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Global trips for women

## **Portugal & Spain Camino Walk**

**14 days**

### ***Discover the Beauty of Portugal and Spain: Women-Only Group Holiday***

Join us for an unforgettable journey through the stunning landscapes and rich cultures of Portugal and Spain! This women-only holiday is designed for adventure, relaxation, and connection. Over 14 incredible days, you'll explore vibrant cities, indulge in local delicacies, and walk the historic Camino de Santiago alongside kindred spirits.

- Starts: **Lisbon** (Portugal), 21st September 2025
- Ends: **Santiago de Compostela** (Spain), 4th October 2025
- 14 days & 13 nights, fully guided
- Euro6900, minimum 6 hikers, maximum 11
- Accommodation is in city-centre, comfortable 3-5-star hotels
- Transport by private minibus, with excursions (2) by train and a *rabelo* boat trip
- Six guided walks on the famous Way of St James pilgrimage route
- Group meals in hand-picked local restaurants; Douro winery visit & tasting; spa visit with massage & other treatments available; optional cookery class

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Combines Iberian neighbours Portugal & Spain, countries known for their warm welcome and rich traditions, each one subtly similar yet different
- Explore the fascinating history of medieval Europe's two great seafaring nations, as we visit with expert guides the dazzling riches these brought to the historic cities of Lisbon, Sintra, Coimbra, Porto, Pontevedra and Santiago de Compostela

- Be enthralled by the gorgeous ceramic tiles that adorn the streets of Portugal's cities and towns; listen to the nostalgic melodies of "fado" song on our first night out in Lisbon; visit inside one of Europe's oldest universities, in Coimbra
- Experience the camaraderie and sense of satisfaction in our achievements as we walk six hand-picked stages of the legendary pilgrims' path to Santiago de Compostela, Spain's "Way of St James", which pass through green and leafy countryside dotted with sleepy hamlets and towns
- Indulge in some of western Europe's finest cuisine, from freshly caught Atlantic seafood to exquisite, cured hams and delicious salads and stews made from fresh garden produce – not to forget Portugal's sweet treat – the "*pastel de nata*" (custard tart)! And the local wines are, of course, extremely good and affordable.

## ITINERARY

### **Day One (21 September): Arrival Lisbon**

Arrive in Lisbon and grab a taxi to our hotel, located right in the centre, and a 3-minute stroll from the impressive square of Praça do Comércio, which bustles with life. We meet our fellow Venus Adventurers and locally based Tour Leader for pre-trip briefing, followed by dinner in the lively Alfama district - whilst listening to the melodic, passionate strains of Fado, Portugal's greatest musical tradition.

We stay 3 nights in Lisbon. Meals: D

Note: you can book additional nights through us, should you wish to arrive early

### **Day Two (22 September): Lisbon**

Get ready to dive into Lisbon's incredible history, where past and present collide! Once the power center of a sprawling maritime empire that reached Asia, Africa, and Brazil, this city has pretty much seen it all - Lisbon has a few stories to tell! We'll get the scoop from our fantastic local guide as we explore two of Lisbon's most iconic spots: the grand Monastery and Church of St. Jerome and the charming Museum of Ceramic Tiles, a showcase of the stunning tile designs Portugal is known for.

After lunch, take some free time to wander and soak up the city vibes. In the evening, we'll regroup and hop on a ferry across the bay, heading to a

chic waterfront restaurant with unbeatable views of Lisbon glittering in the distance—perfect for a memorable dinner with a view! Meals: B, D

Note: your Tour Leader can give suggestions on what to do and see on your free afternoon

### **Day Three (23 September): Train to Sintra**

Today, we're escaping Lisbon for a day trip to the enchanting town of Sintra! We'll hop on a train and wind our way up into the green hills, where Sintra's nestled just a short way from the Atlantic coast. Known for its dreamy 19th-century Romantic architecture, lush gardens, and a stunning collection of royal palaces and castles, this UNESCO World Heritage site feels like something straight out of a fairy tale. Meals: B, L

