

THINGS I NEED TO KNOW (FAQ)

A Guided Pilgrimage with Soul Care Seattle

Camino Portugues 2025

June 14-22, 2025

Q: Important Dates

- Pilgrimage Dates: June 14, starting in Vigo, Spain - June 22, ending in Santiago de Compostela
- REGISTRATION CLOSES: October 1, 2024
- Four Team Building Meetings (in-person or Zoom)
 - November 12, 2024
 - January 21, 2025
 - March 18, 2025
 - May 13, 2025
- July, 2025 optional BBQ at the Layne

Q: When should I plan to arrive in Europe?

A: It is optimal to allow at least one full day in Spain or Portugal prior to our gathering day of June 14th. This allows ample time to make the ground journey to Vigo, Spain, to adjust to your surroundings, and take care of last minute preparations. *At minimum you need to plan to land in Spain or Portugal no later than June 13th in order to make the journey to Vigo.*

For those participating in the extended pilgrimage, plan to arrive in Spain or Portugal no later than June 4th.

One of the themes of our four group meetings will be to discuss logistics including sharing ideas, details and options around the topic of getting to Vigo.

Q: What exactly is a pilgrimage?

A: Many of us are familiar with the idea of pilgrimage. We witness versions of pilgrimage in movies such as "The Way" (2010). We know of religious pilgrimages to holy sights of the world's religions (ie. Jerusalem, Mecca, Ganges River). Many make pilgrimages to homes and homelands of their ancestors, or to places of loss and/or sacrifice, or to places of natural wonder and beauty. Pilgrimage takes many forms. Life itself is a pilgrimage. Ultimately, a pilgrimage is an inner knowing that we actually "don't know", and that there is mystery and more to discover.

Q; Why should I consider making a pilgrimage?

A: On our pilgrimage we journey together expecting that as we open ourselves to the experience of watching, searching, smelling, feeling, listening for God, we will somehow participate in becoming new. We may slowly let go of attachments so that we have more space to receive from God and find more and more of our true selves as God's beloved.

Q: What if I want to go but I am not particularly interested in the "relics" of St James?

A: True, a pilgrimage is often about the destination, but most pilgrims would say that many of the gifts they received were not in the "destination" - ie. what they thought they were looking for - but, rather, some of the most impacting gifts were in the little noticings along the way. On this pilgrimage, some may have a strong desire to connect in some way with James the Apostle (brother of John - Matt 4:21-22) as a way to draw nearer to the life of Christ. Others may just want to pray in a church that celebrates the life of the first martyred apostle. Others may simply be curious over what all the curiosity is about, or simply curious about what it is like to slow down - to walk rather than drive, to listen to nature rather than podcasts, 'to be' rather than to perform.

Q: What if I prefer to walk alone or in silence?

A: By all means... YES! We want to give as much space as possible to honor "your own camino", your way. Mornings will be structured silence to provide a contemplative space for all and to encourage the contemplative practices of Silence, Solitude, and inner Stillness. Afternoons allow for more of a social walk if both parties agree.

Q: Who will I share a room with?

A: Good question. In the spirit of pilgrimage, of letting go of comforts, we find ourselves in potentially awkward situations with an inward orientation toward "watch and wonder" as God uses the circumstances beyond our control to affect a greater purpose and gift. We invite all pilgrims to be open to what new thing might gradually form in you through roommates. That said, it is perfectly acceptable to request single occupancy or to bring a companion.

Q: What does the trip cost?

- **Pilgrim Package:** Single Occupancy \$2,394, Double Occupancy \$2,062
 - 4 advance group sessions for spiritual, physical, practical, and logistical preparation (zoom available for those outside the greater Seattle area) November 12, January 21, March 18, May 13
 - Daily optional morning prayer / reflection gathering
 - Ignatian prayer guide while on the camino
 - Spiritual Care along the journey as desired
 - 8 nights 'standard accomodation' - double or single occupancy as reflected in the pricing
 - Breakfast Daily
 - Baggage transfer
 - Logistical assistance along the Camino
 - Daily optional evening debrief

- Dinner Celebrations in Vigo and Santiago
- Optional transition BBQ at The Layne in late July
- **Not included:**
 - Travel, hotel, and food expenses to Vigo, Spain and from Santiago, Spain (to be arranged independently by pilgrims)
 - Lunches, dinners, snacks, drinks, etc. (Group dinner is provided in Vigo and Santiago)
 - Transport of more than one piece of luggage
 - Medical expense and incidentals
 - Optional extension at the beginning (Porto to Vigo)
 - Travel Insurance

Hidden costs of gear, food/drinks, and extras are up to the individual traveler.

