

From Aviión to the Tres Rías lookout point... from O Suído to O Cando

24

The O Suído 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 Rías 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!.*

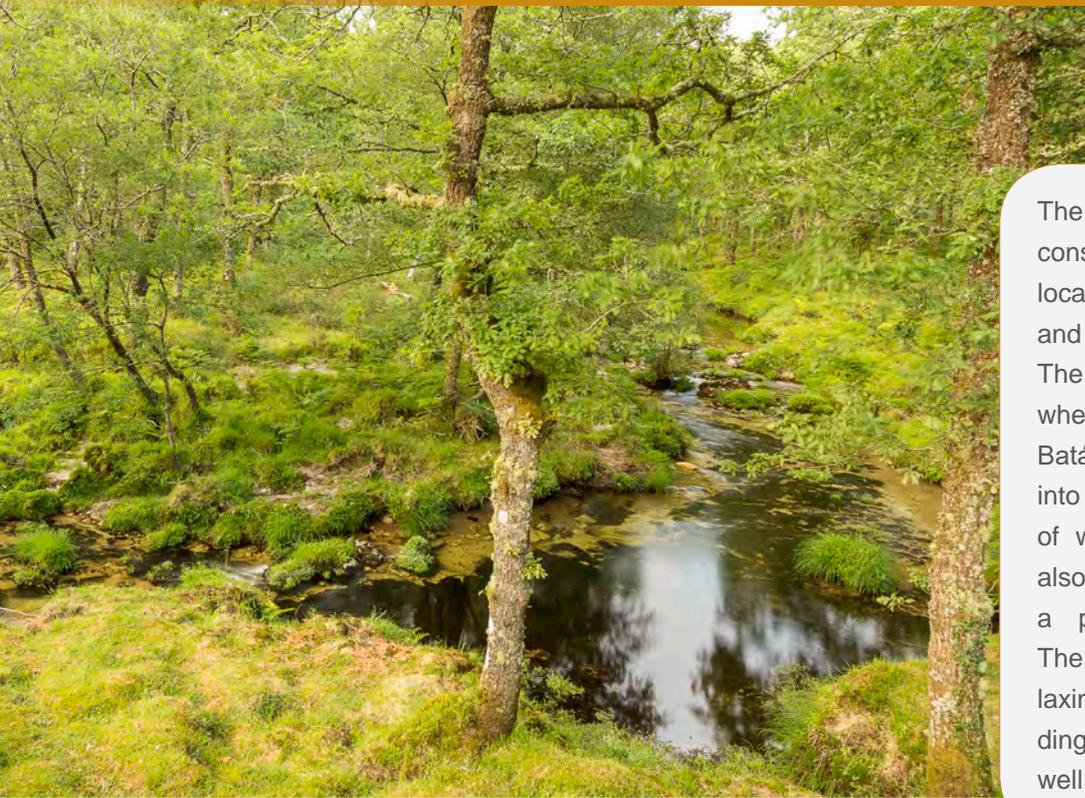
Avión is a small municipality but one that has played an important part in Galician life. In the past many of the people living in the valleys between these

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.

