

Laurie Reynolds – Revised draft as of 12 Dec. 2013



The Confraternity of St James has published Guides to the Caminho Português in two sections. A Guide to the route from Porto – Santiago is also available. The Guides are available in printed form and also to download from the CSJ Website: <http://www.csj.org.uk/guides-online.htm> These Guides can only be kept up to date for future pilgrims if users send their comments to the authors of the Guides. Their e mail addresses are listed in the Guide.

## Introduction to the Caminho Português from Lisbon to Porto

Unlike the other online CSJ guides, this one is limited to providing the nuts and bolts information about walking from Lisbon to Porto. If you are planning to undertake this walk, I highly urge you to consult the CSJ's online guide for the Porto-Santiago segment for general historical and practical information about the Caminho Português.

I walked from Lisbon to Porto in Spring 2009, relying on the yellow arrows and on the Spanish language guide available online from the Gallego Amigos Association, available at:

<http://www.amigosdelcamino.com/attachments/article/143/Caminho%20central%20Portugues.pdf>

For the most part it was smooth sailing, and the arrows were clear. There are inevitably some problem spots, but I have incorporated all comments from recent pilgrims on those places. We rely on the comments of future pilgrims to keep these things up to date.

In May, 2010, the Via Lusitana was formed. This was a transformative event for the Caminho Português. The Via Lusitana, based in Lisbon, is a group of Camino advocates. They have undertaken the responsibility of waymarking from Lisbon to Porto; they have regular events along the Caminho to promote knowledge of the route; they have been working with municipalities to get albergues up and running; they are working to find alternatives to dangerous and/or confusing spots; and they provide a SOS Peregrino phone number. If you are lost or in

doubt, you can call this number any day, any time, and you can receive assistance in English, German, French, or Spanish. From within Portugal, the number is 915 595 213. Their website, [www.vialusitana.org](http://www.vialusitana.org) has the most up to date listing of accommodations on the Caminho Português.

For some visual information, I have posted my pictures on the web:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/laurie.reynolds/CaminoPortuguesFromLisbon?authkey=F7Dxi pep3Vo#>

This pamphlet has already benefitted from the updates provided by Robert Gunn (summer 2009) and Sharron Warren (September 2009). Kat and Don Fitzpatrick, 2013 pilgrims, went well above and beyond my expectations with their outstanding and helpful comments. I urge others who use this totally non-professional guide to contact me with new information and changes in the route. There is a fair amount of road construction along the way, which suggests that some re-routing will occur as a result. Please send me your updates, and I will input all changes and comments as quickly as I can.

Bom Caminho to you all.

Laurie Reynolds

[laurie.reynolds@gmail.com](mailto:laurie.reynolds@gmail.com)

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**Information before starting out**

## **General Description of the Caminho**

From Lisbon to Porto on the Caminho is approximately 380 kilometers. Devoting two weeks to the stretch averages out to about 25 km a day. Some days of 30+ km are inevitable, though, unless you are willing to do creative things like taxi out and back to rural points or small hamlets in between towns. It's unlikely that you will be able to use public transportation to help you get to and from intermediate points between towns. Buses are very infrequent, and the train stops tend to mimic the suggested starting and ending points along the Caminho, that is, generally in major towns and cities.

In this guide, I give kilometer distances between towns, but please note that these distances are totally approximate. They are based on my sense of distance (which is admittedly not expert) as well as on distances given in the online guide produced by the Galician Association of the Camino, which is referenced later.

There is a lot of road walking on this Caminho. My estimate would be that it's at least 75% on asphalt. Most of that is either

through industrial parks, on quiet rural roads, or on residential streets. Very little is on busy roads, though there are a few stretches on national highways and other major thoroughfares.

The good news, however, is that the shoulder on those busy parts is usually quite wide. Some pilgrims report that truck traffic can be quite heavy, depending on day and time of day, and pilgrims should be very careful when walking alongside the national highways.

Extensive walking on hard surfaces puts a lot of pressure on your muscular and skeletal systems. Icing shins (or any sore part of your foot) every night is a good idea, even as prevention. Soft soled shoes add protection against abuse of the foot.

This Caminho has very little elevation gain. Depending on your perspective, this is either a plus or a minus.

Place names in Portugal can be confusing. That's because many small hamlets both have their own name and are part of a larger "município." The município is a municipal territory, but in rural areas it is likely to extend to include the major city (after which the município will be named) as well as a number of rural hamlets. The município is then further subdivided into "freguesias" (neighborhoods/parishes). In large cities, the freguesias will be sections of the city, while in rural areas, the freguesia will be an entire hamlet outside of the main municipality.

The route from Lisbon to Porto passes through a number of very nice towns (I especially liked Vila Franca, Golegã, Tomar and Oliveira de Azemeis), some terrific Roman ruins (Rabaçal and Conímbriga) and the beautiful medieval university city of Coimbra. Though this Caminho goes through rural Portugal, it is most usually through rural developments in Portugal. There are very few sections that qualify as "away from civilization," or "out in nature," except perhaps for several stretches through eucalyptus forests.

## **The Credencial**

Credenciales are available in Lisbon at the Cathedral. You may also buy one at the Igreja dos Mártires, very close to the Chiado metro stop. The charge is 2€ per credencial. You must have a passport or other government-issued ID to buy one. The first arrow is to the left of the main door of the cathedral, close to the ground.

Because the Caminho to Santiago is not well known in Portugal, at least south of Porto, you have to be creative in finding stamps.

In Portuguese the word for stamp is “carimbo” from the verb “carimbar” (to stamp). Some possibilities: Post offices in small towns, Junta da Freguesia (small sub-municipal district offices), Câmara Municipal (main municipal building), and train stations. I also got carimbos in some unusual places – museums, sailing associations, and even a pharmacy or two. If you’re in a town with a tourism office, though they don’t usually have carimbos, they are likely to be aware of the Caminho and can tell you where to get a carimbo for your credencial. All private accommodations have their own carimbo as well.

## **Accommodation**

Accommodations on the Caminho south of Porto are changing rapidly. There are now pilgrim albergues in Santarem, Golegã, São Caetano, Alvaiazere, Alvorge, and Sernadelo. In 2009, none of these places were open.

Several towns have hostals that offer accommodation to pilgrims at rates about the same as the albergues – ie €12-€15, and all seem to be targeting the pilgrim market. See the accommodation description for the towns of Tomar, Rabaçal, Coimbra and Albergaria-a-Velha, all of which have very good prices for pilgrims.

The Bombeiros Voluntarios (Volunteer Firefighters) in many towns have a room where they will let pilgrims sleep. May or may not have beds/mattresses, but they let you shower. They ask for a donation. It seems that as the pilgrim traffic increases, though, the numbers of Bombeiros who accept pilgrims are decreasing. As of November, 2013, the best information is that the following towns still accept pilgrims in the Bombeiros Voluntarios: Alhandra, Tomar, Alvaiazere, Ansião, Mealhada, Oliveira de Azemeis, Sao Joao da Madeira, and Lourosa.

Private accommodations are relatively inexpensive. The equivalent of the Spanish pensión is called a “residencial” or “pensão” in Portuguese. Always show your credencial; some places give nice pilgrim discounts.

For the most up to date information on accommodations, check the Via Lusitana website:

[http://www.vialusitana.org/en/albergues\\_eng/](http://www.vialusitana.org/en/albergues_eng/) Note that they do not list private accommodations, unless there is no alternative in the town, which means that many small private places are not on their list.

## **Planning the Stages.**

Because of accommodation availability or lack thereof, the obvious stages are the following:

Day 1 – Lisbon to Vila Franca de Xira (37 km) (to break this up into two days, see suggestions below)

Day 2 – Vila Franca - Azambuja (20 km)

Day 3 – Azambuja - Santarém (32 km)

Day 4 – Santarém - Golegã (30.5 km)

Day 5 – Golegã - Tomar (22 km)

Day 6 – Tomar - Alvaiazere (32 km)

Day 7 – Alvaiazere - Rabaçal (33 km)

Day 8 – Rabaçal - Coimbra (32 km) (for both rest and an opportunity to visit the Roman ruins and museum at Conimbriga, break this into two days, Rabaçal - Conimbriga (11 km) and

Conimbriga - Coimbra (21 km)

Day 9 – Coimbra - Mealhada (26 km)

Day 10 – Mealhada - Agueda (31 km)

Day 11 – Agueda - Albergaria a Velha (19.5 km)

Day 12 – Albergaria a Velha - São João da Madeira (29 km)

Day 13 – São João da Madeira - Porto (35 km)

I think there are several options for the first day out of Lisbon:

1. Walk to Parque das Nações (about 8 km), stopping along the way at the Tile Museum (it's a "must see" in my opinion and it's right on the Caminho in Lisbon). When you get to the Parque das Nações there are lots of things to enjoy. This large multi-use area is on the river, and it's a popular hangout for young and old. The aquarium is quite nice, and there are also several museums oriented more towards kids. But just walking along the river, sitting in a café, etc., is a very pleasant way to spend a few hours. That would give you an 8 km day, so you'd have plenty of time to take in the sights.