Q: What's up with the four meetings before the pilgrimage?

A: There is a lot that goes into preparing to make the most of an adventure like this. In these meetings, we will focus on the three main themes of logistic, physical, and spiritual preparation.

Q: Spiritual Preparation?

A: In our group meetings, prior to the journey, together we will explore the wisdom and practical help of Ignatian Spirituality with particular attention to image of God, image of self, "God in all things" and "All is Gift".

Q: What if I am not even sure of what I believe anymore? What if I have lost all trust in the church or in God?

A: We want you to know that you are both definitely not alone and that you are fully welcome. We honor where you are without expectation or agenda. We invite you to use this pilgrimage as a time for healing, a time for newness, and for coming further into your true self. We anticipate that we will all be in different places along our unique paths. You can expect safety and honor in all that we experience together. Please let us know if you ever experience anything less.

Q: How should I prepare physically for the pilgrimage?

A: Walking the Camino involves moving to different locations on foot each day. For seven consecutive days, we will walk 5 to 14 miles each day. This is a significant distance and it includes varying, often uneven terrain (i.e. trails, asphalt, gravel, elevation changes). It is strongly recommended that pilgrims train their bodies at least four months in advance for the journey. Additionally, pilgrims must train using the boots or shoes they will wear on the journey. Breaking in new footwear on the journey is not for the faint of heart.... As part of our group preparation, we will swap ideas and experiences on training and preparation.

Search the following sites for training suggestions that resonate with you.

- Follow the Camino: <https://followthecamino.com/en/blog/your-camino-training-plan/>
- Camino Ways: <https://caminoways.com/how-do-i-train-for-the-camino-de-santiago>
- Stingy Nomad: <https://stingynomads.com/camino-de-santiago-training/>

Q: Can older children join us?

A: Pilgrimage is an amazing gift to older children, especially high school age, provided they are traveling with a parent or legal guardian.

Q: Where does the pilgrimage begin? How do I get there?

A: We will meet at a hotel in Vigo, Spain, in the afternoon on June 14, 2024. We will provide the exact address and further details as we get closer to the start of the pilgrimage. Pilgrims will likely fly into nearby larger cities, such as Lisbon, Porto, or Madrid. *We do not suggest flying into Santiago* as this also serves as the destination for our journey together. If it is possible for you to save Santiago for the end of your journey, we highly recommend flying into Lisbon, Porto, or Madrid, and arranging transportation to Vigo from there.

Q: What is the best way to get from Porto to Vigo?

A: It looks like there are 4 viable options depending on your preference. We suggest studying the Rome2Rio website to find the option that suits you best. Train, bus, rideshare, car rental are all viable options. The journey is roughly 1.5 hours by car, 2.75 hours with transfers by train, or seven days by foot for anyone who wishes to extend their pilgrimage with us!

Q: What is the best way to get from Madrid to Vigo?

A: There is a direct train from Madrid to Vigo. Based on certain days of the week, this 4- 5.5 hour journey allows you to take in a bit more of the countryside and can afford you a day or two to explore Madrid as you adjust to being in Europe. Check Rome2Rio for updated information.

Q: What about after the pilgrimage?

A: The pilgrimage ends in Santiago de Compostela, Spain on June 22nd between 11:00 and 12:00 PM. With that in mind you are encouraged to stay and explore Santiago, continue on to Finisterra, travel home, or continue your travels. The official pilgrimage ends with our celebration and each individual will find their way (bus, train, car, ...or foot) to their airport or next destination.

Q: What is the trip itinerary?