To avoid the typical crowds, we're headed to two hidden gems: the Palace of Monserrate and Quinta da Regaleira. These 19th-century villas are packed with fascinating stories, eccentric former owners, and gardens full of quirky, hidden nooks. Our expert local guide will help bring their colorful pasts to life. After lunch, you'll have some time to wander and explore at your own pace. We'll catch a train back to Lisbon in the late afternoon, where the evening is yours—take advantage of Lisbon's endless charm! Meals: B, L

**Note:** your Tour Leader can give suggestions on where to dine & wine on your free evening

### **Day Four (24 September): Lisbon to Coimbra by minibus, historic Coimbra**

We say "adeus" to Lisbon and hit the road! Our friendly driver will take us north, with a fun stop along the way at the charming town of Óbidos. This place is like something from a fairy tale, with narrow cobbled streets nestled under a hilltop castle. After grabbing coffee and stretching our legs, we'll keep going, stopping for a bite before arriving in Coimbra mid-afternoon.

Once Portugal's capital, Coimbra is now famous for its buzzing university life. Founded in 1290, the university is one of the oldest in the world, and its 21,000 students give the city an electric, youthful vibe. We'll explore the historic campus with our local guide, wandering through its 16th-century palace grounds and stopping at the incredible Joanina Library, rumored to have some very unusual book-loving residents—bats! After checking in at our cozy riverside hotel, we'll head out for a fun dinner in the vibrant Baixa district.

We stay one night in Coimbra. Meals: B, L, D

Note: Coimbra is a safe and friendly place, so if you feel like a night out, this is a great opportunity. Perhaps you have got the bug for fado? - why not carry on to one of the venues where you can listen to nightly live performances in an intimate setting.

### **Day Five (25 September): Coimbra to Porto**

Enjoy a leisurely morning before we make our way north to Portugal's vibrant second city, Porto. With a history stretching back to the Roman settlement of Portus Cale (the namesake of both the city and country), Porto is also the birthplace of the world-famous fortified wine, Port.

On our way, we'll swing by the picturesque town of Aveiro, known for its pretty canals and pastel-colored houses. Here, we'll savor fresh seafood and local wine for lunch. Then, it's off to explore the wonders of Porto on an afternoon tour! We'll take in the city's opulent trading history at the gold-adorned Palacio da Bolsa stock exchange, and step next door to the stunningly ornate baroque church of St. Francis.

Then we're off to the iconic Clérigos Tower. Brave the 240 steps to the top for panoramic views of Porto's red rooftops, the river, and those soaring seagulls! After all that climbing, it's time to relax and hop on an electric tuk-tuk with a local guide for a breezy ride through the city streets. As the sun sets, we'll stop at a lookout for a glass of Port, soaking in the city's glow over the Douro River—perfect for that memory-making snapshot.

After freshening up back at our hotel, we'll head out for a delicious Portuguese dinner nearby to cap off the day.

We stay two nights in Porto. Meals: B, L, D

Note: the inhabitants of Porto are often referred to as "tripe-eaters" and they in turn refer to Lisbon dwellers as "cabbage eaters" – but don't worry, it's just a sign of the North-South rivalry between the two cities and not an indication of what we are having for dinner!

### **Day Six (26 September): Excursion by train along Douro Valley, all about wine**

Today, it's all about wine—where it comes from, how it's crafted, and the stunning Douro Valley that makes it all possible! We'll dive into the world of winemaking, meet some of the locals who keep these traditions alive, and of course, enjoy a few tastings along the way.

To start, we'll catch a train from Porto's Campanhã station, winding our way along the scenic banks of the Douro River to the charming town of Pinhão, famous for its beautifully tiled train station. Just a short walk away is Quinta da Foz, a historic estate founded in 1872, where we'll stroll among terraced vines cascading down to the water. Here, we'll learn all about vine cultivation and sample a lineup of wines, including a white, a red, and three distinct port wines—each with its own story.

After a laid-back lunch down by Pinhão's bustling pier, we're off on a rabelo boat, a replica of the traditional vessels that once carried barrels of port downriver. As we float along, we'll be treated to vineyard views you won't find from the roads. Take in the peaceful atmosphere, breathe in the earthy scents, and soak up the true spirit of the Douro Valley.

With some time to wander through Pinhão after our cruise, we'll catch the evening train back to Porto, arriving around 8:30 p.m. The evening is yours to relax, explore, or grab a bite at a nearby spot—whatever feels right after a day of wine and relaxation!

