

## **CAMINO TORRES – APRIL 2018**

Last year I completed the Camino Torres, leaving Salamanca on 11 April 2018 and walking to Ponte de Lima in 19 stages. I walked solo and saw no other peregrinos until Ponte de Lima. From Ponte de Lima I went by bus to Porto and followed the Senda Litoral and Variante Espiritual to Santiago.

The outstanding features of the camino Torres were the friendliness of so many people I met on the way, the beauty of the terrain, especially in the mountains after Almeida, and the peacefulness of the walk.

My stages were:

1. Salamanca to La Rad (15km)
2. Robliza de Cojos (20km)
3. San Muñoz (20km)
4. Alba de Yeltes (25km)
5. Ciudad Rodrigo (25km)
6. Gallegos de Argañan (17km)
7. Almeida (24km)
8. Pinhel (22km)
9. Trancoso (30km)
10. Sernancelhe (27km)
11. Moimente de Beira (18km)
12. Lamego (26km)
13. Peso de Regua (12km)
14. Mesão Frio (16km)
15. Amarante (28km)
16. Felgueiras (18km)
17. Guimarães (16km)
18. Braga (20km)
19. Ponte de Lima (33km)

My primary source of information for planning the camino was this USAL website. I downloaded the Wikiloc walking track which was essential, and the daily walking descriptions and accommodation lists were very helpful. Also a number of the 'Relatos' gave me a lot of information – particularly from Ina Sinclair, Pilger Keelin and Fabrizio Franzoi.

I divided some of the USAL stages because I prefer to keep below 30km per day. Also, I stopped at Peso de Régua so that I could take the train journey along the Douro valley to Pochino.

This is a wonderful camino which I really enjoyed. It is away from crowds, and goes through some beautiful and quite remote areas. Be prepared to be alone, there are very few peregrinos on this route and on some days there are long distances between villages.

## The Way

The people who laid out the way have performed an amazing task in finding pathways, sometimes small and remote, to avoid main roads and make this camino something special. While there is a great deal of country walking the route also goes through many very interesting and historic towns which have almost no tourists – Salamanca (of course), but also Ciudad Rodrigo, Almeida, Trancoso, Lamego, Amarante, Guimaraes and Braga.

The first few stages, until Almeida, are mostly flat. The walking is easy on wide tracks on the Cañada Real through open country. Mostly there are no villages or any facilities at all between the start of the day and the finish. It is very rare to see anyone at all.

*Cañada Real*



*Cañada Real*



The way after Almeida has many hills but is mainly relatively easy walking with only a few steep gradients. The height gain on several days is in the range 600m to 850m. At age 77 I had no problem. The two longest climbs are from Peso de Régua to Mesão Frio and the following day from Mesão Frio to Amarante. Although there are more villages than earlier in the camino some sections in the mountains are far from any villages, with almost no one to be seen.

*Peaceful countryside*



Most of the way is on paths, occasionally on roads. Some of the paths are narrow and were a little overgrown in the spring, but always easily passable. On some stages you could use roads to shorten the day.

### *Pathways and hills*



I started my camino after very heavy rains and the path was frequently flooded, particularly as far as Ciudad Real. Until Aldea de Obispo the way crosses several rivers (Arganza, Cabrillas, Fresnada, Yeltes, Dos Casas) which are usually dry but on this occasion were flowing strongly. I made detours to use bridges across all the rivers except the Rio Fresnada. In summary, this is how I crossed each of the rivers:

Rio Arganza (shortly after Robliza de Cojos)– I made a detour along the N-620 to San Muñoz. The route was boring but safe, with very few cars.

Rivera de Cabrillas and Rio Yeltes (between San Muñoz and Alba de Yeltes) – I used the maps below (copied from Etapas Del Camino on this site).

Rio Fresnada (between San Muñoz and Alba de Yeltes) – I waded across – it was about 50-55cm deep.