A: The trip itinerary is as follows (please note, some minor changes may occur depending upon hotel availability):

- June 14th - Vigo, Spain: Gather together for dinner celebration (included) to bless and begin our journey
- June 15th - Vigo to Redondela - 15km, 9.3 mi
- June 16th - Redondela to Arcada - 8km, 5mi
- June 17th - Arcade to Pontevedra - 12km, 7.5mi
- June 18th - Pontevedra to Caldas de Reis - 22km, 13.7mi
- June 19th - Caldas de Reis to Padron - 18km, 11mi
- June 20th - Padron to Teo - 12km, 7.5mi
- June 21st - Teo to Santiago -13km, 8mi Celebration dinner together (included)

- June 22nd - Santiago to ...the rest of the world! We will have a closing ceremony the morning of June 22 in Santiago before you travel home or journey to points beyond!

Q: Will I need a guide book?

A: Yes! Absolutely! You will need to purchase a guide book. We are recommending “Camino Portugues”, by John Brieley. You will lean heavily upon this book to find your way.

Q: How much walking is it?

A: The daily mileage is included in the itinerary above. While the route is moderate in nature, it does include some inclines and declines. We will begin walking between 7:30 and 8:30 AM. Generally, pilgrims will arrive in the next lodging location before or around 3:00 PM (including a lunch stop).

Q: What about footwear?

A: Light hiking boots or trail running shoes are likely all you need. We are only carrying daypacks with probably only 5-10 pounds. However, the more prone you are to ankle injuries, the higher level of ankle support you may want. Cushion is not always the best option, as inconsistent and uneven surfaces, such as gravel bordering on small river rock, or cobblestone, can render cushy shoes unstable. Water resistance will be your friend. “Waterproof” may prove to be too warm. Lastly, many find that their feet tend to swell as the walking progresses. Opting for shoes with a larger/wider toe box can reduce hotspots. We highly recommend a good shoe store with knowledgeable people. For example, FleetFeet offers foot imaging to help in this process.

Q: What about blisters?

A: This is where adequate training and breaking your shoes in early is imperative. It’s much better to experiment with blisters at home where they can heal rather than on the camino where you will have to put your shoes on again the next day.

We suggest Smartwool socks. Bombas also seems to be fairly good in this regard. You will need a minimum of three pairs (one to hike in, one to carry just in case, and one to wear the next day while the previous pair is drying). Additionally, jell-blister pads such as Compeed are essential. Moleskine is also a great item. You will devise what works for you! If you experience difficulty and pain, you are welcome to make your own ground transportation arrangements to the next lodging location.

Q: Do I have to carry all my things with me each day?

A: No. The cost of the pilgrimage includes a service that will transport our baggage from lodging site to lodging site each day. Therefore, you only need to carry in your pack anything you would like to have during the day’s walk (water, snacks, journal, ID, cash, sunscreen, first aid supplies, rain jacket). Keep in mind, the baggage courier service only allows one bag per pilgrim. Therefore, pilgrims should plan to only have one piece of luggage and one backpack or day pack, to carry as they walk. Also note, the baggage courier service limits the weight of each suitcase/pack/duffel to 20 kgs (44 lbs).

Q: What about meals?

A: Breakfast at each hotel is included in the cost of the pilgrimage. European breakfasts tend to be very carb-heavy, but some hotels offer some good protein options. Feel free to add your own twist with something you pick up along the way.

With the exception of the daily breakfast, and the first night and last night dinner, you will have the opportunity to explore local restaurants and cafes for lunch and dinner. It's an adventure to think through the 'when and where' to find your next meal. Let this experience take you deeper into your pilgrimage and enjoy the food culture of Galicia.

Bars are almost always open. However, restaurants and cafes will likely stop serving lunch at about 3:00 and begin dinner at 7:30 or 8:00, which is an adjustment if you are used to an early dinner. Tapas or 'light plates' can be found between hours in some establishments. Some will make a late lunch their main meal, others will want to stay out late for dinner. All is gift!

Watch for the "Pilgrim Menu" (Menu de Perigrino) or "Menu del Dia" offering a 3-course meal that includes a starter (ie. salad, soup or pasta), main dish (i.e., protein and french fries), dessert (cake, pastry or ice cream), and beverage (water, soda, wine or beer). For plus or minus 10 Euros, you will be well-fed, and even the average dinner in Spain is memorable.

Q: What is a "standard" accommodation?

A: Lodging at a "standard" accommodation is usually a smaller hotel or guest house, sometimes family run that offers a homey, simple feel, and usually a hearty breakfast.