Then take the metro back into the center of Lisbon and the next day take the metro back out to start from the Vasco da Gama tower.

If money is no object, there are several expensive hotels at the Parque das Nações - Tryp Oriente:

<http://pt.solmelia.com/hoteis/portugal/lisboa/tryp-oriente/home.htm>; Tivoli Oriente:

[http://www.tivolihotels.com/hotels-portugal/destination/lisbon/hotel\\_oriente/list.aspx](http://www.tivolihotels.com/hotels-portugal/destination/lisbon/hotel_oriente/list.aspx). Rooms at

these hotels range from 80€ and upwards. For the budget conscious, there is also a youth hostel:

[http://juventude.gov.pt/Portal/Lazer/en/PParque\\_das\\_Nacoes.htm](http://juventude.gov.pt/Portal/Lazer/en/PParque_das_Nacoes.htm) with rooms ranging from 13 to 38 euros, depending on

the number of beds in the room and toilet facilities. The hostel is about a ten minute walk to the central part of the Parque das Nações.

2. Walk from Lisbon to Sacavém, which is still on the river and 3 km beyond the Parque das Nações. That would be an 11 km day, and at that point you can hop on a commuter train back to downtown Lisbon. Starting out at Sacavém the next day would give you a very doable 26 km day to Vila Franca de Xira.

3. Walk 32 km from the cathedral and spend the night in Alhandra, the first place out of Lisbon (and directly on the Caminho) with a place to stay. The only lodging option, however, is a residencial that gets bad reviews or the Bombeiros Voluntarios (which do offer a mattress, not just the floor). Decent private accommodation on the Caminho is 3-4 km further from Alhandra, in Vila Franca de Xira, which would be a pretty hefty first day.

4. Walk 29 km from Lisbon to Verdelha a Baixa (0.8 km off route) with accommodations and restaurants. Directions for this detour are given further on in this document.

The commuter rail system runs from Lisbon to Azambuja.

There are a number of stations right on the Caminho itself – Alverca, Alhandra, Vila Franca de Xira, Castanheira do Ribatejo, and Azambuja. Azambuja is about 35 minutes by train, trains run frequently and cost less than 2€ for a one way trip. There are also stations in Sacavém and Vila Nova da Rainha, but these stations are not directly on the Caminho.

I have posted pictures from the Caminho between Lisbon and Porto:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/laurie.reynolds/CaminoPortuguesFromLisbon?authkey=F7Dxi pep3Vo#>



## Walking the route

**\*\*\* Please note these abbreviations: L(left); R(right); KSO (keep straight on)**

## Lisbon

There are several youth hostels in Lisbon; check [www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com). Recommended spots include Lisbon: Pousada da Juventude, Rúa Andrade Corvo, 46; Pousada da Juventude, Rúa de Moscavide, 47.

Arrows in Lisbon start at the Sé (the Cathedral). In this initial part, many arrows are close to the ground. The well marked in-city route takes you through the Alfama (old Moorish quarter), past the Tile Museum (definitely worth a visit), through the old port, and out to the new river expo center – Lisbon's casino, aquarium, science museum, etc. are all at the Expo site.

Facing the Cathedral, the arrow is on the bottom right near the door. The arrows take you through Lisbon on the following streets and plazas: Cruzes da Sé, São João da Praça, Largo de São Rafael, Rúa de São Pedro, and Largo de Chafariz de Dentro. From there go up on the Rúa dos Remedios, Rúa do Paraíso, and arrive at the Campo de Santa Clara, where there is a junk and flea market on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Continue on the Rúa do Mirante, Rúa Diogo Couto, Rúa Cruzes de Santa Apolónia, and the Rúa de Santa Apolónia (this is Lisbon's major downtown train station). From there, L on the Calçada da Cruz da Pedra, R on Rúa Madre de Deus, pass the old convent (today the Tile Museum), onto the Rúa de Xabregas, Calçada de D. Gastão, Rúa do Grilo, Rúa do Beato y Rúa do Açúcar. Cross the busy Avenue Infante Don Enrique and continue on the Rúa Vale Formoso de Baixo until entering the Parque das Nações. Turn onto Av. Fernando Pessoa and later merge with Alameda de Oceanos. Continue down to the pavilion and head towards the river on Rossio de Olivais. You can now walk around wherever you like, with the ultimate object being to get to the large Vasco da Gama tower on the far end of the park on the Tejo River.

**Parque das Nações** (8 km). This is the park where Lisbon's Expo '98 was held. The area is also generally known as Oriente, which refers to the name of the train and metro station, the Estação do Oriente, which is right next to the park. The station was designed by Santiago Calatrava and is particularly pretty lit up at night.

There are several fancy hotels here. There is also a Youth Hostel,

Pousada de Juventude Parque das Nacoes, Rua de Moscavide, Lt 47-101. Tel: 219-920-890.

Leave the park on the river path, you will go by the Vasco da Gama tower on the river. For the next few kms, it's a pleasant river path.



Vasco da Gama Tower on the Tejo at Parque das Nações

At **Sacavém** (3 km), the route turns inland and goes along an old canal. The area seems to be one of Lisbon's choice illegal dumping places. You pass some old estates in ruins, and walk through some industrial park corridors. It is basically an ugly walk all the way to Alhandra. But very well marked.

**Alpiarte** (8 km). Small hamlet with a bar or two.

At 0.9 km after Alpiarte, a Fatima marker directs you to the right, off the paved road on to a rural track, which follows the fields until you emerge again on to the road. Turn right here at arrows for 200m towards the tunnel leading to Povoia de Santa Iria. Just before the entrance to the tunnel (do NOT go through the tunnel), leave the paved road L on to a footpath at the Fatima marker and arrows. Follow this waymarked footpath parallel to the A-1 and emerge again on to a paved road (Rua dos Canicos). Turn right here at the Fatima marker to go under the A-1 and descend the 1km to Povoia de Santa Iria and the large roundabout. Arrows are faint or non-existent here. Turn right at the roundabout on the N-10 and KSO for 100m keeping the railway on your left (there are arrows on the back of road signs but difficult to see) until you see the marker arrows at the entrance to the road bridge crossing over to the east side of the railway. Cross over the railway here.

Once you are over the tracks, you'll walk close to the river, on a well marked off-road path, into Alverca (3 km). Carimbo available in Alverca at the Air Museum right next to the train station.



## Detour to Verdelha.

To take the 0.8 km detour to spend the night in Verdelha de Baixo, follow these directions. Note that you should not go all the way into Alverca, the detour is a few hundred meters before entering that town. After crossing the railway line into the industrial area of Povoá de Santa Iria, in just under 3 km take the bridge back over to the west side of the railway line again and enter Verdelha de Baixo. Turn left at the first roundabout, go down the busy road and cross over at the next roundabout onto the street named Estrada de Alfarrobeira. Here there are a variety of accommodations and restaurants serving mainly the workers from the nearby industrial estate.

Recommended accommodation at Alojamentos, Particulares, Estrada do Alfarrobeira – 10, Tel 219580475. (20€. single pilgrim rate). Very good food available at the nearest restaurant, usually busy with local workers. Service quick and friendly. A male pilgrim noted that it may intimidate a single female.

To return to the Caminho the next morning, retrace your steps over to the east side of the railway line and you will again be on the Caminho paralleling the railroad, which takes you into Alverca.

**Alverca** (3 km from Alpiarte) has cafes and shops, but no accommodation. To leave Alverca, enter the train station (on the museum side) and cross over the railroad on the elevated walkway. You will be on the west side, and the arrows begin as you exit the station building. Following arrows and Fatima markers, which are not always easy to see, go past the football/soccer field to emerge onto the national highway.

The route from Alverca to **Alhandra** (5 km) is on the side of the national highway. Lots of marking and wide shoulders. In Alhandra, there is one residencial, but a resident told me it was not very nice. Alhandra has a variety of shops, bars, and restaurants.

