

CAMINO DE SAN SALVADOR  
MAY 2017  
ROGER BRANKIN

### General

The Camino is approx. 120ks long from Leon to Oviedo and can be walked in 4, 5, or 6 days, as there is accommodation en route either private or in albergues. The route is varied, but the central part crosses a cordillera with a high point of 1568 metres. Here the landscape is beautiful, but wild and remote and the walking more like hill-walking in Scotland. Therefore consideration should be given to the level of fitness possessed and the weather.

The Camino is well marked. However, as with all Caminos there are some places where confusion may occur, but this can be overcome by using common sense.

Transport exists along the route in case of emergencies. Bus no12 runs from Leon to Carbajal, the first town, which cuts an uninteresting 8ks. ALSA runs buses from Leon to La Robla, Pola de Gordon and Pola de Lena, also RENFE serves several towns on route. In Asturias the FEVE runs from Puente de Fierros to Oviedo with stops along the Camino.

### Leon

The Camino starts at the San Marcos Parador and is marked by a statue of a peregrino, with signed directions along both the Camino Frances and the San Salvador. Walk along Avenida de los Peregrinos to a roundabout and here the first wooden mojon, (about 1 metre high with a yellow figure of a walker), will be seen. Close by is a Mercadona supermarket where food can be bought if staying at Cabanillas. The Camino follows mostly suburban Leon until Carbajal.

Carbajal 8ks.

Some small shops and cafes. Meson La Legua has a sello. At the end of the town the Camino leaves the road and takes a path crossing wood areas and open hilly country. There are several short but steep hills, before entering Cabanillas.

Cabanillas 8ks.

A pretty village with albergue. I did not stay here but it looked nice. There are no cafes/bars so buy food in Leon if staying here. Continue along rural tracks to La Seca.

La Seca 3.5ks.

Cross the footbridge to enter the village with bar 400m.

Cascantes 3.5ks.

The Camino passes through the village with a bar. After Cascantes there is a sign to LLanos 6ks or along the road to the Ermita just before La Robla. LLanos is not on the Camino, so stay on the road for an uninteresting 5ks. At the Ermita there is a picnic place with a wonderful view of the ..... power station!

La Robla 5ks

Good albergue of 16 beds, washing machine and well equipped kitchen. It is located on the Camino, but LHS at the far end of the town. Contact Carlos, the hospitalero, tel 659 093 647. He will call ahead to the Posada at Poladura de la Tercia if staying and or eating there.

There are banks and a good Dia supermarket. Hostal Ordonez de Celis, tel 987

572 342 is on Calle Ramon y Cajal. There are good reports of Meson la Bogadera on Calle Plaza de la Constitucion.

Peredilla 3ks.

From La Robla follow the N620 to Peredilla. At the end of town the Camino turns left along a gravel path to an underpass and railway before turning right to go 1k to the Ermita del Buen Suceso on the N620. Opposite is a Café which does breakfasts and Menu del Dia.

Pola de Gordon 5ks.

A small town with cafes/restaurants, banks and a Mas y Mas supermarket which opens at 10 am. No albergue, but accommodation at Pension El Arenal, Calle Arenal, tel 987 577 427.

This is the last chance to buy food for Buiza or Tercia, as there are no cafes/restaurants until

Pajares. Continue on the N620 as far as the Hostal Fontanan. On the LHS the Camino leaves the road where the guard rail begins. It is mostly all small road to Buiza. Comment. From Buiza to Pajares it is 24ks, which to some people may not sound a long distance. However there are 2 passes, Buiza to Poladura de la Tercia, 10ks and Tercia to Pajares, 14ks, which is higher and more difficult. As stated previously this section is particularly beautiful, but wild and remote and true mountain walking. A lot of the way the Camino is a mountain path and I walked from Buiza to Pajares in bad weather, with wind, rain and bad visibility at times. Although a fit and experienced hill walker I found it a challenging section to walk. Consideration should be given to dividing this section into 2 parts, La Roble - Tercia, 23ks and Tercia - Pajares, 14 ks, especially if the weather is not good.

Buiza 5ks.

A village with a good albergue located at the entrance to the village on RHS. About 20 beds and a kitchen with an electric cooker and microwave. Angel, the hospitalero lives about 200m further on to the right, just off the Camino. Listen for the radio which is above his front door and ring the bell. If he does not answer his old mother will. There are reports of a bar, but Angel told me it only opens at weekends, and not always.

Continue through the village to the church where the Camino divides. Before the church there is an arrow which directs left, but it is best to go to the church. Here the options are to go right to Villasimpliz and walking on the N630 to Puerto de Pajares, or go left on the Camino. The Villasimpliz option should be considered if the weather is really bad.

