



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

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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).

