

A pilgrimage from Bordeaux to Santiago de Compostela by racing bicycle

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Travel time: July 2004.

Most people imagine that a pilgrimage has always something to do with devoutness but nor me neither a lot of young people which I met on the track had any religious attitude to travel to Santiago. Interestingly a lot of that pilgrims felt some kind of unknown spirit while coming close to the end of its pilgrimage.

The hike on the French hiking trail from Bordeaux to Santiago is even suitable for young people aged 16 or elder because a lot of peaceful hikers are on the same track every day and the countless Youth Hostels are prepared for them.

Bordeaux was reached comfortable by night train from Geneva at 8 o'clock morning. Next to the main entrance of the railway station is a tourist office where you can get you first stamp of your pilgrimage.

All GPS-Data given at WGS84. Download all recommendable places as MapSource-File: [Download](#) (mps, 2kb)

Day 1: Bordeaux - Orthez

179km, 805hm[↑], 728hm[↓], 6.31h

Map: Michelin No. 525.

[Relief profile](#) (gif, 22kb)

After wriggling out of Bordeaux follow the almost flat road D651 with slight traffic through pine forest up to Mont-de-Marsan. The road D390 after Marsan is in bad condition but its very scenic with almost no traffic and is the only way to avoid the busy main road D933 to Orthez which you have to take after St. Sever. Now its getting hilly and this sucks when you just climbed the top of the ridge and see into a valley with steep slopes to the next ridge.

In Orthez its tricky to find the helpful tourist office (N43 29.303 W0 46.493) opened Monday to Saturday from 10AM to 6PM. Opposite is the Hotel Reine Jeanne, 44 rue Bourg-Vieeux, 64300 Orthez, Tel. 0559 670076. It offers small but clean [rooms](#) in an ancient atmosphere. The bike can be stored safe in the courtyard. A basic single room is 50€ but also more comfortable rooms are available. The reasonable breakfast buffet is 7€ extra. Recommendable. [Map](#).

Top:

+ Nice flat and quiet road to Mont-de-Marsan.

Flop:

- Arterial road out of Bordeaux.
- Up-and-down after St. Sever.

[Up](#)

Day 2: Orthez - Puente la Reina

166km, 2083hm↑, 1792hm↓, 6.40h

Map: Michelin No. 525 and 573.

[Relief profile](#) (gif, 22kb)

Even when its some addition altitude and the road D23 is not in good shape but it has nearly no traffic and the countryside is very scenic. After Sauveterre-de-Bearn follow the main road D933 where the surface gets better but is also more busy till Saint Jean-Pied-de-Port. From here the road lead through a narrow green valley to Arneguy where you cross the border to Spain. At the village limits is a gasoline station selling refreshments. Now the road rise steeply till you reach the Puerto de Ibaneta with the small pilgrim church on the highest point.

Now its going down bypassing Roncesvalle and some kilometer later a gasoline station where you can stock up. Instead of following the main road to Pamplona take the road NA172 left side at the junction shortly after the gasoline station. This small road is going down through a beautiful valley nearly without traffic but where the reconstruction of the road starts the beauty stops. Tip: Instead of following the new road NA172 (former NA2040) take the old road at the junction to Nagore and Agoitz which is much more scenic.

After reaching the road NA150 and changed at Urroz to NA234 and some kilometers later to NA 601 the country side is nor very interesting neither flat and sometimes very windy so that the only wish is to reach the destination. The tourist information in Puente la Reina is at the Plaza de Mayor (N42 40.274 W1 48.921). The nice ancient and nicely renovated Hotel Rural Bidean at Calle de Mayor 20, 31100 Puente la Reina, Tel. 948 341156 has small but clean [rooms](#) for 40€including a very delicious breakfast buffet. Highly recommendable. [Map](#). More information in various languages at www.bidean.com.

Top:

- + Most part of the route.
- + Historical part of Puente la Reina.
- + Hotel Rural Bidean.

Flop:

- New road NA172 bypassing Nagore and Agoitz.

[Up](#)

Day 3: Puente la Reina - Burgos

185km, 1824hm↑, 1313hm↓, 7.13h

Map: Michelin No. 573.