In Alhandra, the arrows take you out of town to continue on the national highway. But there is a nice alternative. In October 2008, a river path opened between Alhandra and Vila Franca de Xira. This river walk is paved, used heavily by old and young alike. Carimbo available in the Associação de Vela (Sailing Association) right at the beginning of the walk.

As you are coming to the end of the river walk in **Vila Franca de Xira** (4 km), you have two different ways to reconnect with the arrows. If you don't want to stop in town, you can continue to hug the river, past the docks, and through the municipal gardens, where you will see the arrows. If you want to go into town, you should take the pedestrian bridge over the train tracks right before the bull ring.

You will see the yellow arrows at the bull ring. Follow them to go into the center and then out again to the municipal gardens along the river. You can get a carimbo at the main municipal building, located on the main square across from the tourist office.

Accommodations in Vila Franca de Xira – Leziria Parque Hotel (67 rooms), [www.leziriaparquehotel.pt](http://www.leziriaparquehotel.pt); Residencial Flora, <http://flora.com.sapo.pt>, Rua Noel Perdigao, 12, tel.: 263 271 272 (20 rooms); Casa de Hóspedes Ribatejana) Rua da Praia, 2-A (next to train station), tel. 263 272 992; Hospedaria Maioral, Travessa do Terreirinho, no. 2, tel: 263 275 370. Lots of restaurants, shops, cafes.



Main Square in Vila Franca de Xira

Leaving Vila Franca, walk through the municipal gardens along the river. When you exit, turn R, then take a quick L. This will

take you out of town, and you then will have to walk on the side of the N-1 (national highway, not too busy) in the direction of Carregado. This is all extremely well marked, and at the Lidl store, turn R and enter an industrial park that goes on for kms and kms. The only good thing is that there's not much traffic.

I was surprised to see a fair number of restaurants scattered through the industrial park, but it makes sense since truck drivers and workers have to eat too!

In **Vila Nova da Rainha** (19 km from Vila Franca) the route takes you through the town and there are bars and restaurants. Vila Nova da Rainha to Azambuja is 5 more km, all on highway. Once you pass under the superhighway (A-10) the scenery gets a little less industrial, but soon you are back on the N-1 all the way into Azambuja. It is not pleasant, but not dangerous, the shoulders are extremely wide.

**Azambuja** is a major town with lots of commerce. It has several options for spending the night in private accommodations: Residencial Flor da Primavera, Rúa Conselheiro Arouca, 21 (Tel. 263-403-263). (Recommended in June 2009, 20€). Restaurant O Forno below the residencial was basic but very good. Carimbo is available at the Residencial and at the Junta da Freguesia. Free internet in the Espaço Internet, run by the municipality on the second floor of the small "centro comercial" in the center of town.

Leave Azambuja by crossing over the RR tracks at the train station. You are now on the east side of the station, and immediately out of the urban area and on a pleasant paved road.

There are picnic tables in a shaded area a few hundred meters away from the train station. When the road crosses over a canal, a few km on, get on the dirt path that goes alongside the canal.

There is a big round concrete pole-like marker, in the size of a Roman mile marker, to indicate that you will be walking on bits of the Roman road.

The path zigs and zags through farm areas and comes to a paved road with a signpost that indicates Valada to your left (and back to Azambuja on your right). Stay on that paved road all the way into Valada (it keeps on zig-zagging to get you around several big

farms/ranches). On the paved road, just to check your bearings, you should pass the entrance to the Quinta do Alqueidão. The road takes a sharp left turn soon after the entrance to the quinta and brings you into Reguengo.

**Reguengo** (8 km). Café Campino on main street. The top of the dyke for the Tejo River is a broad flat path (it's a cemented surface in some parts, and there are benches all along the way) that you will stay on all the way into the town of **Porto Mogue** and beyond. Depending on the time of year, the top of the dyke may be overgrown, but you can always walk on the road below, which parallels the dyke the entire way.

**Valada** (2 km). Small grocery store, various cafés. Carimbo at the Post Office. Stay along the dyke through Porto Mogue (3km), where you pass underneath the RR bridge that crosses over the Tejo. Café on the L before the bridge, and picnic tables on the R shortly after the bridge. No facilities for the next 9 km until Omnias. The Caminho leaves the paved road and takes a wide dirt road used by farm vehicles for almost all of those 9 km. It passes primarily vineyards and horse farms. When you reach a paved road, turn left and head under the modern bridge (Puente Salgueiro Maia). Stay on the road that hugs the Santarém Aerodrome and continue into the small town of Omnias.

**Omnias** (12 km from Valada). Restaurante O Forcado. At the restaurant turn L, go under the RR tracks and KSO up the Calçada da Junqueira into the town of Santarém.

**Santarém** (2 km). At the top of the hill coming into town, go R onto the Rúa Pedro de Santarém, KSO into a big traffic circle. The old town is off to your right at this circle. You can access it from many points along the Rúa Antonio dos Santos, which comes into the circle with Rúa Pedro de Santarém. Carimbo in the church office next door to the Igreja Matriz (main church).

In 2013, an albergue opened in Santarém. It gets consistently excellent reviews. Santarém Hostel, Rua Eng. António Antunes Júnior, 26 (to the left of the old fire station).

<http://santaremhostel.blogspot.com/> . The owner, Mario, speaks excellent English. Excellent small restaurant, “O Chefe”, near the albergue. Private lodging in the city ranges from a big 4-star Santarém Hotel, Av. Madre Andaluz, the 3-star Hotel Residencial Alfageme, Av. Bernardo Santareno, 38, tel. 243 377 240, <http://www.hotelalfageme.com/>, to several smaller residenciales: Residencial Beirante, R. Alexandre Herculano, 3/5, tel. 243 322 547, [www.residencialbeirante.com](http://www.residencialbeirante.com); Residencial Vitoria, Rúa Segundo Visconde de Santarém 19, tel. 243 309 130. There is also the quite fancy Manor House Hotel, Casa da Alcacova: <http://www.alcacova.com/ingles/ingles.html>. It is located very

near the Santiago Gate on the Caminho. There is also reported to be very cheap accommodation directly across from the train station, located in Ribeira de Santarém, down below by the river.

The remains of the Moorish castle form the perimeter of a pretty municipal park and garden, which is called the Porta do Sol.

Santarém also has several gothic churches, but I think its self-proclaimed status as Portugal's "Gothic Capital" is a bit of an overstatement.

To leave Santarém, find your way to the gardens at the Porta do Sol, which are inside the castle ramparts. In the square that is directly in front of the gardens, the Porta de Santiago (Gate of Santiago) leads you out of the town and down a dirt path that descends and goes around the castle walls. Arrows are in need of painting, so pay attention.

The path leads to a very wide paved road that seems to be connected with the ramparts or the engineering holding up the promontory that the castle is built on. This road descends gradually, taking you to the outskirts of Ribeira de Santarém.

Swing around the yellow and white church, KSO to the RR tracks, and stay as close to the tracks as you can till the Rúa Alfageme de Santarém, which is the center of Ribeira de Santarém. Then turn R and go over the tracks.

**Ribeira de Santarém** (2 km). Bars, cafes, and stores. This small "suburb" of Santarém is on the river level. Santarém's train station is here, but it is not directly on the Caminho. I was told that there is cheap accommodation near the train station, but I have not seen it. Once over the tracks in Ribeira de Santarém, turn L and walk straight towards the XIVth century Alcorce bridge. Cross it, and turn R onto a paved road, then L off the road a few hundred meters along, at a rehabilitated white building (there may be no arrow here, so be careful). About 50 meters onto path, quick R.

You are now paralleling the paved road on which you left Ribeira de Santarém. After about 2 ½ km, you will be back on the paved road, cross it and take a quick R onto the dirt road again. You will pass a few unmarked intersections, always KSO. At a T intersection, turn L and very soon you are on the paved road again, turn R into Vale de Figueira.

**Vale de Figueira** (7 km). Enter the town on the Rúa Campo do Rossio, leading into Alvitejo, Baro de Almerim, and you will reach the church in the main square. There is a Junta de Frequesia office here for a carimbo. It also has a welcome water cooler with very cold water. Bars, cafes, and restaurant. KSO through the town, and at the mini-mercado (small food shop) with bar attached, Café of Sibuco, turn R onto Rúa do Sobral.

