



St Jean Pied de Port



St Jean Pied de Port ([map](#)), or “Saint John at the Foot of the Pass” is in the Pyrénées department in Southwestern France close in the Pyrenean foothills. The town is also the old capital of the traditional Basque province of Lower Navarre. It is also the traditional starting point for the Camino Francés. If you start your Camino here, you are 8km from the Spanish border, however those 8km may as well be doubled if you factor the ascent. The town is made up of one long main street, crossing over the River Nive as you exit the town.

Getting to St Jean is not as easy as you think. You can either fly to Biarritz and catch a train from nearby Bayonne. It is the nearest city to St Jean and Ryanair offer regular flights. For those of you who live outside of Europe, you many have to fly to Barcelona or Paris. You can travel to St Jean directly from those places also. There are plenty of

places to stay in St Jean once you arrive (*Gronze*). If you are planning to walk during peak season, it is advisable to book a room in advance as you are not guaranteed a bed on arrival. I have stayed in *Gite Ultraia* and highly recommend it, however *Gite Beilari* is well known and well liked. Many of the people you meet here will walk with you for much of your Camino.

The old town of St Jean Pied de Port is really one old cobbled street, the rue de la Citadelle which runs downhill from the 15th century Porte St-Jacques to the Porte d'Espagne. The street crosses the River Nive on an old stone bridge and there are many pictures of these views strewn across the internet. Up above the town is the citadel which once held great importance in St Jean Pied de Port. There are many restaurants offering pilgrim menus and shops selling anything you might have forgotten. A top tip is to visit the local Lidl to buy some snacks for the tough walk the next day. The pilgrim office will either give you a credencial or stamp your own one, which you need in order to stay in the albergues along the way and have maps and useful advice. Heed any advice the volunteers there give you, especially if you should cross the Napoleon pass or if you should walk via Val Carlos. The weather plays an important part in this decision. Your next stop after leaving St Jean is Orisson after 8kms of gradual ascent. But remember to enjoy the views!



Pilgrim Office in St Jean