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## ROUTES FROM **Santiago**

Santiago de Compostela has traditionally been a point of arrival. Many routes lead to the city under the name of Way of St. James, being followed by pilgrims that have come to visit the Apostle's tomb during the last one thousand years; there are also modern communication links that bring visitors by land and air. Located in the centre of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela as a starting point makes it possible to visit in very little time other places of interest throughout the varied and fascinating region of Galicia



# ROUTES FROM Santiago



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COVER PHOTOS

© Turismo de Santiago: Cabezoás viewpoint, Lighthouse of Fisterra, Toxa waterfall

© Axencia de Turismo de Galicia (ATG): Walls of Lugo

BACK COVER PHOTOS

© Axencia de Turismo de Galicia (ATG): Castle of San Felipe, Parador de Baiona, Ézaro waterfall



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## ROUTE 1 Costa da Morte – Fisterra

Carnota beach (©ATG)

The trip to Fisterra, the end of the earth for the Romans, and the rugged, dangerous Costa da Morte is a must for all those visiting Galicia. A region of ancestral legends and past shipwrecks, it has a melancholic and wild beauty of irresistible charm. The itinerary borders the Ria of Muros and Noia from its beginning, where the town of Noia is located, as far as the picturesque fishing town of Muros. Afterwards, now facing the open sea, you can see the extensive beaches of Carnota, which is home to one of Galicia's biggest 'hórreos' (stone granaries). You continue alongside the mythical Monte Pindo and Ézaro towards stately Corcubión, a town of medieval origin. At the end, the impressive Cape Fisterra awaits you -considered Europe's westernmost tip- which marks the beginning of Costa da Morte.

The Costa da Morte's personality bears the deep mark of its being thought of as the western limit of Europe. The continent's most westerly point is actually at Cabo da Roca in Portugal, but since Antiquity people have considered this to be the Finis Terrae, the end of the earth, Land's End,

or the door to the Beyond. On their arrival here, the Romans witnessed and then related the spectacle of the sun sinking into the Atlantic Ocean, a scene that was to be fixed indelibly upon the collective imagination of the Ancients since the remotest of times. Fisterra is at the end of many roads, a place where Pilgrims come to satisfy the last rites of the pilgrimage by finally reaching the place where the sun sets in order to be reborn, as a symbol of the renewal of life.

A large part of the seaborne traffic of the North Atlantic in both past and present times had and has to sail through these waters. The abrupt shores, the many hidden reefs, and the winter gales and storms account for the large number of shipwrecks that the Costa da Morte has witnessed. Next to these it is still possible to see the crosses in honour of the victims, hence the name of this coast.

This is a land of mystery, legend, and myth. Both the beauty of its landscapes and the allure of its culture make it a unique area with a special charm.

## Muros

Facing the southern sun and protected by the hills of Carnota and Mazaricos, the medieval port of Muros –a historic and artistic setting, and the main tourist resort of the Finisterrae– is the symbolic entrance leading to the Costa da Morte.

Among the beautiful architectural scenes preserved among its old streets with their suggestive names, one must highlight the buildings of religious significance over those of a civil character, the former reminding us of the fact that Muros belongs to the bishopric of Compostela. Among those, the church of San Pedro (10th century), the old collegiate church of Santa María and present-day parish church of San Pedro de Muros (12th century), in which the Gothic style predominates over the Romanesque remains, and sepulchres from the 15th and 16th centuries are preserved.



Monte Pindo (©ATG)

## Carnota

The long Hórreo of Carnota, a National Monument, imparts its celebrity to this fish and seafood-processing town, placed between endless beaches and the majestic height of the ancestral Monte Pindo.

The Hórreo of Carnota and its traditional pigeon loft –both part of a parish setting to which the church of Santa Comba also belongs, as do the cemetery and the rectoral– are typical examples of Galician rural architecture.

The natural environment of Carnota, stretching as far as Caldebarcos –next to the magical Monte Pindo, fascinating due to



Hórreo de Carnota

its unusual pinkish hue– is the temporary home of an important variety of migratory species and is made up of a unique set of dunes and marshes with an inner lagoon. The large beach is considered one of Galicia's longest and most beautiful.



Cabo Fisterra

## Fisterra

Fisterra has all the magnetism of one of the mythical places of Antiquity. People from all over Europe regarded it as the end of the known world and the door to the Beyond. The image of the sun setting over the waters of the Atlantic terrified and fascinated whoever came to look from the continent's western extremity. The rocky cliffs of Fisterra, in their permanent duel against the ocean waters, have always contributed to feeding the legend that surrounds this place.

Fisterra, Finisterre, Finis Terrae, is a territory marked by finality, by sundown, by limit, a final place that must be reached in order to begin one's return.

In the urban centre of this seafaring town there are certain points of interest such as, among others, the village port and the castle of San Carlos. Where the way up to its legendary lighthouse begins, there is the Holy Christ of Fisterra, an image to be admired in the church of Santa María das Areas (12th century).

The lighthouse was rehabilitated by the world-renowned Galician architect César Portela, winner of the National Architecture Prize. He is also the author of the unusual and daring cemetery that can be seen on the way up to the lighthouse, which is in itself a reason for many visits.

However, without doubt, the main attraction is the landscape: the coastline with its cliffs, wild beaches, and the ocean itself. Also, the Cape of Fisterra, jutting out into the ocean, looking away infinitely far into a sea that appears to have no end.

