

Sheet 3: Coimbra – Porto

Coimbra, ancient capital of Portugal and boasting the nations oldest uni-

versity, has transformed itself into a vibrant modern city. A list of the wide selection of hotels and hostels, along with a city map, can be obtained from the helpful tourist office located immediately (right) as you enter town over the river Mondego. Of particular interest to the pilgrim are the church of Santiago (closed) directly on the camino (see photo) and the 'old' cathedral *Sé Velha* both dating from the 12thC.



Igreja de Santiago and wayside arrow

Accommodation is, again, limited on the next stretch to Porto. If you are fit it breaks down into 4 full days of around 30km each (with some intermediate possibilities). To continue we pick up the river again passing the city rail station 'A' (3 different stations serve Coimbra) and make our way over the busy road roundabout heading due North alongside the EN 111-1 which we leave shortly afterwards to take quiet roads to Anadia.

There are no sites of particular historic or pilgrim significance on these stages into Porto. The first part is along quiet country roads interspersed with stretches of pathway. Time, perhaps, to enter the inner realms of contemplative walking. *"We are surrounded by trivia. There is much to distract us from the inner path, but what profit is there in the outward journey if it is not accompanied by expanded awareness? A pilgrim must travel on two paths simultaneously. The tourist will look for the stone altar, the pilgrim an altered state. The one seeks sacred sites the other insight ..."* From *A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino Fisterra*.

The final stage from São João da Madeira to the cathedral in Porto is 37km. This is a long and tiring stretch as we cross and re-cross the A-1 and N-1. There is no accommodation directly on the waymarked route until we reach Vila Nova da Gaia (although possibilities exist off the route).

Porto is a wonderfully rich and diverse city and worth an extended stay to rest from your exertions and to soak up some of its atmosphere and history. See *A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino Português* for suggested city 'sites' and a list of a pilgrim friendly hostels and offices. This guide also includes detailed stage maps, contour guides and notes for walking the 126 miles to the border with Spain at Valença / Tui and the remaining 115 miles to Santiago. A total distance of 241 miles divided into 11 stages. Several new pilgrim hostels have opened up in recent years and the advent of budget airlines flying directly to Porto make this one of the most accessible and pilgrim-friendly routes.

Check out recent changes on www.caminoguides.com (Click on: Updates for latest information on this and other routes).



Porto Cathedral

