

galicia

scenery
at the Wheel

25 unusual routes
through the best landscapes in Galicia

50 must-visit
viewpoints

Océano Atlántico

Mar Cantábrico

ASTURIAS

CASTELA E LEÓN

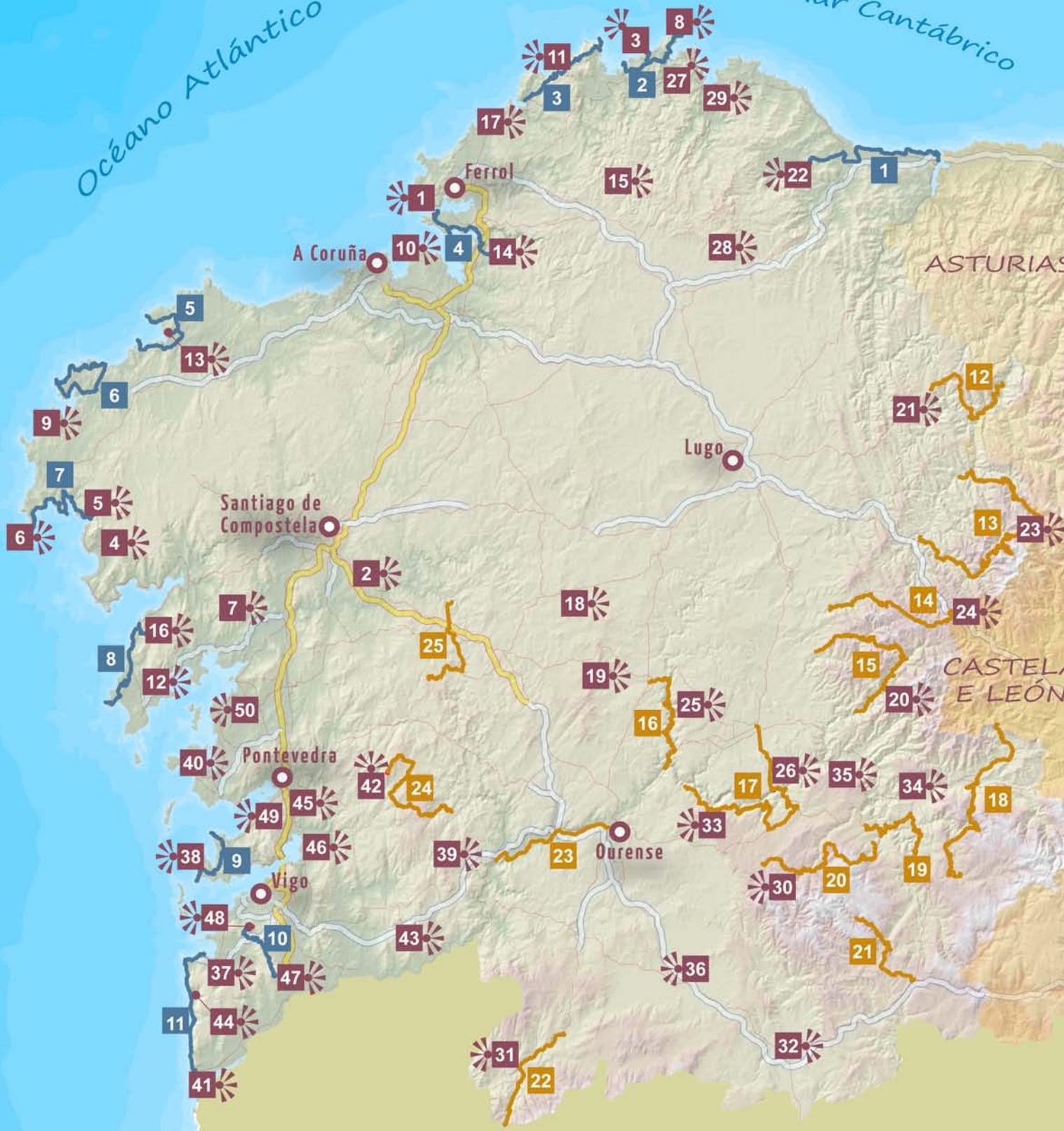
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A celebrated Galician writer, Álvaro Cunqueiro, called Galicia “the land of a thousand rivers.” Cunqueiro did not know the exact number, nor did he need to, because what he really wanted was to talk about the soul of a region whose capillaries are constantly fed by water. It is a wondrous land that enchants from the first sight of the green carpet covering it.

In Galicia we can climb the mountains of the Pena Trevinca massif to heights of over 2,000 metres, navigate the gorges of the River Sil or the River Miño, wander along the near deserted beaches of the Costa da Morte, Ortegal and A Mariña Lucense, or become one with nature exploring the O Courel or Os Ancares woods. Sit atop

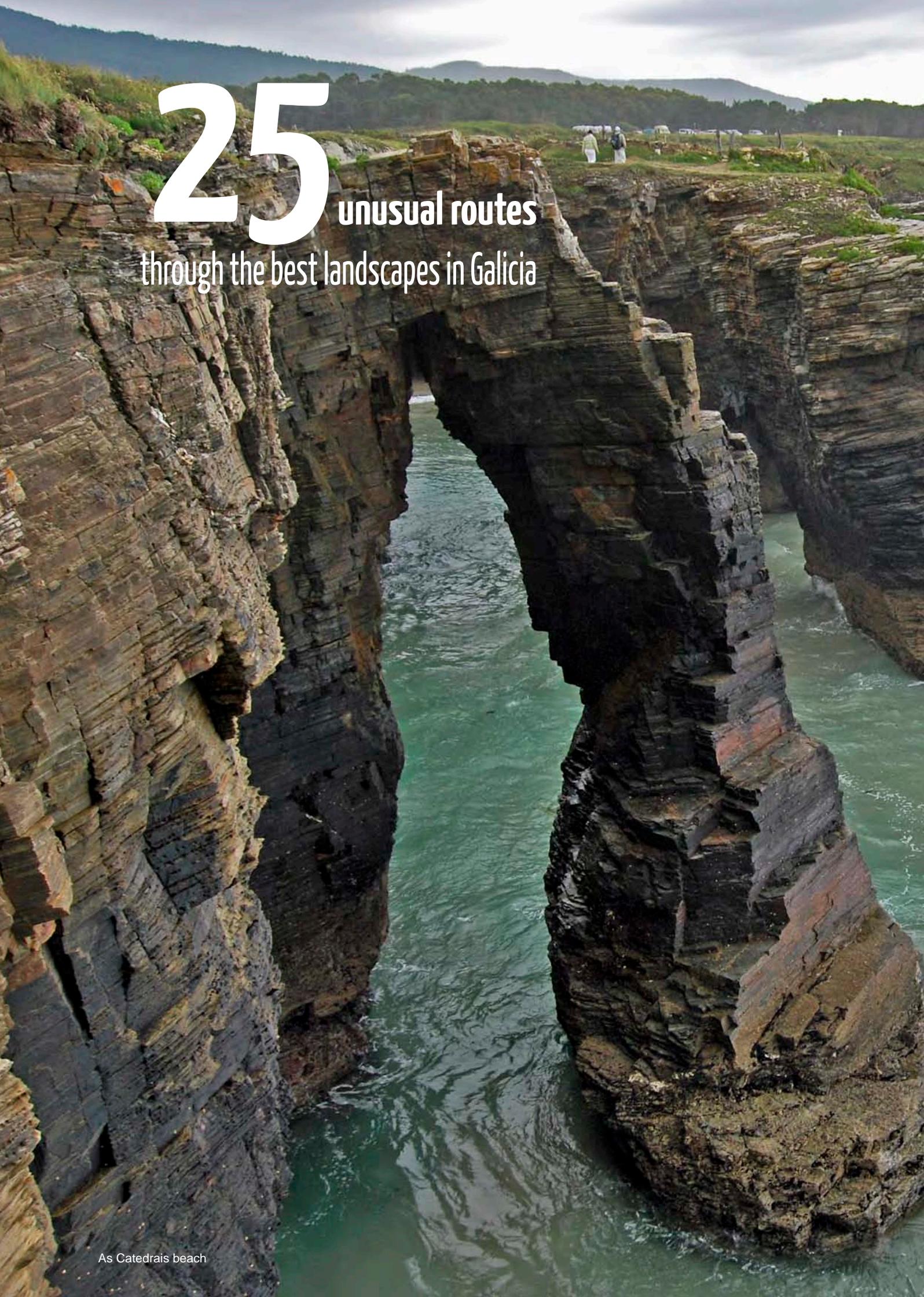
dizzying cliffs with a drop of over 600 metres to the sea, shelter in warm valleys or fish in well-stocked rías, which overwhelm the senses with their beauty.

Galicia is, above all, landscape. A landscape that expresses the links between its men and women and the soil, combining natural forms with those carefully shaped by generations who occupied the land and sculpted it to reflect the needs and social situations of each age. The terraces of Ribera Sacra, the mosaic of the meadows, the painstakingly cultivated orchards, the towns and cities, the paths and roads that cross the region...all this is landscape.

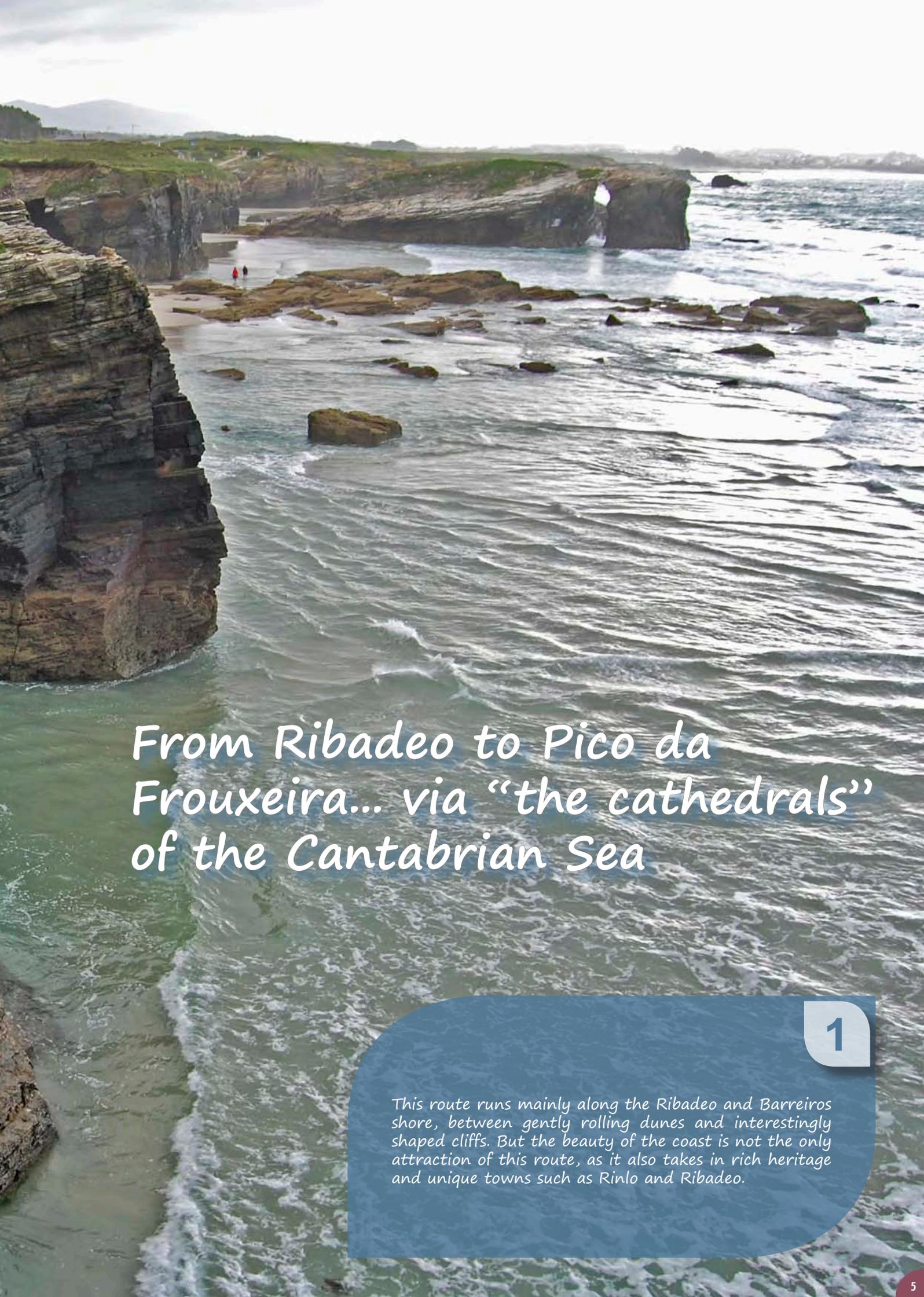
Every journey is a unique personal process. The emotions stirred

by these landscapes will also be different for every visitor. The authors of this guide have therefore set themselves an impossible task: to choose 25 routes through Galicia’s finest landscapes and identify 50 unmissable lookout points. How many different versions would have to be published to allow for all opinions? How many lookout points would need to be chosen to please everyone?

Galicia has a wealth of landscape and the routes described in this publication are an invitation to discover its secrets. The 25 routes are an introduction to a complex, living world, in which there will always be opportunities to discover route number 26.



25 unusual routes through the best landscapes in Galicia



From Ribadeo to Pico da Frouxeira... via “the cathedrals” of the Cantabrian Sea

1

This route runs mainly along the Ribadeo and Barreiros shore, between gently rolling dunes and interestingly shaped cliffs. But the beauty of the coast is not the only attraction of this route, as it also takes in rich heritage and unique towns such as Rinlo and Ribadeo.



Lugo's Mariña Oriental has one of the most distinctive coastlines in Galicia. The wide coastal plain forms an area containing towns and villages, farmland and open country. The open views of the Cantabrian Sea reveal a succession of beaches, the most notable example being at As Catedrais. With its feet in Galicia but its eyes on Asturias, Ribadeo stands on the left bank of the Ría de Ribadeo. The river marks the border between the two communities, linked physically and symbolically by Os Santos bridge. Modern and functional, the bridge has run from one bank to the other since 1987, with a chapel at each end (San Román in Castropol, San Miguel in Ribadeo, the saints referred to in the name of the bridge).

A Ribadeo, a Ribadeo, que alí tamén fun eu.

Cando o Mondigo pon o capelo, todas as vellas tembran de medo.

Ribadeo is a major town. Its architectural heritage features a unique, incomparable style strongly influenced by the Galicians returning from the Americas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Torre dos Moreno (1915) is an outstanding example of this cross-cultural exchange. The route keeps the sea in sight from the starting point at pier of Porcillán, beside the marina in Ribadeo. After passing under Os Santos bridge, the road to the lighthouse soon brings us to our first compulsory stop: the castle of San Damián and the

Cargadoiro.

The former is an eighteenth-century fort that protected the Ría de Ribadeo and was declared a Cultural Heritage Site in 1994. The latter is an old loading wharf built in the early twentieth century for shipping iron from the mines at Vilaodriz, which was brought to the site by train. Following the coast the route soon reaches the old Illa Pancha lighthouse, built in 1857. This delightful small island is bathed by the turquoise blue waters of the Cantabrian, contrasting with the bright colours of the brushwood near the coastline and the cliffs. The route continues through the fields on the coastal plain as far as Rinlo, one of the Galician coast's most distinctive towns. Following the coastline, we then

▼ View from the Pico da Frouxeira



come to the beaches at Os Castros, As Illas and Esteiro and then, the most outstanding of all, As Catedrais, with its famous stone arches. The succession of beaches continues through Barreiros: Arealonga, Lángara, Benquerencia, Remior, etc. Between them we find some interesting examples of

archaeological heritage with sites including Punta do Castro and the anthropomorphic mediaeval tomb at the O Coto beach. The final section, in the municipality of Foz, takes us along the estuary of the River Masma and then turns towards our final destination, the Pico de A Frouxeira. On this 427-metre high

rock once stood a late mediaeval fortress which may have belonged to Pardo de Cela, a fifteenth-century marshal who fought the Catholic Monarchs. The main structure of the building is all that remains of the fortress, which overlooked the Ría de Foz and the inland areas of Alfoz and O Valadouro.



Illa Pancha ▲

With its impressive rock formations, **the beach at Augasantas** is known as As Catedrais (The Cathedrals). The succession of cliffs and rock arches forms a wall that resembles the finest Galician Gothic architecture. Arches, grottoes, etc.: stone rising from the sea and supporting the land, like a modern feat of engineering.

Rising and falling sea levels over the ages, tectonic movements and erosion by the waves gradually modelled the slate and quartzite formations, creating an authentic natural monument, the site being officially awarded Natural Monument status in 2005. In view of the area's outstanding natural features, As Catedrais

has been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), mainly because of the presence of exceptional vegetation on the coast (in particular sea lavender) and a wide range of birds. As it is a protected area, visitors must ask for permission to access the area, via the Xunta de Galicia Department of the Environment's website.

Don't miss...



A **Mariña Oriental** is a county with many interesting natural spaces of interest to bird-watchers.

The combination of fresh and salt water in the Ría de Ribadeo and Ría de Foz provides habitats that are home to a wide range of species.

Rinlo

Rinlo conserves all the charm of a maritime town that time seems to have forgotten. Its buildings were constructed on the coastal cliffs, a series of homes facing the sea, on which the residents depended for their livelihood.

The small inlet on which it stands was a natural harbour for fishermen, even when they captured whales.

The traditional layout of the town centre is unchanged, with irregular, narrow streets that lead to the sea in places. The landscape retains a traditional appearance with small plots producing crops that complement fishing.

Rinlo's houses fit together perfectly, sheltering each other from stormy weather and they produce a distinctive image with their slate-covered gable roofs and neat shapes.

The traditional shellfish nurseries, built near the town in the early twentieth century, are the basis of its gastronomy, of which *arroz caldoso* (soupy rice) with lobster is a notable local speciality.





From O Porto de Espasante to the Estaca de Bares lighthouse... cliffs, harbours and light

2

The Ortigueira and Mañón coast features some of Galicia's most impressive cliffs. The steep coastline is broken by sheltered harbours containing pleasant towns. Passing through the distinctive landscape of the north of Galicia, this route takes in open beaches, natural lookout points, historic sites and charming towns.



This route along a fascinating stretch of coast starts at O Porto de Espasante. A hub of maritime activity, its harbour accounts for a substantial part of the fishing activity in Ortigueira. The isthmus, running between the A Concha and San Antonio beaches, ends at Punta dos Prados, the site of a strategically located prehistoric maritime settlement (castro). The nearby early eighteenth century Garita da Vela was a lookout post from which the Espasante inlet and access to the Ría de Ortigueira could be monitored. Aligned with A Garita de Herbeira and O Semáforo

de Bares, A Vela formed part of an extensive system for signalling and watching these dangerous coasts. The route continues via Espasante and Céltigos, until a

*A luz cría matices sobre as augas:
grises, cores, azuis case verdes
e o negro dos fagotes que descenden
da mítica montaña.*

side turning towards Loiba and its impressive cliffs, where there is a bench often referred to as “the best bench in the world” because of its spectacular views.

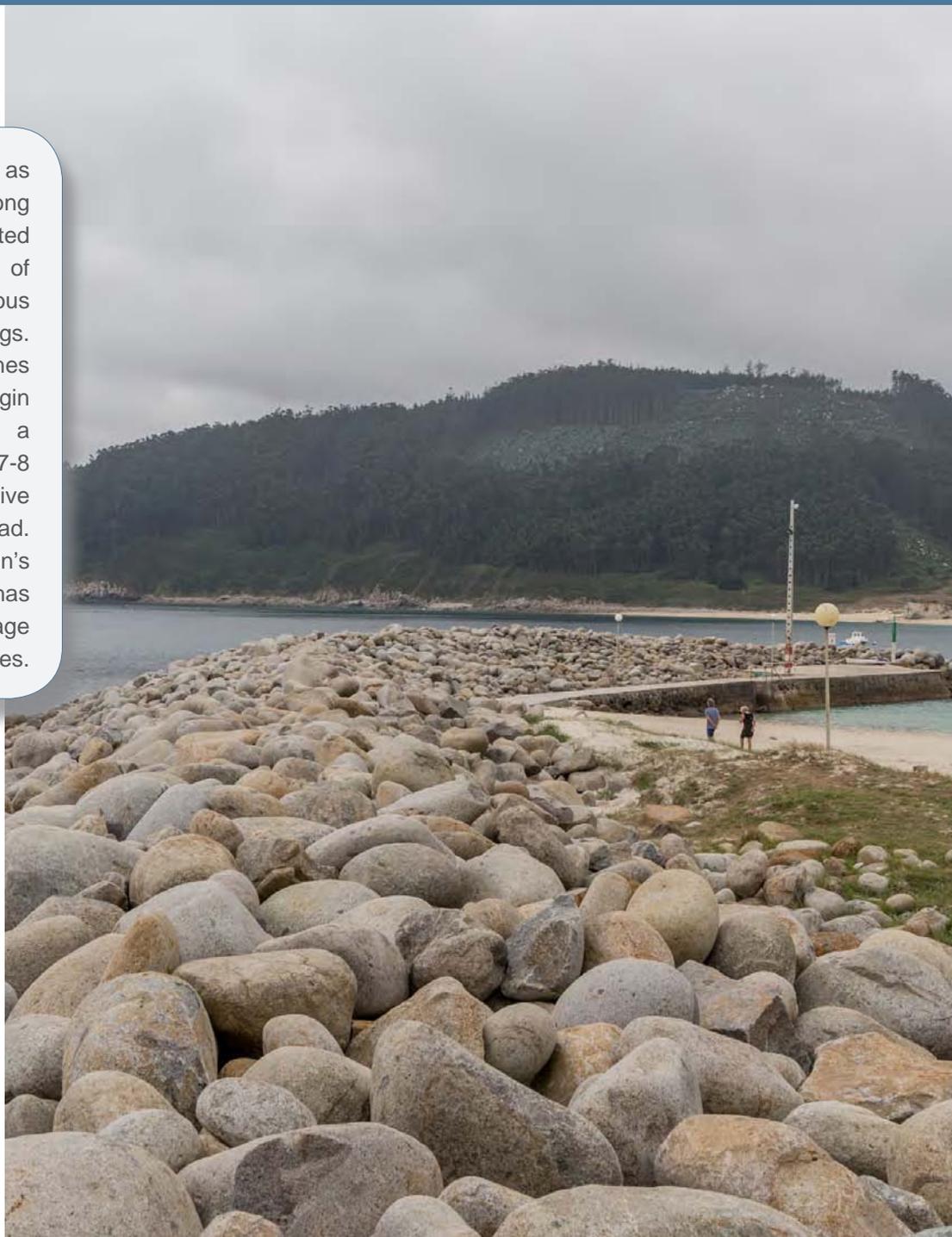
Back on the road, the route leads through villages and woodland towards O Porto do Barqueiro. Hidden at the end of the ría in the beautiful Sor estuary, it is a delightful example of a coastal village, its narrow streets crowded with small, slate-roofed houses. The small harbour is home to a busy fishing community. Located in a fantastic enclave facing the appropriately named Arealonga beach, which falls within O Vicedo. The route now turns towards Bares. A Vila de Bares is a traditional hamlet with crop fields, enclosures and hórreos (raised

▼ O Barqueiro





The **quay in Bares**, known as O Coído, is a 300-metre long accumulation of stones. Attributed to the Phoenicians, it may be of Roman origin, given the numerous Roman remains in the surroundings. The accumulation of stones was probably natural in origin and it was then used as a harbour. Its height reaches 7-8 metres, showing the impressive dimensions it may once have had. O Porto de Bares is Spain's most northerly town and has been a key point for the passage of ships since ancient times.



O Coído de Bares ►

granaries), all gazing towards the sea. The wide, sandy Bares beach, which forms a delightful curve, leads us to O Porto de Bares. A Vila and O Porto are very similar, the agricultural and maritime versions of traditional Galician villages. In O Porto, the houses stand close to the beach and huddle together for protection from the strong winds that blow through the area. At the end of the beach is the distinctive O Coído quay. The ascent to the Semáforo de Bares offers views of the inlet and

Coelleira Island, which contains the remains of an old mediaeval monastery about which there are many legends. The Semáforo is a nineteenth-century maritime observation point from which signals could be sent to ships using flags and lights. It was also used as a military facility and for weather forecasting and communications. Located 200 metres above sea level, it offers stunning views. There is an ornithological centre on the way to the Bares lighthouse, evidence of the importance of

this coast for migrating birds and a vital bird observation point, especially in the main periods of migration. The cliffside area forms part of the Estaca de Bares SCI. The strategic importance of the site is shown by the presence of a former US Marines base, abandoned in 1991. Here we find the most northerly point in the Iberian Peninsula. Lit by the lighthouse built in 1850, it is constantly lashed by the heavy rain and strong winds coming from the sea.

Don't miss...



Coelleira island has its secrets. According to oral tradition, the monks in San Miguel Benedictine monastery sailed to Viveiro in boats made of leather to say mass. The legend says that, when the island was retaken by the Knights Templar, the monks were all killed except one, who escaped without his habit and took refuge in a house in O Vicedo which is known today as "Casa do Paisano".

The best bench in the world

Loiba boasts a cliff-top bench from which there are stunning panoramic views of this section of the coast.

The cliffs at Loiba, in the municipality of Ortigueira, reach heights of over 100 metres in places. The presence of tiny islands, grottoes and caves demonstrates the geomorphological forces at work along this part of the coast.

Access to the beaches is not easy as it involves going down steep winding paths.

The village of O Picón occupies an outstanding position on the coast and is of considerable ethnographical interest with *hórreos* typical of the area, a windmill and various buildings in traditional popular style.

The scenery is beautiful and spectacular, with rocky outcrops like the Pena Furada point, eroded into a series of extraordinary forms. To the west, on the horizon, we can see the imposing form of Cape Ortegal.



An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. The land is covered in green vegetation and brownish-grey rocks. The ocean is a deep blue, with white waves crashing against the shore and several large rock formations in the water. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

From Cedeira to Cape Ortegal... vistas in the far north

3

Cliffs, spirituality, fog, mountains...all the landscape and ethnographical features typical of the Galician coast are condensed in just over 20 kilometres on the route between Cedeira and Cape Ortegal. Much of the route provides continuous views of the Atlantic, taking the visitor along some of the highest cliffs in western Europe.



Océano Atlántico



Cedeira, a coastal town whose name is also that of a charming *ría*, is the starting point for this journey, which takes in some of the most spectacular lookout points on the north coast of A Coruña province. The narrow streets in the old town are delightful for strolling around. Starting at Praza do Peixe, the route passes through Cedeira, in search of the road that will take us to Santo André de Teixido. The first kilometres go through the carefully tended valley of the River Condomiñas, a beautiful example of Galicia's traditional meadows.

At the end of the valley the route begins to climb and the landscape gradually changes, leaving villages and farmland behind. The sloping road and extensive wooded areas remind us that we are close to the A Capelada mountains. Visitors must bear in mind that there is livestock in the area and there are cattle grids on the roads to prevent animals crossing. The lookout point at Chao do Monte is a turning point in the route. With our first sight of the village of Teixido, the route opens up to

the Atlantic and from this point on we have continuous views of the sea. The typical mountain scenery of the A Capelada range (shrubs, crags, pine woods, etc.) contrasts with the coastal landscape and provides amazing 360o panoramic views: the immensity of the Atlantic in one direction and the backdrop of the mountains in the other. Descending towards Cape Ortegal, there is a succession of lookout points on both sides of the road, alternating views of the open sea and the Ría de Ortigueira and the municipality of Cariño. The complex lithology of Cape Ortegal provides a spectacular setting, crowned by the lighthouse 125 metres above the sea. Viewed from the foot of the lighthouse the O Limbo cliffs rise like great monuments to the west. To the east are the tiny islands known as Os Aguillóns, which appear to extend the cape out into the ocean, symbolically separating the waters of the Atlantic from those of the Cantabrian Sea. Estaca de Bares can also be seen to the east in the distance, the most northerly point of the Iberian Peninsula, the north of the north.



◀ Cabo Ortegal

Santo André de Teixido and A Capelada ▶



▲ Vilarrube beach, Cedeira

*A San Andrés de Teixido
fun coa cesta na cabeza,
fun por mar e vin por terra
o santiño mo agradeza*

The intersections on the way into **Teixido** are marked by crosses and cairns, reminders of the old routes followed by pilgrims on their way to the Santo André shrine (pilgrimages have been documented since the fourteenth century).

It is also known as Santo André de Lonxe because of its remote, solitary location among mountains and cliffs. It is a place of worship where religious and pagan traditions are

combined. The animals that roam along the paths must be treated with special care as, according to traditional belief, they represent the souls of those who did not visit Saint Andrew the apostle during their lives, as the popular saying states: “*A Santo André de Teixido vai de morto quen non foi de vivo*”. (He who did not go to Santo André de Teixido when alive goes when dead).



Don't miss...



Cariño means “affection” in Spanish but research shows the name of the village has other origins.

In many parts of Europe, place names of pre-Roman origin include the forms “carn-” and “corn-” which mean “stone”: Cornwall, Carpathian, Candán, etc. The name Cariño is thus linked to the crags of the A Capelada range and the cliffs on the coastline.

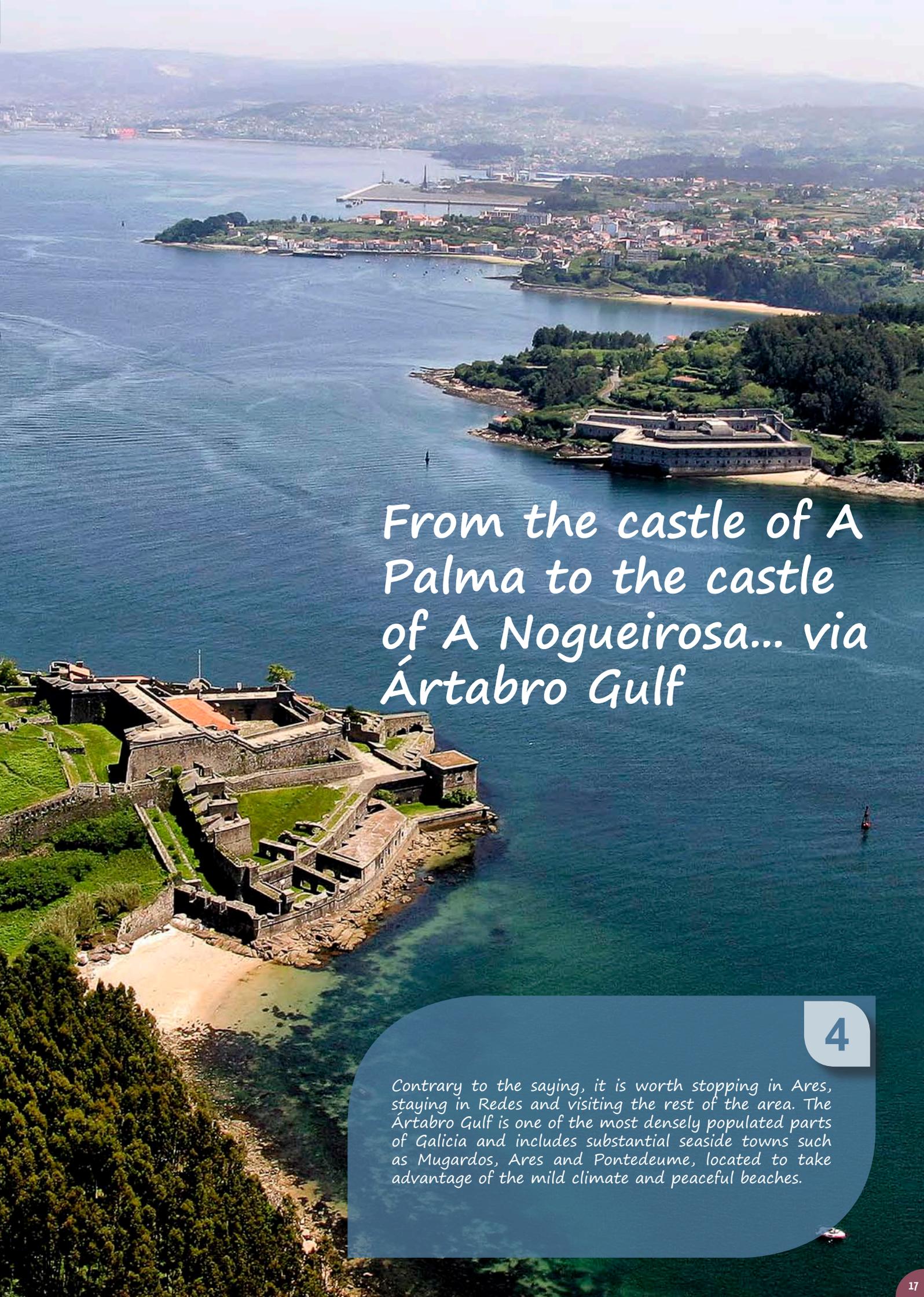
A Vixía de Herbeira

Mount Herbeira (615 metres) is the highest point in the A Capelada range and the municipality of Cedeira. The geological characteristics of this site have given it a unique appearance.

At over 600 metres high, the Herbeira cliffs run down to the sea with gradients of over 80%, making them some of the highest and steepest in Europe. This allows the coastline to be observed as if a geological slice has been cut out of it. The whole area is of great geo-morphological interest. The towering cliffs that rise from the sea consist of rocks that lay over 70 kilometres deep millions of years ago, rocks that were brought to the surface by the collision of two super-continents.

Towering over the grazing livestock, wind farms exploit the area's high winds, withstanding the frequent weather fronts that hit the mountains. The landscape is not just lovely to look at: the excellent views made it an ideal location for a maritime surveillance point, the Garita de Herbeira, originally constructed in the eighteenth century, although the modern building dates from 1805.





From the castle of A Palma to the castle of A Nogueirosa... via Ártabro Gulf

4

Contrary to the saying, it is worth stopping in Ares, staying in Redes and visiting the rest of the area. The Ártabro Gulf is one of the most densely populated parts of Galicia and includes substantial seaside towns such as Mugardos, Ares and Pontedeume, located to take advantage of the mild climate and peaceful beaches.



The Ártabro Gulf forms a sweeping curve that includes the A Coruña, Ares-Betanzos and Ferrol rías. Named *Portus Magnus Artabrorum* by Roman geographers, it today forms a natural space defined by the presence of the sea. The route begins in the Royal Town of Mugardos, at the castle of A Palma, which dates back to the sixteenth century, although the present castle is a nineteenth century building. Together with the castles of San Felipe, San Martiño and San Cristovo, it formed part of the defensive system of the Ría de Ferrol, a place of strategic interest because of the presence of the military arsenal. The site was even

defended with a heavy chain which crossed the *ría* from castle to castle to prevent the passage of enemy ships. The lighthouse beside A Palma has a pleasant recreation area and offers great views of the castles on the banks of the *ría*. We then come to a

En Ares, non te pares.

En Redes, non te quedes.

En Caamouco, para pouco.

path leading off towards the winding ascent to Montefaro de Ares at the far end of the fertile Bezoucos peninsula, a reference point on our journey. At the top of the mountain stands the Santa Catalina de Montefaro monastery, built in the fourteenth

century by Fernán Pérez de Andrade, nicknamed “O Bo” (“the Good”). The Andrade dynasty was a noble Galician family with considerable influence in the county. The building contains a number of rooms and has undergone refurbishment, especially in the two surviving cloisters. Devoted to the Franciscan order, it retains a Gothic entrance with capitals portraying scenes from the life of Saint Francis of Assisi. Montefaro also has various lookout points. The main and most accessible of these is at A Bailadora (266 metres), from which a large part of Ferrol and its *ría* can be seen, with fine views of the castles of San Felipe and A Palma. Descending towards Ares, we find



the church of Santa Olaia de Lubre, an unmissable jewel in the transition from the Romanesque to the Gothic. Ares is a maritime town. Its neatly laid out streets lead to San Xosé church, in the O Porto district, home to Alianza Aresana, the first school set up by Galicians returning from the Americas and a fine example of the architectural styles brought from the New World. The long beach leads to the harbour, in a lake-like inlet of calm water. The route continues to Redes and Pontedeume, which must be visited. Between them, the A Magdalena beach is an excellent spot for leisure activities, thanks to its location at the end of the *ría* and its sunny orientation. Alongside its magnificent pine trees there is a copse of cork oaks, unusual at this latitude and indicative of the area's gentle climate. The last part of the route is the ascent to the castle of A Nogueirosa. Built in a strategic position on a crag, it is known in the area as *Castelo de Andrade*, as it belonged to this late mediaeval noble family. It is a small fortress but one with magnificent views. From the keep there are extensive views of the mouth of the Eume and virtually all of the Ría de Ares y Betanzos.