After Buiza the Camino climbs, passing a high rock formation called Las Forcadas de San Anton, before reaching the summit at 1400m. From here there is a steep descent along a track, through woodland to a hairpin right turn and a small building, (a water control house). Here the Camino is well sign posted to a path on the left which follows the contour of the hill. Do not continue downhill along the track! There are good views as the path skirts the hill of the valley to Poladura de la Tercia. The final 1k passes through overgrowth, (wet if bad weather) and across a wooden bridge.

Poladura de la Tercia 10ks.

A typical small village with no shops/bars. There is accommodation at La Posada del Embujo, [www.toprural.com/ficha/es.cfm/idp/24/ids/4433.htm](http://www.toprural.com/ficha/es.cfm/idp/24/ids/4433.htm), tel 987 69 83 13 or 659 030 282.

However, it is essential you book ahead for accommodation and/or food. There is also an albergue in the schoolhouse. Previous comments stated this was not maintained, but when I passed through and looked in, it was being cleaned by a hospitalero. Also other peregrinos who stayed there said it was comfortable. It is unknown if there is a kitchen, so if staying there it is best to bring cold food or pre-book a meal at the Posada. Comment.

The next part of the Camino is the most difficult and is a true mountain route, (alt 1568m), with regular changes in weather and snow possible in April, even May and October. Waterproof and warm clothing is needed and mobile phones probably will not work. The route is marked by arrows, mojons, shells/conchas, which may be hidden by snow and yellow sticks. There are several gas pipelines which run by, or across the Camino, which are also marked by larger yellow posts and these should not be confused with the Camino markers.

From Tercia the route is initially road, before crossing a field and then climbing to a high valley from which there are good views. The path follows the edge of the valley until dropping to another valley. Then it climbs again to the left to the highest point, El Canto de la Tusa. Near here the Amigos del Camino have placed a cross, which is visible from many directions and which could be regarded as the equivalent of the Cruz de Ferro on the Camino Frances. The path descends to a valley and skirts it to the left. Below the small town of Busdango can be seen, but the path keeps to the left side of the valley before climbing towards a communications tower. Near the top the Camino bears left, descends and follows the contour of a hill. You will come to a spot where the Parador and buildings at Puerto de Pajares can be seen about 1.5ks away and the N630 leading to it. About 20m below to the

left is a track beside an electricity pylon, with an arrow pointing along the track to the N630. Also there is a yellow stick marker on a path which suggests the Camino descends to this track. (This is a place which confused me and other peregrinos. Here I believe the correct route is to bear right between two small hills and continue to Santa Maria de Arbas del Puerto. From here the Camino continues, to pass closeby to and to cross the N630 after Puerto de Pajares). However, if you are in need of a coffee, (and which honest peregrino isn't), my recommendation is to drop down to the pylon and take the track to the road. There is a fence but this can be climbed over. Follow the road to the roundabout, arrows can be seen on the crash barrier, and walk towards Puerto de Pajares. At a new caged compound arrows direct you to the right of the compound - a dead end! Ignore these and continue along the road to Puerto de Pajares.

Puerto de Pajares.

A pass which is the border of Leon and Asturias. Take note that in Asturias the shell/concha signs are reversed with the hinge end indicating the direction to take. There is café for snack and meals on the RHS. Opposite is the Parador, closed in 2017.

From Puerto de Pajares there are 2 options depending on the weather. To regain the Camino walk behind the café, through a gate and climb towards a line of electricity pylons. Here the Camino markers will be seen and after crossing a summit the path drops steeply down a long grass slope to the N630. This slope is treacherous and difficult in wet weather. The other option is to follow the N630 from the café, downhill for 500m, to the point where the Camino crosses the road by an emergency vehicle escape pit. However, there is no safety strip at the side of the road and this option is probably equally hazardous.

Shortly after the road crossing there is a mojon indicating a track descending to the left. However, on the right is a wooden fingerpost to 'Albergue' and to a rough path which descends to the right. This is a pleasant path with good views, but comes to a steep sided wooded area, where the path becomes deep mud in wet weather and treacherous. This path eventually joins the left hand track before Pajares.

Pajares 14ks.

A village with a good albergue of 16 beds, with very hot showers and heaters, but no kitchen. At the entrance to the village the track becomes a narrow street, continue for about 250m and the albergue is LHS. The views over the valley and mountains are wonderful. There is a Taberna on the parallel N630 which offers a limited 1 choice menu del dia at 8pm, although if requested omelettes or jamon with papas are available as an alternative. However, it is essential to book beforehand.

From Pajares follow the highway to the end of the village road sign where the Camino drops down to the left, following a steep track for about 2ks through lovely rural countryside to San Miguel. It becomes a small road winding along the valley floor to Santa Marina. Just before the village the Camino divides. Go right to rejoin the N630, or left to continue on the Camino and through the village. At the church pass through a blue gate, (please close), and across fields ascending gently through lovely countryside for 2ks to Llanos de Someron. From here the route becomes a small road again for 4 ks to Puente de los Fierros.