Neither can the excellent local cuisine be overlooked, a cuisine based on the best possible sea produce, among which we may feature the Longueirón, a large variety of razor-shell which is perhaps the most representative seafood of the area.

At the 'end of the earth' is the end of this road, which returns toward Santiago through the interior -Negreira, Bertamiráns- with its rolling green hills, in contrast to the sea which we have just left behind.



## ROUTE 2 **Rías Baixas – Barbanza.** **Mythical landscapes**

Corrubedo (©ATG)

With a Celtic past, this is an outstanding region of strong contrasts, dominated by the Barbanza mountain range, an enormous block of granite rising from the sea separating two of the Rías Baixas: Muros/Noia and Arousa. This region features important areas of scenic (A Curota viewpoint, where horses and cows roam freely), natural (Corrubedo dunes) and archaeological interest (such as the spectacular Baroña ‘castro’ or fortified settlement, and the solitary Axeitos dolmen), as well as fishing towns with a medieval past, such as Noia and A Pobra do Caramiñal.

The landscape, with the untamed beauty of its hills which are like privileged balconies looking over the Rías Baixas, opens up to extensive white sandbanks and lagoons on the coast. One of the most remarkable features here is the dune complex of Corrubedo, which includes the lagoons of Carregal and Vixán. The area is also rich in megalithic and prehistoric monuments, such as the spectacular Castro de Baroña, as well as in fishing villages with a past reaching back to the Middle Ages.

### **Ría of Muros and Noia**

Granite rocks define most of the natural landscapes of this ría, as can be well appreciated in the cliff-covered shores of the peninsula where the Castro de Baroña stands, on the ría’s southern bank, and in Monte Louro on the northern bank, one of the most beautiful mountains in Galicia, a mountain which towers over the transparent waters and large sandbanks of the ría, as if to protect them.

Castro de Baroña (©ATG)



## Ría of Arousa

The largest of the Rías Baixas is limited to the north by the abrupt Serra do Barbanza, while its southern bank is bordered by the softer profile of the Salnés peninsula. It is sprinkled with many islands and small rocky isles of extraordinary beauty, among which we can mention Sálvora island at its entrance from the sea, Arousa in its central section, and Cortegada deeper within it, almost where the river Ulla meets the sea.

The width of the ría made it a route open to commerce since the most ancient of times, but also invited the invasions of both Norsemen and



Torres de Oeste - Catoira (©ATG)

Arabs, to whose presence the defensive towers bear witness, the Torres de Oeste, in Catoira. According to legend, the boat transporting the remains of the Apostle Saint James sailed up this ría as far as the town of Padrón.

## Noia

Located well within the ría of Muros and Noia, this town is important in Galician history, and still retains an interesting old town of medieval origin. Two of the town's churches figure among the most relevant in Galician architecture: Santa María A Nova (14th century), which contains interesting guild-related headstones with inscriptions, and San Martiño (15th century). Also important is San Francisco, and as for relevant urban environments, the Rúa do Curro, with the house containing the Grammar School, stands out.



Santa María A Nova (©ATG)

## The Baroña Castro

'Castro' (akin to the English 'Chester') is the name of a certain form of settlement, one characteristically defended by parapets and ditches, which became common in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, and particularly in Galicia, from the Iron Age until well into the times of Roman occupation. The dwellings most commonly related to 'castros' are of a typical circular shape, similar to the famous 'pallozas.'

The Baroña Castro is spectacular for the way it juts into the sea. Situated on a peninsula connected to the mainland only by a small sandy isthmus, its location and its good state of preservation make of it one of the most beautiful and striking witnesses of the so-called 'castrexa' culture. The Castro has been declared National Artistic Heritage.



## The Axeitos Dolmen

The Axeitos Dolmen, popularly known as Pedra do Mouro ('the Moor's Stone') has existed for 4,000 years. It was a monument of a funerary nature, as were all the megalithic monuments of its kind. The dolmen was hidden under a mound of earth and had an entrance hall, now disappeared, oriented towards the rising sun.



Axeitos Dolmen

## The Corrubedo Dunes

The giant moving dune of Corrubedo beach, made up of a number of dunes which are being constantly reshaped by the wind, is unique among the coastlines of Spain for its size – it is 2.5 km long and can reach a height of 15 m – and for its being accompanied by two lagoons: one freshwater lagoon (Vixán) and a saltwater lagoon (Carregal), which constitute a marsh area of great environmental interest.

## Ribeira

Santa Uxía de Ribeira, an outstandingly enterprising town thanks to the importance of its fishing port, still preserves some remains of its old fishing town.

At a height of 368 m above sea level, Curotiña peak is the best place to have an almost aerial perspective of the Rías Baixas and, on clear days, even of Portugal. From there, one can admire the characteristic serenity of the 'rías' while at our feet ships, 'bateas' (floating wooden platforms from which mussels are farmed) and whole fishing villages appear as figures of a huge scale model. Grazing here and there, the wild horses of the Barbanza are the true lords of the landscape.

## Pobra do Caramiñal

An aristocratic town that resulted from the union of two previously existing ones, the names of which have both survived in its present name. It boasts emblazoned houses and castles such as the Torres de A Xunqueira. Over this town hangs the shadow of Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936), one of the most distinguished Galician authors ever to have written in Spain. A Pobra is very quaint, especially its Alameda Park, the pride of its inhabitants.



