

*CaminoGuide.net*

*Walking Guide to the*

VIA DE LA PLATA

*and the*

CAMINO SANABRES

Gerald Kelly

2020 Edition

## THE VIA DE LA PLATA

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# The Vía de la Plata

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The route followed by the Vía de la Plata was originally a Roman Road linking Asturias in the north of Spain with the port of Cádiz in the south. Its name, which means The Silver Route, is based on the belief that the Romans used this route to transport silver from Asturias to the Mediterranean port of Cádiz. However, given that the mines of Asturias mostly produced gold, some historians question the validity of this explanation.

Beginning in about the 9th century, as Santiago de Compostela was becoming known as a Christian pilgrimage site, this route began to be used by pilgrims travelling to and from the tomb of St James the Apostle.

In the 1980s the revival of the Camino Francés as a walking route led to renewed interest in the Vía de la Plata. Since then numbers of pilgrims have increased slowly reaching a peak of 14,197 in Holy Year 2010. Then 8,061 in 2011, 8,163 in 2012, 9,016 in 2013, 8,491 in 2014, 9,221 in 2015, 9,067 in 2016, 9,138 in 2017 and 9,127 in 2018 (these are figures for pilgrims arriving in Santiago). Despite what the statistics say the numbers of people walking the Vía has grown steadily in recent years. That we're not seeing this reflected in the statistics seems to be because many people are only walking parts, for example Seville to Salamanca, or if they do arrive in Santiago are simply not bothering to get a Compostela because they already have several from previous Caminos.

In contrast to the Camino Francés which is busiest in summer, the busiest times on the Vía de la Plata are spring and autumn.

Today the Vía de la Plata is a popular alternative to the Camino Francés for people looking for solitude and a more authentic Camino experience (with its accompanying difficulties).

## About this guide

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This guide covers the **Vía de la Plata from Seville to Astorga**, and the **Camino Sanabrés**, which branches from the Vía de la Plata and arrives in Santiago through southern Galicia. People often use the term *Vía de la Plata* to refer to the combination of these two routes. For simplicity I will refer to the combination of these two routes as the *Vía*. This guide also covers the Caminos de Finisterre and Muxía, which finish at the Atlantic coast in North Western Galicia, in case, when you arrive in Santiago, you just haven't had enough!

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

I started by making the guide available as a free download from my website, [www.CaminoGuide.net](http://www.CaminoGuide.net). Thanks to the positive feedback and encouragement I received from other pilgrims who used it I decided to try publishing it on Amazon (with the addition of maps). This has enabled me to bring the information to a far

wider audience.

From the beginning I appealed to pilgrims to send me updates and corrections to help me keep the information up-to-date. Many people responded to my call, and this, together with the wealth of information available online, allowed me to keep track of new hostels and route changes. This system isn't perfect and I would prefer (in fact I would love!) if I had the time and money to walk the *Vía* every year and do the updates as I go along. But I don't, and given the small number of English-speaking pilgrims walking this Camino, it's unlikely this or any other guide will ever make enough money to cover a full, yearly update (such as the German guides manage).

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

The *Vía* is very different from the Camino Francés in that it is longer, lonelier and less scenic. It is closer to the original experience of long-distance pilgrimage than the commercialised and 'tamed' Camino Francés. You can walk the Camino Francés on 'autopilot', by which I mean, without planning ahead or really paying much attention, and I don't mean that in a negative way, one of the great things about the Camino Francés is that it's accessible to people of all levels of ability and commitment. But, if you approached the *Vía* on 'autopilot' you'd quickly find yourself lost, hungry and thirsty. As a consequence, the people who walk the *Vía* tend to be a self-reliant bunch with experience of long-distance hiking (such as, having walked the Camino Francés).

If you find this guide useful and you want to help (or if you don't find it useful and you still want to help) then send all suggestions, updates, corrections, etc. to me at [\*\*caminoguidecontact@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:caminoguidecontact@gmail.com)

## The *Vía* in 2019

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It was a cold, sunny winter's day just before Christmas 2018 when I set off from Seville. My journey this time would be in four parts covering winter, spring, early summer and autumn. It would be almost ten months before I arrived on a cold, sunny autumn's day into Santiago de Compostela.

The road had changed little in the three years since I had walked it last. The half-abandoned villages with their ubiquitous *for sale* signs sported an occasional new bars or albergue, sometimes even a shop. But besides these small changes everything seemed more-or-less as always. It was like in this remote corner of Spain time was standing still.

What had changed, and changed fundamentally, was the experience of walking the *Vía*.

Almost completely consigned to history was the feeling of being *the only pilgrim in town*. Long, dark nights alone in an albergue with only a host of unexplained noises for company were a thing of the past. And the idea of walking for days or even weeks without seeing another pilgrim now seemed to belong to a quaint, bygone era.

Sometimes I missed the old days and the feeling of being a pioneer, but mostly I didn't. Being *the only pilgrim in town*, eating dinner on your own with the television for company, was never really much fun. And the feeling was never far away during the long walking days through the vast open spaces and distant horizons of rural Spain, then everything seemed to melt away as it always had and I

often found myself alone for hours with nothing but my thoughts and the wind and an occasional dog (friendly or otherwise).

Galicia was cold and it rained (as it always, always does). I was glad I would be finishing soon. I was passing through these mountains for the third time and for the third time I saw nothing but fog and rain. I decided it was enough and if I ever walk the Camino Sanabrés again it will be in summer.

On the last day I passed the scene of the Angrois train crash. No sign of what happened here remains except for the strange mixture of objects left by relatives of the dead and passing pilgrims. A man sat in a car nearby with no apparent purpose. I felt like he was watching me, maybe to see what I'd do. I took a photo of these objects, shells, boots, articles of clothing. I wondered if it was the right place for what looked like a shrine to the Camino. I kept walking being careful not to look in the direction of the man in his car. I didn't want to intrude. I already felt uncomfortably like a spectator to some personal tragedy.

