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Texts: Manuel F. Rodríguez

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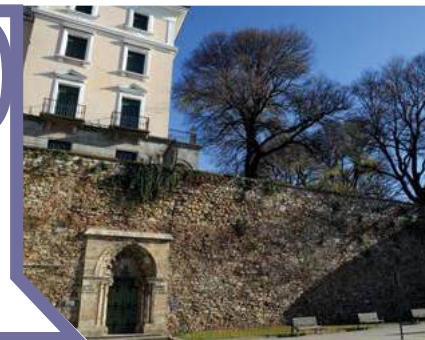


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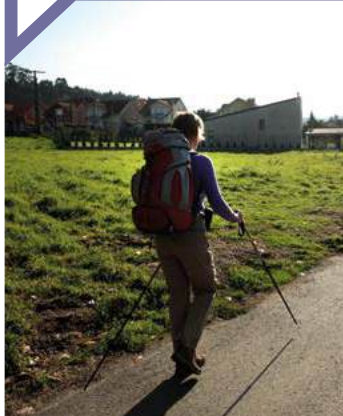
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## A Coruña and the English Way /



Historically, A Coruña is the port that has welcomed pilgrims travelling the Way of St James.

Practically without exception, sources refer to the city of A Coruña as the port chosen by pilgrims following the maritime route of the Way of St James to reach their destination, the Galician city of Santiago de Compostela.

This claim is confirmed by researchers such as Robert B. Tate and Thorlac Turville-Petre, who explained that A Coruña was the principal meeting point for pilgrims travelling by sea from northern Europe.

Naturally, the majority of pilgrims travelled overland to Santiago, a trend that continues today. Yet the maritime pilgrimage was extremely popular, particularly between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, when thousands of pilgrims from the British Isles and northern Europe disembarked in A Coruña. They continued on their way along the English Way through the province of A Coruña, an overland section which at the time was just under 70 km. It is one of the historic routes of the Way of St James, and owes its name precisely to the fact that it was popular among pilgrims mainly from England.

Once in the city of Santiago, the pilgrims made their way to their final destination, the cathedral. According to ancient tradition, since the first century it has been the burial site of St James the Greater. Visiting his tomb was the ultimate aim of the pilgrimage which, after falling into oblivion during the eighteenth century, enjoyed a major revival in the 1980s. Provided that they comply with a series of requirements, pilgrims starting from A Coruña are entitled to receive the Compostela, the certificate issued by the cathedral authorities in Santiago to those that complete the Way.

Following their stay in Santiago de Compostela, the devout travellers would retrace their steps back to the port of A Coruña along the English Way. It was also the chosen departure points for many pilgrims who, despite having travelled overland to Santiago, preferred to return to their homes around Europe by ship.

In A Coruña pilgrims sought physical and spiritual recovery before embarking on the overland route. The city also provided shelter and rest for the return journey, whilst the pilgrims awaited the almost always uncertain date when they could set sail and return

to their homelands. And naturally, it also provided them with provisions and other essential items they needed for their journey, as well as the much treasured symbols and objects that would remind them of their pilgrimage.

A series of activities that would generate traditions and a unique heritage surrounding the pilgrimage in the city, traces of which, despite the passing of time, can still be seen today.

This guide is therefore intended to restore the most emotive ties that are as yet to be addressed: those that bind modern-day pilgrims with their fellow pilgrims of the past. Whether the city serves as a point of arrival or of departure for the overland route, the first stage of the English Way must always be the city of **A Coruña** itself. A truly memorable experience.

There is something of a pilgrim in all of us.



Partial view of the old port of A Coruña



## A Coruña/

A Coruña has a population of 245,000. Lying in the north-west of the autonomous community of Galicia, its origins date back to the first century BCE. It was the Romans that founded the first city, known as Brigantium, as well as the primitive port.

The area would later fall into decline and lose much of its population. In 1015 King Alfonso IX founded the current city and the port, which he named Crunia, the origins of which are uncertain. The founding was part of a drive to repopulate the coastal areas and strengthen the power and influence of the monarchy in north-west Galicia. In order to make the new city accessible, possibly built on the site of an earlier settlement, the king rebuilt the lost but strategically sheltered Roman port and improved the route between the city and Santiago de Compostela.

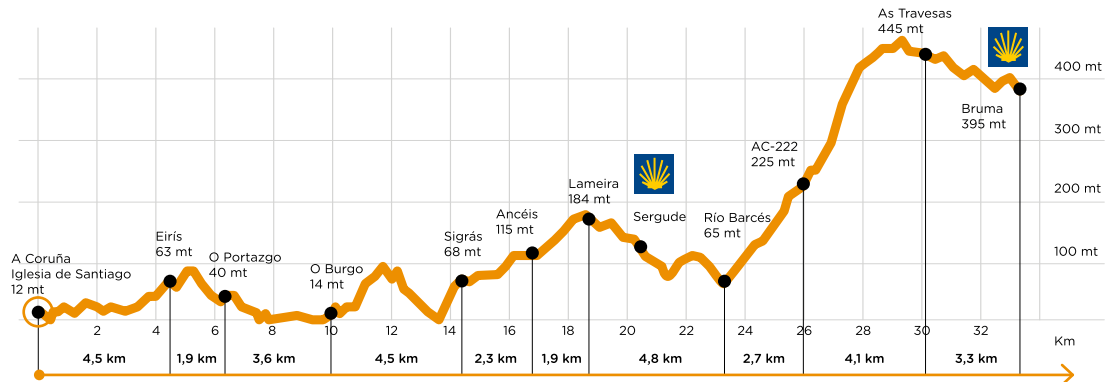
Today A Coruña is a bustling commercial and industrial city, positioned at the forefront of the international fashion sector. This endows it with great importance in culture and tourism, stemming particularly from its historical Atlantic connections.



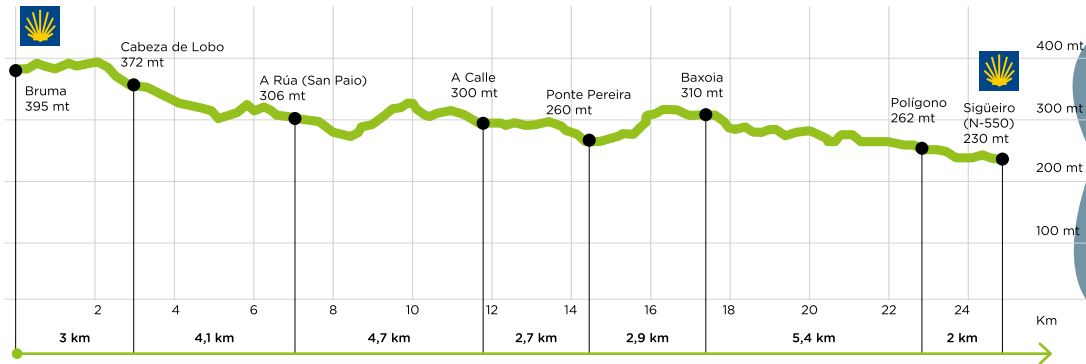




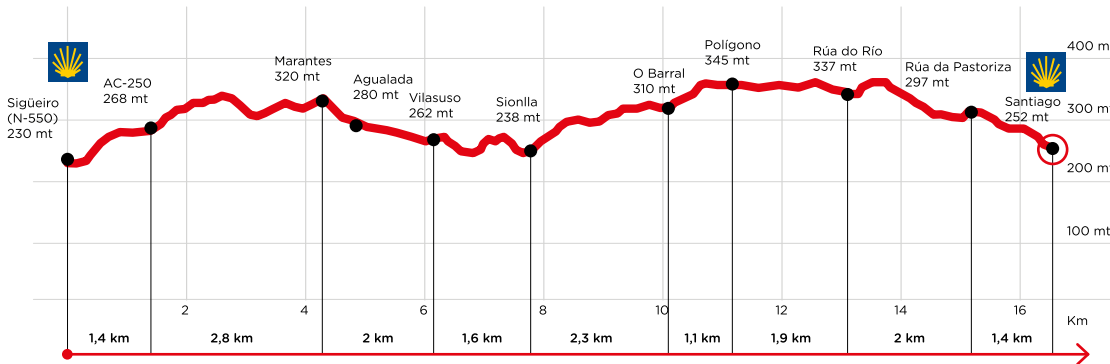
THE ENGLISH WAY \_ A Coruña - Santiago de Compostela



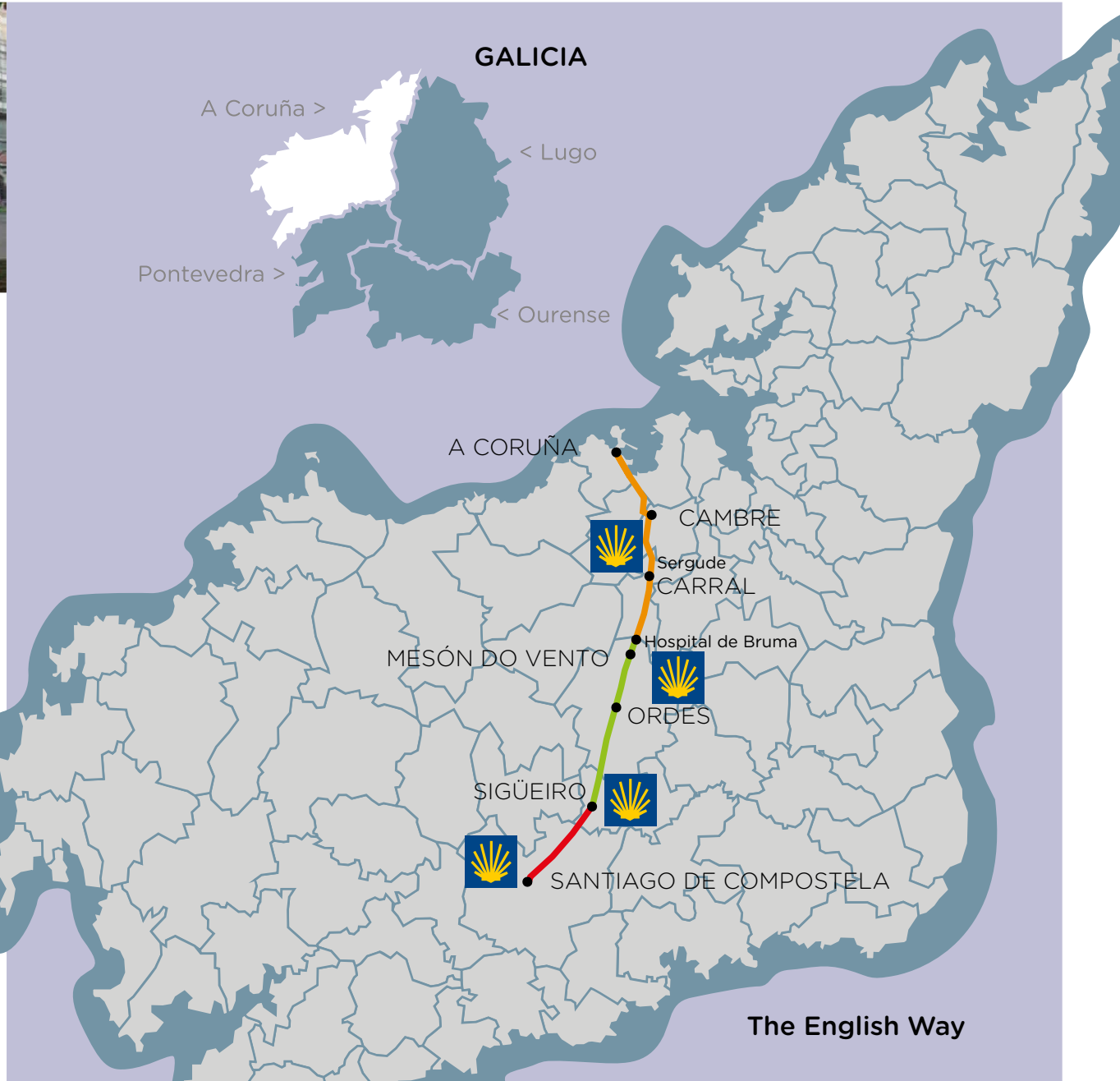
Stage 1 \_ A Coruña - Hospital de Bruma 33.6 km



Stage 2 \_ Hospital de Bruma - Sigüeiro 24.8 km



Stage 3 \_ - Sigüeiro - Santiago de Compostela 16.5 km



The English Way



## A Coruña for pilgrims

(see pages 26 a 58)



1. The Tower of Hercules.
2. The port of O Parrote.
3. The port of O Parrote (promenade).
4. The church of Santiago.
5. The doorway of the Hospital of San Andrés.
6. The stone cross of San Andrés.
7. The ruins of the monastery of San Francisco.
8. The church of San Francisco.
9. The monastery of Santo Domingo.
10. The convent of Santa Bárbara.
11. Calle de Santiago.
12. The church of San Jorge\*.
13. The church of San Nicolás.
14. The collegiate church of Santa María do Campo.

