Spain and Portugal from 1/26—3/22/2026

Results of Week 4: 2/16—2/22/2026

During this week we collectively walked 294 miles and had 20 participants. Sources for photos are given in smaller front near the image. You can click on images to increase their size for a better view. The green line on map of Spain and Portugal indicates places we visited each week. A magenta line on the entire map is our proposed route for our 8 week walk map with major cities marked with magenta dots PAT is free software. Copyright © 2010, 2013 by Ian Macky. **Note: This document is copyrighted by K. Scharer, 2026, except where other copyrights are noted.**

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL MAP



We left the small village of Santo Domingo de Silos just past the city of Burgos on Monday morning and headed along the Camino to Hornillos del Camino. The path was fairly flat and the scenery continued to be endless plots of cereal grains and no trees to provide any shade or shelter from inclement weather as we walked along. We didn't make a stop at Hornillos del Camino of 70 inhabitants because there wasn't much to see.

We continued on the path to next stage to Castrojeriz, which is a bit larger village of about 900 people. The Camino path runs right through the center of the village for about a mile. The village sits at the convergence of the Odra and Pisuerga Rivers and is at the bottom of a large hill. Castrojeriz was granted a charter in 974; it was the first chartered village in the region. As we walk through the village, houses are located all along the Camino path. At one time there were several hostels/ hospitals along the route to support the pilgrims.

We stopped at the Church of Nuestra Señora del Manzano when we came to it on the Camino path in Castrojeriz. The current church's construction was started in 1214 following the orders in the will of Queen Berengaria of Castile. It is located just below the Castle of the town.



Lancastermerrin88, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Manzano, left. Carlospalacios, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia Commons Chapel of Our Lady of the Apple, right.

In the chapel's niche is a statue of The 13th-century image of Nuestra Señora del Manzano which translates to Our Lady of the Apple Tree. The statue is made of painted stone. The Virgin is dressed in a blue tunic decorated with stars and the typical flowing cloth that covers her head and is belted at her waist. She holds Jesus on her left and she is patting His foot with her other hand.



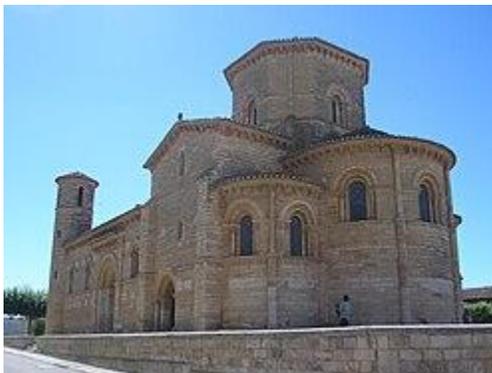
The church has elements of Gothic, Romanesque and Renaissance styles in different parts of the church, perhaps a reflection of differences in either the date of construction or due to renovations. Various statues adorn the exterior. The main altar is from 1760 and has various paintings as adornments.



After leaving the church we decided to climb the hill to visit the ruined castle. Jule_Berlin from Berlin, Germany, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left This old castle was probably built in its location because of the excellent views of the various approaches to the village. Lookouts could spot a troop of warriors at a good distance, allowing villagers time to get to the castle for protection. On the top of the hill, we found what must be the oldest construction of the village. It appears to have been built in old Roman times, followed by a section built by the Visigoths, and then more construction then in the Middle Ages. Perhaps the best-known action of importance committed here was the murder of Eleanor of Castile, Queen of Aragon in 1358 by her nephew Pedro I.

After passing through the village, we were challenged to ascend Alto de Mostelares, the highest peak to climb on the French way. But the path of the Camino is laid out well and the smooth surface of the path makes the climb much more do-able. And this stage was only 15 miles long before we reached Frómista.

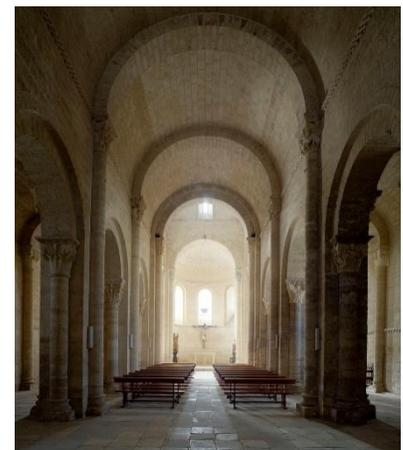
Frómista also has around 900 villagers in residence. It has always been an important stopping place on the Camino. We went to the church of San Martín de Tours de Frómista first. It was built in the 1000's and is Romanesque in style.