It was a sad end to a long Camino and made for a melancholic arrival into Santiago. I went straight to my albergue, the Praza Obradoiro could wait and I had never intended going for a Compostela.

## The 2020 edition

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The 2020 edition was updated with information gathered while walking the Vía in 2019 together with feedback and advice from many pilgrims.

I'd like to thank everybody who took the time to write to me. I'm always very happy to hear from my readers and as always I was amazed at the trouble some people took to help me and their fellow pilgrims. As always I can be contacted at [caminoguidecontact@gmail.com](mailto:caminoguidecontact@gmail.com)

I'm always happy to answer questions and to help people in any way I can so if there's something specific I can help you with please just ask. I can also supply **PDF copies** of this guide, which are handy for reading on a smartphone or a tablet computer.

We now have an active group on Facebook with Vía pilgrims of all levels of experience. Join to ask questions or to share your knowledge and experience with your fellow pilgrims. You can link to it here [viadelaplataguide.net/pages/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/viadelaplataguide)

Thanks for all the help and support and Buen Camino!  
Gerald Kelly, Seville, November 2019

## GPS Tracks

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If you'd like a copy of the GPS trace I created while I was walking you can download it by going to [www.viadelaplataguide.net](http://www.viadelaplataguide.net) and requesting the free guide. The link to the GPS traces will be in the same email as the link for the free guide. It's a free app and it allows you to download the maps you need over WiFi and then use them offline.

## How to use this guide

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Information is presented in the following text formats:

Information about the route and things you will meet between hostels are given in this format. Distances given in this format should be ignored when calculating distances between hostels.

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

**Parish hostel (14, 10€)** *Albergue Parroquial de Monesterio* on the Camino on the left, at 218 Avenida Extremadura. Kitchen. Nice hostel, modern and clean with good facilities. Tel 924 516 097

This hostel is run by the local parish, it sleeps fourteen people, costs 10€ and is open all year.

**Information about places and facilities:** The following information is given about facilities available in towns and villages (see the note below about opening hours):

- **café / bar** if they're known to serve food it will say so
- **shop**
- **bank** meaning an ATM
- **pharmacy**

## Please remember the following

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

Likewise, always assume there is no place to buy food or drinks between villages and that some villages have no facilities of any type. Even if there are shops and cafés never assume they'll be open.

The text of this guide is not sprinkled with reminders to always make sure you have enough food and water. It is up to you to plan your walking day the day before and indeed several days in advance, taking account of availability of places where you can restock.

## Opening times

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Bear in mind that shops in rural Spain usually open from 9 AM until 12 PM and again from 5 PM until 8 PM and that these times vary. They are also usually closed, or have greatly reduced opening times, on Sundays and Mondays and on public and religious holidays.

Cafés don't always open in the morning and if they do it's rarely before 8 AM. The note about public and religious holidays above also applies to cafés. If it says in the guide that a café opens early that mean about 8 PM. Also cafés often close one day a week por descanso, it's often Monday. Restaurants server lunch from about 2 PM until about 4 PM and then dinner from about 8 PM until about 9 PM.

## Pilgrim hostels (Albergues)

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

- Electricity
- Beds with mattresses
- Toilets
- Showers with hot water

- Drinking water
- Heating (although it may not be very effective and it may not be switched on)

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

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

If you're first to arrive many hostels will be locked with a contact telephone number stuck to the door. For this reason having a mobile phone is essential. If you need to ring for the key and you don't speak Spanish try the following: *Estoy aquí a la puerta del albergue de peregrinos, ¿puede Usted abrirme la puerta?* – which means *I am here at the door of the pilgrim hostel, can you open the door for me?* The ideal response would be *sí, sí, cinco minutos / diez minutos* – *yes, yes five minutes / ten minutes*. However, the likelihood is the reply will be somewhat more verbose in which case the best thing to say is *no entiendo español* – *I don't understand Spanish*. And hope for the best. Don't let this worry you if you speak no Spanish, the person answering the phone is expecting calls like yours and even if you completely fail to understand anything they will automatically assume you are waiting for them at the albergue door.

## Waymarkings

Waymarkings are basic but functional. Everywhere you will find painted yellow arrows like on the Camino Francés. However, it's important to note that the arrows are sometimes far less frequent than on the Camino Francés and are sometimes only to be seen at points where there's a change of direction. So basically, if you don't see any arrow keep going straight, but keep your eyes peeled.

The Vía de la Plata is different from the Camino Francés in that it was originally a Roman Road and the present day Vía follows the route of this road for part of its length. The official waymarkings reflect this history. In Extremadura, as well as the yellow arrow, the Vía and the Roman Road are marked by blocks on the ground with a coloured tile on one side and a representation of the arch in Cáparra on the top pointing in the direction which you must follow. The tiles are coloured yellow (for the Camino) or green (for the Roman road) or bi-coloured where the Vía follows the Roman road.

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

In Galicia you'll find the ubiquitous concrete bollards with the shell symbol on a tile pointing, with its flat end, the direction to follow.

