

CIVIL PROTECTION, GOVERNMENT OF GALICIA

EMERGENCY GUIDEBOOK FOR PILGRIMS ON THE WAY OF ST JAMES

SELF-PROTECTION MEASURES



XUNTA DE GALICIA

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Artwork | Mario Sigüenza

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I | Learn about the Way of St. James and the risks involved

The way of St James (Camino de Santiago) is the route of mediaeval origin whose aim is to reach **Santiago de Compostela** and visit the tomb of the Apostle, St James the Great. It is not a single route, nor is it a path which the Apostle himself actually took; rather it is a series of different routes which gradually come together to make their way towards Compostela, and over the centuries numerous pilgrimage routes have been established in Spain. The most commonly taken route is the French Way, but there are also others, such as the Northern Way, the Primitive Way, the Portuguese Way, the Portuguese Coastal Way, the Silver Way, the English Way, the Winter Way, the Arousa Maritime and River Ulla Way and the Fisterra and Muxía Way.

Nowadays, tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over the world come to do the Way of St James on foot, by bicycle and on horseback, following the different routes, and in different stages, either individually or in groups.

The Camino is always open to anyone who wishes to do it

The aim of this guidebook is to help you to avoid the problems you may encounter along the Way and which could adversely affect the success of your pilgrimage: medical problems, safety problems, accidents, etc. This is why the Government of Galicia is publishing this document, which offers a series of simple, self-protection measures.

Being aware of the possible circumstance that may arise along the route chosen will allow us to foresee possible alternatives to or solutions for the problems which may arise, thus ensuring a safe, problem-free experience.



2 | Phases for a problem-free pilgrimage

1. Planning

A) determining the number of pilgrims

When planning the journey, you will need to assess the number of individuals who are going travel and whether the pilgrimage is to be made alone or in a group. Undertaking the pilgrimage alone or with a companion is usually simpler than a group pilgrimage, which requires greater planning, particularly if the group includes children, elderly individuals or persons with some type of physical, sensory or psychological disability.

A larger group of individuals requires carrying out a deeper study of the needs the pilgrimage will require, in terms of food, accommodation, modes of transport, support transport, special needs, daily distances to be travelled, stops, etc.

Also important is the time of year the pilgrimage is to be undertaken, since the risks and drawbacks of the summer are very different from those we may come across in the winter, there being a wider range of different weather situations during the spring and the autumn.

B) Choosing the route

In addition to religious, cultural, recreational and leisure interests, we also need to consider the difficulty, the estimated time it will take and the physical condition of the individual or individuals who are going to undertake it, as well as accommodation, transport and provisioning facilities.

Tackling routes with a high level of difficulty is not a good idea if individuals or the group have special needs entailing the requirement for support transport. In this case, the weather will also be a differentiating factor, since, depending on the time of year, some routes will be of a lower difficulty than others.



C) Information gathering

Once the route has been chosen, it must be studied in depth. It is important to know whether there is public or private accommodation, the distances between the same, the type of path (footpath, road, track, etc.), if it passes through woodland, if there is any shade or not, and the width thereof (in the case of bicycles, support trolleys, carts or other vehicles), state of the road (unpaved, stone, dirt, cobbled, paved, etc.) alternative communication routes (train, roads, etc.), schedule of provisioning or resting points, etc.

It is also important to know whether a route is very busy or not, if there are support services (such as Civil Protection Volunteers, Civil Guard or National Police) patrolling the route and how far away emergency, medical and other services are.

On the basis of this information, and with the means at our disposal, we shall be able to prepare a dossier with the itinerary, stops, available accommodation, meeting points, rallying or provisioning points, and possible alternatives that may be found.

Similarly, forecasts of the weather we may encounter along the Way are readily available through phone apps or from the Internet. In Galicia, Meteogalicia issues specific forecasts for each section or route of the Way, which is highly useful when planning routes.



2 | Phases for a problem-free pilgrimage

D) Recommended material for the pilgrimage

The equipment will depend on the route chosen, the time of year, our economic possibilities and other variables. We need to take into account that the more things we take, the more weight we shall have to carry.

The essential material includes a backpack, suitable clothing and footwear, changes of clothing, warm clothes and rain gear, first aid material, any prescribed medicines we habitually take, mobile phone, spare batteries and charger, cap or hat, canteen, torch and nocturnal signalling elements, among others.