Meals: B, L

Note: Porto is the industrial and commercial heart of Portugal, as well as a beautiful city. As an oft repeated saying about the Portuguese cities goes, "Coimbra studies, Braga prays, Lisbon parties...and Porto works."

### **Day Seven (27 September): Our first walk on the Way of St James, country lanes**

Time to lace up those hiking boots as we dive into our "six-steps-to-Santiago" journey along the Portuguese Camino de Santiago! Our first leg starts at the historic Dom Zameiro Bridge, a medieval stone crossing over the peaceful River Ave, just a short drive from Porto. As we step onto the stones of this ancient bridge, the magic of the Camino kicks in—we're treading the very path that countless pilgrims have followed toward Santiago over the centuries.

Locals tending their gardens and fields greet us with a warm "Bom Caminho!", welcoming us into the timeless tradition of the Camino. Today's walk takes us through a mix of open fields, shaded woodlands, and charming villages, each dotted with shrines and churches. We'll pause in the town of São Pedro de Rates, where you can grab a café lunch or snack and relax by the simple, yet soulful Romanesque church. And don't worry—the minibus is nearby if you want to give your legs a break, and our Tour Leader will keep a comfortable pace for everyone.

Along the way, there's plenty of time to stop for drinks, snap photos, rest, and chat with fellow walkers. This part of the Camino is all about taking in

the scenery, the quiet rhythm of the trail, and the wonderful company. Our route ends in the hamlet of Real, with a quick detour to the historic Pedra Furada, a hollowed stone believed to be an ancient fertility landmark.

We stay one night in Barcelos. Meals: B, D

-Today includes: minibus transfer Porto-Barcelos, with vehicle support along the stage of the Camino; **Camino stage 1**: Ponte Dom Zameiro to Real (Pedra Furada): approximately 17 kilometres, easy-moderate;

### **Dinner**

-Useful to know: more women than men walk the Camino. Of the recorded 446,000 people who walked the various route of the Camino de Santiago in 2023, 53% of them were women.

## **Day Eight (28 September): Our second walk, to beautiful Ponte de Lima**

Today, we're off on our second leg of the Camino, starting at the sacred shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida. Legend has it, this is the spot where a miracle restored a penitent's sight and hearing—so, as they say, it's where sins are washed away! From here, we wander through rolling countryside toward Vitorino dos Piães, where we'll pause for a well-deserved morning coffee before tackling a few short climbs. Then, we descend into the lush valley of the Lima River, surrounded by tranquil hamlets, villages, and distant views of the Peneda-Gerês mountains.

Today's route mainly follows quiet country roads, so the minibus is nearby if you ever need it, but the 19 km should be manageable with a nice, steady pace. When we reach our destination, the picturesque town of Ponte de Lima, that sense of accomplishment is hard to beat—and we'll celebrate with a delicious lunch in one of the local spots. Afterward, we'll wander across Ponte de Lima's famous stone bridge—a medieval "remake" of the original Roman bridge built here in 1 AD! There's even a small museum nearby that showcases the region's renowned "vinho verde," or "green wine," which we may just have to sample. Meals: B, D

Tonight, we're in for a treat: our stay is at the stunning Pousada de Viana do Castelo, perched high above a sanctuary with panoramic views over the town, the Lima estuary, and the Atlantic beaches. With a pool in the grounds and a restaurant that shares these jaw-dropping views, it's a perfect place to unwind and take in the beauty of this special region.

We stay one night in Viana do Castelo. Meals: B, D

-Today includes: minibus transfer Barcelos-Viana do Castelo, with vehicle support along the stage of the Camino; **Camino stage 2**: Balugães to Ponte de Lima: approximately 19 kilometres, moderate  
-Useful to know: Ponte de Lima hosts an annual International Gardens Festival, as shown on their Instagram page:  
<https://www.instagram.com/festivalinternacionaldejardins>

### **Day Nine (29 September): Our third walk, along the beaches to quaint Caminha**

Today we're mixing things up with the "Coastal Way" of the Portuguese Camino, walking a gorgeous stretch of Atlantic beach between Praia de Paço and Caminha. Mostly level and easy-going, this route takes us along wooden boardwalks, cycle paths, and forest trails. We'll definitely stop to kick off our shoes and feel that soft sand between our toes—and for anyone daring enough, maybe even dip a foot in the chilly ocean!