In some places along the route the original Roman waymarkings are still present. Known as *Miliarium* these are stone columns about one metre high which originally had writing on them giving such information as: the emperor under whose reign the road was built, the distance to Rome or another important city on the road. These stones were placed one Roman mile (1,481m) apart.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milestone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milestone) and [es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miliario](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miliario)

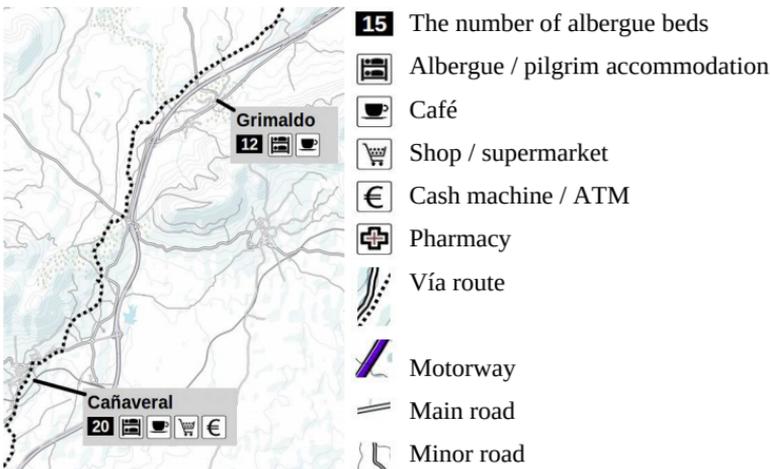
In certain places you may find that several different kinds of waymarking co-exist and occasionally they may point in contradictory directions. If in doubt, **as a general rule you should follow the yellow arrows**. This is not to say that the other waymarkings are wrong, just that the yellow arrows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

## Maps

The route of the Vía is shown as a line of black dots. When there is more than one route option both routes are shown. Route options are also described in the text.

Maps also include elevation profiles which (with a few exceptions) are included as part of the map. Altitude is shown in metres with the distance shown in kilometres along the bottom of the graph. The kilometre count resets to zero **at each place which has a pilgrim hostel**.

The symbols used on maps are:



## How to calculate distances

The distances given next to placenames are stage distances. They are given in kilometres, rounded up or down to the nearest kilometre, and walking time, calculated on the assumption they you'll average 4km per hour. Measurements are usually taken from the pilgrim hostel, or if the pilgrim hostel is not on the route of the Vía or there is more than one, it's taken from some central point, such as the main square or the church / cathedral. Use these distances when calculating the length of stages. Other distances given in the **route description** are distances between points which are not pilgrim hostels. You could call them *intermediate distances*. These should be ignored when calculating stage distances. They are not cumulative. Example:

2km / ½ hr this point is 2km from the last pilgrim hostel  
4km / 1 hr this point is 6km from the last pilgrim hostel

## Measurement units

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All distances are given in the metric system (kilometres and metres). Prices are given in the format most commonly used in Spain, ie. 5€, 2,50€, etc.

## Dogs

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The Vía is about 1,000km long and most of that is through farmland. Dogs in this area are used to help guard and control flocks of sheep and so are often to be seen unsupervised in a field with a flock of sheep. Despite this incidents with dogs are rare and serious incidents, ones in which someone has been bitten requiring medical treatment, are to my knowledge unheard of.

During all the times I've walked the Vía (three times in its totality and many other stages) I have at no time come close to being bitten by a dog. There have been occasions when I've had to stand my ground when a dog ran over barking when it saw me but none of these turned out to be dangerous, just annoying. I've been around dogs all my life and I like dogs, but I know that that isn't the case for everybody. What might be annoying for me might be frightening for someone else.

If you do meet an aggressive dog, your safest option is to back away (without turning your back) and get out of its territory. Running is not a good idea because a dog can move much faster than you can and many breeds of dogs will instinctively take chase if you run.

Raising a stick at it will probably be enough to convince it it's dealing with someone who'll fight back (working, country dogs associate a stick with pain, unlike their townie cousins). If you haven't got a stick to hand, bend down and pick up a few stones, they understand that too. However, hitting a dog is an absolute last resort, only to be used if it attacks first. Pre-emptive action may just provoke it.

If you encounter dogs looking after sheep or goats, bear in mind that they're very protective and if you come **too close or between them and their flock they will regard you as a threat**. So stay as far away as possible.

It's also probable the dog's owner is someplace nearby, and attracting their attention is probably the easiest way to deal with the offending mutt.

## Walking in summer

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

North of Salamanca is a different matter. The climatic conditions which prevail here are largely similar to what you would encounter on the Camino Francés.

## Online resources

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For more information about the Vía, including how to get to various starting points, download GPS tracks and the latest updates go to: [www.viadelaplataguide.net](http://www.viadelaplataguide.net)

For tips about packing and links to useful equipment go to: [www.caminoguide.net/packing](http://www.caminoguide.net/packing)

You can also browse the content of the guide online and see more accommodation options and avail of easy links to reservations website [booking.com](http://booking.com) from [viadelaplataguide.net/guide](http://viadelaplataguide.net/guide)

# Distances from Santiago

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Outeiro = 16km, Ponte Ulla = 21km, Leiras = 29km, Bandeira = 34km, Silleda = 41km, A Laxe = 50km, Castro Dozón = 69km, Cea = 84km, Ourense = 106km, Xunqueira = 129km, Vilar do Barrio = 142km, Alberguería = 150km, Laza = 162km, Campobecerros = 176km, A Gudiña = 196km, Lubián = 220km, Requejo = 236km, Puebla de Sanabria = 248km, Asturianos = 262km, San Salvador = 269km, Mombuey = 279km, Rionegro del Puente = 288km, Olleros de Tera = 302km, Calzadilla de Tera = 304km, Santa Marta = 315km, Santa Croya = 316km, Tábara = 338km, Faramontanos = 346km, Granja de Moreruela = 364km, Riego del Camino = 370km, Montamarta = 386km, Zamora = 405km, Villanueva de Campeán = 423km, El Cubo de Tierra del Vino = 437km, Calzada de Valdunciel = 457km, Salamanca = 474km, Morille = 493km, San Pedro = 497km, Fuenteroble = 525km, Valdecasa = 533km, Valverde = 537km, Calzada de Béjar = 546km, Baños de Montemayor = 558km, Aldeanueva del Camino = 568km, Cáparra = 589km, Carcaboso = 607km, Galisteo = 618km, Cañaverl = 645km, Casar de Cáceres = 678km, Cáceres = 689km, Valdesalor = 701km, Aldea del Cano = 712km, Alcuéscar = 727km, Aljucén = 747km, El Carrascalejo = 749km, Mérida = 763km, Torremejía = 778km, Villafranca de los Barros = 806km, Zafra = 826km, Fuente de Cantos = 850km, Monesterio = 871km, El Real de la Jara = 891km, Almadén = 905km, Castilblanco = 934km, Guillena = 951km, Seville = 974km

**NOTE** This distance and altitude information is based on a GPS trace following the right option after Ourense, the left option after Cea, the left option after Fuenteroble, and the Camas option when leaving Seville, and walking as closely as possible to the original route where there are detours caused by AVE works.

