



escape to: **Spain**

# So much more than sea and sand

Are you bored of Benalmadena and tired of Torremolinos? Metro Life checks out a few alternative things to do away from the Costas

## SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

The capital of the Galician region of north-west Spain is a World Heritage City, Christian pilgrimage destination, cultural capital and university town that is one of Spain's most impressive cities. Visually, the centre looks as if it has sprung from the pages of a Gothic comic and, with almost every building hewn from stone, it's an architect's dream. Despite its 'city of stone' nickname, Santiago has a warm heart and the university ensures a year-round youthful vibe. Camino Ways, the Dublin-based walking and cycling holiday specialists, offer specially tailored walking tours that cover the Camino de Santiago. This unique package covers the last one hundred kilometres of the French Way of the Camino de Santiago, from Sarria to Santiago de Compostela. Expect jaw-dropping views of the landscape of Galicia, gorgeously rustic accommodation and food to die for.

visit [www.caminoways.com](http://www.caminoways.com)

## EL TRASCANTABRICO

While most Irish people flock to the coasts of southern Spain for the hot temperatures, golden sands and faux-Dublin style pubs, the country's northern shores in the regions of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque Country go largely unnoticed. Known as Espana Verde – or Green Spain – the area is home to some of the best-conserved ecological areas in Europe, so it makes sense to carry on the green theme and visit them by train. El Trascantabrico (pictured) is a luxury train that runs from Santander to Leon along the scenic coast visiting hidden gems of towns along the way (meals are mainly taken in local restaurants when the train stops). The train features double-bed cabins with ensuite bathrooms and four lounges, one of which has a bar and a dance floor. It is decorated and lit like a small nightclub, with

entertainment every night.  
[www.luxurytrainclub.com](http://www.luxurytrainclub.com)



## CÓRDOBA

Córdoba lies about 160km inland from Málaga, making it an ideal away day from the Costas or a superb stand-alone destination. The city lies on the Guadalquivir river and is a blend of Arabic, Jewish and Christian culture and history – with particular highlights being a visit to the Grand Mosque, or Mezquita, built by the Moors in the 8th century and the Alcazar, or Fortress, built by Christians in 1328. For somewhere to stay, try the Palacio del Bailio (pictured) in the old quarter.



## PUIGCERDÀ

Just 2km from the French border, Puigcerdà in the heart of the Catalan Pyrenees is a busy town in winter for skiers but adapts nicely in the warmer months with a range of mountain activities on offer including hiking and biking.

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**There's plenty to do, whether it be a trip to the 13th-century Iglesia de Sant Domenec or taking advantage of the close proximity to the French border by exploring the nearby towns of Latour-de-Carol and Perpignan. There's also Europe's oldest pharmacy in Llívia and the world's oldest and largest solar furnace.**



**On the horizon: Weary pilgrims on the Camino Way have a lot to look forward to when they reach the stunning Santiago de Compostela**

## STAY IN A YURT IN ANDALUCIA

With Mongolia too far to visit, the Grazalema mountains in southern Spain may be the best place to stay in a (kind of) authentic Asian yurt. The Hoopoe Yurt Hotel (pictured) is set in three hectares of olive groves and unspoilt cork oak forest, right in the heart of the mountains. Cortes de la Frontera, a typical Andalusian 'white village', is a 20-minute walk away and the Cueva de la Pileta, with ancient cave paintings and underground galleries, is also nearby. The nearest town is Ronda, which is perched over the dramatic 100-metre Tajo gorge. Visit [www.yurthotel.com](http://www.yurthotel.com)

