

## From *Pilgrim's Guide* to *Santiago de* *Compostela*

*Excerpted from Janson, H.W., History of Art, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 1995.*

*The Pilgrim's Guide, written in the mid-twelfth century, gives a vivid account of the routes and what was to be met along them by pilgrims to the shrine of the Apostle James in Compostela. Describing Ste.-Madeleine (the church of St. Mary Magdalen) at Vezelay, the Guide recounts a medieval legend that Mary Magdalen journeyed to France after Christ's death and died in Aix-en-Provence.*



There are four roads which, leading to Santiago, converge to form a single road at Puente la Reina, in Spanish territory. One crosses Saint-Gilles, Montpellier, Toulouse and the pass of Somport; another goes through Notre-Dame of Le Puy, Sainte-Foy of Conques and Saint Pierre of Moissac; another traverses Sainte Marie-Madeleine of Vezelay, Saint Leonard in the Limousin as well as the city of Perigueux; still another cuts through Saint-Martin of Tours, Saint-Hilaire of Poitiers, Saint-Jean-d'Angely, Saint-Eutrope of Saintes and the city of Bordeaux....

One needs three more days of march, for people already tired, to traverse the Landes of the Bordelais.

This is a desolate region deprived of all good: there is here no bread, wine, meat, fish, water or springs; villages are rare here. The sandy and flat land abounds none the less in honey, millet, panic grass, and wild boars. If perchance you cross it in summertime, guard your face diligently from the enormous flies that greatly abound there and which are called in the vulgar wasps or horseflies; and if you do not watch your feet carefully, you will rapidly sink up to the knees in the sea-sand copiously found all over.

Having traversed this region, one comes to the land of Gascon rich in white bread and excellent red wine.... The Gascons are fast in words, loquacious, given to mockery, libidinous, drunkards, prodigal in food.... However, they are well trained in combat and generous in the hospitality they provide for the poor....

They have the habit of eating without a table and of drinking all of them out of one single cup. In fact, they eat and drink a lot, wear rather poor clothes, and lie down shamelessly on a thin and rotten straw litter, the servants together with the master and the mistress.

On leaving that country, . . . on the road of St. James, there are two rivers.... There is no way of crossing them without a raft. May their ferrymen be damned! .... They have the habit of demanding one coin from each man, whether poor or rich, whom they ferry over, and for a horse they ignominiously extort by force four.... When boarding...one must be most careful not to fall by chance into the water....

Many times the ferryman, having received his money, has such a large troop of pilgrims enter the boat that it capsizes and the pilgrims drown in the waves. Upon which the boatmen, having laid their hands upon the spoils of the dead, wickedly rejoice.





### ST. MARY MAGDALENE

On the route that through Saint-Leonard stretches towards Santiago, the most worthy remains of the Blessed Mary Magdalene must first of all be rightly worshipped by the pilgrims. She is...that glorious Mary who, in the house of Simon the Leprous, watered with her tears the feet of the Savior, wiped them off with her hair, and anointed them with a precious ointment while kissing them most fervently.... It is she who, arriving after the Ascension of the Lord from the region of Jerusalem...went by sea as far as the country of Provence, namely the port of Marseille.

In that area she led for some years...a celibate life and, at the end, was given burial in the city of Aix.... But, after a long time, a distinguished man called Badilon, beatified in monastic life, transported her most precious earthly remains from that city to Vezelay, where they rest up to this day in a much honored tomb. In this place a large and most beautiful basilica as well as an abbey of monks were established. Thanks to her love, the faults of the sinners are here remitted by God, vision is restored to the blind, the tongue of the mute is untied, the lame stand erect, the possessed are delivered, and unspeakable benefices are accorded to many. Her sacred feast is celebrated on July 22.

### THE STONECUTTERS OF THE CHURCH [OF ST. JAMES] AND THE BEGINNING AND COMPLETION OF THEIR WORK

The master stonecutters that first undertook the construction of the basilica of the Blessed James were called Master Bernard the elder—a marvelously gifted craftsman—and Robert, as well as other stonecutters, about fifty in number, who worked assiduously under the most faithful administration of Don Wicart, the head of the chapter Don Segeredo, and the abbot Don Gundesindo, during the reign of Alphonso king of Spain and during the bishopric of Don Diego I, a valiant soldier and a generous man.

