

WALKING FROM LISBON TO PORTO IN SHORTER STAGES.

The section of the Caminho Português between Lisbon and Porto has its supporters and its detractors. There is a lot of road walking, and the stages are sometimes long. But on the plus side, Lisbon is an incredible city, and the arrows start right at the cathedral, where you can get your first stamp. There are lovely places on this section, like Santarém, Tomar, the Roman ruins at Conimbriga, and the beautiful city of Coimbra. The Portuguese people top the charts in terms of hospitality and kindness, many speak English, and you get a chance to see the “off the beaten path” parts of a country that is already “off the beaten path” for mass tourism.

Many of those who are attracted to the idea of walking the Caminho Português starting in Lisbon are discouraged because some of the stages south of Porto are listed as more than 30 kms for a day’s walk. This short document is intended to give pilgrims some suggestions about how to cut these stages into more manageable lengths.

There are really two different ways to do this. One would be to take advantage of the private and public transportation options described below to just “skip over” several kms to bring a 30+ km stage down to your comfort level. The other would be to carefully plan intermediate stops outside of the “normal stages.” Because of the shortage of accommodation, this would involve transportation out and back, but you would be able to “walk every step” if that’s important to you.

The information provided here was verified as carefully as possible, but you should be sure to check for updates and changes before you plan any particular trip. In addition, this document is intended to be used in conjunction with the Confraternity of St. James’ online guide to the Lisbon-Porto section, [CSJ](#) and the ViaLusitana’s website, particularly their comprehensive list of accommodation: [Via Lusitana](#)

COMMUTER TRAINS

The Lisbon commuter lines run from Lisbon to Azambuja. There are stops in the following places along the Caminho:

Moscavide, Sacavém, Bobadela, Santa Iria, Povoas, Alverca, Alhandra, Vila Franca de Xira, Castanheira do Ribatejo, Carregado, Vila Nova da Rainha, and Azambuja.

The trains run on one set of tracks, but there are three different lines with different stops. Trains are more frequent during working hours (several per hour), but there are schedules for evening and weekends as well.

You can find precise details on the commuter trains from Lisbon to Azambuja at this website: [CP - Tomar](#)

REGIONAL TRAINS

Several regional train routes stop along the Caminho.

1. Lisbon-Tomar. This train has stops in most of the commuter train towns as well as Reguengo, Santarém, Vale de Figueira, Riachos (off the camino and 4 km from Golegã on foot), and Tomar. Trains run about once an hour Monday through Friday, less frequently on weekends.
2. Lisbon-Porto. This train has stops in the Caminho towns of Santarém, Vale de Figueira, Mato de Miranda, Riachos (4 km on foot from Golegã), Coimbra, Mealhada, and Porto. Twice a day, one leaves Santarém at 12:56, the other at 20:56).
3. Coimbra-Aveiro-Porto. This train stops in Mealhada and Aguim. There is very frequent service on this line, with more than 15 trains a day during the week.
4. Linha da Vouga. This train has stops between Albergaria a Velha, Pinheiro da Bemposta, Oliveira de Azemeis, São João da Madeira, and Arrifana. Between Albergaria and Oliveira, there are only two trains a day, one leaving a 6 am, the other at 14:43. But between Oliveira and Arrifana, there are about 8 daily trains during the week, with times spread out across the day and evening.

For current information on Portuguese trains, see [CP](#)

BUSES

Though some warn that the timeliness of the buses may be less than perfect, there is also an option to use the bus between some of the towns.

Coimbra (18:00) – Agueda (19:15) – Albergaria a Velha (19:35)– Oliveira de Azemeis (19:55)

São João da Madeira (20:10) – Porto (21:00)

ALBERGUE “PICK AND DROP”

Albergue owners in Santarém, Golegã, Tomar, and Alvaizere are happy to offer “on demand” pick up and drop off. This will allow you total flexibility in deciding when and where to stop and start. The fee is a surcharge to the lodging price, it is not a taxi service. The hostels are also happy to arrange bag transport on these stages for their guests. Contact them directly. Do not hesitate. They speak English fluently and are eager to help you. These owners work with each other to help provide the best overall service possible to pilgrims. Price for transporting one pilgrim and bag, 8 euros; two or more, 15 euros.

