

THE CAMINO DEL NORTE AND CAMINO PRIMITIVO

**TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND FINISTERRE
FROM IRÚN OR OVIEDO**

by Laura Perazzoli and Dave Whitson

CICERONE

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Front cover: *Pilgrims cross the medieval bridge through Ponte Maceira*
(Camino Finisterre, Stage 1)

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The pedestrian-friendly
center of Avilés

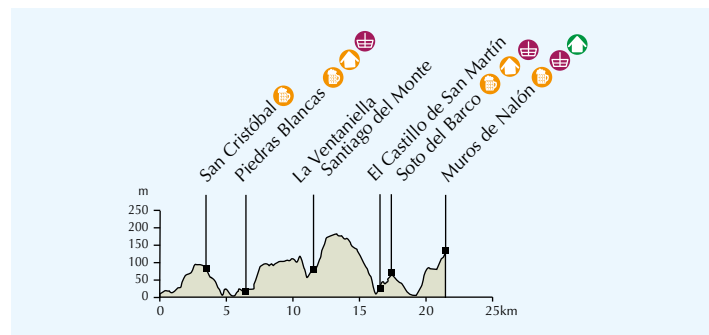
STAGE 21

Avilés to Muros de Nalón

Start	Albergue de Peregrinos, Avilés
Finish	Iglesia de Santa María, Muros de Nalón
Distance	21.6km
% unpaved	31.2%
Total ascent	613m
Total descent	490m
Terrain	3
Route-finding	2
Pilgrim accommodation	San Martín de Laspra, Muros de Nalón

Today's walk generally holds to the interior, especially following recent route changes that bypass the town of Salinas entirely. Instead, the focus is on the Río Nalón – the fortified village of El Castillo de San Martín is perched above its east bank, the camino juts southwest through Soto del Barco in order to reach the lone bridge crossing, and then Muros de Nalón sits nestled in the hills above the westside. While Muros was a small blip on the Norte a few years back, it now offers three albergues, making this (or El Pito, a few kilometers further) a good place to break up what used to be a very long stage.

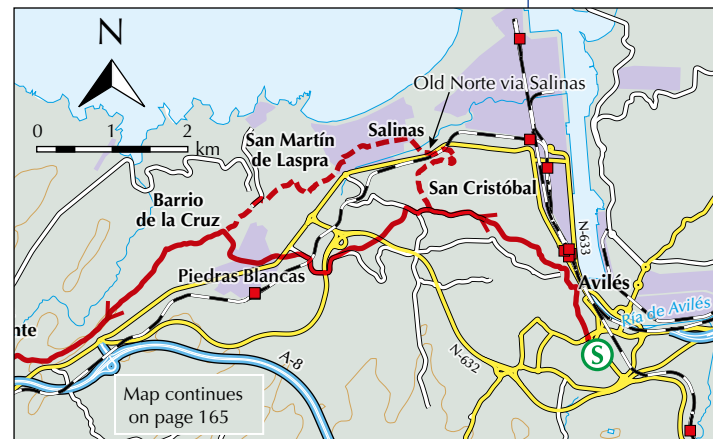
From the albergue, follow c/Rivero, a pedestrian-only road through the **Plaza de España**, then continue straight on c/



la Ferrara, passing the Parque del Muelle and the Plaza de la Merced. Depart the city on Avda de Alemania and keep straight on.

In **San Cristóbal (bar)**, 3km later, the route now continues straight on Calle Peñamayor. ▶ After the road curves right and descend towards a housing development, turn left onto a dirt track. Pass under N-632 and then merge onto AS-320. Be mindful of traffic, as the shoulder is often narrow in this stretch. Fork left, cross N-632a, and proceed towards the urban center. To detour to San Martín de Laspra's pilgrim accommodation (**Albergue San Martín** – donativo, 46 beds,

While the Norte no longer passes through Salinas, the old route through the beach town and its surf hostels (Beach Hostel El Pez Escorpion, Las Dunas Hostel) is included on the map. This alternative is 1.6km longer.



open all year, kitchen, W/D, tel 659 803 290), take the first right on Calle Fruela and proceed 1.1km. Otherwise, continue straight into

PIEDRAS BLANCAS (6.3KM)

All facilities. **Hotel Piedras** (singles €60, doubles €80, triples €90, meals available, Avda Galicia 24, tel 985 508 310).

