



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

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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).

▼ View from the Pico da Frouxeira

*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



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.