\* Photo 12 shows the modern church of San Jorge, which replaced the medieval one on Rego de Auga.



## the origins/



The pilgrimage to Santiago dates back to the period between 820 and 830. Its origins lies in the discovery on the site of what was then a forest and an abandoned cemetery and today is the Galician city of Santiago de Compostela of a tomb which, for unknown reasons, was considered to hold the remains of St James the Greater.

This Apostle, one of Jesus' most beloved disciples, had preached in Hispania, spreading Christ's teachings to the far West of Galicia. He later returned to Jerusalem where he was beheaded sometime between the years 42-44. Tradition has it that his body **was taken by sea** back to Galicia, where he was buried, an event that fell into oblivion until the discovery of his tomb in the early ninth century.

## St James and the Sea/

The sea plays a vital role in the origins of the pilgrimage to Santiago.

According to tradition, the Apostle St James the Greater travelled by ship to the Iberian Peninsula to teach the word of Christ. He would make his way overland as far as the west coast of Galicia, believed by the Romans to be the finis terrae, the end of the known world.

Another tradition claims that following his death in Jerusalem, his disciples brought his body by ship to Galicia for burial. They had a reason for doing so. Believed to be the end of the world, Galicia's far western region was considered to be the furthestmost point their evangelist mission could reach. In this sense, burying St James in such remote lands would symbolise the roots and spread of Christianity.

In the Codex Calixtinus, a twelfth century text that provides an invaluable insight into the nature of the mediaeval pilgrimage, St James is referred to as the protector of pilgrims at sea. He was the patron saint of European ports and many ships were named after him, including several used to carry pilgrims. A particularly large number of ships dedicated to St James were based in the English port of Dartmouth.

The symbol that distinguishes pilgrims travelling the Way of St James is also related to the sea: a scallop shell, representing a series of virtues, but particularly those of rebirth and charitable works.



A surprising phenomenon emerged just a few decades after the discovery of the tomb with the arrival of the first pilgrims travelling from distant lands. The numbers would grow during the tenth and the eleventh centuries with pilgrims arriving from all over Europe. The majority travelled overland to Santiago, crossing the continent from such far-off places as Poland and Armenia.

Yet from the eleventh century onwards there are records of European pilgrims travelling by sea from Nordic countries or those lining the Atlantic seaboard. Numbers fluctuated considerably and in those days their destination was unpredictable, putting in at any of the ports on the Galician coastline. Examples include the crusaders who, on their way to the Holy Land, would stop off to visit Santiago, mooring in the tidal estuaries of the Ria de A Coruña - although it would not be known by this name until the thirteenth century - Muros-Noia and Arousa.

In the twelfth century, the port of O Burgo, situated on the same tidal estuary as the future city of A Coruña, would become the principal destination for pilgrims arriving by sea.

In the thirteenth century, the port of A Coruña, founded in the same year as the city, 1208, would eventually become the destination for practically all these pilgrims. The numbers increased steadily, **reviving legendary**, immemorial connections between the small peninsula on which the new city stood, with the European shores that lined the Atlantic Ocean.



The cathedral of Santiago de Compostela  
Statue of Breogán with the Tower of Hercules in the background

## Ith catches sight of Ireland/

The Roman port and city of Brigantium, the site of the modern-day city of A Coruña, were founded to promote trade and commercial relations in the Atlantic.

Relations that over time would inevitably lead to emergence of a series of legends. One such tale is included in Leabhar Ghabala, a twelfth century compilation of earlier Irish narratives. It tells how a Celtic chief of Brigantium named Ith, the son of Breogan, the founder of the city, spotted an island from the top of the city's lighthouse. Captivated by the sight, he set sail in an unsuccessful attempt to conquer it. He was avenged a short time later by his son Mil, who settled there. The island was none other than Ireland.

These ancient connections would favour the excellent relations that A Coruña would enjoy with the ports of Ireland, England and Brittany, etc.







Pilgrims in the city of A Coruña and surroundings

The number of pilgrims travelling by sea would peak during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The largest numbers came from what today is the United Kingdom, which shares close and ancient ties with the traditions of St James. An interesting example is a literary reference contained in the version of Tristan and Iseult written around 1210, describing two elderly pilgrims in Cornwall, in south-west England, whose clothing was covered in scallop shells, the symbol associated with St James.

As a result of these ties, the Atlantic pilgrimage route, unique in that it is the only one that takes pilgrims over both land and sea, would eventually become known as The English Way. According to the sources available, which always tend to be limited in their scope, this route was also chosen, albeit to a lesser degree, by pilgrims from Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Holland, Belgium, the Faroe Islands and Iceland.

Pilgrims travelling to Santiago de Compostela were encouraged to choose this route due to the improved navigation techniques and flourishing trade that emerged in the Late Middle Ages. Yet there were also other, external reasons. The principal of these was war, which made overland travel dangerous. Of particular importance in this sense was the Hundred Years War between England and France which lasted from 1337 to 1453. In order to continue with their firmly established tradition, practically all the English pilgrims were forced to travel by sea to A Coruña, without stopping en route.

Another reason for the large numbers of pilgrims were the Holy Years celebrated in Santiago de Compostela. These events, held regularly every 6, 5, 6 and 11 years since the early fourteenth century, galvanised the maritime route to Santiago.



The Tower of Hercules



Protestant reform in the sixteenth century brought about a gradual decline in this form of pilgrimage, which would eventually disappear from the European lands that had once embraced it with such enthusiasm. This was the case of England and much of the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, etc. Indeed, the number and origin of pilgrims would be reduced dramatically to locations such as the French ports.

The event that would finally put an end to the period of splendour of the Way of St James in A Coruña was the assault on the city in 1589 by the English sailor and privateer Sir Francis Drake. As will be seen later on, the former English pilgrims became merciless enemies. An event charged with significance.

The contemporary revival of the traditions of the Way of St James in the mid-twentieth century also brought renewed interest in the maritime routes to A Coruña and the final overland stretch to Santiago. Routes that are most commonly followed by English and Irish ships, although many pilgrims opt to complete the overland stretch only.



pilgrims at sea/



The British pilgrim Andrew Boorde, who travelled to Santiago in 1532, claimed that the voyage to Santiago holds no danger, yet by land the journey is the most perilous an Englishman can make.

Boorde knew what he was talking about. As mentioned above, the English comprised the largest group of pilgrims travelling by sea, and the United Kingdom is home to the greatest amount of documented evidence about the conditions endured by those travelling by sea to A Coruña.

St Godric's pilgrimage from England to Santiago, around 1102, is one of the earliest to be recorded in some detail. The evidence indicates that he travelled by sea, although the exact route he followed is unknown. The saint set sail from the town of Finchale, where he would also be buried. It is situated in north-west England and was a port of call for ships carrying pilgrims from the Nordic countries who would then make their way overland to the ports in the south of the country. From there, the majority would sail to France before continuing to Santiago by land, or, in the twelfth century and albeit to a lesser extent, by sea.

As with St Godric, retracing the steps of these early pilgrims is no easy task, despite the fact that they represented an authentic mediaeval mass phenomenon. Indeed, as Constance M. Storrs, a British historian and leading scholar of the pilgrimages to Santiago by sea explains, the fact that the medieval pilgrimage was a such a common occurrence meant that it left little trace. Storrs also discovered the oldest license to carry pilgrims by ship,



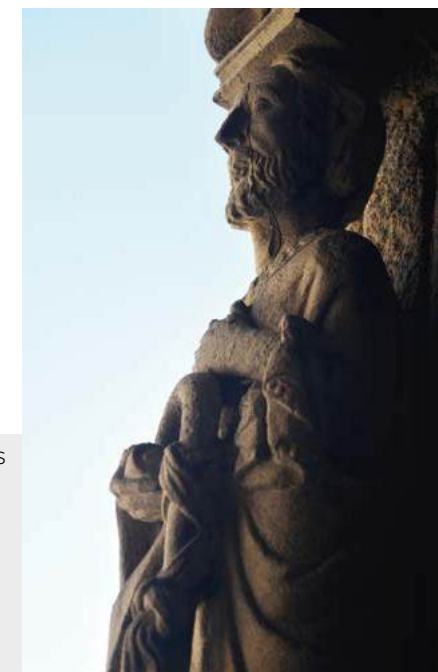
which dates back to 1235 and was granted to a certain Simon of Whitley. Yet in the thirteenth century such licenses were few and far between and no forms of control were applied to the majority of vessels.

Another British historian, Wendy R. Childs, explains that this situation would change in the following century. The fear of enemy spies during the Hundred Years War and the removal of precious metals from the country led the English monarchy to introduce a system of licenses and letters of safe conduct for ships and pilgrims in response to the growing number of vessels and the need to control them.

Following the signing of the Treaty of Brétigny in 1360 that led to a temporary peace between England and France, the English crown strengthened and clarified the terms and conditions of this system.

Anyone wishing to carry pilgrims was required to obtain a compulsory license. Thanks to these measures, a considerable number of vessels were recorded, and the number of pilgrims travelling to Santiago was listed in their hundreds or even thousands, depending on the year.

However, and despite the Crown's demands, there was still a constant flow of pilgrims travelling without a license, and therefore the actual number of pilgrims was undoubtedly far higher than that reflected in the official figures. According to Robert Brian Tate, many of the licenses were valid for more than one journey and the number of pilgrims was not



The apostle St James at the entrance to the church of Santiago

The estuary of A Coruña





stated. Likewise, it is impossible to estimate the flow of illegal traffic as ship owners tended to change the name of their vessels to avoid arrest.

Tate also describes the large number of fake licenses that were naturally also not recorded. On their return from A Coruña, many ships would moor in smaller ports or harbours where there was no form of control. This expert also explains that certain ships were granted licenses that were valid for several voyages, lasting a year or even longer, and for an unlimited number of pilgrims, which meant that it was impossible to determine the real activity with any degree of accuracy.

Judging by the information included in the licenses, the average number of pilgrims that would embark on the ships ranged between 50 and 150. The lowest number recorded stands at around 20 and the highest figure that regularly appears is 200.



The largest number of pilgrims known to have been carried on a single ship from the British Isles is 400. They set sail from the Irish town of New Ross on the 320 ton Mary London. This ship had carried pilgrims to A Coruña on previous occasions, such as in 1473, when it was attacked by pirates. Vicente Almazán, a renowned scholar of the Nordic pilgrimages, cites a vessel carrying 500 pilgrims in 1506 and that stopped at Norwegian, Scottish, Flemish, English and French ports.

English ship owners and pilgrims were required not to carry goods and materials, such as gold and silver, whose removal from the country was

forbidden. Furthermore, they undertook not to disclose military or confidential information when abroad. Due to the wars, the movement of ships, horses and money was restricted during certain periods. In this sense, the licenses that are conserved in the British archives provide a **valuable insight into life** at this time.

The English pilgrims set sail for A Coruña even during times of major hostilities between the kingdoms of England and Castile

and León. The pressure exerted by the Archbishopric of Santiago and the city of A Coruña on the Spanish monarchs, coupled with their own financial interests, proved to be solid reasons in the decision not to halt the arrivals.

However, the welcome extended to these travellers by the inhabitants of Galicia was never really warm. Their arrival was accepted and even awaited, but the locals tended to keep their distance. There was little contact with the pilgrims and the means employed in attending the neediest were almost always deficient. This was attributable to social, economic, religious and political factors, as well as language barriers.



## Life and licenses/

An innate paradox. The impersonal legal tone of the licenses granted by the English Crown for the carrying of pilgrims to A Coruña in fact reveals intense activity and life. Its positive and negative aspects. Indeed, it is easy to gain an insight into the terms and conditions that regulated boarding.

By means of an example, they shed light on the rigid structure of mediaeval society. A license dating back to 1368, like many others, clearly states that the ship must not carry members of the clergy, knights or their squires. In other words, only laymen from the middle and lower classes. There must be no mixing of the layers of society in such a confined and necessarily communal space such as a mediaeval ship.