After passing through the town center, fork right off Calle Gijón towards Las Murias. Follow quiet back roads through Barrio de la Cruz. A beautiful walk follows, along a tree-lined dirt road through the hills, concluding with another descent into **La Ventaniella Santiago del Monte**. Cross a minor highway and N-643 (Aeropuerto de Asturias is 1.6km to the right) in quick succession, taking great care with the fast-moving traffic on the latter. After crossing A-8, join a dirt road and watch carefully for three waymarked right forks as you proceed. Complete a lengthy downhill stretch through a eucalyptus grove, then cross the medieval bridge into

EL CASTILLO DE SAN MARTÍN (10KM)

Built over ruins of a Roman fort, this medieval castle dates to Alfonso III's rule. This also used to be the embarkation point for pilgrims crossing the Río Nalón.

Proceed uphill through the old town. Turn left onto N-632, turning soon after into

SOTO DEL BARCO (1.1KM)

Bar, supermarket. **Hotel Palacio de la Magdalena** (doubles €80–150, includes breakfast, tel 985 588 899). The camino skirts the town and most facilities are just off-route.

A town shaped in many ways by trade and emigration to the Americas, as displayed in the many examples of Indianos architecture.



Follow the old N-632 as it swings widely out of town, joining the (current) N-632 as it crosses the Nalón. Fork left up a steep dirt road, passing through a small neighborhood (two of Muros's albergues are here). Re-cross the highway and proceed to the central plaza in

MUROS DE NALÓN (4.2KM)

Bars, supermarket. **Albergue Casa Carmina** (€14–15, singles €30, doubles €45, 20 beds, breakfast available, kitchen, W/D, Avda de Riego 21-23, tel 985 583 137), **Albergue La Naranja Peregrina** (donativo, 20 beds, open mid Mar–Nov, communal meals, W/D, @, c/Ería 27, tel 685 245 111), **Albergue Camino de la Costa** (€10, singles €15, doubles €30, open all year, breakfast available, kitchen, Plaza del Marqués 12, tel 636 580 365), **Apartamentos Turísticos La Flor** (doubles €40–60, kitchen, pilgrim discount, c/Arango 28, tel 985 583 106).

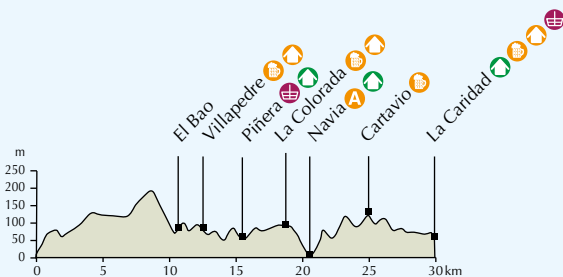
The 16th-century **Plaza del Marqués de Muros** includes the Iglesia de Santa María.

STAGE 24

Luarca to La Caridad

Start	Albergue Villa de Luarca, Luarca
Finish	Albergue de Peregrinos, La Caridad
Distance	30km
% unpaved	29.1%
Total ascent	587m
Total descent	540m
Terrain	2
Route-finding	2
Pilgrim accommodation	La Ronda, Otur, Piñera, Navia, La Caridad

As has been true for the last several stages, the walk from Luarca to La Caridad is generally level (although the climb out of Luarca will break a sweat), passes primarily through quiet countryside, and offers few notable sights. It has one energetic market town along the way, Navia, and several minor possible stopping points. Near the midway point, Piñera offers an Albergue de Peregrinos, which can be particularly useful for those hoping to go farther than Luarca in one day. La Caridad is a pilgrim-friendly place to end your walk, with a well-situated albergue.



Those who stayed at the albergue in Almuña will start their day by walking 1.7km to Luarca.

◀ Proceed uphill on c/La Peña. Pass the 10th-century Antigua Iglesia y Cementerio de Santiago. 3.1km from Luarca, arrive at turn-off for **Albergue Casa Lua** (donativo, 10 beds, open all year but reserve in winter, communal meals, @,

W/D, 619 989 910) in **La Ronda**. Cross the railroad and N-634, with a bar and restaurant nearby. The route proceeds between N-634 and A-8, where it will remain for most of the day, with brief exceptions. 3.7km further, in **Otur**, pass alongside **Albergue Casa del Peregrino** (€10, 14 beds, open Semana Santa – October, includes breakfast, kitchen, W/D, 627 887 507). After a short up-and-down across a modest ridge and a crossing of the Río Barajo, the camino passes through El Bao and El Carreion before arriving in

VILLAPEDRE (12.7KM)

Two bars. **Hotel El Pinar** (singles €25–28, doubles €36–45, W/D, @, tel 985 472 221), **Villa Auristela** (singles €35–40, doubles €50–70, includes breakfast, tel 655 846 206).

