



What do you take with you?

When people advise you to take the bare minimum, please believe them. Apart from the fact that glamour and variety become totally meaningless on the walk, every gram starts to weigh more as you walk. The general rule is that your backpack should not weigh more than 10% of your bodyweight. Take light, loose clothing that won't get too creased and dries easily, with options for cold or wet weather. The following list is suitable for spring or autumn where temperatures varied from about 10 - 35°C. Asterisked items could probably be left behind in high summer.

Recommended List

Clothing:
2/3 short sleeved shirts or t-shirts - fast drying and non crease
1 pr shorts - fast drying material (not cotton) (Note - not acceptable wear off the Camino for visits to churches etc.)
2 pr zip-off longs or 1 pr plus light track pants for evenings/pyjamas
1 lightweight long sleeved shirt if you need sun protection while walking
3 sets underwear (one on, one to wash, one to dry)
2/3 pairs of socks
1 pr comfy sandals or flip flops to change into at the end of each day or to give feet a break
rain poncho (which is useful as a ground sheet as well)
Light sleeping bag/blanket. * For any time other than high summer season when you could get by with a light sarong or sheet, sleeping bags are essential as many refugios don't keep blankets. The lightweight ones are fine for most weather - (Cape Storm Midge or similar - 300g or First Ascent from Cape Union Mart - 500g). Make a pillow out of your clothing of take a lightweight pillow case into which you can stuff soft clothing each night.
Small, light torch or LED head torch
sun hat/cap
Lightweight wind breaker (for cooler times a more substantial jacket may be needed)
swimwear
Coloured thermal vest or long-sleeved sweatshirt to double as evening wear/pyjamas*
Sleep shirt/nightie (optional)
Sleeveless fleece waistcoat* (optional)
Toiletries:
Soap or shower/shampoo gel, toothpaste & brush, moisturiser, deodorant, suntan lotion, minimal makeup, comb/brush, laundry soap
General:
Small diary/notebook and pen
Money belt
A few pegs, nylon cord 2 metres long for a wash line, safety pins to attach wet clothes onto the back of your backpack
Earplugs - these are invaluable to counteract disturbance in the plane, the snoring and rustling of plastic bags by early starters in refugios, the chatting (frequent) and the traffic noise (infrequent)
Map/guidebook
Credit card, phone card, passport in a money belt
Water bottle (you can easily use plastic cool drink bottles obtained there) or a "camelback"



Recommended List Continued . . .

Light, easy drying travel towel
Sarong (which can be used for a wrap, a scarf, a sheet, a towel, or a cover when it is too hot for sleeping bag.)
Small Swiss army knife, scissors and/or clippers (remember that trains (eg Eurostar) and all airlines forbid carrying knives in cabin luggage.)
Zip-lock plastic bags to keep things dry and accessible
Walking stick - many pilgrims recommend walking with one or two sticks, claiming it is easier on the knees and helps on inclines/declines. Cape Union Mart offers the Italian 'Master' brand which "telescopes" to about 10cm. Wooden ones are available in shops and at some refugios, some complete with gourds and scallop shells. It is also suggested that you train with a stick to toughen the hands ahead of time.
Remember to have some way of securing your backpack for travelling - either padlocks, an outer cover that locks or shrink-wrap (available in Cape Town and Johannesburg airports international departure halls)
Optional Extras:
Camping gas stove and mugs or a little spiral immersion heater, plug for Spain, camping cup, tea bags, coffee sachets and cup of soup packets
Travel alarm clock
Space blanket (± R15 Trappers' Trading)
1 neck scarf/bandana
Two large suction wall hooks to use in the showers. There are very few clothes hooks to hang your dry, dirty or wet clothes and, some of the showers don't have doors
A universal bathplug
Small sewing kit (hotel sample)

Further Recommendations:

LOCAL CLOTHING STORES	
African Nature	Try the factory shop in Westlake Park in Tokai. Turn right at the end of the M3 as if going to Ou Kaapse Weg. (zip-off longs, shirts, fleeces etc)
Mr Price	Dri-Tech shirts - short and long at about R45 which are light, dry quickly and are supposed to wick the moisture away from the skin - mostly from the men's department
Cape Storm	long sleeved shirts- almost like a fly-fishing shirt with UV protection and an air vent in the back; long black pants, not detachable but a great fabric, which dries very quickly so could be washed daily; ultra lightweight warm tops and jackets
Cape Union Mart	(nationwide, especially their K-Way range), 3/4 pants and longs with zip off bottoms
Sportsman's Warehouse	Moisture management t-shirts (mountaineering undershirts) quick drying, 3/4 pants and sweat-wicking tops
Plastics for Africa	rain ponchos which cover the pack
Due South	(Woodlands Boulevard Pretoria): quick drying sleeveless tops
Hikers Paradise	(Pretoria): Long sleeved tops from R275, tight fitting for warmth even when wet