Comparing certain cases with the majority, it can also be deduced that being on excellent terms with the powers that be could be extremely beneficial. In 1369 the Sainte Marie cog was authorised for a whole year to sail to A Coruña with as many pilgrims as it could carry and return loaded with goods. In 1391, Thomas Norton, a vassal of the king, was permitted to carry on the voyage between Bristol and A Coruña on a ship called the George, "as many pilgrims as he wishes, and may also announce the voyage throughout the kingdom". However, he was warned that "the pilgrims must be loyal subjects and not remove gold or silver".

Such licenses contrasted considerably from the most common, which required an exact number of passengers, were granted only for carrying pilgrims and for a single voyage.

The restrictions arising from the various periods of war and the even greater difficulties they entailed for pilgrims can also be seen in the licenses. An example is a license for 100 pilgrims in 1428. It was granted to a Bristol-based ship called the Marie, unless, as the license specifies, "it was required by Count Salisbury's navy against France". This license also requires the devout travellers to be "loyal subjects that will not disclose secrets when abroad".

The harsh conditions at sea affected both pilgrims and sailors. Both groups would share the experience of the pilgrimage. A license dating back to 1503 is just one of several granted to "crew and merchants of a ship for having been saved from shipwreck".



the ports of departure/



Bristol and Plymouth, situated in the west and south of England respectively, are considered to have been the busiest ports in terms of pilgrim traffic to A Coruña. They are followed by a number of others, including Dartmouth, Fowey and Falmouth, and to a lesser extent, Southampton, Poole, London and Winchelsea. According to existing records, ships carrying pilgrims on their way to Santiago set sail from at least 30 ports in the south, east and west of the current-day United Kingdom.

If we consider only the official licenses that were granted and preserved, Robert B. Tate states that the top of the list of British ports is Bristol, followed at a considerable distance by Dartmouth, Fowey and Poole. Ports with smaller numbers of pilgrims include, in this order, those of Southampton, London, Winchelsea and Southwold, on the eastern and south-eastern coasts.

As an island nation, Ireland also saw large numbers of pilgrims setting sail for Santiago de Compostela from the thirteenth century onwards. According to Tate, the principal ports of departure were Galway, in the west, and Dublin, in the east. Sources also indicate that boats carrying pilgrims set sail from other towns, such as Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Dingle, Limerick and Drogheda.

On mainland Europe, several cities belonging to the Hanseatic League registered intense activity, with St James as the patron saint of their merchants and traders. Hansa ports with the largest numbers of pilgrims include the German ports of Lübeck, Hamburg and Danzig, and the Flemish port of Antwerp, currently part of Belgium. Pilgrims from all over Europe would set sail from these ports.

In Denmark the busiest port was Ribe, situated on the west coast, whilst in Norway the port of Stavanger attracted the largest number of pilgrims. One of the first Norwegian pilgrims to travel by sea to Galicia was King Olaf the Black in the twelfth century. In Sweden, the two major ports of departure were Gothenburg and the capital Stockholm. In the second half of the 15th century, the Tänkbocker, books chronicling major events in Stockholm, cite the frequency of the maritime pilgrimages departing from this city in a trend that would continue into the early years of the sixteenth century.



The marina of A Coruña



The way in to the estuary of A Coruña

Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Danish pilgrims travelling by sea would often call at ports in England and France and some would then continue their journey overland. The principal port for pilgrims in France was La Rochelle, followed by Brest, Nantes and Bordeaux.



Medieval pilgrimage routes by sea from European ports to A Coruña



The most distant port from which mediaeval pilgrims set sail for A Coruña was Reykjavik in Iceland. Travellers heading for Santiago de Compostela would gather each year at a monastery just outside the city before setting sail, weather permitting, for a Norwegian, British or Danish port, from where they would continue their journey. Vicente Almazán refers to the saga of a famous Icelandic physician, Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, who would embark on the pilgrimage to Santiago in 1213. He sailed first to Norway before continuing his voyage to France and Galicia.

Several ports boasted **specialised facilities** for pilgrims. The most common of these was a church dedicated to the Apostle St James, where they would receive a blessing before embarking on their voyage. As they were often forced to wait several days before setting sail, a number of ports founded hospitals to provide shelter for sick and needy pilgrims during their enforced stay.

## Ports for pilgrims/

Pilgrims represented both a spiritual and economic asset for the ports most frequently chosen as their points of departure. It is for this reason that they were an object of consideration, and their memory is conserved even today.

Lübeck, the principal port of the Hanseatic League, had a church dedicated to St James and a hospital that provided shelter for pilgrims; Southampton had a gate especially for their use and which can still be seen today; like Lübeck, Drogheda also had a Church of St James and a hospital; the same is true of Dublin, whose hospital was founded in 1216 by the city's bishop and located right in the port.

The Irish capital also preserves a gate dedicated to St James which was used by the departing pilgrims. For many years now, St James's Gate leads to the city's landmark Guinness factory. In memory of its history, it is at this gate that modern-day pilgrims have their credentials stamped.



the crossing/

After boarding a ship chartered specifically for the pilgrims, or alternatively, albeit less frequently, to carry both pilgrims and goods, the voyage to A Coruña would get underway.

When the weather conditions were optimum, the crossing from southern England or Ireland would take five or six days. Under the same weather conditions, it would take a further three or four days to travel to and from Santiago de Compostela, and another week to sail home.

Provided that fortune smiled on the pilgrims, the entire journey would take an average of twenty days. In contrast, the perilous overland trip across Europe could take months. Speed was a factor that undoubtedly contributed to the success of the maritime pilgrimage route.

Records also exist of longer voyages from more distant ports. The Danish historian Arne E. Christensen cites a thirteenth-century itinerary based on earlier sources that relate an eight-day crossing to A Coruña from Ribe, the principal port of departure for pilgrims travelling from Denmark. He claims that this does not







include the calls made at Flemish, English and French ports. An extreme albeit dubious case is that of the Welsh priest Giraldu Cambrensis who, in 1183, claimed that it was possible to sail from southern Ireland to Galicia in just three days.

Most of the pilgrims chose to set sail in spring and summer, when the weather conditions were most favourable.

Despite considerably reducing the travelling time, the success of this pilgrimage by sea was still surprising.

The principal reason is that it was a costly affair. The expert Roger Stalley claims that for a craftsman, the cost of the passage was the equivalent of several weeks' earnings. The money had to be handed over before setting sail. No financial resources were necessary for the overland journey, as the pilgrims could appeal to charity and use the network of shelters and assistance available along the Way.

Moreover, the sea crossing was not as simple as Boorde gave to understand. Indeed, the sea generated considerable respect and fear.

The perils, although concentrated into a far shorter period of time than the overland journeys, tended to be decisive factors. At sea, the pilgrims were relatively helpless and could do little to overcome them. The dangers were almost constant during these centuries and included attacks from mainly English, French and Spanish pirates, storms and illnesses caused by the unhealthy conditions on board. Without forgetting the reverential fear of the unknown depths of the sea, considered to be the antechamber to hell, to the extent that the pilgrims' only desire was to **not to die** at sea.

Despite all this, the difficulties did not deter the intrepid mediaeval travellers from their desire to make the pilgrimage. In a reference to English pilgrims that could well be applied to those from other countries, Wendy R. Childs states that they came from all parts and social classes: the clergy, knights and ladies from the upper classes, merchants and sailors, travelled to Santiago de Compostela from all over England.

Childs also concludes that the pilgrimage to Santiago formed an integral part of life's aspirations in late fourteenth-century England, and was even referred to in the literature of the day.

## Survival on board/

In the Middle Ages and the centuries that followed, the duration, distance and harsh conditions implicit in undertaking a pilgrimage implied a sense of atonement as piercing as the actual arrival in Santiago.

Indeed, and despite the relatively short time required to complete the crossing, pilgrims travelling by sea did indeed comply with this atonement, particularly the poorer ones. Their vulnerability became clear as soon as they stepped foot on board, as illustrated by the following two examples. In 1506 just sixteen of the 100 pilgrims that had begun their journey to Santiago were saved following the sinking of their vessel on the River Elba, close to Hamburg. Seven years later, in 1513, a British boat sank off the English coast just a short time after setting sail for A Coruña. All the pilgrims on board were drowned.

Life on board was also incredibly harsh. Most of the passengers were crowded into the hold, where conditions were both unhealthy and oppressive. They were forced to take their own food, and cooking facilities were few and far between. Things became even more difficult when the ships were attacked by pirates. Mass, as a communal form of praying to God and St James to save them from these attacks and the storms at sea, was considered compulsory. On average it was held 2 or 3 times a day.

The anonymous fifteenth-century English poem, 'The pilgrims sea voyage and sea-sickness' begins "Men may leue alle gamys, that saylen to seynt Jamys! For many a man hit gramys, When they begyn to sayle. For when they haue take the see, At Sandwyche or at Wynchylsee. At Brystow, or where that hit bee. Theyr hertes begyn to fayle" (Those that set sail for Santiago renounce all pleasures. Many fall ill at sea. When they depart from Sandwich, Winchelsea, Bristol or anywhere else, they begin to lose heart). The principal reason for their disheartenment was the sea sickness caused by the rocking of the ship, which prevented many from eating and drinking. The poem goes on to say that all the crew could promise were storms and gales. The anonymous author concludes by saying "I had as lefe be in the wood, without mete or drynk" (I would rather be left in the wood without food or drink).

If in addition to a lack of financial resources the pilgrim was a woman, then the perils and fears were even greater. The British mystic Margery Kempe, who made the pilgrimage in 1417, was warned that in the event of a storm, she would be thrown overboard, as the ship was in far greater danger when there were women on board.

Conditions were somewhat better for the nobility and the wealthy. However, this was not always the case. The Flemish noble Jean Taccouen, Lord of Zielbeke, set sail for A Coruña from Nieuwpoort, currently part of Belgium, in March 1512. His wealth and status enabled him to travel in a cabin, although he was also subject to the trials and tribulations of sea travel. "My advice", he concluded, "is that nobody should travel on a small ship without a small chamber for two. They should also take a supply of bread and butter, as well as cheese and drink, as one is often treated badly".



in A Coruña/



The pilgrims anxiously awaited their arrival in A Coruña. On disembarking, they would find a number of specific amenities. Although they varied somewhat over time, they covered their basic spiritual and material needs, including those resulting from the almost always taxing voyage and, on their return from Santiago, the enforced wait until the ship set sail again, due to the frequent delays and uncertainty regarding the actual date of departure.

The facilities made available to them included a number of churches, hospitals, ecclesiastical centres and hostleries, etc. Pilgrims were a constant presence in mediaeval A Coruña, with their numbers often exceeding a thousand, a figure only surpassed by Santiago de Compostela itself.

We are going to embark on a journey that will retrace their steps around the city.

A journey that will take us to the places they visited in approximately the same order as they did. The sites are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. (cf. the plan on page 10). Many of the heritage sites related to this period no longer exist, but we still know their exact location. These sites, which have long since disappeared, are indicated by a reference number and the current address where each is located.

The Tower of Hercules was a beacon for old pilgrim boats



arriving at port/

Pilgrims who embarked for A Coruña were very much aware of the extreme weather conditions during the sea crossing, and so when they caught sight of the **TOWER OF HERCULES** 1, avenida Navarra s/n, it was an especially moving moment.

The Roman lighthouse, built in the late first and early second centuries, and which was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2009, was known at the port pilgrims left from. Catching a glimpse of it on the horizon was a **sight pilgrims yearned for** as it meant they had reached their destination, the end of the worst suffering, and contact with dry land again.



## A vision of the city of the lighthouse/

In Galicia and at the ports on the Atlantic coastline in Europe, A Coruña was known as Pharum, Phare, Far, etc., fruit of the legendary fame of its impressive lighthouse, the meaning of all these words. The word 'Faro' comes from its original purpose, as the name 'Tower of Hercules' is later. It came from a story written in the late thirteenth century, telling how Hercules, the legendary Greek hero, killed the evil giant Gerion in this land, and in commemoration of his victory founded a town and built a large lighthouse.

The city's official name has been recorded in historical documents and by pilgrims in the most far-fetched versions: La Coulongne, La Crunhe, La Groyne, La Grune, Clunya, Crunna, Corunna, Coromha, Corund, Lagrunje, Grwne, Grunn, Kron, Kronen, etc.

It has even been referred to as Finster Stern – Dark Star – a name used by some German pilgrims for Fisterra, the land of the last sunlight. This designation is used, for example, by George von Ehingen in 1457. A Coruña in these cases was seen as the port at the finis terrae which for them was Galicia, called Jacobsland, the land of St James.