If you start in Seville and you get a distance certificate from the Pilgrims Office in Santiago it will say that you have walked a little over 1,000km. When I measured it I got 974km. If you'd like to check for yourself just email me at [caminoguidecontact@gmail.com](mailto:caminoguidecontact@gmail.com) and I'll send you copies of all the files.

## Copyright

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## Total ascents and descents per stages

These numbers take account of *all* ascents and descents on a particular segment, this is not just the difference between the start and end altitude. **In metres.**

**Total ascent = 16,980m, total descent = 16,710m.**

	Ascents	Descends
Seville cathedral to Guillena via Camas	235	-230
Guillena to Castilblanco	468	-149
Castilblanco to Almadén	613	-489
Almadén to El Real	359	-342
El Real to Monesterio	558	-276
Monesterio to Fuente de Cantos	326	-496
Fuente de Cantos to Zafra	271	-347
Zafra to Villafranca	269	-366
Villafranca to Torremejía	142	-255
Torremejía to Mérida	94	-186
Mérida to El Carrascalejo	214	-133
El Carrascalejo to Aljucén	39	-60
Aljucén to Alcuéscar	303	-119
Alcuéscar to Casas de Don Antonio	21	-81
Casas de Don Antonio to Aldea del Cano	45	-43
Aldea del Cano to Valdesalor	96	-100
Valdesalor to Cáceres	168	-109
Cáceres to Casar de Cáceres	106	-184
Casar de Cáceres to Cañaveral	502	-512
Cañaveral to Galisteo	457	-530
Galisteo to Carcaboso	104	-117
Carcaboso to Cáparra	334	-208
Cáparra to turnoff for Hostal Asturias	109	-120
turnoff for Hostal Asturias to Aldeanueva	234	-92
Aldeanueva to Baños	233	-47
Baños to Calzada	406	-329
Calzada to Valverde	72	-64
Valverde to Valdecasa	152	-2
Valdecasa to Fuenteroble	96	-94
Fuenteroble to San Pedro	452	-429
San Pedro to Morille	18	-61
Morille to Salamanca	234	-373
Salamanca to Calzada de Valdunciel	202	-199
Calzada de Valdunciel to El Cubo	249	-209

El Cubo to Villanueva	128	-208
Villanueva to Zamora	125	-248
Zamora to Montamarta	230	-174
Montamarta to Riego	185	-171
Riego to Granja	58	-53
Granja to Faramontanos	265	-262
Faramontanos to Tábara	77	-24
Tábara to Bercianos	175	-172
Bercianos to Santa Croya	76	-89
Santa Croya to Santa Marta	14	-4
Santa Marta to Calzadilla	81	-63
Calzadilla to Olleros	11	-17
Olleros to Villar	120	-64
Villar to Rionegro	76	-81
Rionegro to Mombuey	131	-30
Mombuey to Cernadilla	101	-88
Cernadilla to San Salvador	26	-16
San Salvador to Asturianos	137	-84
Asturianos to Puebla	199	-261
Puebla to Requejo	213	-118
Requejo to Padornelo	452	-150
Padornelo to Lubián	146	-419
Lubián to A Gudiña	740	-791
A Gudiña to Campobecerros	509	-596
Campobecerros to Laza	366	-788
Laza to Alberguería	563	-140
Alberguería to Vilar do Barrio	126	-358
Vilar do Barrio to Xunqueira	241	-357
Xunqueira to Ourense	317	-687
Ourense to Cea	682	-326
Cea to Castro Dozón	564	-341
Castro Dozón to A Laxe	351	-634
A Laxe to Silleda	296	-283
Silleda to Bandeira	79	-213
Bandeira to Leiras	71	-151
Leiras to Ponte Ulla	153	-364
Ponte Ulla to Outeiro	249	-29
Outeiro to Santiago	433	-467

## Sevilla / Seville (map page 88)

The city of Seville has a population of 703,000. It is the capital of the autonomous community of Andalusia and the Province of Seville. All facilities you could possibly need are available.

**SLEEPING:** All facilities except a dedicated pilgrim hostel! However, there are lots of cheapish backpacker hostels and hotels. Some good options are **Triana Backpackers** at Calle Rodrigo de Triana, in Triana, across the river from the city centre. This well-run and friendly hostel has dorm beds from about 13€ and is popular with pilgrims and backpackers (so possibly noisy). If you're cycling you can contact them about having your bike delivered there a few days before you arrive. They can also arrange bike hire. More information and booking on 954 459 960 or from their Website *english.trianabackpackers.com*. **Hotel Simón**, at Calle Garcia de Vinuesa 19, about 120m from the cathedral, has been recommended by several pilgrims, it has singles from 40€, telephone 954 226 660, website *www.hotelsimonsevilla.com*. These and other accommodation can be booked from *www.hostelworld.com* or from *www.booking.com*.