[Relief profile](#) (gif, 22kb)

The road N111 is getting quite hilly shortly after Puente la Reina without getting to a higher level. At Los Arcor you can either continue the N111 with lots of up-and-down including more traffic or follow the N112 on good road with less traffic and later change to the N134 which is mostly flat with more but not too much traffic so I did. Cross Logono city and at its limits the only possibility is to take the A12 "Autovia" which you have to follow for the next 15 kilometers on the hard shoulder till Najera. Actually its not allowed to cycle here but even the police did not turn their heads while passing us. But keep in mind that traffic is busy and fast which not everyone can tolerate.

From Najera its of the "Autovia" but continuously hilly up to Puerto de la Pedraja. After the pass its getting down more or less till Burgos. Nevertheless most of the route has a wide verge for peaceful cycling off the traffic.

The tourist information (N42 20.610 W3 42.017) of Burgos is open daily from 9AM to 8PM. The stamp for pilgrims is available at the ticket counter of the cathedral open daily till 7.30 PM. For accommodation the choice was Hotel Espana, Paseo del Espanol 32, 09003 Burgos, Tel. 947 206340. The Hotel is located in the city center and is for its location quite cheap with 35€for a small, well used [room](#) with creaking floor, small bed and small bath. Breakfast is 6,50€and not too bad if you want to save the time for looking around for another location. The bike can be stored in the reception hall. Not very recommendable but OK for one night.

[Map](#). More information at www.hotelespana.net.

It seems that Burgos is a magnet for elderly people which always are blocking the best seats of the coffee bars. Also its hard to find a restaurant serving dinner before 8 PM.

Top:

+ Cathedral of Burgos (3€entrance).

Flop:

- Burgos.

[Up](#)

Day 4: Burgos - Leon

192km, 844hm[↑], 854hm[↓], 7.08h

Map: Michelin No. 575.

[Relief profile](#) (gif, 22kb)

Starting from Burgos on the road N120 with lots of traffic which is getting almost nonexistent at the beginning of the highway running mostly parallel to the national road. After two short hills the road is almost flat passing through farming land. Occasionally bypassing a village or a gasoline station where you can stock up. After reaching the N601 traffic is getting more busy but also the road is more wide with a verge mostly aside. One more hill to climb through a industrial zone and than down to Leon.

Leon is a beautiful city with lot of young visitors, coffee bars, restaurants and snack bars with suitable prices, nice squares, historical center without traffic... The tourist information (N42 35.951 W5 34.046) is opposite the cathedral. A cheap place to stay while student holidays is the University Campus at San Pelayo 15 (N42 35.997 W5 34.127) two minutes walking distance from the cathedral. Its only 16.50€ for a small, useful furnished (student standard) [room](#), self covering basic bed and clean own bathroom. The location is quiet, has some vending machine for snacks and drinks and a nice small garden area. Storing your bike securely here is no problem. Basic breakfast is served in the student canteen which is much better than you expect for that price. For that small money highly recommendable. [Map](#).

Internet is available at Avenida Ordone 7 (N42 35.860 W5 34.355).

Top:

+++ City center of Leon.

Flop:

- Boring route especially with wind which always comes from the front.

[Up](#)

Day 5: Leon - Sarria

202km, 2288hm[↑], 2682hm[↓], 8.09h

Map: Michelin No. 571.

[Relief profile](#) (gif, 27kb)

First stop and go traffic out of the city till the bypassing road is reached. Now traffic is getting less and with good speed on nice road towards Astorga. If you follow the original track of Xacobeo take the rough road LE142 to El Ganso and further on to the top of the pass where a huge wooden cross is waiting for pilgrims. Some more climb and its going down in break murdering slopes but take care at Manjarin because the road is of paving stone here and very narrow too but its only a few meters. Now further down to Ponferrada and through city center with lot of traffic and after passing the center slowly upwards on nice road N IV. As steeper the road gets as less the traffic will be.

At Pedrafita do Cebreiro where you can stock up with food and drinks take the road on the left side at the entrance of the village. The good and nearly empty road LU634 winds further up passing the statue of Xacobeo near the Puerto El Poyo before it goes down to Triacastela and further on to Sarria.