The type of journey, the route and whether we are travelling alone or in a group will determine the equipment we need.

On the other hand, it is highly advisable to take maps, leaflets and pamphlets, or any other information we could need along the route, particularly telephone numbers and addresses relating to hostels, accommodation, hotels and emergency or security services.

E) Personal documentation

You will need to take a valid ID document or passport, or any other document accrediting your identity, a valid healthcare card, medical prescriptions or health alerts signed by your GP, where applicable, as well as any other documentation or cards you may need (debit cards, credit cards, etc.).



2. Physical preparation

We need to bear in mind that the means of propulsion along this pilgrimage will be our own body. That is to say, we must be capable of walking, of supporting our own weight plus that of the backpack, for daily distances of around 20 or 25 km, under situations of heat, cold, rain, snow, fog, etc., on slopes, hills, etc., in a continuous manner over a number of days.

It may be the case that we are not used to this sort of constant demanding physical effort, owing to which, as preparation and by way of a test, we should go on systematic walks with the equipment that we are going to take and the clothing and footwear that we are going to use.

It would be advisable to use at least one week before the trip to walk short routes, gradually increasing the length, and carrying the equipment or an equivalent weight.

On one hand, this will test us physically and, on the other, it will allow us to gauge the suitability of the equipment selected.

3. Setting off

Shortly before setting off, we would recommend leaving a brief document —outlining the route, daily distances, scheduled stops and accommodation, as well as contact telephone numbers and other information— with direct family and close friends so that we can be contacted in the case of need or emergency.

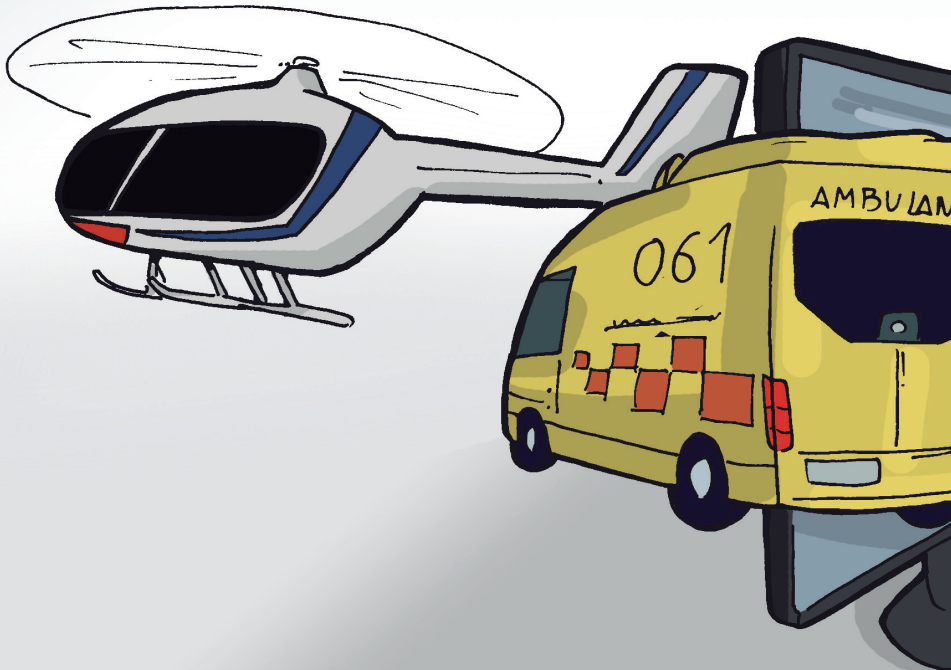


3 | The single European emergency telephone number -112

In the setting of the European Union, 112 is the single emergency telephone number for healthcare, fire service, rescue, and civil protection, available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. From this number, a request for emergency assistance can be dealt with, informing all the intervening bodies, to ensure a coordinated response, **totally free and at no cost whatsoever for the individual making the call.**

A 112 call can be made from any conventional telephone (mobile or landline, public or private telephone box), wired or wireless, Smartphone or Tablet.

It can even be made if the mobile phone has no SIM card or balance, or if our telephone operator has no radio transmitting coverage at that point. In this case, the system will channel the call through any telephone operator available in the area and will reroute the call to the Galician 112 Emergency Call Centre, to be dealt with.



Where applicable, and when so required, 112 can be called to notify of any serious situations which may place our lives, integrity or safety at risk. The call should be made calmly and collectedly, following the instructions from the operator answering the call. Do not switch off your mobile phone, as it may be necessary to contact you again.