**PRACTICAL: Credenciales (pilgrim passports)** are available from the following places: the very helpful and friendly **Amigos del Camino de Santiago en Sevilla**, at: Calle Castilla 82, which is on the Camino as it passes through Triana. Opening hours vary, please check their website *www.viaplata.org* under *Atención al Peregrino*. **The Cathedral Parochial Office**, ask one of the cathedral employees where to go for a *Credencial de Peregrino*. Also from **Hotel Simón** and **Triana Backpackers** (details above). In recent years the Credenciales available in Seville have a map of the Camino Francés on the back, don't worry, they're accepted along the Camino. Also, if you're going all the way you'll probably need more than one for all those stamps. Credenciales are available on the Camino from larger municipal and religious hostels in major towns and cities, but if you think you'll need two you could just buy them in Seville. If you need to do some last-minute equipment shopping there's a **Decathlon** outdoor shop in the city centre near Las Setas on Calle Martín Villa. SIM cards, from Hotel Simón walk 20m towards the cathedral, on your left is **Photo & Phone**, which sells them. Labara has good plans for international calls and data: *www.lebara.es*

**EATING:** Seville has a big tapas culture and many bars around both Triana and the city centre have good selections. Recommended for tapas is **Bodega Dos de Mayo** on Plaza de la Gavidia, it's very popular so best to arrive early (ie. 8 PM). If your preparations for the Camino includes eating like a horse and you like fried seafood, then you should try the Plato Variado in **Abaceria Alborea** on Calle Jacinto, in Triana. The kiosk on the city side of Triana bridge does good **churros y chocolate**.

**SIGHTS:** Seville is a historic city whose architectural heritage reflects the cultural influences of Roman, Islamic and Christian civilisation. The **Tourist Office** opposite the main entrance to the Cathedral has tourist maps and information about the various sights. The highlights are the **Catedral de Santa María de la Sede**. Completed in the 16th century it is said to be the largest cathedral in the world. It is mostly Gothic with a mix of other influences. Its bell tower, *La Giralda*, was originally the minaret of a mosque. Christopher Columbus' remains are buried here having been brought from Cuba in 1903. The **Alcázar Palace and Gardens** were build as a home for the rulers of Muslim Al-Andalus. The palace is considered to be the best example of Mudéjar architecture in existence. Its walled gardens, with their extensive use of flowing water, are a beautiful example of the type of garden design introduced to Spain by the Moors. Both these sights are extremely popular

with tourists and queues to enter can be very long. You can avoid the queues by booking online at [www.lacatedraldesevilla.org](http://www.lacatedraldesevilla.org) and [www.alcazarsevilla.org](http://www.alcazarsevilla.org). The **Plaza de España**, completed in 1928 for the Ibero-American Exhibition, is a graceful example of early 20th century Renaissance (arches) and Mudéjar (brickwork) revival architecture. It and its adjoining park, are a nice place to relax on a sunny afternoon. Besides the major historic buildings, Seville is also a great city for walking around, soaking in the architecture and atmosphere of its narrow streets, and getting hopelessly lost. Just walk east or north from the cathedral. If you like **urban decay** you may enjoy a visit to the site of **Expo 92**, much of it unchanged and slowly falling to pieces from when it was abandoned when the Expo ended. It includes a life-size model of an **Apollo** rocket. It's in the area around **La Isla Mágica**, across the river from the city centre, north of Triana. The river itself, the Guadalquivir ("big river" in Arabic), may look impressive but it's actually an isolated branch of the main river which you will cross on the Camino before Camas. **Triana** is on the opposite side of the river from the city centre, it's a colourful neighbourhood which hasn't yet lost its soul to mass tourism.

**CULTURE:** If you'd like to experience some *Sevillanas* singing and dancing **Casa Anselmo** on Calle Pagés del Corro, in Triana kicks off about midnight, far more authentic than the tourist shows in the city centre. Free in but drinks are pricey.

The Camino begins outside the main door of the cathedral, turn right to follow the tram tracks along Avenida de la Constitución, then, at the corner of the cathedral turn left on to Calle García de Vinuesa, then first right on to Calle Jimios. This becomes Calle Zaragoza, which you follow through various twists and turns until it intersects with Puerta de Triana, with Café de Indias on your left. Now turn left and continue straight to cross Triana Bridge (AKA Puente de Isabel II). Once across the river turn right after the Mercado de Triana along Calle San Jorge and Calle de Castilla (where there's a Día supermarket which opens at 9.30 AM). After about 600m you'll come to a modern square with steps leading up on the right which bring you to a main road. Walk anticlockwise around the roundabout, crossing two roads then turning right on to a footpath and left down to a large, run-down carpark where you veer right and then left to cross the narrow bridge across the main branch of the Guadalquivir. **This route is marked with yellow arrows but they're easy to miss in the city. Once outside the city they become easier to spot.**

3km /  $\frac{3}{4}$  hr, just after crossing the narrow bridge over the main branch of the Guadalquivir, you have the **option** to continue straight to pass through the suburb of Camas, or to go right along the bank of the river (muddy after wet weather), to bypass Camas. Don't let the grimness of this first part get you down, things improve once you're out of the city.

### **RIGHT / RIVER ROUTE 5km / 1¼ hr...**

Walk along the banks of the river for about 1km /  $\frac{1}{4}$  hr then follow a lane as it veers left. In about 1km /  $\frac{1}{4}$  hr you'll pass under an elevated motorway then continue straight under railway tracks and another motorway, then right to join a main road which you follow to the left to a roundabout where you rejoin the left route and turn right towards Santiponce. This route passes through some run down, deserted areas and not everyone will feel comfortable walking it on their own. You may encounter cute donkeys and unfortunately also loose dogs.

6km / 1½ hrs to Santiponce, from the point where the routes divide.

### **LEFT ROUTE 5km / 1¼ hr...**

2km / ½ hr to Camas from where the routes divide, shops, cafés, bank, pharmacy. In Camas turn right on to Calle José Payán and follow this until you come to the Church of Santa Maria de Gracia where you take the street to its left, also called Santa Maria de Gracia. From here the Camino continues straight along the side of a busy main road through suburbs and industrial areas, through two roundabouts until after 4km / 1 hr you come to Santiponce.

## RIGHT AND LEFT ROUTES REJOIN BEFORE...

Santiponce, shops, cafés, bank, pharmacy.