I, Santiperez, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior of Saint Martin's, left.

The Church of Saint Martin of Tours was part of a monastery, but the other monastery buildings have since disappeared. PMRMaeyaert, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia Commons, right.

It became part of the Benedictine priory of San Zoilo at Carrión de los Condes in 1118, which we will see in the next stage of our pilgrimage. But in the 1200's the monks abandoned the Church of Saint Martin of Tours. Ownership of the church changed hands several times over the years.



Renovations including a bell tower and a sacristy were implemented in the 15th century. But after the Middle Ages, it started to deteriorate for lack of care. In the 1800's it was closed because of its deterioration. Restoration to return the church to its original state was begun around 1894, after the church was named as a national monument.

While the church has four entrances, only two are currently used. There are only a few windows resulting in a solid set of walls. Various sculptural decorations adorn the building, inside and out. It is not a parish church, although religious services do occur there at special times.

Our next stage was about 12 miles long and took us to Carrión de los Condes. Again, the walk was primarily on flat land and we continued to see Castilian plains. We passed several small villages along the route. When we arrived at Carrión de los Condes we were in the Palencia Province of Spain. It, too, was built along a river, the River Carrión. This is not surprising since, in most places, the rivers not only provided water but a way of shipping goods or traveling before roads were built. Having access to water for drinking, agriculture, and transportation has always been important in developing civilizations. The municipality has been a stopping point for pilgrims on the Camino for centuries.

In 1209, a hospital that provided housing and basic medical care, the Hospital de la Herrada, was established to serve the pilgrims. It was also known as the Hospital de Santa María de la Herrada. It was built by Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón. Girón was a man of business who apparently had acquired wealth and who wished to help the pilgrims. The hospital and its founder became quite powerful in the region through donations of lands and buildings to the bishop and also granted carters to several municipalities. Unfortunately, the hospital has disappeared but the area where it was is still referred to as "la huerta de la Herrada" (the vegetable garden of Herrada).

There were several sights we went to see in Carrión de los Condes. Our first visit was to the

Church of Santa María de las Victorias, sometimes called Santa Maria del Camino. It is from the mid 1100's and was built in Romanesque style.

PMRMaeyaert, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior.

One thing we were particularly interested at this church was the Christ Pantocrator, a depiction of Christ in his glory during the second coming. He is usually sitting on a throne. In this church the sculpture is on the outside of the building on the western façade.

The sculpture there is deemed to be one of the crowning

achievements of Spanish Romanesque art. The western façade is seen on the left below with the lower right picture showing the Pantocrator, right above the arch in the picture but the whole wall is decorated with beautifully sculpted images. In the below right picture, you will note a sort of wreath around Jesus, the central figure. That is called a mandorla, like a halo that surrounds the entire image. I have seen similar images of the Virgin Mary with a mandorla, mostly in painted images.



Montgomery, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia, left
Ángel M. Felicísimo from Mérida, España, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right

Then we went to the monastery of San Zoilo, This monastery belonged to the Benedictine order from the 900's to the 1800's. Today it is a luxury hotel.



Originally it was named after John the Baptist but in 1047 was renamed when the relics of St. Zolius were brought there. Who was St. Zolius? He was a young man who was martyred during the Diocletian Persecution in 304 along with 19 others in Cordoba, Spain.

Saint Zoilus (died 304 AD) is venerated as a saint by the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Christian tradition states that he was a young man martyred with nineteen others at Córdoba, Spain, during the Great Persecution under Diocletian. Some consider him the patron saint of urologists because his kidneys were removed. It is unclear if this was part of the process of torturing him before death or the actual method of execution.