Q: What's the daily schedule like?

A: We will follow a general daily rhythm (see below). Exact timing will vary somewhat day-to-day and depend on factors that are hard to predict or plan on in advance, so plan on flexibility.

Also, please note that this is *your* pilgrimage. We will offer breakfast and a morning gathering for a prayer and reflection as well as an optional gathering at about 5:00pm to check in and enjoy each other's company. Other than these two optional events, and your personal needs, such as laundry and preparing for your next day, your days on the camino are really up to you.

- o 7:15 – 8:30 AM - Breakfast, group reflection, and depart for the day. The exact timing of breakfast and our morning departure will vary because different lodging locations begin breakfast at different times ranging from 7:00 AM to 8:00 AM. Note: Baggage must be at the front desk of the lodging location by 7:30/8:00 AM each day for courier pickup.

- o 1:00 – 4:00 PM: Pilgrims likely will arrive at the next night's lodging location in this timeframe.

- o 5:00 PM - (Approximate time) You are free to join us at a specified 'no-host' cafe or bar (when available) to process your day, share stories, noticings, or just put your feet up and rest.

Q: What do I need to bring?

A: The most important item you will bring is your boots or shoes. You must, must, must break these in well before the pilgrimage. Additionally, you may want to bring a pair of sandals or flip-flops to put on in the evening. They will feel good on your feet after the day's walk. Also, bring clothes that are comfortable to walk in. Lastly, keep in mind that you may want to stop and pray for a minute in a church, cathedral, or basilica. For these sites, due to the number of pilgrims and tourists, dress codes have been relaxed. Also, bring:

- o Hat
- o Rain poncho (good to be prepared)
- o Sunglasses
- o Backpack
- o Water bottle
- o Sunscreen & bug spray
- o Journal and writing utensil
- o Snacks (suggest bars/trail mix as they travel well. Packaged meat sticks and fruit may not be allowed into the EU. These items can be purchased there.)
- o ID (passport) and copies of important documents kept separately from your ID.
- o Cash & Credit Card (some restaurants and vendors will be cash only)
- o First Aid – consider bringing your own small anti-blister kit (we'll go over what items to include in your kit in group meetings)
- o Toiletries
- o Phone / Camera
- o Hiking poles (optional: some people find these help alleviate joint pain)
- o Outlet adapters for Spain (Appliances rated between 220V and 240V are safe to plug into Spanish sockets.)
- o Phone charger
- o Earplugs
- o Durable luggage tags with: name, leader's name, and booking code
- o Insider tip: We are particularly fond of pads for sitting. These small, thermal pads provide a relatively inexpensive perk when you need to stop in a wet, muddy, dusty, or rocky space to nurse blisters or simply take in a snack and a view.

Q: How much money will I spend on food and drink?

A: While walking the camino, breakfast will be provided. If you choose to eat breakfast on your own, you can count on +/- 5 Euros. Remember the first and last dinner, as a group, is included in your pilgrimage cost.

For lunch and dinner you will continue your pilgrim's experience finding your own food and drink. A typical pilgrim lunch will be found +/- 10 Euros, and a typical dinner will be roughly +/- 15 Euros. It is fairly safe to assume that 25 Euros a day (25 x seven days = 175 Euros) on the camino will leave you well fed with food befitting the average pilgrim.

Some may decide to bring extra spending money for coffee, alcoholic beverages, snacks, and desserts. You may also want to bring extra spending money for any gifts or souvenirs you wish to purchase.

Q: How much cash should I bring?

A: We are fans of limiting the amount of cash that you carry. Credit cards are welcome in many, if not most establishments, but you will need Euros at times. We prefer to carry 100 Euros and replenish using cash machines *at banks*, as needed. Remember to check your bank for fees.

Remember, you will likely need US dollars on both ends of your journey and Euros while in Spain, Portugal, other EU nations. If traveling through London, GB uses the British Pound. Credit cards will work for most establishments, but you'll also want to have Euros, as the smaller restaurants and cafes are cash only.

Q: Do I need Travel Insurance?

A: Travel insurance is not included, but is a valuable option in case of unforeseen events, damage, illness, injury, and so on. There are many travel insurance providers. A reliable and easy resource is worldnomads.com