

Santiago. What Now? What Next!



Image: The Santiago de Compostela cathedral.

How does arrival in Santiago de Compostela make one feel? Life on the way was ordered. We were pilgrims and had succumbed to the routine. But as we neared Santiago this rhythm began to change. We crossed the threshold, entering the old town to arrive in this liminal space of transition. I stand in front of the cathedral unsure of my next move. My Camino Family has split and is in the process of returning to the 4 corners of the earth. The following are pointers from a pilgrim who has navigated this process a number of times.

Santiago de Compostela

The culmination of the outward pilgrimage is the arrival in Praza Obradoiro. Once the photographs have been taken in front of the cathedral what next? Here are some suggestions.

20 Things to Do In Santiago de Compostela

- Visit the **Pilgrim Office** for your Compostela (free) and 'Certificate of Distance,' (small fee). You will require your credential. First 10 pilgrims receive a for a free lunch at the Parador and in 2019 Philip also received a free ticket to the refurbished Portico Glory, the historic front door to the cathedral.
- Attend **Pilgrim Mass** in the Cathedral. (No packs nowadays).
- Watch the **Botafumeiro** swing at the conclusion of some masses.

- Visit the **cathedral**, best time when it opens and before the tourist buses arrive. Seek out the Chapel of La Corticela which is a separate parish church dedicated to pilgrims, strangers and Basques. Over the centuries the cathedral expanded to envelop it.
- Hug the **statue of St James**, above the altar, visit the tomb of St James beneath the altar.
- Attend the **Vigil** service after evening mass in the cathedral on a Saturday evening.

- Tour the **Cathedral museum**, and the roof, visit the **Portico of Glory** (doorway), a Romanesque sculpture from the 12th century, the work of Master Mateo. See background Wikipedia 'Santiago de Compostela.' Highly recommended. A recently restored masterpiece.



- Attend the **Pilgrim Mass in English** held in the chapel on the ground floor of the Pilgrim office building.
- Listen to **Tuna de Rerecho** who sing traditional songs nightly in the Praza do Obradoiro. Recommended.

Image: Welcoming R6 above the Pilgrim Office

- Visit the **Faithful Companions of Jesus** nuns in the **English Speakers' Room** above the Pilgrims' office for a chat, refreshments (donation) and Camino debrief. Well worthwhile.
- Visit **Pilgrim House Welcome Centre**, Rua Nova 19 - just a stone's throw from the cathedral. They have a meditation/reflection lounge, a restful back garden, a ticket printing facilities, cup of tea coffee (donation), and a Camino debrief session. Closed Wednesdays and Sundays. pilgrimhousesantiago.com



- Visit the **Pilgrim Museum**, adjacent to the horse fountain in front of the cathedral side door. (take your credential for a Pilgrim discount.)
- Visit **Alameda Park** and the most admired viewpoint, Paseo da Ferradura, on the eastern slope of Santa Susana hill. From there, there is a spectacular view of the cathedral. Recommended both day and night.
- Locate the **statue of the Two Marias** just inside Alameda park. (Pictured)
- Visit **San Martin Pinario church and museum**, a former Benedictine Monastery whose construction commenced in the 10th century. (Less than memorable museum.)

- Locate after dark, The **ghost pilgrim**, Plaza de la Quintana, Santiago de Compostela cathedral, Santiago de Compostela. (Pictured.)

- Enjoy **Breakfast** at San Martin Pinario hotel. A treat following breakfast on the road. (Opposite the cathedral.) Stay on the cheaper tariff pilgrim floor (book a few days out) and breakfast is complimentary.



- **Sit in Praza do Obradoiro**, taking in the cathedral, pondering your achievement and celebrating with pilgrims previously met along the way. (This is very worthwhile.)

- Celebrate by eating a meal with fellow pilgrims at an **outdoor table**.

- Locate **The Crismon** above the current entry door of the Santiago de Compostela cathedral showing “the end is the beginning.” How does this resonate with you?

Image: The Crismon, exterior, Santiago de Compostela cathedral.

Resources in Santiago

Quiet Time With the Faithful Companions of Jesus

I have found spending time in the company of the English Chaplaincy Team staffed by nuns from the Faithful Companions of Jesus to be very worthwhile, and a fitting end to the physical journey. Members of the congregation from the English Speakers' morning mass are invited upstairs at the conclusion of the service for a cup of tea, a biscuit and a chat. At 2pm there is a quiet reflection circle. During this time pilgrims are invited to participate in some form of reflective activity and share their stories. As a solo traveller I have found this supportive contact a very helpful aid in processing my thoughts and feelings.

Pilgrim House: Debriefing and Journaling Questions resources pilgrimhousesantiago.com

Pilgrim House, Rua Nova, 19, 15705 Santiago de Compostela, is a church backed space for pilgrims. It is a place of welcome and refreshment for pilgrims within a stone's throw of the cathedral, and in my opinion well worth a visit. One of the useful resources I brought back with me is their 'Pilgrim House Debriefing and Journaling Questions,' guide which is downloadable from their website.

'**The Camino Podcast, Episode 52, 'Tales from Two Houses in Santiago,'** features an extended interview with the founders, Nate and Faith. In it they discuss their history, reasons for being in Santiago and the services they hope to continue offering pilgrims. I (Philip) found it a very restful place after coming off the Camino and into a bustling city. The self questionnaires were thought provoking. A very interesting place to visit.

Prior to Arrival in Santiago

- Register for your Compostela
- Book accommodation for Santiago de Compostela (as soon as the arrival date becomes clear.)

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