The San Zoilo monastery changed owners several times. By the 1200's the monastery was a major landowner in the municipality. It was so important that King Ferdinand III had the citizens of Carrión de los Condes paying taxes to the Monastery instead of to



the Royal treasury! But then in the next two centuries, San Zoilo underwent deterioration of fortune. In the 1500's,



Benedictines from Valladolid owned and

rebuilt the Monastery. During the 1800's it was abandoned when the Spanish government dispersed the religious communities. Later the Jesuits bought the monastery and turned it into a school. And now it is a luxury hotel. Yildori, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia Commons, main façade of church, above left; Montgomery, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia Commons, altar piece, above right. Zarateman, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, courtyard, above center.

The church still stands. In the church are tombs of the founding family of the monastery. And the altar piece is still there but it was unclear to us if the church was in use. But it was time to move on; this time we headed to Terradillos de los Templarios. We stocked up on water and snacks because unlike most stages in the pilgrimage, there are no villages along the 19-mile path before our destination where we could stop for re-supplying these essentials.

The scenery is unchanging, still mainly grain fields. However, the path here runs on the Via Aquitaine, an old Roman road that ran between The Bordeaux region of Southern France to Astorga in Spain. In the legend of the golden goose, Terradillos de los Templarios is the place where the golden eggs were laid. Per the legend, the Templars buried the golden egg in this town. The name of the town also indicates a connection to the Knights Templar; this group was a Catholic Military Order. We found out that the last Grand Master of this order, Jacques de Molay, had a hostel in the town named after him. There was a Templar convent in the area and that may be the hostel named above.

Manuel Velazquez, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, below left. We did stop at the local church, San Pedro. It was a simple



building, made of brick. The main interesting sight was a Gothic Christ sculpture from about the 1300s. The village did have services for pilgrims such as eateries and hostels, so we were able to refresh ourselves. We also stocked up on water and snacks because there weren't any small villages before the next stage.

Then we headed to Mansilla de las Mulas. This town has less than 2,000 inhabitants but because it is a stop on the Camino, it does have a place for pilgrims to sleep and restock. It is a walled city as the photo, below center, shows. It doesn't have many sights of interest but there is an ethnographic museum which is built upon the ruins of former convent of San Augustin. The Provincial Ethnographic Museum of León, below left, has collections of 8,000 artifacts that represent ordinary



life, often representing different cultural groups, in this case of the Leonese Spanish. Zaratemán, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, left, museum; Mareve, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, walls of the town center.

We had entered the province of Leon when we arrived. This town is also built on a river, the River Esla, and we had to cross a medieval bridge over the river to

continue on the Camino. After exploring the town, we headed 12.5 miles further to the city of Leon, the capital of the province of Leon. We walked along, leaving the Esla River and finding the Porma and Torío Rivers instead.

Next, we stopped at León, which has a population of about the population of León is 125,000 but the metropolitan area population is about 200,000. The city began its existence as a Roman military Encampment in about 29 BC. That encampment became more settled and permanent around 75 AD. It continued to grow over time with various groups or individuals assuming control. By the middle of the 800's it became part of the Kingdom of Asturias and then León became the Kingdom's center of politics around 910. Later the kingdom became the Kingdom of León. In 1188, a parliamentary session was held in Leon including representatives of the cities of the Kingdom of León; this was the first documented parliamentary event in history.

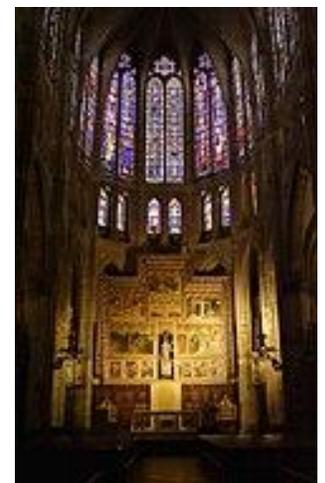
But as had happened elsewhere, the city declined during the middle ages. One factor in the decline was the merger of the two kingdoms of León and Castile in 1301. This consolidation remains today. Spain has 17 autonomous regions which are mostly self-governing with their own parliaments and executive branch of government but not judicial which is controlled by the central Spanish government. This model works because the regional differences in Spain are great and this model allows regions to use their own variant of Spanish such as Leonese or Catalan and to follow the main traditions of the primary group of the region. Beginning in the late 1800's, the city began to grow and urban expansion occurred. Both the start of a railroad there and increased communications helped the city's growth.