With beach bars along the way, we'll have the choice to grab lunch at one or pack a picnic from the seaside town of Vila Praia de Âncora. Our walk wraps up in the border town of Caminha, a charming place full of history with fountains, churches, and 16th-century architecture. Recently voted one of the best spots in Europe for investment, Caminha offers great views across the Minho River to Spain.

To cross the border, we may catch a scenic boat ride over the Minho estuary, meeting our driver on the Spanish side, or take the road bridge. Either way, it's time to set our watches forward as we enter a new time zone! Our destination tonight is Baiona, where we'll stay in a stunning Parador hotel—a former castle perched on a rocky bluff with views over the bay. The hotel even has an outdoor pool, perfect for a quick dip or relaxing in the late afternoon sun. After a bit of downtime, we'll head out for dinner in Baiona's enchanting old town, a fitting end to a fabulous coastal day.

We stay one night in Baiona. Meals: B, D

-Today includes: minibus transfer Viana do Castelo-Baiona, with vehicle support along the stage of the Camino; **Camino stage 3**: Praia de Paço to Caminha: approximately 18 kilometres, easy-moderate; **Dinner**  
-Useful to know: on today's coastal walk you may need to wrap up against the shore breezes and/or protect yourself from the sun (as other than a lovely stretch through a forest there is little shade).

## **Day Ten (30 September): Our fourth walk is in SPAIN, above the Atlantic coast**

This morning is all about taking it easy! Enjoy a lazy breakfast, catch up on your journal, tackle some laundry, stroll through the old town, or just unwind by the pool—it's totally up to you. Our hotel sits on the site of a medieval castle, so you can also walk along the ancient battlements and soak in some jaw-dropping views over the harbor and ocean. You might notice an unusual ship among the fishing boats and yachts—a replica of the caravel that brought back news of Columbus's "discovery" in 1493. Just a little slice of history right here!

After lunch, we're off by minibus to the outskirts of Vigo, where we'll pick up the Camino again. We'll walk through peaceful woodlands and take a scenic (if a bit steep!) descent to the picturesque Rego das Macieiras, or "stream of the apple trees." Passing through Redondela, where two Camino routes meet, we'll then take on a climb to today's summit, the Alto de Lomba. The effort is worth it for the amazing views of the "rías," the unique estuaries that shape this coast.

We'll wrap up today's shorter hike with well-earned sundowners by the water in Arcade before heading to our next stop: the charming city of Pontevedra. Tonight, we're staying in another historic gem—a Parador hotel that was once a 16th-century Renaissance palace. Check out the grand stone staircase or unwind in the lovely garden, perfect for a quiet drink or a chat. For dinner, you can enjoy a cozy meal at the hotel or venture into Pontevedra's old quarter to find a lively bar or restaurant.

We stay one night in Pontevedra. Meals: B, D

-Today includes: minibus transfer Baiona-Pontevedra, with vehicle support along the stage of the Camino; **Camino stage 4**: Vilar de Infesta to Arcade: approximately 11 kilometres, moderate; **Dinner**

-Useful to know: the distinctive yellow arrows that mark the way on all the turns of the Camino were originally the work of a Catholic priest in the 1980's who, intent on restoring the path of the Camino, which had been neglected over time, set about marking them with the yellow paint that a friend had left over from painting roads!

## **Day Eleven (1 October): Our fifth walk, and a soak in the medicinal waters of Caldas**

Water takes center stage today as we step out of the hotel and begin our walk. Our first river crossing is the Lérez, via the charming medieval Burgo Bridge. From there, we'll skirt the lush wetland area of Xunqueira



de Alba, where kingfishers, egrets, and moorhens call home. The path leads us over a series of stone footbridges, adding to the tranquil vibe of the place. We'll finish today's hike at the stunning Río Barosa, where the layered waterfalls cascade over smooth granite boulders. Among the picturesque falls, we'll stop for lunch at a cozy bar-restaurant in one of the old stone mills—what a way to enjoy the scenery!

