

# Camino 101

## A Starting Point for Planning a First Camino.



**Image:** Castrojeriz, Meseta, Spain, around dawn.

This guide is aimed at pilgrims undertaking a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

The Camino de Santiago is a series of paths taken by pilgrims across Europe which end in the city of Santiago de Compostela. Here they would venerate the remains of martyred St James, a disciple of Jesus. Pilgrims would step over the threshold of their home and begin their pilgrimage. Gradually paths would coalesce on to the Camino Frances. For example there were 4 main routes from France. As well there were trails from Portugal and the south of Spain. In recent times there has been a resurgence in pilgrim numbers. Nowadays the reasons for the walk are many and varied. Some are making a pilgrimage, others utilising the time to sort their lives. A new trend appears to be “bucket list” walkers cashing in on the infrastructure and cheaper costs when compared with the usual European holiday. When they book ahead 40 days of accommodation it puts a squeeze on the traditional pilgrim. Thus putting pressure on pilgrims to book too. “Bucket List” walkers are likely to take taxis and buses to maintain a level of comfort. In this way opportunities to prove oneself and learn life lessons are minimised. (In France booking at least one day ahead is expected.) Some of these walkers are affected by the Camino and return with the mindset of a Pilgrim.

The pilgrim today has the internet at their fingertips. It is becoming more difficult to leave the normal world behind and step into a liminal space. Here trials and challenges are faced and the

pilgrim discovers more about themselves. The temptation is for the pilgrim to bring the “normal” world with them thus risking missing out on what the Camino has to offer.

### **Tips for a Leaving the Normal World Behind**

The pilgrim has an opportunity to cross the threshold and move into a liminal space for the duration of their Camino. To do this as much of the normal world as is possible is best left behind. This will help foster conditions which will allow the Camino to provide what is needed. However this is not always possible. Some pilgrims will have factors in play which might mitigate this advice. An ill relative might require phone call reassurance, a bad back might necessitate the use of a baggage service. A female solo pilgrim might seek the security offered by a specialist travel company. By adopting the measures below a pilgrimage can still be undertaken.

If possible:

- Stay off social media ~ at least during the day, avoid live communication
- Alert friends and family you are taking a break from social media, and that you welcome emails.
- Communicate by email, a useful diary will gradually build.
- Carry your luggage
- Share Google location with a relative, especially for the more remote Caminos.
- Attempt to stay in pilgrim accommodation
- Leave the ear buds at home, walk in silence.
- Walk all the way as an intention. Circumstances might dictate otherwise.
- Leave expectations at home, replace with intentions.
- Find time for walking in silence.



### **Key References**

John Brierley: More than a guidebook. Contains much useful information  
Alexander John Shaia: Contains suggested steps to take before and after Camino.  
Christine Valters Paintner: 'The Soul of a Pilgrim, Eight Practices for the Journey Within.'  
All are available from Christchurch City Libraries.  
The Camino Podcast, Episode 96, June 26, 2025. 'Camino Ten Commandments.'

### **Use of Mobile Phones**

A mobile phone can be a useful tool when walking Caminos. Often pilgrims are required to telephone for accommodation entry codes. They can be an excellent navigation tool when route makings are sparse. In France they are essential for booking accommodation. They can also cause us to leave the special world and become enmeshed in situations we have temporarily left behind. [www.walkinginwisdom](http://www.walkinginwisdom) is a website hosted by a pilgrim. Here she discusses the possible dangers of mobile phones.

## Use of Apps

There are numerous apps which might be useful:

- Alert Cops ~ police, safety [Spain Only]
- Gronze Maps ~ Essentially an on-line guide book. Covers most routes; description, intermediate, distances, terrain profile, accommodation. [Tap 3 dots for drop down menu and language conversion]
- mapy.cz ~ trail guide.
- Google Translate ~ to convert languages.
- Google Maps ~ great for locating accommodation address in towns and cities.

## Accommodation

My advice on the Frances would be to book as far as Zubiri. Then be alert to the current situation and book if prudent. I would rather have the disadvantages of booking to being ferried to the next village in a taxi. Obtain specific albergue entry info while internet is available.