On the road to the city center is the Hotel Londres (N42 46.685 W7 24.580), Calvo Sotelo 153, 27600 Sarria, Tel: 532456. It offers tiny grubby [rooms](#) for 24€ The bike can be stored in the basement. Across the street is a big supermarket and some 100 meter

down the road is the nice river promenade with lots of restaurants and bars which are perfect for relaxing, watching, eating. Also close by is the 3*Hotel Alfonso and at its back a Internet bar (N42 46.542 W7 24.671). [Map](#).

Top:
+ Nice route with nice countryside on mostly nice road with less traffic.
+ River promenade in Sarria.

Flop:
- Sometimes poor signposting.

[Up](#)

Day 6: Sarria - Santiago de Compostela

118km, 1681hm↑, 1856hm↓, 5.02h

[Relief profile](#) (gif, 24kb)

Soon after Sarria the road C535 its getting hilly till Santiago de Compostela is reached. A lot of up-and-down, sometimes more steep, sometimes less steep, sometimes with a longer piece of straight road in between but nearly 1700 hm all together. Nor a flow neither a rhythm will arise so all in all this piece of route is hard-core. Comforting the road is mostly in good shape with hard shoulder and only little traffic.

While following the road C535 across Samos and Portomarin some 6 kilometers after Gonzar a way on the right side leads directly to Palas de Rei and is closed to all traffic. That might be the reason why this road is in such a poor [condition](#) that most people would not call it continuously tarred and is a real challenge for racing bicycles even [like my one](#). Not only that its tricky to find a suitable way through all the potholes but also avoid hitting the pilgrims. In return the countryside is very beautiful.

Short before crossing Palais de Rei follow the normal road till the airport of Santiago is reached left side on the top of a hill. Here the road leads into a highway which is forbidden to cyclist but another route guide you around the airport always the fence left side and at the roundabout follow the signs towards the city. The tourist information (N42 52.676 W8 32.700) is in the pedestrian precinct close to the pilgrim office where next to it is a left luggage [service](#) which might be only available in summer.

Top:
+ Scenic landscape on the "Pilgrim road" after Gonzar.

Flop:
- All this up-and-down.
- Chilly morning with 16°C temperature.

[Up](#)

Packing list

- 1 Pair of MTB-shoes with clickies which you can wear as normal shoes too.
- 2 Pair of socks.
- 2 Cycling shorts.
- 1 Cycling shirt short-sleeved.
- 1 Windstopper jacket with detachable sleeves.
- 1 Pair of cycling trouser legs.
- 1 Pair of rainprotectors for the shoes.
- 1 Pair of gloves.
- 1 Helmet.
- 1 Pair of sunglasses.
- 1 Raincoat.
- 1 Youth hostel sleeping bag made of silk.
- 1 Fleece towel.
- 1 Underpants.
- 1 Undershirt.
- 1 Shirt.
- 1 Trouser with detachable legs.
- 1 Bag with: Small bottle of shampoo, toothbrush, little tube of toothpaste, little tube of washing cream, throwaway razor, cream for

your backside, handkerchiefs, sticky tape, 3 tubes wrapped into old socks for protection, spare battery for the mobile and digi-cam, spare key for the lock.

All this was packed in a waterproof Ortlieb-bag size M (82x26cm) and secured on the carrier with two straps. The raincoat was stored on top of all for quick access.

In a small daypack was packed:

- Maps which were stored in zipper plastic bags.
- Sun cream waterproof.
- MP3 player.
- Digi cam.
- Mobile.
- Earmuffs.
- First-aid kit.
- Breakdown kit with mounting tool for tyre-change, repair kit, spare valve, chain-link, spare battery for the speedometer, break pads, Topeak Alien multitool, spoke mounting tool, chain oil.
- Pump with manometer.
- LED torch and headband mounting.
- Travel documents, money, credit card.

All together around [6 kilos](#).

On the bike:

- Lock.
- Speedometer HAC4.
- [GPS](#) Garmin eTrax Vista.
- 2 One-litre bottles.
- 4 Spare spokes taped to the frame.
- Carrier.