The 13th-century **Iglesia de Santiago** features Santiago Matamoros in its altarpiece.

Pass the church, loop under the railroad, and cross the highway. Follow minor roads to Piñera, then cross the railroad twice, curve around the church, and return to N-634. The albergue is located here, on the outskirts of

PIÑERA (2.6KM)

Grocery. **Albergue de Peregrinos** (€5, 20 beds, meals available, W/D, tel 611 040 517).

Turn right onto a footpath, then right again at a T-junction towards **Villaoril**. Continue along the road into

LA COLORADA (3.4KM)

Bar. **Hotel Blanca** (doubles €65–70, tel 985 630 775).

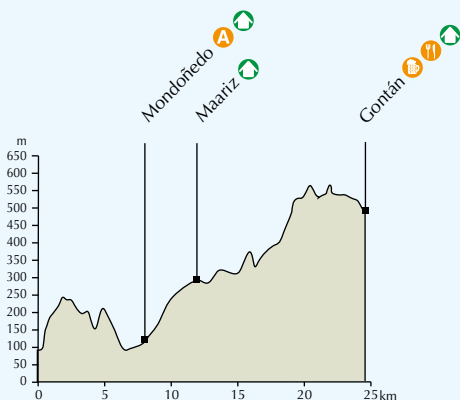
Turn left after Hotel Blanca and then right onto a footpath. Keep straight on past the cemetery, proceeding downhill into

STAGE 27

Lourezná to Gontán/Abadín

Start	Albergue de Peregrinos, Lourenzá
Finish	Albergue de Peregrinos, Gontán
Distance	24.3km
% unpaved	31%
Total ascent	853m
Total descent	449m
Terrain	4
Route-finding	2
Pilgrim accommodation	Mondoñedo, Maaríz, Gontán

Today's walk rewards its steep ascents with expansive views. The route first climbs through the hills and into Mondoñedo. Once one of the seven capitals of the Kingdom of Galicia, its old town is a national cultural-historical site. From Mondoñedo, pilgrims have two route options: a new, shorter, mostly off-road route through the mountainside spanning 12.9km into Gontán; or, the older route (15.8km) winding uphill through a series of tiny villages with options to stay at two small albergues. Note that the newer, primary route has no services along the way.



From the albergue, turn right, heading uphill on a small footpath. After a short climb, cross under A-8 and continue on a brick path through **Arroxo**. Turn right on a minor road through **Grove (restaurant)**. At the cemetery, turn left onto a footpath, joining a series of tracks and small roads passing the Capela da Virgen de Guadalupe in **Carballal** and continuing through **San Pedro da Torre**. Continue past the church, then turn right onto a paved lane through town. Continue weaving through the outskirts of Mondoñedo, finally joining LU-124 and proceeding into the main plaza of

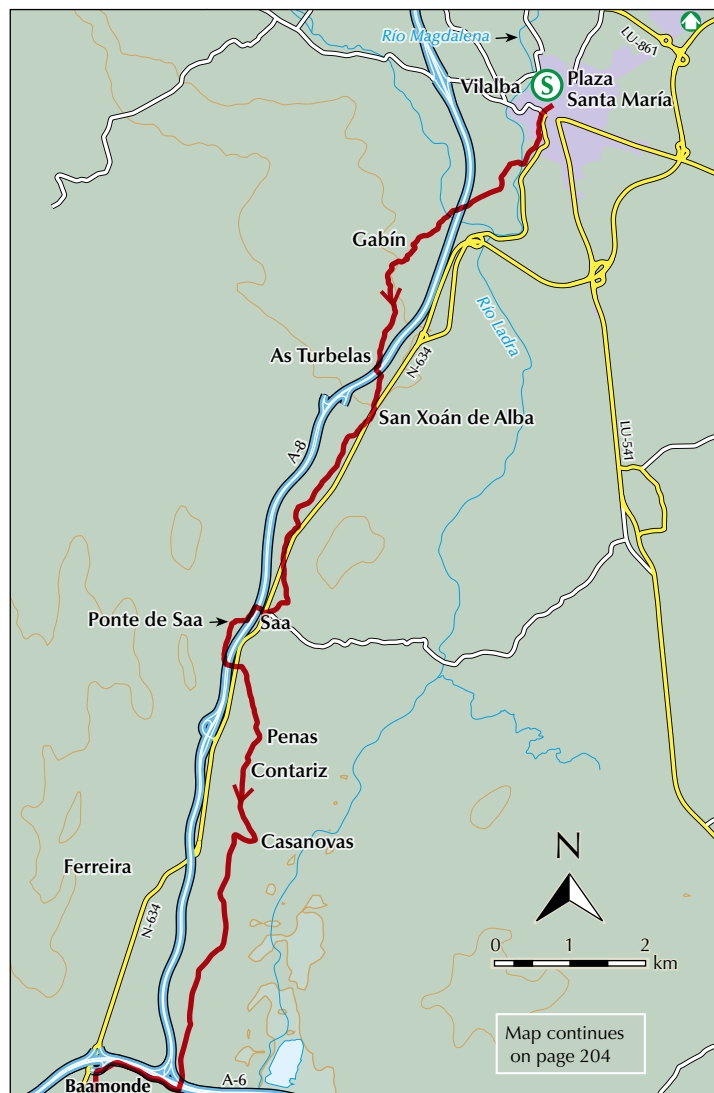
MONDOÑEDO (8.5KM)