A Pobra do Caramiñal (@ATG)



## ROUTE 3 Lugo. Roman City

Walls of Lugo

A Roman city par excellence, the appearance of Lugo has always been inextricably linked both to its walls and its excellent and historically renowned cuisine, based on the produce of its permanently green fields.

With more than 2,000 years of history behind it, Lugo was the only town in Galicia to bear the title of capital of a judicial district back in Roman times. Founded by Paulus Fabius Maximus in the year 14 BC, its walls were built then and have been declared a World Heritage Site, with a perimeter of more than 2,600 meters and many semicircular towers. In spite of some rebuilding, this is the best preserved Roman walled town in the entire Iberian Peninsula, and it still keeps its original guiding main streets, the 'cardus' and 'decumanus'.

On the banks of the river Miño, and also crossed by a bridge that is originally Roman, two halls of the contemporary *termae* still stand. Within the walls are the most significant streets and squares, as well as the main monuments, all preceded by the cathedral, proud to hold

the privilege of permanently exhibiting the 'Santísimo,' for which reason Lugo is known as the 'city of the Sacrament.'

The cathedral began to be built around 1129. Different master builders were in charge of its construction and its naves were not finished until the 13th century. The northern door is particularly relevant for its magnificent Pantocrator and pendant, the latter depicting Christ's last supper. Both pieces are the best of Lugo's Romanesque sculptures.

The convent of San Francisco, still preserving its sober medieval cloister, has become the Museo Provincial, and as such houses important collections of pre-Roman jewellery and Galician paintings. The adjacent church and that of Santo Domingo are among the main examples of the Gothic mendicant style.

The 'Ayuntamiento' or town hall, as well as the old houses, the emblazoned 'casonas,' and the other churches all contemplate the artistic heritage of this city of quiet and narrow streets in which time seems to have come to a standstill.



Lugo cathedral



Castro de Viladonga (©ATG)

## The Viladonga Castro

The Viladonga Castro, important especially between the 2nd and 5th centuries AD, is one of the most impressive of its kind that is possible to visit. It follows the typical patterns of this form of settlement, characteristic of Galicia from the Iron Age until well into Roman times. Several walls and ditches shelter an ample acropolis or central crown, in which there is housing, animal pens, warehouses, and public buildings.

Viladonga also features a museum, exemplary for the magnitude of its didactic effort, a great aid for the task of understanding the life of Galicia's 'castrexo' forbearers of two millennia ago, and containing a most interesting scale model.



## ROUTE 4 **Padrón. The origin of the Jacobean legend**

Church of Santiago de Padrón

The town of Padrón has always had very strong ties with Compostela. It seems possible that the name may come from 'pedrón' (big stone), a rock where they would have tied the boat that allegedly brought the Apostle's body from Palestine to the coasts of Galicia. The Sar, the river of Compostela, is also the river of Padrón, so they are both linked by this stretch of water. Due to its nearness to the mouth of the Ulla, Padrón was during the Middle Ages an unavoidable stop for Compostelans heading for the sea, and also the port of entry for pilgrims arriving by it.

One must visit is the Casa Museo de Rosalía de Castro in the outskirts of the town, opposite Padrón train station. It is also known as Casa da Matanza. The poetess Rosalía de Castro, the most important figure of Galician letters, spent the last years of her life there.

Only a couple of kilometres from the house of Rosalía is the Franciscan convent of Herbón. The monastery is next to a leafy oakwood and the river Ulla, famous for its

lamprey, trout, and salmon. From Herbón came the first 'pementos de Padrón' (peppers) which were apparently brought from Mexico by Franciscan monks in the 16th century. These small green peppers are one of the best-known products of Galician gastronomy, and the saying goes –roughly translated– 'some are hot, and some are not'.

Padrón, originally a medieval town, still has the charm of the past lingering in its corners: the 'pazo' of the Bishop of Quito, Praza de Macías O Namorado –a legendary local troubadour who died at the hands of an angry husband while he was wailing about their impossible love.

The 'pedrón' that the Jacobean legend mentions is under the altar of the parish church of Santiago, commissioned by Xelmírez, the archbishop of Compostela. Crossing over the Santiago bridge, the 'Fuente del Carmen' is reached. On its arch, carved in stone, the boat in which the disciples transported the body of the Apostle. Following the steep stone

pavement, we reach the 'Convento del Carmen,' erected upon the granite rock of the slopes of monte de San Gregorio. The church, the only place that can be visited, is distinguished and beautiful. From the atrium, a planimetric view of Padrón and its surrounding area.



'Pementos' (peppers) de Padrón

## Iria Flavia and A Escravitude

Iria Flavia is a strongly evocative place-name, yet one that is difficult to explain. Quite close to Padrón, it was the seat of the bishopric until it was moved to Santiago in the 11th century. Santa María de Adina is today a parish church. The pyramid-shaped towers and the façade, a combination of Romanesque and Gothic styles, reflect its past splendour.

In the area surrounding the church and outdoors, there are interesting anthropomorphic sepulchres from the time of the domination of the Suevi. The graveyard of Iria, next to the church, was faithfully described in nostalgic terms by the poetess Rosalía de Castro. The remains of another great writer rest here: Nobel prize winner Camilo José Cela, a son of Iria Flavia.