**Bodeguita Reyes**, right on the roundabout, does good food. **Hotel Anfiteatro Romano**, on the right a little past the town, has been recommended by many pilgrims, it has double rooms from about €50. Tel 955 996 704

The newly restored **Monesterio de San Isidoro** in Santiponce can be visited (free for pilgrims). They have a sello (stamp). It's on the Camino on the right. The **Teatro Romano** is a couple of minutes off the Camino, at the roundabout take Calle la Iglesia, then right on to Calle Claven, then left at the end. The ruins of the Roman city of **Itálica** are just to the left of the Camino to the north of Santiponce. This is the birthplace of the Emperors Trajan whose rule brought the Roman Empire to its greatest geographic extent, and also of Hadrian, best known for the construction of the wall which marked the northern limits of Roman control in Britain. Open daily 9 AM to 3 PM.

13km / 3¼ hrs to Guillena from Santiponce.

Continue north on the main road through Santiponce, right at a roundabout and under the motorway and then veer left where the Camino leaves the road and continues on a lane through fields. There's a stream you need to ford which may be difficult after rain. If the water is too deep to cross look up and downstream for easier crossing places or flag down a passing tractor or Jeep and ask them to drop you on the other side.

**Occasionally after prolonged heavy rain this stream can be badly flooded and impossible to cross. Happily there is an alternative route which branches left about 500m before the stream (sometimes there is a temporary signpost here but since it's the only possible left turn on a long straight road it would be hard to miss). Follow this road left passing a farmhouse on your right then pass under the motorway, veer left and right to join a main road after 2km / ½ hr. Here you turn right and follow the road all the way to Guillena. This detour adds about 3km to the day's walk.**

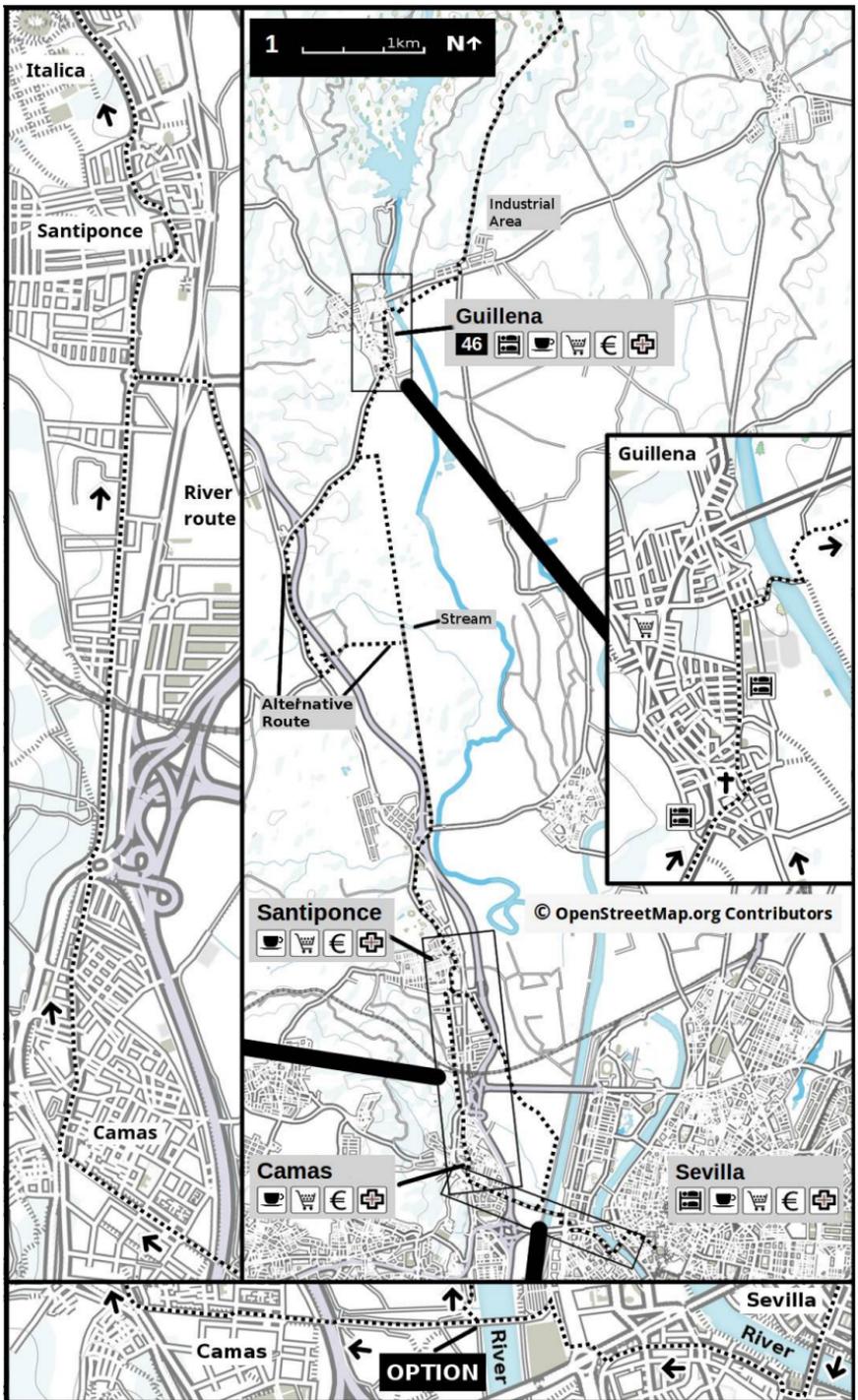
Before Guillena the yellow arrows direct you to turn sharp left towards the main road, bringing you past the private hostel, Albergue Luz del Camino. It is possible to go right at this point but it will mean fording another stream which can be difficult. The description of the route through Guillena is based on the assumption that you turned left.