The operational personnel will perform all the necessary procedures, send the corresponding assistance, in the form required, and keep you informed.



1. General advice for a good Pilgrimage

Before setting off

- Is worthwhile preparing physically beforehand, training with increasingly longer walks and routes.
- Before setting off, try to prepare a stage plan. It is better to make the initial stages shorter.
- Download maps with the location of health centres and pharmacies along the route you are going to take.
- Notify your family about the scheduled dates, in case they need to locate you rapidly.

What to take with you

- Suitable footwear; never start a pilgrimage with new.
- A small first aid kit with painkillers, plasters and gauze, needle and thread, Vaseline, hydrogen peroxide, anti-inflammatory cream, alcohol, Betadine or similar (povidone iodine, disinfectant), anti-diarrhoeal medicine, sun cream, insect repellent.
- Clothing should be suited to the weather. In summer, a cap or hat for the sun, and in winter, warm clothing, gloves, woollen garments and waterproof clothing.
- If you are planning to stay in hostels, do not forget to take a sleeping bag and a pillowcase.
- On the stages themselves, you will need to take a canteen with water and a walking stick or staff is recommended.
- Always carry documentation: National ID Card or passport.



- Take a fully charged mobile phone. Download GPS apps (such as Safe-365) which will provide the emergency services with your location in the case of emergency.

2. Careful with food

- If you are going to cook your own food, bear the following advice in mind:
- Wash your hands before meals and always after going to the toilet.
- Only drink water that is fit for human consumption or bottled.
- Only eat food purchased in authorised establishments (shops, bars, restaurants, etc.).
- Avoid preparing food which requires refrigeration, particularly if it contains egg (sauces, mayonnaise, Russian salad, smoked fish, creams or deserts).
- To not leave food or drink in the sunlight.
- Wash vegetables with water fit for consumption, preferably by submerging them in water with a few drops of chlorine bleach, and rinsing them well under the tap.
- Wash and then peel fruit.
- When making sandwiches, avoid runny omelettes, wrap them suitably (aluminium foil or plastic film) and consume them on the same day.
- Wash beverage containers frequently (canteens, water cans, flasks, etc.).



- Heat food up to boiling point.
- For food products, the label is the safety guarantee: check the sell-by or best-before date

3. Look after your feet

- Do not start along the Way with new footwear. Footwear with thick, flexible sole, with no hard heel counters, pronounced curves or hard toecaps are recommended.
- Avoid tight laces and seams which can cause lesions on the skin.
- Use yarn, cotton or woollen socks which cushion the ankles, absorb humidity and are breathable.
- Use shower slippers in changing rooms and communal showers.
- Toenails should be cut straight. Have any ingrown or problem toenails treated by a podiatrist before setting off.
- Bathing the feet in tepid salty water for at least five minutes may be beneficial (a tablespoon of salt for each litre of water).
- After bathing, dry your feet thoroughly, particularly between the toes; applying antiperspirants with fungicides is advisable to prevent maceration, irritation and contagious diseases (fungal infections, skin tags, etc.).



- Massage gently from the toes to the heel.
- If blisters appear, keep them particularly clean; depending on the case, drain them with a sterile needle, leaving part of the suture thread for drainage and apply antiseptics.
- In the case of more complicated foot lesions or wounds, go to the nearest primary care facility.

4. Measures for increasing safety

Before setting off

- Ensure that you have the necessary documents for accrediting your identity and nationality.
- Take a mobile telephone with a new battery and charger.
- In the case of non-Spanish pilgrims, ensure that you have the addresses and telephone numbers of consulates or diplomatic missions, in case you need to get in touch with them.

