

From Chantada to Os Peares... A Ribeira Sacra do Miño

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A Ribeira Sacra of River Miño is one of Galicia's great wine producing areas. The combination of vines and leafy vegetation and the presence of a rich Romanesque heritage make this an exceptionally attractive area. Starting in Chantada, this enjoyable route follows the banks of the river as far as its surprising end at Os Peares where the Sil and the Miño finally meet.



Chantada is one of Galicia's wine capitals, nestling in an area watered by the Miño and the Asma, providing excellent conditions for the production of quality wines. The historic centre contains beautiful streets and attractive squares and features notable buildings such as the sixteenth-century Casona dos Lemos, currently the Casa de Cultura. Our route begins by the banks of the Asma. The first few kilometres follow main roads running parallel to the river, as it flows timidly towards the Miño. A long downhill section takes us towards the vineyards, suddenly revealing an impressive series of terraces on the hillside. The turn off to the San Fiz bridge runs alongside terraces of vines and carefully constructed wineries where the grape harvest will be turned into wine. On the way to Belesar the route runs very close to the Miño, where the Asma flows into it. The hillsides have sunny and shady sides and, as the vines need sun, they are planted on

the south-facing slopes. On the other side, extensive deciduous woods add colour to the scene. Belesar is a traditional village with modern boating facilities. The contrast is due to the fact that the dam at Os Peares turns the river into a reservoir at this point, making navigation possible. Belesar is an interesting spot. It stands on both banks and belongs to two municipalities: Chantada and O Saviñao. The route continues through vineyards and oak groves until it reaches the Pincelo bridge.

*O Sil leva a auga,
o Miño leva a fama.*

Crossing the bridge, a narrow uphill trail takes us to the main road. The landscape changes constantly: we see the first pine woods on the route but mixed woodland is still in evidence. Between the chestnut trees there are occasional glimpses of the Miño. The bell tower of the Santa María de Nogueira de Miño church can be seen through the green leaves, with a cypress standing beside it. The charming village is reminiscent of wine growing areas in other latitudes, a sudden transition from Atlantic woodland to vineyards that feel almost Mediterranean. In summer the sun





A wine growing village set on a hillside with sweeping views of the River Miño, **Nogueira's** greatest treasure is the Santa María church. Its large rose window is the most notable feature of the twelfth-century Romanesque structure, although there are also interesting Baroque details, including an eighteenth-century façade and tower. Santa María de Nogueira de Miño is unique for its Renaissance murals: The paintings were restored in 2012-2013, including the murals and the historiated apses for which it referred to as "the Sistine Chapel of the Ribeira Sacra".

◀ Codos de San Fiz

and heat reinforce this impression. From here on the river will be constantly in sight. As the road runs at a considerable height it provides excellent views when the trees allow. The peaceful route takes in villages with interesting churches, such as Santo Estevo de Chouzán and the

old church at San Xoán da Cova. Os Peares is not easy to untangle: three rivers and six bridges in four municipalities and two provinces. An old settlement that grew up on the steep slopes beside the Miño, Sil and Búbal rivers, it now forms part of the municipalities of

Nogueira de Ramuín and A Peroxa, in the province of Ourense, and Carballo and Pantón, in the province of Lugo. The confluence of the Miño and the Sil allows us to verify which of the equally famous rivers actually bears the most water.

Cabo do Mundo ▼



Don't miss...

Belesar

! The Fondós falls are situated beside the **Penedo do Graúllo**, an enormous vertical quartzite rock. According to legend, the rock formed part of an old castle and is thus known locally as the Penedo do Castelo do Monte do Graúllo (another example of Galicia's fascinating wealth of place names). The rock's surroundings are notable for their vegetation, which includes a number of Mediterranean species such as holm oaks and cork oaks.

A traditional crossing point over the Miño, the village of Belesar is a fine example of a traditional Ribeira Sacra village. Its layout and architecture, with houses packed together, blend in perfectly with the surrounding vineyards.

The importance of this area as a transport route can be seen in the Cóbados de Belesar, the remains of an old Roman road that winds to and fro as it descends, hence the name (the Belesar "elbows"). The Winter Route to Santiago, an alternative to the Primitive Route when there was snow, also passes through this spot.

The bridge dates back to 1830, built on the foundations of a mediaeval bridge that was destroyed by floodwaters in 1780. Until then boats were used, as at other points on the river where there was no other way of crossing. This led to the development of a particular type of boat, the *barcas do Miño*, flat-bottomed vessels that were propelled by oars and poles.

The landscape, the river, excellent wine: a combination that makes Belesar an essential stop on any journey through the Ribeira Sacra in Lugo.