The ancient lighthouse, in the words of one of the narrators who travelled with the Italian prince Cosme III de Medici in March 1669, when he came to A Coruña to sail for England after completing the pilgrimage to Santiago, “helped sailors to find their way in to the port”. It could not have been more decisive.



The seventeenth-century coat of arms of A Coruña. Archaeology Museum of A Coruña

Going up today to the top of the Tower of Hercules, restored in 1789 to a height of 55 m, 112 above sea level, and contemplating the way in to the estuary of A Coruña, is a way of feeling the emotional intensity of those brave and distant spiritual travellers.

A Coruña shows the historical relationship between the lighthouse and pilgrims on its coat of arms, created in the sixteenth century: on a navy blue background, the Tower of Hercules rises up, flanked by seven scallop shells. The seventeenth-century stone coat of arms preserved at the city’s Archaeology Museum is very revealing in this regard, as it shows four scallop shells. The link between the lighthouse and pilgrimage is very old, as shown by a city seal from 1448, which places the lighthouse between two **scallop shells**.

## The pilgrims’ shell/

The scallop shell, pilgrims’ shell or simply scallop – all these terms are used for the ‘pecten jacobaeus’ or ‘pecten maximus’, a large bivalve mollusc that is very numerous on the western coastline of Galicia. For unknown reasons, the top part of the shell of this mollusc, which is concave inside, became the symbol of pilgrims to Santiago at least as far back as the eleventh century – they wore it on their clothes and hats.

History tells us nothing about the reasons for this custom, which is still in force today. Legend does, however: a man on horseback fell into the sea and sank at some point on the coastline of Galicia and Portugal. Just then the boat bringing the body of St James to Galicia passed by. A miracle took place – both the knight and the horse came out of the water unharmed, covered with scallop shells.

The shell was already a legendary symbol in pre-Christian times, and Codex Calixtinus, dating from the twelfth century, extols it as the emblem of pilgrims to Santiago. Among the many virtues attributed to it, some of which are cited in this book, we could highlight one in particular: its shape on the outside, convex, protects pilgrims, while the shape on the inside, concave, gives them shelter.

In 1987 the European Council declared the different ways to Santiago in Spain and other countries the first European Cultural Route, and established the scallop shell as the identifying mark. Nowadays it is often seen together with the yellow arrow, the contemporary emblem of the Way to Santiago.



Ships usually anchored in the estuary, and pilgrims were brought ashore in rowing boats.

Pilgrims usually came ashore at the **PORT OF O PARROTE 2**, on what is now the Paseo Marítimo Alcalde Francisco Vázquez. The main point of activity was what is now the private land of La Solana and the Hesperia Finisterre hotel, both complexes built on land reclaimed from the sea. It was a privileged port location, protected from the worst effects of the open sea and close to what is known as A Cidade Vella – the Old City – the original settlement founded in 1208.

O Parrote, today buried under cement, but whose heartbeat emerges from the depths for whoever wishes to feel it, was little more than a small rocky beach, with hardly any specific infrastructure; and yet from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, and much less in the seventeenth and eighteenth, thousands of European pilgrims came ashore here.

The oldest witness to this relationship can be found in the Anonymous Chronicle attributed to the Flemish monk Emon. In June 1217, during the Fifth Crusade, around 350 Danish, Norwegian, Flemish, German etc. vessels sailed from Dartmouth, England, to A Coruña, the first major stopping point. They were carrying several thousand crusaders, who from the bay of A Coruña left on foot to visit the cathedral in Santiago. They

came back quickly to the port with the intention, spoiled by bad weather, of continuing their journey to the Holy Land.

Vicente Almazán summarises this historic visit in the words of the anonymous author: “With the wind in our favour we reached Far on the following Friday, a magnificent city in Galicia with a very safe port and a splendid lighthouse that was built on the orders of Julius Caesar. We anchored our ships, and left the next day for Compostela. After worshipping God and the Holy Apostle we went back to Coruña, where we had to wait nine days for the adverse winds to calm down.



The area where the lost port of O Parrote used to be. The Hotel Hesperia Finisterre is in the background





A view of the peninsula of A Coruña. On the left is the area where the old port of O Parrote used to be, now built up

Some weighed anchor despite the storms and died along the coast of Galicia". When the fleet was reunited in Lisbon a third of the vessels had been lost.

A Coruña was not only a stopping point for crusaders who visited Santiago. It was also an intermediate port for pilgrims, who coming from different European Atlantic ports, were making their way to Rome and Jerusalem, the other two major destinations of Christendom. In any case, this traffic was sporadic, and could not possibly be compared to the traffic generated by ships with pilgrims on their way to Santiago.

The monarchy, and above all the archbishopric of Compostela, which received part of the anchorage fees charged in the port and included A Coruña in its diocese, showed great interest in the free circulation of foreign devotees in the city. An example of this dates from May 1440, when an English pilgrim vessel, the Katherine, was captured as the crew and passengers were involved in commercial activities, which the locals considered as damaging to their interests.

When the archbishop was made aware of the situation, he immediately sent an envoy to the people of the city and their representatives. In the end the ship was set free and what had been confiscated was returned. Furthermore, a request was approved to protect all pilgrims coming into the city together with their goods and merchandise, and that of the ships that

carried them. It was stated that "foreign pilgrims should not be arrested and their possessions should not be confiscated in reprisal against them".

Royal support for the pilgrimage and the port is almost always evident. In 1466 Henry IV of Castile even authorised the Council of A Coruña to agree on specific truces with the English Crown, given the confrontation it had with Spain and France.

Diverse documents likewise show the Council's interest in favouring the traffic and stay of pilgrims, as they were no doubt an economic asset. A good example of this dates from 1494. Municipal representatives made a request from the Spanish Crown, to the effect that the rules which only allowed knights to use saddled beasts should not be applied to pilgrims arriving at the port of O Parrote, and they should be allowed to rent horses, mules and other similar animals for their journey overland.

Coming back to the bishops in Santiago, they laid special emphasis on the treatment of high-ranking pilgrims in A Coruña, both on their arrival at the port and when departing. They saw them as their guests.

A well-known case is when in 1669 Bishop Ambrosio de Spínola provided aid for Prince Cosme III de Medici until he sailed for England. Just as when he stayed in Santiago, the bishop ordered people in Coruña to meet his needs, and sent the prince a handsome gift for the crossing. It is worthwhile quoting in full: four boxes of pork legs, twelve in each box, various barrels of sole, twenty pots of oysters and various boxes of sweets and fruit in syrup.

Boats that came to A Coruña with pilgrims on board were of two different types: those hired exclusively to bring them, and to a lesser extent merchant ships that brought pilgrims as well. One of the most used was the cog, a fast ship at sea and of the right size to sail up rivers and bays with a regular depth. In the fifteenth century the hulk became popular for transporting pilgrims, as it was ideal for both people and goods, and larger than the cog.

Numerous manufactured goods were unloaded at O Parrote, especially quality fabrics, while the main exports were wine and





salted food. Robert B. Tate points out that traders in Bristol and London made their fortune by importing wine from A Coruña and exporting cloth, while at the same time using their ships to carry pilgrims.

There were specific agreements between the port of A Coruña and ports in Britain such as Bristol. A Coruña was also an ideal stopping point for maritime trading ships on their way from the North Atlantic to the Mediterranean.

For all these reasons O Parrote is **the great historical port for pilgrims** to Santiago.

## Portus Magnus Peregrinorum/

The Romans knew the port of A Coruña as Portus Magnus Artaborum, alluding to the Artabri, who lived in the area. From the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries the name could very well have evolved into Portus Magnus Peregrinorum. Pilgrim traffic, as acknowledged by historians such as Elisa Ferreira, boosted other commercial activities.

The English pilgrim William Wey, one of the founders of the prestigious school of Eton, describes Coruña in May 1456, while he was awaiting for the day to embark, as full of people from "England, Wales, Ireland, Normandy, France, Brittany and other places". The serious and well-respected Wey counted 84 vessels in the bay, 37 of them English. 37! and as Wendy R. Childs recalls, over that whole year only 19 licenses are known to have been granted for pilgrim ships.

Wey, who had sailed from the port of Plymouth with other devotees on board the Mary White, noted down that on the same day a further five English ships with pilgrims set sail to the same destination. They did so from Portsmouth, Bristol, Weymouth and Lymington. Wey obtained this information by talking to the pilgrims and sailors of the same nationality in the port of A Coruña.

Heinrich Schönbrunner von Zug, from Switzerland, also met with a port brimming with pilgrims to Santiago, in 1531. He had embarked in La Rochelle in France, where he says he saw another ship put into port with 300 pilgrims coming back from Santiago, and came onshore in A Coruña - he calls it Kron - and travelled with his colleagues to the cathedral in Santiago on horses which they had rented from their innkeeper after staying the night in the city.

On his way back Schönbrunner had to wait four days for his ship to sail. He spent some of this time exploring the area on horseback. "There was" - he writes - "great activity [in the port] and plenty of people who just like us were waiting for favourable winds". His ship came back to La Rochelle with 52 pilgrims on board. Two other ships sailed with them. One of them went down with all the people and goods on board.



A re-enactment of the stay of pilgrim William Wey in A Coruña



Not all the travellers who came to the port of A Coruña were doing the pilgrimage for themselves. Just like on the overland routes, many of them were doing it on behalf of someone else - for a relative, friend or wealthy person, or in the name of a noble, priest or member of a royal family.

People went to Santiago on behalf of the living and the dead. They were sometimes paid for it while at other times they were moved by affection or obedience. The Scottish knight James Douglas entered into history and myth when he made the pilgrimage **with the heart of his king**, who had died in 1329.



The Alcalde Francisco Vázquez promenade



## Robert Bruce - the dead pilgrim/

The legendary king of Scotland Robert Bruce (1274-1329) yearned to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Santiago. Seeing that would die before he could fulfil his wish, he entrusted the knight James Douglas, a hero like himself in the struggle for the independence of Scotland, with taking his heart when he died and fulfilling the promise he had made but not kept, and finally laying his heart to rest before the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Various historians, among them James Stone, in 1927, argue that Douglas, together with his men in arms, came to A Coruña by sea - named in some related verses as Grund - and from there to Santiago. Shortly afterwards, the Scots joined the Christian troops fighting against the Muslims in Andalusia. Douglas died in battle at Málaga.

Legend has it that the king's heart, which his faithful knight kept in a silver box hanging round his neck, was taken back to Scotland and never came to Jerusalem.





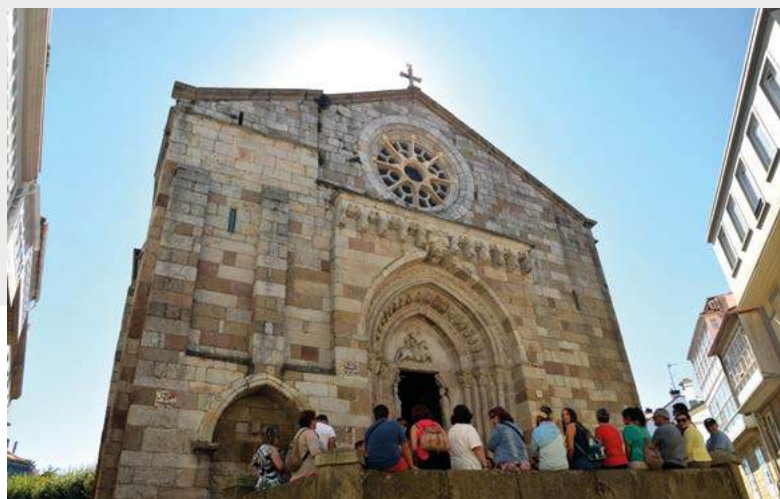
The gateway of O Parrote

The **GATEWAY OF O PARROTE** 3, Paseo do Parrote, s/n, right next to the Hesperia Finisterre hotel, gives us an idea of where the original lost port of A Coruña was, at number 2-4 on the promenade. As the city was surrounded by walls which were next to the beaches and rocks at different points along the coast, various gateways provided entry into the city from the sea. The English Way starts from the gateway of O Parrote, which opened up onto the now lost beach of the same name, part of the old port area.

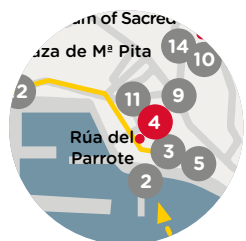
Also known as the gateway of A Cruz, the possible substitute of an older pre-fourteenth-century gateway, what we see today dates from 1676, although some minor changes were made later. The royal coat of arms can be seen in the middle. Steep and narrow steps come up the gradient onto the promenade to the left and right.