Castelo de Andrade ▲



Five streets and two squares. That is **Redes**, a small village on the Ares coast which has a magnificently preserved layout with distinctive architecture from the Americas. Cuba had such a strong influence on emigrants from Redes that, when they returned to Galicia, they reproduced its aesthetic and architectural styles, and Redes is one of

the best examples of this fashion in Galicia. The *Porto das Redes*, as it was formerly known, owes its name to the wooden frames used to dry and repair nets. The village's maritime vocation is clear from its layout, giving the houses direct access to the sea, creating what has been referred to as a "Galician Venice".



◀ Redes

Don't miss...



The Eume, Landro and Sor rivers rise in the O Xistral mountains. According to the **Legend of the Three Rivers**, they sprang from the same source and competed with each other to see which of them would reach the sea first. Half way there the Landro and the Sor stopped to rest but the Eume continued, opening up a spectacular gorge. Because it broke the agreement, Antubel, Celtic goddess of water and shadows, punishes the Eume every year by making someone drown in its waters.

Pontedeume

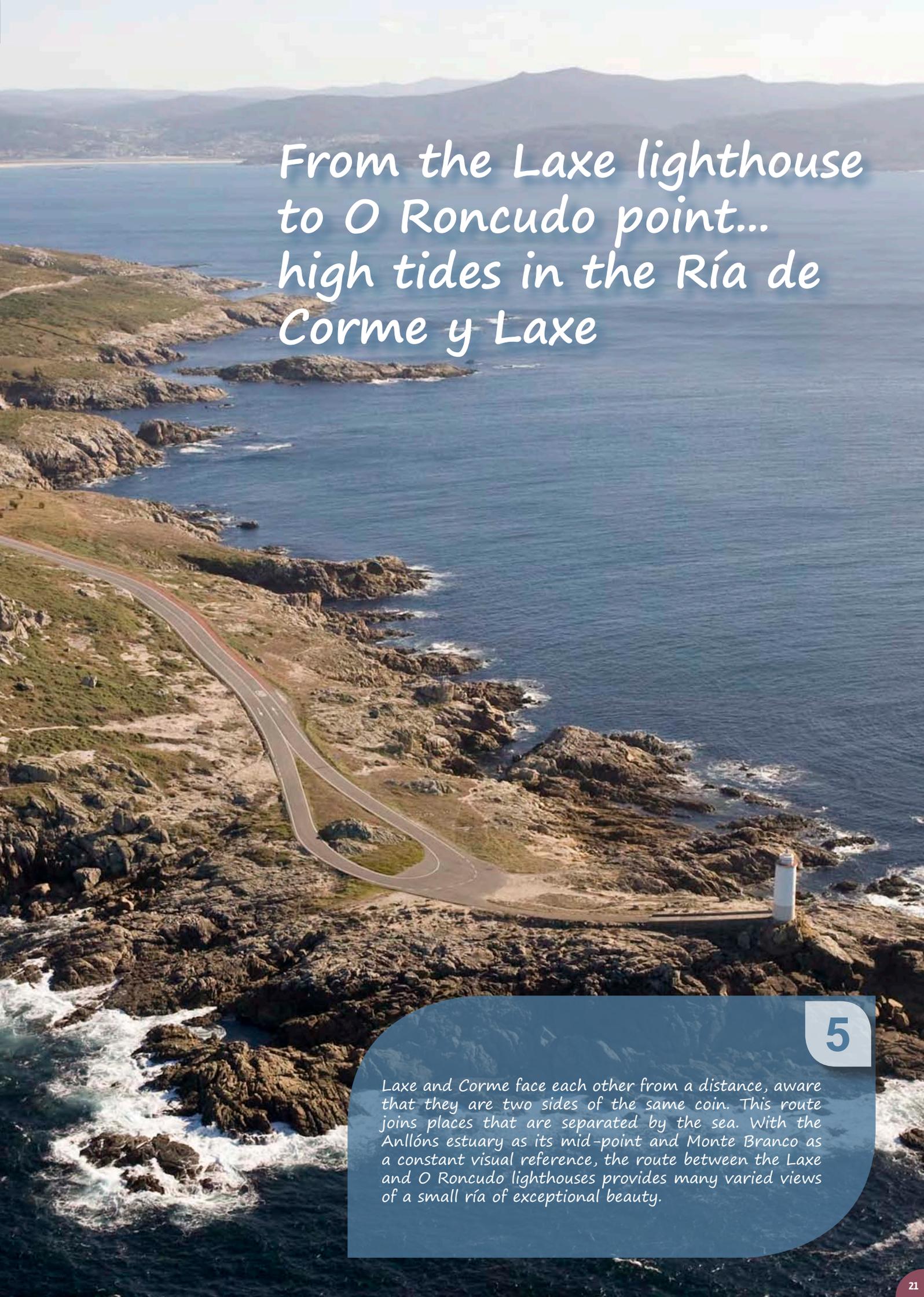
The bridge at Pontedeume is its *raison d'être*. The historical English Way to Santiago through As Mariñas crosses the River Eume at this point. Founded in the fourteenth century by Fernán Pérez de Andrade, it was redesigned in the nineteenth century.

The importance of the routes running through it and the lack of space between the slopes of Breamo mount and the banks of the Eume resulted in the town having a curious, north-facing layout.

The well-conserved town of the Andrade family still retains its mediaeval centre. Beside a wealth of popular architecture, there are many outstanding civil and religious buildings demonstrating the historical importance of the town, such as the eighteenth-century fish markets in the harbour, the seventeenth-century *Cátedra de Latinidad*, the sixteenth-century San Agustín monastery and the fourteenth-century Andrade Tower. Part of the noble family's estate, today the tower houses the town's Interpretation Centre. According to legend, for the family's security, a secret tunnel linked the tower to the castle of A Nogueirosa.

Pontedeume is also one of the gateways to the Fragas do Eume Natural Park. Because of the richness of its landscape, the county of Eumesa was declared a *Historic-Artistic Site and Picturesque Landscape* in 1971.





From the Laxe lighthouse to O Roncudo point... high tides in the Ría de Corme y Laxe

5

Laxe and Corme face each other from a distance, aware that they are two sides of the same coin. This route joins places that are separated by the sea. With the Anllóns estuary as its mid-point and Monte Branco as a constant visual reference, the route between the Laxe and O Roncudo lighthouses provides many varied views of a small ría of exceptional beauty.



The Ría de Corme y Laxe is one of Galicia's small central rías. It is located on the Costa da Morte, where the force of the sea marks life on the land, and the villages and people have an unmistakable maritime character. Laxe and its lighthouse mark the beginning of the route. Standing on A Insua hill behind the village, the lighthouse overlooks a wide area with the Laxe inlet on one side and the Baleeira inlet on the other. The latter is the location of

the curious, delicate Os Cristais beach, covered in worn pieces of glass, whose origin is a mystery. Laxe has a wide beach, a busy port

*Campana de Anllóns,
Noites de lunar,
Luna que te pós,
Detrás do pinar.*

and is home to various architectural jewels, including the fifteenth-century Santa María da Atalaia

▼ Punta do Roncudo.

church and Casa do Arco, the latter famous for its appearance in the popular Galician television series *Mareas Vivas*, set in the imaginary town of *Portozás*. Heading towards Ponteceso, the route passes wave-battered beaches until it reaches As Grelas, where the Lodeiro inlet provides the first views of Monte Branco. The route reaches Ponteceso, overlooked by the bridge over the Anllóns and the birthplace of the Galician poet Eduardo Pondal. The wide estuary's dunes, mudflats and river mouth form a natural space of exceptional importance for marine fauna and birds. The route runs parallel to the rushes until a side turning up to Monte Branco, with views over a wide area. On the main road once again, we go towards Corme Aldea, its name distinguishing it from Corme Porto, the two names highlighting the importance of both agriculture and seafaring in this area. Corme is a village that looks to the sea. Beyond Corme, in the distance, on the shore of the Costa da Morte, there is only the O Roncudo point, and then the vast ocean. The harbour is the epicentre of the village and from it a path leads to the lighthouse, with constant views





◀ Mouth of the Anllóns river



Eduardo María González-Pondal Abente (Ponteceso, 1835–A Coruña, 1917) is one of the major figures in Galician literature and one of the leading writers of the *Rexurdimento*, a movement promoting the artistic, historical and political recovery of Galicia and its culture.

Pondal was born in Ponteceso, beside the River Anllóns. His family home can be visited today as a museum-house. From this point a walking route, the *Ruta Pondaliana*, leads towards Monte Branco, touching on different aspects of his work, in which Bergantiños, Ponteceso and the Anllóns all feature. Influenced by the Romanticism of his era, he wrote about his homeland and the landscape.

Eduardo Pondal is the author of *Os Pinos*, a poetic text which was adopted as Galicia's national anthem. In 1965 the Day of Galician Literature was dedicated to him.

of the sea. O Roncudo point is a mythical location on the Galician coast, famous for the quantity and quality of its tasty barnacles. O Roncudo lighthouse marks the end of

the route. Built in 1920, it is a simple construction standing on granite rocks in the middle of a rugged landscape shaped by wind and water, reflecting the essence of the Costa da Morte.



Don't miss...



O Roncudo's barnacles live attached to the rocks in an area of very rough seas, making harvesting them a highly dangerous activity. The numerous crosses on the way to the lighthouse commemorate shipwrecks and other misfortunes, reminding us that the sea is both beautiful and dangerous.

The Monte Branco lookout point

Monte Branco is a hill which is remarkable for the presence of a huge sand dune. This gives it a very characteristic texture and white colour, giving rise to its name.

The strength of the tides in the mouth of the Anllóns generates a system which deposits and removes the sediment forming the Barra beach, a long strip of fine sand. The strong winds blow some of the sand onto the side of the hill, creating a dune which runs from the sea to a height of over 100 metres.

At the top of Monte Branco, on Alto das Travesas (182 metres) there are communications masts. A little below this a lookout point has been created, allowing visitors to enjoy the peaceful surroundings and the fine views.

From Monte Branco one can see the mouth of the Anllóns and the wetlands to the east; a large part of Cabana de Bergantiños to the south-east; the Barra beach in the foreground to the south; the island of A Tiñosa with its crystal-clear waters to the south-west; and the wide Ría de Corme y Laxe to the west.

The beauty of the Costa da Morte can be fully appreciated from this vantage point, one of the finest for viewing the county's landscape.



Camariñas circular tour... routes on the Costa da Morte



6

All the force of the Atlantic batters the mythical Costa da Morte, giving it a range of characteristic shapes and colours. Strong winds, the scent of the sea and green hills are the features of a route that distils the essence of one of the most dangerous coasts in the world. The circular route, which starts and ends in Camariñas, takes in coastal villages and landscapes, dunes, capes and sandbanks, echoing tales of sailors, storms and lighthouse keepers.



coin. Located close to each other, they have such close links to the sea that they cannot be understood without it. The bright colours of the houses recall times when the paint left over after painting boats protected the beach-facing façades from the winter weather. A dirt track takes us towards Ensenada de O Trece, an inlet open to the sea and exposed to the might of the ocean. The wind blows the fine sand of the beach upward, creating a sand dune like a wall on the side of the O Veo hill that stretches to the top and beyond. On the flat land at the other end lies the English Cemetery, reminding us of the harsh conditions on this part of the coast. The route to Vilán, with views of the horizon, winds slowly beside cliffs and crags, among which an old wolf trap can be seen.

Camariñas is the sea, and the sea is stories of hard work, shipwrecks and tough people who live in a setting that is both beautiful and dangerous. Its presence is at the heart of this route, but the sea and water also have stories to tell on land. A seafaring village, Camariñas nestles in a small *ría*, sheltered from the area's constant winds. The modern harbour contrasts with older maritime constructions which retain the traditional character of the

village. Visitors should be sure to admire the lace made in Camariñas by the *palilleiras*, craftswomen who keep this wonderful cultural legacy alive. The route to Ponte do Porto winds round the A Basa inlet and along the Río Grande estuary. After Ponte do Porto it turns off towards Camelle and Arou, Arou and Camelle... are two sides of the same

The dangerous nature of the coast led to the construction of a new lighthouse at Cape Vilán, the first electrified lighthouse in Spain (1896).

*Entre Cabo Vilano e Tosto,
entre Arou e Camariñas.
Hai chuvias das sete cores
e mirei ao lume do mar cravar-se nos ollos do raposo.*

It towers above the crag and, at 130 metres high, is one of most representative images of the Galician coast, in an incomparable

▼ Cabo Vilán.



◀ Museo Man de Camelle



The **legacy of Man, the German of Camelle**, is one of the town's most distinctive features. Manfred Gnädinger settled in the town's port in the 1960s, communing with nature and creating art based on the concept of a garden-museum, interacting with rocks, shapes and colours.

In his search for harmony with the sea, Man's life and work became part of the landscape of the Costa da Morte. Visitors began to come to see his work and it became an open-air museum in the land-art style, playing with rocks and making changes to the area, including the harbour wall.

The *Museo Man de Camelle, Casa do Alemán* was created nearby and part of his legacy can be seen there, complementing the works which are still outdoors

setting for visitors to enjoy the spectacular sunsets. Cape Vilán lighthouse also houses the *Centro de Interpretación dos Naufraxios, Faros e Sinais Marítimas* (the Shipwreck, Lighthouse and Marine

Signal Interpretation Centre). The return route to Camariñas passes close to Nosa Señora do Monte hermitage, which, from a hilltop with sweeping views, oversees the passage of boats and seamen.







Don't miss...



The name of the municipality is taken from the “**camariña**” (*Corema album*), a species of shrub native to the Atlantic coast. This plant, typical of the Costa da Morte, is a fine example of the wealth of flora found in this impressive yet fragile landscape, part of the Natura 2000 Network.

O cemiterio dos Ingleses

The Royal Navy's HMS *Serpent* sank off this coast in 1890. Of its crew of 175 only three survived. The others have all been laid to rest beside the sea that took their lives.

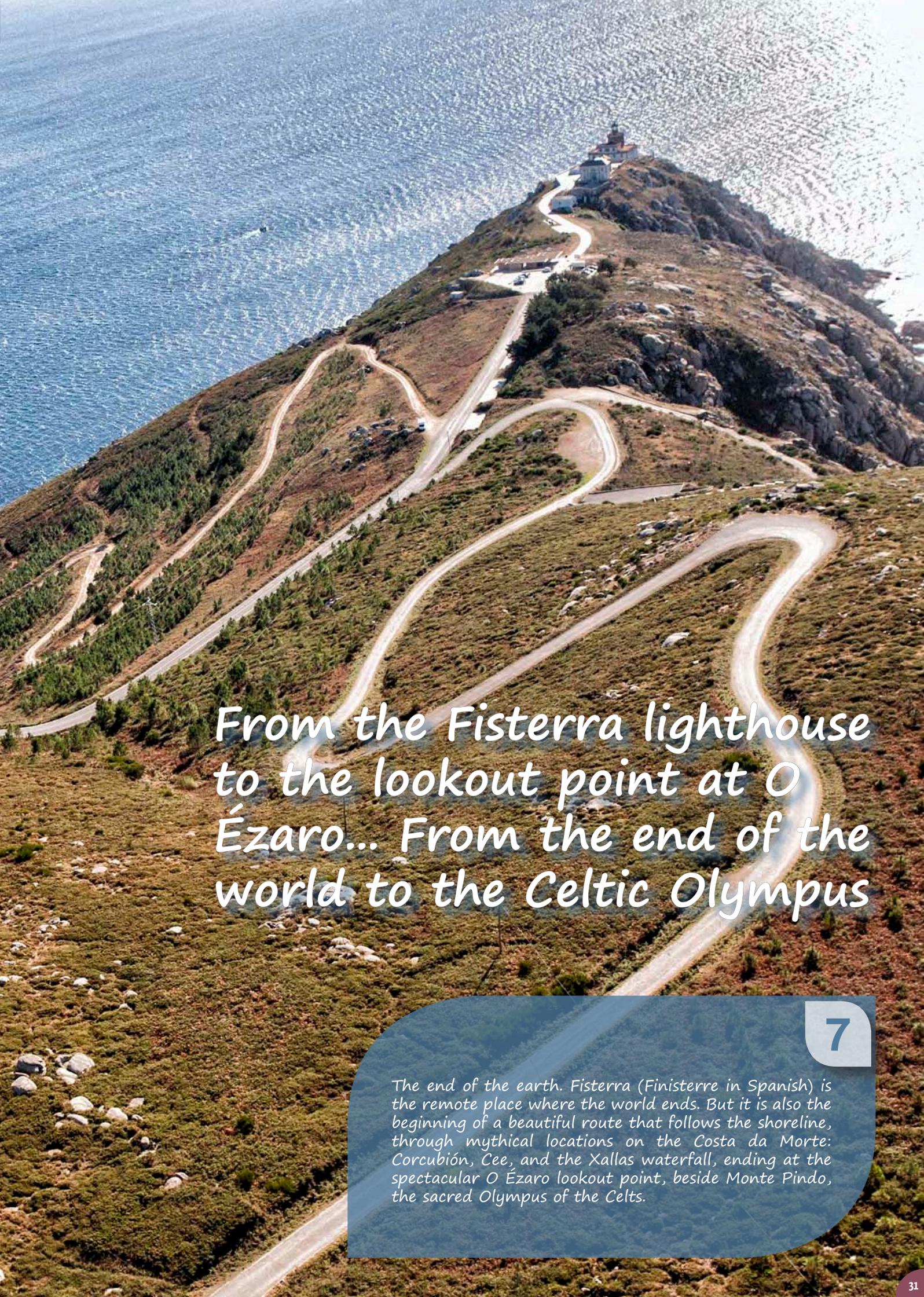
The ship sank in a heavy storm on the night of 10 November 1890, when she was sailing from Plymouth to Sierra Leone. The ship ran aground on the rocks at Punta do Boi with tragic consequences, at a point known today as *Baixos do Serpent*.

The 172 bodies were buried near the place where the ship sank, in the same spot as 28 members of the crew of the *Iris Hull*, another ship that sank at Punta do Boi in 1883.

The English Cemetery is a simple stone construction divided into two areas, an inner section reserved for officers and a larger section for other crew members. Because of its distinctive character and historical importance the cemetery was included in the European Cemeteries Route.

As an expression of gratitude for the help given by local people, the British Navy sent gifts, including the “*Serpent Barometer*” which can still be seen on the façade of a house in Camariñas harbour.

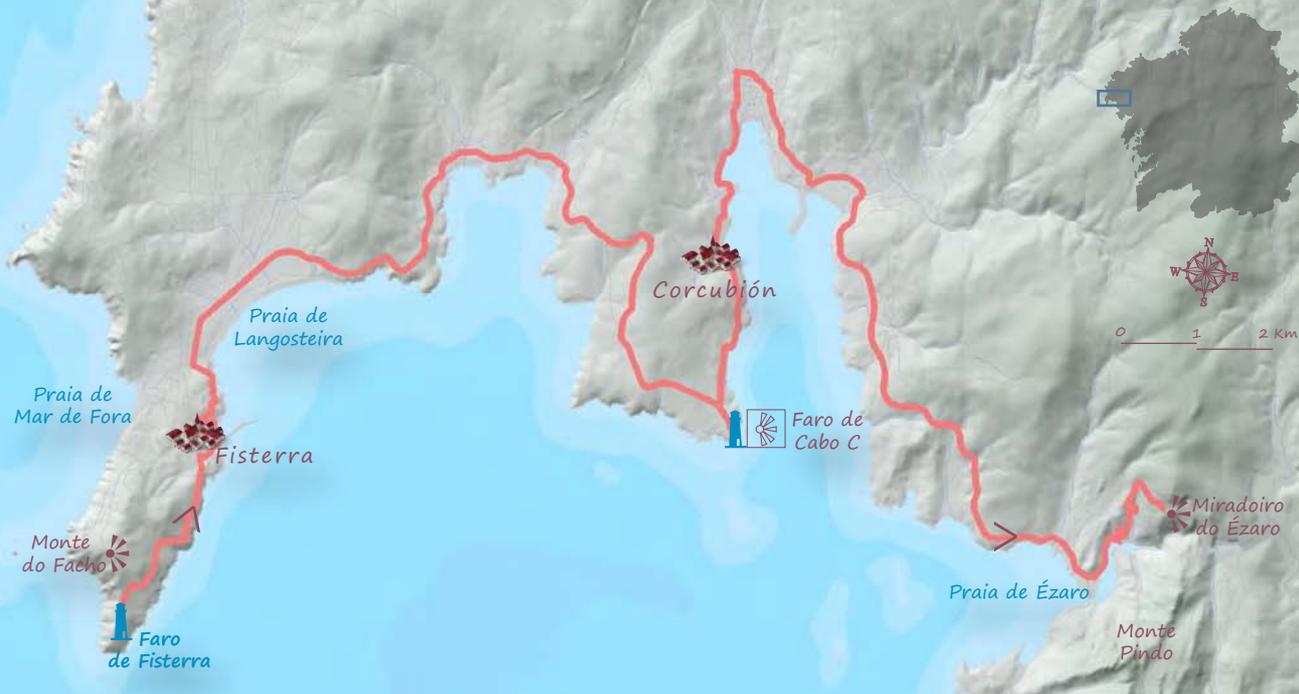




From the Fisterra lighthouse
to the lookout point at O
Ézaro... From the end of the
world to the Celtic Olympus

7

The end of the earth. Fisterra (Finisterre in Spanish) is the remote place where the world ends. But it is also the beginning of a beautiful route that follows the shoreline, through mythical locations on the Costa da Morte: Corcubión, Cee, and the Xallas waterfall, ending at the spectacular O Ézaro lookout point, beside Monte Pindo, the sacred Olympus of the Celts.



For the Romans, *finis terrae* was the place where the known world ended. It features in the collective imagination of many peoples living on the shores of the Atlantic, and other “land’s ends” exist in Brittany and Cornwall. In addition to its spectacular coastal scenery, our Finisterre is a spiritual, mythical place, as it also marks the end of the *Camiño a Fisterra*, a prolongation of the Saint James’ Way to Santiago. According to legend, in Roman times there was an altar to the sun (Ara Solis) here, which Saint James ordered to be destroyed because it was a site of pagan ritual. But the tradition persists and today Ara Solis is the

name of a well-known square in the old quarter, near the chapel of Nosa Señora do Bo Suceso. Geographically, Fisterra is a classic cape: a long peninsula ending in a large promontory, where a lighthouse was built in

Cheguei a Fisterra, alí onde o sol esmaiado e silandeiro morre no mar como umha bágoa.

1853. In 1888 a horn was added, which came to be known as the “Fisterra cow”, because it sounded so much like the animal mooing. Fisterra is a key location on the Costa da Morte. Its long seafaring

tradition is clearly reflected in the fish market, which has a space for visitors to watch the auctions. Leaving the village, the A Langosteira inlet contains the beach of the same name, a long strip of sand with clear waters and views of Monte Pindo in the distance. The route passes through Sardíneiro and by other, smaller beaches, such as Restrelo and Estorde. A side turn leads to A Redonda and Cape Cee, with beautiful views where the Faro de Cabo C lighthouse stands. Then, passing the seventeenth-century Castelo do Cardeal, we approach Corcubión. Well worth a visit, the town was declared a Historical and Artistic

▼ O Pindo from the lookout point at O Ézaro

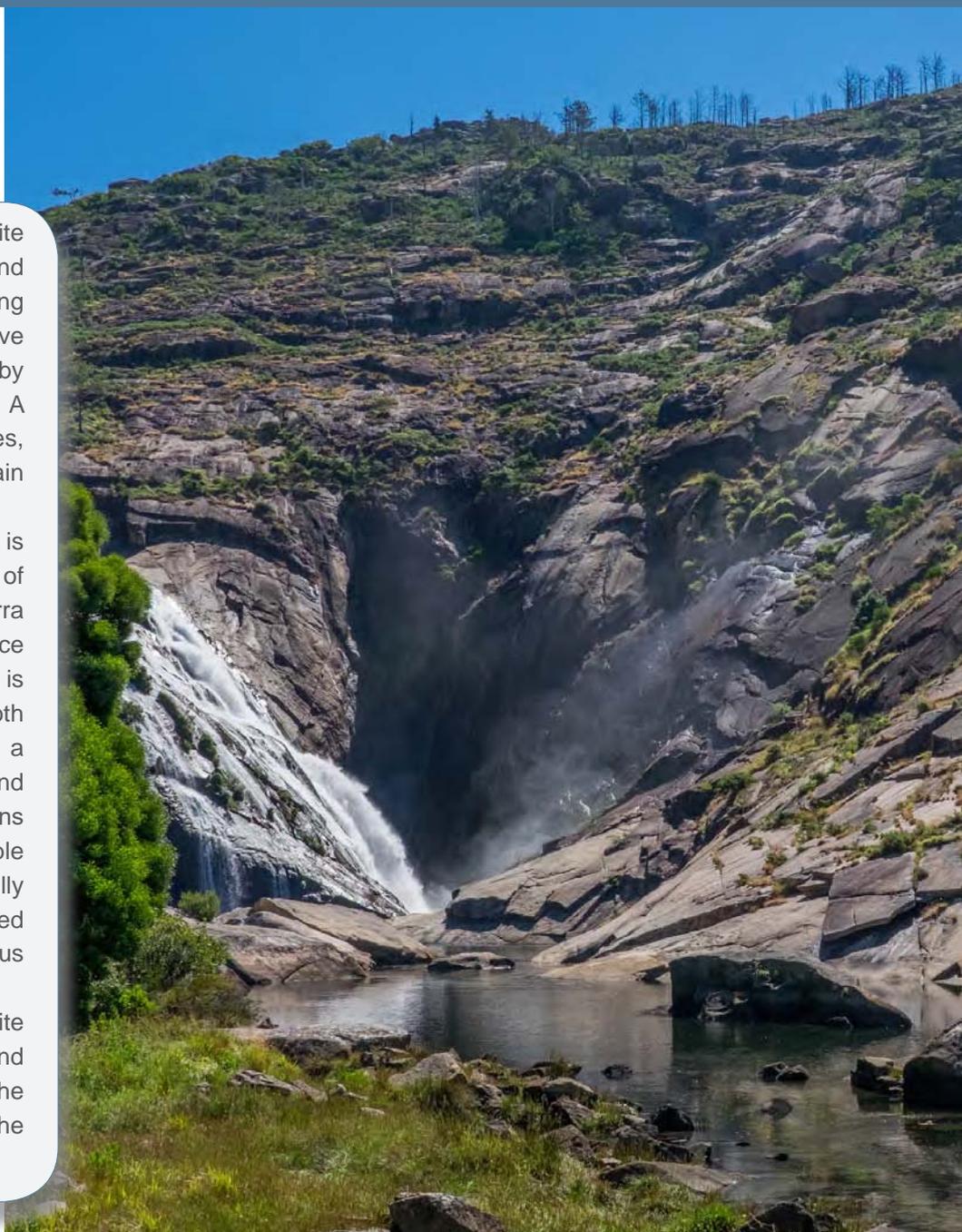




Pindo is an enormous granite massif of great ecological and geomorphological interest, including scrubland habitats and distinctive geological features. Formed by various hills and rocky outcrops, A Moa is the highest point at 627 metres, a considerable height for a mountain so close to the coast.

A major feature of the landscape, it is a visual reference point for much of the curved shoreline between Fisterra and Carnota. As well as being a place of exceptional natural beauty, it is a site of rich cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. There are a number of archaeological sites and the remains of mediaeval fortifications (castle of San Xurxo and a possible fortress at Monte Penafiel) but equally interesting are the legends associated with the area to explain the curious shapes of the rocks.

The route to the top involves quite demanding walking routes and traditional paths but, once there, the visitor is rewarded by some of the finest views the Galician coast.



Fervenza do Ézaro ▲

Site in 1985. It contains many houses with galleries, a style characteristic of coastal towns. The road follows the coast to Cee, in fact it is almost imperceptible where Corcubión ends and Cee begins. Cee is the largest town in the county and is home to many of its businesses and services. In the town centre we take the turning for O Ézaro (Dumbría). Passing by beaches like Gures, the route offers a different view of our starting point, Cape Fisterra, which, from this distance appears to lie on

the ocean. The granite mass of O Pindo looms on the road ahead, moving closer to us as we proceed. O Ézaro is a small agricultural and seafaring village. Its beaches of deep blue waters are dominated by two giants: O Pindo and Cape Fisterra on the horizon. At the O Ézaro bridge, the route branches off towards the Xallas waterfall. The waterfall at the mouth of the medium-sized River Xallas is unique as it descends directly into the sea, tumbling over granite rocks from a

height of nearly 100 metres. A path runs along the estuary to facilitate access to the falls from the Electricity Interpretation Centre, housed in the O Castrelo power station. The final section is spectacular. A steep trail climbs to the O Ézaro viewing point, which allows visitors to contemplate O Pindo, with its succession of granite peaks to the south and the mouth of the Xallas to the west, with its final bend in the foreground and Cape Fisterra and the vastness of the Atlantic in the distance.

Don't miss...



The ascent to the **lookout point at O Ézaro** is very popular among cyclists. Both loved and feared because of its gradients, which approach 30% in places, it is a real challenge for enthusiasts. Markers along the route show the times recorded by professional cyclists during the Vuelta a España.

Cape C lighthouse

Cape Cee or Cape Corcubión is a rocky outcrop, bordered by the Corcubión inlet to the west. It is an important reference point for shipping because of its lighthouse and its position with respect to the tiny islands of Carrumeiro Chico and Carrumeiro Vello.

Despite its small size and low altitude, its position affords continuous views of the coast at Corcubión, Cee, Dumbría, Carnota and even the northern part of the Rías Baixas. Its close-up views of Monte Pindo give a unique perspective of the mountain.

The Cape C lighthouse is known by some as the Cape Cee lighthouse and by others as the Cape Corcubión lighthouse, its curious current name suggesting an amiable compromise between the inhabitants of the two villages. The construction is a simple octagonal stonework tower. Attached to it is a small square house with a hip roof that provides accommodation for the lighthouse keepers. Although plans for the lighthouse were approved in 1847, it did not become operative until 1860. It was automated in 1934.



From Corrubedo lighthouse to Monte Enxa... The dunes at Corrubedo, the sandbanks at Porto do Son



8

The area round Corrubedo, famous for its distinctive dunes, has a great deal to offer the visitor. This untamed shore is one of the best conserved stretches of coast in Galicia, with extensive sandbanks and dunes and nearby hills with views of mile after mile of unspoilt Atlantic beauty.



Cape Corrubedo is a flat rocky formation closing the inlet of the same name. Although it is near the peaceful Rías Baixas, it is exposed to the open sea, with the vast ocean on one side and the rocky Serra do Barbanza on the other. At just a few metres above sea level, The Corrubedo lighthouse withstands the assaults of the wind from the sea with no protection. It is a cylindrical brickwork tower whose white dome can, from a distance, appear like the white crest of a great breaking wave. Surrounded by crags and tiny islands, the lower reaches of this coast are dangerous, making the lighthouse indispensable. Occasionally on foggy nights it has been taken for the lighthouse on the island of Sálvora. A long straight road, a rarity in Galicia, runs to and from the lighthouse. To the north the Balieiros or Furna dos Portiños beach is a popular wind-surfing site. The beaches often form grottoes, “large natural cavities in the rocks, produced by the action of the sea”, evidence of the violent impact of the waves on this shore.

*O faro de Corrubedo
co seu ollo largasío,
ai amor, púxome medo.*

Corrubedo is a peaceful location with pleasant temperatures in summer, although it is windy in winter. The inlet is not as large as a *ría* but it provides sufficient protection for boats in the busy harbour. The small houses

almost touch the sand, or the sand touches the houses, according to how you see it. It is a pleasure to wander through the maze of streets in the village. From the harbour, a large white expanse can be seen in the middle distance: the great dune of Corrubedo. The route passes the *Complexo dunar de Corrubedo e lagoas de Carregal e Vixán* Natural Park, which deserves a leisurely, respectful visit because of its sensitive environmental conditions. A side turn heads towards Santa Clara de Novás, with a detour to Monte Tahume, one of the finest panoramic lookout points on the Galician coast. Returning to our route we come to the Lagoas de San Pedro e Xuño Interpretation Centre, where visitors can learn about phenomena in the intertidal zone. At this point the coast becomes a continuous beach which changes its name as one proceeds: Areas Longas, Xuño, Furnas, etc. Joining the new road at Xuño, we enter a more densely populated area with smallholdings between Caamaño and Tarela. Looking towards the sea, we can see Monte Louro in the distance; we shall be seeing it again later. Baroña is a compulsory stop. The castro here is a coastal settlement dating from between the first century BC and the first century AD, located on a small isthmus overlooking the Arealonga beach. At the A Arnela beach the road

▼ View from the monte Tahume





The **great dunes at Corrubedo** are the feature that defines this protected area. The dunes are moving and are around one kilometre long, reaching a height of nearly 20 metres. The park receives thousands of visitors each year and a designated route has been established to

prevent damage to the site. The wetland area is vital for this ecosystem. The presence of salt water in the Carregal lagoon and fresh water in the Vixán lagoon permits a diverse range of habitats which are home to numerous species of birds, including teals, ducks, dunlins, scorpions, Kentish plovers,

herons and Montagu's harrier. Other species include oystercatchers, sanderlings and turnstones. There is a reception centre and a range of facilities for visitors, including the Castroidá lookout point and informative itineraries of interest to tourists, especially bird spotters.

▲ Great dunes at Corrubedo

appears to merge with the sea. Monte Louro can be seen on the horizon, an impressive sight that will reappear with every turn in the road. Before we reach the town of Porto do Son, a side turn takes us towards Monte Enxa (539 metres), the end of our route. From this

extraordinary natural lookout point there are sweeping views over the Ría de Muros y Noia, closed off to the north by Monte Louro, with its unmistakable outline. Monte Enxa is a great place from which to observe the different uses for the land: crags and scrubland in

the immediate vicinity, livestock and forestry in the middle distance, and urban development on the edges of the *ría*. Above all, however, it allows us to contemplate a fascinating section of the Galician coast, between the Arousa and Muros y Noia *rías*.



Don't miss...

Monte Tahume

The **Castro de Baroña** is an Iron Age settlement located on the coast at Porto do Son. The formation of stable communities led to a civilisation known as the *Castro* culture, with daily life centred around fortified settlements. Located on a small peninsula, Baroña is a maritime *castro* in which different areas have been conserved, including the outer fosse, defensive walls and various circular buildings. The fine sandy beach and sweeping views of the Atlantic provide a perfect setting for this magnificent heritage site.

Monte Tahume is a superb natural lookout point, located in the last section of O Barbanza mountain range, similar in shape and texture to other peaks in the range.

At 227 metres high, it affords views of the whole coastline between Rías Baixas and Costa da Morte. In the foreground the whole of the *Complexo dunar de Corrubedo e lagoas de Carregal e Vixán* Natural Park can be seen. There are also fine views of Cape Corrubedo with its lighthouse and the islands of Sálvora and Ons, the latter in the Ría de Pontevedra.

An asphalted track goes to the top of the hill, where parking space is available beside the telecommunications masts. The paths on the upper part of the crags lead to a cross at the top, where splendid views are to be found, although there are sweeping views from anywhere on the way up.