Shortly after leaving Vale de Figueira, still on Rúa do Sobral, at a Y intersection, bear L, then R at a T-junction. There are timbering operations here. The best advice is to follow the main path. You will come to several Y junctions where secondary forest paths have been created. Ignore them. It is generally quite obvious which is the main path. The pictures below give a good illustration:



You will be going slightly downhill through this section. Pass a large abandoned building on your right side, and you are at another T-junction.

At this point, I had the misfortune of meeting a very helpful, earnest man who insisted that I could not turn right here, even though the left turn option had a yellow X (the Caminho's way of saying "not this way"). Unfortunately I saw no arrow pointing to the R either. He insisted that I take that left, 500 m or so to a paved road, and then turn right to go into Azinhaga. Since I couldn't understand him completely and didn't know whether there was some problem on the Caminho ahead, I decided to follow his advice. I took the left and ignored the yellow X. I continued on the gravel road to the paved road, and then turned R.

This way took me through a town not on the Caminho, called Pombalinho (lots of commerce), and about 5 km further on, staying on the highway, I reached Azinhaga, where I found the arrows again.

Pilgrims from fall 2013 told me that the right turn is correct. The path goes through corn fields and is freshly marked so easy to follow. It is a really nice walk which could be a bit boggy in wet weather. They sent in the following instructions: About two hours (say 8 km) after leaving the deserted house you will come to an intersection with several signs and a map. There are two yellow signs, one pointing to the left saying “Estrada Real (Brôa) 4.8 km”, and the other pointing to the right saying “5.4 km (Brôa) Pombalinho e Azinhaga”. The map is vague and doesn’t really support the signboards. We went left and enjoyed a lovely, mostly rural walk. The walk from the signed intersection is about 5 km to the Quinta de Brôa, then another 5.5 km along the N-365 to

Golega. This last section was tough walking as there was a lot of high speed traffic and little or no shoulder. This alternative bypasses Pombalinho and Azinhaga.

The yellow signboard suggests that the right hand route will take you through both Pombalinho and Azinhaga.



As of spring, 2013, there had been extensive remarking between Santarém and Golega. But there is municipal disagreement and confusion that has made things complicated for pilgrims. Arrows have been placed to take pilgrims on a route that does not pass through Azinhaga, even though that is the traditional caminho route. My advice would be to call the SOS pilgrim number for help. They know this segment extremely well and can help you navigate. Hopefully, the route will be clear by 2014.

But if you do find yourself on the road between Pombalinho and Azinhaga, there is a gas station with an attached restaurant called O Bacalhau. Beds are available in the back in an unattached

building. A pilgrim in 2012 found it clean and a good place to stay.

**Azinhaga** (12 km). Birthplace of Jose Saramago, Nobel prizewinner. There's a plaque outside his modest home. The town has bars, restaurants, stores, a pharmacy, and rural tourism Casa da Azinhaga (rooms are 50 euros):

[http://www.casarioribatejano.com/index.asp?](http://www.casarioribatejano.com/index.asp?info=casas&id=11&cont=apresentacao)

[info=casas&id=11&cont=apresentacao](http://www.casarioribatejano.com/index.asp?info=casas&id=11&cont=apresentacao) (tel. 249 957 162). The Rúa de Misericordia takes you past the old hospital and pilgrim's albergue (XVI-XVII century), the town church. KSO out of town.

Paved road all the way to Golegã. There is a very short off-road section right before entering Broa, take L onto dirt road, go past the Quinta da Broa (a very pretty large ranch), cross the bridge over the Almonda River and return to the paved road. Stay on this road till Golegã. There may be a lot of busy and speedy traffic along the highway into Golegã.



Birthplace of Nobel Laureate Jose Saramago in Azinhaga

**Golegã** (8 km). As you enter Golegã, there are picnic tables on your right. Once past the tables, a R turn takes you to the square of the Immaculate Conception (Largo da Imaculada Conceição), with the manueline church of Our Lady from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It has beautiful blue and white tiled walls inside. KSO past a bullfighter statue, cross the square, and you are on the Rúa D. Afonso Henriques, which will lead you out of Golegã.

In Golegã, there are plenty of shops, cafes and restaurants.

Albergue Solo Duro (Casa da Tia Guida) (10 beds in albergue plus two double rooms). Spotless, highly recommended, very nice people. 10 euros with breakfast. Rua Francisco Sousa Terré, 1.

Tel: 249 976 802; 935 640 550; 935 640 551. You may also be able to locate Kirsten, a German lady who rents one room to pilgrims. Two fancy hotels, the Golegã Sporthotel and the Hotel Lusitano, Rúa Gil Vicente, 4, <http://www.hotellusitano.com/> (tel. 249 979 170). Quinta da Miranda, a 4 room B&B/residencial, tel. 249 957 115. Also, the campgrounds have rooms/apts. available – the woman in the tourist office said they were nice. Though I didn't have a chance to visit it, I did take a rest in the shady

gardens outside the very pretty late 19<sup>th</sup> century home, turned museum, of Carlos Revas. It's right next to the Junta da Freguesia, where you can get a carimbo. Golegã is the center of Portugal's horse breeding area and there are many horse shows here throughout the year. Its statues also explains the horse motif on many street signs and stores. Café Central in the main square has excellent food and a nice outdoor terrace for al fresco dining.

Leave Golegã on the Rua D. Afonso Henriques, which leaves from the praça where the church is, behind the bullfighter statue. KSO till the end of town, where you will see a small monument to Manuel Barreto (bullfighter). Cross the highway and KSO onto a dirt/gravel road. After about 1 km, the road makes a hard right turn and leads onto paved road straight ahead about 50 m. L onto road, pass Casal Branco ranch on L. Cross EM23 (name of paved road) and KSO. Sign says you are entering Mala. L at Y junction, and you stay on the paved road and will pass the Quinta do Matinho. Turn R at stop sign. KSO through hamlet of São Caetano (no commerce). Albergue de Alexandre Hachmeister (9 beds); 15 euros with breakfast. Tel: 917 063 823. Email address is [alexander.hachmeister@element.pt](mailto:alexander.hachmeister@element.pt). This albergue is the only house of any size in the hamlet, and it is in front of the primary school, directly on the Caminho (pilgrims report wonderful, long, wine-filled dinners sitting around the table with Alexandre and his wife; English and German spoken).

KSO to Quinta Cardiga.



Abandoned palace at Cardiga

**Quinta Cardiga** (3 km) is a very large former royal palace, estate, and castle. Dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it is now totally abandoned. Fun to walk around, lots of shade, on the river, a nice rest spot. I found some very pretty tiles on walls around the estate. There are rumors and hopes that a pousada (historic hotel similar to the paradores in Spain) will be built on the site, but I saw no evidence of that. The total complex is abandoned and in different stages of decay, but it is a very interesting place to spend some time poking around.



Cross bridge leaving Quinta da Cardiga, turn L onto dirt road.

KSO and enter Vila Nova Barquinha (2 km). Given its apparent size, I assume there is ample commerce here if you want to go into town, which appears to be quite close.

KSO (street changes names from Pedregosa, to Cardiga, and then to Salgueiro Maia. Cross the highway and go over the RR tracks at the pedestrian crossing. L after tracks, KSO. Cross the roundabout (Junta da Freguesia for Moita Norte on left as you enter roundabout – carimbo available). KSO on street whose name changes from Ribeiro Maia to Escola Nova. The arrows take you through a residential neighborhood and you do not enter the town of Vila Nova Barquinha.

KSO and enter town of **Atalaia** on Rúa D. Afonso Henriques (2 km). Café Monteiro before stop sign, fountain and tables on L shortly after stop sign. KSO and pass Casa do Patriarca (rural tourism B&B). 6 rooms, 50€ for a double. Kitchen for guests' use to cook, or there is a restaurant 50 m away. Very nice gardens and common rooms. Tel. 24 971 0581; website [www.casadopatriarca.pt.vu](http://www.casadopatriarca.pt.vu).

Leave Atalaia, KSO past church. Soon after the church, turn off on right side of the road onto dirt road leading through eucalyptus forest.

The eucalyptus forest is long (almost 5 km) and has recently been very well marked. Upon entering the forest, KSO, through several intersections. You will come to an abandoned house on the left and a bridge over the superhighway. The forest across the highway has been extensively burnt. Cross the superhighway, turn L and about 100 meters later there is a path to the right, with a yellow sign on the electricity pylon indicating straight ahead and not to take the right turn. KSO and after another 100-200 meters there is another path to the right, with a large stone arrow on the ground (photo below) indicating a right turn. The stones and the surrounding vegetation are severely fire blackened and the stone arrow is easy to miss. Turn R here and go up a hill. The road goes up and down over a hill or two passing a burnt out fire truck.