We started our exploration of León with its magnificent cathedral, Santa María de Regla de León



Cathedral. Joselodos, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. The cathedral was begun in the 1200's, finished in the mid 1400's and it was built in Gothic style. It is considered to be one of the greatest Gothic cathedrals of all time. One of the features of the cathedral is the use of stained glass for as much of the construction as possible.

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So, less solid construction and more beautiful glass were used in construction. It has 2153 square yards of stained glass! The picture above, right shows one example of the stained-glass usage in an area that is not usually made of glass, the area above the altar. Much of the stained glass in the church is from its period of the cathedral's construction.

José Luis Filpo Cabana, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, basilica facade.



Our next stop was at the Basilica of San Isidoro This Basilica is Romanesque in design. The Royal Pantheon in the Basilica holds the



tombs of many of the kings of Leon from the middle ages.

Alonso de Mendoza, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons , Basilica interior, center. Megginede, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Royal Pantheon, right



We were able to attend Mass here.

The Basilica was built over the ruins of an ancient Roman temple. The original Catholic church was there as early 900's, as part of the monastery of Saint John the Baptist. In 1603, the basilica was built but this building was dedicated to San Isidoro of Seville, whose relics were entombed there.

Next, we found the Monastery of San Marcos built in a mixture of Plateresque and Renaissance Spanish architecture style. Plateresque style was new to me. It began in Spain around in the late 1400's. In this style, the facades of the building or parts of the interior were ornately decorated. Any of the roof, outside walls, chandeliers, altars, tombs, etc., could have these ornate decorations, mostly floral or plant designs but also some heraldic designs, animals and crests were used. Gold might be applied to a roof or the tomb or any other place. Silver was mostly used indoors because it could tarnish. Polychrome usage became part of the style a bit later, in the first half of the 1500's. Currently the building is used as a luxury hostel or hotel for travelers but certainly worthy of exploration!



The original uploader was Josemanuel at Spanish Wikipedia., CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. Emgorio, Public domain, via Wikimedia Common, right.

The photo on the right shows the ornate designs I described above. You can see why this monastery could be converted into a luxury hotel!



León grew in size in the 1960's as rural populations migrated into the city. Our last stop was at the Plaza Mayor, the center square

of Leon. Of course, the picture only shows a portion of the Plaza. We had a chance to visit some shops and select a restaurant for lunch before moving on to hospital de Órbigo.



Hospital de Órbigo , is a small town with about 1000 inhabitants. One of the defining characteristics of the town is a long bridge which is over the Órbigo River, shown right, below.

Cruccone, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia Commons, right

During the 1500's a pilgrim hospital was built here by the Knights Hospitaller to aid the pilgrims on the Camino. It is now only a ruin. The bridge was replaced fairly recently; the town populace destroyed the bridge during the Napoleonic war I the 1800's to slow Napoleon's troops from advancing. While the town provided an opportunity for a brief respite there was not much else to see so we moved onto Astorga.



As we walked the 16 miles to Astorga, we again had flat agricultural land for scenery. Astorga has the distinction of being one of the oldest Catholic dioceses in the area and it covers a large area. The city began as a military encampment but it quickly became a civilian village and then a capital city. Gold mining was a principal source of its economic growth. By the middle of the 200's, it was an episcopal see. The city did suffer from Muslim assaults and barbarian invasions over the centuries. Beginning in the 11th century the city again prospered, partly because it was on the Camino and partly because of the Catholic Church's position there. The city was taken early during the Napoleonic war but the city peasants and workers revolted against the French in 1808 and the city changed owners several times afterwards until the 1812 when the city was once again under Spanish rule. In the mid 1800's through the 1900's, industry boomed with the advent of the railway. Being a stop on the Camino has continued to support growth through income from tourism. We headed for the Cathedral and Episcopal Palace, both shown below.



Mssoller, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, Cathedral, left.

Cruccone, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia Commons Cathedral Altar Piece center. Joselodos, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, Episcopal Palace, right.

Antonio Gaudí, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, formal dining room of the Episcopal Palace, below center.