From Cape Udra to Cape Home... via the capes of O Morrazo



9

The route between these two capes links natural spaces in the far south of the Ría de Pontevedra and the far north of the Ría de Vigo. The Parque Nacional das Illas Atlánticas is visible from point on this route along the Atlantic coast of the O Morrazo peninsula. The fantastic coastal itinerary takes in the Ría de Aldán and conveys the essence of the Rías Baixas: nature, a favourable climate and beaches.



coastline features a series of attractive bays and beaches. Starting from here the route runs through populated areas, confirming the image of the Rías Baixas as a residential location. Passing through forest plantations, we reach Aldán (Cangas), a land of sailors and canoeists. Aldán is a small *ría*, easily overlooked between those of Pontevedra and Vigo. The sea is productive in this area, which is well known for its mussels and beaches with crystalline water. The focal point in O Hío is its church with a spectacular stone cross for which it is famous. At this point the route branches towards the Costa da Vela, passing attractive beaches such as Nerga and Barra. Reaching Donón, we enter the last section of the route. A Buguina, a beautiful sculpture in the form of a periwinkle, by Lito Portela, marks the beginning of the wildest stretch of the Costa da Vela. At this point we leave

Cape Udra (Bueu) is a natural space located in the far south of the Ría de Pontevedra, sharing access to the sea with the Ría de Aldán and facing the island of Ons. Because of its natural qualities it was declared a Special Area of Conservation and it is part of the Natura 2000 network with its own nature workshop. Crags, cliffs and scrubland dominate the landscape. The area is also important for its submarine habitats. The remains of a fort can be seen at the top, while the

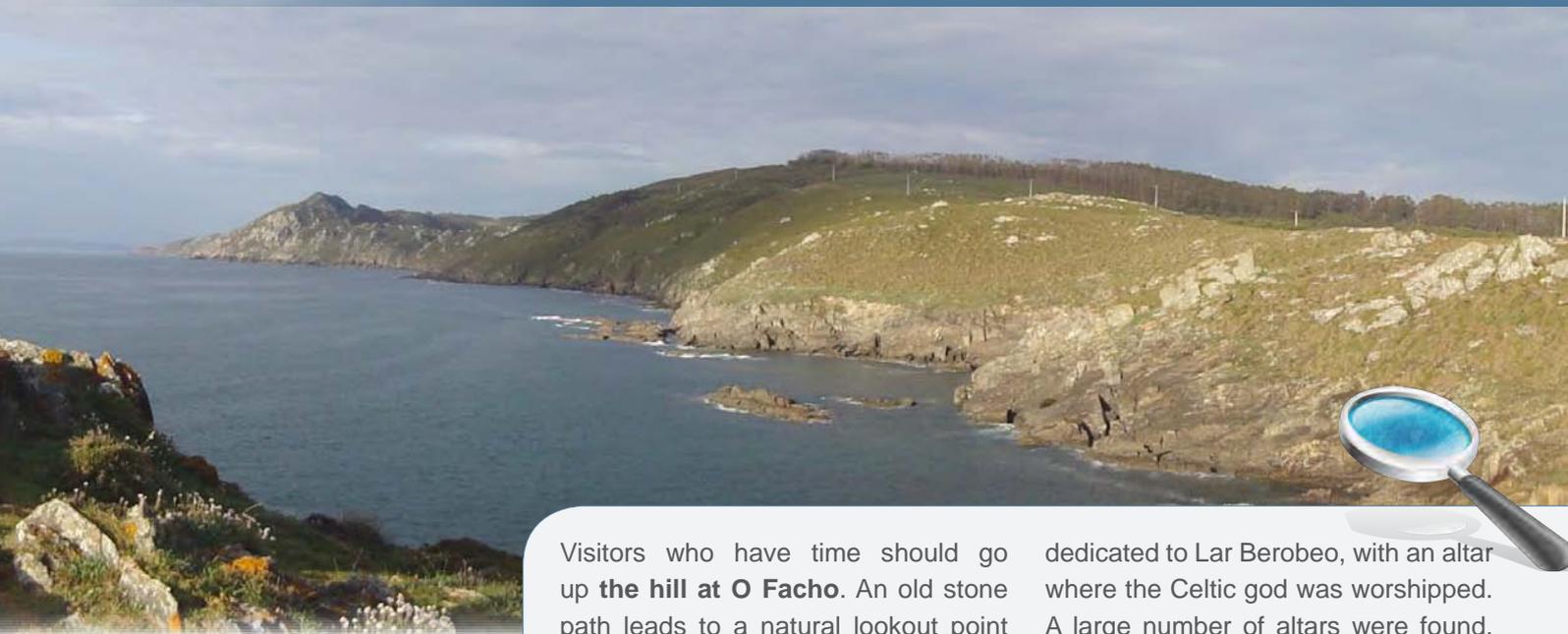
the road and follow a wide dirt track above the cliffs which leads to the capes. There are small bays that can be reached by steep winding paths. Cape Home is a mythical spot in the Rías Baixas. The Cíes islands are nearer to this point than any other part of the coast. The lighthouse on the cape is a slim white cylindrical tower. The low, red lighthouse at nearby Punta Robaleira is more modest. After the beach at Melide there is a third lighthouse, at Punta Subrido. Atlantic. Cliffs and beauty.



The Costa da Vela ▲

▼ The Cabo Home and the Cíes islands





*Presentádeme un outro
Deucalión
para invadir o mar tal
Cabo Home
cunha nave de pedra, a illas
remotas.*

Visitors who have time should go up **the hill at O Facho**. An old stone path leads to a natural lookout point with views of the Cíes islands. An old military lookout post shows the strategic importance of the spot. O Facho is a site of rich cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. As well as the castro settlement there is a Galician-Roman sanctuary

dedicated to Lar Berobeo, with an altar where the Celtic god was worshipped. A large number of altars were found, there being various copies on the site. According to legend, religious and pagan rites took place in this place of earthly power. The special significance attributed to it at various times in history may be related to the sublime sunsets seen there.



Don't miss...

The stone cross at O Hío

The parish of O Hío is home to an important collection of artistic and religious monuments, comprising the church, the rectory and the stone cross.

Santo André is a Romanesque church dating from the twelfth century. The spacious rectory stands on a large plot. It is enclosed by a brick wall and contains a dovecot. From the artistic point of view, however, the most interesting feature is the stone cross.

It is attributed to Xosé Cerviño, known as Maestro Cerviño or *Pepe da Pena*. The popular stonemason from Cotobade had connections with the Pontevedra school, becoming its most famous exponent. Nevertheless, the authorship of the cross is not clearly established, although it is known that it was sculpted in 1872.

Its importance is highlighted by its position in the atrium of the church. The cross is in Baroque style and carved from a single granite block, the steps and the shaft are historiated and the cross depicts the Descent of Christ.

It is considered one of the most important Galician *cruceiros* and a visit to O Hío calls for a tranquil pause to contemplate this beautiful, delicately carved piece.



On the left, opposite the turning that leads to the harbour in Aldán is a wooded area that is often unnoticed by visitors. It is the little known **Finca do Frendoal** park, which belonged to the Casa da Torre de Aldán, official residence of the Counts of Canalejas. Known as an “enchanted wood” the park contains a variety of plants and trees and various features of interest, including the Arco da Condesa and the Arco do Mouro, the remains of an old stone aqueduct.



From Monte Cepudo to Monte Aloia... from Vigo to Tui via Serra do Galiñeiro

10

In the vicinity of the Ría de Vigo, various natural lookout points offer excellent panoramas of the coast and the Illas Atlánticas Natural Park. Beside the ría, Monte Cepudo is the starting point of a route going towards Monte Aloia Natural Park via the surprising O Galiñeiro range, which links the Rías Baixas to O Baixo Miño.



The Ría de Vigo, despite being a densely populated built up area, offers attractive views of the coast. Galicia's largest city is surrounded by a green belt of hills and mountains with lovely walks and views. Near Monte Alba (503 metres), Monte Cepudo (527 metres) is the starting point for this itinerary, which can claim to offer the best views of the city. From this position much of Vigo and a long stretch of the southern Galician coast can be seen, including the mouths of the Rías Baixas. Cepudo and Alba form part of an extensive woodland park, equipped with a variety of leisure services. At the top of the hill the eye is drawn to the Nosa Señora da Alba hermitage which offers spiritual protection to the *ría*. Leaving Vigo behind, the route enters the municipality of Nigrán. Chandebrito welcomes us with its fort and eighteenth-century church. Its rural tranquillity contrasts with the densely populated areas on the coast in O Val Miñor county. After passing through Vincios,

before the road goes over the motorway, a turning to the right leads into the Sierra de O Galiñeiro. This chain of mountains runs through the municipalities of Vigo, Gondomar, O Porriño and Tui until it reaches Monte Aloia, a natural park in the south-eastern area of the range. The route through O Galiñeiro runs mostly through peaceful pine woods with occasional glimpses of the rocky summits, including Monte Galiñeiro, the highest peak, which reaches 705 metres despite being so close to the coast. After a number of turns and passing through the village of Prado, the route reaches Monte Aloia, the first place in Galicia to be declared a natural park, in 1979. Today it is the smallest in area of Galicia's six natural parks. Covering approximately 750 hectares, the favourable climate, mild temperatures and abundant presence of water allow native species such as chestnut, ash and white willow trees, to flourish alongside other more "exotic" varieties, such as firs, cypresses and cedars, the result of replanting in the 1920s, directed by engineers Daniel de la Sota and Rafael Areses. The visitors' centre, Casa do Enxeñeiro Areses, was named after the latter. Built in 1921 in a distinctive architectural style it is the starting point for an interesting botanical trail with many explanatory panels. From the high point at Cruz de

Somos auga, e a auga pode có máis duro.

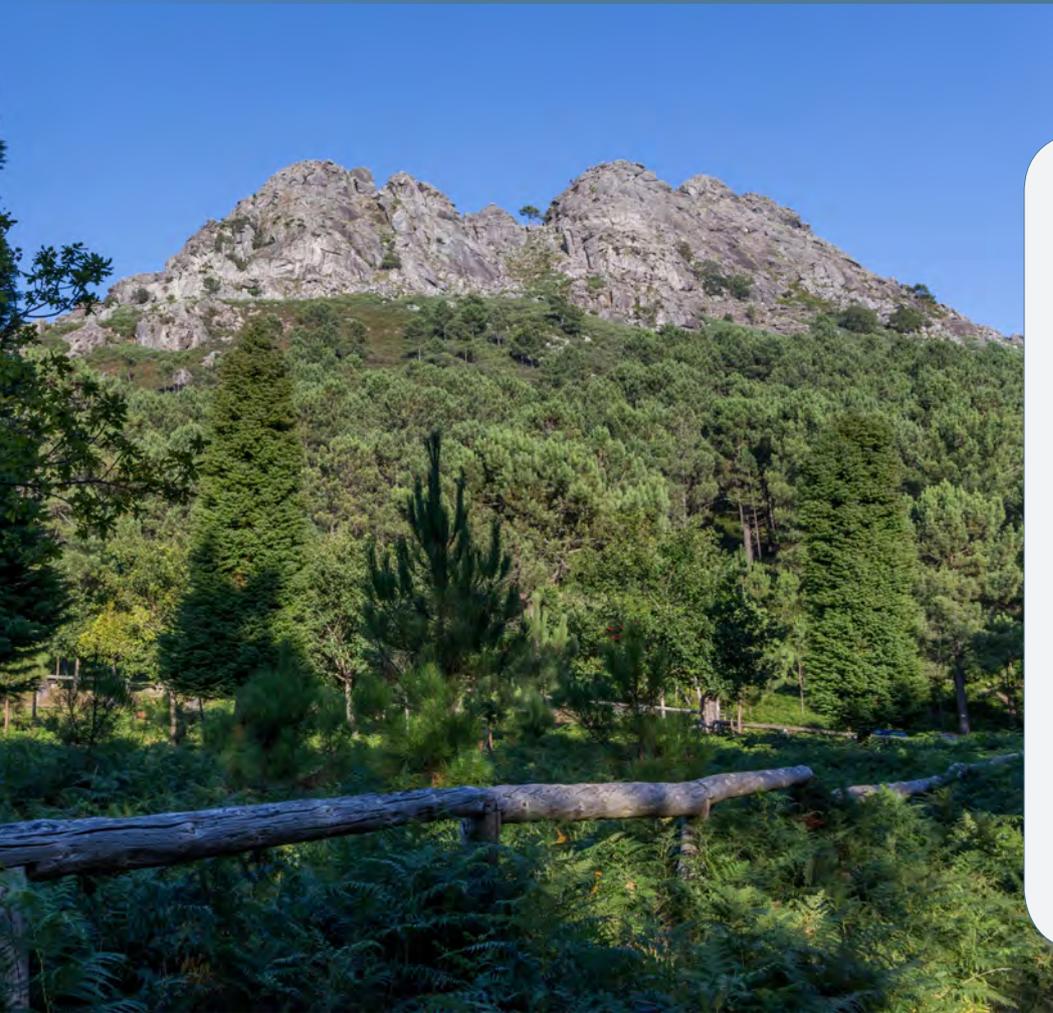
Somos serra, a serra protéxenos, e nós protexerémola.

▼ View from the high point at Cruz de San Xiao





Legends of *mouros* are common to all parts of Galicia. These supernatural creatures hid treasure sought by the local population in burial mounds, forts and other archaeological sites, giving rise to myths in the popular imaginary which have been recorded in curious place names: Forno dos Mouros, Casota de Mouros, Pena da Moura, etc. Such myths are widespread in the O Galiñeiro range where numerous archaeological sites (forts, castles, burial mounds, etc.) suggest an abundance of treasures. The unusual rock formations of the crags and granite pillars are interpreted as the result of the action of the *mouros*, local legends providing an explanation for what has no explanation of its own.



▲ Serra do Galiñeiro

San Xiao (664 metres) we can appreciate the landscape of O Baixo Miño, the valleys of the Louro and Miño rivers, the latter forming the natural and administrative border with Portugal and flowing into the sea at Monte de Santa Trega, which can be seen in the distance. Monte Aloia is also a site of rich cultural heritage, both tangible

and intangible. The San Xiao and San Fins hermitage dates back to the sixteenth century and was built on the remains of a fort. At Alto dos Cubos, the remains of the fortifications give way to a wall several kilometres long built with large blocks of masonry without cement. Known as the *Muralla Ciclópea do Aloia*,

its purpose remains a mystery. The mysteries related to Monte Aloia have led some scholars to think that it might be the site of the mythical Monte Medulio, where the Galician tribes preferred to commit suicide rather than be dominated by the Romans. On a foggy day the mysticism of the hill is felt even more intensely, taking us back in time.



Don't miss...



The **O Galiñeiro range** is also of geological interest as its peaks contain *gneis riebeckita*, a mineral formed in the earth's mantle. The area's geomorphology is very distinctive, especially the unusual forms dating from the periglacial age, with names such as A Cova da Becha and A Lapa da Moura.

Chandebrito fort

The village of Chandebrito is dominated by the Monte de O Castro. With its steep slopes, at an altitude of 359 metres it is a perfect watchtower. Its defensive position allows perfect surveillance of the Ría de Vigo and a large part of the Nigrán and Baiona coast.

Occupied between the fifth century BC and the second century AD, its strategic location is reinforced by a wall to the north, the side that is least protected by the natural relief. The site was carefully chosen to establish the settlement of the Castro culture.

Its layout is similar to the mountain forts, with terraces that are not common in coastal settlements. The interior space was structured according to specific functions, including an area with numerous rocky caves which archaeological remains found there indicate was used as an acropolis.

This site of great historical, natural and ethnographical interest is complemented by nearby mills and canals and an extensive network of walking trails.





From Baiona to Santa Trega... the south coast

11

The route along the southern coast of Galicia follows a unique shoreline, without the rías, coves and inlets typical of the region. The road linking Baiona and A Guarda goes through one of the most beautiful landscapes on the Galician coast: a long straight line bordering the sea, running from north to south alongside the amazing A Groba mountain range.

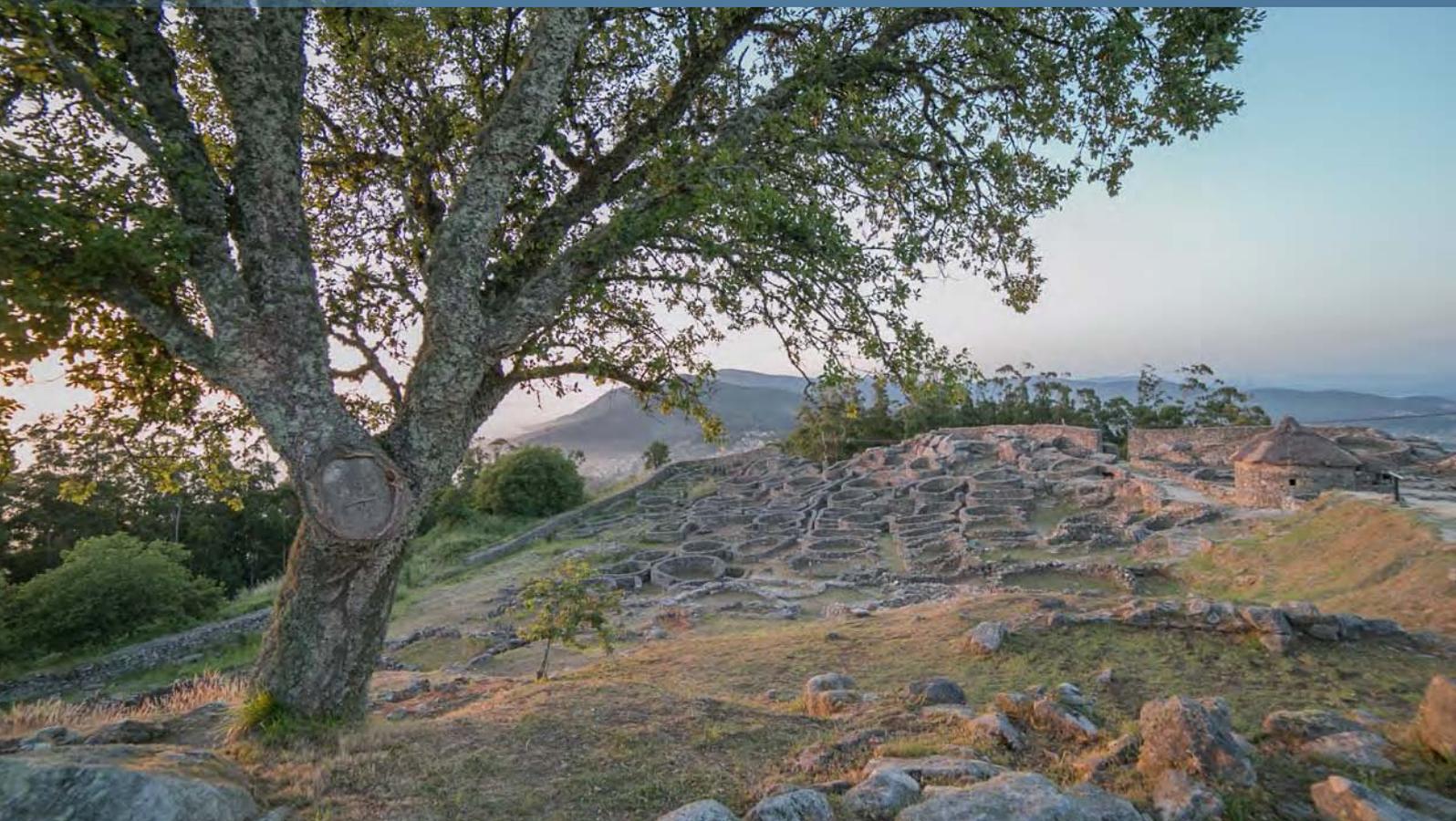


▼ Cabo Silleiro

Baiona is the starting point for our journey. A seafaring town, popular with tourists, it was established long ago taking advantage of the site's good climate and sheltered position in a small inlet. With its carefully conserved sea front, its old centre was declared a Historical and Artistic Site in 1993. The Monterreal fortress is the town's most important historic building. Its location on Monte Boi, a small peninsula beside the harbour, defines the Baiona shoreline. Its strategic position was historically important, and it was a walled precinct from the second century BC. The Catholic Monarchs granted the precinct a charter of settlement, inaugurating a period of trading splendour, but its importance gradually declined until it was abandoned in the nineteenth century. The Monterreal site contains various buildings and other remains, including the gates leading to the fortifications and the towers (Porta do Sol, Príncipe, Tenaza and Reloxo), while the nineteenth-century Pazo de Elduayen was extensively refurbished in the 1960s to house the present Parador de Turismo. After leaving Baiona our first stop is Cape Silleiro, where the shoreline turns to run from north to south. The area contains numerous features of interest: artillery batteries, viewpoints and lighthouses. The old Silleiro lighthouse (1866), close to the sea and almost at sea level, was replaced

by a new octagonal lighthouse with red and white stripes in 1924. The cape area is spectacular: open sea, views of the Cíes islands and crags that appear to emerge from the sea and continue to the top of the hills. The long straight section of the south coast begins at Silleiro, keeping the sea to the right and the A Groba range steadily rising to the left, reaching 654 metres at Alto da Groba. The route provides a succession of delightful views of the green hills and the blue sea. At times it is not clear where the land ends and the sea begins, with water blowing onto the road on windy days. Between Mougás and Oia the mountains give way to the sea, in an open coastal area where crops are grown on small, irregularly shaped plots bordered by stones, with occasional terraces to make better use of the slopes. Oia is a small village in a corner of the coastline. It follows the sea front and has narrow streets and a harbour immediately beside the majestic Santa María monastery. In the late afternoon the sun shines directly onto the façade giving it a wonderful warm glow. A Guarda is in Galicia's furthest south-west corner. A village of bright colours with close links to the sea, the houses in the harbour retain the traditional structure but their height has increased over the years. Their spirit is unchanged and memories of the village's seafaring past are very much alive. There is a promenade along the sea front and





Santa Trega fort ▲



The route follows the **A Groba range** along the south coast from Cape Silleiro to the area near A Guarda. The granite-based mountains have crags and scrubland at the top and extensive pine woods on their lower slopes. Forestry and livestock both play an important role in A Groba and it is not unusual to find cattle grazing

loose in the hills or wandering along the forest trails. In summer

*Néboa na Groba,
nordeste afora.*

they are often rounded up. The *curros* are enclosures used in an

ancient rite known as the *Rapa das Bestas*, an impressive feat of strength when the wild horses are gathered in to be marked and have their manes trimmed. This range is most impressive on its western side, which drops steeply, creating sweeping views over the sea.

a strong harbour wall, although this may seem insufficient when the Atlantic is at its fiercest. The waves crash against the wall and A Guarda is sprayed with sea water. Santa Trega is a mythical hill. Overlooking A Guarda from a height of more than 340 metres, it rises suddenly, standing alone where the Miño flows into the Atlantic. This strategic location has been occupied since ancient times, with many archaeological remains

showing how important it was. These include rock carvings, the hill fort, one of the most visited in Galicia, and the Santa Trega hermitage, which has given the hill its name. The fortified town is a large archaeological site, an example of the Castro culture, which reached its peak in the first century BC. The large number of buildings reveals how substantial the settlement was, thanks to its strategic position and economic importance. Circular

constructions predominate but the influence of Roman building styles can be seen in other, rectangular structures and in the defensive walls. The site was declared a Historical and Artistic Monument in 1931 and it is also a Cultural Heritage Site. The views at the top of the hill provide a 360° panoramic vista: A Guarda and the A Groba range to the north, Baixo Miño to the east, Portugal to the south and the vast Atlantic to the west.

Don't miss...



The ancient stones of the fortified settlement reflect the play of light and colour of the sunsets over **Santa Trega**. From this superb vantage point, with the River Miño flowing into the immensity of the Atlantic, on the border between two countries, and a wealth of views from the top of the hill, the twilight moments at the end of the day, when all shapes are seen as shadows, are a sublime experience.

Oia Monastery

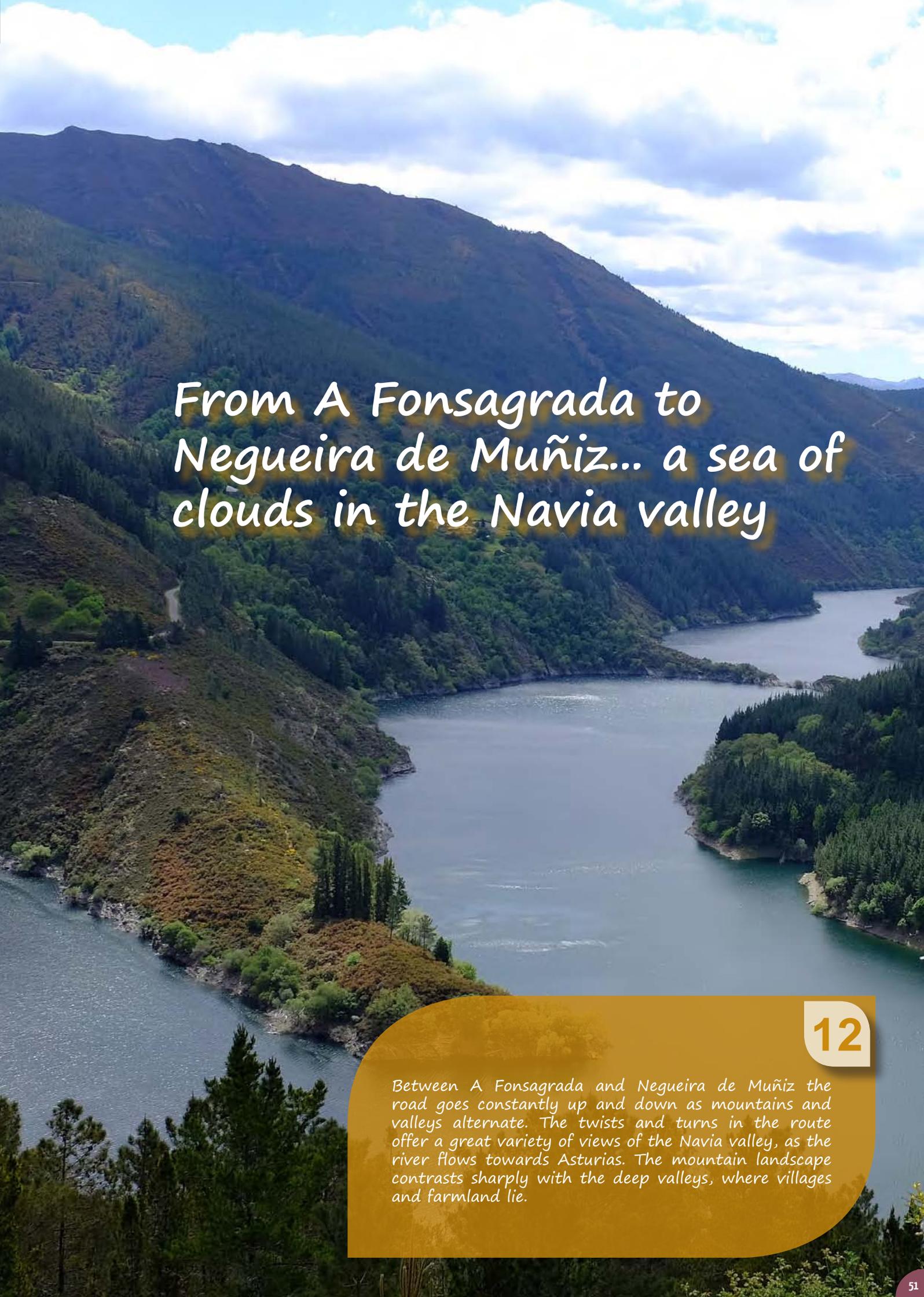
The origins of the Santa María de Oia monastery are uncertain. It may have been founded by Saint Martin, Christian evangelist and bishop of Braga, who is said to have converted the Suevi to Christianity in the sixth century.

In the twelfth century the Benedictine monastery was transferred to the Cistercians. Located in a remote and relatively undeveloped region, the monastery's activity led to changes in the local landscape and economy, with the introduction of new crops and livestock (vines and the Baixo Miño horses are attributed to the order).

Architecturally, the mediaeval church is the outstanding feature of the monastery. In a unique setting, blending perfectly into the coastal landscape, unusually for a Cistercian monastery the façade looks towards the sea. The remains of an old quay are evidence of the monks' connections with seafaring and fishing.

Declared a National Monument (currently a Cultural Heritage Site) in 1931, it awaits the support needed to restore it to its former beauty.

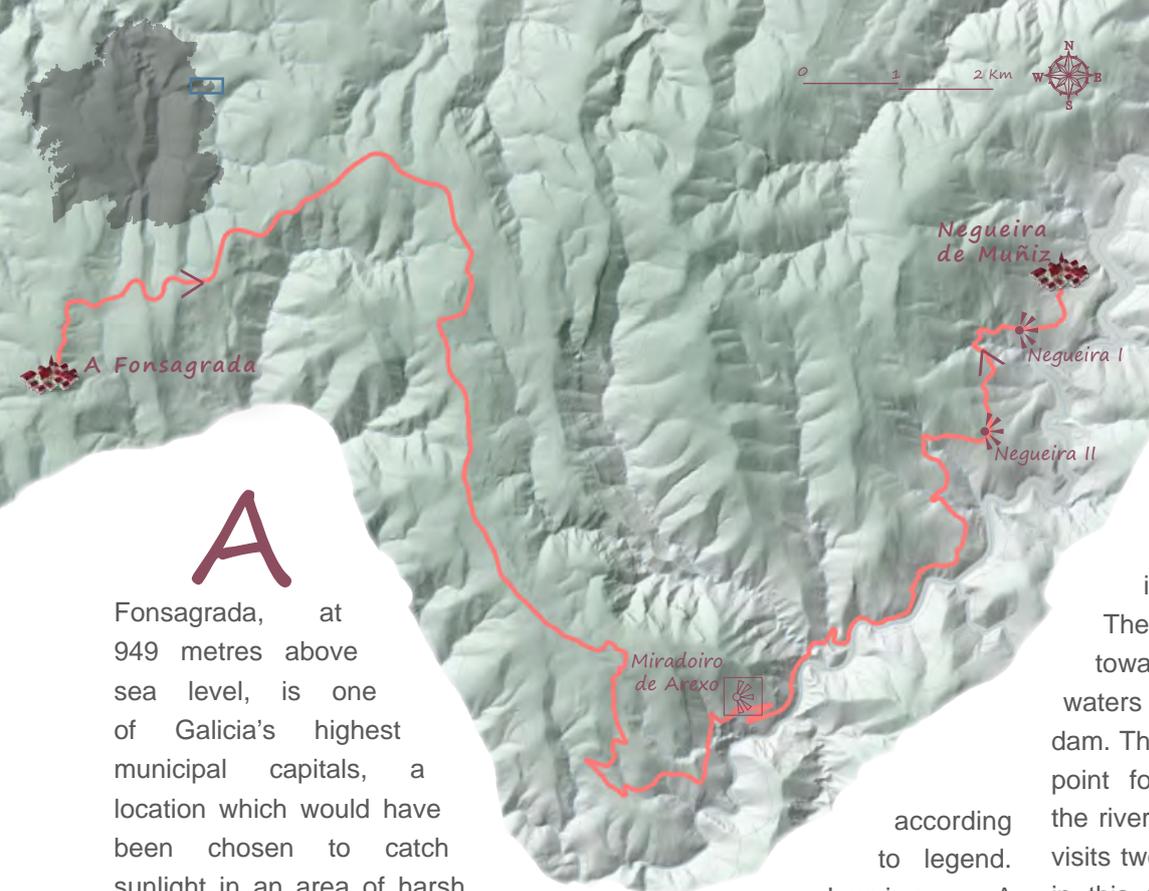




From A Fonsagrada to Negueira de Muñiz... a sea of clouds in the Navia valley

12

Between A Fonsagrada and Negueira de Muñiz the road goes constantly up and down as mountains and valleys alternate. The twists and turns in the route offer a great variety of views of the Navia valley, as the river flows towards Asturias. The mountain landscape contrasts sharply with the deep valleys, where villages and farmland lie.



A

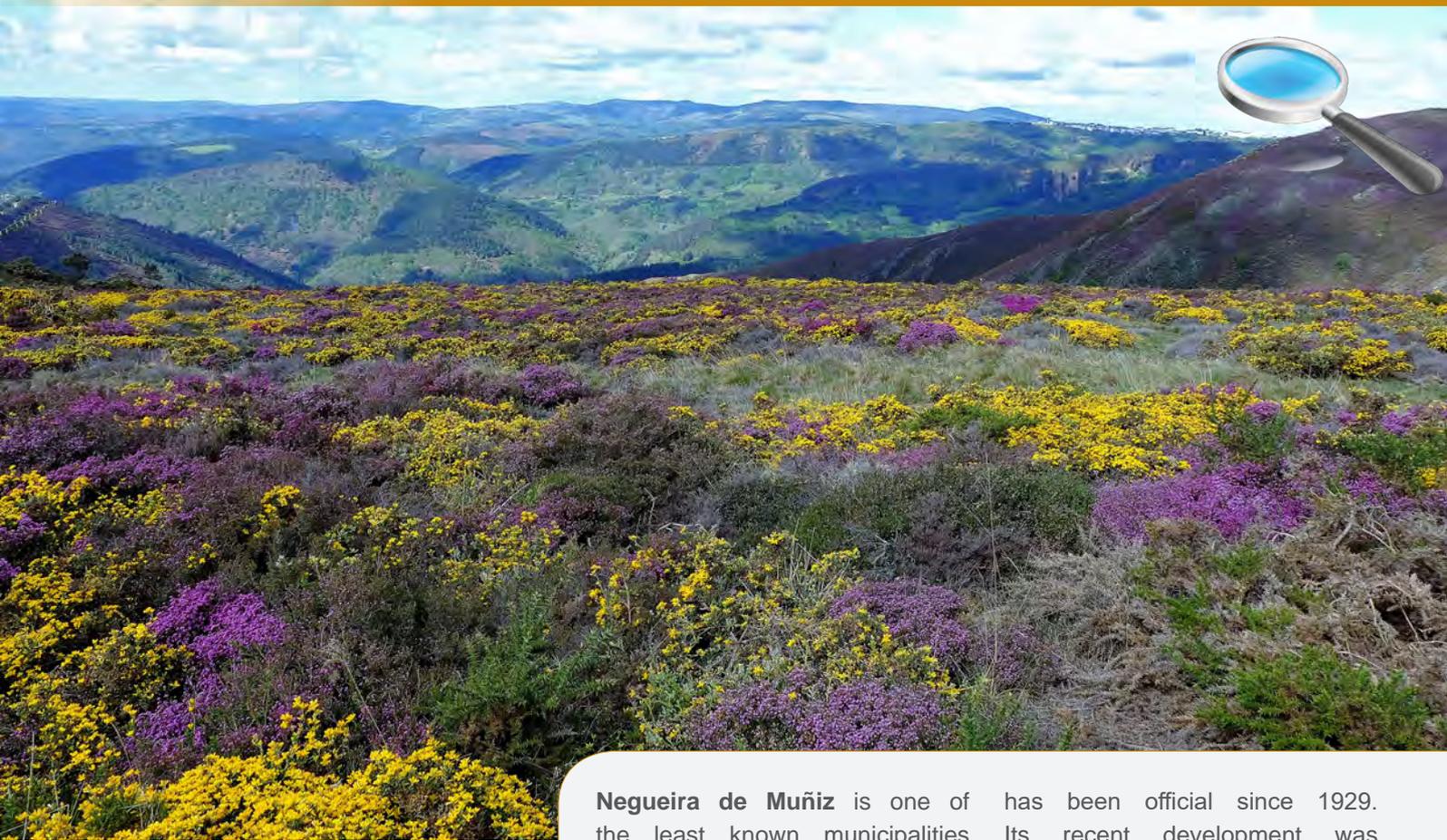
Fonsagrada, at 949 metres above sea level, is one of Galicia's highest municipal capitals, a location which would have been chosen to catch sunlight in an area of harsh winters. The town has fine views and can be discerned from many points in the mountains of Lugo. The town centre is compact and well sheltered, despite its altitude, structured round an old chapel and the square in the Holy Fountain is located. Historically, the Burón area was a place of transit, and the "Camino Primitivo" (Primitive Way) for pilgrims to Santiago passes through here. This branch of the Saint James' Way is known as the Vía de Alfonso II, as it was the route followed by this Asturian monarch, the first pilgrim

according to legend. Leaving A Fonsagrada and going towards Asturias, the route comes to the village of Paradanova, whose name recalls the old inns at which travellers would make a halt (*parada*) in their journey. For pilgrims it would have played the same role as today's hostels. The route leading to Fonfría has views of the Oscos area in the distance and a large part of the municipality of A Fonsagrada (the largest in Galicia at 400 km²). The route branches towards Liñares de Bidul, entering landscapes characterised by pine woods and scrubland with

their eye-catching seasonal colours. Going on towards Vilar de Cuíña, the steep slopes give us our first views of the Navia valley, far below us. The route follows the course of the river, running high above it, and passing through A Fornaza and Arexo with its impressive viewpoint. The road gradually drops towards the River Navia, its waters held back by the Salime dam. The Boabdil bridge is the only point for many kilometres where the river can be crossed. The route visits two designated lookout points in this rugged terrain, ideal spots for leisure and contemplation. We are now very close to Negueira de Muñiz, one of Galicia's most special places. The municipal capital is a pretty village of traditional architecture, facing the River Navia and blending perfectly with the meadows and farmland around it. Of special interest are San Salvador's Church and the rectory house, which date from the sixteenth century. These lands gaze down silently on the Navia river which is still crossed today using small boats which go from one side of the Salime reservoir to the other.