In a clearing with three high voltage transmission lines there are two roads ahead in a Y. The branch on the left is marked with a yellow X, so take the one on the right. From here down to the bottom of the hill, the Via Lusitana has placed many obvious arrows.



But, if you get lost, look for the huge high voltage transmission lines at the top of the hill. From there you can see straight down to the hamlet of Grou. If you follow the transmission lines and poles, it will take you down steeply, but it will get you to the bottom of the hill and you will find the Caminho again. Once at the bottom of the hill, you will see a farm straight ahead that appears to be enclosed. You want to get on the road that runs along the far side of the farm, so take a L and then a R on the next path, and you come to a dump – and the arrows! Turn R, you are now on the other side of the farm, you pass it on your right, and the road takes you into Grou.

**Grou** (5 km) is a small hamlet with no commerce. KSO past a modern church on the right, on a paved road and into Asseiceira.

In **Asseiceira** (3 km), there are 4 cafes, two mini-markets and a Junta da Freguesia for a carimbo. There is also a fountain with a wonderful footbath for cooling the feet on the right hand side beside what looks like an old swimming pool as you walk into the hamlet.

KSO and the road merges into the N-110. Take a R towards Tomar. You pass through Guerreira (café, restaurant, pharmacy). Stay on the N-110 and go through two roundabouts. At the second roundabout, leave the N-110, and take the direction towards the train station of Santa Cita. Cross the railroad tracks

on an overpass, KSO and cross the street. Straight ahead is an unpaved path that parallels the train tracks.

Stay on this for several kms. The dirt road ends and turns into a paved road, but KSO (paralleling the train tracks) till the abandoned factory. Turn L, follow the road for 1 km past a deserted building, then turn right at a T-junction. Follow the road for a few km – caution, narrow shoulders. Turn right under the train line and left at the N-110. Extreme caution, narrow or non-existent shoulder and several blind oncoming corners.

Go through São Lourenço on the N-110, with a chapel and a monument to the martyred saint. KSO into Tomar.



Tomar, Convento de Cristo

**Tomar** (5km) is a pleasant town on the River Nabão. Lots of commerce and accommodation.

Tomar's Convento de Cristo sits a bit above the town and is definitely worth the walk up the hill for a visit. It is both a castle and monastery, built by the Knights Templar in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with additions from later centuries. The Reconquest in Portugal was complete a lot earlier than in Spain. By the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century the Moors were gone. When Spain and France began to try to diminish the Templars' power, many took refuge in Portugal, where King Dom Dinis welcomed them and renamed them the Order of Christ.

They were very influential during Portugal's sea expansion. There's lots of evidence of that in the Convento de Cristo.

The Convento de Cristo has what is agreed to be the best Manueline (flamboyant Portuguese gothic) window in Portugal. Open every day, 9 - 6:30 (closes at 5:30 October-May).

Also worth visiting is Tomar's 15<sup>th</sup> century synagogue, said to be the oldest in Portugal. It was built to honor the Jewish community's support of Portuguese expansion and discovery in the New World. It has been turned into a small museum with interesting artifacts and two very old burial stones. The interior is well preserved and has beautiful horseshoe arches.

Hostel 2300 Thomas is highly recommended. Rua Serpa Pinto, 43. Tel: 965 515 100. Special pilgrim prices. Other places to spend the night in Tomar include Residencial União (Rua Serpa Pinto 94, tel. 249 323 161), Residencial Sinagoga (Rua Gil Avo 31, tel. 249 323 083), and Residencial Luz, (Rua Serpa Pinto 144, tel. 249 312 317 - reported basic but very good, 17.50€). All of these places are on or next to the Caminho. For a good meal, try Casa Antiga on the Rua Serpa Pinto.

Leave Tomar on the main road Rua Serpa Pinto to cross the old bridge. Tourist office just before bridge – carimbo available.

Head up Rua dos Voluntarios, go around the bull ring. You will pass what looks like a jail on the edge of town on your right. R onto Rua Vicennes, L on Rua Coronel Julio Araujo Ferreira. Keep your eyes peeled, marking is not great in this area. L on Ponte de Peniche. (If you have trouble finding the arrows here, ask for “Ponte de Peniche” – the ancient Peniche bridge. There is a path through undeveloped land to get there).

Pavement ends and you walk through olive groves and over an old bridge, presumably the Ponte de Peniche. KSO under highway.

R at T-junction, river on your left. Path leaves river after an abandoned house and twists up and R. L at T junction, then path keeps you on the ridge for a while. L at fork with a big electricity transmitter pole. KSO - do not take the next path on the L.

Path has several marked turns, and the markings may be on electricity poles or on rocks or buildings. When all else fails, KSO on the main path. There are no markings for quite a stretch, but you will soon emerge onto the paved road, where you turn R. At a junction with Rua Antonio Silva Nunes Carvão, KSO.

Into **Casais** (7.5 km from Tomar) on Rua Associação. L and past church on right. Pharmacy upstairs in Junta Freguesia. Carimbo available. No services except for the pharmacy.

R in direction Castelo Branco and Coimbra. Into Soianda (1.5 km) (bar, but was closed) and out on main road. KSO out of town toward Calvinos.

KSO on paved road to **Calvinos** (2.5 km). L at stop sign and quick R onto Rua da Capela. R after chapel, L at house with “telefone” sign. Mini-mercado and café on L. Leave Calvinos on Travessa do Bairro. KSO down hill.

Enter **Freguesia de Alviobeira**. KSO up and through hamlet on Rúa da Calçada. R at junction. L at fountain onto Rúa do Alqueidão. KSO with stream on left. Stay on pavement. L at T with another paved road.

KSO, with hamlet on right side. R at T-junction and then a quick L. Sign says Travessa da Eira. R and then L onto path paralleling highway. R off of highway and over stream, continue to parallel highway on L. Pass house “Vivienda Mesquita” on L. R at yellow ranch and up slightly. 50 meters more and you’re on a dirt road. L up (leaving river on your right). On the Roman Road. No markings. Stay on main path. Near the top, L turn indicated only by arrow on pine tree AFTER the turn. This path will bring you out into the open on a ridge, nice views on the L.

KSO onto paved road, pass through small hamlets of **Portela de Vila Verde, Daporta**

Turn-off takes you onto dirt path about 100 m from last house in the last of these small hamlets. L off of road on path that is next to utility building. This path takes you into a eucalyptus logging forest. Keep an eye to the left for the path into the forest. It is marked, but a little up the turnoff and there are no obvious arrows on the main pathway. Friendly pilgrims before us have put a stone arrow there, if it lasts. Pilgrims in 2013 report plenty of fresh arrows and other markings, no problem navigating the eucalyptus forest.

On the N-110 into Tomal. At intersection of N-110 and N-238, take the N-238 towards Alvaiazaire.

**Cortiça** (3 km from Tojal). I spoke with an 87 year old woman out for her daily walk who told me her next door neighbor is English. In a pinch, you could try to find her. Bar at end of town. Cross road, R then L on Rúa de Sobreiral. Cross Rúa Farroeira and you’re on Rúa do Almagre. Come out onto busier Rúa Visconde de Souzel and L takes you into town of Alvaiazere.

**Alvaiazere** (6.5 km from Cortiça). Small town with services.

Junta da Freguesia on Caminho right before the Residencial O Bras. Grocery store, several restaurants and bars, pharmacy.

Restaurant/Residencial O Bras, Rúa J. Augusto Martins Rangel (right on the Caminho), tel. 236-655-4050. Basic room, 20€.

Recently opened, Albergaria Pinheiros (pilgrim price is 10 euros).

Located next door to the church, highly recommended. Tel: 915 440 196/ 911 150 817 / 925 850 756. Carlos Pinheiro, very helpful owner, speaks English and plans to provide meals in 2014. [www.albergariapinheiros.com](http://www.albergariapinheiros.com) Free internet in library (very close to O Bras, open till 6 pm).

Leaving Alvaiazere, one or two bars in the center of town near church open at 7:30. Leave on road in front of church, up and L at old age home. Well marked route takes you through **Laranjais** (2 km) and **Vendas** (1 km). At top of hill leaving Vendas, R at fork and down. Merge into another minor road and KSO. At Y junction, L towards Ariques, gentle descent. R onto gravel road at arrow, takes you into **Venda do Negro** (3.5 km).