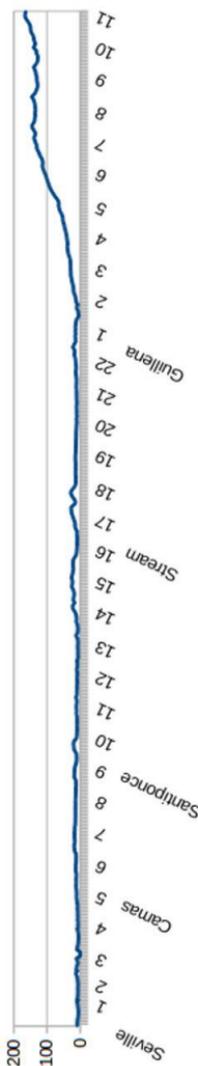
The latest updates are available on our website [www.viadelaplataguide.net/pages/updates](http://www.viadelaplataguide.net/pages/updates)

## 23km / 5¾ hrs to Guillena

**Private hostel (12, 12€ with breakfast)** *Albergue Luz del Camino* on Calle Federico García Lorca, on the Camino on the left. Kitchen, laundry facilities. Positive reports. Website [albergueluzdelcamino.es](http://albergueluzdelcamino.es) Tel 955 785 262 Open 2 PM

**Municipal hostel (34, 10€)** *Albergue Municipal*, in the Sports Centre / Polideportivo on Avenida de la Vega, on Camino past the church, signposted, watch out for a large gate in a high wall on the right through which you will see a mini-soccer pitch, enter here and it's past the café on the left. Kitchen, laundry facilities. Ask in the café or





phone 672 373 099 or the phone number posted on the door. Website [www.guillena.org](http://www.guillena.org) Open 12 noon

**Shops, banks, cafés** on or near Avenida de Andalucía, the main road through town and the road the Camino arrives on. At the end of this road is a roundabout, where you turn right for a **Mas supermarket** which is open all day, and a **café / bakery** which opens about 7.30 AM, and a **pharmacy**. **Banks** on Plaza España and Calle Fleming. **Hostal Francés** has single rooms, en suite with air conditioning from 20€ and does good food. Tel 639 594 496 Website [www.hostalbarfrances.com](http://www.hostalbarfrances.com).

Leaving town continue past the municipal hostel on Avenida de la Vega and then first right down a road to a ford which you cross (if the water's too high there's a bridge to your left) and then up the slope to the right then veering left, then 1km / ¼ hr to a roundabout where you veer left through an industrial area and eventually into open country.

## 18km / 4½ hrs to Castilblanco de los Arroyos

Just before Castilblanco the Camino goes left at a roundabout and follows Avenida España through town. Continue straight at this roundabout for the municipal hostel.

**Municipal hostel (30, donativo, March to October)** Continue straight where the Camino branches left, it's just past the *Repsol* petrol station on the right. It may be staffed during busy times by volunteer hospitaleros from various countries, otherwise ask for the code to open the door at *Repsol*. Basic kitchen. Loads of space with a big balcony. Tel 955 734 811 Website [www.alberguecastilblancodelosarroyos.blogspot.com.es](http://www.alberguecastilblancodelosarroyos.blogspot.com.es) Open 12 noon

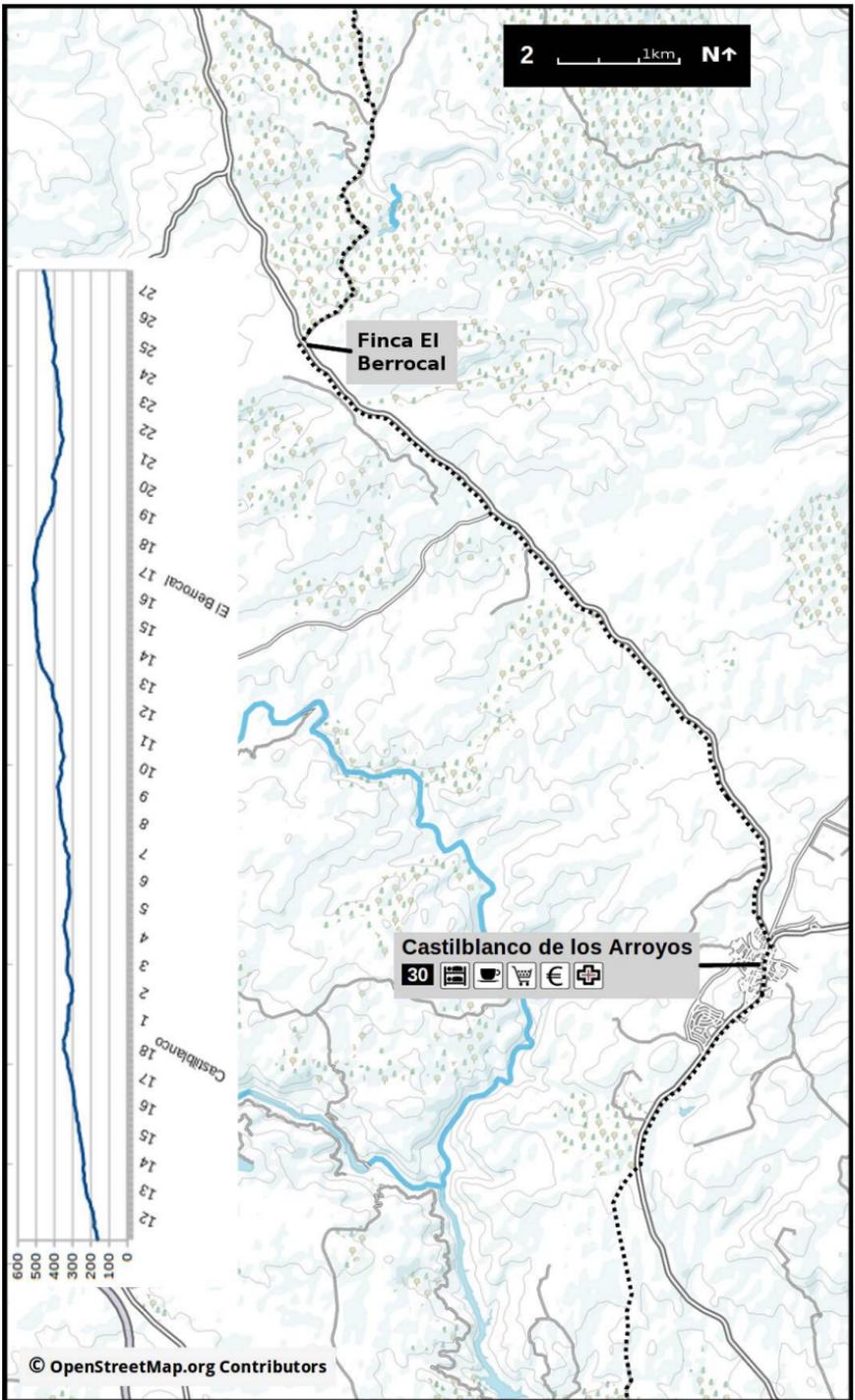
On or near the Camino as it passes through town there are shops, a bakery, bank and pharmacy (both opposite the entrance to the church), post office, and cafés. Follow the Camino left at a mini-roundabout to **El Rincón de Beni** on Calle Pilar Nuevo which does good food with vegetarian options on request. **Día supermarket** with a good selection on Avenida del Puente which goes right off the Camino at the same mini-roundabout.