Numerous pilgrims also came through the nearby gateways of O Clavo and San Miguel, which already existed in the fourteenth century, in addition to O Parrote. All of them as described as sea gateways, as they opened up directly onto the water in the estuary.

On disembarking in the port, pilgrims would head for the nearby **CHURCH OF SANTIAGO** 4, which at the time was just a hundred metres from the sea. The first thing was to thank the apostle in whose honour they had set out on this adventure for their safe arrival in port. After the dangerous crossing, just under 70 km from the cathedral in Compostela was an almost always lesser danger.



The front of the church of Santiago



Inside the church they expressed their gratitude and unrestrained love for the apostle St James by **embracing** the stone image of the saint, specially positioned for them on the main altar.

In any case, visiting the church of Santiago, and other churches that we will see in the city, went beyond the pilgrim's pressing need for his encounter with the apostle.

Elisa Ferreira, the great researcher from Galicia of maritime routes, explains: "Religious acts on land, in Coruña itself, were unusually important when compared to pilgrims who travelled on foot. English pilgrimage [Ferreira says English as most pilgrims on this route were English, but not all of them, as we have seen] was not typical on the different Ways to Santiago, where the aspect of travelling on foot is fundamental. They were only twelve leagues away from the sanctuary [of Santiago, after coming to port], and this was not enough. So they took the greatest possible advantage of the route travelled in England from where they left to the port of departure".

The church of Santiago, which dates from the early thirteenth century, is the oldest one in A Coruña. It has been refurbished



## Embracing St James in A Coruña/



The statue of St James that pilgrims used to embrace

Pilgrims' overflowing joy on reaching dry land was expressed by embracing St James in his church. Just like in the cathedral in Santiago, the church in A Coruña had a stone statue of the saint dating from the fourteenth century on the main altar. In 1521 it was on the gospel side of the altar – on the left, facing the apse of the church. The centre of the main altar was taken up by Our Lady, the other great object of devotion for travelling pilgrims, flanked by another statue of St James and one of his brother John.

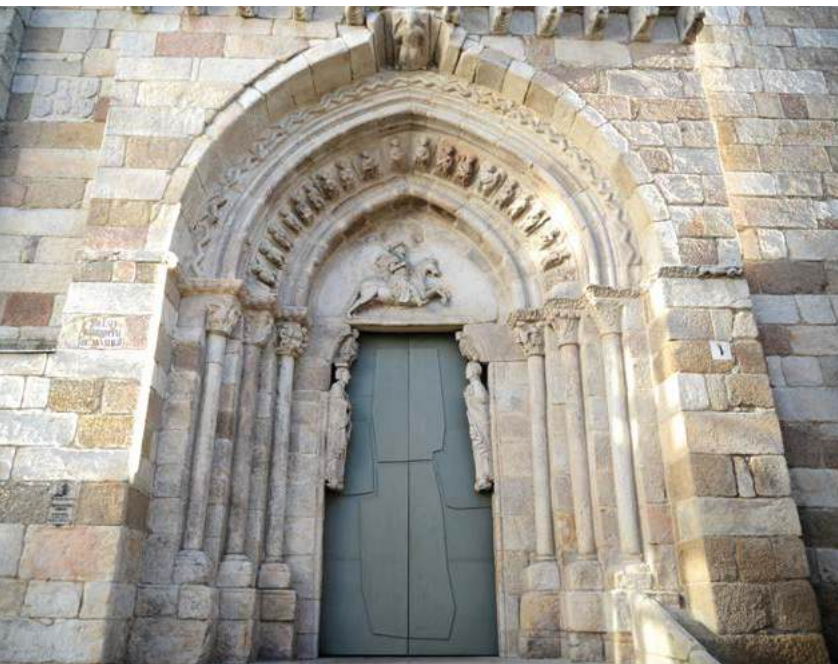
Just as in the cathedral in Santiago, pilgrims had to go up some steps to embrace the statue. This habit fell into disuse with the almost total absence of pilgrims in the eighteenth century and after the fire in the church in 1779, which altered its aspect. Despite this, local researcher Antonio de la Iglesia said in 1861 that people still embraced the statue, reaching it "by means of two small stairways".

The historical statue, which is 1.75 m high, is currently on a pedestal at the start of the aisle, on the right of the main door, on the epistle side of the altar. It lies quite far away from its historical position.

He holds in his left hand a scroll, of more recent manufacture, with the Latin inscription "St James the Greater, patron saint of Spain". In his right hand he holds a staff with a gourd, two well-known attributes of pilgrims. Expert Dolores Barral Rivadulla believes that in medieval times this hand – which is not the original one, now lost – held a tau-shaped staff like other old images of the apostle. This would show his evangelizing and travelling nature, laden with authority. St James is sitting on a lion, a symbol of wildness tamed by faith.

Some visitors and pilgrims left pieces of paper with requests for the apostle on the back of the statue.





The first two photographs show the western doorway, and the third one the side doorway of the church of Santiago



several times over the years, most recently and most intensively in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It might have been built over the remains of an earlier and much smaller church of which nothing now remains. In the current aisle there are some elements of the Roman ruins that made up the cultural space that the Christian structure was built over.

The church was originally Gothic with hints of Romanesque, and shows influences of the Pórtico de la Gloria in Santiago, from the late twelfth century. This can be seen on the main and side fronts, and on the inside capitals.

In addition to the stone statue of St James, the Jacobean evocations both inside and outside the church are many and diverse. We shall now visit them.

The main front - the western front - is flanked by the statues of the apostles and brothers St John the Evangelist and St James the Greater. The latter holds a tau-shaped staff, alluding to his nature as a missionary and traveller, according to historian Dolores Barral, and other experts agree with her. St James rests on a lion, which according to the same writer, would be related, within a versatile meaning, to the apostle's pastoral activity, aimed at subjecting evil - wildness tamed by faith.

The image of St James the apostle can also be seen on the tympanum, but this time on horseback as St James the knight, the soldier of Christianity or miles Christi. This sculpture dates from 1790 and is somewhat strange in its pretended naturalness; it does not quite manage to fit in the late medieval portico.

On the top left of the main doorway is a relief showing the Jacobean scallop shell sculpted between the coats of arms of the kingdoms of León on the left and Castile on the right. These same

coats of arms are reproduced on the top of the relief, the other way round, with a cross in the middle. The purpose of the whole, dating from the fourteenth century, is to reinforce the image of A Coruña as a royal city at the service of pilgrims and faith. Some writers have seen in it a first approach to the city's own coat of arms.

The side doorway, which opens onto the Rúa de Santiago, displays the Agnus Dei in the tympanum, the depiction of Jesus Christ sacrificed as the Passover lamb to save humanity. This same image, above the tribunes, culminates the Pórtico de la Gloria in the cathedral of Santiago. It alludes to the pilgrim's supreme yearning: the vision of the sacred mystery, always distant, but always possible in its extreme compassion.

Inside the church, which is also Gothic with some later work too, do not miss the capitals with scallop shells at the top of the columns in two of the arches in the aisle. This sculpture is specific to this church, as it was the Jacobean destination from the sea.

The capitals on the three columns on which the second arch in the aisle rests, on the left as we look at the altar, are worthy of special mention. They are crowned by a linear series of 11 scallop shells, under which, according to some writers, are some geometric figures, which are most probably pilgrims' staffs in the shape of St Andrew's cross. This symbol of pilgrimage was frequently depicted in the late Middle Ages and subsequent centuries.



Capitals decorated with pilgrim's shells in the church of Santiago





The apostle can be seen in three statues inside the church. The first is the medieval one which pilgrims used to embrace, already described. The other two are much later, from the end of the eighteenth century. The most visible one is St James the Apostle seated with a pilgrim's staff, presiding the neo-classical reredos behind the main altar. On his sides are St Joseph and St Joaquim, husband and father of Mary respectively. The piece is crowned by Mary with the infant Jesus and her mother St Anna, who holds a bunch of grapes that the infant is trying to grasp.

The third statue of St James, raised at the level of the choir, over an arch in a side chapel, shows him on horseback in the midst of battle against the unbelievers. This kind of depiction is popularly known as St James the Moor-slayer. It was very popular in Spain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and alludes to the medieval struggle in the peninsula against the Muslims. These images were an attempt to arouse patriotic Catholicism, as opposed to the open sense of St James the medieval pilgrim, the most frequently depicted throughout Europe.

On the reliefs of the pulpit on the gospel side is an allegory of pilgrimage - scallop shells, a star, the funeral chest of St James, St James' cross, the gourd, etc. The series is supported on a pedestal which alludes to marine mythology.

The maritime link is extended on the stairway wall going up to the choir. On one of the raised window ashlar, a simple engraving shows a man in a vessel with his fishing nets deployed. Some say it is St James, originally a fisherman and protector of sailors and pilgrims at sea. This same depiction can also be seen elsewhere in the church.

The chapels flanking the main altar were related to the two guilds most identified with the commerce generated by pilgrimage. The one on the gospel side - the left - nowadays known as the Chapel of Hope, whose iconography shows the Annunciation, was the chapel of the guild of tailors, while the chapel on the epistle side - the right - nowadays the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, was the chapel of the guild of seafarers.

What was possibly the oldest pilgrims' hospital in the city was run by the church of Santiago, although it is not recorded until the fifteenth century, when it was related to a lawyer from the Council, Juan Ferreño. It was very near the church, although the exact location is unknown. Pilgrims had to meet and be registered in the church of Santiago in order to be cared for in the city's hospitals.

Despite the fact that it was built for the spiritual benefit of pilgrims to Santiago, the church also had other uses. It was one of the first two medieval parishes in A Coruña. The atrium was used for the City Council's meetings, and residents' meetings were also held there, called by ringing the bells.

For many years now pilgrims' credentials have been stamped at the church of Santiago, in collaboration with the apostle's brotherhood in the city.

From left to right: the aisle, pulpit and reredos over the main altar in the church of Santiago



the stay/



On leaving the church of Santiago some pilgrims set out for the cathedral in Compostela. Others, depending on the time they had, their health and financial situation, and the time of day, spent at least one night in the city.

Pilgrims with no resources had free lodging at the hospitals, which looked after the sick and travellers. This hospitality, so intimately related to the Way of St James, was financed by institutions, guilds and local people as a way of finding grace with the apostle.

The largest centre that lodged Jacobean travellers was the Hospital of San Andrés, now lost. The doorway and stone cross can still be seen in the city streets.



The **DOORWAY OF THE HOSPITAL OF SAN ANDRÉS 5**, is on the Paseo do Parrote, s/n, close to No. 3 on this road and about a hundred metres from the gateway of O Parrote. It was taken there from its original location on the Rúa San Andrés, where the hospital was, to the gardens of San Carlos. In 1956 it was moved to where it is now, in the walls around the gardens, as the symbolic way in to the Archive of the Kingdom of Galicia.



The Hospital of San Andrés was founded by the seafarers' guild at an unknown date, possibly in the late fourteenth century. It was devoted to this apostle as he was the patron saint of fishermen and sailors, the promoters of the hospital. It had c. 150-180 beds. Part of the building was still standing in the late nineteenth century. In any case, it was severely damaged by the English under Sir Francis Drake in 1589, and from then on it gradually fell apart.

Fortunately, the doorway we are concerned with survived. It dates from the fifteenth century and was inspired by the city of Santiago. There are fish on the upper archivolt, in allusion to the seafarers' guild. The central archivolt consists of a series of St Andrew's crosses, a reference to the martyrdom of this saint, surrounded by leaves whose shape at times recalls concave pilgrims' shells. The archivolt closest to the tympanum is made up of eight figures - angels with outspread wings who are kneeling in prayer. Their

The doorway of San Andrés

clothes are bound by the typical Franciscan knotted belt cords, a deliberate identification with monks of this order, as they ran the hospital.

Seeing the doorway of San Andrés is a moving experience: it connects today's pilgrims with those from the past unlike any other heritage in the city. From its present location, opposite we can see the sea gateway of O Clavo, through which numerous pilgrims came, and the large built-up area under which lies the old port of O Parrote.

In any case, the original site of the hospital in question and the chapel was where the other object can now be found, the **STONE CROSS OF SAN ANDRÉS 6**, on the busy street of San Andrés, 32, opposite No. 39. This unique piece, part of the structure of which dates back to at least the sixteenth century, belonged to the hospital site.