FOOTWEAR AND FOOT CARE

Boots, trainers or sandals? One pair of socks or two? Popping blisters or leaving them alone?

The debates continue about the best options for walking the Camino. Whatever you choose, get them well beforehand so you can wear them in and get used to them before starting the pilgrimage. On the Camino your feet are all important so don't skimp on footwear.

BOOTS AND SHOES

New Balance	black cross trainers (no 806); Hikers (R645); trail shoes (trainer type - expensive but excellent); walking shoes - "All Terrain" type (printed on the inside sole at the heel.),light, not waterproof but dry quickly
Hi-Tech	KAVLAR - very lightweight, almost like running shoe material; 'Boulder' watertight boots; walking shoes, ALL TERRAINS; Altitudes or Altitude 2's - waterproof, have a good grip and feel great
Montrail Gortex	from the Quays in Knysna
Hiking boots	Timberland in Cape Town
Nevados	very light leather boots
Women's Nike	air/trail/exposure sports shoes, all terrain
La Sportiva Trekking boots	with Goretex and Vibram soles

SANDALS

New Balance	black cross trainers (no 806); Hikers (R645); trail shoes (trainer type - expensive but excellent); walking shoes - "All Terrain" type (printed on the inside sole at the heel.),light, not waterproof but dry quickly
SA Rocky sandals	
Hi-Tec sandals	
Merrell Hiking Sandals	
Cape Union Mart	their own brand, much cheaper (R100) and perfect
Tevas soft leather sandals or strops	available in Spain and UK

Some pilgrims carry rubber slops (flip flops) but as all bath mats in the albergues are plastic they are less likely to carry fungal foot infections than do wooden ones



SOCKS

As with boots / shoes don't skimp. Experiment until you've found the type that suit you and don't wait until the last few weeks to make your selection. Wear nylon "knee highs" (pop socks) under hiking socks to prevent rubbing.

Falke Coolmax	For thin inner socks
Falke TK2 thermal socks	For thick outer socks
Falke seamless hiking socks	For thick outer socks

FOOTWEAR TIPS

Hi-Tech 'Sole Saver' is a fluid rubber with which you can do DIY repairs to rubber soles
Choose shoes one to two sizes larger and always try them on with the socks you plan to wear on the walk

If your feet get wet then smear them with Vaseline

Lambs wool can be the answer to any abrasive problems

It's important for ladies to wear ladies' boots / shoes - amongst other things they're narrower at the heel than men's boots / shoes

Lacing of boots and shoes can be done in a number of ways: Cross lacing and parallel lacing are the most common methods but other variations can be made: for example, for the pilgrim experiencing problems with metatarsals the Arthur Lydiard method of lacing skips a couple of eyelets to leave the affected area free.

Some people recommend taking boots and socks off to air the feet at every rest stop (every 10 or 15 km)

Wear clean socks every day

Make sure that your boots/shoes are long enough to accommodate your toes on the downhill, to avoid damaging toenails.

Feet swell if you walk every day, so make sure shoes are also wide enough

Make sure that stitching on the toe of the sock is not going to hurt you - especially the knots at the end of the stitching

Keep feet dry

Think about getting extra padded inner soles too, but make sure shoes are still spacious with your socks on



BACKPACKS

We did an informal survey amongst returning pilgrims to find out what type and size backpack one should carry. Consensus was that it's all about travelling light (35 - 45 litre capacity). Most men preferred backpacks with an internal frame, but cautioned on not filling every available space!

Orca	Backpacks (Bowwood Road Claremont, Cape Town)
Cape Union Mart	'Outdoor' Quadrant pack, waterproof 45-litre (about R450). It carries a lifetime guarantee with it on zips etc.
	K-Way Kilimanjaro
	35 litre "Duzi" which has side and back pockets and a sternum strap
	45 litre Lowe Alpine, no frame