

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

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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 protéxe-
nos, 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.