In front of the parish church, an interesting group of 18th century buildings known as Casa de los Canónigos, contains the small Museo de Arte Sacra de Iria Flavia, John Trulock's Train Museum, and the Camilo José Cela Foundation, with different memorabilia and personal belongings of the author. In the garden are the locomotives Sarita and Sestao, pioneers of Galicia's rail network.

The sanctuary of A Escravitude, marking the limit of the region of Padrón, looks over the road almost like a watchtower. Legend has it that an ill man on his way to Compostela was suddenly cured after drinking water from this fountain. Thankful, he praised the Virgin for freeing him from 'the slavery' of his ailment, which explains the name of the place. On the left side, there is a path that leads to a small and solitary parish church, with a Romanesque apse.

Church of Iria Flavia





## ROUTE 5 Ourense & O Ribeiro. Medieval towns amidst vineyards

Ourense cathedral

The O Ribeiro district, located around the middle course of the Miño river, has a varied repertoire of cultural, gastronomic, and scenic attractions, making this area one of the most interesting of inland Galicia. Ribadavia is its most important town.

The area's character is defined by its waters, that of its rivers, of its spas and reservoirs. As they pass through these lands, the rivers Miño, Arnoia and Avia are the source of a succession of still waters and gorges, thus creating O Ribeiro's emblematic landscape, defined by its rolling hills, its fertile soil, and its benign weather. Most of the district's population has settled in the river valleys.

The courses of the rivers are surrounded by dense forest. Grapes for wine production are the most important crops, usually arranged in the form of terraces or 'socialcos.' The several varieties included in the denomination of origin 'Ribeiro' have given the wines from these lands a reputation of quality that has been acknowledged since Roman times.

The passing centuries have left a great wealth of monuments in the form of medieval villages, monasteries, churches, convents, and bridges. Although there are no great heights in the area, it does have several vantage points overlooking the vineyards and vegetable gardens so characteristic here.

Miño river - Ourense



## Ourense

A city on the banks of the Miño, it is the capital of the only Galician province without a coastline. It was already important in Roman times for being the most convenient point for crossing the Miño. The foundations of its Old Bridge, an essential landmark of the city, are Roman.

Also important is its cathedral (12th century and later), especially the 'Pórtico do Paraíso,' which emulates the world famous 'Pórtico da Gloria' in Santiago de

Compostela; the churches of San Francisco –Gothic– that of la Trinidad, Santa Eufemia and Santa María Madre. And there are also of course the streets, plazas, and gardens of a well-preserved old town with the leisurely pace of the good life in an old provincial town.

Ourense is also the city of the 'Burgas': three hot water springs with temperatures of about 70°C, the origin of which has given rise to countless theories and stories.

## Ribadavia

This town, the capital of O Ribeiro, is on the meeting point of the rivers Avia and Miño on the way between Ourense and Vigo. The landscape surrounding it is one of river valleys, vineyards, and rolling hills.

In the 12th century its population and trading influence began to expand, taking advantage of the vigour of the nearby monasteries of San Clodio and Melón. After this, Ribadavia became the home of a large Jewish community that took part in the prosperous wine trade, and their influence is still felt today.

Its economic life, very prosperous between the 15th and 17th centuries, has always been linked to wine production. The local wines have been appreciated throughout Europe since Antiquity, and they began to be exported to the New World soon after its discovery.

Among the civil architecture we should feature the castle of the Counts of Ribadavia (15th century), where there are graves excavated in the rock in the 19th century, a 12th century sepulchre, the Jewish quarter, which is unique in Galicia, or the walls (12th to 15th century), at some points 5.50 meters high and preserving three of the original five gates. Also, the

House of the Inquisition (16th century), which in its day kept a close watch particularly on converted Jews, who were suspected of heresy. The religious repertoire is made up of the church and convent of Santo Domingo, the church of Santiago, the church of Santa María de Oliveira, the church of San Juan, and the chapel of Nosa Señora do Portal.

Apart from its architecture, Ribadavia has many other cultural sites. The Museo Etnolóxico, housed in an 18th century 'pazo,' owns an excellent book collection, one of the best regarding the history of Galicia. There is also the much visited 'Festa da Istoría,' a celebration with its origin in the 17th century in which during one day, either the last Saturday of August or the first Saturday of September, Ribadavia returns to the Middle Ages: costumes, dances and music, a market, arts and crafts, a recreation of Jewish weddings... everything is medieval, and even the official currency is the old 'maravedí.'

It is striking to discover the survival of Hebrew influence in Ribadavia: in several places they still prepare traditional Jewish sweets such as 'kamisch-broit,' 'ma'amul,' or 'masifas de mapoulas.'



## ROUTE 6 **Rías Baixas – Salnés.** **Fishing villages**

Ría de Arousa

The trip follows the contour of the Salnés peninsula, between the Rías Baixas of Arousa and Pontevedra, protected inlets that are very productive, sprinkled with 'bateas' where the best mussels in the world are farmed, as well as with islands large and small: Ons, in the ría of Pontevedra; and Arousa, Sálvora, Cortegada, and A Toxa in that of Arousa. On the banks of the Salnés, art and history merge. This was the site chosen for the foundation of beautiful cities such as Pontevedra, small fishing towns –Combarro, O Grove, Cambados– tourist and residential centres –Sanxenxo, Portonovo, San Vicente do Mar–

monasteries –Poio, Armenteira– and a multitude of country palaces and noble houses that bear witness to the riches of a land which is also one of the most important wine-producing regions of Galicia, from where Albariño and Barrantes wines come from.