## Safety

- Always keep passport and money with you. Have a waterproof bag and "S" hook for showers.
- Arrange to walk with others over technical sections, through cities and 6 am starts.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Walking poles ~ are great for scaring barking dogs
- Carry some emergency snacks. [Shops close for celebrations and often at weekends.]

## Gear

Weight is critical. Take electronic scales shopping, use layering, There are many YouTube videos with gear suggestions. Appropriate footwear is essential.

## Website

The Christchurch Camino Group's website is a mine of information. The extensive index is a useful tool to locate information of interest in the newsletters: [chchcamino.net](http://chchcamino.net)

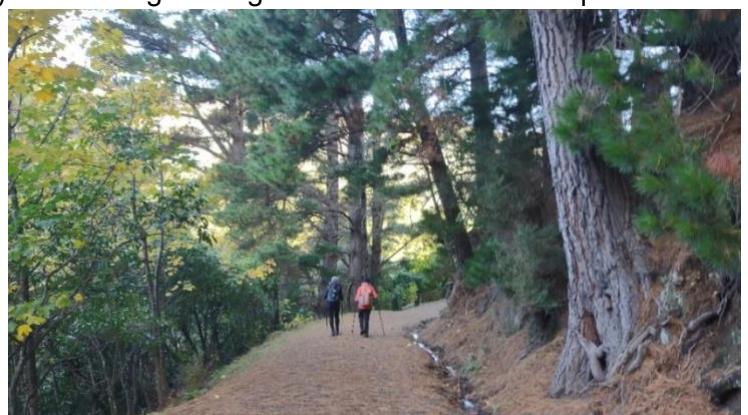
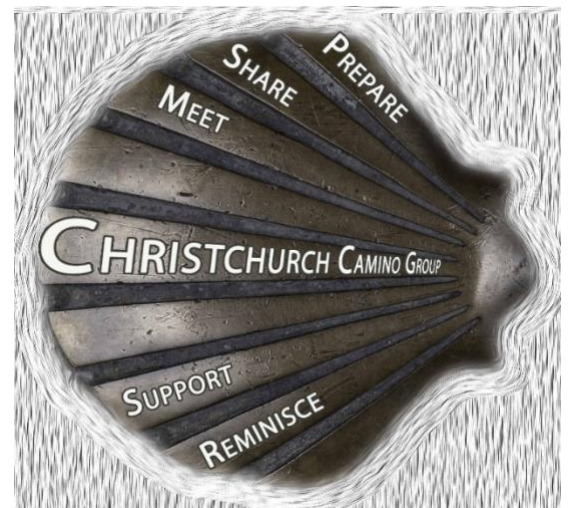
## Fitness

All Caminos require multiple consecutive days of walking. So a good level of fitness is required.

A physio should be able to conduct tests and locate areas of the body requiring strengthening. The Christchurch Camino Group has a walking group for those who have walked, or intend to walk a Camino. They undertake monthly walks.

## Camino Resources

There are many resources available. The trick is to explore them, while leaving sufficient mystery regarding the journey.



- The Christchurch City Libraries has an extensive Camino collection. They also have some Camino documentaries/films as do various streaming services.
- YouTube has a plethora of useful guides.
- Camino podcasts include: My Camino the Podcast, The Camino podcast
- Christchurch Camino Group holds quarterly meetings: [chchcaminogroup@gmail.com](mailto:chchcaminogroup@gmail.com)
- Hero's Camino: heroscamino.com

### **On the Trail**

- Be grateful. Express gratitude.
- Be litter free, have a bag for toilet paper.
- Stay out of fields, Vineyards. The produce is the farmers' livelihood.
- Greet other pilgrims with, 'Buen Camino,' a blessing meaning "have a good way."
- Ask before photographing locals and other pilgrims.
- Be aware of God presence in churches, the landscapes, in others.
- Maybe light a candle in a church, contemplate the statues, icons and stained glass. Pause at roadside crosses to remember loved ones.

### **After the Camino**

- Visit R6 above the Pilgrim Office for a debrief.
- Reread Alexander John Shaia's book.
- Complete the Post Camino survey in John Brierley's guidebooks.