All facilities. Stock up here: it's your only opportunity to purchase supplies during this stage. **Albergue de Peregrinos** (€8, 28 beds, kitchen, c/Alcántara, tel 982 507 040, tel 982 507 177), **Albergue del Montero** (€15, 38 beds, kitchen, W/D, Avda Eladio Lorenzo 7, tel 982 521 751), **Hospedería del Seminario de Santa Catalina** (singles €20–25, doubles €28–42, located inside 18th-century seminary, tel 982 521 000), **Pensión Casa Bracamonte** (singles €30–45, doubles €40–55, c/José María Pardo 23, tel 629 165 342), **Hostal Padornelo** (doubles €50, pilgrim discount, meals available, Avda Buenos Aires 1, tel 982 521 892).

Nestled in mountains and full of historical charm, Mondoñedo is one of the highlights of this stage. Bronze Age remains have been found in the vicinity, including an altar once used for human sacrifices. Bronze busts of Marcus Aurelius and Hadrian bear witness to the former Roman presence as well. The 13th-century **cathedral** was declared a national monument in 1902 and is known as the *catedral arrodillada* ('kneeling cathedral') for its perfect proportions and short stature. Its frescos are among Galicia's oldest, the walnut choir stalls are Gothic masterpieces, and the 5-meter rose window is especially stunning on a sunny day.



Mondoñedo cathedral

**SAA (3.4KM)**

Bar with provisions.

Ponte de Saa dates from the medieval period.



Cross N-634, pass under A-8, and walk across the beautifully restored medieval bridge over the Río Labrada. Double back under A-8 and across N-634, onto a footpath. To skip the historic bridge crossing, turn left onto N-634 instead of crossing it when leaving Saa. You will rejoin the camino 1km later, turning left. Proceed straight as the path becomes a minor road and passes through Penas, Contariz, and Casanovas. Pass under A-6, then turn right alongside it. Continue into

BAAMONDE (10.1KM)

Bars, restaurant, grocery, pharmacy. **Albergue de Peregrinos** (€6, 94 beds, kitchen, tel 628 250 323), **Hostal Ruta Esmeralda** (doubles €32–40, on the N-VI, tel 982 398 138). Supplies are very limited between Baamonde and Sobrado, so stock up before leaving.

The Romanesque **Iglesia de Santiago** dates to the 14th century. Baamonde was the birthplace of acclaimed sculptor Victor Corral. His home has been turned into a museum, documenting his life and containing his works.

► Follow the highway 3km out of town. Turn left onto a dirt track, crossing the railroad and Río Parga. Pass the 14th-century **Santuario de San Albarte**, and continue through the woods, towards the hamlet **Toar**. (Note: A new, waymarked alternative route to Sobrado forks right here. It's 8km shorter than the 'official' route, but services are limited: **A Pobra de Parga** (7.8km, **Parga Natura** – €18 inc. breakfast, meals available, W/D, @ 642 411 371), **Casanova** (6.7km, bar), and **As Cruces** (13km, restaurant, fountain). Yet another alternative route continues direct to Baamonde from As Cruces, bypassing Sobrado.)

A new waymarked alternative leaving Baamonde avoids the highway. It's 1.3km longer, but quite pleasant.