The five **pilgrims' staffs** which surround its shaft show the most characteristic mission of the lost building. As late as 1589, when it was severely damaged by the English attack on the city, it is said that "many foreign pilgrims were welcomed and cured" in the hospital.



The stone cross of San Andrés  
Below is a detail of the carved pilgrim's staffs

## The pilgrim's third foot/

The shaft with staffs on the stone cross of San Andrés is unique in Jacobean art, which increases its value, although the staff is depicted in other places and on other different pieces. Together with the scallop shell it forms the most frequently depicted pair of historical symbols of pilgrims to Santiago.

Nowadays only the shell is depicted, but in the historical centuries of pilgrimage the staff was an inspiring motif on all kinds of format. Made of bone or metal, it was shown mainly on hats and clothes. Two crossed staffs making a St Andrew's cross was a very common adornment.

In Spanish the staff is known as a 'bordón', which comes from the French 'bourdon', a long walking stick used by pilgrims in that country. In English it was known as a bead or pilgrim's staff. Such was the value attributed to the staff that the best craftsmen designed and made them, and it was blessed, together with the pouch, at the start of the journey.

In the twelfth century, Codex Calixtinus refers to the staff as a third foot for pilgrims, a symbol of the Holy Trinity, and a weapon to be used in defence against vermin and thieves, which are compared to the tempting devil. The St Andrew's cross made up of staffs was frequent from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.







Both photographs show the ruins of the old monastery of San Francisco

For the pilgrim to Santiago today, the capacity of this stone cross to evoke the past is undeniable. The adjoining military church of San Andrés, parallel to the street of the same name, replaced the old hospital chapel in 1890.

There is a third element remaining from the site of San Andrés – the baptismal font from the chapel, which is now kept in the city's Archaeology Museum. The decoration is all but eroded, but a scallop shell can still be made out.

At the end of the Rúa San Andrés, westwards, the road to Fisterra started, an inhospitable destination in those times, and yet one which attracted many pilgrims. In Fisterra, just 100 km distant, was the cape of the same name, considered the end of the world from time immemorial. This belief for Jacobean pilgrims became a vision both mythical and spiritual, as they saw St James as the brave apostle who had brought the good news to this remote land, the doorway to the Great Beyond. The beginning of this remote route from A Coruña is still recalled by the name of the Avenida de Finisterre.

None of the other hospitals in the city was as well-known as San Andrés, but Bo Suceso, Os Anxos, A Soidade, A Caridade, etc. all lodged pilgrims, both in the Middle Ages and from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. They were always poor and sick pilgrims, a large part of whom died. None of these other hospitals remain standing.

Faced with the continuous flux of pilgrims and the scarce medical care available, in 1502 the local governor of the city,

Pero Montoto, asked the king and queen of Spain, Fernando and Isabel – known as the Catholic Kings – to unify the four small hospitals there were at the time into just one. The new building would be large and well-equipped: the Great Pilgrims' Hospital of A Coruña, run like the Royal Hospital in Santiago de Compostela, to accommodate sick pilgrims and those with no resources.

Montoto justified his request by the city's unique position as a port, where many pilgrims came from Santiago – he wrote – “to find ships for Flanders, France and many other places”. They were almost always forced to wait until they managed to go on board, and so had to stay in the city.

The great hospital of A Coruña was never built, despite the fact that, as the governor informed the king and queen, there were often more than a thousand poor pilgrims from different parts of Europe in the city. “They have nowhere to stay” he adds, “and wander the streets”.

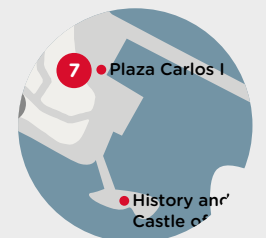
Nobles and the clergy had an easier time: they were lodged in the city's convents and monasteries.

The Franciscans stood out for their hospitality for distinguished pilgrims. Their original monastery, outside the city walls, is lost, but there are still some archaeological remains – the **RUINS OF THE MONASTERY OF SAN FRANCISCO** <sup>7</sup>, praza Carlos I, going past the side of the Luís Seoane Foundation at the end of the square.

Legend has it that it was St Francis himself who founded the monastery, when he came to Santiago as a pilgrim in 1214. It has even been suggested that the saint from Assisi departed for Italy from the port of A Coruña after founding the monastery. Others believe it was the work of his disciple Friar Benicasa de Todi in the early thirteenth century. As the monastery was built next to the shore – at the time – legend holds that Benicasa fed the builders with fish, which came of their own free will to his basket in great numbers. The monk took what was needed, blessed the others and sent them back to the sea.

Various members of royal families stayed there on their way to or from Santiago: Juana of Castile, Charles I and Philip II (in the sixteenth century) and other relevant people such as the Italian prince Cosme III of Medici (in the seventeenth century). The monastery had rooms for clergymen making the pilgrimage, and the order was, in addition, the most hospitable religious body for pilgrims of any condition.

Tragedy struck the monastery in 1589 when the English admiral Sir Francis Drake attacked the city at the head of a fleet of 120 ships and 17,000 soldiers. The attack was a reprisal for the failed







The modern church of San Francisco



Spanish invasion of England in 1588 with a large fleet, popularly known as the Spanish Armada.

The monastery was set on fire to avoid its falling into the hands of the **enemy**, who in turn burnt down other significant buildings and areas in the city, which was destroyed.

In 1653 the monastery of San Francisco was once again damaged, by the explosion of the nearby gunpowder store. Only ruins of the monastery now remain. Various gravestones have been found there with scallop shells on them, now kept at the Archaeology Museum. They belonged to pilgrims and monks, and brotherhoods and craftsmen in some way related to the monastery (cf. photo on p. 60).

The Franciscan house ended up in the power of the army, and over time disappeared – although its church remained. This is the **CHURCH OF SAN FRANCISCO 8**, on Avenida Calvo Sotelo, 41, where it was moved from 1964 to 1981. The style is Gothic, although heavily altered by later work, and above all by its move to the new location, which left it hopelessly decontextualized.

In its original location, multitudinous masses and other religious services were held for pilgrims from everywhere and of all conditions, some of whom even slept in the aisles at night. In his

## From pilgrims to invaders/

An outrage - the attack by Englishman Sir Francis Drake on Coruña in May 1589 to a great extent altered the vision the city had of the English as pilgrims and sea traders.

It also meant that such emblematic buildings like the monastery of San Francisco and the church of Santo Domingo, together with the hospital of San Andrés, which had cared for so many British pilgrims, were destroyed by fire. These fires were caused by both the attackers and defenders, to stop the buildings from falling into enemy hands. There had never been such a widescale loss of heritage and documents in the history of the city.

Drake's attack, the consequence of the terrible political and religious relations between Spain and England at the end of the sixteenth century, confirmed the end of the Golden Age of pilgrimage by sea.

In any case, during this attack A Coruña provided a last great service to the Jacobean world of Compostela. By defending themselves against Drake, the inhabitants stopped the English from advancing towards Santiago – as was feared, with the worst possible intentions. A Coruña was destroyed – in the fires of the buildings related to pilgrimage documents were lost that would today be key evidence – but Santiago and its cathedral remained safe at what was possibly one of the most critical times.

The monastery of Santo Domingo



narration from 1456, William Wey tells us that after attending a religious service at Santa María do Campo, on the next day he went to San Francisco, where he heard a sermon devoted to the apostle St James. He also tells us that the sermon was given by an Englishman with a degree in theology, for the numerous Englishmen present in the city.

The **MONASTERY OF SANTO DOMINGO 9**, praza de Santo Domingo, 1, was also visited by illustrious pilgrims and clergymen. Among them was the King of Castile of Flemish origin, Philip the Handsome, who had come to the port on his way to Santiago in 1506.

Given the lack of documentary sources, some traditions attribute the origin of the monastery to the founder of the Dominican order, St Dominic of Osma. Just like St Francis, after completing the pilgrimage to Santiago in 1219 he departed from the nascent city of A Coruña.

The original monastery was outside the city walls until it was rebuilt on its current site in the seventeenth century. The church, which holds the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary, the patron saint of the city, conserves very few late medieval remains, as it was completely rebuilt in the late eighteenth century, in the Baroque style.

Gravestones have been found in Santo Domingo with the names of foreign monks, possibly pilgrims who for unknown reasons remained at the monastery.

In the inner ward of the Archaeology Museum is a fifteenth-century relief, as rough as it is evocative. Some experts think it was from Santo Domingo, while others relate it to the lost church of Santo Tomás. The Museum explains both possibilities (cf. photo on p. 60).

According to the Museum, the relief shows a pilgrim. Dolores Barral also accepts this iconography, although the figure is wearing a cap with a chinstrap and not the usual pilgrims' hat or halo which we normally see on St James. This is noteworthy because it has also been interpreted as a depiction of St James dressed as a pilgrim, as in his left hand the figure is carrying a book, which would be the gospels.

The figure shows various attributes of the historical pilgrim to Santiago: the staff for support along the way, the pouch for documentation and some basic food, a cloak on his shoulders to protect himself from rain and damp, and the scallop shell as the identifying emblem.

The inner ward at the Archaeology Museum also exhibits other pieces from the Dominican monastery. We could highlight the Adoration of the Magi, considered the first pilgrims in Christianity, and various tombstones.

Close to Santo Domingo was the Hospital of Os Anxos, for the poor and pilgrims.



The Plaza de Santo Domingo





The third religious institution that provided shelter for pilgrims, very close to Santo Domingo, was the **CONVENT OF SANTA BÁRBARA 10**, praza de Santa Bárbara. Founded in the fourteenth century, it belongs to the order of the Poor Clares, an enclosed Franciscan order noted for its work in charity and looking after the sick. The name of the convent comes from a previous chapel that was devoted to St Barbara. The silent and welcoming square of the convent, the church, and above all the Gothic relief that has adorned the arch over the outside gateway in the patio since 1613 are all worth visiting.



The highly original relief is a depiction of the Day of Judgement. In one of the scenes, the archangel St Michael is weighing the souls of the dead. In another, the apostle St James is taking a man's soul for judgement, possibly a local seafarer who had made the pilgrimage. The image of the apostle as an intercessor, greatly valuing his devoted pilgrims, is reinforced by his own pilgrim's clothes.

The relief also shows St Francis with a Franciscan monk in an identical mission as mediator. The whole is completed in the centre by God holding up Jesus crucified, the supreme example of salvation.

The image of St James accompanying one or two pilgrims in prayer has been reproduced over the centuries. It symbolises his supreme mission of intercession and was extended all over Europe, especially in pieces made of jet. Even so, it is no less true that the iconography of this relief, taken as a whole, is highly original and exclusive to Gothic art in Galicia.

Historian and Jacobean expert Antón Pombo suggests that just like in the city of Santiago, pilgrims who could not find accommodation in the hospitals would try one of the above-mentioned monasteries; above all inside the monastery churches, and at other churches like Santiago and Santa María do Campo, which were their main meeting points. This would happen at times when there was a massive influx of pilgrims in the city.

Richer pilgrims, but who were not nobles or clergymen, just like in Compostela sought accommodation in private houses. The two original areas in the city - the Old City, mainly inhabited by nobles,

the enriched bourgeoisie and civil servants, and A Peixería or the fishing neighbourhood, where fishermen, sailors, traders and craftsmen lived - provided inns and guest houses for pilgrims.

In any case, this activity was more intense in A Peixería, where there was a great floating population. Foreign innkeepers lived here, who spoke the same languages as the devout visitors. The Chronicler known as Licenciado Molina wrote in 1550 that in A Peixería were "all kinds of people, locals and foreigners", as A Coruña was a "great stopping point for ships from all countries".

Kings, nobles, knights, craftsmen, church dignitaries, monks and priests, farmers, adventurers, sailors, tradesmen etc. all came to the city as pilgrims. Nothing remains of the immense majority of them, and yet the **footprints** of some, either because they were well-known or because they wrote about their visit, **still remain**.



The medieval relief over the doorway of the convent of Santa Bárbara

Below is a detail from the relief - St James guiding the soul of a pilgrim

## Pilgrims in memory/

The oldest known pilgrims who came to Coruña were the crusaders from the north of Europe, who on their way to the Holy Land in 1217 came ashore to visit Santiago.

There were many more. Some were on their way to Santiago while others came after completing their pilgrimage with the intention of sailing back home. We shall now briefly recall some of the best known.