Along the Way

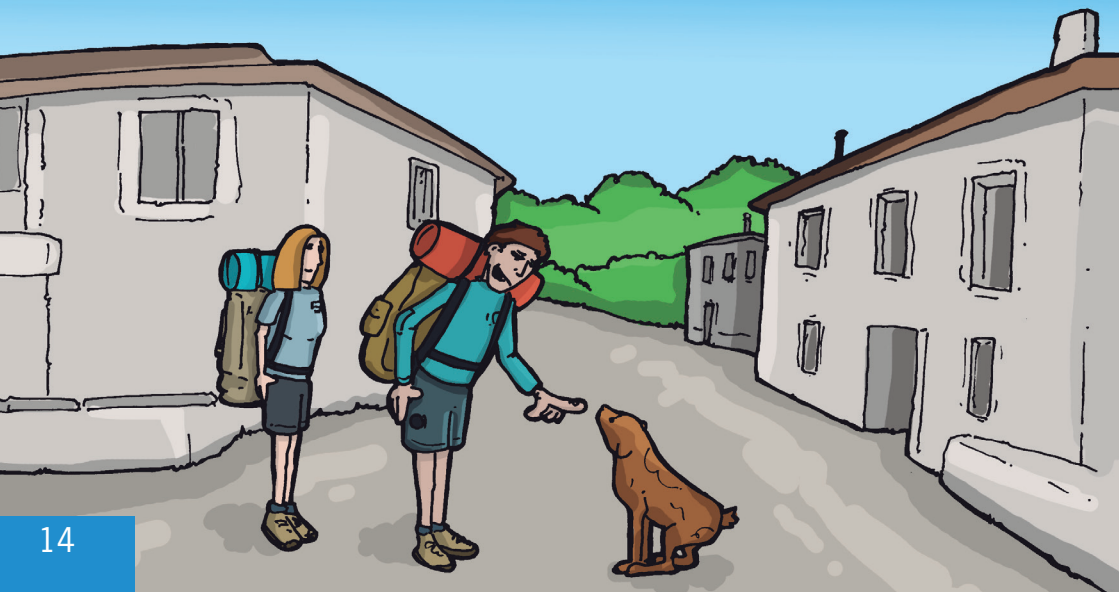
- Respect the signs and instructions that you find in the area.
- Do not take routes other than those which are signposted, since off these you may be in danger.



- As far as possible, try not to walk through isolated poorly lit places.
- If you have a geolocation system (Safe-365, WhatsApp, etc.), keep it activated.
- Do not trust strangers who approach you unexpectedly.
- Keep your documentation in a safe place.
- Keep your belongings in sight, keep rucksacks and bags closed and close to you, with your wallet/purse in an inside pocket.
- In the event of a theft, note down all the details of the incident, do not engage with the assailant, and report the incident to the police.
- In the event of any incident or accident, always call 112 to request the assistance of the Police or the Emergency Services.

Stray animals

If you come across a stray animal (dog, cat or other pet) on the way, particularly when entering or leaving towns and villages, do not feed them, as they probably have an owner. If you let them accompany you, they will be distancing themselves from their origin and will end up disorientated, hungry and homeless.



Forest fires

Particularly if you are doing the pilgrimage in the summer or autumn, there is the possibility of encountering a forest fire.

In such cases:

- If you are passing through a wooded area and detect smoke or a burning smell, stick to areas with high visibility. Call 112.
- Try to move away from areas alongside the smoke or fire.
- Try to keep clear of gullies and riverbeds, and do not attempt to escape uphill, as fire tends to rise.
- Move away from the fire through those areas with the sparsest vegetation, and remember that a change in the wind direction can result in your being surrounded by the fire.
- Do not attempt to cross a road affected by fire fronts, or areas with an intense build-up of smoke which reduces visibility, either on foot, or in any type of vehicle. The best thing to do is go back and seek an alternative route.



5 | Pay attention to road safety

If you do the Way on foot

- On roads, keep to the left and where available, use the pavement (sidewalk). If it is more dangerous to walk on the left (e.g. as there may be a ravine with no protective barriers), walk on the right as this is the least dangerous side.
- When walking on roads in groups, walk in single file and on the right-hand side occupying only the essential part of the roadway.
- Use luminous or reflective elements. When walking along roads at night, a reflective jacket or other garment visible from a minimum distance of 150 metres must be worn. Additionally, when walking in groups, you must carry at least two lights: a white or yellow one at the head of the group, and a red one at the back.
- If you need to cross the road, choose a spot where you will be highly visible: preferably on a straight section of road and preferably with only one lane per direction, as opposed a dual carriageway. If there are underpasses or footbridges, these must be used.
- If there is a roundabout on the Way, never walk across the central area: walk around the outside.



If you do the Way by bicycle

- Use an approved helmet
- When on roads, ride on the right and use the hard shoulder. If travelling in a group, ride in two columns and always close to the hard shoulder.