A small world in itself, constantly visited by both Galicians and people from elsewhere during the summertime for the mildness of its weather, its magnificent beaches, its tasty fish and seafood, and the quantity and quality of its tourist-oriented services.



Praza da Peregrina

### **Pontevedra**

At the head of the ría of the same name and on the banks of the river Lérez, the old town of Pontevedra, founded in medieval times, stands out for its good state of preservation. Although it may appear to be a small town, wandering through it usually takes longer than expected, for its charms are many. The Provincial Museum, the church of A Peregrina (18th century), baroque and in the shape of a scallop, Santa María a Maior (16th century), the secluded Praza da Leña, the arcades of Ferrería, or San Telmo street, are only a few of the points of interest in this city which is also the capital of the province bearing the same name.



## Combarro

Combarro is like the vision of the seafaring Galicia that one expects to find. Its houses and 'hórreos' almost in the sea itself have been immortalized through thousands of pictures and posters, contributing to the most widespread perception of the Galician 'rias.' The town in its entirety has been declared to be of historic and artistic interest.



Combarro

## A Lanzada

A Lanzada is an immense stretch of white sand looking to the ocean, thanks to the fact that the O Grove peninsula remains connected to the mainland. It is also, for its relation to rites of fertility, a beach closely connected to the mysticism commonly attributed to Galicians: tradition has it that bathing in nine waves on a full moon night is a guaranteed cure for infertility. On its southern flank, looking towards the sea and the sunset, there is a beautiful Romanesque hermitage (13th century), next to the remains of a medieval tower from the 10th century.

## Sanxenxo and Portonovo

Although little more than fifty years ago Sanxenxo and Portonovo were no more than a pair of fishing villages, nowadays they are the capitals of beach tourism in Galicia. Their beaches and nightlife still act as a magnet for Galicians in particular, the Spanish in general, and also for the neighbouring Portuguese.

Hermitage of A Lanzada (©ATG)





Praza and Pazo de Fefiñáns (©ATG)

## Illa da Toxa

A luxury island, famous for the properties of its waters, which lent their name to a brand of cosmetics of international renown. In A Toxa the atmosphere is exclusive, and the tourist services –hotels, spa, casino– are of the highest quality based on a long-standing tradition, in some cases as old as the beginning of the 20th century. It also has a smart little chapel, peculiar for its being covered with scallop shells.

## O Grove

The O Grove peninsula, only tenuously linked to the mainland, actually has an island character. Mostly visited throughout the summer, it is known best for the high quality of its seafood, which makes it the capital of marine gastronomy. But it is also known for places like Monte Siradella, whose height of 167 m above sea level makes it the highest point in the area, and therefore its best viewpoint. In the centre of town there are a great number of bars, pubs, and restaurants where the most excellent fish and seafood can be found.



Siradella viewpoint (©ATG)

## Cambados

Cambados holds the title ‘Muy Noble Villa’ (Most Noble Town). That nobility is appreciated in the centenary stones of the Praza de Fefiñáns (17th century), with its aristocratic quietness and the Romanesque church of San Bieito (16th century) on one of its sides. Cambados is the indisputable capital of Albariño wine, the festivities of which are celebrated on the first weekend of August.



## ROUTE 7 Rías Altas – Costa Ártabra. Legendary seas

Garita de Herbeira (©ATG)

The excursion takes place within the limits of A Coruña province, along the so-called Ártabra coastline, the land of the ‘ártabros.’

Ancient legends of the Celtic oral tradition that Galicia shares with Ireland speak of Breogán, the son of Brath, as the founder of the city of Brigantia or Briganza (Art-o Briga). He is said to have built there (present-day A Coruña) a tower or lighthouse that was later reconstructed by the Romans and renamed the Tower of Hercules. However, Breogán is much more than this: he is the mythical father not only of the ‘ártabros’, but of the entire Galician nation.

This area’s scenery is a combination of sea and mountains with a coastline dotted with many beautiful beaches –some of which are calm and sheltered– located inside the ‘rías,’ while others are wild, virgin, and open to the ocean.

The landscape of the A Faladoira and A Capelada mountain ranges is beautiful but rugged, reaching the seashore as spectacular cliffs more than 500m high. This is a region of natural viewpoints, ‘cruceiros’ (stone crosses), wild horses, and legends, which includes Galicia’s most famous rural sanctuary: San Andrés de Teixido.

The first part of the excursion follows a winding coastline, rich in landscapes, formed by the numerous rivers flowing into this region of gentle contrasts, featuring estuaries, leafy forests, fishing villages, and a shimmering sea.

Beyond reaching Cedeira, we come across many beautiful beaches, such as Vilarrube, Pantín, and Valdoviño, which is near the lagoon called Lagoa de Valdoviño. Here the beach and wetland together form a protected Nature Reserve.



San Andrés de Teixido (©ATG)

## Cedeira

Cedeira –or Cetaria, from the Latin ‘cetus’ (tuna or whale)– is a peaceful fishing village with less than 8,000 inhabitants. Its old quarter is made up of narrow streets with lovely small houses, some of which feature stone coats of arms. In 1953 it was declared a Municipality of Tourist Interest.

