

Santander Guide - June 2023

In this document, you can find some useful information about getting around Santander, as well as eating and drinking in the city. Any inaccuracies you find here are purely mine, but even with inaccuracies, I hope you find this information useful.

The associated map can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/DM2023-map>. I've listed a number of bars and restaurants, the easier thing to do is just google the name to find the location, but if you have any issues, get in touch (e.g.) on slack.

Especially worth noting is the information about when you can find food in Santander, as this can be very different from other countries.

Thanks in particular to Sven Heinemeyer, whose Higgs Days Guide to Santander was used as inspiration for this document.

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Getting around Santander

Arriving from the airport: Getting to downtown Santander from the airport is reasonably straightforward. There is a bus (S4) which connects the airport to Santander bus and train stations. The fare is €2.90 per person and you can consult the time-table [here](#). Alternatively, you can take a taxi from immediately outside the airport terminal (this should cost around €20).

Buses: There are many bus services which connect the Sardinero area (where Hotel Chiqui is located) to the downtown area. However, these generally don't appear on google maps and other apps. The best option is to use Moovit (<https://moovitapp.com>), which generally has all the lines, and up-to-date information. You can buy a ticket directly from the driver, or on most buses you can pay directly using a credit or debit card with one of the contactless terminals as you get on.

Taxis: There are a number of taxi ranks dotted around Santander, where you can simply jump in the next taxi. A small number of these are marked on the map. You can also request a local taxi to pick you up using the PideTaxi app (<https://pidetaxi.es/en/>), or calling +34 942 333 333. Another option is Cabify, which is a Spanish version of Uber/Lyft. You can get the app here: <https://cabify.com/en/>.

Travel to Bilbao Airport: To get to Bilbao airport from Santander, one option is to take a taxi, but this is likely to cost ~€150. In this case, it might be feasible to group together to share a taxi. Alternatively, you can take a coach directly from Santander Bus Station. These coaches should be booked in advance online (<https://www.alsa.es>) and take ~90 minutes to get to Bilbao Intermodal Bus Station. You can then take bus number A3247 to Bilbao airport from directly within the bus station (<https://www.bilbaoturismo.net/BilbaoTurismo/en/del-aeropuerto-a-bilbao>). This short journey takes about 20 minutes (and the buses depart every 20 minutes or so). If you choose to take the coach+bus, the full journey will take 2-2.5 hours (depending on traffic and connections).

Food and eating out in Santander

In Spain, the largest meal of the day is typically eaten around lunch-time (any time from about 13:30 - 16:00). Dinner (*cena*) is then eaten rather late compared to many other European countries, which means that **finding dinner in Spain before about 20:30-21:00 is a challenge**.

Restaurants

There are a large number of restaurants in Santander. The best strategy is sometimes to head to a cluster of restaurants and see what looks good. Some of the main clusters are:

- *Sardinero North*
- *Sardinero South*
- *Tetuán*
- *Puerto Chico*
- *"Old Town"*
- *Calle Cadiz*
- *Plaza de las Cervezas*
- *Barrio Pesquero*

These names are my unofficial terminology, and you can find these areas marked on the map: <https://tinyurl.com/DM2023-map>. *Plaza de las Cervezas* and *Barrio Pesquero* are a little further from the 'centre' of Santander, but they may be worth a visit if you're exploring. *Barrio Pesquero* in particular has a good selection of fish restaurants.

Food can come in a few formats which may be unfamiliar:

- *Pincho*: small item to eat, often on a slice of bread (like an open sandwich), very typical to order one of these to have alongside a drink. There is often no menu for these, you just have to see what's available on the bar.
- *Ración*: one plate of something. These may be quite large, and are good for sharing. Some places allow you to order a half-portion (*media ración*).