If you do the Way on horseback

- Ride on livestock trails
- It is advisable to take out a civil liability insurance policy for the horse.
- At night, you must carry sufficient luminous elements to indicate your position and size.
- Use an approved helmet



6 | Most frequent health problems for pilgrims

Muscle soreness/muscle contracture

Cramp Muscular pains Stiffness

What should you do?

- Rest the affected area.
- Replenish fluids.
- Varied diet.
- Oral analgesic if there is intense pain (paracetamol).

How to avoid it?

- Gradual exercise, at your own rate, warming up beforehand.
- Sufficient nocturnal rest in terms of quality and quantity of sleep
- Avoid uncomfortable or forced positions.
- Use worn-in, comfortable, breathable and not excessively tight footwear.
- Avoid rubbing of clothing or equipment: thigh sleeves, etc.
- Bicycles: Protection for hands and knees, helmet.

When should you seek medical care?

- If the pain continues with no improvement for 24/48 hours.

Wounds/chafing/blisters

Breakage or lesion of the skin

What should you do?

- Wash with cold, clean water. Local anaesthetic (povidone iodine).
- In the case of large blisters, puncture with a sterile needle, without removing the skin.

How to avoid it?

- Gradual exercise, at your own rate, warming up beforehand.
- Sufficient nocturnal rest in terms of quality and quantity of sleep
- Avoid uncomfortable or forced positions.
- Use worn-in, comfortable, breathable and not excessively tight footwear.
- Avoid rubbing of clothing or equipment: thigh sleeves, etc.
- Bicycles: Protection for hands and knees, helmet.

When should you seek medical care?

- If the lesions do not improve.
- In the case of large blisters, deep extensive wounds, with heavy bleeding or the appearance of pus.

Sprains/tendinitis

What should you do?

- Rest the area.
- Local cooling (avoid placing ice directly onto the skin).
- Anti-inflammatory painkiller (aspirin).

How to avoid it?

- Gradual exercise, at your own rate, warming up beforehand.
- Sufficient nocturnal rest in terms of quality and quantity of sleep
- Avoid uncomfortable or forced positions.
- Use worn-in, comfortable, breathable and not excessively tight footwear.
- Avoid rubbing of clothing or equipment: thigh sleeves, etc.
- Bicycles: Protection for hands and knees, helmet.

When should you seek medical care?

- If the symptoms do not improve with rest. Generally speaking, tendinitis will force you to abandon the pilgrimage, and sprains will need taping in order to be able to continue walking.

Sunstroke/hyperthermia/heat stroke

What should you do?

- Immediate rest in a cool, well-ventilated shaded spot.
- Replenish fluids.
- In the event of dizziness, lie on the ground with your legs raised.

How to avoid it?

- Whatever the time of the year: cover your head and ensure that you are sufficiently hydrated.
- In the warmest months of the year: avoid walking in the middle of the day and do not prolong the stages.
- Drink more liquids than are strictly necessary to quench your thirst.
- Be sure to urinate frequently and abundantly.
- Always wear a hat and sunglasses and apply sunscreen, preferably factor 20 or higher.

- During the middle of the day, avoid exposing your body and limbs to the sun.

When should you seek medical care?

- If you do not recover general well-being in a short space of time.
- If you lose consciousness.
- **Call 061 or 112 in the event of confusion, altered level of consciousness or loss of consciousness.**

Dehydration

What should you do?

- Rest immediately.
- Replenish liquids in a gradual, constant manner.

How to avoid it?

- Whatever the time of the year: cover your head and ensure that you are sufficiently hydrated.
- In the warmest months of the year: avoid walking in the middle of the day and do not prolong the stages.
- Drink more liquids than are strictly necessary to quench your thirst.
- Be sure to urinate frequently and abundantly.
- Always wear a hat and sunglasses and apply sunscreen, preferably factor 20 or higher.
- During the middle of the day, avoid exposing your body and limbs to the sun.

When should you seek medical care?

- If there is any loss of consciousness or mental confusion or if there is any associated diarrhoea or fever.
- **Call 112 or 061 in the event of confusion, altered level of awareness or loss of consciousness.**

Sunburn

Hot red skin, localised pain and burning. In cases of intense blistering.

What should you do?

- Wash the area with cold water, without rubbing.
- Apply moisturising cream on the affected area.
- Painkiller if there is intense pain.

How to avoid it?

- Whatever the time of the year: cover your head and ensure that you are sufficiently hydrated.