If you fly back from Santiago you can use the [packing service](#) at the airport in the departure hall which might be suitable for less expensive bikes and MTBs or order a bike-save at a distributor like www.roseversand.de how shipped it to Santiago without any additional costs. It takes around 7 to 10 days for delivery and you must have a address in Santiago handy. And remember to inform the consignee.

Find useful information about Xacobeo at www.xacobeo.es and about accommodation in Spain at en.infohostal.com.

[Up](#)

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00:00:00
0.00

07:15:32
178.29

Höhe [m]

| | |
|----------|-----|
| Höhe [m] | |
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| Rechts: | 101 |
| Diff: | 79 |
| Mittel: | 94 |
| Max: | 164 |
| Min: | 22 |





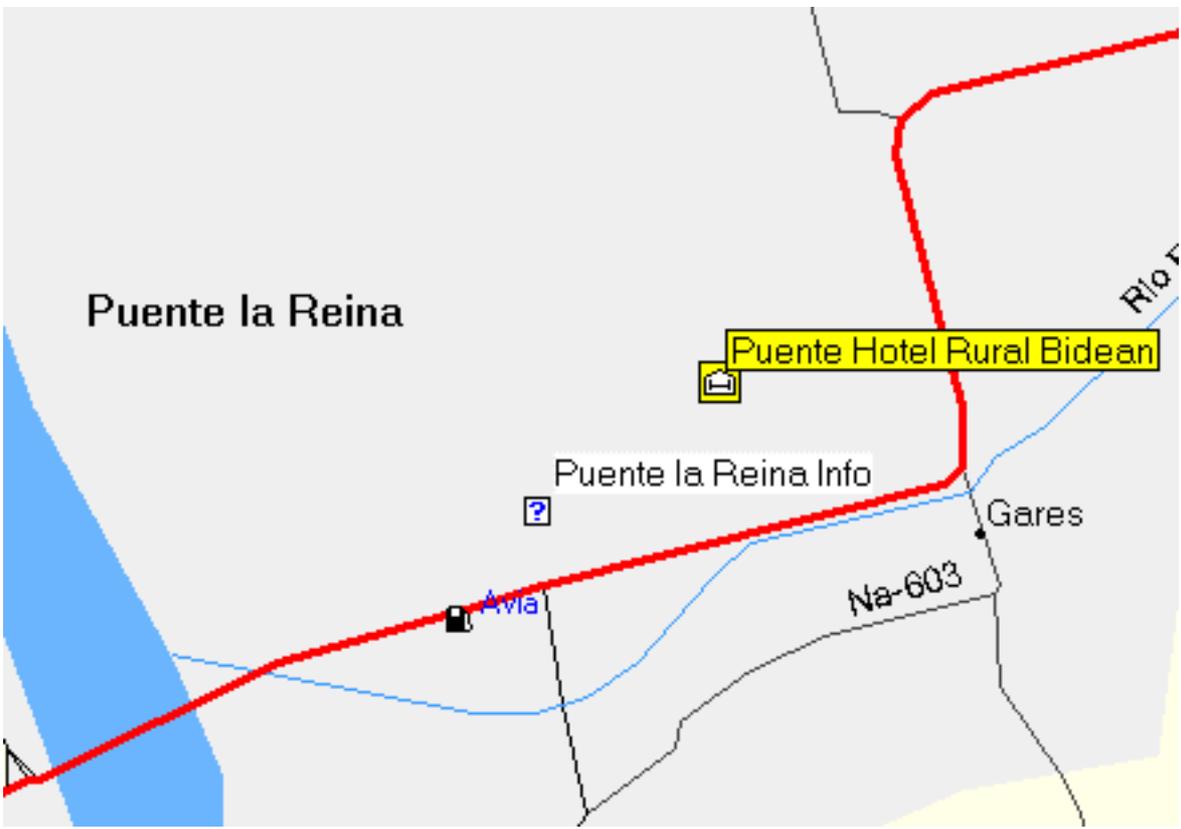
00:00:00
0.00

Pto. de Ibaneta

07:32:06
165.61



| | |
|----------|------|
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| Rechts: | 387 |
| Diff: | 290 |
| Mittel: | 443 |
| Max: | 1049 |
| Min: | 74 |