R turn off main road, sign posted for Casal Maduros and Casal do Soeiro. Very minor roads, pleasant walk, into town of **Ansião** (7.5 km from Venda do Negro).

You pass the sign saying you are in Ansião about 1½ km before you actually enter town. Banks, stores, bars, free internet in library. Junta da Freguesia next to pillory. Pensão Residencial Adega Tipica, located on Rua Combatentes da Grande Guerra, tel. 236 677 364. Very good standard rooms, 25€, and there is a restaurant on the premises. Pastelaria Diogo recommended.

Leaving Ansião, cross the bridge and go across highway. Right outside of town, and on the Caminho, Solar da Rainha has rooms and restaurant (tel. 236 676 204).

Pass a soccer field with seats. The path ascends slightly and you reach a small road ahead with arrow (right next to a factory TOFASIL on R). Go down small lane, pavement ends. Short time

on track, out to road and L past a small shrine in honor of the Virgin Mary. KSO, passing through Constantina and Netos.

Leaving Netos, L onto dirt road. About 2 km arrive at a four road intersection with gas station/café.

This is **Venda do Brasil** (6 km from Ansião). Cross highways, keeping the gas station on your R. Shortly after, R turn off road with sign “Casais Granja” – uphill on gravel road. Very pleasant narrow path through hedgerows, stone fences, vineyards and olive trees. Path narrows but still has stone walls on either side. Out onto highway after 1 km on this track. You can see the next town, Junqueira, straight ahead on the highway, but do not stay on this highway or you’ll miss the Caminho’s next turnoff. The Caminho does not actually enter Junqueira but rather skirts it. So when you reach the main road, take a quick L off road and across the field.

R when you come out onto minor road, L going up before intersection with main road in town. Back on dirt road, gradual pleasant ascent into Alvorge (4 km from Venda do Brasil).

**Alvorge** is a village, with an ATM, mini-market and bar. An albergue has recently been opened in the church basement and was highly recommended by a pilgrim who walked in Sept. 2013. It is donativo. The bar owners (Café da Sua Vida) are very helpful and speak English and Italian between the husband and wife. At the new traffic circle (new as of 2009), go on the paved road

towards a two-story brown stone house that is oddly shaped (it flares out at both sides).

After passing the flared house at Alvorge, the pavement ends, and you are walking through pleasant fields. The Caminho winds down to the highway (Estrada EN347-1). This highway goes directly into Rabaçal, but the Caminho takes you across the highway and heads upwards. This is an unpaved road, and the arrows are on stones. You are now walking sections of the Roman Road. After about 2 km, you emerge onto a paved road, which is coming down from Casas Novas. This road connects Casas Novas with the EN347-1, but you do not want to go all the way to the highway. About 400 m before you reach the highway, you will see a faint arrow directing you to the R off the paved road.

You are once again paralleling the EN347-1. At the next group of buildings (a village named Alcalamouque), you rejoin the EN347-1. There is a bar here. At the end of the village, an arrow takes you R onto a good track between houses. You will pass a small round tower on your L (perhaps it's a lookout tower for the 13<sup>th</sup> century Castelo de Germanelo you can see off in the distance on the top of a hill). Continue on this main path for 300m, turning L at the arrow at the next junction. Pass the wooden signposts for a local hiking path, the GR26, then emerge onto a wider track, then turn L to enter Rabaçal, going up and past the primary school.

In **Rabaçal** (9 km from Alvorge), stay at Casa de Turismo (right next door to museum). Telephone numbers are on the door. The people in the museum will call for you. If you want to call ahead, try 918 752 990. Room 15-18€, clean and basic, but some of the recent reviews are mixed. Two restaurants in town, decent food. Try the well known Rabaçal cheese.



Roman Ruins at the Roman Villa in Rabaçal

The Roman villa about 2 km outside Rabaçal is definitely worth a visit (1.5€, which includes entrance to the museum and a ride out to visit the ruins). Open till 6 p.m. My guide was a young man who became interested in archaeology as a boy helping out at the ruins when they were first excavated in the late '80s, early '90s.

He went on to study archaeology at the University of Coimbra and is now employed by the museum. The small museum houses artifacts found at the site; my favorites were several Roman marbles and some petrified food garbage that showed that these wealthy Romans had seafood brought to them from the coast. The site itself was a large single family villa, and the walls have all been marked out to show the size. It has spectacular mosaics, but all are kept under sand since they can't afford to put a roof on to protect them, as they have done at Conímbriga. The guide will brush off the sand to show you some of the best, and the ones I saw were incredible – feminine representations of the four seasons.

Baths are quite large and many of the original walls remain intact, particularly around the sauna alcove. My guide explained that they do excavations every year in July. It's a huge community labor of love, with lots of participation by local residents, young and old. I enjoyed the visit a lot, and the museum has its own carimbo.

Though the bar owner across the street from the museum told me he would open at 7:30, I left town at 7:45 without coffee. There is nothing between Rabaçal and Conímbriga (about 11 km away).

Shortly after leaving Rabaçal, a pedestrian path on the R takes you on the Roman road to **Zambujal** (3.5 km). In Zambujal there are also newly painted GR red and white striped markings (indicating a regional hiking path) going in the opposite direction of the Caminho. Yellow arrow takes you to **Fonte Coberta** (2.5 km).

Leaving Fonte Coberta on the marked Rúa de Santiago, do not follow the brown directional sign pointing right that says "Caminho de Santiago." The AGACS (Galician Camino association) has painted a very visible and initialed yellow arrow to the left, which takes you alongside an old river bed and out to the small hamlet of **Casas do Poço** (2 km). Here you ascend on the Roman road and walk on quiet paths into **Conímbriga** (3 km), the most important Roman site in Portugal. Museum and ruins have a cafeteria and are definitely worth a visit. Opened at 10 the day I was there, though guidebooks say 9 am. It is still only partially excavated, but very interesting. Lots of mosaics, pools, baths. Pilgrims uniformly recommend a visit of at least an hour.

Accommodation available off the Caminho in the town of Condeixa a Nova (only a few km away, and there are public buses that go frequently from Condeixa a Nova to the ruins).

Residencial Central, run by Antonia Jesus, tel. 239 941 353 (not recommended – dirty, no hot water); Pensão Residencial Ruínas, tel. 239 941 772 Rua de Dona Maria Elsa Franco Sottomayor, Tel:



239 941 772. There is also a fancy Pousada, the Pousada Santa Cristina, originally a 16<sup>th</sup> century palace, but extensively reconstructed as a hotel. Rooms have nice balconies. Tel. 239 944 025. Might be worth a call for last minute special prices. If you're over 55, the Sun-Thurs price is 40% off the rack rate.

Leaving Conímbriga, get on the road leaving the ruins' parking lot. Arrow takes you off that road to the R at the first intersection, and you go under the highway. KSO across a busy road (bar here). Arrows take you on a country road through small hamlets of **Atadoa**, **Avessada**, **Orelhudo**, **Ribeira de Casconha**, and **Casconha** (bar).

**Cernache** (7.5 km from Conímbriga) has bars, shops, pharmacy and a Junta da Freguesia for a carimbo. In Cernache, the Jesuit institution, the Colegio da Imaculada Conceicao, now takes pilgrims in for overnight accommodation. You must phone in advance. Tel.: 239940030. To leave town, go R at main square with café, onto Rúa do Cabo, then Rúa 1 de Maio, to the small hamlet of Pousada. Very nice looking (probably not cheap) Quinta Sao Pedro, tel: 919555403. Leave Pousada on "main street", L onto dirt forest road and R at stone hut. Stay on the main path, more or less always straight ahead, for 2-3 km. Very well marked. As you are reaching the end of this path, you'll pass the dump on your L, electricity plant on R, lumber yard on L. Then the Caminho takes you into the small town of Palheira.

Enter **Palheira**, arrows take you up past the church, and you then leave town on a dirt road with big private estate on R. L at fork and up. Out onto paved road, L into Freguesia de Antanol. After one or two blocks in this patch of modern housing, zig-zag down and under highway, up to main road and R. You are in Antanol.

Continue on into **Cruz dos Mouros** (8.5 km from Cernache). Bar. Past the small church, there is an outdoor seating area with first views of Coimbra in the distance. On paved roads now into town. Arrows take you across the freeway and into Mesura (a Coimbra suburb). Pass the University's observatory on L. At traffic circle follow sign for Santa Clara Convent (3.5 km from Cruz dos Mouros). Dom Diniz's wife, Queen Isabel, is buried here but her tomb is not open for visitors. The convent has pleasant views of the city below. Walk down, cross the Ponte de Santa Clara (bridge over the Mondego River) and you are in the center of Coimbra. Tourist office on square, with carimbo. Caminho continues ahead into Coimbra, past the church of Santiago, and takes narrow streets to the in-town train station (called Coimbra-A to distinguish it from the newer station slightly out of town that accommodates high speed trains).