The church was begun in the year 1116 of the era.... And from the year that the first stone of the foundations was laid down until such a time that the last one was put in place, forty-four years have elapsed.



<http://home.vxu.se/eolpj03/santiago.eng/history.html>

## *Camino de Santiago*

The history of the Camino is old and has a religious origin. It all started some 2000 years ago when the apostles divided the world in between them in order to spread the Christian faith. The legend says that James (Jacobo, in Spanish) got the Iberic peninsula, the area of Spain and Portugal. Documents from the 7th and 8th centuries tell us the story of how he spends a couple of years preaching in the country before he returns to Jerusalem where he according to the legend died as a martyr by beheading. This occurred around AD 42 and 44. The legend also mentions his companions, and the fact that they carried his body down to the ocean where they laid James in a ship built of stone. The ship was later carried by the wind and angels, passing today's Gibraltar. It eventually ended up close to Finisterre at the Spanish northeast coast in Galicia. James was buried further inwards the land where his tomb eventually became forgotten for 800 years.

The current political situation at this time was complex. The Christian Spanish people experienced difficult times with an ongoing pressure and menace from the Moorish kingdoms. In 636, Jerusalem fell and was conquered by Islamic forces. Later, in 711, Spain was invaded and large parts of the country were conquered. The power and influence of the Moors grew; they even made raids into France.



However, there were still parts of Spain, which had not been invaded, the regions of Asturias and today's Galicia.

It was in the area of Galicia that they eventually discovered the tomb of James under the reign of Alfonso II (B. 792 - D. 842). At some point during the 9th century a hermit named Pelayo discovered the remains of the apostle. According to the myth a rainfall of stars is supposed to have enlightened the spot for the tomb, hence the name Santiago "de Compostela" (campus stellae - "field of stars", or "the place for the star").

The remains were declared genuine by the local bishop. The Christian population really needed during this time a leader and a paragon, something that could bring them forth in combat and give them inspiration. Exactly this happened after the Christian conquest of Jerusalem. With these thoughts in mind, an idea started to spread among the Spanish Christians, a reconquest of Spain. Even the pope Calixtus II (reign between 1119 - 1124) was campaigning for this in his (supposedly written) work "Codex Calixtinus". However, the work is probably a gathering or works from different authors from the mid 1100 hundreds. It also includes the first guide for pilgrims, which many people knowing the vocation think was written by a Frenchman around 1130. It is also possible that he had close relations with the cathedral in Santiago.

Santiago (Santiago is another name for Saint James) also has a second name, Santiago de Matamoros (Matamoros - the Moors killer or the killer of the Moors). This is due to the fact that he already from the beginning was connected with the reconquest (la reconquista) of Spain. The city of Santiago was actually conquered by the Moors at one point, when the Moors also burned down the first church of Saint James. The legend says that the general of the Moors went into the church riding his horse, and that he let the horse drink from the holy water. Later, at the battle of Clavijo, Santiago (Saint James) came riding on his white horse according to the legend. He took the command of the forces and killed 70,000 Arabs (a surely exaggerated number). It was at this point he received his second name, Santiago de Matamoros.

It was a common belief during the middle ages that relics possessed great powers, especially if they were from such an important person as an apostle. This and the belief that he was the one who send Christendom to Spain were the main causes for the first pilgrimages. It is recorded that the first pilgrims arrived already during the 10th century and even more during the 11th. Nevertheless, it was only during the 12th century Santiago achieved the same status as Rom or Jerusalem. The city became one of the main religious goals, mainly due the archbishop Diego Gelmirez (1100 - 1140), of the early medieval pilgrim movement.



The origin of the city and its golden age begun when the first cathedral was built over the tomb of Santiago, shortly thereafter houses and other building begun to spread.