▼ Clouds in the Navia valley





▲ View from the road to Liñares de Bidul

*A Fonsagrada está nun alto
e Naraxa nun baixiño
máis arriba Vilabol
cun pelexiño de viño*

Negueira de Muñiz is one of the least known municipalities in Galicia, largely because of its small population: just 215, according to official figures for 2016. A mountain village of marked contrasts, its character has been shaped by its position at the eastern edge of Galicia and historical circumstances. A local dignitary, Antonio Muñiz Álvarez, called for the village to have its own local council in 1925, separating it from A Fonsagrada (which had itself formerly been part of the now extinct Concello de Burón). Its present name, which includes the surname Muñiz,

has been official since 1929. Its recent development was marked by the construction of the Grandas de Salime or Gran Navia reservoir in the 1960s. Farmland was lost, various villages were cut off and there was an exodus of inhabitants to the “colonies” of A Terra Chá, Arneiro and Veiga de Pumar, created to rehouse the residents of Nequeira. O Foxo, one of the abandoned villages, was reoccupied in the 1970s by a group organised as a commune, who were seeking a life in contact with nature. Their experience inspired the film **Vilamor** (Ignacio Vilar, 2012).



Don't miss...

Botelo is the signature dish of A Fonsagrada's cuisine. This pork sausage is cured and smoked in a casing made from the animal's intestine. Very popular throughout the eastern mountains of Galicia and parts of León and Asturias, this speciality from A Fonsagrada is ideal fare for the cold days of winter.

Arexo lookout point

The Arexo lookout point is in the village of the same name, on the Galician side of the Navia. Its position, with a drop of over 200 metres to the river and opposite a meander, offers wide views of the Navia valley and the mountains on the Asturian side (Sierra de Cuías and Sierra de Busto), including glimpses of an *alvariza*, a stone structure which protected beehives from the bears.

The landscape is one of marked contrasts, characterised by slate and schist outcrops, while differences in altitude result in widely varying biogeographical conditions.

The different types of vegetation and crops observable from Arexo create a surprising and varied landscape: from the crags and scrubland of peaks approaching 1,000 metres to vineyards at lower altitudes of 200 to 400 metres, with pine woods on the hillsides in between.

The presence of vines at lower levels and that of other vegetation typical of warmer climates, such as the cork oak, is a bioclimatic indicator, in contrast with the frequent snowfalls in the mountains bordering the Navia valley.

From Arexo it is possible to observe many of the features that have resulted in this county being recognised as a natural paradise, with the designation of Negueira as a Special Area of Conservation and the creation of the River Eo, Oscos and Tierras de Burón Biosphere Reserve.



From Navia de Suarna to As Pontes de Gatín... Ancares passes

13

The broad expanses of Os Ancares allow a complete tour of its passes and valleys. A mythical location in the Galician mountains, with its splendid natural resources, rugged relief and rich ethnographical heritage, the county is an essential part of any visit to eastern Galicia.



route comes to a turning to Murias and Balouta, leading out of the valley. The first serious climb is to the pass at Folgueiras de Aigas. As we leave the village of Munís, the Larxentes range rises steeply and the well-surfaced road begins to climb and drop dramatically. Heading towards Rao, the variations in altitude provide beautiful views of the sierra. The Rao valley is a place that is lost in time. Little villages nestle among green fields and dense vegetation between mountains rising to more than 1,000 metres. Windbreaks and coppices remind us of the importance of agriculture and livestock in the area's economy. There will be no lack of invitations to buy honey and other local produce. Murias is the largest village in the area. With its distinctive architecture, the village closely follows the contours of the mountainside. Shortly after leaving it, an attractive recreation area allows the traveller to rest and enjoy the views of the River Rao in the valley far below. Going on towards Balouta we enter the region of Castilla y León. But borders mean nothing in these mountains and the landscape is as impressive as ever. Balouta is an old village. Its round thatched houses

Os Ancares is one of Galicia's main mountain systems. Comprising various ranges, its grandiose mountain scenery contrasts with its secluded villages. It is an isolated area whose mountains extend into the further corners of Asturias and León, making it one of the least densely populated areas in the Iberian peninsula. Navia de Suarna is the point chosen

to begin our route. A Proba de Navia is the capital of this extensive municipality and the area's main centre of population. It grew up around the Ponte Vella, an early mediaeval bridge which for many years was the only point at which the River Navia could be crossed for many miles in either direction. Following the riverbank vegetation along the course of the Navia, the

▼ Navia de Suarna.





The village of **Piornedo** (Donís, Cervantes) is one of the best conserved examples of the popular architecture of the Galician mountains, especially its traditional *pallozas*, typical of Ancares, round houses with stone walls and thatched roofs. Some of them were used for storage, in which case they were known as *palleiros*. The *hórreos* (raised granaries) in this area also have their own characteristic design. One of the *pallozas* had been turned into an ethnographical museum where visitors can learn more about the area. The village's position on the side of the mountain protects it from inclement weather and allows its buildings to blend into the natural landscape.



Pallozas in Piornedo ►

are similar to those of Piornedo but may be less well known. There is always something new to be seen in the extensive Ancares mountains. The last houses in Balouta mark the point where the ascent to the Ancares Pass begins. The uneven road climbs steadily to the border between Galicia and Castilla y León, at a height of 1,648 metres. The views from the peaceful, silent Balouta lookout point should not be missed. The route requires us to retrace our steps (briefly) as far as the turning to Suárbol and Piornedo. Piornedo is a living monument to the traditional

architecture of the Galician mountains and deserves an unhurried visit. Some of the greatest concentrations of hardwoods in Galicia, a veritable spectacle of texture and colour are found in Cervantes, Donís and

*O que ve Ancares,
ve todos os lugares*

Vilarello. The route then goes on to Campa da Braña, a key spot for lovers of hiking and climbing, as it is the departure point for such

beautiful routes as the climb to Pico Tres Bispos (1,794 metres). Doiras is an important junction on the route. A short walk takes visitors to its late mediaeval castle, also known as the Torre da Ferrería. As Pontes de Gatín, in Becerreá, marks the end of this journey into the mountains of eastern Galicia. Its ancient bridge was part of Roman Road XIX and there is a milestone on one of its walls. Today it is only used by pedestrians and vehicles use a newer bridge over a pleasant stretch of the Navia, where we conclude our visit to Ancares.

Don't miss...



The **Gatín Bridge legend** says that two lovers lived on opposite sides of the Navia, separated by the waters of the river. The devil made a pact with the man to create a bridge in exchange for the life of the next child to be born in the village. The man tricked the devil, offering him some new-born kittens, saving the child he and his lover were expecting but condemning the kittens to death. Since then the bridge has been known as the Gatín (kitten) bridge.

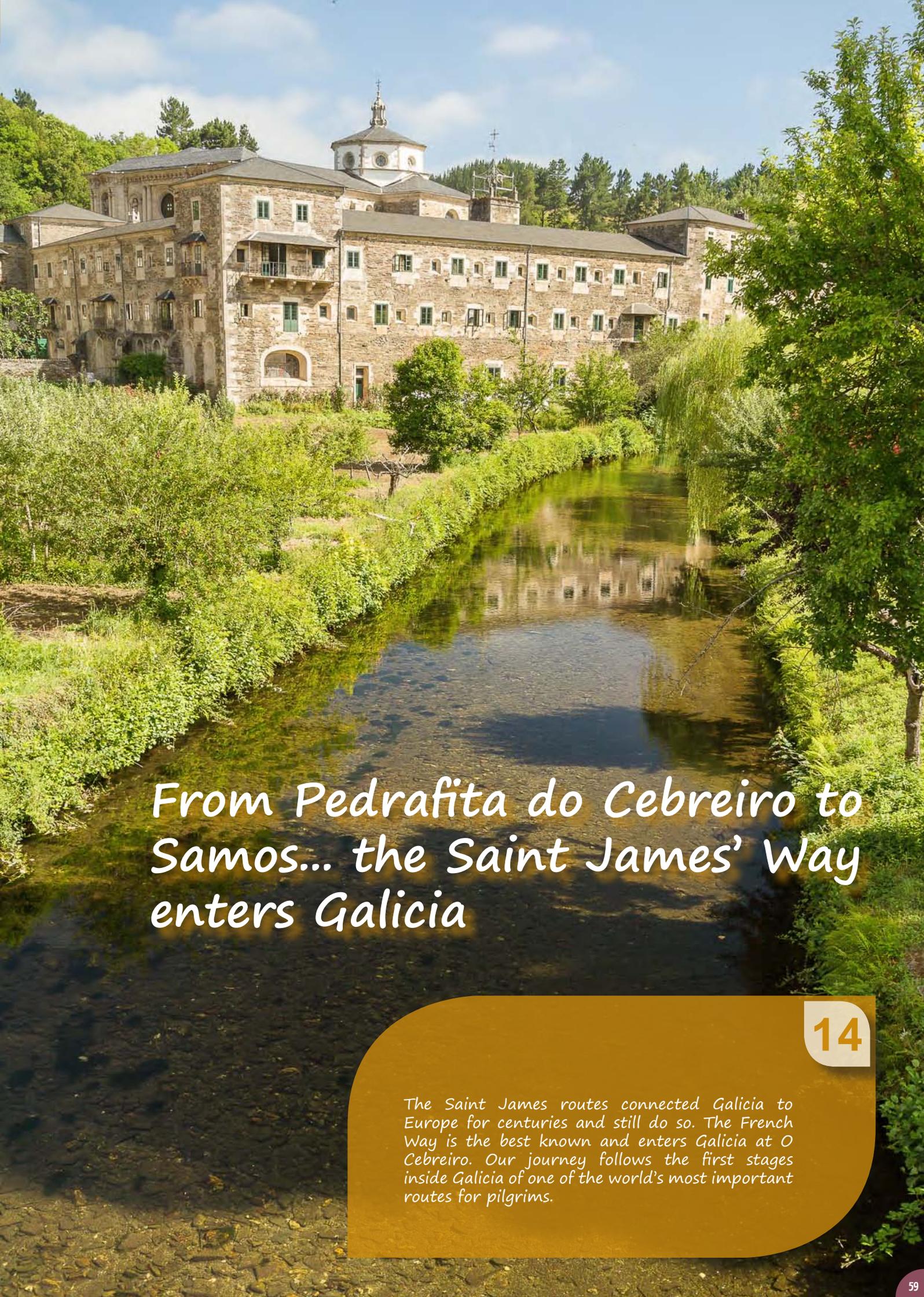
Ancares Pass

Ancares is the common designation for a series of mountain ranges. In such cases it is common for the most widely known name to be extended to the whole mountain system. Os Ancares is a mountain range and also a valley in Candín (León), adjacent to the Balouta valley, the two being linked by the Ancares pass.

From the highest point we have views on both sides: To the north the Balouta lookout point looks down on the village of that name, with its thatched houses and carefully tended fields. In the distance, in Asturias, we can see mountains that rise to over 1,700 metres. To the south runs the long Ancares valley, beside the mountain range that contains O Mostallar (1,934 metres).

The Ancares pass has featured several times in the “Vuelta a España” cycling race.





From Pedrafita do Cebreiro to Samos... the Saint James' Way enters Galicia

14

The Saint James routes connected Galicia to Europe for centuries and still do so. The French Way is the best known and enters Galicia at O Cebreiro. Our journey follows the first stages inside Galicia of one of the world's most important routes for pilgrims.



Pedrafita do Cebreiro is a transit point. Over the years a number of road infrastructures were developed at this 1,099-metre pass which marks the division between Galicia and the Central Meseta (plateau) and is a departure point for those going to Os Ancares or O Courel. This small mountain village is Galicia's highest municipal capital. It is famous for its cheese makers, *Queixo do Cebreiro* being one of the most highly regarded in Galicia. From Pedrafita do Cebreiro the road to O Cebreiro runs along the side of the mountain, with constant views of

an unbelievably green countryside. O Cebreiro is a major landmark on the Saint James' Way in Galicia. The traditional village, which has become a spiritual centre and

*O Cebreiro,
transmisor de costumes e
estruturas prerromanas
é sempre fito e feudo dos
peregrinos a Compostela.*

one popular with tourists, is in a privileged location and contains various features of cultural interest. At the top of the Alto de San Roque

an imposing statue pays tribute to the effort of pilgrims. Not far from here is the village of Hospital, its name indicating it was once the site of a pilgrims' hostel. Although no remains have been found to confirm this, it is also known as Hospital da Condessa, as a hospital may have been founded there by Doña Egilo, Lady of Triacastela, in the ninth or tenth century. Alto do Poio (1,335 metres) is another landmark on the route. In the heart of the O Rañadoiro range with views of the Serra de Oribio and the Serra do Courel, it is typical of the mountain scenery in the area and the difficult

▼ View from the *alto do Cebreiro*





The pilgrim battles against the elements in this windswept spot. This is the scene portrayed in the statue on the **Alto de San Roque**. The work of José María Acuña, this huge bronze figure depicting a mediaeval pilgrim stoically withstands the winter cold and summer sun. At 1,270 metres, with frequent snow and strong winds, San Roque is considered one of the toughest ascents on the Saint James' Way. But the traveller is rewarded by impressive views of the O Courel range and some of the most beautiful sunsets in the Galician interior.



Alto de San Roque. ▲

terrain pilgrims must traverse. After Triacastela, the road becomes more level. Various services are available in this small village. The route then runs through the leafy valleys of the Oribio and Sarria rivers, with their green meadows. The San Xulián Monastery occupies

a central position in the town of Samos, on the banks of the Sarria. Founded by the Benedictine order in the Middle Ages, its buildings and other features are in various architectural styles, predominantly Renaissance, Gothic and Baroque. The monastery is large and

contains two cloisters and an eighteenth-century Baroque church. The River Samos defines the shape of a pleasant town surrounded by woods, always lively because it is a well-known stopping point on the Saint James' Way in Galicia.



Don't miss...

O Cebreiro

! The **Faial de Liñares** is an unusual wooded area bordering the Saint James' Way and a good illustration of the area's biogeographical conditions. Concentrations of beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) only occur in cold, high mountain conditions with cool soil which must be relatively moist. In autumn, the colours of the leaves of these noble trees are gorgeous, contrasting with their grey bark with splashes of white.

O Cebreiro is a traditional village with spiritual associations in the mountains of Lugo, undergoing a revival as an important folk culture site. Marking the point where the French Way enters Galicia, the Santa Maria a Real sanctuary stands at its centre. The Pre-Romanesque ninth-century building was built with rough slate, although the façade has been renovated. It contains various relics and items of interest, including a twelfth-century chalice.

The village also contains four *pallozas* which have been turned into a museum focusing on the importance of sheep and cattle in traditional village life. The circular buildings are the perfect design for this mountain location: the absence of apertures helps keep them insulated while the thatching withstands snow.

The altitude of the village (1,300 metres) means that it is very exposed to weather conditions but also enables it to take full advantage of sunlight. Oral tradition records that the bells in the church were used to guide travellers on days when the area's frequent fog and snow made their journey difficult. These conditions, together with the steep ascent from León, have made O Cebreiro an epic landmark on the Saint James' Way.





From A Cruz do Incio to the viewpoint at A Pena do Teso Grande... O Courel, pure nature

O Courel is one of Galicia's mythical locations, a natural and spiritual reserve. Thanks to their biodiversity, these mountains contain some of the most beautiful views to be found in this part of the world.

The landscape, overflowing with colour and subtle shades, creates an unreal sensation, one that can only be appreciated in person. The work of Uxío Novoneyra, the poet from O Courel, successfully captures the area's beauty.

15



is the dividing line between Samos and Folgoso do Courel. The next section of the route follows one of the quintessential valleys of the area, the welcoming, leafy and colourful River Pequeno valley. A succession of traditional villages, blending perfectly into the landscape, merge with green meadows, fields of vegetables and groves of trees. It is undoubtedly one of the best conserved areas in Galicia, where human activity is in perfect balance with nature. At Seoane do Courel, an important centre of population in the microcosmos of O Courel, the route changes direction. The road follows the bends in the River Lor and runs along the bottom of the deep valley until it reaches Folgoso do Courel, the municipal capital. Here it turns off towards Vilamor and Froxán, crossing the Lor again at Baldomir.

The Serra do Courel is a mountain range located in the south-eastern part of the province of Lugo. Its peaks are not the highest in Galicia but they are among the most beautiful, including Formigueiros (1,641 metres), Pía Paxaro (1,610 metres) and O Teso das Papoulas (1,603 metres). A Cruz do Incio, a small village set among groves, is the starting point

for our journey through this region. The route runs through Foilebar and Vilarxoán, past meadows and chestnut trees. After A Ponte do Lózara the road gradually narrows until it becomes a mountain trail. The ascent to Pedrafita do Courel

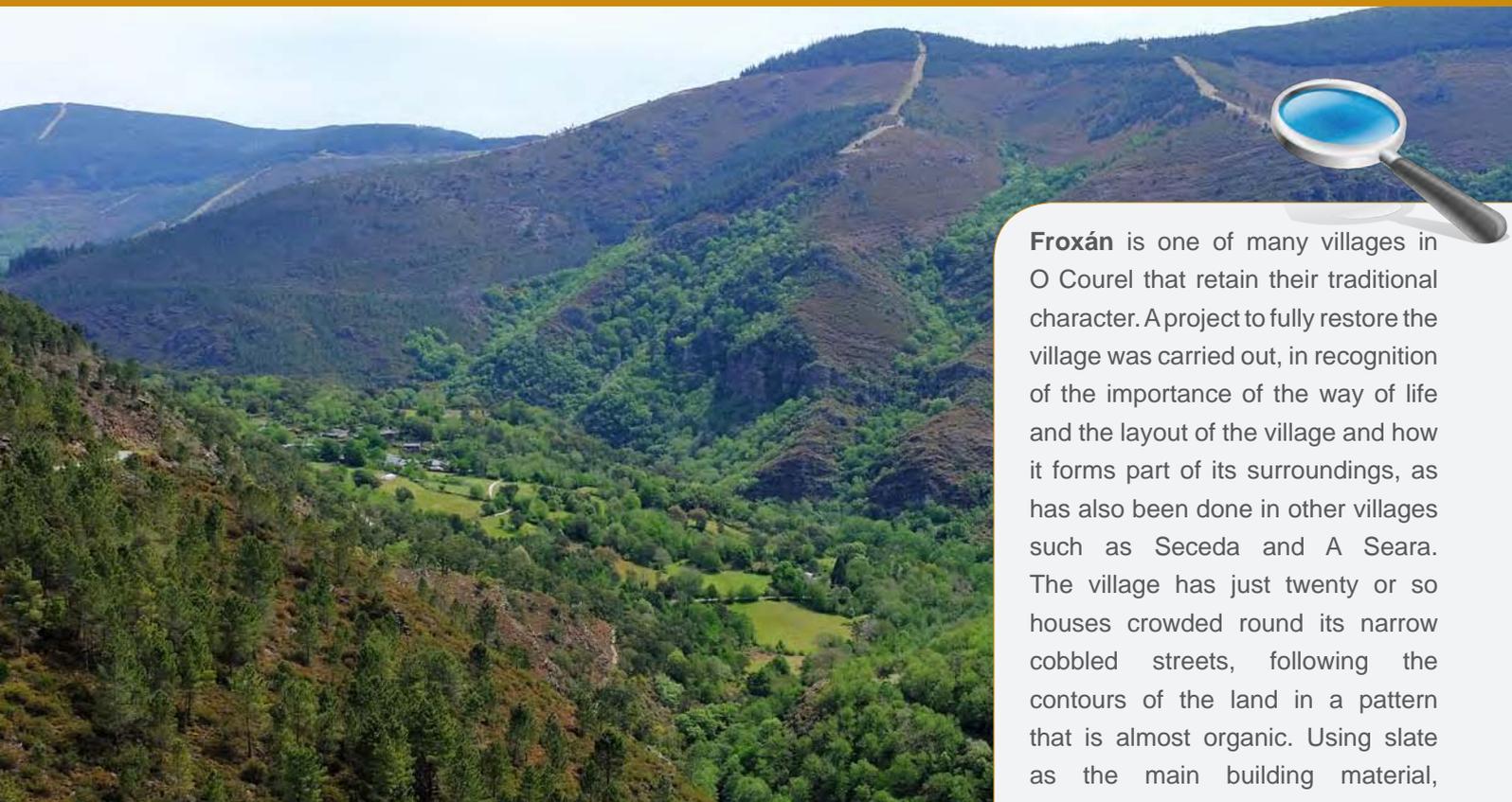
Courel dos tesos cumes que ollan de lonxe!

Eiquí síntese ben o pouco que é un home...

Shortly after this, the Vilamor waterfall invites us to take a short break to observe its waters cascading down between the ferruginous rock walls. Vilamor is a peaceful village whose narrow streets contain exemplars of the popular architecture of O Courel.

▼ O Courel





Froxán is one of many villages in O Courel that retain their traditional character. A project to fully restore the village was carried out, in recognition of the importance of the way of life and the layout of the village and how it forms part of its surroundings, as has also been done in other villages such as Seceda and A Seara. The village has just twenty or so houses crowded round its narrow cobbled streets, following the contours of the land in a pattern that is almost organic. Using slate as the main building material, without architects, the original builders sought practical solutions for the harsh life of the mountains: slate roofs, balconies, ovens, outhouses, *albarizas* (structures to protect beehives from bears), etc. The area round the village contains small plots of farmland, ancient groves of trees and pasture for livestock. As if time were standing still, the Chestnut Festival celebrates the arrival of the produce of autumn, highlighting the village's links with nature. It was declared a Cultural Heritage Site in 2006 in the category "Places of Ethnographical Interest".

▲ View from o Teso Grande

Froxán is an archetype of Galicia's architectural and ethnographical identity. Declared a Galician Cultural Heritage Site, the traditional buildings of this almost abandoned village have been tastefully and skilfully restored. The last section of the route runs above the River Lor, offering impressive panoramic views of the end of our journey: the look-

out point at A Pena do Teso Grande. From here we can follow part of the series of peaks that form the Cordal de O Courel: Pía Paxaro, Alto de O Boi, Cruz das Lastras, Alto de O Capelo, etc. In the foreground, the little village of Castro Portela stands above the river valley, far from the gold found in the Lor, which long ago brought the Romans to the area.



Don't miss...

Uxío Novoneyra (Parada, Seoane do Courel, 1930 - Santiago de Compostela, 1999) is O Courel's greatest literary figure. His family worked on the land and there is a symbiotic relationship between his poetry and the region and its people. O Courel was a central theme in his work. In his family's house in Parada the bench from which he contemplated the countryside around O Courel can still be seen. The Day of Galician Literature was dedicated to him in 2010.

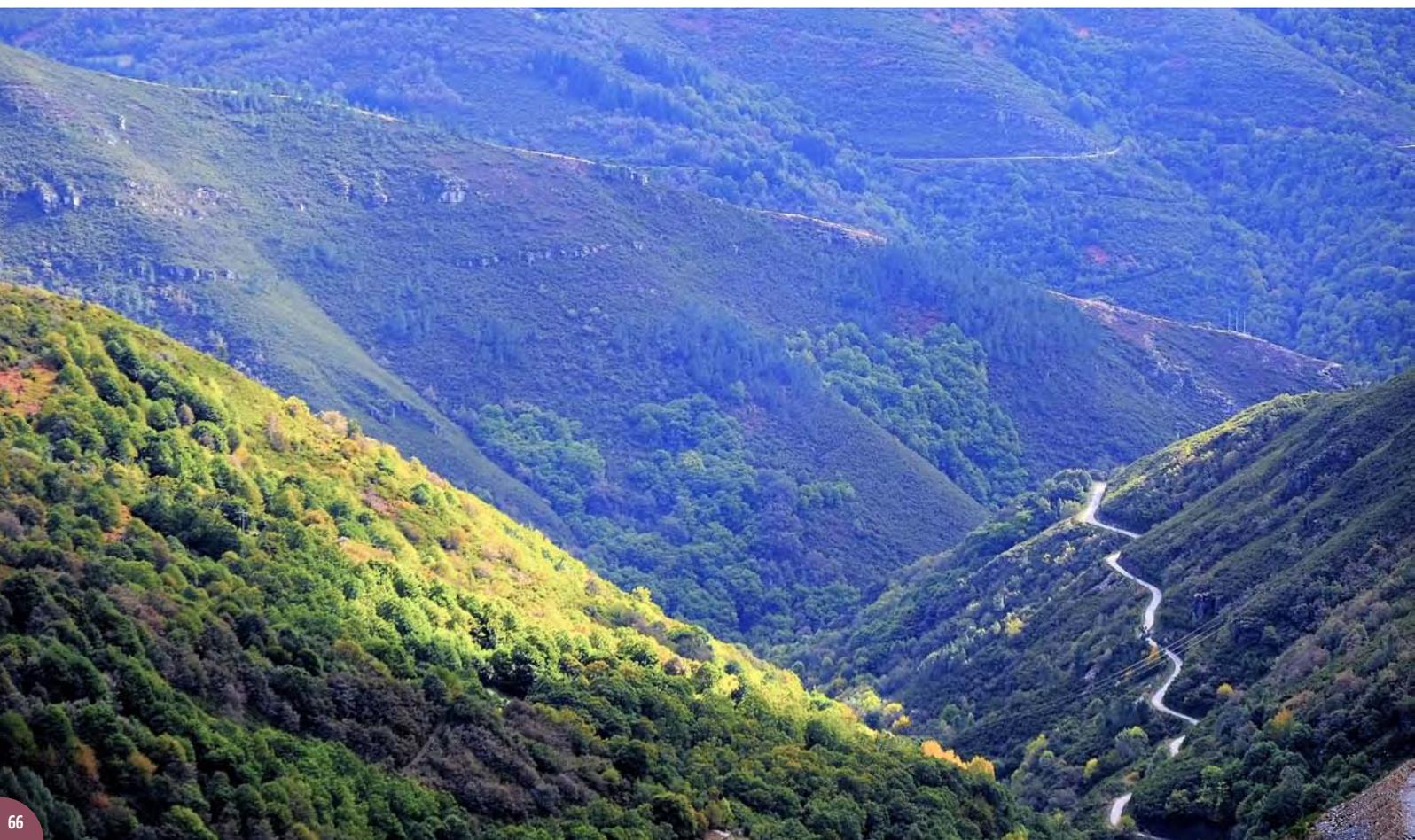
The Lor valley at Traspando

The River Lor is central to the O Courel region. It is fundamental to its ecology and to road transport, which takes advantage of the valley to link the two main centres of population: Seoane do Courel and Folgoso do Courel.

Beside one of the bends in the route, very near the capital of the municipality, we find the small Traspando recreation area, from which the whole course of the Lor can be seen.

The height of the ancient O Courel mountains, worn down by time and erosion, contrasts with the river valleys below. The complex relief is characterised by the rounded peaks typical of ancient formations and steep slopes. The climate here varies widely, ranging from conditions typical of high mountains to the Mediterranean microclimates of some sections of the valley floor. As a result, O Courel contains some of the greatest biodiversity in Galicia.

The remains of *albarizas* bear witness to how man exploited the land. Like chestnuts, honey is a key local product, and the presence of bears in the past and that of other wild animals, made it necessary to protect the beehives. This was always a challenging environment to live in.



From Chantada to Os Peares... A Ribeira Sacra do Miño

16

A Ribeira Sacra of River Miño is one of Galicia's great wine producing areas. The combination of vines and leafy vegetation and the presence of a rich Romanesque heritage make this an exceptionally attractive area. Starting in Chantada, this enjoyable route follows the banks of the river as far as its surprising end at Os Peares where the Sil and the Miño finally meet.



Chantada is one of Galicia's wine capitals, nestling in an area watered by the Miño and the Asma, providing excellent conditions for the production of quality wines. The historic centre contains beautiful streets and attractive squares and features notable buildings such as the sixteenth-century Casona dos Lemos, currently the Casa de Cultura. Our route begins by the banks of the Asma. The first few kilometres follow main roads running parallel to the river, as it flows timidly towards the Miño. A long downhill section takes us towards the vineyards, suddenly revealing an impressive series of terraces on the hillside. The turn off to the San Fiz bridge runs alongside terraces of vines and carefully constructed wineries where the grape harvest will be turned into wine. On the way to Belesar the route runs very close to the Miño, where the Asma flows into it. The hillsides have sunny and shady sides and, as the vines need sun, they are planted on

the south-facing slopes. On the other side, extensive deciduous woods add colour to the scene. Belesar is a traditional village with modern boating facilities. The contrast is due to the fact that the dam at Os Peares turns the river into a reservoir at this point, making navigation possible. Belesar is an interesting spot. It stands on both banks and belongs to two municipalities: Chantada and O Saviñao. The route continues through vineyards and oak groves until it reaches the Pincelo bridge.

*O Sil leva a auga,
o Miño leva a fama.*

Crossing the bridge, a narrow uphill trail takes us to the main road. The landscape changes constantly: we see the first pine woods on the route but mixed woodland is still in evidence. Between the chestnut trees there are occasional glimpses of the Miño. The bell tower of the Santa María de Nogueira de Miño church can be seen through the green leaves, with a cypress standing beside it. The charming village is reminiscent of wine growing areas in other latitudes, a sudden transition from Atlantic woodland to vineyards that feel almost Mediterranean. In summer the sun





A wine growing village set on a hillside with sweeping views of the River Miño, **Nogueira's** greatest treasure is the Santa María church. Its large rose window is the most notable feature of the twelfth-century Romanesque structure, although there are also interesting Baroque details, including an eighteenth-century façade and tower. Santa María de Nogueira de Miño is unique for its Renaissance murals: The paintings were restored in 2012-2013, including the murals and the historiated apses for which it referred to as "the Sistine Chapel of the Ribeira Sacra".

◀ Codos de San Fiz

and heat reinforce this impression. From here on the river will be constantly in sight. As the road runs at a considerable height it provides excellent views when the trees allow. The peaceful route takes in villages with interesting churches, such as Santo Estevo de Chouzán and the

old church at San Xoán da Cova. Os Peares is not easy to untangle: three rivers and six bridges in four municipalities and two provinces. An old settlement that grew up on the steep slopes beside the Miño, Sil and Búbal rivers, it now forms part of the municipalities of

Nogueira de Ramuín and A Peroxa, in the province of Ourense, and Carballedo and Pantón, in the province of Lugo. The confluence of the Miño and the Sil allows us to verify which of the equally famous rivers actually bears the most water.

Cabo do Mundo ▼



Don't miss...

Belesar

! The Fondós falls are situated beside the **Penedo do Graúllo**, an enormous vertical quartzite rock. According to legend, the rock formed part of an old castle and is thus known locally as the Penedo do Castelo do Monte do Graúllo (another example of Galicia's fascinating wealth of place names). The rock's surroundings are notable for their vegetation, which includes a number of Mediterranean species such as holm oaks and cork oaks.

A traditional crossing point over the Miño, the village of Belesar is a fine example of a traditional Ribeira Sacra village. Its layout and architecture, with houses packed together, blend in perfectly with the surrounding vineyards.

The importance of this area as a transport route can be seen in the Cóbados de Belesar, the remains of an old Roman road that winds to and fro as it descends, hence the name (the Belesar "elbows"). The Winter Route to Santiago, an alternative to the Primitive Route when there was snow, also passes through this spot.

The bridge dates back to 1830, built on the foundations of a mediaeval bridge that was destroyed by floodwaters in 1780. Until then boats were used, as at other points on the river where there was no other way of crossing. This led to the development of a particular type of boat, the *barcas do Miño*, flat-bottomed vessels that were propelled by oars and poles.

The landscape, the river, excellent wine: a combination that makes Belesar an essential stop on any journey through the Ribeira Sacra in Lugo.



From Monforte de Lemos to Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil... heroic routes in the Ribeira Sacra



17

The landscape of the Ribeira Sacra is one of the most distinctive in Galicia. The geography of the River Sil gorge produces a characteristic climate in which vines and woodland predominate. It combines with the area's rich cultural heritage to make this a region defined by quality: the quality of its wines, its religious architecture and the landscape itself.



considerable importance in the political and historical development of Galicia. The thirty-metre tower, built between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in conjunction with the mediaeval wall, was declared a Cultural Heritage Site in 1994. Doade is one of the area's wine growing centres. Leaving the village, a spectacular view of the River Sil opens up before us. Welcome to the Ribeira Sacra in all its splendour. Descending between the vineyards, pause at the Souto Chao lookout point, then head down to the jetty at Doade, where you can board a catamaran to sail along the river. The bridge links the provinces of Lugo and Ourense, and from here the route climbs back up steeply to its original altitude. Castro Caldelas stands on a hill, gazing out from its castle. Its origins are uncertain, although it is known that it belonged to the House of Lemos. It was declared a Cultural Heritage Site in 1994. The carefully preserved village has been declared a Historical and Artistic Site. At A Teixeira, on the way to Cristosende, the views the lookout point at A Galeana reveal what is to come next: the

Monforte de Lemos has been an important town for centuries. Standing on the banks of the River Cabe, it occupies a central position in the productive Lemos valley. Equidistant from Lugo, Ourense and Ponferrada,

it is a key communications hub, especially in the rail network. Considered the capital of the Ribeira Sacra, its most notable monument is the great keep of the castle of the Counts of Lemos, the noble lords of these lands, a county of

▼ Miradoiro da Columna





The **Souto Chao lookout point** (Doade, Sober) is on a promontory in the Sil gorge. The steep slopes did not prevent the planting vines, arranged so that they have as many hours of sun as possible, taking advantage of the mild climate. On the opposite slopes there are large areas of dense woodland. From Souto Chao one can truly appreciate the grandeur of the Sil gorge. Produced originally by a geological fault, it was eroded by the river to give it its present appearance. The land was further shaped by human activity, creating a landscape that is a veritable treat for the senses.



Ribeira Sacra at Cristosende ▲

gorges of the Mao and Sil rivers. Cristosende is an example of a *bocarribeira* village, a concept defined by Galician geographer and writer, Ramón Otero Pedrayo. The village is on flat land at the upper edge of a valley, while its crops are grown on the valley slopes, terraced to increase the amount of land under cultivation. The route descends once more, with extensive views of the Sil, to A Fábrica da Luz, by the River Mao, where there is an unusual treetop walkway. The route continues through the Sil gorge, past coppices and vineyards,

through villages such as Barxacova, Sacardebois and Purdeus, to Parada de Sil. A short detour goes to Os Balcóns de Madrid, one

*Ascende o home
pola ribeira en costa.*

*Agatuña o socalco,
salmodia do alén.*

of the most popular spots in the Ribeira Sacra because of its direct views of the walls of the Sil gorge. Despite the impressive views all along this route, those from the lookout point at Cabezoá are still breathtaking. Located on a steep

slope running down to the Sil, it has a metal platform overlooking a meander in the river, where the gorge can be seen in all its splendour. The route ends at the Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil Monastery (Nogueira de Ramuín). Dating back to the sixth and seventh centuries, it has three cloisters in different architectural styles: Romanesque, Baroque and Renaissance. Declared a Historical and Artistic Monument in 1923, it is recognised as a Cultural Heritage Site. The monastery is surrounded by the leafy chestnut trees so typical of the Ribeira Sacra.





Souto Chao lookout point

Don't miss...



In areas where the gradient may be as much as 70% the cultivation of vines can be a heroic task! In some vineyards rails are installed to bring the grapes up on motorised trucks and there are even plots that can only be reached by boat along the Sil. Harvesting the grapes in such areas can seem a Herculean endeavour.