Coming into Coimbra



Church of Santiago in Coimbra

**Coimbra** (1.5 km from convent) is worth a leisurely visit. Old university, narrow streets in old town, cathedral, lots of churches (13<sup>th</sup> century church of Santiago), lively atmosphere. Numerous hotels, pensiones etc. Pensão Residencial Domus, Rúa Adelino Vega, located on Caminho. Tel. 239 828 584. Email: [residencialdomus@sapo.pt](mailto:residencialdomus@sapo.pt). Website: [www.residencialdomus.com](http://www.residencialdomus.com). Serenata Hostel offers pilgrim accommodation in a beautifully converted convent. A room for two with an en-suite and a bunk bed was €25 or €30. Restaurant A Cozinha da Maria in the old part of town, Rua das Azeiteiras 65, is highly recommended.

Leaving Coimbra, return to the old in-town train station (Coimbra-A). Arrows direct you along the river out of town and onto a rural road.

Right around Coimbra, the Caminho again joins up with the road to Fátima. Because Coimbra is north of Fátima, pilgrims to Fátima are going south, in the opposite direction of the Caminho (unlike the Lisbon to Santarém stretch, where arrows were going in the same direction). On a few occasions, the sight of a blue arrow in the opposite direction confirmed that I was indeed on the right path.

If you are arriving in Coimbra to start your walk, chances are you will arrive at the Coimbra-B train station (2.5 km north of Coimbra). If you are going to visit Coimbra, your train ticket entitles you to get on the next local train. Usually there's one parked waiting for the arrival of the fast train. If you are going to start walking directly, and don't care to go into Coimbra, all you do is exit the station onto the main road and turn R. Soon you will see an arrow pointing you off road to the R along a canal (0.5 km from Coimbra-B).

The path takes you to **Ademia da Baixo** (3 km), and **Cioga do Monte** (1.5 km). Bar; over the A-14 through Trouxemil. Arrive at **Adões** (3 km). To Sargento Mor, into Santa Luzia (3 km).

Continue on N-1 till **Lendiosa** (5 km). After Lendiosa, off road track on L, goes through a bamboo tunnel and some crops. Track comes out onto paved road, go R and straight into Mealhada (5 km). At entrance to town there's a roundabout with a statue of Bacchus. Walk over the railway bridge and immediately take a sharp L off the main road, past the big Intermarche store on the right. KSO through town, walking on the two block pedestrianized street. Residencial Oasis (tel. 231-202-081) on far edge of town right on the Caminho. 25€ for single. Decent simple food is served in the restaurant here. Mealhada's albergue is actually a short distance out of town in the hamlet of Sernadelo.

**Mealhada** is famous for its roast suckling pig (Leitão). It has many restaurants serving this local speciality. Reasonable prices: 10-15€.

Leave Mealhada for a short stint on the highway. Follow arrow on R taking you off highway. When you are on the Rúa 25 de Abril and come to a bright yellow house on the left, with an old grape press in its walled yard, and a pink house on the right, keep an eye out for a not-so-obvious arrow on the R. This takes you through the outskirts of Sernadelo. Albergue de peregrinos, Estrada Nacional 1, Avenida da Restauracao, 30. Tel: 916 191 721. This albergue is also called Hilario's.

Leaving Sernadelo, at the end of the residential area, a short well-marked walk through pine/eucalyptus. Into **Alpalhão** (4 km).

Through Aguim, and as soon as you leave town, there's a very clearly marked turn off the paved road onto a dirt track that parallels the road through eucalyptus.

Into the outskirts of **Anadia** (4 km), a town with a lot of new construction – huge sports facilities and other cultural centers on new roads outside of town. The Caminho doesn't take you into town here, stay on the outskirts. Other guides report that Anadia has accommodation. My web search revealed a three star hotel in

the center of town. Hotel Cabecinho:

<http://www.hoteis.pt/link:http://www.hotel-cabecinho.com> (one pilgrim reported getting a 37€ special rate in the hotel and also noted that there is a residencial in the town center, but I could not find anything about it on the web).

The Caminho passes the cemetery, and then the arrow takes you downhill to Arcos. You'll also pass the hospital of Anadia. This road takes you to **Alfeolas**. Bar on the right as you walk through the village is very nice and the owner most hospitable. Leaving Alfeolas, cross the N-28 and take a hard L, which takes you past new walled-in houses. R in 100 meters, then L at sign pointing you to APPACDM, which you will pass in a km or two. This is a huge sports complex.

Enter **Avelas** (6 km) (bar, shops, restaurants). Road goes behind the church, on Rúa Fonte do Sobreiro, cross the N-10 again.

Go through **São João da Azenha**, there's a small chapel there.

From here to **Aguada de Baixo** (4 km). Entering the industrial area of Agueda, then Lendiosa. Go under the IC-2 and at the roundabout, turn L through the industrial area of Agueda Sul.

Right before the roundabout, the Restaurante Dois Postes was packed on a Monday noon.

There is now a long slog into Agueda (7.5 km), and this part is very industrial. Right before Agueda, pass through the little town of Sardão, pass a wide open space known as the "parque das merendas" (place where people come and park their cars and set up tables for eating). Coming over the bridge into Agueda, you'll see a "residencial" immediately in a little plaza on the right. This is a house of ill repute.

**Agueda** had an albergue, but it is temporarily closed and seeking a new location. The nice Pensão Ribeirinho appears to also be closed. This presents some problems for pilgrims, as the Pensão Celeste (tel. 234-602-871) is about a km off the route and up a steep hill. Another disadvantage is that you must come back down to town for food or services. Pilgrims in Fall 2013 stayed in Conde d'Agueda hotel – 3 or 4 star place, and about €52 for a twin share room with breakfast.



Agueda is a town with many shops and restaurants. Good steak dinner at Restaurant dos Judeus, Largo 1° de Maio open on a Sunday. If you have time to explore, the “Parque da Alta Villa” is a huge estate donated by the owner to the city for a park. Very shady and cool, lots of painted pig statues there for some reason.

Leave Agueda in the direction of Paredes, along the river on the Rúa 5 de Outubro. Up and over the RR tracks through some rural residential development, enter **Mourisca do Vouga** (5 km).

Several bars and shops here. Walk down the Rúa da Liberdade and 25 de Abril, at the end cross the very busy IC-2/N-1 and KSO.

After crossing the highway, you will see the medieval (some say Roman) bridge ahead. The bridge of **Marnel** (3.5 km) used to take Caminho traffic but parts of it have collapsed due to lack of maintenance. The Caminho has been re-routed onto the N-1 with new arrows. Once you are over the modern bridge on the N-1, you will go straight up the road and past the church of Lamas do Vouga. You will be walking on the Estrada Real, the Royal Road.

Go through **Pontilhão**, then **Lameiro**. As you are coming into Lameiro, there is a newly constructed intersection and the arrows are not there. Cross highway (signs point Coimbra to L, Porto to R), and go straight up to Lameiro and follow the sign to Serem (3.5 km). Nice bar and shop run by the same family as you enter **Serem**.

At the end of Serem, cross the road and KSO into the eucalyptus forest (the arrow is a bit ambiguous). You pass over the A-25 and through Asseilho and then enter Albergaria a Velha (5 km).

Plenty of cafés, shops, pharmacies, ATMs. Carimbo in the Câmara Municipal on the main square, internet in the library next door (both right on the Caminho).

In **Albergaria a Velha**, there are several options for accommodation. Pensão Parentes offers pilgrim style accommodation for €12-€15. Owners are very friendly and will prepare a meal. The Pensão Casa da Alameda (tel. 234 524 242) is on the Caminho, on the street leading into the main square. Room with bath, 25€. Room with shared bath in hall, 15€.

The Casa Parochial of the Igreja Matriz (main church) also offers space to pilgrims. It is down the road on the left after the church.

The priest's house is on the corner across from the café, and the key is available there. There are a few mattresses and blankets in a basement room with cold water facilities. Pensão Restaurante Parentes is near the Bombeiros – walking past the Bombeiros

(with the building on your right side), turn R and the pensão is at the next left by the fountain (Rúa Doutor Brito Guimarães, tel. 234 521 271).