St Brigid of Sweden, the patron saint of Europe, in 1342; the Scottish nobleman James Douglas with the heart of his king, Robert Bruce, c. 1329; John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, who after invading A Coruña with an army that followed him in various ships from Plymouth, made the pilgrimage to Santiago in 1386; the British mystic Margery Kempe in 1417; William Wey, the author of the exceptional narration we have quoted, in 1456; John Goodyear, an Englishman who presented the cathedral in Santiago with a valuable alabaster reredos showing Jacobean topics, now kept in the cathedral museum, in 1456; British nobleman and writer John Paston, in 1473; Catherine of Aragon, the future wife of King Henry VIII, the promoter of the Anglican reformation in 1534, which meant the end of pilgrims from Britain, in 1501; Juana the Mad and Philip the Fair, coming from Holland, in 1506; Charles I, who after completing the pilgrimage to Santiago left for Germany, in 1520; Philip II, as yet the crown prince, in 1554; Juan José de Austria, a politician and soldier, and illegitimate son of Philip IV, in 1668; the queen consort of Spain of German origin Mariana of Neuburg, who was driven into the estuary of Ferrol by bad weather and came to Coruña, her initial destination, overland before going on to Santiago, in 1690; the Italian prince Cosme III of Medici, in 1696; James III, pretender to the throne of England who completed the pilgrimage to Santiago from A Coruña while seeking for support for his claim to the throne, in 1719, etc.



Scenes from the Plaza de Santa Bárbara



The Irish nobles who came to A Coruña early in 1602 with their families and followers are not forgotten either. They had fled from the English, who ruled their country. It was a double flight: political, as they had fought for the independence of Ireland, and religious, as they were Catholics who rejected Anglicanism.



They were welcomed in A Coruña with all honours by the Archbishop of Santiago with the support of King Philip III. Great care was taken of them before they continued on their journey to the cathedral in Compostela.

Subsequently, some of them settled at different points in the Iberian Peninsula. This led to the foundation of seven Irish colleges in as many cities, among them Santiago de Compostela. Several of these noblemen went down in **Irish history** under their own names.

## Hugh O'Donnell also wished to see Ireland/

The Battle of Kinsale, fought towards the end of 1601, signified the definitive defeat of the Irish nobles who had been fighting for the independence of their country for nine years.

The leader was 'Red' Hugh O'Donnell, the Lord of Tyrconnell, born in 1572. He had led various clan rebellions against the English and was also at the head of their immediate exile in A Coruña, an event known as the 'flight of the earls'.

O'Donnell, together with other noble families – the O'Neills, O'Sullivans, etc. – wanted to go up to the top of the Tower of Hercules, possibly to see, like his remote forefather Mil, if from there he could catch a glimpse of his beloved Ireland.

After completing the pilgrimage to Santiago, the young noble went to the Spanish court, at the time in Valladolid, to talk to Philip III. He wanted royal aid to go back to Ireland and start up the fight against the English again. He was unsuccessful. He died on the way, according to some poisoned by an English spy. His epic struggle forms an important part of Irish history and literature.

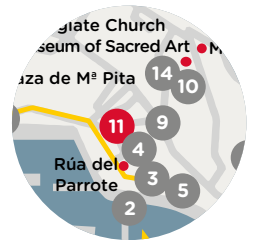


on the way/

On arriving at port and when departing for the cathedral, pilgrims went to the church of Santiago. This was the essential visit, as we have seen and as still happens today, as there, in A Coruña, the pilgrim obtains the first stamp in his credentials.

This church therefore represented and still represents the symbolic beginning of the English Way. Pilgrims' first steps took them to the adjoining **RÚA DE SANTIAGO 11**, which is so named as it borders on the church and marks the beginning of the way through the city towards Compostela.

Pilgrims on the Calle de Santiago



## By sea to Santiago/

The English Way, called thus as the English were the most frequent travellers on the route throughout history, is the only Jacobean route that joins Europe to Santiago by sea, completed with an overland extension. The land route currently has two starting points – the ports of Ferrol and A Coruña. From the latter, pilgrims have to cover 75 km to Santiago. The routes from Ferrol and Coruña come together in the village of Bruma, 34 km from A Coruña, which preserves the remains of a historical pilgrims' hospital. From here there are still 41 km to go to reach the destination.

The English Way from the estuary of A Coruña arose with its own identity in the twelfth century, when the first Jacobean pilgrims coming by sea arrived at the port of O Burgo, which today lies in the neighbouring municipality of Culleredo. Some of them were crusaders from the north of Europe on their way to the Holy Land.

The peak came in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In this period sailing techniques and other vicissitudes – wars, trading routes, etc. – promoted the development of maritime pilgrimage. A Coruña became the reference port, replacing O Burgo.

It usually took four or five days to travel overland on foot from A Coruña to Santiago and back again, and two or three on horseback. Lukas Rem, from Germany, did it in two days on horseback in the early sixteenth century. He left A Coruña in the morning, reached Santiago at dusk, visited the apostle, and came back the next day.

Pilgrimages by this route started up again in the 1980s. Development was slow as no "compostelas" (pilgrims' certificates) were granted until late 2016, despite the fact that it was the most frequented sea route in the past by pilgrims to Santiago. This situation is now changing as more and more pilgrims are discovering the profound traces of the thousands and thousands of European travellers from the past in their own footsteps.

In December 2016, under certain conditions, the cathedral of Santiago approved the granting of the **compostela**, the pilgrimage certificate, on setting out from A Coruña. This is yet another reason to walk the English Way from the city.

## The compostela from A Coruña/

In 1990 the cathedral of Santiago required pilgrims to walk at least the last hundred kilometres of any of the Jacobean routes ending in the city in order to obtain the compostela, the pilgrimage certificate for the Way.

Nevertheless, in respect for the historical exclusivity of the pilgrimage from the port of A Coruña, in December 2016 the chapter in Santiago approved granting the certificate from A Coruña, 75 km from the final destination. The City Council of A Coruña presented a historical report, and the proposal was supported by associations related to the Way of St James in all five continents, Spain and Galicia, at a meeting held in A Coruña in November the same year.

The condition established for obtaining the certificate, departing from A Coruña and arriving at the cathedral in Santiago, is to complete the previous pilgrimage in the country or region of origin. Special conditions are established for residents of A

Coruña and the surrounding area, who have to visit the Jacobean sites in their city and then make the pilgrimage on foot to Santiago.

In the past, on leaving the Rúa de Santiago, pilgrims would walk around the neighbourhood of A Peixería, parallel to the coastline (now lost). The current official route takes them through some of the representative streets in the city's history. The first ones are Os Anxos, praza de María Pita and Rego de Auga.

At Rúa Rego de Auga, No. 37 was the **MEDIEVAL CHURCH OF DE SAN JORGE (NOW LOS 12 12)**. The Rosalía de Castro Theatre was built on the site in the nineteenth century. Many English pilgrims started their route to Santiago from this church, which was founded in the late thirteenth century and at the time was right next to the sea. They had a good reason for this: since the mid-fourteenth century St George (Jorge) has been the patron saint of England.

The parish church of San Jorge, which had been in a very poor state of repair since the late seventeenth century, was moved in 1837 to the old Jesuit church, in the nearby square of El Marqués de San Martín. Pilgrims who love the architecture of the city of Santiago should visit this church, visible from the most open corner of the Plaza de María Pita. The façade, which dates from



The modern church of San Jorge



the late eighteenth century, recreates the characteristic Baroque of Compostela, evident in monuments like the cathedral front in O Obradoiro. The inside, with its pure lines, is one of the most beautiful churches in A Coruña.

Even closer to number 37 on Rego de Auga is the **CHURCH OF SAN NICOLÁS 13**, rúa de San Nicolás, No. 18. To get there you have to turn right from the pilgrims' direction up the short streets of Bailén and San Nicolás in front of the Rosalía de Castro Theatre - a total of about 70 metres. The front of the church dates from the eighteenth century, although its origins date back to the thirteenth. St Nicholas, the patron saint of travellers, together with St James was the patron saint of certain medieval European ports, such as Hamburg.

In their medieval concept, these two churches in A Peixería were related to pilgrimage. Galician historian Alfredo Vigo states that because of their original location, very close to the port, they complemented the church of Santiago in welcoming pilgrims who had recently disembarked. Furthermore, St Nicholas - as the same historian reminds us - was the "patron saint of sailors, tradesmen and pilgrims", and St George "the holy warrior with numerous devotees among soldiers and knights in general", as well as being, as we have already said, the patron saint of England.

From Rego de Auga pilgrims go along Rúa Real, Cantón Grande and Cantón Pequeño. Moving away from the Old City but in an urban continuum, the Way leaves the municipality of A Coruña in O Portazgo, the name of which comes from the toll that was paid there in the past.

Shortly after O Portazgo the route comes to O Burgo, in the municipality of Culleredo. The town lies on the estuary of the same name, which is really an inland continuation of the estuary of A Coruña.

Protected by the Knights Templar, the old port of O Burgo was the main port where pilgrims arrived in the twelfth century. It was replaced by the port of A Coruña, which was founded in 1208. The splendid church of Santiago de O Burgo (twelfth century) was built, just like the one in A Coruña, thanks to the pilgrims' route.



Above, the church of San Nicolás  
Below, pilgrims in O Burgo



the wait/



Pilgrims came back from Santiago to Coruña on the English Way, just as they had gone there. They were joined by those who had travelled to Santiago overland, and were now on their way to the port in A Coruña to sail for numerous destinations in Europe, yet another unique feature of this route.

Despite the advances in sailing techniques from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, which is when A Coruña was a destination for pilgrims, it was almost impossible to fix an exact day for weighing anchor. Conditions at sea, which had to be good as ships were not so strong yet, and port activity could delay departure by several days.

This happened to most pilgrims. We could mention Jean Tacoen, who in 1512 sailed from his home country, Flanders, for A Coruña. On the way out the wind kept them out of the port of A Coruña, and they could not go on shore until they reached Lisbon. From there he made the pilgrimage to Santiago and then went on to Coruña to go back to his own country. He had to wait in the city for eight days for favourable winds. Ten days after this he was back home in his palace.

180 years later the situation had not changed. Prince Cosme III de Medici went overland to Santiago as a pilgrim, and then came to Coruña to sail for England in March 1696. Due to the bad weather he had to wait for eleven days in the city.

The Italian nobleman spent his time by taking care of business, discovering the city and observing port activity. Meanwhile, Pier María Baldi, the artist who was with him making sketches, made the most of the time to draw a historical panorama of the city, the oldest one still in existence. In some exceptional cases people sailed but were driven back into port. This happened to William Wey in 1456. After various days at sea his ship had to come back to A Coruña because of the bad weather.

These stays in the city, almost always forced, especially when pilgrims were on their way back from Santiago de Compostela, breathed life into the city - mainly in two fields, spiritual and commercial. They inevitably went hand in hand.



the wait:  
the spirit/

An almost essential spiritual visit was to the church of Santa María. Just like the apostle St James, or possibly even more so, the great protectress of pilgrims on the road was Our Lady. Pilgrims expressed their devotion for her on the way to and from Compostela. This is why many of them visited the **COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF SANTA MARÍA DO CAMPO** 14, rúa de Santa María, No. 1, during their stay in the city.

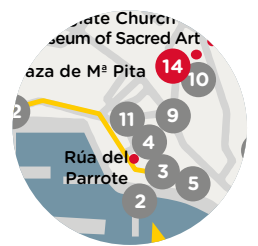
The current building dates from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and there are later extensions and reforms. The latest was in the nineteenth century, which extended the aisle towards the front, and moved the door forwards. The church was originally outside the city walls.

The tympanum of the entrance, which recreates the scene of the Epiphany - the adoration of the infant Jesus by the three wise men in Bethlehem - has a turret on each side. Three horses' heads arise from one of them. The work is rough, but it reproduces almost exactly another one from the lost stone choir in the cathedral of Santiago. Both of them depict the three horses of the three wise men, an allegory of the distance they covered to worship the Child.

The three wise men, considered the first pilgrims in Christianity because of their long journey from somewhere in the East to Bethlehem, are a regular motif in various churches in Santiago, given the relationship of the city with pilgrimage.

The south doorway, on Calle de Santa María, is also Jacobean. The tympanum contains five unshod figures with hoods; the one in the middle is carrying a tau-shaped staff, a characteristic piece in the medieval iconography of the apostle St James. Various writers therefore suggest that this figure depicts the apostle guiding his pilgrims; it could even allude to his preaching in the westernmost lands, as Galicia was thought to be in the Middle Ages. Dolores Barral says that the scene could also

The doorway of the collegiate church of Santa María



The front of the collegiate church of Santa María





be identified with St Anthony, the saint of those with infectious diseases, at the head of some monks of his order. She bases this on the old name of the street the door opens onto.