**Café Mancilla**, on the main road, opens early (4 AM).

The palatial **Hotel Castillo Blanco**, on the right just before the town, singles from 30€, website [hotelcastilloblanco.com](http://hotelcastilloblanco.com) Alternative accommodation: guest house **Casa Salvadora**, on the Camino at Avenida de España, 43, phone: 615 500 962, cosy singles from 14€.

You can either follow the Camino or the main road through Castilblanco. The Camino then continues north along the main road towards Almadén. This road isn't usually busy.

Continue on the road (SE-5405) for 16km / 4 hrs until you come to a place known as Finca el Berrocal where you will see arrows pointing through a gate on the right into the Parque Natural Sierra Norte. From here it's



unpaved paths to Almadén. If the main gate is closed there's another pedestrian gate to the right which may be open (it is not visible from the road). Keep some high-energy food or drink in reserve for the last couple of kilometres where there's a steep hill which ascends abruptly about 100m. Alternatively you can follow the road all the way to Almadén, it's slightly longer but an easier climb.

## 29km / 7¼ hrs to *Almadén de la Plata*

**Private hostel (6, 10€)** *La Casa del Ralój* on the Camino going through the village on Plaza del Reloj. Laundry facilities, kitchen. Wood burning stove. Breakfast 2€. Tel 692 552 659 Website [www.eulate.net/ruraltellez](http://www.eulate.net/ruraltellez)

**Private hostel (8, 12€)** *Albergue Casa Clara* on Plaza de la Constitución, beside the church. Kitchen, laundry facilities. Café / restaurant. Tel 665 617 723 or 625 345 713

**Municipal hostel (16, 10€)** Follow the Camino through the village until you see the Albergue Municipal signs. It's on Calle Puerto de la Cruz, a few minutes walk from the Camino. Phone number or instructions on the door. The hospitalera comes around later to stamp Credenciales. Kitchen. Website [www.almadendelaplata.es](http://www.almadendelaplata.es)

Follow the Camino past the distinctive old town hall with its purple tower, through Plaza del Reloj, then veering left to Plaza de la Palmera. Here standing with your back to the pharmacy, the supermarket is up the street on your right and the bank is up the street on your left. **Café El Ralój**, the café of **Albergue Casa Clara** and **Café La Morena** open early. Restaurant **La Murilla**, beside the church, does a good pilgrim menu. Food in **Bar La Chorla** has been recommended. **Hostal Concha** has rooms for 20€. Tel 954 735 043 or 659 459 938. **Hostal El Romeral**, opposite the bank, has rooms from €30. Tel 653 092 163.

The Camino is abundantly (if not always clearly) signposted through the village with signs and yellow arrows. If in doubt when leaving town aim for the bull ring on the hill to the north, the Camino passes it to the left.

## 14km / 3½ hrs to *El Real de la Jara*

**Municipal hostel (32, 8€)** *El Realejo*, the first building you come to on the left when you arrive in the village. Check for instructions on the door which usually direct you to the Tourist Information Office to get the key. Kitchen with microwaves, fireplace. Tel 655 898 252 Open 11 AM

**Private hostel (12, 10€)** *Alojamiento del Peregrino* a little past the municipal hostel on the right. Kitchen, laundry facilities, nice roof terrace. Good reports. Tel 654 862 553

**Private hostel (12, 10€)** *Alojamiento Molina* on the Camino past Plaza España at 70 Calle Real. They also have private rooms. Tel 610 026 132 or 628 745 720

Shop, cafés, bank and a bakery on the Camino as it passes through Plaza España and Calle Real. Avenida 28 de Febrero, which is left of the Camino from Plaza España, has more shops, cafés, a bank and the post office.

**Mason Restaurante La Encina** has private rooms for 20€ and reportedly good food. It's past the municipal hostel and at the bottom of the street turn left and follow the signs through an industrial park. Tel 625 998 300 or 693 866 646.

**Mesón La Cochera**, opposite the church, does good food. The café in **Casa de la Cultura** on Avenida 28 de Febrero has also been recommended. Café **El Chati** on Plaza de España open early.

El Real's impressive castle is one of a series in the *Banda Gallega* defensive line which protected the northern limits of Al-Andaluz. Later it was used to defend against the Portuguese who had designs on this region. Today it is used as an outdoor theatre.