Rio Dos Casas – I found a path on the Galileo mapping app that took me to the DSA-477 and DSA-470 to Aldea de Obispo.



expensive. With a GPS it was no problem. My approach was simple - “just follow the GPS track” and it worked wonderfully well. The maps were amazingly accurate. There were times when the GPS instructed me to cross fields where there was no identifiable path, or to follow very minor, overgrown trails that I was sure were not part of the camino. Always the map was correct and I was soon back onto more obvious paths.

*Sometimes you just have to trust the GPS map*



There were two places where the camino had been rerouted; both the new routes were well marked. The new routes are from Sande to Pesa de Régua, and from Braga to Vila de Prado.

By constant use of the GPS I limited my “off path” experiences to just two minor instances which in total cost me about an hour.

*Lovely pathways and beautiful views*



### **Accommodation and Supplies**

Accommodation was freely available and I did not bother to book ahead. I took with me the accommodation list from this website and also I had compiled a list of recommendations from other peregrinos. The places I stayed at were:

- La Rad – Hotel La Rad
- Robliza de Cojos - Albergue

- San Muñoz - Albergue
- Alba de Yeltes - Albergue
- Ciudad Rodrigo – Hotel Arcos
- Gallegos de Argañan - Albergue
- Almeida – Hotel A Muralha
- Pinhel – Residencial Falcão
- Trancoso – Residencial D.Dinis
- Sernancelhe - Bombeiros
- Moimente de Beira – Residencial Pico do Meio Dia
- Lamego – Residencia Solar da Sé
- Peso de Regua – Hotel Imperio
- Mesão Frio – Casa Portas do Douro
- Amarante – Casa de Cultura e Juventude
- Felgueiras – Apartamentos Horus
- Guimarães – Alojamiento My Hostel Guimarães
- Braga – Hotel Bragatruthotel
- Ponte de Lima – Albergue Municipal

On the Cañada Real de Extremadura, except for Ciudad Rodrigo the villages have no alternative accommodation, only the albergues. The albergues are basic but offer all a pilgrim needs although Robliza de Cojos and Gallegos de Argañan did not have hot water. In Portugal there are alternative hotels in all the above villages except Sernancelhe. If the bombeiros are full there is accommodation at Ponte de Abade 6km before. All the hotels I stayed at were completely satisfactory and very reasonably priced.

On the Cañada Real the small villages that form the stopping points generally have a small shop or a bar but opening times need to be considered. I was perhaps unlucky, but shops were closed or non-existent for three successive days, in Robliza de Cojos, San Muñoz and Alba de Yeltes. It's advisable to take some emergency supplies.

### **Pilgrim Numbers**

Very few. In the book at Robliza de Cojos I was the seventh peregrino for 2018. As I expected I did not meet another peregrino until Ponte de Lima. This is such a beautiful camino that I am sure numbers will grow. I greatly enjoyed the solitude but recognize that it is not for everyone.

### **Language**

No Portuguese? No problem. Many Portuguese speak a second language – usually French or English, sometimes Spanish, occasionally German. English was spoken at all the hotels I stayed at.

## **Hotels**

### **Ciudad Rodrigo**

Hotel Arcos, Calle Cardenal Pacheco 11. €40 34 923 48 00 01

### **Lamego**

Residencial Solar de Sé, Av. Visc. Guedes Texeira 9. €24 351 254 612 060

### **Peso de Régua.**

Hotel Imperio, Rua Jose Vasquez Osorio 8. €25 351 254 320 120

### **Mesão Frio.**

Casa Portas do Douro, Rua Vale do Couto 319. €70 351 913 573 406

### **Felgueiras**

Horus Apartments. Av. Dr. Leonardo Coimbra 556. €42 351 255 312 400

### **Guimarães**

My Hostel Guimarães, Rua Francisco Agra 135. €15 351 253 414 023

351 967 075 755/351 962 111 639

### **Braga**

Bragatruthotel. Rua de São Marcos 80. €30 351 253 277 187

### **Goães** (halfway between Braga and Ponte de Lima)

Albergue Peregrinos 500m off camino. Also a bar 100m off camino