- In the warmest months of the year: avoid walking in the middle of the day and do not prolong the stages.
- Drink more liquids than are strictly necessary to quench your thirst.
- Be sure to urinate frequently and abundantly.
- Always wear a hat and sunglasses and apply sunscreen, preferably factor 20 or higher.
- During the middle of the day, avoid exposing your body and limbs to the sun.

When should you seek medical care?

- If there is intense pain, large blisters or a large area of the skin is affected.

Insect bites and ticks. Animal bites

What should you do?

- Insect: wash the area, without rubbing. Apply antipruritic cream.
- Dog: wash the wound with water and soap. Apply antiseptic.
- Poisonous snake: immobilise limb.
- Tick: if attached to the skin, do not try to remove it by hand. It must be removed by healthcare personnel.

How to avoid it?

- Use insect repellent, avoiding scents which may attract them.
- Cover the lower limbs up to the knees.
- Stick to pathways.
- Travel in groups, to ensure rapid aid.

When should you seek medical care?

- **Insects: call 112 if there is a known allergy to the poison or there are breathing difficulties or a significant deterioration in the general condition.**
- **Dogs:** Have an anti-tetanus injection.
- **Poisonous snakes: Seek immediate medical help. Call 061 or 112 in the case of a young child.**

Gastroenteritis/diarrhoea

Sickness and vomiting and/or abdominal pain and diarrhoea. At times, fever and general malaise.

What should you do?

- General rest.
- Bowel rest: eat nothing for between 24 and 36 hours.
- Reintroduce solid foods gradually, avoiding dairy products until fully recovered.

- Rehydration: commercial rehydration solution: 2-3 litres every 24 hours.
- In the case of a fever over 38° C: Paracetamol.

How to avoid it?

- Drink water fit for human consumption (potable).
- Wash fruit and vegetables.
- Do not take foods that are perishable at ambient temperature.
- Boil fresh foods before eating them.
- Wash hands after meals.
- Avoid infecting others: do not share plates, and keep your hands clean without coming into contact with other pilgrims.

When should you seek medical care?

- If your general well-being is severely affected or uncontrollable vomiting.
- In the case of multiple cases of food poisoning.

Fungal skin lesions

Itchiness, pain and a reddening of the folds of skin between your toes.

What should you do?

- Good personal hygiene.

How to avoid it?

- Shower: Wear rubber sandals in communal showers. Dry your feet well.
- Avoid infecting others: do not walk barefoot or share footwear.

When should you seek medical care?

- If the symptoms persist, treat with oral and/or topical anti-fungal medication

Other illnesses and chronic problems

Cold, tonsillitis. Headache, toothache, menstrual pain. High blood pressure, bronchitis, diabetes.

What should you do?

- In known episodes, take the habitual actions.

How to avoid it?

- Take the habitually used medication and do not discontinue it.
- Carry a report of chronic diseases and allergies (where applicable).

When should you seek medical care?

- If the episodes are different from habitual ones or if you have any doubts.

7 | Checklist for group pilgrimages

We now provide a checklist with a series of questions to verify whether the pilgrimage meets the minimum requirements to be undertaken with sufficient guarantees for the group members' safety.

- Support vehicle YES NO
- Has the accommodation for the stages been confirmed? YES NO
- Has alternative accommodation been located? YES NO
- Are the group leaders conversant with the route to follow? YES NO
- Have you received confirmation from Santiago City Council regarding possible traffic control measures, if necessary? YES NO

PILGRIMAGES WITH ANIMALS*:

- Have you arranged locations along the way for the sheltering and feeding thereof? YES NO
- Have you arranged for the sheltering of the animals in the city of Santiago? And where applicable, veterinary care for the same? YES NO

*Note: you must take into account the care, sheltering and feeding of animals throughout the entire pilgrimage.

- If you are going to undertake the pilgrimage with any extraordinary items (e.g., bicycles, sledges, motorbikes), has adapted or controlled accommodation been taken into account? YES NO

If the majority of the answers are negative, you should consider rescheduling or postponing the pilgrimage.



You can find further information at:

www.xunta.es/
www.112galicia.org/es
<https://061.sergas.gal>
www.turismo.gal
www.caminodesantiago.gal

In a situation of risk call 112

Follow the advice given in this guidebook, prepare your Way well in advance, and apply the suitable self-protection measures for each situation.

This guidebook was prepared by the Directorate General for Emergencies and Interior, with the collaboration of the Galician 061 Public Health Emergency Foundation.