## San Andrés de Teixido

After Cedeira, we head towards San Andrés de Teixido, one of Galicia’s most relevant religious and pilgrimage sites.

According to legend, St. Andrew –one of the Twelve Apostles– came by boat as far as the cliffs of Teixido. There his boat capsized and was turned into a crag known as A Barca de San Andrés. Nobody helped him, but God promised him that he would have a sanctuary and a pilgrimage that all mortals –either dead or alive– would have to visit, giving rise to the popular saying that to San Andrés de Teixido ‘vai de morto o que non foi de vivo’ (goes after death the one that doesn’t go while alive).

The Monastery of San Andrés is known to have existed back in the 12th century, although the present-day building began to be built in the 16th century, continuing into the 17th and 18th centuries. In addition to its religious significance and its beautiful striking scenery, San Andrés de Teixido is a fine example of deep-rooted traditions of remote origin, such as the votive offerings hanging from the trees.

A short distance away from San Andrés de Teixido is the Garita de Herbeira Viewpoint, with spectacular views of the highest cliff in Europe: a 600-metre drop into the sea with an 80%-plus gradient.

## Ferrol

One of Galicia’s seven main cities and, until a few years ago, one of Spain’s largest shipyards, Ferrol is Europe’s largest Enlightenment city built overlooking the sea. A city designed with reason, marked by its orthogonal urban planning, its linear and modernist architecture, and the silhouette of its old shipbuilding

industries. But Ferrol’s most important constructions are undoubtedly the Castle of San Felipe, erected at the entrance of the ‘ría’ by Felipe II, and the ‘Arsenais Militares’ (naval dockyard), whose history dates back to 1749. Many of the city’s identifying features are centred on these two constructions.



Lighthouse or tower of Hercules (©ATG)

## A Coruña

Everything in this town is evocative of the sea. Seen from the air, it seems about to break away from its narrow isthmus to once again become the island that it was thousands of years ago. Since Roman times it has lived from sea trade. Its important ports –trading, fishing, and marina– speak of its maritime vocation.

Its waterfront, a balcony overlooking the ocean, brings it yet closer to the sea. You can walk around the entire peninsula without leaving it once and also reach the ‘Parque Celta’ and the Roman Lighthouse of Hercules –the oldest lighthouse in the world to be still in service, a World Heritage Site, and the unmistakable symbol of the town. There is also the Archaeological Museum, set within the castle of San Antón, the fabulous Aquarium, and Domus, the Casa del Hombre (House of Man) which, together with the Casa de las Ciencias, in Santa Margarita Park, and

the Museo de Bellas Artes, are the main cultural and didactic resources of a town that takes pride in a museum network not lacking in a few small jewels, such as the Museo de Arte Sacro, the Museo de los Relojes, and the Casa de Emilia Pardo Bazán.

A Mariña, with its houses with enclosed balconies, Calle Real, ideal for shopping purposes, Praza de María Pita, and its serene old town with its stone houses and stone-paved streets, where the Colexiata and the church of Santiago stand out, are other attractions in a city that is densely populated, but that has a fine quality of life.

The city’s special relationship with the sea is clearly seen from Monte de San Pedro, a privileged viewpoint that used to house coastal batteries and has now been reconverted into a city park.



## ROUTE 8 **Ribeira Sacra – Sil Canyons.** **The inland seas**

Cabezoás viewpoint

The Ribeira Sacra area comprises the hinterland regions where the two most important water courses of Galicia meet: the Sil and the Miño. For the last few kilometres before it meets the Miño at Os Peares, the Sil flows along the border between the provinces of Lugo and Ourense, following a deep canyon –in some points as much as 500 metres deep– thus creating an impressive landscape quite out of the ordinary, a hallmark of this territory.

These potent natural landscapes were inhabited in the early days of Christianity by monks and hermits who led an ascetic life in search of silence and the privileged natural environment of these lands, and who over time were to build magnificent monasteries. Hence the name ‘Ribeira Sacra,’ for which there have been written testimonies since the 12th century.

Apart from its monasteries, this part of Galicia can boast a rich heritage in the form of castles, churches, ‘pazos,’ and bridges.

The vegetation of the ‘ribera’ consists of forests of oak, chestnut, and holm-oaks. In the cultivated areas, vineyards are most important, arranged in terraces or ‘socialcos.’ Seen from the river they speak of human efforts to get the most out of these lands, the home of the wines commercialized under the Ribeira Sacra denomination of origin. The red Mencía grape is the most commonly grown and it produces wines of a superior quality, aromatic, and with a distinctive fruitiness. With a smaller production, the Godello varietal is grown to make white wines which accompany the fine trout fished in the area.

### **Castro Caldelas**

The location of Castro Caldelas is what is impressive, with the imposing castle on top of the hill and the striking terraces on its slopes. Also interesting are the church of Santa Isabel and the Virxe dos Remedios Sanctuary.

## Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil

Located on the very banks of the River Sil is the magnificent Monastery of Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil, a Benedictine monastery from the 6th century that has been rehabilitated as a hotel by the 'Paradores' chain. It features a notable Romanesque cloister, with alterations from the 16th century. In addition to the Romanesque style, its structure and decoration includes Gothic, Renaissance, and baroque elements. It was declared a Historic-Artistic Monument in 1923.



Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil (©ATG)

## Doade

Here is the largest extension of cultivated grapes of the Amandi varietal, included in the denomination of origin 'Ribeira Sacra.' The tour includes a visit to a wine cellar and a sampling of these excellent Galician wines.

## Boat trip along the 'inner seas' of Galicia

A cruise on a catamaran down the Canyons of the Sil, it crosses spots of great charm. The still waters and the Canyon's rock formations are a grandiose spectacle for the senses. Small docks on the banks are used by local winemakers to transport grapes during the harvest season.

The famous Santa Cristina de Ribas do Sil monastery can be seen high up from the boat. It is a 12th century church with an interesting Romanesque rose and 16th century cloister. It is said that from the apse of the church there used to be a tunnel leading outside. It is also said that if one walks among the hollow chestnut trees in the vicinity, called 'caracochas,' one is cured of 'tangaraño,' i.e. rickets. It probably does a good job with more modern ailments as well.

## Monforte de Lemos

Considered as the gateway to the Ribeira Sacra, Monforte –a medieval town– owns a rich heritage represented by monasteries, castles, 'pazos,' convents, and bridges, making it an absolute must. Especially worth mentioning are the monastery of San Vicente do Pino, the Torre da Homenaxe, and the scattered remains of the Pazo of the Counts of Lemos.

Monforte's medieval heritage is completed by the walls, the towers, and streets of its old town, such as Rúa da Cadea Vella, Rúa dos Fornos or Rúa do Burato, with an abundance of emblazoned houses. In these 'rúas' there was, in the final years of the Middle Ages, an important Jewish community, the largest in Galicia together with that of Ribadavia, which made a fundamental contribution to the town's commercial life.

Also to be mentioned is the Puente Viejo, of Roman origin –although in its present shape it dates from the 16th century– the Franciscanas Descalzas convent –also known as that of the Clarisas, the home of one of the most important museums of sacred art in Spain– and the Colexio Nosa Señora da Antiga, an impressive Renaissance building known as 'the little Galician Escorial.' In its museum there are several paintings by El Greco.



## ROUTE 9 ‘Pazos’ & historic gardens

Pazo de Oca

This trip is to the district watered by the Ulla river. Its landscape, vegetation, and ancient monuments make the visit there an absolute must, and due to its relationship with Santiago, it should be considered the city’s garden and, indeed, its vegetable garden.

The landscape is dominated by the outline of the Pico Sacro (Sacred Peak), the most beautiful as well as symbolic summit of Galicia, visible in the composition of many ample vistas. The Pico, a legendary place, already known in Latin Antiquity, was the legendary setting of Gospel preaching by the Apostle, who with only the sign of the Cross made the dragon (a pagan symbol) inhabiting it fall. It was also according to legend the place where the disciples of the Apostle Saint James tamed two wild bulls, so that they would carry his body to the place where the cathedral now stands.

On clear days, from there one can see all of Compostela’s finest buildings huddled around the basilica towers, the Ulla river valley, and even the sea of the Ría de Arousa into which the Ulla flows.

### **Pazo de Santa Cruz de Ribadulla and Pazo de Oca**

‘Pazos’ are noble houses typical of rural Galicia, which reached the height of their splendour between the 17th and 19th centuries. Two of the best are included in this itinerary: the Pazo de Santa Cruz de Ribadulla, also known as Pazo de Ortigueira, and the Pazo de Oca, both in the vicinity of Santiago de Compostela.

Pazos are frequently considered akin to castles, presenting them as a derivation suited to more peaceful times. However, the genuine Pazo style owes more to rural and monastic architecture than to the military. The towers are not merely decorative though, since they are convenient for both sunbathing and looking at the landscape. The sun gallery opens toward the courtyard as both a watch post and a post of honour. Popular festivities were often celebrated in the courtyard, which could be seen from the chapel, and the sun gallery was the booth for renowned guests. The baroque style is usually the





Pazo de Santa Cruz de Ribadulla

one predominating in the decoration. Once transplanted to the city, it adapted to a milieu of streets, but still preserved much of its style without blending with the strictly bourgeois architecture, neither even with the noble houses derived from the old fortress-houses of the city.

Although the interior of these buildings cannot be visited, their fabulous gardens can be, and they are true monuments of nature, remarkable for the variety and elegance of their species, and for the way in which they blend with their surrounding areas. They both have a garden section, a forest section, and another for cultivated land. The difference between their respective gardens has more to do with their original conception, more voluptuous, spectacular, and rustic in the case of Ribadulla, following rather the pattern of the English garden, more cared after, decorative and smarter in that of Oca, with a more elaborate design involving water and stone.

Vegetation is at its most powerful and varied at the garden of Santa Cruz de Ribadulla. Galician 'carballeiras' (oak woods) and venerable olive trees have long grown side to side with magnolia trees and eucalyptus, and the avenues of myrtle climbed by white and grey lichen are of a royal and melancholy beauty. Since it is inhabited, it has the warmth of lived-in monuments, and it deals in camellias much coveted by wholesaler florists.

