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TO THE

Six highlights on the road ...

MENU PEREGRINO

Some hostels provide
a simple communal
supper, cooked by pilgrims
and volunteers; others have
basic kitchen facilities or
restaurants. Pilgrim's menus
and del dia (daily menu)
are widely available at local
cafés, bars and restaurants
for an average €10. The
private El Palo de Avellano
in Zubiri (elpalodeavellano.
com) serves a hearty set
menu for €12.

THE COMPOSTELA
This is a Latininscribed certificate
delivered on completion of
the walk, to those who have
done at least the final 100
kilometres, on presentation
of your credencial. Pick up a
credencial from the pilgrim
offices in St-Jean-Pied-dePort or Roncesvalles. Your

stopovers will be stamped by warden hospitalero in the hostels, or at churches, bars and town halls along the way.

PET PILGRIM'S REFUGE The Refugio Gaucelmo, at mountainous Rabanal del Camino between Ponferrada and León, is located in the old parish house - converted in the early 1990s by the Confraternity of St James into the first pilgrim's lodgings in the area.

POST-CAMINO
PARADOR The
splendid, cathedralnudging Hostal Dos Reis
Catolicos, commonly known
as the Parador de Santiago
de Compostela, is a 15thcentury historic gem of
pilgrim hospitality, equally

renowned for its beds and restaurant. Doubles from €186; maptravel.ie.

RUSTIC CHARM The Casa Os Vilares is a lovely stone inn, five kilometres north of Santiago de Compostela. Doubles from €62; osvilares.com.

PILGRIM DEODORISER The call of the Camino originates in the shrine of St James at the Romanesque Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Consecrated in 1211, its nave is more than 100 metres long, with a Baroque façade added in the 18th century. One of its famous features is the Botafumeiro, or incense burner, which swings from a pulley system in the dome and succeeds in perfuming the pongy pilgrim masses.

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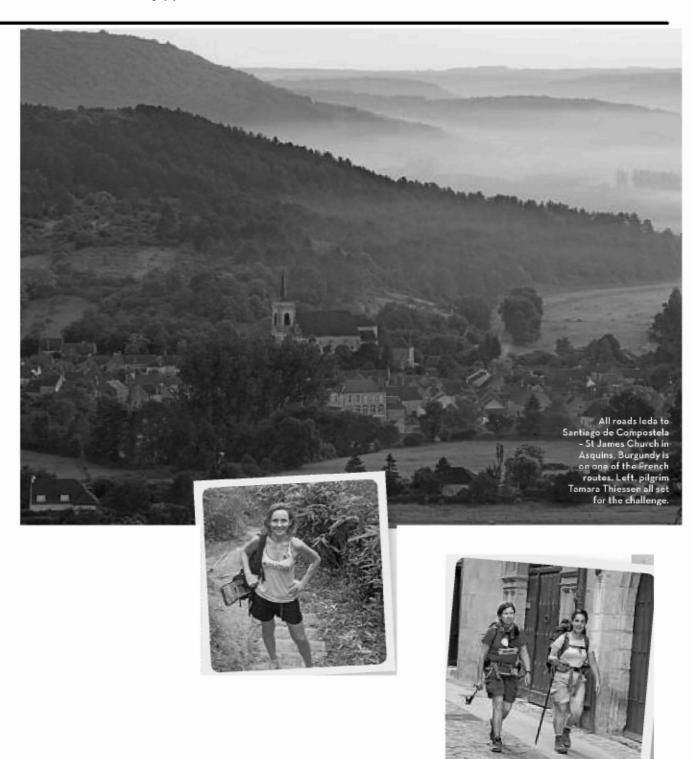
Getting there ...

It is a four-hour train trip from Bordeaux - six hours by train or bus from Bilbao - to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, popular starting point for the Camino Francés. GO Anytime from March to November; March-May and September-October are less crowded and hot. ORGANISED TRIP Ireland's Camino Ways (caminoways.com) can take a load off your back and mind - they also organise cycling tours. Follow the Camino (followthecamino.com) also does horse tours. CYCLE THE CAMINO Many sections of the pathway can be used by cyclists; you can easily deviate from unsuitable parts and follow rural roads going in the same direction. Read The Way of St James: A Cyclist's Guide, by John Higginson (Cicerone Guides). **ESSENTIAL READING The Camino** is not suitable for armchair travel or a "virtual pilgrimage", but A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino de Santiago by John Brierley, or Walking the Camino de Santiago by Bethan Davies and Ben Cole, will help

you prepare.

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Below, last provisioning stop on the French side of the Pyrénées - the cobblestoned town of Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port.



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Above, humble splendour at the medieval monastery of Roncesvalles and, top, Puente la Reina, both Navarra. Left, cockleshell, the symbol of the pilgrim.



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