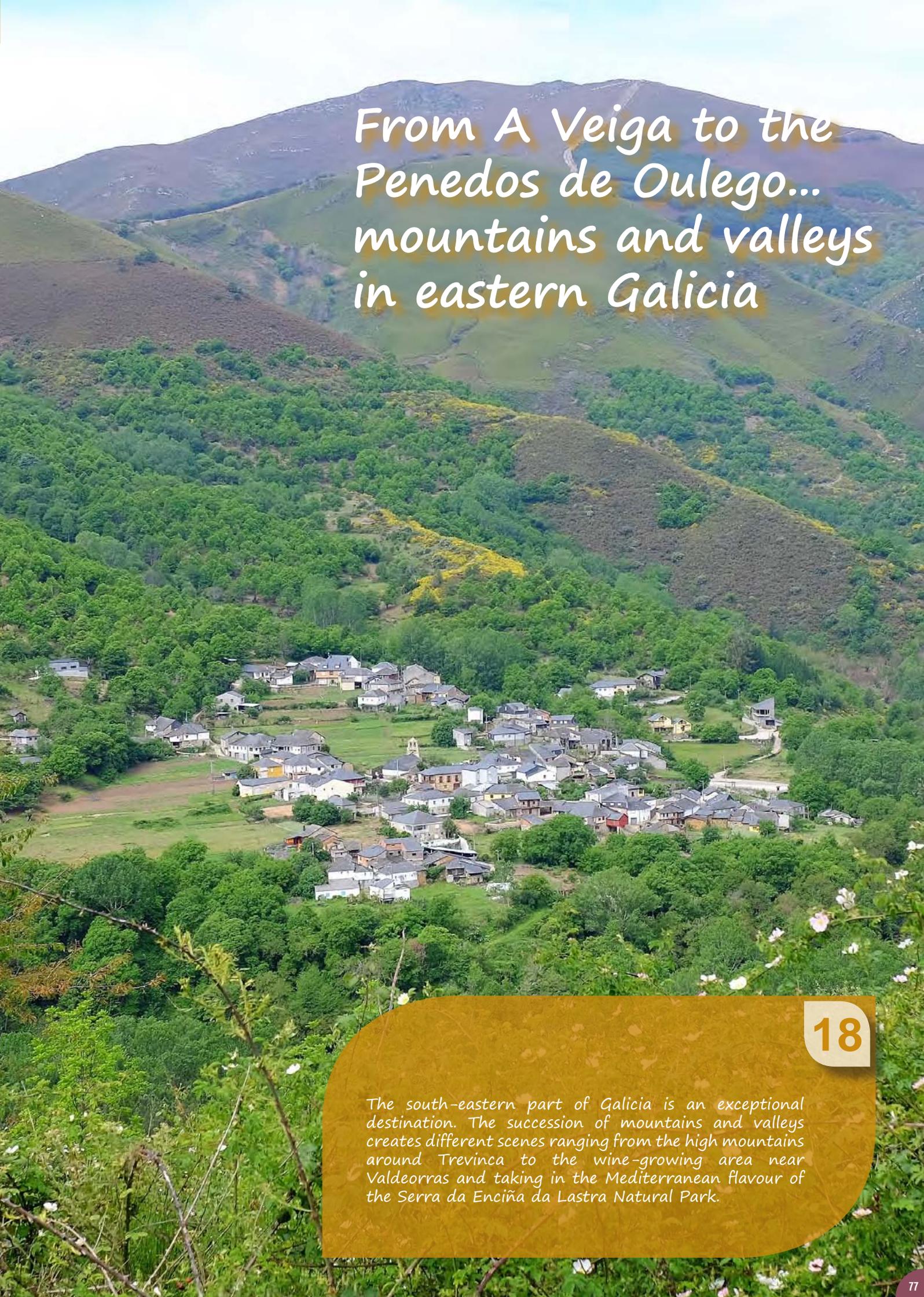
A Fábrica da Luz-River Mao walkway

The River Mao is the Sil's little brother and also runs through a beautiful gorge with steep sides and distinctive vegetation. Like the Sil, the Mao is used to generate electricity, and was one of the first rivers in Galicia to be exploited in this way.

A Fábrica da Luz is an old hydroelectric power station built in 1914. In 2011 it was redesigned as a hostel for tourists, a multi-purpose facility and a centre for training in environmental issues and active tourism. It blends perfectly with its surroundings, exemplifying the positive use of industrial heritage, in harmony with the natural environment.

A path leads from the power station, turning into a walkway running high above the left bank of the Mao until it reaches the Sil near the village of Barxacova. The area's micro-climate allows Atlantic woodland to grow alongside Mediterranean species such as holm oaks and the strawberry tree.





From A Veiga to the Penedos de Oulego... mountains and valleys in eastern Galicia

18

The south-eastern part of Galicia is an exceptional destination. The succession of mountains and valleys creates different scenes ranging from the high mountains around Trevinca to the wine-growing area near Valdeorras and taking in the Mediterranean flavour of the Serra da Enciña da Lastra Natural Park.



The route from A Veiga to the Penedos de Oulego runs over mountains and through valleys. The varied landscape and ecological importance of the area make this an exceptionally interesting and beautiful journey. A Veiga is one of largest municipalities in Galicia and as such has a great deal to offer. Centring on the River Xares valley, it is densely covered by leafy trees whose varied colours delight visitors, especially in autumn. Leaving A Veiga the route crosses the Xares bridge over the Prada reservoir, a popular spot for fishing, water sports and even swimming, at the Os Franceses beach. The narrow road round the reservoir runs along slopes between meadows and oak woods until it reaches the dam, where the village of Prada is located. It is parallel to the *Senda Verde do Xares*, a route that is highly recommended for those who enjoy walking

through peaceful countryside. From Prada the road ascends to the high mountain pass of A Portela, where the descent to Valdeorras starts. County capital and the second largest town in the province of Ourense, O Barco de Valdeorras is notable for its vibrant economy and mild climate, a fundamental factor in the production of its world famous wine. The vineyards give way to the Sil valley as the route heads towards the Enciña da Lastra Natural Park, where the limestone rocks of the Penedos de Oulego create a remarkable contrast where they rise above the green carpet of vegetation. The Serra Enciña da Lastra is not typical of the geography of Galicia. The presence of holm oaks, cork oaks and the thyme that fills the air with its distinctive smell is reminiscent of warmer climates in other latitudes.

*O viño de Valdeorras delicias do corazón
Se bebemos un grolíño cantaremos a seu son
Cantaremos a seu son,
O viño de Valdeorras delicias do corazón.*



The **River Corzos**, a tributary of the Xares, conceals a tiny natural jewel very near A Veiga. Water, rocks, caves and oak trees form a labyrinth in which, according to legend, lived a *moura* (a traditional Galician mythological figure with magical powers) who had a golden comb which she dropped to test the character of the local girls: the stones we find on

the path are the girls who picked up the comb and did not return it to the *moura*. The large hollows formed by the granite rocks allow the River Corzos to flow under them, forming natural swimming pools. One of the caves was used by escapees in the Civil War and is still known as the *Cova dos Escapados*, its entrance, via a small hole, only being known to them.



Don't miss...



The constant presence of high mountains as a backdrop reminds us that we are near Galicia's highest range, the **Trevinca Massif**, a range that includes the highest mountains in Galicia, the three highest being Pena Trevinca (2,127 metres), Pena Negra (2,121 metres) and Pena Surbia (2,116 metres), all in Serra do Eixe.

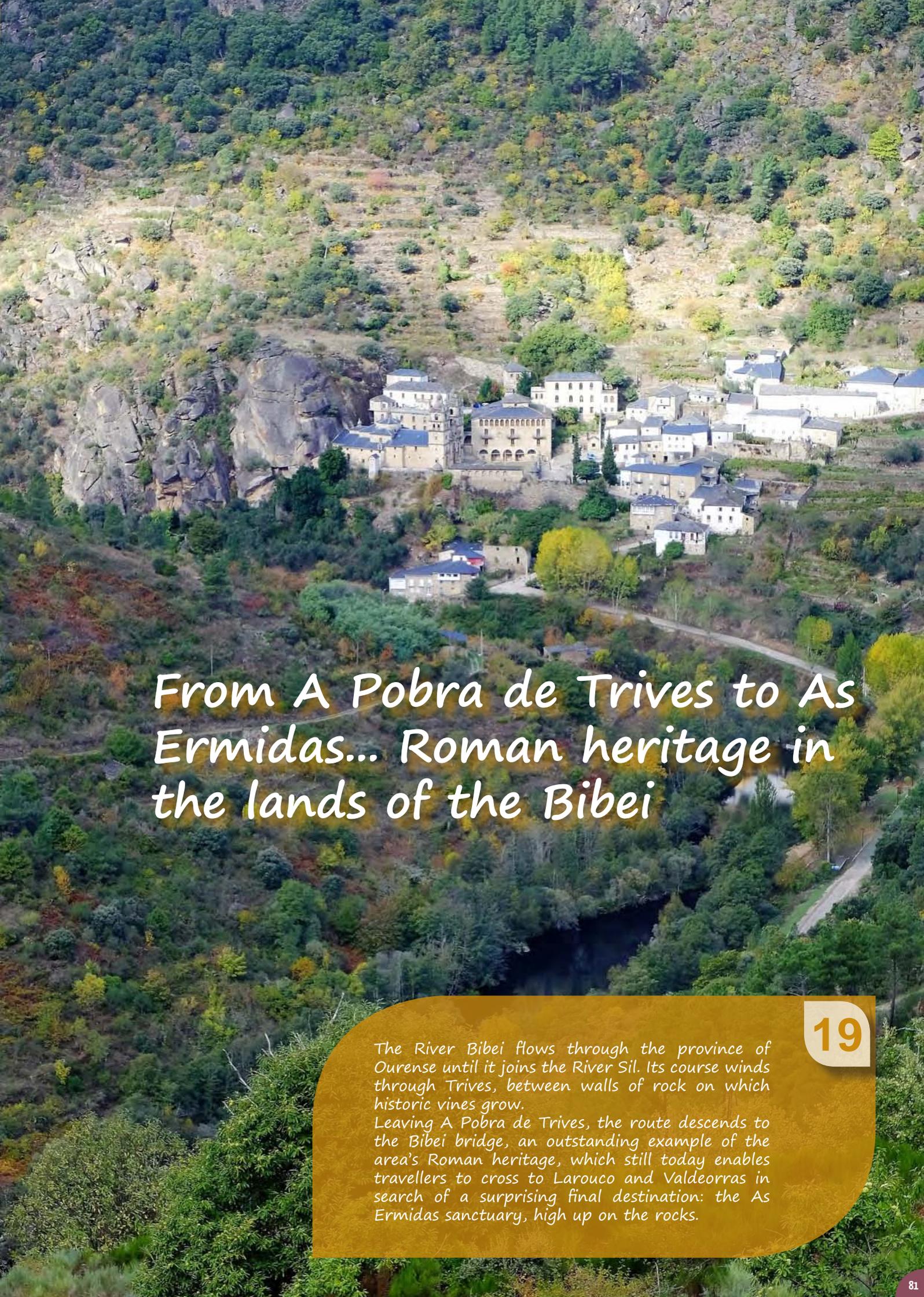
O alto da Portela

The A Portela pass is a dividing point in the route as it separates the slopes of the Xares from the Sil valley. It also signals the contrast between the biogeographical conditions in the Xares valley and those in Valdeorras. The difference in climate is reflected in the diversity of flora and fauna, the Valdeorras area exhibiting characteristics similar to Mediterranean locations.

At A Portela, among scrubland and pinewoods typical of mountain areas, one can appreciate the depth of the narrow valleys through which small rivers such as the Mao and Azoreiras flow towards the Xares.

Also known as A Portela do Valado, at 1,124 metres, it is a mountain pass of historical importance. Its name reveals its role, as Portela means "an opening created to allow people and livestock to pass", and it connects the two low-lying areas of A Veiga (a broad fertile area on the banks of a river) and Valdeorras (in the Sil valley at an altitude of just over 300 metres).



An aerial photograph of a village built on a rocky hillside. The buildings are light-colored with dark roofs. The surrounding area is lush with green trees and vegetation. A river flows through the valley below the village. The text 'From A Pobra de Trives to As Ermidas... Roman heritage in the lands of the Bibei' is overlaid on the image in a white, stylized font.

From A Pobra de Trives to As Ermidas... Roman heritage in the lands of the Bibei

The River Bibei flows through the province of Ourense until it joins the River Sil. Its course winds through Trives, between walls of rock on which historic vines grow.

Leaving A Pobra de Trives, the route descends to the Bibei bridge, an outstanding example of the area's Roman heritage, which still today enables travellers to cross to Larouco and Valdeorras in search of a surprising final destination: the As Ermidas sanctuary, high up on the rocks.

19

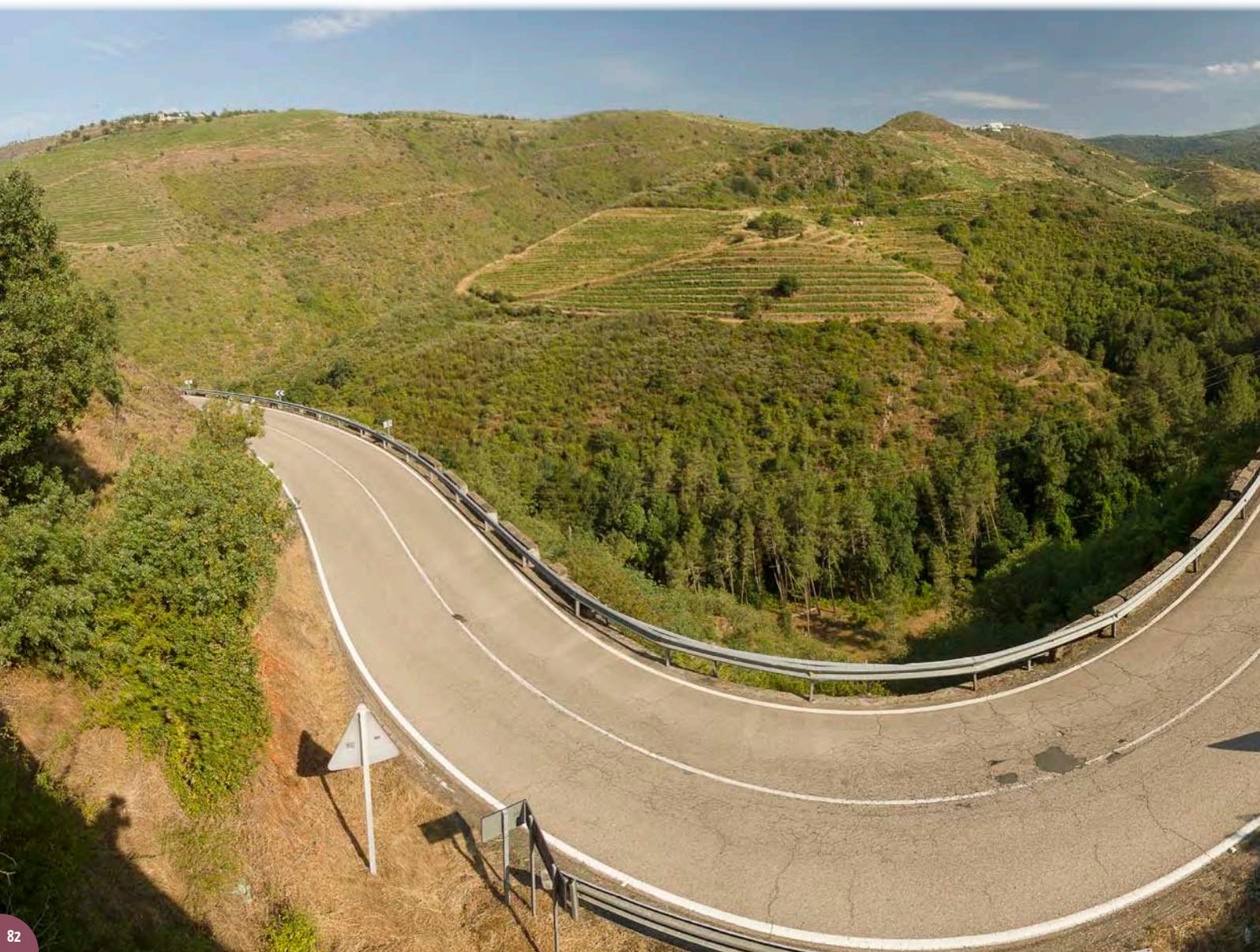
The narrow valley of the Bibei defines this route, dividing it in two and forming the backbone of this mountainous terrain with strongly contrasting climates. A Pobra de Trives is the main town in the county and the starting point for the route. The old town centre, which has conserved its old, narrow streets, lay on Roman Road XVIII (the Via Nova) which linked Bracara Augusta (Braga) and Asturica Augusta (Astorga). The route starts from the iconic Torre do Reloxo in the square of the same name but, before leaving, one should try *bica*, the delicious local cake that no visitor should miss. The old road from Ourense to Ponferrada leaves the town and runs through dense groves that



remind us of the importance of chestnuts in this area. The road continues to go down and opens out into the Bibei valley, the leafy trees giving way to terraces on the slopes above the river. The site's orientation to the sun and

*Lâdranlle os cás de palleiro
as néboas de medía noite
que, coma lobos famentos,
faíscan nivand'o monte...*

its protected position in the valley give rise to a micro-climate that is very suitable for growing Godello and Mencía grapes.



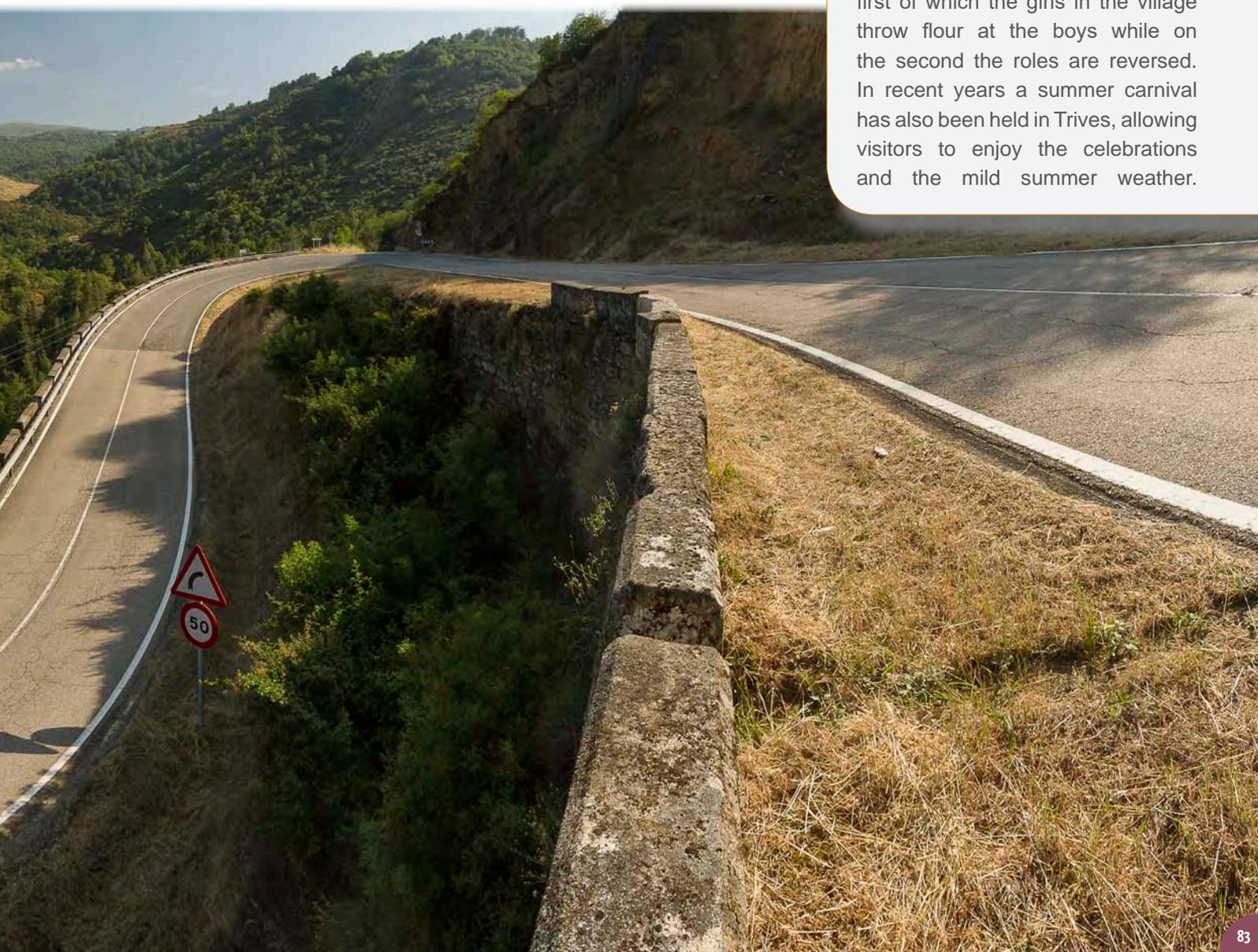


The road gradually winds down to the bottom of the gorge, where, at an altitude of just over 300 metres, we find the Roman bridge over the Bibei. A number of milestones have been found in the vicinity. There is then a steady climb up Alto de A Ermida as far as Larouco, with views of the top of Cabeza de Manzaneda in the distance. The last part of the route, now in the municipality of O Bolo, is a beautiful descent to As Ermidas, where it rejoins the River Bibei. The area's exceptional climate, with conditions similar to the Mediterranean, permits the cultivation of vines and olive trees, while

cork oaks and strawberry trees can also be seen. Nosa Señora das Ermidas sanctuary stands on the edge of the village, set into the granite rocks that run round its upper side. Built in the seventeenth century by order of the Bishop of Astorga (the diocese to which it belongs), it was declared a Cultural Heritage Site in 2006. The façade, dated between 1713 and 1726, is an outstanding example of Galician Baroque architecture. Standing between rocky outcrops and the beginning of the Bibei gorge, As Ermidas is in an incomparable setting which changes as the seasons progress.

Carnival is one of Galicia's great celebrations, especially in the province of Ourense, where many varied customs and traditions are maintained. The festivities, whose origins date back hundreds of years, involve dancing, fancy dress, processions and food, in preparation for the restrictions of Lent. In the Trives area the traditions associated with Carnival vary from one village to another, illustrating the region's rich ethnographical heritage. In A Pobra de Trives the **foli3n** is a noisy procession in which the residents fill the streets, singing and dancing to their drums. A curious tradition is the "xoves de comadres" and the "xoves de compadres": two Thursdays, on the first of which the girls in the village throw flour at the boys while on the second the roles are reversed. In recent years a summer carnival has also been held in Trives, allowing visitors to enjoy the celebrations and the mild summer weather.

▼ Download from A Pobra de Trives.



Don't miss...

! This route's contrasting landscapes are one of its outstanding features. The deep river valleys, especially the River Bibei valley, create a rugged terrain with amazing contrasts between the colours of the vines on the valley floor and the snow covered peaks.

The Roman bridge over the Bibei

The River Bibei gorge conceals an architectural jewel, the bridge over the river, a majestic granite structure with three arches, 75 metres long and rising 20 metres above the river. The bridge, which dates from the time of the emperor Trajan, was a key point on Roman Road XVIII, the Via Nova, part of the Antonine Itinerary. Built approximately between 114 and 119 AD, it is still a functioning road bridge today and is one of the only bridges of its period (together with the O Freixo bridge over the River Arnoia) to retain its original structure, although some renovation work has been carried out.

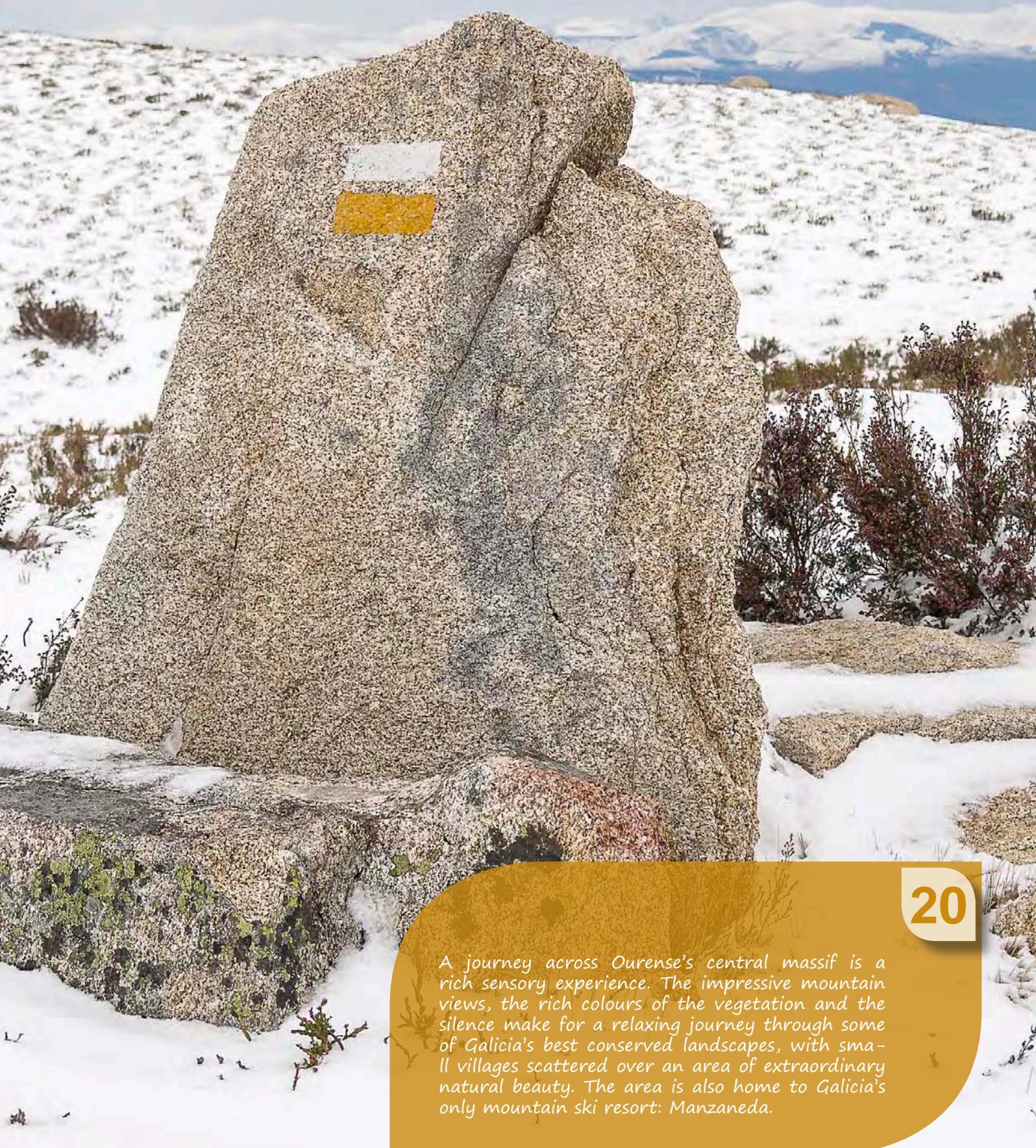
Its construction involved careful selection of the point at which the river could be crossed and consideration of its geometry. It is a key point on this section of the Via Nova, which reaches the bridge via a series of horseshoe bends.

The way the bridge is integrated perfectly into its surroundings testifies to the skill of the Roman engineers, while the quality of construction is amply demonstrated by its 2,000-year history.

It was declared a Historical and Artistic Monument in 1931. Beside it can be seen a Roman milestone from the time of Vespasian (79-81 AD) and a Trajan column that refers to work on the bridge.

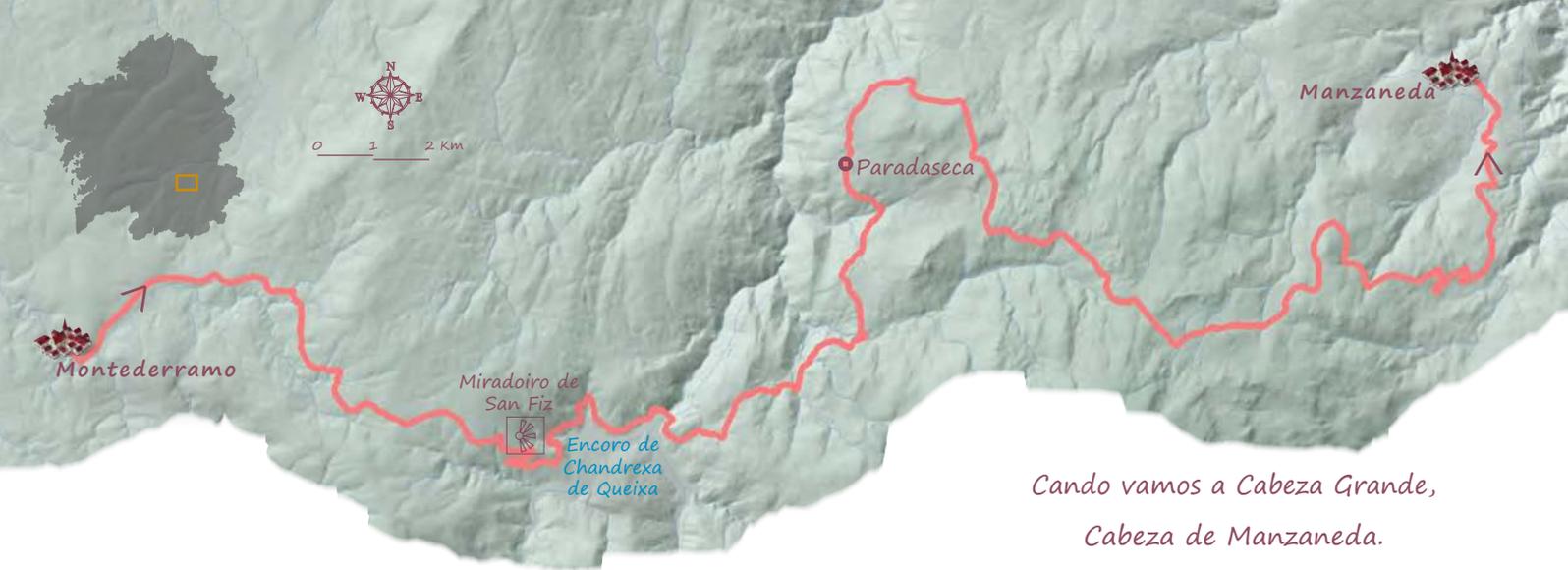


From Montederramo to Manzaneda... across Ourense's central massif



20

A journey across Ourense's central massif is a rich sensory experience. The impressive mountain views, the rich colours of the vegetation and the silence make for a relaxing journey through some of Galicia's best conserved landscapes, with small villages scattered over an area of extraordinary natural beauty. The area is also home to Galicia's only mountain ski resort: Manzaneda.



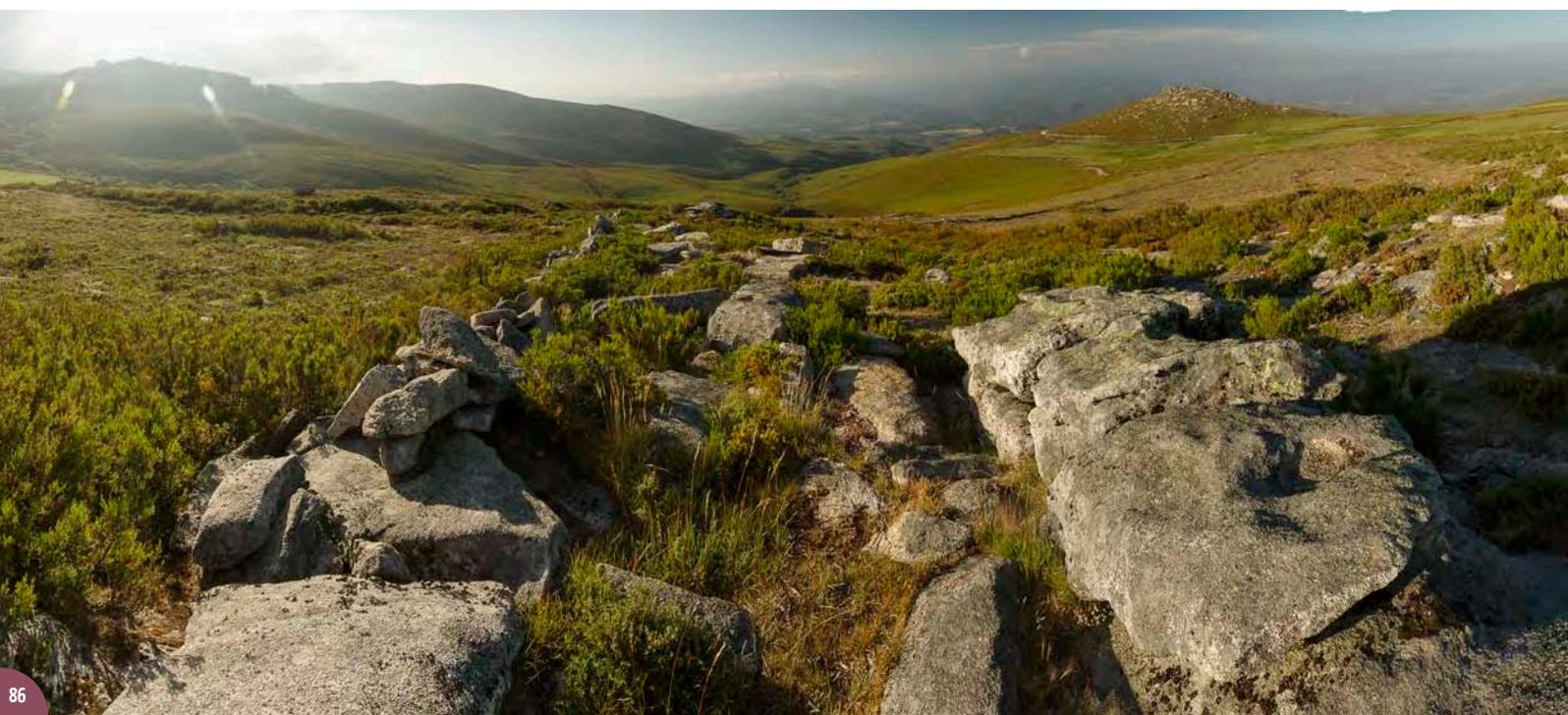
*Cando vamos a Cabeza Grande,
Cabeza de Manzaneda.
Miña Galicia querida.
Ese é o Ceo da terra.*

The central massif comprises a series of mountain ranges that run across the province of Ourense. The valleys on the northern side offer delightful routes among meadows and the holly bushes, oaks and birch trees that cover the slopes of the mountains up to the rocky peaks of the San Mamede, Burgo, Queixa and Cabeza de Manzaneda ranges. They are not the highest mountains in Galicia but their beauty is undeniable. Montederramo is the ideal starting point for this route. Its welcoming central square adjoins the Santa María Monastery, an architectural jewel that combines various styles. Shortly after leaving Montederramo there is a turning towards OBidueiral,

a stand of birch trees (*Betula alba*) reminiscent of a Scandinavian wood, but in the south of Galicia. Following the course of the River Mao, the route passes through a series of villages which blend perfectly into a landscape of *bocage*, small plots of farmland with their old stone enclosures and hedges. In the distance the Serra de San Mamede can be seen, changing according to the time of year. After San Fiz, the route turns to reveal the broad Queixa valley, with the mountain range of the same name providing a picturesque backdrop. The road then runs along the side of the Queixa reservoir, going over the dam to cross it. The route through Chandrexa de Queixa heads towards

Manzaneda, the only mountain ski resort in Galicia. Cabeza Grande de Manzaneda (1,781 metres) is a major landmark, as it is the highest mountain in Ourense's central massif and forms part of a chain bordering the Bibeí valley. The descent to the town of Manzaneda offers views from a different side of the mountains, those from the lookout point at Chaira das Lamas being particularly impressive. Against the backdrop of the mountains, the landscape is characterised by scrubland and extensive pastures, testifying to the historical importance of livestock in the area. As the road descends the first groves of trees appear,

▼ The Chaira das Lamas lookout point



including legendary examples such as the *Castiñeiro de Pumbariños*, an enormous chestnut tree in Rozavales. The town stands on a plain and retains its mediaeval layout with part of the walls intact. The Porta da Vila gate (twelfth century) is the most important vestige of this defensive structure,

which was originally over 400 metres long. From here Rúa da Igrexa (also known as Rúa do Medio) leads through the mediaeval centre with its carefully conserved narrow streets to San Martiño Church. The town's defences were completed with the castle, parts of which remain and have been turned into a lookout

point. The Irmandiño revolts led to the destruction of the mediaeval tower and the castle was rebuilt in the sixteenth century on the orders of the Counts of Ribadavia. The new building included a prison known as the Cárcere dos Sarmiento, reflecting the lineage of the counts. Today it is used as a cultural centre.

