



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

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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.





is the dividing line between Samos and Folgozo 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 Folgozo do Courel, the municipal capital. Here it turns off towards Vilamor and Froxán, crossing the Lor

**T**he 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 Lóuzara 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...*

again at Baldomir. 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







▲ 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.

**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".





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.