The great thing about pinchos is that they're usually available almost any time of day (even if the main kitchen hasn't opened yet). Try:

- *Casa Lita* - the self-proclaimed "*Casa del Pincho*", closed on a Monday.
- *Perretxico* - Basque-themed pincho-bar and restaurant
- *Hijas de Florencio* - a very traditional bar with simple but tasty pinchos
- *Mésón Rampalay* - another traditional place with good pinchos and an extensive menu of *raciones*
- *Casa del Indiano* - restaurant/bar in an indoor market serving pinchos all day (it also has a full restaurant)
- *Cruz Blanca* - bar with a very wide selection of different flavours of *tortilla* (see below).

Merienda is a snack that's eaten in the mid-afternoon (say 17:00 - 19:00). One of the most popular options is *chocolate con churros*, a thick hot chocolate with long doughnuts for dipping. Many places serve *chocolate con churros*, but a few note-worthy places are:

- *Áliva* - very traditional place for churros.
- *Valor* - a Spanish chain of cafes which has a wider selection of chocolates.

One good place if you're desperate for food before the traditional Spanish time is *Bodega La Conveniente*, which opens at 19.00 and serves large (but simple) *raciones*. They can also usually accommodate large groups. Try the anchovies and piquillo peppers.

Some specific foods to look out for are:

- *Rabas*: fried squid. Very traditional to share some *rabas* with friends while you're having a drink.
- *Anchoas*: Anchovies, fished in the Cantabria sea. These are delicious (but can be expensive).
- *Croquetas*: deep-fried croquette with ham or fish or seafood
- *Jamon*: ham, from best to normal: bellota, iberico, serano
- *Queso*: cheese, normally a plate with slices of typical spanish cheese
- *Albondigas*: meat balls in tomato sauce
- *Tortilla*: A spanish omelette made with eggs, potato and (preferably) onion. You usually order it by the slice and almost every bar serves it.
- *Morcilla*: fried sausage made out of blood (pig), rice, onions, spices
- *Mejillones*: mussels
- *Gilda*: a small skewer with olives, peppers and anchovies on it, eaten as an aperitif with a drink.

Vegetarian and Vegan Restaurants

Unfortunately, in Santander there aren't as many vegetarian/vegan options as there are in other places. Sometimes ordering vegetarian/vegan food can be a little tricky. Asking for '*sin carne*' ("without meat") might lead you to being offered fish/seafood. Saying '*vegetariano*' (vegetarian) or '*vegano*' (vegan) should work better.

A few good options are:

- *LEVEL-Fresh Club* - Some vegetarian options for sandwiches, wraps and salads
- *Salvaje Santander* - Some good vegetarian options and a nice atmosphere
- *Santa* - Good vegetarian burger and other options
- *La Caseta De Bombas* - Some good salads as well as sides/sharers
- *Il Boccone* - Authentic Italian restaurant (run by Italians) serving pizzas, pasta and salads
- *La Parada de San Martin* - Completely Vegetarian / Vegan

Gluten-free

Again, the bread-heavy diet can make eating gluten-free (*sin gluten*) tricky. But here are a few places which have decent gluten-free options:

- *Masa Madre* - Options for gluten-free noodles/pasta.
 - *Salvaje* - see above
 - *Santa* - see above
 - *Sibuya* - Trendy sushi restaurant with gluten-free options
 - *Pizzeria Sibarita's* - Pizzeria which offers gluten-free pizza.
 - *LYMA Gofres & Shakes* - a good option for sweet or savoury gluten-free waffles
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Drinking in Santander

Coffee

There are no Starbucks in the centre of Santander, but fortunately almost every bar and restaurant serves coffee. Depending on your tastes, you can ask for:

- *Cafe solo* - A small shot of coffee, like an espresso
- *Cortado* - A cafe solo topped up with a splash of milk.
- *Americano* - A cafe solo lengthened with hot water. The size of an *americano* is a random variable.
- *Cafe con leche* - A cafe solo with plenty of milk, like a latte.

Some modifiers you might want to apply to your coffee:

- *Descafeinado* - Decaf
- *Con hielo* - Served with a separate glass with an ice cube in it, which you can decant your coffee into.

Beer, Wine and More

[Here](#) you can find a good summary of different areas to explore in downtown Santander.

