

## Art and Culture on the Way of St James

### Art and Culture on the Way of St James (Spain)

In the days when Santiago de Compostela was the third largest pilgrim destination of the middle ages, the streets were lined with artisans, craftsmen and artists. The numerous churches, cathedrals and buildings mark these times gone by.

Do I need to prepare for the pilgrimage?

Some examples:

#### Puente la Reina

This bridge, found in the city of the same name, crosses the river Arga and was built in the 11th century. In those days, the bridge was the one and only way to cross the river. With time, the usefulness of the bridge became known through word of mouth and many people were attracted to settle near it, bringing wealth to the city. Various famous figures such as the catholic king and queen Ferdinand and Isabell, as well as Francis of Assisi are known to have crossed this bridge on their pilgrimages.

**Cathedral of Burgos**The Cathedral of Burgos is one of the most significant religious buildings in the world. It was built in the 13th century. The fact that the building was completed in less than forty years explains the uniformity of this gothic masterpiece. The portal, "Puerta de Sarmental" and the chapel, "Capilla de Condestable", both from the 15th century, are really outstanding. The Cathedral of Burgos is, after those at Seville and Toledo, the third largest cathedral in Spain. Two mighty towers, 84 meters high, mark the building's main facade. Under the richly decorated dome lie the graves of Spain's national hero, El Cid, and his wife, Jimena.

#### Cathedral of Leon

Building of the Cathedral of Leon was commenced in the early 13th century, taking around 100 years to complete. It is a masterpiece of the french gothic style. A breathtaking number of richly decorated window facades leave visitors in amazement, and lead them through the insides of the cathedral.

#### Casa de Botines, by Antonio Gaudi (Leon)

Antonio Gaudi began work on this building in 1891, its construction having been commissioned by the textile merchants of Leon. One such merchant, Carlos Guell, was responsible for recommending Gaudi for the task. The goal was to produce a modern building with a middle-aged appearance. The lower floors of the building were to be used for carrying out any business duties while the upper floors were intended to provide housing. In the year 1969, the building was declared a monument of historical importance. Today, it is used as a place of business for Caja España.

### Templar Castle (Ponferrada)

The Templar Castle in Ponferrada originates from the 12th century and is one of the most imposing of all Spanish military buildings. The military order of the Knights Templar were instructed to protect the pilgrims on the Way of St James. In the Rabanal Pass, which lies before Ponferrada, bands of robbers would constantly raid pilgrims passing by, so the Templars would accompany and protect the believers on this part of the route.

### Cathedral of Santiago

The cathedral is the final destination on the Way of St James and hosts the grave of St James. Building was begun in 1077, using the remains of an 8th century church for building material. In 1985, it was declared a building of international historic importance by UNESCO. The famous facade on the west of the cathedral is baroque. The interior is Romanesque. Above all, the Portico de la Gloria is a masterpiece of its time, built by master builder Mateo in the late 12th century. Visitors are welcome to post any information they may have on works of art and cultural monuments for future pilgrims on the Way of St James.

Visitors are welcome to contribute information on works of art or other cultural memorials on the Via Francigena, in order to help future pilgrims.