A side door of Santa María, on Calle Santa María

We should also make mention of the architrave on which the archivolt of the tympanum come to an end. Critics say that it consists of a well-sculpted line of leaves facing inwards and with their nerves visible. However, the way in which these nerves stem from a single point reminds us above all of the grooves in the pilgrims' shell when in a concave position.

The jumbled inside of Santa María, where the light is dim and concentrated, is highly evocative. There is a beautiful embossed silver front on the main altar, dating from the eighteenth century, with an image of the Assumption of the Virgin. There are also certain Jacobean details: St James as a pilgrim, scallop shells etc.

A curious detail is the slight inclination to the left of the apse in the church. It has been interpreted as an analogy of the inclined position of Christ's head when he was dying.

Santa María sheltered pilgrims and the poor, providing them with food and accommodation. Together with the church of Santiago it was the headquarters of the guilds related to maritime trade and activities, which is why it was also known as **Santa María do Mar (St Mary of the Sea)**.

## A collegiate church for foreigners/

In 1441 the Archbishop of Santiago Lope de Mendoza granted Santa María the status of a collegiate church. He justified this because "many foreigners from different parts of the world" came there. He wished for the new status to increase the church's prestige and aspect even further.

The archbishop added that "ship commanders, merchants and sailors in the city and from elsewhere feel such great devotion for the church of Santa María that when their ships come into port they never go to any house, or any other church or monastery, until they have first prayed in Santa María".

These words evidence a concealed rivalry with the church of Santiago. In any case, it would not seem logical that Santa María, in the high part of the city, should receive more visits than the church of the apostle, right next to the port and where the statue was kept that joyful pilgrims embraced on arriving. At the same time, it is also true that seafarers, and also pilgrims, already felt in the Middle Ages a special devotion for Our Lady, considering her to be their guide and protectress on their lengthy sea crossings.



The apse of the collegiate church of Santa María



the wait:  
shopping/

Innkeepers had the greatest interest in Jacobean travellers waiting in the city, as their establishments were thereby kept full; but craftsmen and traders, and even pilgrims themselves, were not far behind.

A significant number of pilgrims, whether alone or as part of a group, brought products with them in their ships, especially much sought after cloth from England and other places, to sell in the city. In this way they made essential money for surviving on land in the best possible conditions. As Elisa Ferreira points out, "they had to pay for meals, accommodation, offerings, pilgrimage certificates ...".



Pilgrims as occasional traders with money also gave rise to a dark side. They were often attacked and robbed, both in the port and in the streets and establishments. Local delinquents took part in this task, as did pirates, who sometimes sailed into the estuary. In 1456 some pirates from Brittany took everything from a ship that had sailed from Dartmouth, the Juliana, which was waiting in port for the return of the pilgrims from Santiago.

Craftsmen and traders' guilds often carried out their transactions in time with the sailing of pilgrims' ships. Craftsmen, a large part of whose production was sold to visiting devotees,





were at the time the most numerous socioeconomic group in the city, followed by the seafarers, for similar reasons.

There were two main purposes in pilgrims' spending money.

One was to buy food and other means for the voyage back home. This included salted fish, especially cod, which constituted an industry in the city.

They also frequented the numerous taverns, where there was no lack of wine, one of the characteristic trading products in the port and always linked to pilgrimage. The importance of these establishments in the local economy was so great that in 1397 the sale of wine was temporarily prohibited in A Peixería in an attempt to put a halt to the depopulation of the Old City.

The second reason was even more decisive, given the spiritual transcendence it enjoyed in the past. This was the purchase of **souvenirs and badges** related to the Jacobean universe, in A Coruña if pilgrims had not already bought them in Santiago.

## For the rest of the journey/

Pilgrims in the past attributed a transcendent, almost sacred value to the symbols of the pilgrimage to Santiago. They bought them in different formats and sizes and with different meanings, before starting their return journey. They purchased them mainly in Santiago, but also in other significant places, such as A Coruña.

They kept these objects with them for the rest of their lives. They certified their visit to the apostle's tomb, they protected them from the devil, the evil eye and sickness, and when their owner died they showed that he was a devout pilgrim on his journey to the Great Beyond. This is why a large number of these pieces - more those made of materials other than gold and silver - have been found in graves in diverse parts of Europe.

There were two main types of souvenir: metal and bone reproductions of the pilgrims' shell and staff, hung on clothes together with the real scallop shells, images of St James the pilgrim, figa charms and rosaries, usually made of jet, which was greatly valued.

Pilgrims always kept some money to buy these emblems. They could not return home without them. As a fifteenth-century document from A Coruña shows, they had - some had more, others less - their "money, gold, silver and other things". The value of this trade for the economy of the city is therefore clear.



Currencies had to be exchanged in many cases for these transactions. This is one of the reasons why Jews from the lands the pilgrims departed from came to the city, especially from England, in the late thirteenth century, and could also be why the British enjoyed closer relations with them. The name of Calle de la Sinagoga (Synagogue Street), very near the collegiate church of Santa María do Campo, conserves their memory.

Today's pilgrims can also buy Jacobean and other souvenirs of A Coruña and Galicia

From the time of its foundation A Coruña had its own mint. The purpose was to boost and promote trade from port activities and pilgrimage. The mint produced mainly copper coins, and gold and silver to a lesser extent. Its last known location was somewhere near the current monastery of Santo Domingo. Significantly enough, the hallmark of coins minted in A Coruña was a scallop shell, as can be seen on the back of coins from the fifteenth century.

Specialisation from demand created a sector for manufacturing Jacobean souvenirs - scallop shells, figures of St James the pilgrim etc. - carved in jet. This shiny black lignite stone, believed to contain an ancestral force to protect bearers from evil, was especially appreciated by pilgrims. It became a unique element in Jacobean pilgrimage.

The jet industry in A Coruña was so successful that in 1488 manufacturers in Santiago lodged a protest with the authorities to have it closed down - the appeal was unsuccessful. They alleged that it was unfair competition, given the supposedly inferior quality of jet work in A Coruña.







Shopping and leisure in A Coruña

Jet worked in A Coruña came mainly from Portugal, while that in Santiago was from mines in what is now the self-governing region of Asturias. No more than local traces of this craft remain today.

An active silversmithing sector also developed under the influence of the school in Compostela, the largest in Galicia. Just like in Santiago, a large part of the production went to pilgrims.

Surviving documentation confirms that local craftsmen produced a variety of objects with gold, silver and other metals: pilgrims' shells and gourds, cups and rings specifically decorated with scallop shells, images of St James the apostle, etc.

Sales points were concentrated around the port and in the Old City and A Peixería, especially the latter. It was customary to set them up in front of the busiest churches, such as San Jorge, Santa María and Santiago. Markets and shops were subject to the approval of the City Council, which boasted a broad representation of the most thriving socioeconomic sectors.

Wendy Childs and Elisa Ferreira conclude that the essential port traffic in A Coruña in the Middle Ages was related to pilgrimage, and this in turn boosted trade in the city - heritage from the past that endows the present with greater meaning.

Please forgive us if we are moved by emotion.

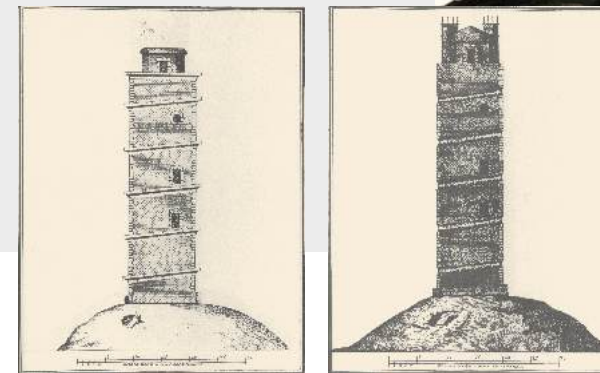


discovering more:  
museums/

Various different museums in A Coruña hold material and immaterial elements, mentioned in this guidebook, which form part of the local Jacobean history and culture.

**The Tower of Hercules**  
Avenida Navarra, s/n

The old Roman lighthouse was the first thing that travellers by sea caught sight of. The best views to observe the historical entry into the bay of A Coruña are from the Tower and its surroundings. The interpretation centre provides information about sailing in ancient times.

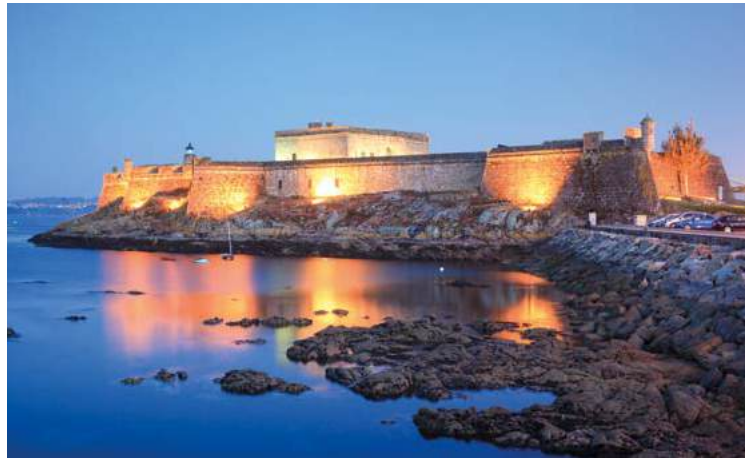


The Tower of Hercules and two sketches of the structure of the lighthouse that pilgrims saw in the past



**The History and Archaeology Museum in the Castle of San Antón**

Paseo Alcalde Francisco Vázquez, 2



In what was the inner ward of the old castle of San Antón is a wide range of medieval stone objects related to pilgrimage in the city. Most of them come from the medieval monasteries of San Francisco and Santo Domingo.

We could highlight the fifteenth-century relief of a medieval pilgrim from the now lost church of Santo Domingo or Santo Tomás.

We should not forget, among the objects already mentioned,



the granite tombstones of monks from the old monastery of San Francisco, showing scallop shells. This could be due to pilgrims who remained in the monastery as monks, or according to Dolores Barral, possibly to the deeply-rooted medieval idea that life on earth was a pilgrimage to eternal life.

Also of great interest are the tombstones from brotherhoods, merchants and fishermen related to the monastery of San Francisco and activities linked to pilgrimage, and the tympanum showing the Adoration of the Magi in the monastery of Santo Domingo, dating from the fourteenth century. Another object related to the Jacobean world in A Coruña was the baptismal font from the old hospital of San Andrés, on which a scallop shell can still be made out.

In these photographs, a relief showing a medieval pilgrim, a tombstone with a pilgrim's shell, and the seventeenth-century coat of arms of A Coruña. Archaeology Museum of San Antón



**The Museum of Sacred Art of the Collegiate Church**

Rúa Porta de Aires, 23



The chest - in the foreground - and the pyx donated by Mariana of Neuburg

This museum holds the gold and silverwork of the collegiate church of Santa María do Campo, dating from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries.

The two most significant pieces in the museum are related to pilgrimage - the Eucharist chest and silver pyx donated to the city of A Coruña by the queen consort of Spain of German origin Mariana of Neuburg. She wished to express her gratitude for the welcome the city afforded her when in 1690 she came on her way to Santiago, and the gratitude of the Court, after she married King Charles II. The two pieces were beautifully made by the German Johann Sebastian Mylius. The chest dates from 1691 and the pyx from 1695.

The museum also exhibits several silver scallop shells from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

**María Pita House Museum**

Rúa Ferrerías, 28

Very close to the Sacred Art Museum is the converted house museum of María Pita, a city heroine. Pita encouraged people in the city to defend themselves against the naval attack by the English under Sir Francis Drake in 1589.

It shows what the city was like in the year that symbolises the end of its greatness as a port for pilgrims, as the English definitively stopped coming. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Jacobean travellers still came, mainly from France, Ireland, Germany and Italy, but less frequently and in much lower numbers.



The House Museum of María Pita



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## Where to have your pilgrim credentials stamped in A Coruña:

- 1\_ Municipal Tourism Office in the Plaza de María Pita
- 2\_ Municipal Tourism Office at the Tower of Hercules
- 3\_ Opposite the church of Santiago, on Travesía Tabernas



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Photographs of unidentified pilgrims in this guide show people walking the English Way from A Coruña to Santiago.

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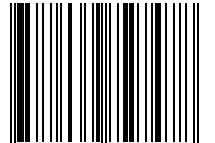


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