00:00:00
0.00

Puerto de la Pedraja

07:54:13
184.31

Höhe [m]

| | |
|----------|------|
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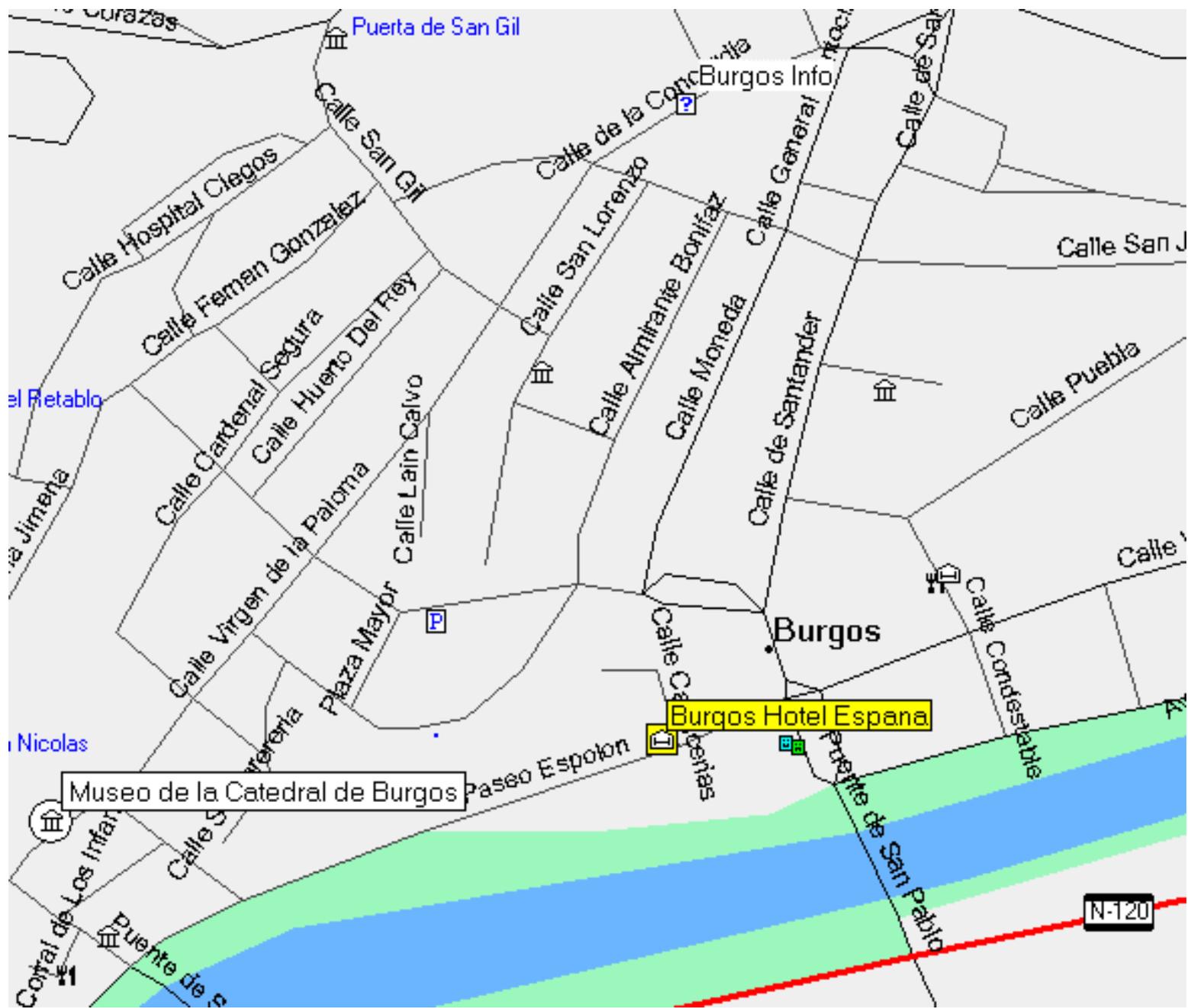
Puente la Reina

Logrono

Autovia

Burgos

[km]