Santarém Hostel. [Email](#) [Facebook](#) [WEB Page](#) Tel: 965 832 702 (mobile); 243 322 256 (fixed). Speak to Mario.

Casa da Tia Guida (Albergue Solo Duro), Golegã. [Email](#). Tel: 249 976 802 OR 935 640 550 OR 935 640 551. Speak to Leonor.

Hostel 2300 Thomar, Tomar [Facebook](#) [Email](#). Tel: 965 515 100. Speak to Sonia.

Albergaria Pinheiros, Alvaizere. [Web Page](#). Email: [Email](#) Tel: 91 544 01 96 OR 91 115 08 17. Speak to Carlos.

Typical stages from Lisbon to Porto:

Day 1 – Lisbon to Vila Franca de Xira (37 km)
Day 2 – Vila Franca - Azambuja (20 km)
Day 3 – Azambuja - Santarém (32 km)
Day 4 – Santarém - Golegã (30.5 km)
Day 5 – Tomar (32 km)
Day 6 – Tomar - Alvaizere (32 km)
Day 7 – Alvaizere - Rabaçal (33 km)
Day 8 – Rabaçal - Coimbra (32 km)
Day 9 – Coimbra - Mealhada (26 km)
Day 10 – Mealhada - Agueda (28 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)

What follows are suggestions on how to shorten the stages that are over 30 kms.

DAY 1. There are several different ways to break up the first stage out of Lisbon. It is 37 km from the Lisbon Cathedral to Vila Franca de Xira. (These suggestions are reproduced from the Confraternity of St. James' online guide to the Caminho from Lisbon, which is available here: [CSJ](#))

Option One. 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:

[WEB Page](#); Tivoli Oriente: [WEB Page](#). Rooms at these hotels range from 80€ and upwards.

For the budget conscious, there is also a youth hostel: [WEB Page](#)

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.

Option Two. 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 from the Lisbon Cathedral, 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.

Option Three. 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.

Option Four. Walk 29 km from Lisbon to Verdelha a Baixa (0.8 km off route) with accommodations and restaurants. Directions for this detour are given in the CSJ online guide.

SOME GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STAGES FROM AZAMBUJA TO RABAÇAL.

Azambuja to Rabaçal, about 160 kms, is typically listed as 5 stages, each of which is more than 30 kms. You can easily split each of those stages into two, with an albergue Pick and Drop at the half-way point of each stage. The hostel owners are very happy to help you arrange this; contact them directly.

Here are some suggestions for splitting Days 3 and 4 in half; the other days in this segment would follow the same pattern with a pick-up and drop-off at the mid-point:

Day 3. Walk from Azambuja to Porto Muge and then request a ride from Santarém Hostel. The next day, take a ride back to Porto Muge and walk into Santarém (two days of 15-16 km).

Day 4. Walk from Santarém to Vale de Figueira (10 km). Hostel pick up to return to Santarém, with drop-off the next day in Vale de Figueira. Vale de Figueira to Golegã is 20 km. Train can also be used between Vale de Figueira and Santarém.

If you are not as concerned about “walking every step,” you can always do the 32 km stage between Azambuja and Santarém in one day by walking some and taking the train for some of the way. For instance,

1. Take the train from Azambuja to Reguengo, 4Km walk to Valada, then 20Km walk to Santarém.
2. Walk to Valada, then 4Km to Reguengo, and then take the train to Santarém

The hostel owners can work with you to come up with other train options on some of the other stages, as there is good train service all the way up to Tomar.

If splitting the 30 km days into two 15-16 km days makes distances that are too short for you, you can design your own stages by calculating desired stopping and starting places by using the list below. The list of towns gives the distances between some obvious stopping points on that stretch of the Caminho.

You can calculate your distances and work out how to break the stages up with help from the albergue “pick and drop” system:

Azambuja 0
Porto Muge 16.4
Quinta das Varandas 2.5
Santarem (Santarém Hostel) 13.4
Vale Figueira 11.4
Estrada Real 9.5
Golegã (Albergue Sol Duro) 10.3
Grou 17.4
Guerreira 4
Tomar (Hostel 2300 Thomar) 8.3
Portela de Vila Verde 16.2
Cruce 6.2
Alvaizere (Albergaria Pinheiros) 8.9
Ansião (accommodation available) 14.5
Netos 3.7
A Café (Near Freixo) 2.0
Alvorge (accommodation available) (3.3)
Rabaçal (accommodation available) 12.3

The albergue owners have split up the route, with each one providing transportation near his/her own albergue. For transport between Azambuja and Vale Figueira, contact Santarém Hostel; from there to Golegã, contact Casa da Tia Guida; from Golegã to Cruce, contact Hostel 2300 Thomas; from Alvaizere to A Café (Near Freixo), contact Albergaria Pinheiros.