Leave Albergaria a Velha following the arrows past the Bombeiros Voluntarios and cross highway. Arrows are slightly faded, but you want to go in the direction of Nossa Sra. do Socorro (there is a road sign indicating the way to go). About 100 meters along, there's an arrow taking you off road and into a eucalyptus forest. Well marked with arrows. Exiting the forest, a religious retreat center is on your right (3.5 km). KSO. Shortly after, another turn-off takes you off road and back into the eucalyptus. Well marked. Enter **Albergaria a Nova** (3.5 km), you will be on Rúa Velha through town, turn right on the N-10.

You will pass through a number of small hamlets. It's an almost continuous string of development. On entering Pinheiro da Bemposta (5.5 km), bar at the nice square, Largo do Cruzeiro. KSO up hill to the Largo do Cruzeirinho. Cross over the IC-2/N-1 on an elevated stairway. You then pass the Largo das Vendas, and soon have entered Bemposta.



Old Bemposta

Soon after crossing the highway on the elevated stairway, there's a sign pointing towards **Bemposta's** "centro historico". If you want to see it (a few nice old buildings, a beautiful fountain/trough, and an interesting pillory with both the templar cross and an armillary sphere on it), it's a slight ascent, but not much out of the way. It requires no backtracking. At the end of Bemposta, KSO and head back down the hill and you will reconnect with the arrows right before a crossing back over the busy N-1 again.

After crossing the N-1, continue through **Besteiros**. At the far end of Besteiros, there is a newly constructed intersection. Sign points R for Oliveira de Azemeis. The Caminho goes straight over highway. Continuing through several hamlets, after an ascent you go through a RR tunnel and walk L and parallel to the tracks for about 50 m. Then go straight down on a gravel road (leaving the tracks), which takes you to the bridge **Sr. da Ponte** (5 km) (supposedly medieval but very hard to see anything because of

overgrowth). There is a fair amount of shade, so it's a good place for a rest.

After going through Silvares, enter **Oliveira de Azemeis** (3 km).

Even though the arrows disappear as you cross through town, just KSO. This takes you right through the historic center, past the main municipal building (carimbo available), past the church (take a minute to go to the bottom of the little park in front of it to see the authentic Camino de Santiago mojón sent to Oliveira by the government of Galicia). This is a very pleasant looking town, some nice looking restaurants.

Accommodation includes Pensão Anacleto (tel. 256 682 541).

However, a pilgrim from spring 2013 described it as “filthy and expensive and not maintained well.” There is also a modern (pretty ugly outside) 4-star hotel right on the Caminho, Hotel Dighton (tel. 256-682-191 - ask for pilgrim discount) This is a 4 star hotel, €56 for a twin room and includes breakfast. The hotel restaurant looks very expensive but was very reasonable. They have a large fire, and watching a culinary artist doing his thing on the huge bed of coals was a delight. Have anything from the BBQ grill and it will be good.

From Oliveira de Azemeis to **São João da Madeira** (9 km), the way is well marked and almost totally through development.

Residencial Solar São João is right in the main square, the Praça Luis Ribeiro (tel. 256 202 540). Clean room with bath 29€. Café on ground floor open by 6:30 a.m.

São João da Madeira is not very attractive. Their main square has a huge round modern projectile shooting up into the sky, not exactly clear what that is. The Municipal Forum is a very large modern building, carimbo available. Internet available until midnight at the Casa de Cultura (very nice old renovated blue building about a block off the main square towards the little church up the hill) and also in the basement of the library next door to the Casa de Cultura (till 7 p.m.)



If you have time to kill, take the Caminho out of the main square for about three blocks and you will come to a totally renovated large old factory. It was a hat making factory, now a museum, and appears to have exhibits describing the old hat making process.

According to an inscription on a nice statue/fountain out back (5 men making felt hats), this was a dirty, ugly job. What was visible from the sidewalk as I passed by in the morning looked interesting. There was also what looked to be a kind of “upscale” restaurant in one part of the museum and a nice café out back. I was very sorry I hadn’t known about either the museum or the restaurant before leaving town because, other than the internet, there isn’t much to do or see here.

Leave São João da Madeira on Rúa Oliveira Junior, one of the roads going out of the main square. Facing the Residencial in the main square, the street you want is not the road immediately adjacent to the residencial on the left, but the next one over. At the Repsol gas station, a few blocks after the hat museum, turn left onto the Rúa da Fundação, then right onto Rúa Varzea. You will be going around a huge, now abandoned foundry. Up past the Mini-Preço grocery store, and into **Arrifana** (2.5 km).

From Arrifana you go to **Arrifães**. At the stop light in the center of Arrifães, R and up to the N-1. Highway names are often confusing in Portugal, and the N-1 is also dubbed the IC-2. I had trouble finding the arrows here, but if you get lost, rather than ask for a town, the best thing to do is to ask for directions to the N-1.

You will walk along this highway for many kilometers before you get to **Malaposta** (5 km). Once on the IC-1 (sidewalks all the way), the arrows are infrequent, but KSO on the highway.

Immediately after the hotel in Malaposta (constructing an addition in summer 2009, so hard to see), it’s difficult to see the arrow telling you to get off the N-1 and onto a secondary road that starts out paralleling the N-1. Once on it, you pass a cell phone tower on the right. You are on the Rúa da Estrada Romana and will have several stretches on the original Roman road, some of it in remarkable condition.





In **Lourosa** (4 km) - many cafes and shops, turn R onto the N-1. As noted earlier, you may see references to the IC-2. The N-1 and the IC-2 are one and the same highway.

Past a large factory, Facol, on the left side of the road. Once you are out of Lourosa, you will get off the N-1 and walk through **Vergada**. After a km or two, arrow takes you L. Cross the N-1, go straight down on paved road in front of you, then a quick R.

In **Mouzelos** (3 km), you can see the ocean! After Mouzelos, on minor roads, pass under two very high elevated roads (must be super highways), which are about 1-2 km apart.

Upon entering **Grijó**, you will hug the high walls holding lots of greenery behind them. The entrance to the Monastery (5 km) is in those walls and obvious. There's a long shaded driveway with lots of benches. The Junta da Freguesia across from the Monastery has a carimbo. Clean bathrooms. Not much to see in the monastery, but the cloister with its 13<sup>th</sup> century tomb is likely to be open for a quick peek, and the well shaded benches are a nice rest spot.

Accommodation is apparently available in Grijó, but it's at least 1 km off the Caminho. I found a 3-star pensão on the internet: Pensão Sobreiro Grosso, Rúa Américo de Oliveira 807 (tel: 227 648 188).

From the monastery of Grijó, head down Avenida do Mosteiro, then turn in direction of Sermonde, arriving in **Perozinho** (5 km). This is the first place I saw permanent camino markers, signs with the shell and an arrow indicating the direction. They disappeared again after about 5 km, seemed to be only in the municipality of Perozinho. After Perozinho, there's a brief walk

up through eucalyptus and other trees on part of the original Roman or medieval road. Down into **Rechousa**, where there's a long walk on the sidewalks along the busy main road (Rúa de Rechousa). When you begin to descend, the development and traffic thin out. At the next intersection, R following sign to Vila Nova de Gaia. Under the overpass, then up. Stay on the N-304 for what seems like many, many kilometers.

Once in **Vila Nova de Gaia** (7 km), the arrows will want to take you DOWN to the river's edge, where the port wine lodges are. Depending on your plans upon arrival, that may be what you want to do, but if you would prefer to go straight to the Cathedral for a carimbo, you should not go down. The bridge that crosses the Douro River at this point takes you over to the city of **Porto**,

and it has both a low crossing and a high crossing. The low crossing is next to the port lodges, taking you directly across the river to Porto's riverfront, while the high crossing takes you to the "upper town", very near the Cathedral. So, if you want to take the "high crossing", when you see the sign pointing you downhill to the port caves, ignore it and go across the plaza in front of you and you will be on the Avenida da República. That's the main street of Gaia, and it's where the tram runs, connecting Gaia and Porto (using the top part of the old bridge as well).

You are at this point very close to the Jardim do Mouro, a garden in Gaia with a fabulous view overlooking the Porto riverfront, and the Gaia port wine lodges below. It is, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful "built environment" sights ever I've seen. The bridge leaves from the Jardim and crosses the river. You then take a left to go uphill (often there are those little mini in-town tourist trains parked there) and you will be in front of the Cathedral (4 km). You can get a carimbo in the Cathedral. There is also a tourist office right there.



Porto Riverfront