While Episcopal Palace was originally the Bishop, it has not always served that civil war, it was taken over by local group representing the dictator, Franco. Later residency bit in the mid-1950's, the bishop excellent museum and today it is the Museo art of the Camino can be seen.



designed as the residence for purpose. During the Spanish headquarters of the Falange, a it was restored as the bishop's determined it would make an de los Caminos, a place where

Then we began our next stage to Foncebadón, still in León Province.

Rodelar, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, view of Foncebadón from the hillside above, left image. Rafax, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Hermitage, center image.



During medieval times, the village thrived since it was on the Camino. Sometime in the 10,000's or 11,000's, Guacelmo, who was a hermit, built a hospital and church in Foncebadón. While the church is in ruins, Guacelmo's hermitage remains. Currently a new hostel, named for Guacelmo, provides

services for pilgrims. During the 1950's and 1960's, the village was mostly abandoned as villagers left

looking for employment but with the resurgence in the Camino pilgrimage, the new hostel is most helpful. Perhaps the village will regain more residents.

After a brief stop to see the hermitage, we headed out on the next stage toward Ponferrada, entering a more mountainous region where we climbed another of the highest peaks on this route, known as the Cruz de Ferro on Mount Irago. Of course, that meant we also had to climb down the other side! Sometimes I wonder if it is harder to climb up or down such a peak! But at the bottom was Ponferrada. It

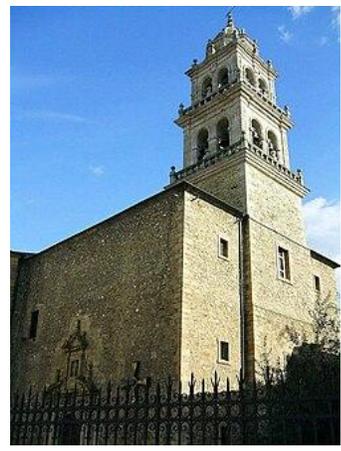


is the second largest city in León Province. The city is encircled by mountains and is split into two sections by the Sil River. The name Ponferrada refers to the iron bridge spanning the Sil. This is our last significant town before we reach We saw the Chapel of the Virgin of Carmen first. It is a small chapel next to the pilgrim's hotel. This chapel, from 1681 or earlier is set in a lovely garden. In 1713, it was transferred by the founders, Pascual Pérez de Quindós and his wife, to the Barefoot Carmelites. Zarateman, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior left and exterior, shown below.

The Carmelites added a hostel for pilgrims on the Camino and for the poor. A hostel still exists beside the Chapel.



Next, we visited the Basilica de Nuestra Señora de la Encina (Basilica of Our Lady of the Holm Oak). Zarateman, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, Basilica right image. José Luis Filpo Cabana, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior of Basilica, below, center.



José Luis Filpo Cabana, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, front façade, right below.

The Basilica was begun around 1573 and is built in



Renaissance style. A legend surrounds the name of the Basilica. There was a carving of the Virgin thought to have been carried by the Bishop of Astorga from the Holy Land to the city. When Muslims were coming to raid the city, the carving was hidden to avoid it falling into Muslim hands. The image was forgotten but centuries later, the Knights Templar found the carving in a Holm Oak tree while collecting

wood. The basilica was named for the tree where the carving was found. The Basilica contains a sculpture of the patron saint.

Clockman, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via Wikimedia Commons, castle of the Knights Templar in Ponferrada, left image.



Our last visit in Ponferrada was to the Castillo de los Templarios, (Castle of the Knights Templar). The castle dominates the cityscape. It is huge, covering about 170,000 square feet. Ponferrada was donated to the Knights in 1178 so the Knights would protect the pilgrims on the Camino. The Grand Master of the Knights, who oversaw all of the functions of the Knights in the Holy Land and in Europe, visited this Castle at one time. However, the Knights' tenure in the Castle there only lasted about 20 years; the order was disbanded by the Pope when the King of France, who was heavily indebted to the Knights, accused the order of all kinds of crimes and the Pope decided to disband the Knights. Currently,

the castle serves as a place for study and research, it has the library of the knights, and sometimes exhibitions or other cultural events are held there. We enjoyed touring the castle and seeing the various exhibits.