Puente de los Fierros 9ks.

Here the FEVE starts and the station is nearby. There are 2 options depending on the weather. Just before the small road meets the N630 there are 2 arrows. One points up to the left along a path to 'Fresnado' and the other along the road to 'La Frecha'. The Fresnado option is a beautiful route climbing up the side of the valley and passing through small villages. It is very undulating, consequently a strenuous walk, especially after the previous days over the mountains, but gives superb view to the east and down to the valley floor below. However, at the beginning the path goes through fields and overgrowth, long grass and overhanging foliage and is wet in bad weather. It is, I estimated, about 8ks to Campomanes, longer than some distances quoted and the last 1k is a long and very steep descent into the town.

Consideration should be given to the other option in bad weather, which is a tempting lesser 5ks along the gently descending smooth surface of the N630, (there is a safety strip), to Campomanes. If the clouds are low then there is no possibility of enjoying the views offered by the Fresnado route.

Campomanes 8ks, (or 5ks).

A fair sized town with bars, shops, banks, but no albergue.

Private accommodation at Hospedaje Senda del Huerna, Avenida del Huerna, tel 985 496 447 or 675 654 550. Also Pension Casa del Abad, tel 985 496 578 or 670 262 036.

If coming into the town along the Fresnado route follow the arrows until you come to a crossroads in the centre. There is a good café on the far left corner. Here again there are 2 options. The first option is to proceed ahead along the AS242 to Pola de Lena and is the original Camino, but still well marked. Recently the Amigos created an alternative. Turn right at the crossroads and follow the arrows out of Campomanes and across the N630. Cross the river via a footbridge, turn left and walk parallel to the river for 3ks then pass through a small tunnel and turn right. The newer option is 7ks, while the road route is 5ks and might be preferable for people walking from Pajares to Mieres in 1 day.

Pola de Lena 7ks or 5ks.

A large town with all facilities and an albergue. Follow the Camino through the town to the Ayuntamiento where there is a sign to the left uphill to the train station. Here trains go along the line to Mieres, Ollaniego and Oviedo if the weather is bad, time is short, or there are injury problems. I did not stay at the albergue, which apparently is on the second floor of an office building. Information from 2012 says that if arrival is during office hours then an attendant will give access, if not then the keys will be at the Police Station on the Plaza Mayor. Also there is no hot water at weekends. Private accommodation at Hotel Lena, La Playa, tel 985 493 329, or Hotel Dona Gaudiosa, Munon Fonero tel 985 490 625.

Follow the AS242 out of Pola. Beware this is an old 2 lane road with no verges, but still carries some traffic. There are some small villages between Pola and Ujo, (Uxo), with cafes/bars.

Ujo, (Uxo) 7ks.

A fair sized town. The AS242 comes to a junction with a road crossing the adjacent river. Bear left to go into the town for coffee, food, or bank. To continue cross the road to the asphalt leisure footpath which is now the Camino and follows the river all the way to Mieres. Here at the second footbridge by the railway station the Camino turns right to cross the river into the town centre.

Mieres 5ks.

Mieres is a big town with all facilities. The albergue is not in Mieres, but in the next village of La Pena which is 3ks from the footbridge. It has 18 beds and a well equipped kitchen. It opens at 5pm, but the hospitalero may be contacted on tel 985 461 353. The Hostal La Pena, 400m further on from the albergue does a limited menu del dia up to 4pm and at 9pm. Beside the railway station and footbridge there is a Dia supermarket. I recommend that food be bought here before proceeding to the albergue, to save an aggravating 4k round trip back into the centre.

Cross the footbridge and follow Calle Manuel LLaneza, well marked, to the top. Turn left along Calle Teodoro Cuesta, past a church and a statue of a cider pourer. Carry on past a Repsol garage and after passing under two flyovers there is a sign indicating the albergue to the right.

La Pena 3ks.

From the albergue follow the road to a roundabout by the Hostal La Pena which opens early at 6.30 for breakfast. Take the road on the right which goes uphill for 5ks to the Alto del Padrun. The village of Padrun has a bar. From here the Camino descends to Olloniego, past the train station, alternating between track/path and road.

Olloniego 7ks.

A small town with bars/cafes, but no accommodation. The Camino follows the main street out of the town to cross an old 17th century toll bridge. At the far end a shell/concha indicates a path uphill through a forest. At the top is Centro Reto and a place to rest, before continuing again up hill, but not as steep. Soon Oviedo can be seen in the distance, but there is a final ascent of around 100m to a hill which overlooks the city and the beginning of the suburbs. It is an easy downhill walk to the centre, looking for the brass scallop shells in the footpath/walls or arrows which mark the route.