After lunch, we'll take a short minibus ride to Caldas de Reis, famous for its healing thermal waters. For centuries, these waters have been soothing weary travelers, and today, you're in for a treat. At the stylish Balneario Acuña spa resort, you'll experience a thermal circuit like no other. Picture yourself relaxing in a jacuzzi with views over the Umia River, followed by a journey through a circular shower, steam bath, and hydromassage tub. Optional massages and treatments are available for those wanting an extra dose of relaxation.

Refreshed and rejuvenated, we'll head to Padrón, where we'll stay the night in a beautifully renovated hotel overlooking the peaceful Sar River. Tonight, dinner at the highly praised Chef Rivera restaurant promises a delightful blend of Galician and French flavors. It's the perfect end to a day filled with natural beauty and soothing experiences.

We stay one night in Padron. Meals: B, D

-Today includes: minibus transfer Pontevedra- Padrón, with vehicle support along the stage of the Camino; **Camino stage 5**: Pontevedra to Rio Barosa: approximately 15 kilometres, moderate; **Dinner**

-Useful to know: the town of Padrón is famous for a type of green pepper (capsicum) that is said to be the culinary equivalent of Russian Roulette. Most of the peppers – delicious when grilled with sea salt as an accompaniment to meat or fish dishes – are pleasantly piquant, but every now and again one will simply blow your head off, so hot and fiery can they be!

## **Day Twelve (2 October) Our sixth (and final!) walk to Santiago**

The end of our journey is in sight today and we share the excitement of being close to reaching Santiago with the other pilgrims we meet along the way. Before we embark on our sixth and final stage, however, there is a chance to savour a beautiful Galician "pazo" (or country house) at O Faramello, a small hamlet just north of Padrón. Founded as a royal paper mill, this architectural complex is more than three centuries old and is full of history and charm. The outdoor areas are made up of natural pools, canals, fountains, pools and ponds, and azaleas, camelias and rhododendron abound in the delightful gardens. From here we walk the last 15 kilometres of the Camino, entering the old quarter of Santiago by

the bustling Rúa do Franco – the traditional entrance for Portuguese Camino pilgrims.

As excitement mounts, we get the first glimpses of the vast shrine of St James, the towering cathedral of Santiago, and then, almost suddenly, we are standing before it, in the vast square Praza del Obradoiro. It's a moment to savour, with hugs and embraces all round, and photos to record our achievement, at once a private and yet very shared moment, that is replicated thousands of times each day by people from all around the world when they reach this hallowed spot. Our luxurious hotel is located a mere 10 minutes' walk from the old centre, and tonight you can either choose to eat at the in-house restaurant, a good local restaurant nearby (there are several within a 2-minute walk), or choose from any of the wide array of excellent restaurants in town.

We stay two nights in Santiago de Compostela. Meals: B

-Today includes: guided visit of country house & gardens of Pazo do Faramello; minibus transfer Padrón-Santiago, with vehicle support along the stage of the Camino; **Camino stage 6**: O Faramello to Santiago: approximately 15 kilometres, moderate

-Useful to know: the Cathedral of Santiago issues a certificate known as the "*Compostela*" to those pilgrims who can show that they have walked the last 100kms of any Camino into Santiago. Our more selective approach means that we are not eligible for this certificate, but we can still have fun collecting stamps from businesses and places of interest along the way in our special "Pilgrim's Passports".

### **Day Thirteen (3 October): Holy & venerable Santiago, and our Farewell Dinner**

Today we rest! And savour our achievement and all we have learned and experienced along the way. After a leisurely breakfast, we walk into town and, with an expert local guide, we visit the interior of the Cathedral and hear of its centuries of history while absorbing the peace that it radiates. For those who would like to attend, there is a special Pilgrims' Mass said every day at 12:00, in front of the splendid Main Altar. We may also be lucky and coincide with a visit of pilgrims who have made a special request for the famous thurible (incense-dispenser), the "*Botafumeiro*", to swing. Suspended from the main dome of the Cathedral it is operated by a system of pulleys, but it is so heavy that it still takes eight men to work it. When it swings, dispensing incense, it is a truly magnificent sight. Having nourished our souls, we now turn to more mundane matters and, for those who would like to, there is the chance to learn some Galician

culinary skills in a private cookery class, which leads into lunch. (There is a minimum for the class to run and the price will vary according to the final number participating). Alternatively, the market area is a great place for light bites and for seeing what's good and fresh on the colourful stalls. The rest of the day is free time, so you can do last-minute shopping, sunbathe by the hotel pool, or delve into the granite streets of the old town, full of interest and ambience. Then this evening, we put our tour to bed with a celebratory and farewell dinner in one of Santiago's best restaurants, as we swap favourite memories from the past 13 days and make plans for future Venus Adventures!