Santa María de Montederramo. ▼



Santa María de Montederramo is a monastery that dates back to the tenth century. Most of the current buildings were constructed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Herrerian Renaissance façade being a feature of special interest. It became a Benedictine monastery in the twelfth century, subsequently passing to the Cistercians, who had a preference for peaceful, isolated locations for their monasteries. Santa María de Montederramo

stands beside the River Mao, on a strip of rich farmland at the foot of the San Mamede mountains. It boast two outstanding cloisters, the Claustro das Procesiões (Procession cloister) (sixteenth-century with Gothic and Renaissance features) and the Claustro da Hospedería (Hostel cloister) (seventeenth-century Renaissance). The monastery's origins may be related to a priory in Seoane Vello. It was refounded in its current location

in the twelfth century, according to a document drawn up in Allariz in 1124. This is the first recorded case of the use of the expression *Roboira Sacrata*, the origin of today's Ribeira Sacra, possibly alluding to the numerous oak trees (*Quercus robur*) in the area, although the large number of religious buildings on the banks of the Sil may also may also be related to its etymology.

Don't miss...

The Queixa lookout point

! The **River Queixa** loses its name at the reservoir. Downstream the river is called the **Navea**, a tributary of the River Bibei (the names of smaller rivers commonly change as they pass through different villages).

The route's leisurely passage through the municipality of Montederramo takes it to San Fiz, approaching the slopes of the Serra de Queixa. But this little village has a surprise in store for the traveller: with no prior warning, after a number of bends in the road, the River Queixa valley opens up before us, with an impressive view of the mountains in the background from the San Fiz lookout point.

The Manzaneda massif dominates this sector with its complex relief. The Queixa range includes peaks rising above 1,700 metres (Seixo and Sistil Branco) in line with Cabeza Grande de Manzaneda and alternating with the River Queixa valley, a depression that was used to create a reservoir, inaugurated in 1953.

From this point it can be seen how the action of the rivers has worn furrows in the granite surface of the Serra de Queixa. The steep slopes and climate conditions drove people to settle in the river valleys, as has happened around the Queixa reservoir, where extensive livestock grazing has resulted in a very well conserved landscape.



From A Gudiña to Pradoalbar... Serra Seca and the O Conso valley

The area round A Gudiña is harsh and sparsely populated, a surprising landscape where visitors can follow the old routes along which people entered and left Galicia. Part of the route coincides with the Vía da Prata pilgrimage route to Santiago, where it ascends to the Serra Seca, looking towards the hills of O Invernadeiro. The last section, going up the River Conso, offers views of streams and waterfalls until we reach our final destination: the hidden village of Pradoalbar.

21



*O gaiteiro da Gudiña
e mais o da Martiñá
andan en preito co vento
e non sei quen gañará*

A Gudiña is the south-eastern gateway into Galicia from Sanabria via A Mezquita and A Portela da Canda. Historically it was a transit point through which mule drivers, harvest workers and pilgrims had to pass. A Gudiña, close to the Portuguese border, thus became a dynamic town which welcomed travellers. With modern transport infrastructures, this is still true today. The upper part of A Gudiña, retains its old layout of small streets centring

on the Rúa Maior, along which the Vía da Prata passes. In the main square, beside the church of San Martiño and San Pedro, the Way divides: the southern route heading to Verín and the northern route towards Laza, along the Old Route or *Verea dos Galegos*. After leaving A Gudiña the route runs through the Seca mountains, an isolated, windy spot with sweeping views of the valleys. The area contains fields, scrubland and a few chestnut trees, whose colours delight travellers in autumn. The route gradually ascends to Alto do Espiño, a pass situated at an altitude of around 1,000 metres.

Along the way there are a number of old inns in strategically placed small villages that grew up to serve the mule drivers and reapers travelling to the harvest in Castile.

After passing Venda do Espiño, the route takes us to Venda da Teresa, where it leaves the Vía da Prata and turns towards Vilariño de Conso. The Invernadeiro Natural Park's fine green slopes contrast with the rocks on the mountain tops and the snow seen in the area's harsh winters. The landscape is shaped by a series of furrows formed by the streams that run down to the River Camba, which flows into the As Portas reservoir here. The turning to Pradoalbar leads into an idyllic world of groves and meadows at the entrance to the Conso valley. The streams and rivulets that flow down from O Invernadeiro form waterfalls (known locally as *corgos*) where they reach the river. The waterfalls at Gorbias, Val do Cenza and Suafraga are a magnificent sight in the distance.

Edrada, a small village perched on a slope by the River Conso, can justly claim to have one of the best conserved settings in Galicia, its buildings perfectly in balance with its natural surroundings of waterfalls, green fields and dense groves of trees. Pradoalbar marks the end of the route, in a peaceful valley in the upper reaches of the river. It is notable for its church and the old stone enclosures on the irregularly shaped plots of farmland. It is the entry point to O Invernadeiro and its most secluded point.



The **River Conso** (or Cerveira) is at the heart of an exceptionally beautiful area. The narrow valley is extraordinarily lovely, and also contains numerous relics of its cultural heritage. On the sheer sides of the O Invernadeiro buttresses, overlooking the Conso valley, runs a Roman road, a secondary branch of the *Via Nova*, showing the strategic importance of the area. The stone road crosses the mountainside half way above the river, between Edrada and San Mamede. At Pradoalbar, a bridge known as the Pontón de Pedra (or Ponte Romana, although the historical connection is questionable) crosses the Conso and the path leads on to the remains of the Castelo da Cerveira, a fortified stronghold in the heart of the Serra de Queixa.



Don't miss...

The As Portas lookout point

! According to popular tradition, there was once a werewolf in the county of Viana. He is said to have been killed at a bridge, which could well be the bridge at Pradoalbar. There are numerous stories associated with the region, some true and others, like this one, merely legends.

The As Portas lookout point offers spectacular panoramas of the O Invernadeiro Natural Park and the River Camba, which flows here into the As Portas reservoir (completed in 1974). Located very close to the dam, looking over its inner wall, the As Portas lookout point is like a balcony above the water, with a dramatic drop to the river below.

Opposite, rising above the waters, streams flow down from O Invernadeiro, some from heights greater than 1,500 metres (the A Pereisada pass, for example, at 1,501 metres).

The O Invernadeiro Natural Park forms part of Ourense's central massif, a mountain range that runs across the province from east to west forming its backbone. The Queixa and Fial das Cordas mountain ranges define an area of nearly 6,000 hectares which was declared a Natural Park in 1997.

O Invernadeiro is a mountainous area where snow is frequent. Its granite rocks are covered by scrubland with heather, whose colour changes with the seasons. To protect the park's unique natural character visitors must obtain a permit to enter it. It is the only uninhabited natural park in Galicia, as there are no centres of population within it.

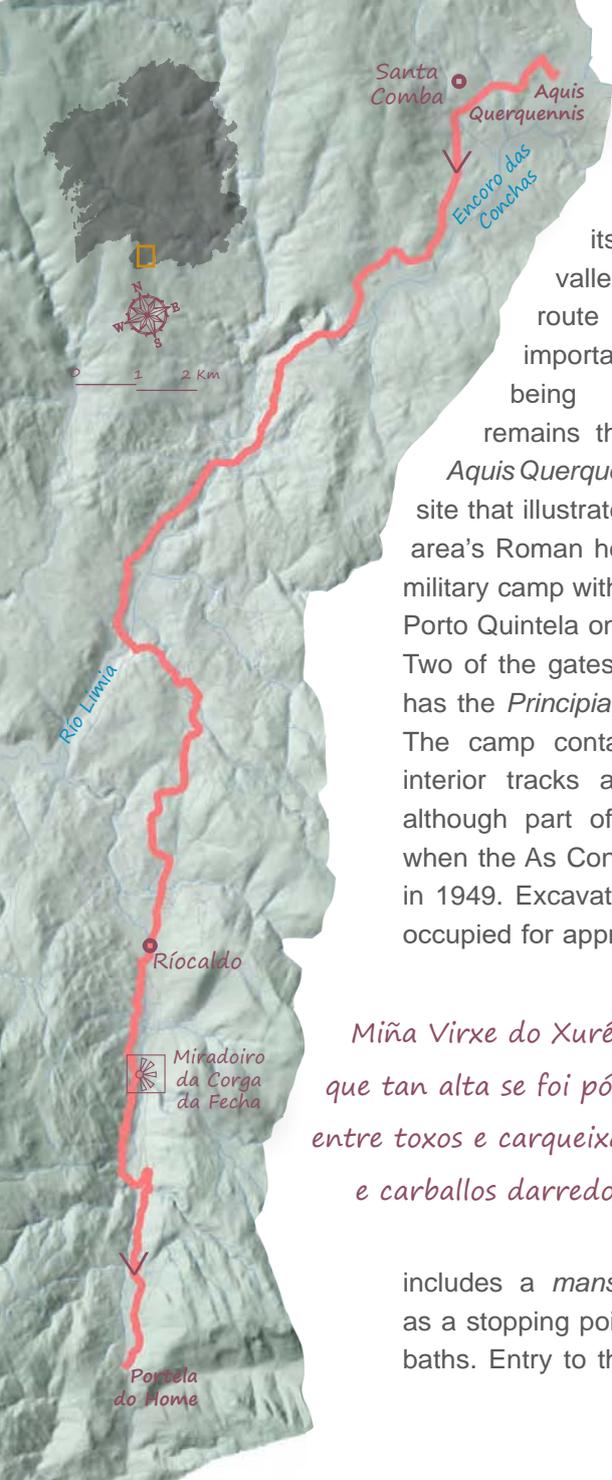
At the windswept lookout point at As Portas, enjoy the silence in a place where time has stopped, where the winters are long and the summers hot.



From Aquis Querquennis to A Portela do Home... Roman remains in A Baixa Limia

22

The Roman heritage of A Baixa Limia is visible all around in A Baixa Limia, alongside its outstanding natural attractions and magnificent landscape. This pleasant route through the Limia valley visits a series of charming locations, allowing travellers to rediscover the historical routes through the Serra do Xurés, leading to Portugal.



A Baixia Limia is a county with a character of its own. The River Limia valley has been a through route since ancient times, its importance for communications being confirmed by many remains that can be seen today.

Aquis Querquennis is an archaeological site that illustrates the importance of the area's Roman heritage. This rectangular military camp with thick walls is located at Porto Quintela on the banks of the Limia. Two of the gates have been restored as has the *Principia*, or camp headquarters. The camp contains a series of walls, interior tracks and drainage channels, although part of the site was covered when the As Conchas reservoir was built in 1949. Excavations indicate that it was occupied for approximately fifty years (79

AD to 120 AD). Its location on the *Via Nova* would seem to indicate that it acted as a base for operations on this major artery.

The complex also includes a *mansio*, a construction built as a stopping point on the route, and hot baths. Entry to the site is free and there

*Miña Virxe do Xurés,
que tan alta se foi pór,
entre toxos e carqueixas
e carballos darredor.*

is a modern interpretation centre providing additional information about its history. This route runs mainly along the old *Via Nova*. From *Aquis Querquennis* the course of the River Limia leads to the As Conchas reservoir. A short distance downstream lies the Lindoso reservoir in Portugal. The route continues across a modern bridge to Lobios, a significant municipality in the area. The peaceful road then leads to Os Baños, a remarkable complex with hot springs on the banks of the River Caldo, used by the Romans for contrasting hot and cold baths. The traditional villages with their carefully cultivated terraces gradually give way to a mountain landscape dominated by pine trees and rocky outcrops. Small streams, known as *corgas* in this region, flow from the hills and rush down the steep slopes. A Corga da Fecha is the best known. In the heart of the Serra do Xurés, after a small bridge over the River Caldo, the route comes to a series of Roman milestones, and a reconstructed stretch of the *Via Nova* which is a pleasure to walk along. A Portela do Home marks the end of the route, where the road enters Portugal. At 822 metres this iconic mountain pass is the most southerly point in Galicia. On both sides of the border there are areas of great natural beauty.



Baixa Limia-Serra do Xurés is a protected natural space, declared a Natural Park in 1993. Located in the south-western corner of Galicia, it comprises a series of mountain ranges (Xurés, Peneda, Labreiro, Quinxo, etc.) and the River Limia valley, an ecological corridor for the area. The landscape is dominated by mountains, with many round boulders and

pinnacles at the top of the worn peaks, none of which exceed 1,500 metres. The combination of the area's rich historical and ethnographical heritage with its natural attractions creates a space of great cultural and aesthetic interest. Baixia Limia-Serra do Xurés, the largest natural park in Galicia, and Peneda-Gerês, Portugal's only national park, form an attractive cross-border protected space.





▼ Serra do Xurés

Aquis Querquennis ▲



Don't miss...

The lookout point at A Corga da Fecha

Road XVIII on the Antonine Itinerary, known as the *Via Nova*, was a Roman road built in the first century AD, linking Bracara Augusta (Braga in Portugal) and Asturica Augusta (Astorga in Castilla y León). In A Baixa Limia the *Via Nova* followed the Limia and Caldo river valleys, where it ran between the Serra do Xurés and Celanova.

The *corgas* are mountain streams. In A Baixa Limia the term is very common, as there are numerous such streams flowing down the granite walls of the Sierra de O Xurés.

The Fecha is a small tributary of the River Caldo. "Fecha" means "stream" so that Corga da Fecha would mean something like "the course of the stream". Other *corgas* such as the Carballón, Curro and Revolta flow into it. The volume of water in the streams varies according to the season, winter and spring being the periods when the flow is greatest.

With a drop of over two hundred metres, the Corga da Fecha is an impressive sight and one of Galicia's highest waterfalls. The water cascades over a series of rock shelves, falling from one level to the next.

On the road leading up to A Portela do Home there is a lookout point that allows the Corga da Fecha to be seen from a distance, so that it can be fully appreciated.





From Ourense to Ribadavia... down the Miño to O Ribeiro

23

The Miño plays a key role in Galicia's geography and culture. This route follows its course from the city of Ourense to Ribadavia, through the wine-producing county of O Ribeiro.

It combines culture, nature and scenery, passing through areas where the legacy of Rome is in evidence and lands where the climate is almost Mediterranean.



Ourense is one of the largest cities in Galicia, its population being the third largest in the region. Water plays an important role in the life of the city, in the River Miño and its hot springs. A walk through the city offers an attractive combination of heritage, nature and good food, accompanied by some of the province's fine wines. The historic centre has many features of great interest, including the Cathedral, devoted to Saint Martin, which is in Romanesque style but subsequent rebuilding has introduced other influences. As Burgas is a seventeenth-century spa, though its hot springs have been used since ancient times, and today's visitors can still bathe in hot water in the centre of the city. Other charming corners include the Praza do Trigo, Eironciño dos

Cabaleiros and Praza da Madalena. The itinerary begins at A Ponte Vella, a Roman bridge reconstructed in the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, a strategic point on the Vía da Prata, the Silver Way to Santiago. It was declared a Historical and Artistic Monument in 1961. There is a beautiful view

*Se queres tomar un bo viño,
ó pasar polo Ribeiro
vai por Castrelo de Miño.*

from the Chapel of Os Remedios. The route follows the banks of the Miño, taking in various bridges, including the Ponte do Milenio, an avant-garde bridge completed in 2001 which is a lookout point in itself. The route continues to descend along the left bank of the Miño until it

reaches the Termas de Outariz Park. In the section from Barbadás to Toén, the leafy riverside woods give way to extensive vineyards. The vines are protected by the river valley and grow well in the area's warm summers. The arrival of autumn fills the landscape with glowing colours. The route to Ribadavia passes the Castrelo Marina, a successful initiative combining recreational activities and hydroelectric power. Nearby, in the area round the reservoir, the beautiful Santa María de Castrelo Church overlooks the surrounding countryside from a hill above the river. Ribadavia, the capital of O Ribeiro, stands beside the River Avia, which flows into the Miño just outside the town. Its cultural heritage and the rich culture of its wine fully justify an unhurried visit.

▼ O Ribeiro vineyards

Ribadavia in the evening ►





There are many reasons for visiting **Ribadavia**, capital of *O Ribeiro do Avia*, an important wine-producing centre since ancient times and a Historical and Artistic Site since 1947. Surrounded by rolling hills, in the centre of the valley where the Avia flows into the Miño, it is a historical town that retains mediaeval features like A Alxama, the formerly prosperous Jewish quarter, which has left its architectural and culinary mark on the city's life. Important historical sites include Praza Maior, a square with porticos which is a popular meeting point; the rounded, Baroque home of the Counts of Ribadavia; the Santo Domingo complex, including the convent of the same name, the Virxe do Portal Church and, of course, the sixteenth-century castle of the Sarmiento, Counts of Ribadavia, where the route ends.

Don't miss...

! The hot springs at Outariz are located on the right bank of the Miño. They can be reached from our route via a pedestrian bridge. Outariz and A Burga de Canedo form a large spa area, with hot springs producing water at 60° and various hot and cold bathing facilities.

Parque Náutico de Castrelo

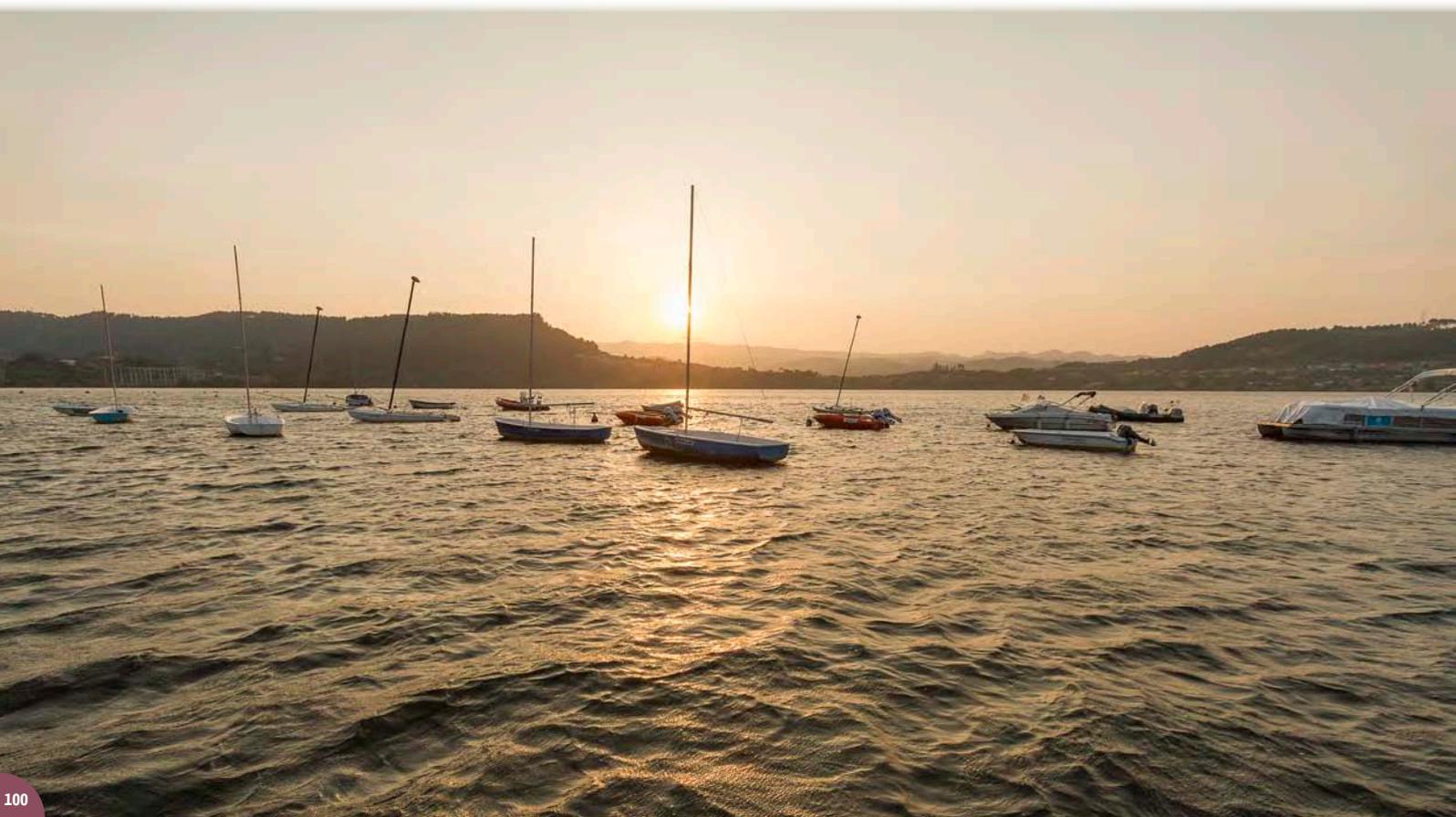
Documented since the ninth century, vine cultivation is known to have been introduced here by the Romans around the third century. The favourable climate and the properties of the dry soil on the slopes of the Avia, Miño and Arnoia valleys led to the development of a long wine-making tradition and a culture linked to wine.

Large areas of vineyards were lost in 1969, when the Castrelo de Miño reservoir was built. The surprisingly calm reservoir, the province's inland sea, stretches from Castrelo to San Paio, extending to the Laidas spa and Barbantes.

Visitors can enjoy the changing colours of the vineyards on the banks of this vast expanse of water. To the north, the curious rock formations at Pena Corneira (675 metres), known as the *Menhir do Ribeiro*, are just visible.

The Marina is a centre for sport and recreational activities in the county. The Club Náutico has an excellent reputation and the rowing course is considered one of the best in Spain, attracting rowers from all over Europe to train and compete there.

The combination of sporting activities, walks, recreational areas and fine food and wine make a visit to the Castrelo Park highly recommendable.



From Avi3n to the Tres R3as lookout point... from O Su3do to O Cando

24

The O Su3do and O Cando mountains form the southern section of the "Dorsal Galega", a system that crosses Galicia from north to south.

Set half-way between O Ribeiro and the R3as Baixas, these mountains surprise visitors with their landscape, distinctive heritage and cultural links to the Americas, as a result of migration.



*Na serra do Suído
atopei o meu amigo
Ai Deus, fica aquí!.*

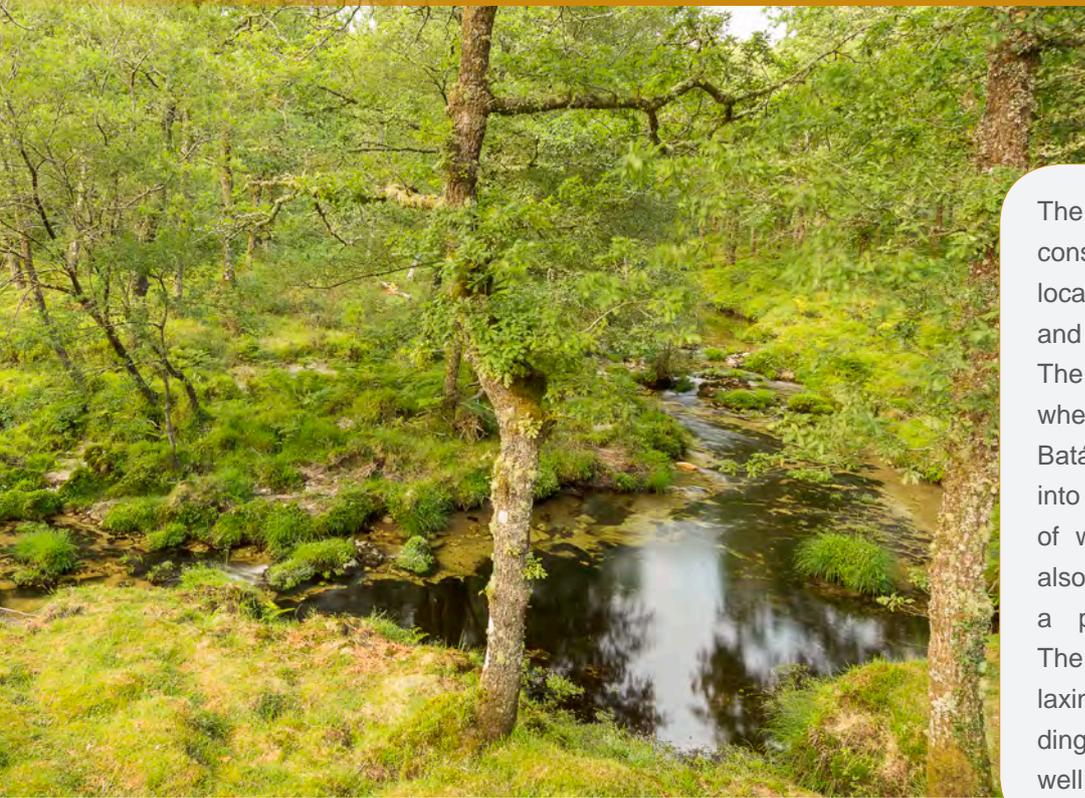
Avión is a small municipality but one that has played an important part in Galician life. In the past many of the people living in the valleys between these

mountains emigrated in search of a better life, mainly to Mexico. The Galician colony on the other side of the Atlantic is still active, its people the descendants of those who left in the past. Today they are responsible for an interesting cultural and economic exchange, making this area unique, influenced by the architecture, gastronomy and language of the Americas. After leaving Avión the route takes us through oak woods and villages, a landscape typical of inland parts of Galicia. After a number of turnings in Abeleña, the route reaches Rodeiro, where the ascent to Serra do Suído begins. El Coto dos Xarotos is a mountain pass at an altitude exceeding 1,000 metres. The slopes leading up to it are very steep, especially in the section known as Outeiro Malato, where there are many hairpin bends.

At the top there is a wind farm. The distinctive climatic conditions in the O Suído and O Cando mountains is due to their geographical position. They are the first mountain barrier encountered by fronts entering the *rías* and river valleys from the Atlantic, producing the heaviest rainfall in Galicia. These conditions generate a habitat in which rocky outcrops and scrubland predominate at higher altitudes, with upland pasture and wetlands on the plains, indigenous trees and woodland on the slopes, and numerous watercourses. Medium-sized rivers like the Avia, Verdugo, Oitavén and Tea rise in these mountains. The route descends O Suído via A Lama, changing direction when it reaches the chapel and oak woods at As Ermidas, heading north towards the O Cando range. It then passes through a succession of villages with traditional architecture along the River Verdugo valley to Barcia do Seixo. The ascent follows a dirt track, calling for special care when going to the top. However, the effort is well worth while, as the summit offers the visitor a magic mountain. Serra do Cando is a scenic area with features of great ecological importance, but it is truly special for the earthly power of O Seixo, a

▼ The Dorsal Galega





The **Os Prados oak forest** is a very well conserved area of indigenous woodland located between the villages of Pigarzos and A Grifa, in the municipality of A Lama. The River A Xesta runs through the area, where various other rivers, such as the Batán, Corcovada and Xubancas flow into it, providing an abundant supply of water for the dense woods, which also contain the Os Prados Sanctuary, a popular local place of worship. The area, which is ideal for walking and relaxing, is the starting point for a route leading up to the O Suído Pass, near which a well preserved old wolf trap can be seen.

▲ Os Prados oak forest

magical mountain according to local tradition. The O Seixo cross marks the entrance to the mountains. After it curiously shaped rocks with profound meanings appear. *Portalén*, shaped like a doorway, provides a path to beyond, allowing us to enter the world of the dead. The door opens once a year on 1 November, All Souls' Day. One must go through it from north to south

and, above all, return in the opposite direction or, according to legend, risk being trapped in the world of the dead. The *Marco do Vento* is a remarkable granite rock over five metres high, standing upright like a huge menhir. These megaliths are characteristic of a mountain landscape worn down by wind and rain. The Santa Mariña Chapel, an ancient place of worship, stands

alone in the green mountains. There are spectacular views from many points but those from the Tres Rías lookout point, where our route ends, are exceptional. Looking past the wind farms and cattle, the Arousa, Pontevedra and Vigo *rías* can be distinguished in the distance, as can, on clear days, the Rande bridge and the Cíes islands.



Don't miss...

The huts on O Suído

! A constant stream of migrants have left O Suído for the Americas. In many cases they followed earlier migrants from their village or parish to the same destination. In Avión (in Ourense), for example, emigration was predominantly to Mexico, while in A Lama (Pontevedra) it was mostly to Brazil.

Mist and rain are part of the charm of O Suído. Its rough hillside vegetation and free grazing livestock, are typical of Galicia's medium-height mountains.

The wet climate at higher altitudes ensures good pastureland, so sheep and cattle have always grazed extensively here.

This led to the construction of simple shepherds' huts, usually small structures with walls made of granite blocks and slate roofs. They were designed to provide shelter for herdsmen and for the animals themselves, which had their own sheds. Slate enclosures were often used to mark the boundaries of each family's land and there were *curros* and *sesteiros* to accommodate livestock.





From Aciveiro to Carboeiro... monasteries in the centre of Galicia

25

Galicia's central counties offer a wealth of natural attractions and cultural heritage. These are areas dedicated to livestock, ensuring that the landscape is well conserved, valleys that lie alongside medium-height mountains, like those in the O Candán range, and captivating monasteries that transport us to another age.



Central

Galicia boasts extensive areas of well conserved traditional landscape. Extensive livestock farming in counties like Tabeirós-Terra de Montes and Deza has produced a region of broad pastures in the valleys with wooded areas and scrubland in the mountains. From mediaeval times its central location led to the establishment of monasteries which acted as religious, productive and jurisdictional centres, of which Aciveiro and Carboeiro are among the most notable. Aciveiro is in the municipality of Forcarei, at the foot of the western slopes of Sierra de O Candán. In a cold but beautiful spot, the Santa María de Aciveiro monastery lies in a bend of the River Lérez, still small at this point in its course. The loneliness of the location seems appropriate for this twelfth-century Benedictine monastery, which was

*Así son aquelas terras de Camba,
Deza e Trasdeza,*

*con tantos anos de historia como
anos ten o mundo;*

*dende os celtas que construíron un
castro en cada curuto.*

transferred to the Cistercians in the thirteenth century. It had authority over a large area, exercising jurisdiction in the centre of Galicia. The architectural complex underwent substantial changes with extensive rebuilding. The Santa María Church, possibly taking its inspiration from the Cathedral in Santiago, is a fine example of the Romanesque architecture found widely in Pontevedra, with the exception of the façade, which was totally redesigned. From Aciveiro a gentle ascent

begins towards O Candán. Mountain landscapes with crags and scrubland alternate with grazing land at altitudes around 1,000 metres, where there is normally snow in winter. The Serra do Candán has been specially protected as a Special Area of Conservation since 2014, it has been a Site of Community Interest since 2004 and forms part of the Natura 2000 Network. The O Candán pass (854 metres) marks the division between

Aciveiro Monastery ▼



Forcarei and Silleda, leaving the county of Tabeirós - Terra de Montes and entering Deza, on the other side of the mountains. The route down offers continuous views of the green valley. The descent ends at Laro and the route then turns towards Silleda, running between the green fields and oak woods that are typical of these valleys. Silleda is an important town on the

Vía da Prata. The festivities to mark the Green Week in Galicia and other displays throughout the year create a vibrant atmosphere in this town. Visitors must not fail to try the famous local *melindres* (sponge fingers). Visits to the *castros* in the vicinity are also recommended: Toiriz (adjacent to the town centre) and A Copa do Castro (beside the beautiful Romanesque San Mamede church).

Carboeiro Monastery is concealed in a leafy wood, nestling in a meander in the River Deza. Founded in the tenth century as a Benedictine monastery, it is one of the finest exemplars of the Galician Romanesque style, with some touches reflecting the transition to Gothic. Located in a distant, rugged setting that takes us back in history, it marks the end of this route.

Ponte do Demo ▼



Apart from its historic and cultural importance, **Carboeiro** is a magical place that blends beautifully with its natural setting. The River Deza runs through a deep valley with a micro-climate in which Mediterranean species such as strawberry trees (*Arbutus unedo*) and cork oaks (*Quercus suber*) abound. A recently created easy-to-

follow and very interesting botanical trail allows visitors to learn the names of a large number of tree species. Near the monastery, the river is crossed by the mediaeval O Demo bridge. Its name alludes to a legend according to which the monastery was built as a result of a pact between the monks and the Devil. Stories of robberies and

other mishaps occurring in the vicinity of the bridge reinforced the theory and the name became commonly accepted. As Antonio de Valenzuela said: "*The Carboeiro Monastery says nothing, it has already said everything. It hides the purity of its twelfth-century Romanesque archivolts in a thick Druidic oak wood*".

Don't miss...

O Candán lookout point

The O Candán pass leads into the county of Deza. With the Faro and Farelo ranges in the background, the wide vistas provide an appreciation of the county's natural environment, scenery and agricultural importance.

The Deza valley, surrounded by hills and mountain chains, forms a river sub-basin which is part of the River Ulla's drainage area. Medium-sized rivers, like the Arnego and Asneiro, cross the region, creating a dense network of streams and rivulets. The whole forms part of the Ulla-Deza river system, a natural space protected because of its riverine woodland and the presence of fish.

 The **O Candán neveiras** are seventeenth-century ice wells dug into the ground with a stone surround. The Aciveiro monastery traded in ice, mainly supplying Santiago de Compostela. The snow was stored at depth to keep it at sub-zero temperatures, so that it could be used to conserve food.







50 must-visit viewpoints





3



1 A Bailadora

 43.455396, -8.280079 (Ares)

From the A Bailadora lookout point, at the summit of the 266-metre Montefaro de Ares, there is a spectacular panoramic view of the Ferrol estuary, with the town of Mugardos in the foreground and the city of Ares beyond, including the military arsenal and the Fene dockyards.

The view of the narrow river mouth, defended by the San Felipe and A Palma castles, leaves no doubt about the strategic importance of Ferrol's connection with the sea since the early modern period.

A series of former military bunkers strategically located at the at A Bailadora lookout point form part of an extensive defensive system that includes tunnels and a range of military buildings, testifying to the historical significance of this spot.

2 Pico Sacro

 42.808152, -8.446813 (Boqueixón)

The Pico Sacro is a quartz outcrop of great geological interest, formed by tectonic shifts, giving it a distinctive pyramid shape that helps to guide pilgrims, especially those walking the Vía da Prata. Much of central Galicia can be surveyed from its summit, above all the verdant Ulla valley.

Home to the mythical Queen Lupa, a narrow pass between the rocks at the top of the mountain led to her pazo (palace), where she converted to Christianity and offered a burial place for Saint James in the *Campus Stellae*.

The many legends and tales linked to this sacred mountain reflect a rich cultural legacy that includes intangible elements (songs, sayings, stories) and items of tangible heritage such as the Hermitage of Santo Estevo and the caves of *O Burato dos Mouros*, where legend has it that the Romans mined for gold.



1



4



2

3 *A Vixía de Herbeira*

 43.724133, -7.945587 (Cariño/Cedeira)

It is very rare for the highest mountain in a range to also form part of a system of coastal cliffs. Vixía de Herbeira, at 615 metres the highest peak of the A Capelada range, is one of the highest cliff faces in continental Europe.

Some of the most spectacular views of Galicia's northern coast are therefore found at Herbeira, on a stretch of coast facing the Atlantic, running from Cape Ortegá to the tiny cove of Santo André de Teixido.

Feel the strength of the wind, inhale the scent of the sea and watch powerful waves batter the emerald green coast from this vantage point, historically important for coastal surveillance, as witnessed by a structure dating back to 1805, known as the Garita de Herbeira.

