

Santiago de Compostela is a monumental city located near the geographical centre of Galicia, Spain`s northern-and western most region. The city is 260 meters above sea level and the Atlantic coast is only 30 kilometers away, therefore the humid oceanic climate guarantees mild temperatures throughout the year.

Santiago de Compostela is the capital of Galicia and the seat of the executive (Xunta de Galicia) and the legislature (Parlamento) of this autonomous Spanish region. Its actual population is over 116,000, of which 33,000 are students attending the University of Santiago de Compostela, the cornerstone of the city`s and the autonomous region`s education for more than 500 years.

Until the 9th century, the city of Santiago did not exist as such. In the beginning, there was only a small Roman settlement which turned into a necropolis with the passing of the centuries. However, the discovery of the tomb of the Apostle James in the 9th century was a turning point in the spiritual history of Europe: Santiago de Compostela started to develop during the Middle Ages until it became one of the three pilgrimage centers of the Christendom together with Rome and Jerusalem. This thousand-year-old pilgrim route (the Way of St. James) attracts thousands of pilgrims and tourists year after year, who enjoy visiting an exceptional historic city declared a World Heritage City by UNESCO in 1985.

Santiago de Compostela is a city with a simple structure. Its centre is the so-called “casco histórico” (old town), which corresponds roughly to the area that used to be surrounded by 11 th -century walls. The old town is home to an important number of monuments that can be visited, as well as museums, foundations and the oldest buildings belonging to the University of Santiago de Compostela. There are also numerous accommodations, gastronomic establishments, cafés and small craftwork shops which make old town a lively and dynamic area.

The former location of one of the city gates, Porta Faxeira, is the natural access from the old town to the Alameda. This city park, which is surrounded by the monumental quarter, the “Ensanche” (urban expansion area) and the University's South Campus is also the starting point of an interesting route around Compostela`s green spaces which goes around the outskirts of the old town, providing magnificent views of its monuments and touring some of the city's most outstanding works of contemporary architecture.

More information:

- For discovering Galicia: <http://www.turgalicia.es/>
- What to see in Santiago de Compostela: <http://www.santiagoturismo.com/>
- The Way of St. James: <http://blog.xacobeo.es/>