Museo de la Catedral de Burgos

Burgos Hotel España

N-120

00:00:00
0.00

08:21:43
192.23



Burgos

Leon

Höhe
[m]

[km]

00:00:00
0.00

08:09:00
202.15

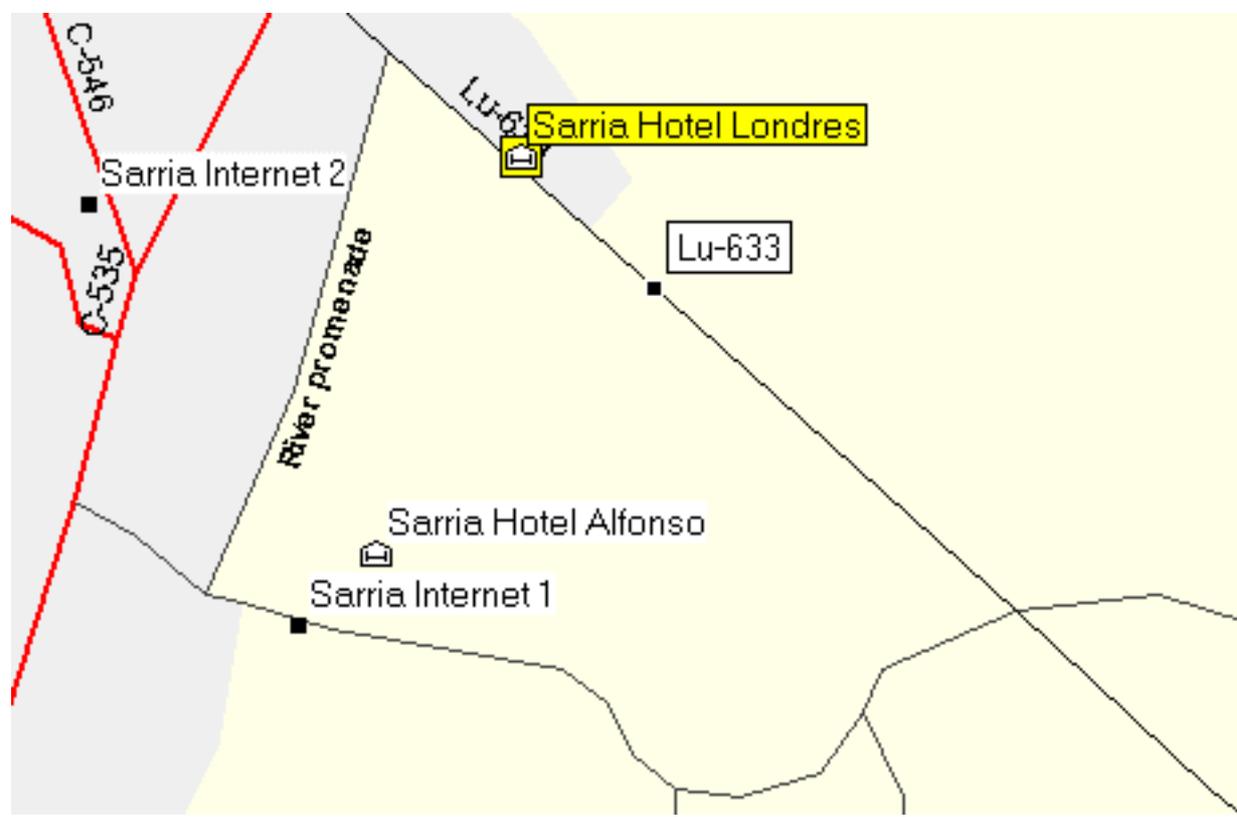
Höhe
[m]

Höhe
[m]

| | |
|----------|------|
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| Mittel: | 871 |
| Max: | 1471 |
| Min: | 432 |



[km]



00:00:00
0.00

05:32:04
118.20

Höhe [m]

Höhe [m]
Links: 445
Rechts: 273
Diff: -172
Mittel: 460
Max: 734
Min: 266

Sarria

Santiago de
Compostela

0.00 12.00 24.00 36.00 48.00 60.00 72.00 84.00 96.00 108.00 [km]