4 *Miradoiro de Cubeiras*

 42.851319, -9.053952 (Carnota)

The Cubeiras lookout point, in a sheltered position on the upper slopes of As Paxareiras, gazes down on a magnificent coastline sweeping from Caldebarcos in the north to Lira in the south, taking in the unmissable Carnota beach, one of the longest in Galicia.

Facing the immensity of the Atlantic ocean, Cubeiras also offers a rarely seen view of the southern and south-eastern flanks of Monte Pindo, an imposing granite massif with sea cliffs topped by steep upper slopes peaking at an altitude of over 600 metres.

5 Monte Treito

 42.745231, -8.777257 (Lousame/Rianxo)

Forming a natural border between the municipalities of Lousame and Rianxo, Monte Treito (Muralla) provides a magnificent viewing platform half way between the O Barbanza mountain range and the Rías Baixas estuaries.

Seen from this rocky vantage point, the undulations carved by the small rivulets descending to the rivers form adjoining valleys to the south of the viewing point where, in the foreground, hamlets such as A Varela, Bustelo and Vilar nestle, surrounded by fields of carefully tended crops.

In the middle distance, turning 180 degrees to the west, there are splendid views of the Arousa, Noia and Muros rías (estuaries).

6 Miradoiro do Ézaro

 42.917148, -9.116177 (Dumbría)

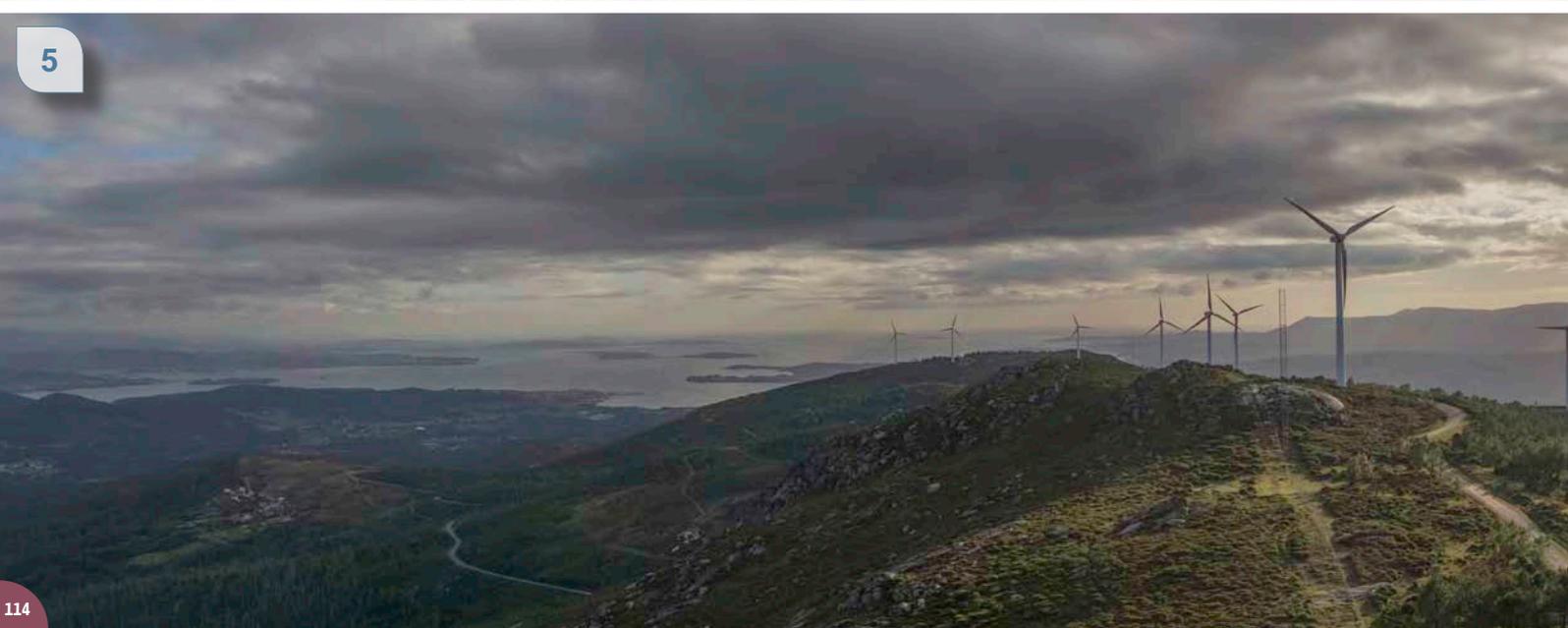
In places this stunning viewing point set on a rocky outcrop forms a natural balcony, close to the Xallas waterfall, one of the only sites in Europe where a river cascades directly into the sea. The view from here takes in the mouth of the River Xallas, the slopes of Monte Pindo, the tranquil cove of O Ézaro and gentle sunsets with Cape Fisterra in the background.

The road up winds steeply, but the views from the top are well worth it: the broad sweep down to the Atlantic, the imposing profile of the granite Monte Pindo descending to the sea, the small Lobeiras islands and the unmistakable shape of Cape Fisterra in the distance make this a magnificent viewpoint.

6



5



7 Monte do Facho

 42.885552, -9.271659 (Fisterra)

Cape Fisterra is a place of legends in western Europe, the end of the world according to the Romans and the final destination for pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago. At the head of the cape is a 240-metre high mountain called O Facho. This name refers to signals made to boats in former times from high, visible locations, such as the Casa do Facho, an ancient building whose remains can still be seen today.

From Monte do Facho the immense Atlantic ocean dwarfs Cape Fisterra and the lighthouse out on the promontory, facing the sea. Due to its coastal location, the vegetation here is reduced to scrubland and the occasional pine stoically resisting the buffeting of the winds.

8 O Semáforo de Bares

 43.778024, -7.668876 (Mañón)

Watching over the diminutive O Barqueiro estuary, the Semáforo de Bares is one of the ancient signal points scattered along the Galician coast.

The role of this old military building was to watch the movement of ships and it also served as a communications base and weather data collection station, thanks to its location 200 metres above sea level, at a place where the Cantabrian Sea begins to show its strength.

The views of the Bares area and port, and the mysterious island of Coelleira, prove an excellent overview of this environmentally diverse and scenic stretch of coastline.





9 Monte do Facho

 43.078287, -9.226776 (Muxía)

O Facho de Lourido is a 312-metre mountain with spectacular views of the Costa da Morte. Its name refers to light and sound signals directed towards boats at sea, for which high and easily visible locations were sought.

The sweeping views range from Cape Vilán to Cape Touriñán, one of the most rugged stretches of the Costa da Morte. Between the capes can be seen the municipalities of Camariñas and Muxía, with wild, beautiful beaches such as Lourido, nestling between countless rocks battered by Atlantic waves.

10 Seixo Branco

 43.396045, -8.349773 (Oleiros)

In the gulf of Ártabro, the Dexo-Serantes coast stretches from the port of Lorbé to the Mera lighthouse, forming an extraordinary protected coastal ecosystem that has been declared a Natural Monument.

A spectacular coastal landscape of cliffs and grottoes between the Ares, Betanzos and A Coruña estuaries is the backdrop for the wealth of flora and fauna found here.

One of the most eye-catching sights along these cliffs is O Seixo Branco, a vein of white quartz that was even used as a navigational reference by sailors, as was A Marola, a nearby islet that marked the limit between the still waters and the open seas, giving rise to the saying: *Quen pasou A Marola, pasou a mar toda*, suggesting that sailing past A Marola is as difficult as crossing the whole ocean.



11



10



12

11 *Os Picóns de Loiba*

 43.744531, -7.752441 (Ortigueira)

The Loiba coastline is, literally, a film set. Many television series and films, such as Pedro Almodóvar's *La mala educación*, were filmed by these steep, rugged cliffs.

Os Picóns are a series of immense and intriguing formations of phyllite and schist, sculpted by the wind and waves to create echoing grottoes and caves.

From the top of the cliffs the magnificent Loiba beach can be seen in the foreground, with wild seas that sculptured the Pena Furada, a monumental rock whose arches brave the ravages of the sea. In the distance, stretching out to the west, Cape Ortegal completes the scene. The best spot to enjoy these views is from the well-known Loiba bench.

12 *A Curota*

 42.625904, -8.959817 (A Pobra do Caramiñal)

The mountain of A Curota (596 metres) is located at the southern end of the O Barbanza range, a granite formation that forms the backbone of the peninsula, separating the Muros and Noia estuary (to the north west) from the Arousa estuary (to the south east).

There are a number of lookout points on A Curota, such as O Alto de Lagoa, known as the site of a statue of the famous writer Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, the communications masts at A Curota, and this spot, A Curotiña, half way between the two, known generically as the Mirador de A Curota. From here, there is a sweeping view of the Rías Baixas estuaries, and notably of the mussel beds in the rich waters of the Arousa estuary, scattered between the islands and islets along the coast.

13 Monte Branco

 43.240531, -8.931717 (Ponteceso)

The sea winds sweep up the slopes of the hillside, covering it with fine sand and giving it the white appearance for which it is named. Monte Branco is a formation sealing the Anllóns estuary at the point where the river meets the sea.

From the top of the mountain there are views of beaches, cliffs, dunes and the long tongue of sand forming the O Medio beach, known as A Barra, which seems to be trying to stop the Anllóns reaching the sea.

The O Roncudo lookout point faces the A Insua mountain where the Laxe lighthouse guides seafarers, with the small estuary of the Corme and Laxe rivers between them, almost all of which is visible from this lookout point.

14 Castelo da Nogueirosa

 43.391391, -8.135467 (Pontedeume)

These lands contain many traces of the Andrade family, mediaeval Galician nobility. The As Mariñas area in A Coruña province contains a wealth of cultural heritage, of which the castle of A Nogueirosa is a highlight.

Constructed in 1369 on the orders of Fernán Pérez de Andrade, the site chosen was a rocky hill known as the Pena de Leboeiro. This was for defensive reasons and because of its vantage point over the mouth of the Eume river and the Ares estuary, it watched over the town of Pontedeume, one of the main feudal domains of the Andrade family.

The castle's keep is well conserved to this day. The square, 20-metre high tower now makes an excellent observation platform.

15



16



15 Monte Caxado

 43.512981, -7.822078 (As Pontes de García Rodríguez)

At 752 metres, Monte Caxado is the highest point of the A Faladoira range, as well as being one of the highest points in the province of A Coruña.

O Caxado is a lovely, peaceful spot, with 360° views of the surrounding low ranges and hills, such as A Coriscada and Bustelo, and the high O Xistral range in the distance. On a clear day you can see as far as the northern coast of Galicia. The rolling landscape, with its rounded hilltops, extends as far as the eye can see. The vibrant tones of the scrubland and pines that grow despite the cold winters bring colour to the landscape and contrast with the distinctive radar and communications station that sits atop Monte Caxado.

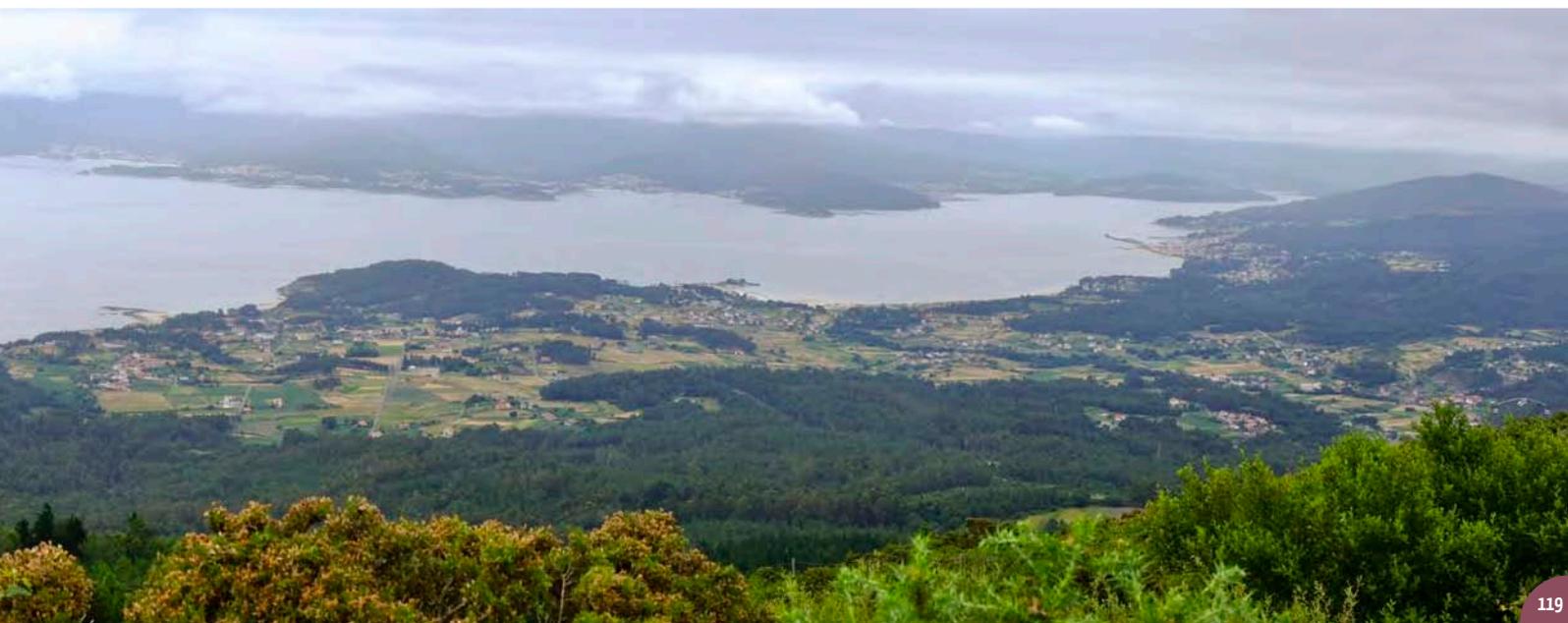
16 Monte Enxa

 42.703659, -8.983636 (Porto do Son)

Uninterrupted views from Cape Fisterra to Ribeira and a stunning view of the Muros and Noia estuary can be enjoyed from the top of the 539-metre Monte Enxa.

In a forested region of the coastal mountains of Porto do Son, Monte Enxa is a mountain located right next to the sea. This makes it the perfect spot to appreciate panoramic views of the northern end of the O Barbanza range where it meets the coastal edge of the Muros and Noia estuary.

Looking north-west from the peak, the granite rock of the lovely Monte Louro seems to plunge straight into the Atlantic, from the wild open sea to the calmer waters within the estuary.





17 Miradoiro do Paraño

 43.627656, -8.139697 (Valdoviño)

Valdoviño contains some of the most spectacular stretches of the Galician coastline, of which one of the most important is the *Espazo Natural da Lagoa e Areal da Frouxeira*.

A Frouxeira beach, with over three kilometres of fine sand and impressive waves, and the A Frouxeira lagoon, an ecologically important tidal zone, form an environmental and scenic jewel which can be admired in its entirety from the vantage point of the O Paraño lookout point.

The views include, to the south-west, a wide sweep of coast including the Frouxeira headland, with the unmistakable silhouette of the modern lighthouse at Meirás, the distinctive shape of Monte Campelo, and the long outline of Cape Prior in the distance.

18 O Farelo

 42.754036, -7.951243 (Antas de Ulla)

The 952-metre high Cima do Farelo overlooks the route from Agolada to Antas de Ulla, and was historically used to monitor movements between the counties of Deza (Pontevedra) and A Ulloa (Lugo).

In the shadow of the more imposing and better known O Faro range, O Farelo is a medium-height range with views over the splendid rural landscape of central Galicia, with farms interspersed by leafy forests and rivers and rivulets.

O Farelo is special in that it offers a 360° view of all four of Galicia's provinces. The nearby O Careón mountains lie to the north (Melide), and on a clear day even the O Xistral range is visible. The Ancares mountains in Lugo province can be seen in the distance to the east. The neighbouring O Faro range is to the south and in the west lie the O Candán mountains in the county of Deza.



20

19 Monte Faro

 42.621325, -7.897615 (Chantada)

At 1,181 metres, straddling the municipalities of Rodeiro (Pontevedra) and Chantada (Lugo), O Faro is one of the highest peaks of the group of ranges known as the *Dorsal Gallega*. It is both a scenic and spiritual landmark, being the site of the *Ermida da Nosa Señora do Faro*, a seventeenth-century hermitage built on top of the remains of older temples, indicating its importance as a place of religious worship. Nowadays it is the destination of two great *romerías* (pilgrimages) held in August and September and attended by the faithful from all over Galicia. The O Faro range is also a place of great archaeological importance. Its western flanks are the site of burial tumuli known as *mámoas*, a characteristic feature of the megalithic culture. These societies buried their dead at the outer limits of the area they considered to be their territory, and the O Faro mountains form an obvious natural frontier.

20 Alto da Cobaluda

 42.601132, -7.179506 (Folgozo do Courel)

O Courel is an area of rich meadows and idyllic hamlets that also contains some high peaks, such as the 1,294-metre A Cobaluda, an ideal spot for surveying the splendour of these mountains. At this altitude the typical forests and meadows of the area, and even its pine groves, give way to low lying heathers and broom, bringing colour to the mountains when they are not covered in snow. Its steep slopes, sweeping vistas and mountainous terrain make A Cobaluda the perfect spot from which to appreciate the immensity of the O Courel range, from the neighbouring peak, the well-known Pía Paxaro (1,610 metres) in the north-east, to Formigueiros, at 1,641 metres the highest peak of the O Courel mountains.

21 Hospital de Montouto

📍 43.095654, -7.143912 (A Fonsagrada)

Montouto is much more than a lookout point. Apart from its stunning views of the area of A Fonsagrada, it is the site of an important part of the cultural heritage of the Way of Saint James. The Real Hospital de Montouto was founded here in the fourteenth century with additional buildings added up until the end of the seventeenth century. It continued as a hostel for pilgrims completing the arduous Camino Primitivo (Primitive Way) to Santiago de Compostela until the early twentieth century. Today one building remains standing and the ruins of others can still be seen.

Near to the old hostel there is a recently built chapel with an ancient pedigree, the site of a traditional *romería* (pilgrimage). Finally, it is also the site of the Dolmen de Montouto, part of a megalithic necropolis.

22 Pico da Frouxeira

📍 43.538147, -7.356203 (Foz)

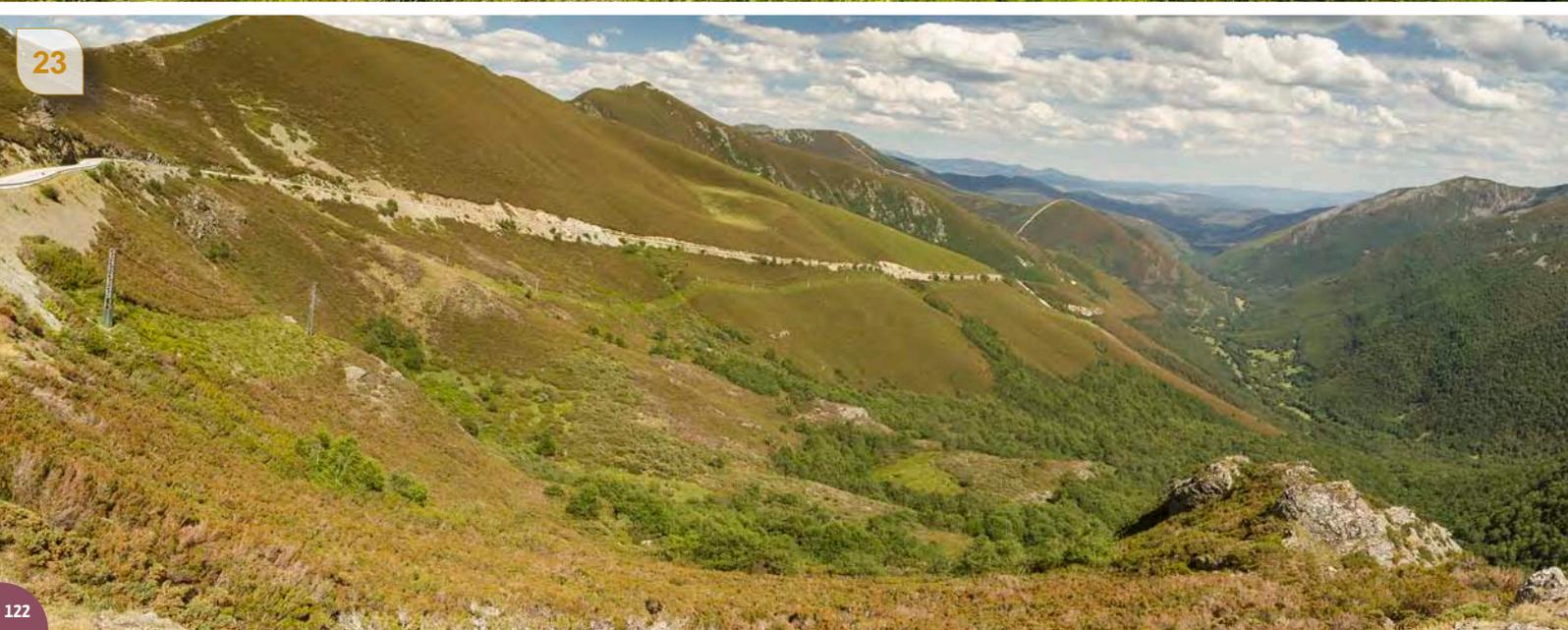
The Pico da Frouxeira is a place steeped in history. This 427-metre peak was once the site of the Castelo da Frouxeira. Today, only a few remains and marks in the granite rocks reveal where the walls of this ancient castle stood.

The fortress belonged to the Mariscal Pardo de Cela, a legendary and controversial mediaeval Galician nobleman. The rocky platform on which the impenetrable fortress stood, gazes down over the Foz region and the coast to the north-east, Alfoz and O Valadouro to the west, and the green, fertile San Martiño de Mondoñedo valley at its feet.

24



23



23 Porto de Ancares

 42.870230, -6.818341 (Navia de Suarna)

Porto de Ancares is a key location in these mountains. The point where León and Lugo meet, this 1,648-metre mountain pass is located at the heart of the range, linking valleys and ridges, hamlets and mountains.

The climb up from Balouta is steeper than usual for this area. From the top, the views down both sides of the mountain are impressive: from the Balouta lookout point there is a sweeping vista of gentle valleys contrasting with rugged peaks, while to the south the Ancares valley in the province of Leon rolls down into the distance. At the summit, experience the kind of mountain winds, winter snows and special light that is only found at these heights.

24 O Cebreiro

 42.709455, -7.043422 (Pedrafita do Cebreiro)

The tiny hamlet of O Cebreiro is a highly symbolic location on the main pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, the Camino Francés (French Way).

The entry point into Galicia, and the end of a long, hard stage for pilgrims on the *Camino*, its carefully conserved local architecture and the sanctuary of Santa María a Real make O Cebreiro a very special place.

At the summit of O Cebreiro, looking back towards Leon, walkers have a stunning panoramic view of the villages they have passed through, such as La Laguna, and other tiny hamlets, such as Cernada. The greens of the fields mingle with the ochres of the trees in a pleasant, self-contained valley.



25 Miradoiro da Cova

 42.565489, -7.675429 (O Saviñao)

A Cova is a popular spot thanks to its riverside beach on the banks of the Miño river and the well conserved, twelfth-century Romanesque church of San Martiño. But there is another surprise at A Cova. On the slopes above, nestling among vines, the village of Cuñas enjoys extraordinary views of the river and its most famous meander, the *Cabo do Mundo*.

The A Cova lookout point provides stunning views over vines and terraces of the mountain of O Navallo, around whose flanks the Miño River winds, giving it a curious form like a maritime headland.

26 Miradoiro de Souto Chao

 42.408788, -7.471651 (Sober)

This imposing, vine-covered hillside gazes down over the river. Souto Chao is the perfect place to appreciate the symbiosis between the canyons of the river Sil and winegrowing.

In Doade, on the sunny hillside heading down to the Sil, the canyon's soil and microclimate provide fantastic conditions for the vines. The steep slopes are shored up by terraces. The challenging contours make winegrowing here a Herculean task, and traditional methods are still important.

The colours, scents and views of the river Sil to the east and west make a stop at this lookout point an experience for all the senses.



25



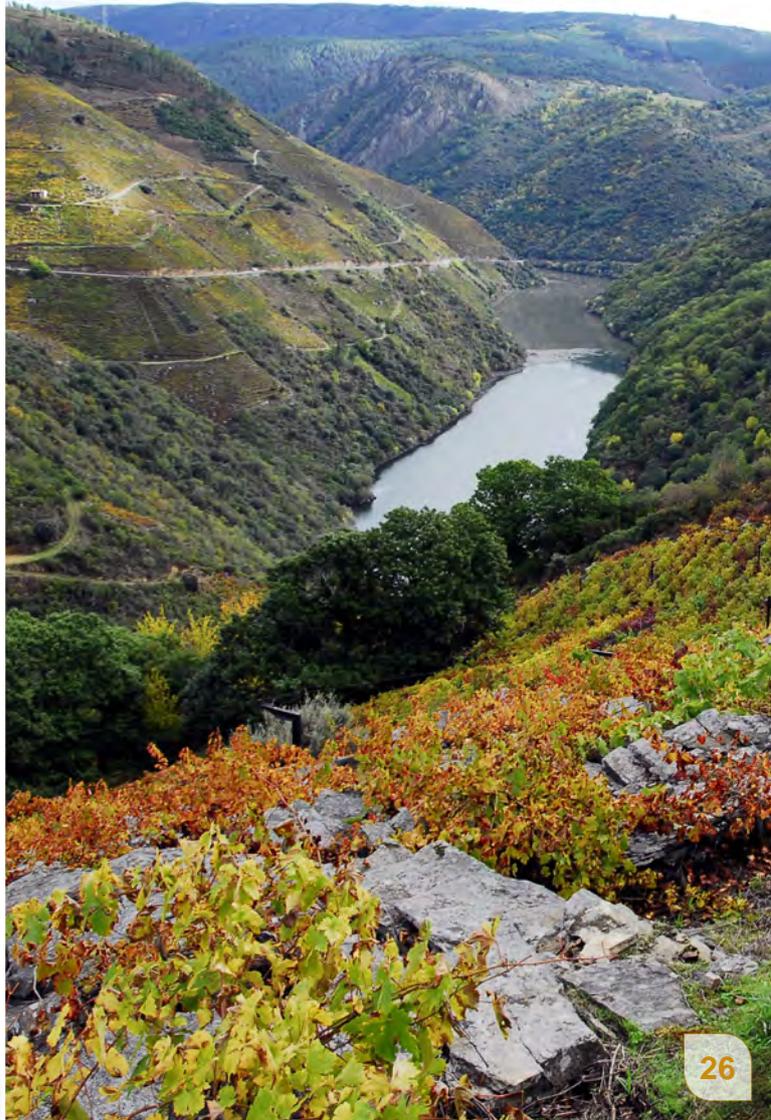
27 *Miradoiro de Muronovo*

 43.700795, -7.676835 (O Vicedo)

O Vicedo is located on a beautiful stretch of coastline in Lugo province with fabulous beaches. However, there are also sites of great interest to be found inland, such as the lookout point at Muronovo.

At an altitude of over 400 metres, the lookout point makes use of the roads up to the windfarm to obtain stunning views of the coast, including O Vicedo itself and the neighbouring municipality of Mañón, with good views of O Barqueiro and Bares.

The mouth of the river Sor can be seen in the middle distance, with its bridges at O Porto do Barqueiro, and the unmistakable Insua de San Martiño, at a place where the river becomes part of the sea.





28



28 Monseivane

 43.390779, -7.574951 (Vilalba)

At 935 metres, Monseivane, or Coto de Monseivane, is the highest peak of the A Carba range, close to the O Xistral range with which it forms the main mountain system in northern Galicia.

Part of A Terra Chá, the most extensive lowland area in Galicia, the hills bordering the county provide the best views of the low-lying areas characterised by well-kept farms, scattered small hamlets and hedges. Livestock can often be found grazing freely around the pastures, scrublands and pine groves of Monseivane.

29 Miradoiro de San Roque

 43.663911, -7.579650 (Viveiro)

The San Roque peak is one of the most popular outdoor spaces for locals to enjoy their free time. At 353 metres, it affords spectacular views of the Viveiro estuary area, including the ports of Viveiro and Celeiro (one of Galicia's most important ports) and the Covas beach.

At the mouth of the Landro river there are extensive wetlands of great ecological importance, extending the estuary and merging into the Cantabrian Sea on this rugged, windswept stretch of the coast.

The chapel of San Roque overlooks the sea, and acts as a reference point for sailors. It is mentioned in a traditional Galician song, *Catro vellos mariñeiros* (Four old sailors): "*Boga mariñeiro, imos para Viveiro, xa se ve San Roque*" (Row, row seaman, we're going to Viveiro, you can see San Roque).



30

Miradoiro de San Fiz



42.258045, -7.412783 (Chandrea de Queixa)

The San Fiz lookout point is a remarkable spot for contemplation. With spectacular views of the Chandrea de Queixa reservoir, the Queixa mountain range and Cabeza de Manzaneda in the distance add depth and splendour to the scene.

The tranquillity of the place reinforces the beauty of a landscape in which the presence of water combines with a traditional patchwork of fields of crops divided by natural walls and tiny hamlets on the banks of the reservoir.

31

Miradoiro do Pedreiriño



41.942612, -8.108753 (Entrimo)

O Pedreiriño is a picnic and recreational area near A Terrachán, the municipal capital of Entrimo. Set high among rocks and pine woods, its splendid location in the O Labreiro mountains means the views are excellent from here.

The vistas take in much of the county, from the Limia river near the Lindoso reservoir to the spectacular O Xurés mountains, with a sweeping panorama of its granite peaks, often covered in snow in winter.

The lookout point is also the site of the O Pedreiriño fountain and a granite image of San Rosendo atop a rock, carved by sculptor Xosé Cid.

32 *Castelo de Monterrei*

 41.947378, -7.449447 (Monterrei)

Seated on a hilltop, this great fortified complex includes a castle that has been dated to the tenth century, of which the parade ground and well survive today; the Don Sancho tower, a fifteenth-century keep; the Pazo dos Condes, a fifteenth-century Renaissance palace; the fourteenth-century Hospital de Peregrinos used by pilgrims on the Vía da Prata (Silver Way); and Santa María de Gracia, a fourteenth-century Romanesque church.

There are excellent views of the surrounding area from this spot high over the Monterrei valley, in particular the municipality of Verín and the Támega river. The almost Mediterranean climate of this area make it one of the most important winegrowing areas in Galicia, bringing colour and character to the landscape.

33 *Miradoiro de Cabezoás*

 42.373883, -7.604678 (Parada de Sil)

Cabezoás is one of the most popular lookout points along the Ribeira Sacra, in an area with an abundance of excellent observation platforms.

Located at an altitude of 700 metres at the side of the road, facing a meander in the river known as Coto das Boedas, there is a vertical drop of over 400 metres from the top of the granite outcrop down to the river. This is one of the deepest points of the Sil Canyon.

At the lookout point there is a wooden walkway with a viewing platform that emphasises the vertiginous drop down to the river. It is surrounded by the typical vegetation of the area, such as chestnuts, oaks and broom.

33



34



34 *Miradoiro do Barranco Rubio*

 42.411556, -7.132480 (A Rúa)

There are extensive views of the Valdeorras area from the Barranco Rubio lookout point. At an altitude of around 800 metres, it is located on a steep hillside above the Sil valley.

The county of Valdeorras is bordered by the Cereixido mountains to the north, whose heights match those of the O Courel range, with which it merges.

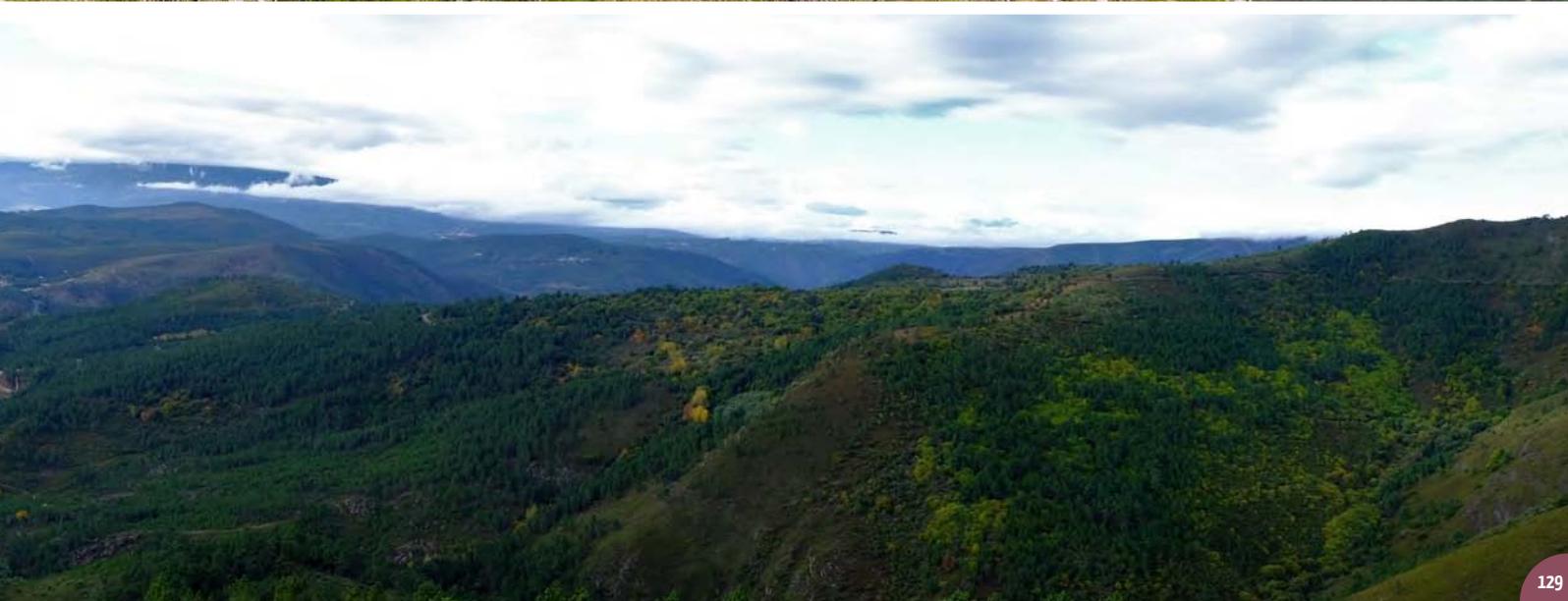
The views to the south from Barranco Rubio are wide sweeping and take in important sights such as the towns of A Rúa and Petín, the San Martiño reservoir on the River Sil and extensive vineyards planted to take advantage of the beneficial climate in the valley.

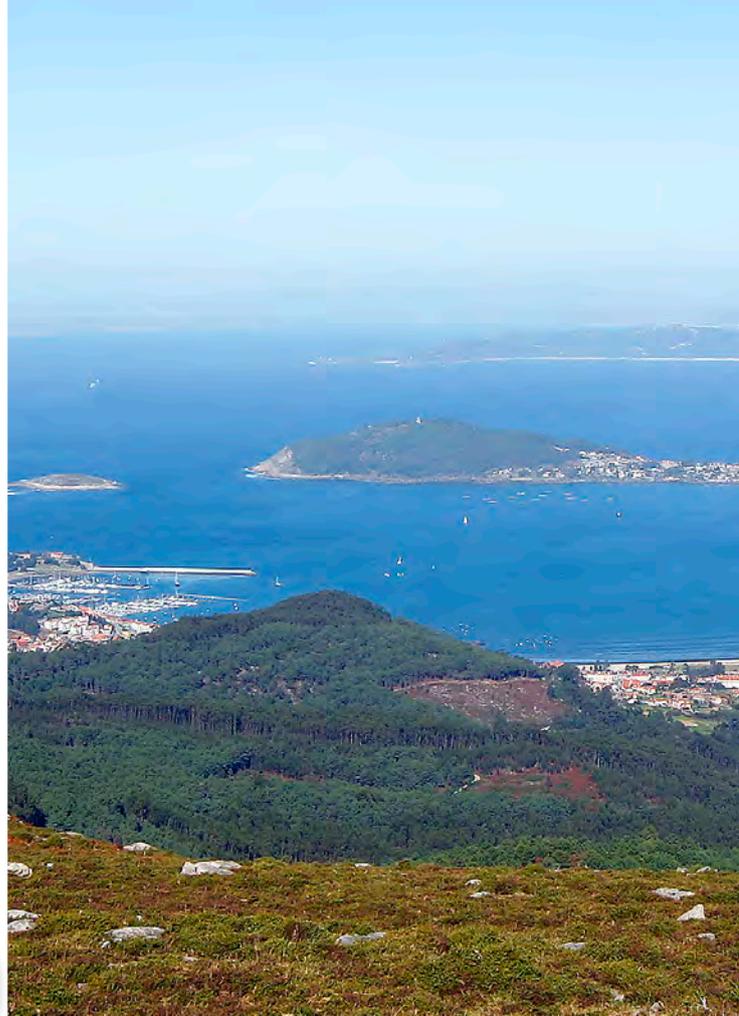
35 *A Moá*

 42.429359, -7.299367 (San Xoán de Río/
Ribas de Sil)

A natural lookout point, A Moá is one of those places where you can get an excellent overall idea of area. At an altitude of 1,123 metres, this is a magnificent spot from which to survey the deep, wide Quiroga and Ribas de Sil valley, with sweeping views of the ranges forming the O Courel mountain system in the background.