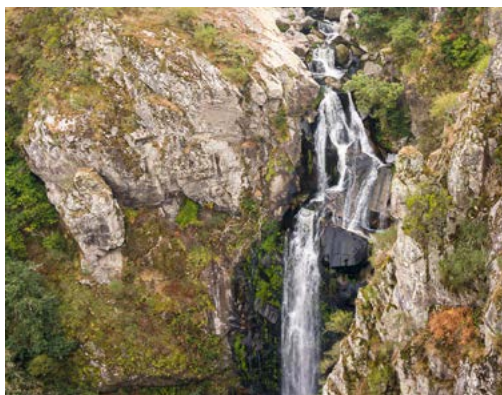
At Oca, the decorative towers and its garden of myrtle, roses and mazes preserve the incomparable grace of the 18th century. A magnificent aqueduct, carved and decorated, feeds ponds worthy of a cardinal's villa, and the avenues are formed by old chestnut trees.

Galician 'pazos' have become a literary subject in themselves, especially after the novels by Emilia Pardo Bazán and Valle Inclán.

## Toxa waterfall

A beautiful water, light, and sound show formed by a waterfall of the Toxa River, between the parishes of Pazos and Martixe (Silleda), considered the highest free-falling waterfall in Galicia. It is a space of great scenic value. In its surroundings, we find the Carboeiro Monastery, a building of special relevance within the Galician Romanesque style.

Toxa waterfall





## ROUTE 10 Southern Galicia & Portugal

Tui

‘Portugal is the lover and Galicia the loved one,’ goes one local folk saying. The ties between the two countries, separated by the vigorous Miño river, are what is highlighted during the first part of an excursion that is a joy from both the monumental point of view and that of natural scenery. These are aristocratic lands covered with vineyards, frontier lands with vantage points looking from one to the other country, and fortresses built for defence.

### Tui

Tui is a Cathedral and fortress surrounded by churches and granite houses, many of them emblazoned, or with arches from the 15th and 16th centuries, arranged along stone-paved streets of a medieval design. Its old town is built exclusively in stone, preserving some sections of the ancient wall, with streets that fall towards the river and with small squares with enclosed balconies looking upon the neighbouring country. The old town of Tui, declared in its entirety to be of historic and artistic value, is surprising not for its beauty only, but also for its serenity.

The most usual itinerary starts at the Cathedral and then descends along Misericordia Street, where we will encounter the chapel consecrated to San Telmo (1769-1803), patron saint of Tui, the sole example of the Portuguese baroque architectural style in Galicia, built upon the foundations of the house where this Dominican saint died in the 13th century.

The town’s spectacular riverbank location, facing the sister fortress of Valença do Minho in Portugal, accounts for its frontier character as one of the seven capitals of the old kingdom of Galicia which once suffered the attacks from both Norsemen and Arabs. There is also the old International Iron Bridge, attributed to the famous French engineer Eiffel. Tui is also located on the pilgrim’s road known as Camino Portugués, which leads to Santiago.

Thanks to its being near the sea, the gastronomic treats include a rich variety of seafood, but owe even more to produce from the river Miño, among which baby eels and lamprey stand out. Tui, which belongs to the ‘Rías Baixas’ denomination of origin, accompanies its dishes with exquisite white Albariño wines.

## Valença do Minho

The Fortress of Valença do Minho is the counterpart of that of Tui on the opposite bank of the river, now on Portuguese soil. It is, however, less solid and secluded, more luminous, and its Portuguese character is also apparent in its stone pavement, different from the Galician, and in the whiteness of its buildings, many of them decorated with an element that is most typical of Portuguese architecture: tiles. Valença is scattered with small churches and niches of a baroque style.



Tui cathedral (©ATG)

## Santa María de Oia

This tour leaves from A Guarda for Baiona, constantly bordering the coast along the road known as 'Rompeolas' (breakwater) so that a splendid landscape is guaranteed all the way.

Halfway through stands the monastery of Santa María de Oia (12th century). The monastery is spectacular for its location, completely facing the ocean, which makes it perhaps the only monastery so unmistakably linked to the sea.

## Santa Trega & A Guarda

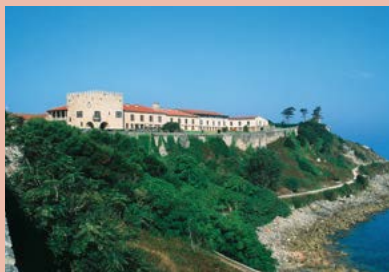
Not far from O Rosal is A Guarda, one of Galicia's most charming municipalities. The Atlantic Ocean, the estuary of the Miño river and Monte Santa Trega together conform an extraordinary setting of both environmental and historic resources, to which the excellence of its cuisine must also be added as an attraction of the highest order.

From the town the monte de Santa Trega can be reached, with privileged vantage points over the mouth of the Miño, facing south, and over the fishing town which has just been crossed, facing north. Santa Trega, which is crossed by paths, is enriched by the presence of glyphs carved on stone from the Bronze Age, and there is also the 'castro,' a reconstructed Galaico-Roman (Celtic) village which is spectacular due to its location, declared a National Monument of Historic and Artistic Interest.

## Baiona

Baiona, with its surname 'la Real' by virtue of the royal sea trade privileges which it was granted during the Middle Ages, is a tourist town par excellence. This beautiful seaport is known best of all for the castle of Monterreal, an ancient fortress which is now a Parador de Turismo named 'Conde de Gondomar,' for its Romanesque collegiate church of the 13th century and for being the port where the caravel 'La Pinta' returned after Columbus's first voyage of discovery, one of the three ships that sailed for America for the first time.

Baiona has become one of the most important ports for sailing in the whole Iberian Peninsula.



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