Meals: B, D

-Today includes: guided visit of the Cathedral of Santiago, entrances included; **Dinner**

-Useful to know: full details of today's optional cookery class will be provided with your [Tour Details] but is sure to be a lot of fun, as you learn from a local female chef some of the recipes taught by her grandmother, as you put together a typical Galician lunch, following their principles of "Cook-Learn-Taste-Enjoy".

### **Day Fourteen (4 October): departures & onward travel from Santiago Compostela**

Santiago is well connected for onwards travel, be this by train (3.5 hours to Madrid), road (6.5 hours by motorway to Madrid) or air (flights operate to London, Paris, Geneva as well as Madrid and Barcelona). Our Tour Leader will be happy to arrange taxi and car transfers to the station or airport. *Buen viaje!*

### **PRICE: EURO6900**

Tour includes:

- Comfortable, modern minibus with professional driver and all other transport
- All accommodation, city tax, buffet breakfast
- Hiking guide
- Nine dinners and four lunches.
- Local expert tour guides
- All entrances to listed monuments
- Sunset tuk-tuk tour in Porto (90 minutes)
- Rabelo boat cruise Pinhão (2 hours)
- Fado show in Lisbon
- Winery visit & tasting in Pinhão
- Spa circuit in Caldas de Reis (consists of circular shower, column shower, mist room, steam bath, ice fountain, whirlpool bath or outdoor jacuzzi)

- Pilgrim's Passports for Camino
- Tips to local guides, minibus drivers, hotel and restaurant staff

Not included:

- travel insurance
- room upgrades or personal hotel expenses
- drinks with meals (eg spirits, fine wine, champagne)
- Optional spa treatments (Caldas de Reis)
- Optional cookery class (Santiago de Compostela)
- Water and snacks for the Camino

Recommended packing list:

### **Clothes, shoes and accessories**

- 2 light comfortable hiking shorts or long pants
- telescopic hiking pole (1 or 2, as best suits you)
- small daysack for excursions and hikes
- lightweight refillable water bottle (save on plastic!)
- 3 t-shirts and a couple of long sleeve blouses to put on to cover your arms from the sun or wherever it might be appropriate to cover up
- comfortable, sturdy shoes for the hikes
- 3 or 4 pairs hiking socks (the better the quality the less the chance of blisters!)
- sandals for walking around town
- swimsuit and travel towel (the hotels in Viana do Castelo, Baiona, and Santiago have pools)
- light but waterproof rain jacket - just in case!
- 1 warm top
- 1 or 2 sundress for around town
- 1 set of nice, casual going-out clothes
- sunglasses, hat, sunscreen – it gets hot out there!
- underwear
- toiletries
- ear plugs (so as not to get woken by street noise)
- travel pillow (small)

### **Entertainment, gadgets & money**

- camera, phone charger, headphones and EU-plug adaptor
- 1 good book / Kindle
- diary or notebook
- ATM debit card (remember to get your bank to activate it for use abroad before you leave home)
- between 50-100 Euros cash, so you can cover emergencies

### **Personal first aid kit**

- Any prescribed medications (and a copy of the prescription)
- Blister tape for feet      - Pain relief (Panadol etc)
- Antihistamine (for hay fever, insect bites, allergies)
- Electrolyte sachets for dehydration, and Berocca tablets
- Band-aids                      - Antiseptic solution or powder, e.g. Betadine
- Small scissors                      - Non-adhesive gauze dressing
- Cough/cold/flu medicine and throat lozenges

**We recommend not bringing: hairdryers, laptop computers or tablets, shoes with heels (many of the old city centres have cobbled streets), or any expensive/irreplaceable jewellery ( - besides, you are bound to buy some jewellery there...!)**