A Moá marks the border between Ourense and Lugo provinces, and also a change in the landscape, from plains to low mountains, with a steep drop down to the River Sil.





36 Torre da Pena

 42.088107, -7.672802 (Xinzo de Limia)

A Limia is a county of interesting geographical features, its landscape being characterised by extensive cultivated land on the Limia river plain.

This geography can be clearly observed from the Torre da Pena, set on a hilltop with unobstructed views of the surrounding plains.

The fortress, of which only the keep still stands today, was built in the twelfth century at the same time as other castles such as those of Sandiás, Porqueira and Celme, forming a defensive system against attacks from Portugal.

37 Miradoiro do Cortelliño

 42.808152, -8.446813 (Baiona)

The A Groba hills are located very close to the coast of Baiona and Oia, and are therefore the site of numerous observation points in high positions with fine views of the sea.

One of these is O Cortelliño, a recreation area with an observation platform reached via a wooden walkway, with views of Vigo, Pontevedra and Arousa, and even Fisterra on a clear day.

From its location in the magnificent natural surroundings of A Groba, the villages of Baiona, Nigrán, O Val Miñor and Monteferro, and the Cíes islands at the mouth of the Vigo estuary can be clearly seen from here.



37



36



38

38 Monte do Facho

 43.724133, -7.945587 (Cangas)

Both beautiful scenery and cultural heritage can be admired at O Facho de Donón, a unique spot on the Galician coast. Located on the Costa da Vela, it has fabulous views of the Cíes and Ons islands and the Pontevedra and Vigo estuaries. A scenic landmark with an unmistakable form, it is also the site of a rich cultural legacy, of which the most visible feature is *the facho*, or lighthouse, a small seventeenth-century structure that may also have been used as a surveillance point. An ancient Roman sanctuary, its strategic position means it has been occupied by many civilisations, including a *castro* settlement.

39 Faro de Aviión

 42.851319, -9.053952 (Covelo)

At 1,151 metres, the Faro de Aviión is the highest point in the province of Pontevedra. It is located on the border with the province of Ourense, in the southern part of the *Dorsal Gallega*, a group of ranges running from north to south through central Galicia.

Extensive views of the Tea valley can be enjoyed from the lookout point. Many rivers flow down from these hills, of which the Deva and the Tea are the most important. There are also fine views of the O Suído range, the natural continuation of the O Faro de Aviión range and a habitat for many species of fauna. The plant life varies widely according to altitude, with meadows and agricultural land in the valleys, forests and copses on the hillsides and rocky scrubland on the mountaintops.

40

Con da Siradella



42.470141, -8.880850 (O Grove)

O Grove is a small peninsula at the southern end of the Arousa estuary. It is joined to the mainland by the A Lanzada beach, although this was not always so: O Grove was an island until silting from the Umia river met the dunes of A Lanzada to create the O Vao isthmus.

The Con da Siradella is the highest point on O Grove, at 165 metres. The well-kept wooden observation platform provides all-round vistas, with excellent views of the isthmus and A Lanzada beach.

The observation platform is located on a pine-covered hill topped by granite boulders and curious rock formations, reminding visitors that *con* means “stone”.

41

Santa Trega



41.888698, -8.870974 (A Guarda)

Santa Trega is one of the best known spots in Galicia. In a spectacular location on the Galician coast, the lookout point has 360° vistas of the mouth of the River Miño and the coasts of Galicia and Portugal, making it a strategic surveillance point between the two countries.

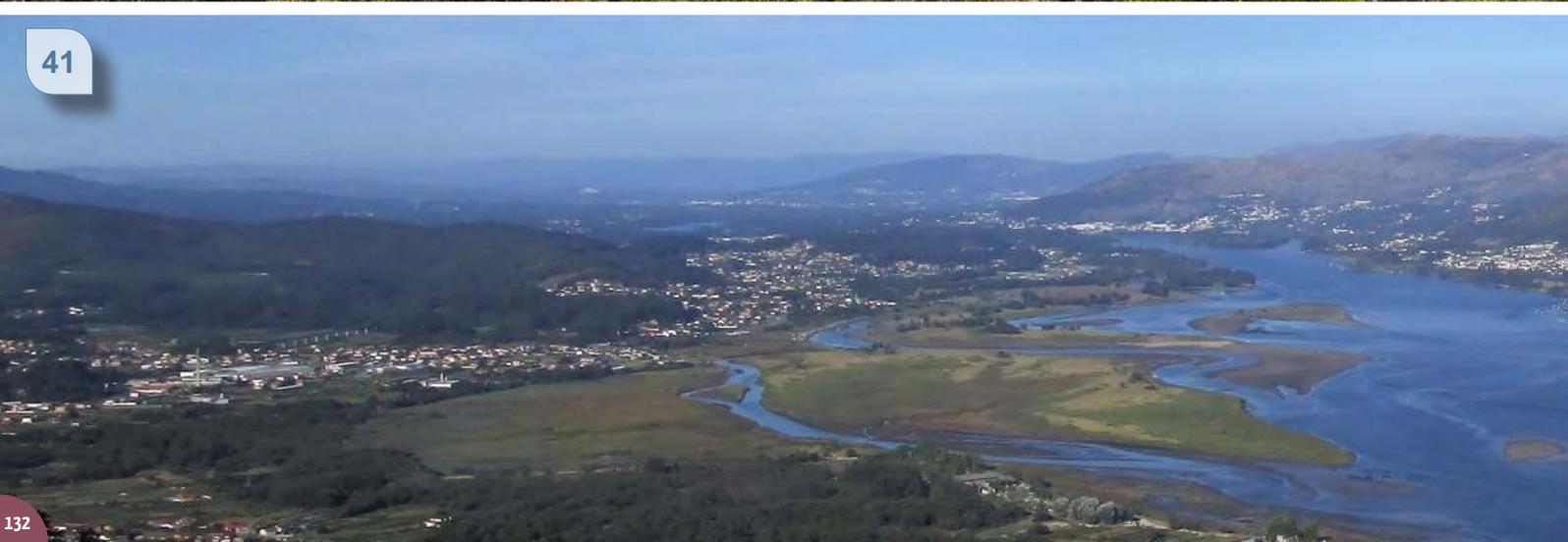
At Galicia's most south-western point, the Santa Trega mountain offers spectacular scenery and a rich concentration of cultural heritage, including a *castro* settlement, petroglyphs and a twelfth-century hermitage.

The immensity of the Atlantic Ocean contrasts with the welcoming valley of the Miño. The best moment to admire them both is at sunset, when the light and colours at Santa Trega are at their most spectacular.

43



41



42

Miradoiro das Tres Rías

 42.447934, -8.405458 (A Lama)

The Tres Rías lookout point is one of Galicia's geographical curiosities, with views of the Rías Baixas estuaries (Arousa, Pontevedra and Vigo) from the O Cando range, deep inland in the province of Pontevedra and part of a group of mountain ranges forming Galicia's *Dorsal Central*.

The Tres Rías lookout point is located on Monte Seixo, known as the "Montaña Máxica" (the Magical Mountain), as it contains various sites popularly linked with the afterlife, such as *A Porta do Alén* and *O Marco do Vento*.

Livestock graze freely on the mountainside, adding to the beauty of the scenery, with views of the upper reaches of the River Verdugo and the neighbouring O Suído range, which is similar in appearance.

43

Monte San Nomedio

 42.134756, -8.413139 (As Neves)

The mount and hermitage of San Nomedio are located at an altitude of 694 metres atop a steep hillside, part of the A Paradanta range, a small system of medium-sized mountains in the province of Pontevedra.

Thanks to its height, it has spectacular views of the valleys of the Termes and Xuliana rivers, and the Miño in the distance, including much of the area of the municipality of As Neves and even part of northern Portugal.

The hermitage is a simple, modest construction, with a single nave. The feast of San Nomedio is celebrated with a *romería* (pilgrimage) to the hermitage during which the faithful pray for a good harvest.

Many legends are told about this place, and it is even speculated that it could be site of the mythical Monte Medulio, where the Gallaeci tribes lost their final battle against the Roman empire, the last soldiers killing themselves with the cry "Denantes mortos que escravos" (Better dead than slaves).



40



42



44 Cano dos Mouros

 42.044300, -8.869120 (Oia)

Cano dos Mouros is a 287-metre hill and the site of a *castro* settlement of the same name, located here as it was an excellent vantage point for monitoring both the coast and movements on land, set between two larger, neighbouring settlements, A Cabeciña and Chavellas.

Today its defensive location on a steep hillside makes it a natural viewing point for admiring a large stretch of the Oia coastline.

With free grazing livestock, a common sight in the A Groba mountains, and the pine groves that are a feature of this landscape, the mountain vistas combined with sweeping views of the Atlantic cannot fail to impress.

45 A Fracha

 42.396862, -8.599967 (Pontevedra)

The mountain of A Fracha is a forest park with a recreation area and numerous designated walking paths classified according to their difficulty. The lookout point affords views of the Pontevedra estuaries and part of the Vigo estuary.

It has particularly fine views of the city of Pontevedra, on the banks of the Lérez, just before it reaches the sea. From A Fracha the whole city with its varied neighbourhoods can be seen.

The surroundings are typical of the coastal mountains of the Rías Baixas, with steep hillsides whose lower reaches are covered in forests and rocky scrubland at the mountaintops.



46



46

A Peneda



42.326824, -8.590452 (Soutomaior)

One of the most notable features of the Vigo estuary, the distinctive form of A Peneda is visible from much of the county. The steep-sided 329-metre peak is topped by the seventeenth-century chapel of Nosa Señora das Neves (also known as the Virxe da Peneda). The chapel is built on the site of the A Peneda *castro* settlement, which would have been located here due to its defensive position and wide vistas.

The entire Vigo estuary, from its starting point at the mouth of the Verdugo river to Rande, with the Cíes islands in the distance, can be observed if one stands next to the ancient cork oak at the A Peneda viewing point.

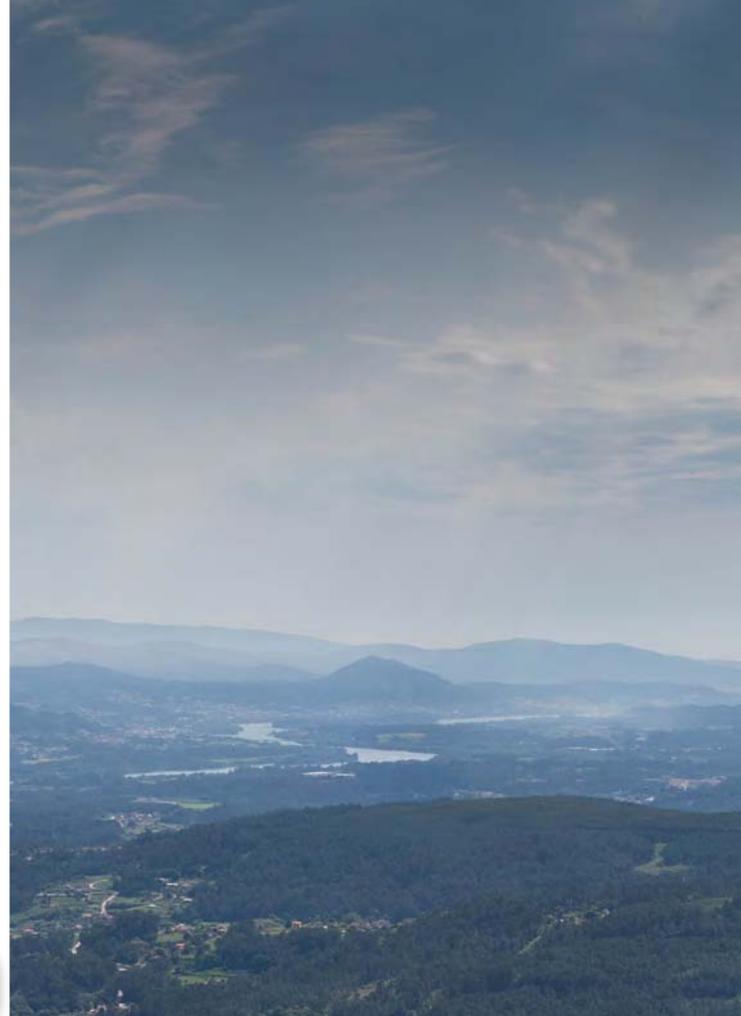


44



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47 *Miradoiro da Cruz de San Xiao*

 42.081788, -8.680794 (Tui)

In addition to its lovely landscapes and panoramic views, the Natural Park of Monte Aloia is rich in natural and cultural heritage. This natural lookout point is located at an altitude of 600 metres, where the great San Xiao cross was erected in 1900, visible from the town of Tui.

From the base of the cross there are views of the course of the Miño, the forests on both the Galician and Portuguese banks, and the length of the river valley. The vistas extend from Salvaterra de Miño to the Santa Trega mount at the mouth of the river. An interesting exercise is to try and identify all the towns and villages along the lower reaches of the Miño: Tui, Valença do Minho, Goián, Vilanova de Cerveira, etc.

48 *Monte Cepudo*

 42.169946, -8.735720 (Vigo)

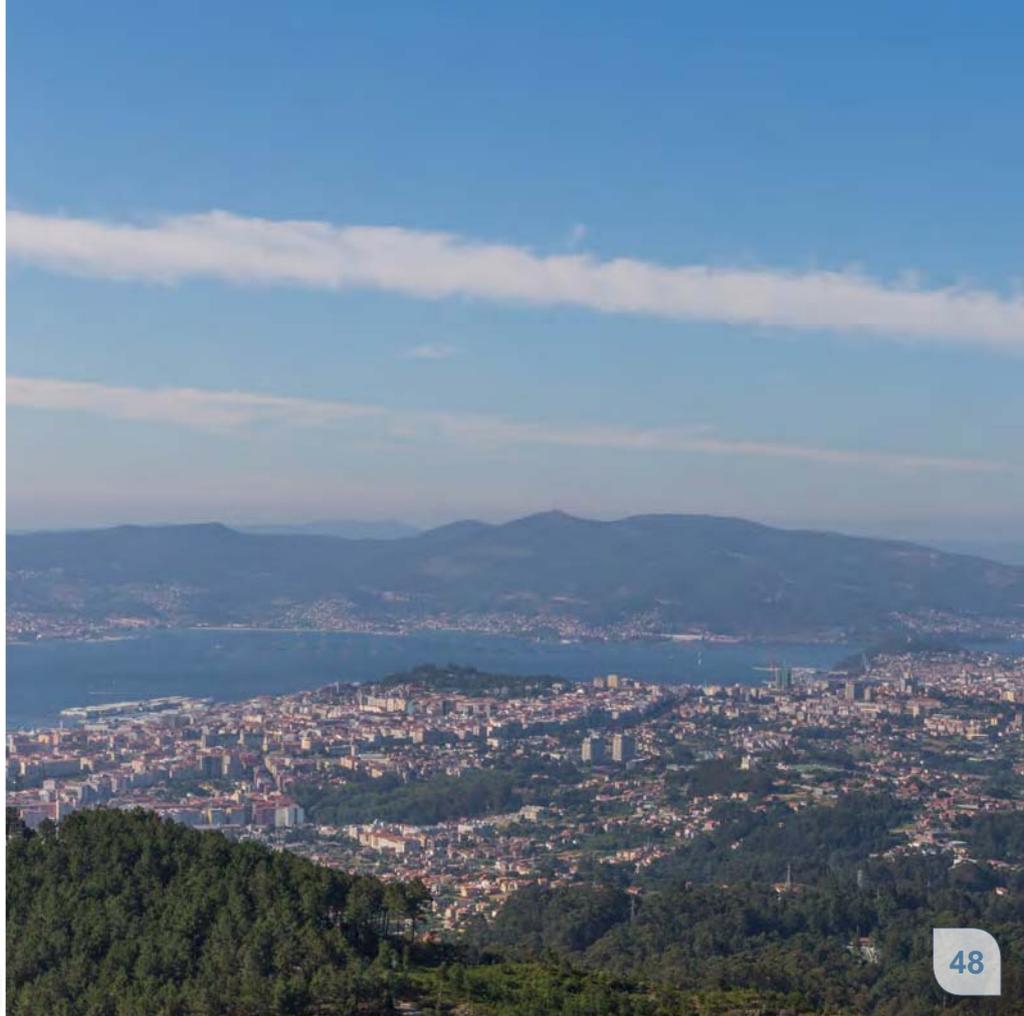
The city of Vigo is surrounded by a green belt of mountains. The height and location of many of these makes them excellent natural lookout points.

Monte Cepudo is one of these and has, together with Monte Alba, the best views of the estuary. It also contains an extensive recreation area with a wide range of facilities, of which the main attraction is the viewing platform with its lovely vistas.

At an altitude of 527 metres, the views from Cepudo take in the majesty of the Vigo estuary, with the island of Toralla in the foreground, the Cíes islands in the middle distance and sweeping views of the coastline of the Rías Baixas to the north west. In the other direction, the coastline towards Nigrán and Baiona merges with the neighbouring mountains of Coruxo and Saiáns.



47



48



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49

Miradoiro de Cotorredondo

 42.353168, -8.675164 (Vilaboa)

Cotorredondo is a nature reserve and recreational area in the centre of the O Morrazo peninsula, and belongs to the municipalities of Vilaboa, Marín and Moaña. The area around the artificial Castiñeiras lake is notable for the wide variety of its trees. A nature workshop has been set up there to provide environmental education. The Cotorredondo viewing point, at an altitude of 550 metres, affords broad vistas to the south of the Vigo estuary, in particular the cove and island of San Simon, with views of the Pontevedra and Arousa estuaries to the north.

50

Miradoiro da Cruz de Lobeira

 42.564078, -8.761996 (Vilanova de Arousa)

The Arousa estuary is considered one of the richest marine zones in the world, uniquely productive thanks to the quality of its waters together with other factors such as the temperature and estuary currents. The Cruz de Lobeira lookout point enjoys views of the estuary and the Illa de Arousa to the west, with the O Barbanza mountains behind them. Looking to the east, wide swathes of the province of Pontevedra can be seen, while to the south lie the O Salnés peninsula and the island of Ons, part of the Parque Nacional das Illas Atlánticas (National Park of the Atlantic Islands). Monte Lobeira has two spaces designated as lookout points, but the most spectacular views are found at Cruz de Lobeira, the site of an ancient settlement where archaeological remains of the *castro* and burial mounds can be seen.



A Coruña



7 urban viewpoints

San Pedro Viewpoint

43.377407, -8.433025

The San Pedro Viewpoint offers a spectacular view of A Coruña as it merges seamlessly with the Atlantic, which plays the absolute starring role in the city.

Located on the west side of A Coruña, Mount San Pedro stands high above Orzán Inlet, presenting a bird's-eye view. In the sheltered cove, Orzán, Matadeiro and Riazor beaches offer a place to take a dip in the heart of the city. This unique spot boasts an extensive leisure area with a variety of attractions. These include the *Cúpula Atlántica* (a covered viewpoint with 360° views and interactive educational features), the Bateria Interpretive Centre (which reminds us of the strategic importance of this location) and the panoramic lift, a very special way to avoid the climb between the promenade and the top of San Pedro.

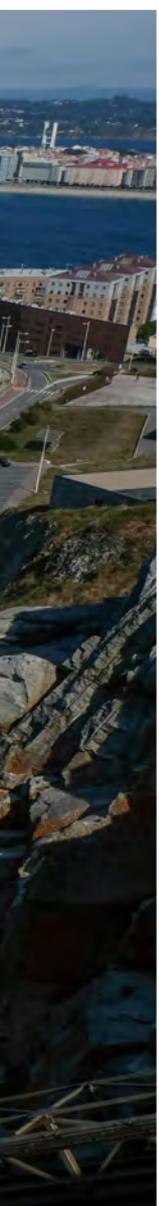
From this vantage point, the metropolitan area does not conceal

A Coruña

the many details on view: the Millennium Obelisk, a glass monolith commemorating the change of millennium and providing a visual reference for passers-by; Aquarium Finisterrae, known as the House of Fish, a museum and knowledge centre offering a comprehensive overview of the Galician coast; and the Tower of Hercules, a Roman lighthouse dating from the 1st century AD, the oldest functioning lighthouse in the world, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2009.

In the distance, you can see the Golfo Ártabro, a coastal arc made up of the rias of Ferrol, Ares–Betanzos and A Coruña, and referred to as Portus Magnus Artabrorum by the 1st-century BC geographer Strabo. Our gaze disappears into the sea mist surrounding the distant capes, Prioriño and Prior, although legend has it that it is possible to make out Ireland from this coast.





Chamorro Chapel

 43.507868, -8.245195

Ferrol is a city with a fascinating history, in which the presence of the Navy Arsenal and the shipyards resulted in a unique pattern of urban development. The Ermida de Chamorro Viewpoint provides a complete panoramic view of the city.

It was the shape of the Ria of Ferrol that led this spot in the Rías Altas to be chosen for the Spanish Navy's facilities. Its narrow mouth ensured that the fleet could be protected by San Felipe and A Palma castles, and its calm waters made it easier for ships to anchor, giving rise to the location of the Arsenal. Ferrol was designated the capital of the Maritime Department of the North in 1726, after which it became known as the 'Departmental City'.

Mount Chamorro is located to the northwest of the centre of Ferrol. On

its slopes stands a country chapel from which it is possible to view the lovely and fertile Serantes Valley. Secluded A Malata Inlet is also visible. The city can be seen stretching out along the coast, the cranes of the shipyards sticking out above the buildings. A large part of the Ria of Ferrol is on view, with Montefaro de Ares at the entrance, framing the picture.

On rocky Chamorro, the chapel is supported by a rocking stone. The late Gothic building dates from the 16th century and has a unique covered portico. Inside is the figure of the Virgin of Chamorro, also known as the Virgin of the Northeast, a wooden Romanesque carving that is taken out in procession every Easter Monday.

Ferrol

Paseo dos Leóns

 42.878417, -8.548445

Santiago de Compostela

Santiago de Compostela is an extraordinary city for many reasons and the Paseo dos Leóns, located in Compostela's Alameda Park, is the spot that offers one of the finest views of the old town.

The cathedral complex, the final destination of the thousands of pilgrims who reach Galicia and its historic district each year, was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1985. Both can be seen directly from this location, forming a unique vista.

Alameda Park is one of the larger green spaces in a city that is noted for its network of parks. The land was donated to the inhabitants by the Count of Altamira in the 16th century, and over time, it would become a key spot for residents and visitors alike. A Carballeira, a section of the park crowned by Santa Susana Chapel, occupies most of its area. This is also the location of an ancient and well-attended livestock fair.

In 1885, two large sculptural figures in the shape of lions were moved from Faxeira Gate and placed at the entrance to Paseo da Ferradura, a semicircular path that runs around Alameda Park. Since then, this section has been called Paseo dos Leóns (Avenue of Lions).





Roman Walls

43.009187, -7.559192

Lugo boasts a complete set of Roman walls. The ancient *Lucus Augusti*, founded by the Emperor Augustus in the 1st century BC, was an important bastion during the Roman Empire, with the walled site being built at the end of the 2nd century AD.

10 gates, 71 towers and more than 2200 metres of intact perimeter walls make the Roman Walls of Lugo a treasure, earning its UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2000.

The various modifications do not interrupt the basic lines along which Roman engineer Vitruvius laid out this granite and slab structure, clearly designed for defence.

The 4 original gates would become 10. Of the 85 towers, 71 have been preserved, although only A Mosqueira Tower retains its original structure: several storeys high and topped with a

Lugo

double semi-circular arch forming windows.

The wide walls, measuring between 4 and 7 metres thick, provide space for a long path which also serves as a continuous elevated viewpoint overlooking the city. Within the walls there is a complete catalogue of urban, architectural and artistic features with many places to visit: the monumental *Praza Maior*, cosy *Praza do Campo*, the Provincial Museum located in the Monastery of San Francisco and the Cathedral.

The view of Santa María Cathedral from the wall near Santiago Gate is truly fabulous. The Neoclassical façade exists side-by-side with the building's Romanesque core, as well as Gothic and Baroque elements, demonstrating a historical evolution which can be compared to the transformation of the city.





Montealegre

 42.334830, -7.850848

Rising to a height of 471 metres, Montealegre is one of Ourense's largest leisure areas. Dominated by slopes, it offers interesting views of the city established on the banks of the Miño River. Once a quarry, some of these spaces have been restored and are now used as outdoor auditoriums.

The weather conditions and type of soil on Montealegre led to the creation of a 15-hectare botanic park in this space to the east of the city in 2011. It is stocked with more than 240 plant species, most of which are typical of Mediterranean environments.

The stone cross atop Montealegre is the spot that offers the most

expansive views. A platform has been installed to create a viewpoint, with a bench that has become known as the 'prettiest bench in Ourense'. From here, the city stretches out below, making it possible to see the urban settlement in the river valley almost in its entirety.

The space is also used for education and research around biodiversity, its management and protection. Additionally, there is an interpretive and research centre located in a notable architectural complex made up of interconnected blocks that incorporate older industrial infrastructure elements.

Ourense

A Caeira

 42.434358, -8.658619

Some of the best views of the city on the Lérez can be found in A Caeira. Located on the boundary between the municipalities of Pontevedra and Poio, A Caeira is more than just a viewpoint.

The A Caeira neighbourhood is a residential area with lovely views of Pontevedra and its ria. In the upper part, accessible by car, there is a viewpoint with a complete panoramic view of the urban landscape of the provincial capital, especially the bridges over the Lérez River. These provide a demonstration of the city's evolution, from

Pontevedra

O Burgo Bridge, over which the Portuguese Route of the Way of St James passes, to A Barca Bridge and the modern, groundbreaking Os Tirantes Bridge.

The A Caeira Archaeological Area offers an organized tour of the group of petroglyphs – rock carvings dating from the Bronze Age – found in the area. To make the climb easier, a wooden walkway zigzags up the slope, allowing visitors to explore the heritage site at a leisurely pace, while enjoying the extraordinary views.





Mount O Castro

 42.232374, -8.726050

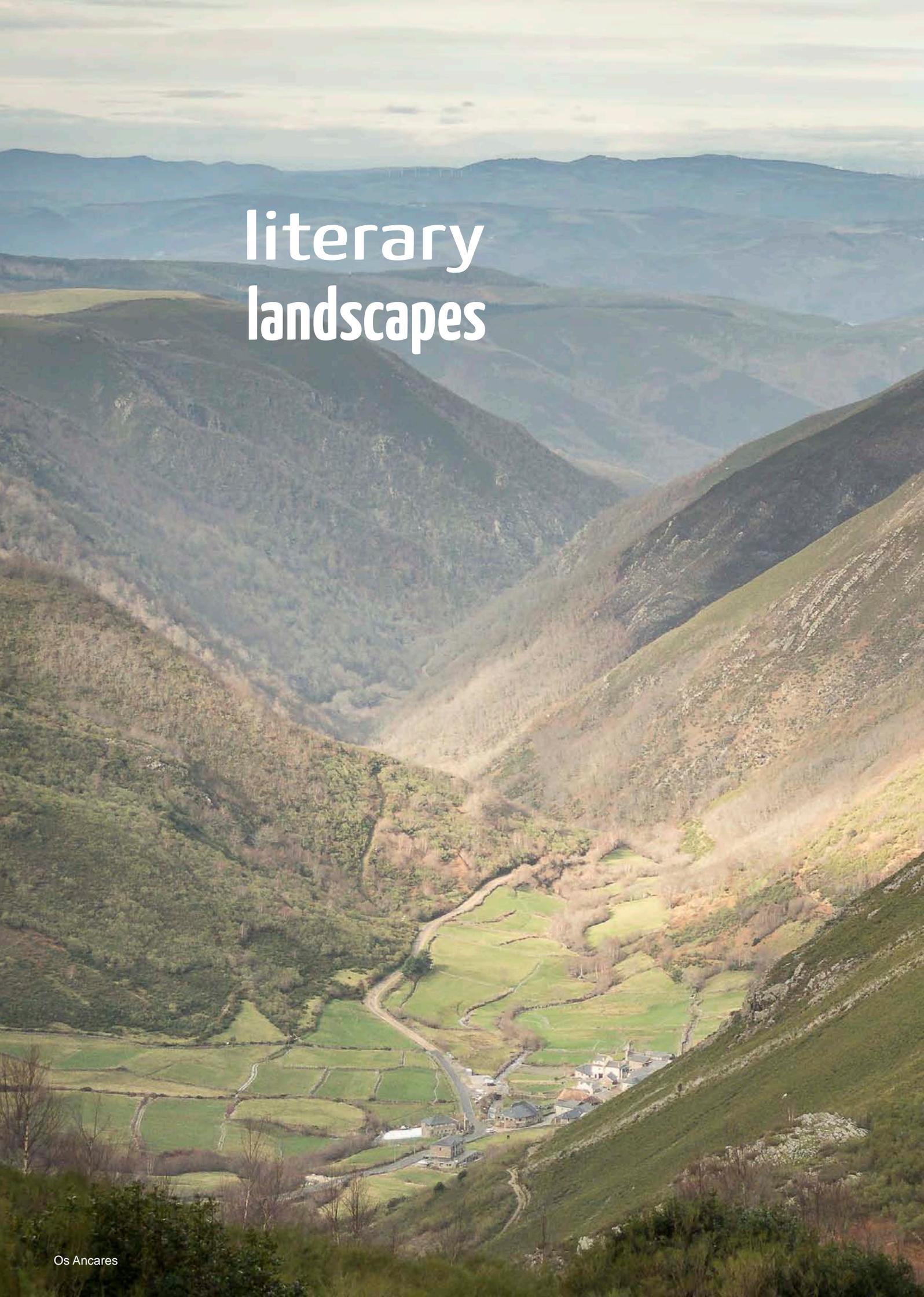
Mount O Castro is the highest point in the centre of the city of Vigo, rising to 149 metres. It is the city's true green space, with a variety of leafy tree species and a large pine wood. This makes O Castro a sort of botanic park, and it also includes various paths and trails.

The views of the city and ria from the viewpoint are sublime: the scale of the city in the foreground, the hills of O Morrazo on the other bank and the Cíes Islands to the west, offering sunsets that fill the sea with colour. On the lower slopes there is a Castro culture archaeological site dating from the 3rd–1st centuries BC.

The location later became a

Roman fortification, subsequently Christianized with the addition of Nosa Señora do Castro Chapel. Construction of the medieval fortress, O Castro Castle, provided a vantage point from which to guard the ria, taking advantage of the elevated terrain. Various external elements of the fortified site have been preserved, including walls, gates and several embrasures, while the interior has been converted into a garden. The range of port facilities gives an indication of Vigo's industrial might and demonstrates the historical evolution of the city that grew up from the *castro* located here.

Vigo



literary landscapes



Every people expresses its feelings through its sayings, songs and proverbs, while its poets embody collective longings in every line. The Galician landscape has been, is and will undoubtedly continue to be a

source of inspiration for the literary creation of Galician writers. In these pages we have included some fragments by popular writers, whose works so beautifully capture the colours of our landscapes.

En Ares, non te pares.

En Redes, non te quedas.

En Caamouco, para pouco.

Dito popular

Ládranlle os cás de palleiro
as **néboas** de media noite
que, coma lobos famentos,
faíscan nivand'o monte...

Noite de inverno, Manuel Luís Acuña
(poeta de Trives)

o **Sil** leva a auga,

o **Miño** leva a fama.

Dito popular

Miña Virxe do **XURÉS**,
que tan alta se foi pór,
entre toxos e carqueixas
e carballos darredor
Cantigueiro popular da
Baixa Limia,
Xaquín Lorenzo

Ceguei a **Fisterra**, alí onde
o sol esmaiado e silandeiro
morre no mar como umha bágoa.

Fisterra, Manuel María

Néboa na **GROBA**,
nordeste afora.

Dito popular

A **Ribadeo**, a Ribadeo, que alí tamén
fun eu. Cando o Mondigo pon o capelo,
todas as vellas tembran de medo

Dito Popular

*Se queres tomar un bo viño,
ó pasar polo **Ribeiro**
vaí por Castrelo de Miño*

Dito popular

Courel dos tesos cumes que ollan de lonxe!
Eiquí síntese ben o pouco que é un home...

OS EIDOS, UXÍO NOVONEYRA

A luz cría matices sobre as **augas**:
grises, cores, **azuis case verdes**
e o **negro** dos fagotes que descendem
da mítica montaña.

Na ribeira da ría,
Laureano Álvarez (poeta de Ortigueira)

**Campana de
Anllóns,**
*Noites de lunar,
Luna que te pós,
Detrás do pinar*
Campana de Anllóns
(Eduardo Pondal,
poeta de Ponteceso)

*O gaiteiro da Gudiña
e mais o da Martiñá
andan en preito co vento
e non sei quen gañará*
Cancioneiro popular

O QUE VE Ancadres,

VE TODOS OS LUGARES

Dito popular

Así son aquelas terras de
Camba, Deza e Trasdeza,
con tantos anos de historia
como anos ten o mundo;
dende os celtas que cons-
truíron un castro en cada
curuto.

Antonio de Valenzuela
(escritor de Silleda)

Cando vamos a Cabeza Grande,
Cabeza de Manzaneda.

Miña **Galicia** querida.
Ese é o Ceo da terra.

Canción popular

A **San Andrés de Teixido**
fun coa cesta na cabeza,
fun por mar e vin por terra
o santiño mo agradeza
Cantiga Popular

Ascende o home

pola **ribeira** en costa.
Agatuña o socalco,
salmodia do alén.
Ribeira Sacra, Francisco X.
Fernández Naval

A Fonsagrada
está nun alto
e Naraxa nun baixiño
máis arriba Vilabol
cun pelexiño de viño
Dito Popular

Presentádeme un outro Deucalión
para invadir o mar tal **Cabo Home**
cunha nave de pedra, a illas remotas.
No misterio de Nerga-Cabo Home,
Bernardino Graña

Somos **augá**, e a auga
pode có máis duro.
Somos **SERRA**, a serra
protéxenos, e nós protexerémola.
Manuel Rivas (en referencia
á serra do Galiñeiro)

O faro de Corrubedo
co seu ollo largasío,
ai amor, púxome medo
Triadas no mar e na noite,
Fermín Bouza Brey

Entre Cabo Vilano e Tosto,
entre Arou e Camariñas.
Hai chuvias das sete cores
e mirei ao lume do mar cravarse
nos ollos do raposo.

O Cemiterio dos Ingleses, Manuel Rivas.

O Cebreiro,
transmisor de costumes e
estruturas prerromanas
é sempre fito e feudo dos
peregrinos a Compostela
Elías Valiña, o Cura do Cebreiro

Lambe orballiñas
e asubiar asubía
...asubía o vento
escoitade: **Suído.**
Xosé Luis Santos Cabanas

O viño de Valdeorras
delicias do corazón
Se bebemos un grolíño
cantaremos a seu son
Cantaremos a seu son,
O viño de Valdeorras delicias
do corazón.
Cantigas do viño de Valdeorras



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scenery
at the Wheel

25 unusual routes
through the best landscapes in Galicia

50 must-visit
viewpoints