Oviedo 10ks.

The Camino will take you to the Cathedral. There is the choice to stay in the city, continue on the Camino Primitivo to Santiago, or to Aviles to the Aeropuerto de Asturias. The Tourist Office is in the nearby Plaza de la Constitucion and gives sellos to those needing one. The albergue is on Calle Adolfo Posada, 30 beds and open at 3pm high season and 5pm in winter. Private accommodation at Hostal Arcos, Calle Magdalena, [www.hostal-arcos.com](http://www.hostal-arcos.com), tel 985 214 773.

Roger Brankin  
August 2017

CAMINO SAN SALVADOR  
2018  
IAN LOWE AND PATRICIA KELLY

- 1) Bus #12 from Plaza Santa Domingo in Leon does not go to Carabajal. The driver directed us to an ALSA bus just around the corner. It did go to Carabajal, avoiding 8 km of plodding through suburbs of Leon.
- 2) In Cabanillas, the albergue was locked and the hospitalero, whose phone number and address were on the door, was not home! Just when we were despairing, we found that the man living across the road from the albergue had the key. There is a very good fuente in the village square, just before leaving the Camino to go to the albergue.
- 3) In La Seca, we found the bar closed after walking the 400 metres into the town; a local who looked like a very regular patron could not advise us when it might be open. We saw him later arriving by car at the very friendly bar in Cascantes, which has a sello.
- 4) As the 2013 guide advised, the Information Office in the ayuntamiento is happy to ring ahead to the Posada Embrujo in Poladura la Tercia to secure a meal there - dinner at 7 p.m. is the only option. We thought we would need to get them to ring the hospitalero to have the albergue open, but they advised us (correctly) that it was already open. The hospitalero comes round at 6 p.m. to issue sabanas, provide sellos and collect money.
- 5) In Peredilla, the cafe opposite the Hermitage Buen Suceso now closes on Friday, so if (as we were) pilgrims are depending on it for breakfast, the need to be aware that on Fridays they should get something in La Robla. There is a very good fuente outside the Hermitage.
- 6) In Buiza, the alternative to walking into the village to try to find hospitalero Angel is to ring on 987 597 031 or 679 860 372; you can wait in the shade of the albergue porch for him to come and open up. There is a fuente on the way out of the village next morning.
- 7) It is a bit confusing arriving at Poldura de la Tercia. After the climb over the mountain you reach what seems to be the village but there is no sign of an albergue or a Posada, then the arrows lead you out of the settlement. It turns out that Poldura is another three-quarters of a kilometre, either along the waymarked path or the tarred road.
- 8) The Posada does an evening meal if it has been booked in advance, a very reasonable three courses (soup, meat, salad and fruit) for 8 euros, but it is a take-away meal that you have to eat back at the albergue.
- 9) There is a very good fuente just outside the albergue, allowing pilgrims to fill water bottles for the long climb the next day.
- 10) The path down from the highest point on the next day's walk to Pajares crosses a few small streams that require rock-hopping or wading.
- 11) The 2013 guide suggests taking the path left just past the disused parador at Puerta de Pajares, but we found that path dangerous (as a sign in Spanish warned: peligroso!). It is much safer to walk down the main road until the Camino is waymarked off to the left. As the 2017 update warned, the path to Pajares from the bend in the N630 is very muddy, but it is not dangerous. It connects with a rural road that returns to the N630 about a kilometre from

Pajares. The Camino branches left at this point and makes a long detour to the village, but it is much easier to walk the last section into Pajares on the road. There is a wide shoulder on the left for part of the way, then a footpath on the right that passes a very good fuente.

12) The bar in the village of Pajares is prepared to do platos combinados as well as meals - a good alternative if you arrive too late for lunch and don't want a big evening meal.

13) There is no easy way to get from Puente de los Ferrios to Campomames. The road is busy with very little room on the side, while the path over the hills is overgrown and blocked in places by fallen trees, necessitating serious clambering. Pilgrims who are not purists should consider getting the train the two stops to Campomames.

14) The amigos' alternative Camino from Campomames to Pola da Lena is a lovely walk along the river - much better than walking along the road. There is the option of going up a steep hill to see the pre-Romanesque church of Santa Cristina, if you happen to be passing during the hours it is open: 11-1, 4.30-6.30. Pilgrims who get the train to Campomames will find the riverside path indicated by a yellow arrow as they walk from the station toward the town.

15) While the 2013 guide said the path through Mieres was not well marked, the route through the town to the albergue (as described in both the 2013 guide and the 2017 update) is now clearly marked with both yellow arrows and Asturias scallop shells.

16) The hospitalero at Mieres is now Julio, telephone 663 680 715.