Next, we enter the stage of the Camino ending at Villafranca del Bierzo. The walking was much easier as the path is paved some of the way and has a good dirt track for the remainder of the stage. We pass through several small villages before reaching Villafranca del Bierzo. It is still in the León province.

The town has been inhabited since neolithic times. In the 800's the town became one of the stops on the Camino. A monastery was erected in Villafranca del Bierzo in 1070 and run by the Monks of Clundy from Burgundy, France. They began to cultivate grapes for wine; other people from France, mostly pilgrims, stayed to live around the Monastery. Thus, the town became known as Villafranca (town of the French). Various resources for pilgrims were erected or provided in the town.

As we entered the town the first thing we saw was the Church of Santiago; it is a simple single nave church built in Romanesque style which dates from the



1100's. It is a simple parish church. At one time it had a door of forgiveness; if a pilgrim was disabled or injured, walking through the door provided the same plenary indulgence that finishing the Camino to Santiago would have provided. That church door was bricked up during the plague to prevent the spread of plague though out the town and it has not been re-opened. There is

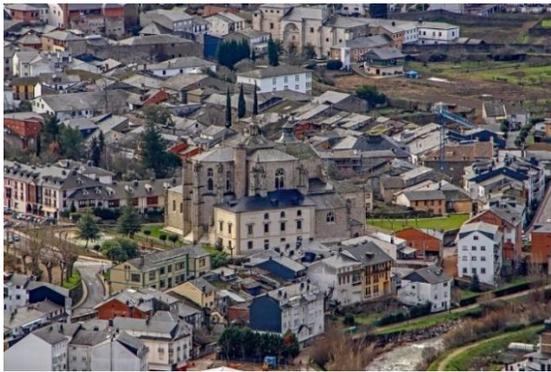


another door, however, so we were able to see inside of the church.

Javier Cacheda, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, front Façade of the Church of Santiago; Lancastermerrin88, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Altar of the Church.

Then we headed to the Collegiate Church of Santa María; construction started in the early 1500's. The Cluny monks built the original church of their monastery on this spot along with a hostel for pilgrims but they had fallen into ruins during 1400's. The current church was built on the same site. In the picture left, below the church stands toward the lower center of the page. The picture also gives you an idea of what the current town looks like.

Hovallef, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Santa Maria Church and town, left below; José Luis Filpo Cabana, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary and baptismal font for Santa Maria, below center. Zarateman, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, altar of Santa Maria, right.



Our next stop was at the Our next stop was at the both images

Monastery of the Annunciation, below left. Zarateman, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, of the Monastery of the Annunciation below.



Wikimedia Commons, St. Francis, right



We continued to explore the town seeing the castle and what remains of the Monastery of St. Francis and then it was time to continue on our pilgrimage. Cruccione, CC BY-SA 3.0 ES, via



Lancastermerrin88, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, castle, left.

We left Villafranca and headed to O Cebreiro, in Galicia. O Cebreiro is a small settlement in a mountain pass of the same name. One of the features of the settlement is the palloza. These are round or oval thatched roof buildings that have been used for millennia. Originally, they served as housing for humans and livestock. The squat height, thick thatched, cone-

shaped roof, thick stone walls and roundish- shape helped retain heat in the winter and protection from the high-altitude climate. Generally, there was some type of central heating system for heating and cooking and sharing the building with the livestock meant the animals contributed heat to the building.



There were separate areas for humans and livestock, and a kitchen area. They were typical shelters for people for many years but are now mostly ethnographic museums. We were able to see much of the countryside from these buildings.

Nicolás Pérez, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, image left. Gerd Eichmann, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Santa Maria a Real church, right.



Next we visited the Santa Maria Real church, right. It is a small parish church and we spent some quit time here, which also helped us adapt to the altitude.

Shortly after leaving Cebreiro, we encountered a small village, Condesa. In the village is an old hospital which is among the oldest on the French Way. The hospital was built in that location to help the tired pilgrims after climbing up and beginning to descend the Mountain Pass. There is also a small church, the Church of San Xoán which served as a parish church until 1891. But we had walked as far as we could for the week and spent our Sunday evening resting here.



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José Antonio Gil Martínez from Vigo, Spain, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Common

It has been an exciting week of our pilgrimage! Thanks for participating.

Your Tour Director,
Kathy Scharer