Here is an example of how to use that list. I’ve broken the 5 standard stages into 8 days, trying to come up with days between 20 and 25. It would involve 4 days with pick-ups and drop-offs:

Azambuja - Quinta das Varandas 18.9 (pick-up Santarem Hostel)
Quinta das Varandas- Vale Figueira 24.8 (pick-up and drop off Santarem Hostel)
Vale Figueira - Golegã 19.8 (places to stay- Casa da Tia Guida, Solo Duro)
Golegã - Guerreira 21.4 (pick-up and drop-off Hostal 2300 Thomar)
Guerreira - Portela de Vila Verde 24.5 (pick-up and drop off Albergaria Pinheiros)
Portela de Vila Verde - Alvaizere 15.1 (Albergaria Pinheiros)
Alvaizere - Alvorge 26 (new albergue in church here)
Alvorge - Rabaçal - Conimbriga (22) (places to stay)

Obviously, there are many ways to devise a plan like this, and knowing that the albergue owners are happy to help out with transportation makes things much easier.

DAY 8, RABAÇAL TO COIMBRA (32 KMS).

13 kilometers beyond Rabaçal, and directly on the Caminho, are the best preserved Roman ruins in Portugal, in Conimbriga. Visiting the ruins and the museum are well worth it. There are several private options in the nearby town of Condeixa a Nova (hourly buses from the Roman ruins to the town of Condeixa; it is 2.4 kms on foot). Private lodging in Condeixa includes Residencial Central Avenida, Av. Visconde Alverca 87, tel: 239 941 353 AND Residencial Borges, Rua Dona Maria Elsa Franco Sottomayor, 65, tel: 239 942 350. There is also a Portuguese pousada, prices on the high end, but you may find very good prices online: [WEB Page](#)
The second day would then be a 19 km walk into Coimbra.

Another option is to walk the first day to Cernache, approximately 20 kms from Rabaçal, where pilgrims may stay in the Jesuit Colegio da Imaculada Conceição. Phone in advance: 239 940 030. That would make the second day a shorter walk into Coimbra than if you stay in Condeixa.

Yet a third option would be to spend a night in the new, and highly recommended, albergue in Alvorge, 9 kms *before* Rabaçal (Then, backing up even further, the day before your walk to Alvorge could be Alvaizere to Alvorge, a total of about 26). Leaving Alvorge, the walk to Conimbriga/Condeixa would be a total of 22/24, which would also give you time to visit the Roman ruins. The next day would be a 19 km walk into Coimbra.

DAY 12, SAO JOÃO DA MADEIRA – PORTO (32.5)

Although there is no way to break the stage up, unless you want to stay at an expensive hotel in Grijo (18.5 km after Sao João), the Porto municipal bus system runs as far as Laborim (6 kms before Porto). Getting on the bus in Laborim would give you a 26.5 km day.

If you can, though, I highly recommend the walk from Vila Nova da Gaia across the upper level of the bridge, to the Porto Cathedral. The view from the park Jardim do Morro over to Porto's riverfront is stunning.

FINAL THOUGHTS. This document illustrates just a few of the many ways you can be creative and come up with manageable stages on those long days between Lisboa and Porto. As the number of albergues increases, the need for the "albergue pick and drop" will undoubtedly decrease. For instance, the recent opening of an albergue in Alvorge has given pilgrims a shorter option from Alvaizere. It's no longer necessary to walk 33 km from Alvaizere to Rabaçal; you can walk from Alvaizere to Alvorge and stay in the new albergue in the church, giving you a day of around 25 km.

BOM CAMINHO, PILGRIM! This short document was prepared by Laurie Reynolds, [Email](#), April, 2014, with a lot of help from members of the online Camino de Santiago forum, [WEB page](#). Updates and suggestions are most welcome.