Bars and cafes in Santander do not typically have menus; you're expected to just ask for what you want (coffee, beer, wine, coca-cola, whatever you want). Note that after your initial order, you are unlikely to get more attention. So if you want to order something else, or ask for the bill ("*la cuenta*"), don't be afraid to wave or call ("*perdona!*") to get someone's attention.

If you want to drink beer in Santander, the best easiest thing to ask for is a *caña*, which will get you a draft beer. The size of a *caña* is another random variable, and it can be anything from about 0.2L to 0.4L. If you want to guarantee a larger beer, you can ask for a *cañon* instead.

If you're looking for something lighter you can order a *radler* (beer and lemonade). Non-alcoholic beer is also becoming more and more common. You can ask for a *cerveza sin alcohol* or a *zero-zero*. You may be asked if you prefer *rubia* (blonde) or *tostada* (amber).

Some other classic drinks options include:

- *Vermú* - Red vermouth (*vermú rojo*) is a fortified wine served over ice, usually as an aperitif.
- *Vino blanco* - White wine
- *Vino tinto* - Red wine
- *Calimocho* - A mix of red wine and coca-cola, which is a classic of Northern Spain (sometimes known by its Basque spelling *Kalimotxo*)
- *Tinto de verano* - A mix of red wine and either lemonade or soda (similar to sangria).

- *Orujo* - A strong spirit (think grappa) which you would typically order after a meal as a digestif. It works. Order *orujo blanco* for the plain white spirit; *crema de orujo* for a creamy variety; or *orujo de hierbas* for a herbal version.

If you're interested in drinking craft beer, there are a few local breweries. Look for bottled and draft beer from *Dougall's* and *Redneck*. A few specific bars to try include:

- *La Braña Beer & Food*
- *La Merla*
- *Zephyr*
- *La Fabrica Smach Taproom*
- *El Camino Cervezeria*
- *Bistro Colonial*

LGBTQ friendly places

The Cantabrian LGBTI association maintains a list of LGBTQ-friendly bars in Santander. [The list](#) is by no-means exhaustive, but we reproduce part of it here:

- *Bar Haddock* - Good music (Calle Valliciego, 6)
- *Canela* - in the centre of town with a large terrace and a lot of life. (Plaza de Cañadío, 5)
- *Bolero* - Good beers and live music (Calle San Celedonio, 35)
- *Los Girasoles* - Central location, behind the city hall, with a huge terrace to enjoy (Plaza de la Esperanza, 5)
- *Lo Que Diga La Rubia* - This bar lives in a busy cluster of bars, all with outside seating and a good atmosphere (Calle Pasadizo Zorilla, 30)
- *Covers* (Calle Río de la Pila, 22)
- *Rubicón* - Live music, meetup events and free popcorn! (Calle del Sol, 4)
- *QUEEN* - The only real LGBTQ+ club in town (Calle Tetuán, 32)

Things to Do

If you have some time to explore Santander and its surroundings, there are a few suggestions:

Taking a boat tour across the bay: You can take a boat tour round the bay, departing from El Embarcadero de Santander. To be honest, if you're interested in taking a boat in the bay, the better option is probably just to get a round trip ticket to Somo and back. This is a 30 minutes crossing of the bay, to the beach and surf town of Somo. Tickets and schedules online at [here](#).

Centro Botín: A striking art gallery overlooking the Bay of Santander. Details [here](#).

Visiting the Lighthouse (Faro de Cabo Mayor): You can take a short walk along the path behind Hotel Chiqui to visit the Faro de Cabo Mayor, with views back over Sardinero Beach. The walk talks about 40 minutes (and there's a cafe for a pause at the top). You can see the walk on the map [here](#).

Coastal Walks: One of the routes of the famous pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago, passes through Santander, so there are plenty of walking routes close to the city. Get in touch if you want some suggestions.

English Beers Language Exchange: Every Thursday in Bar Rubicon (Calle del Sol, 4) there is a Meetup to speak in English/Spanish (and any other language you can think of)

Check out the **cultural events** taking place in Santander [here](#). Or for events within all of Cantabria take a look [here](#).