

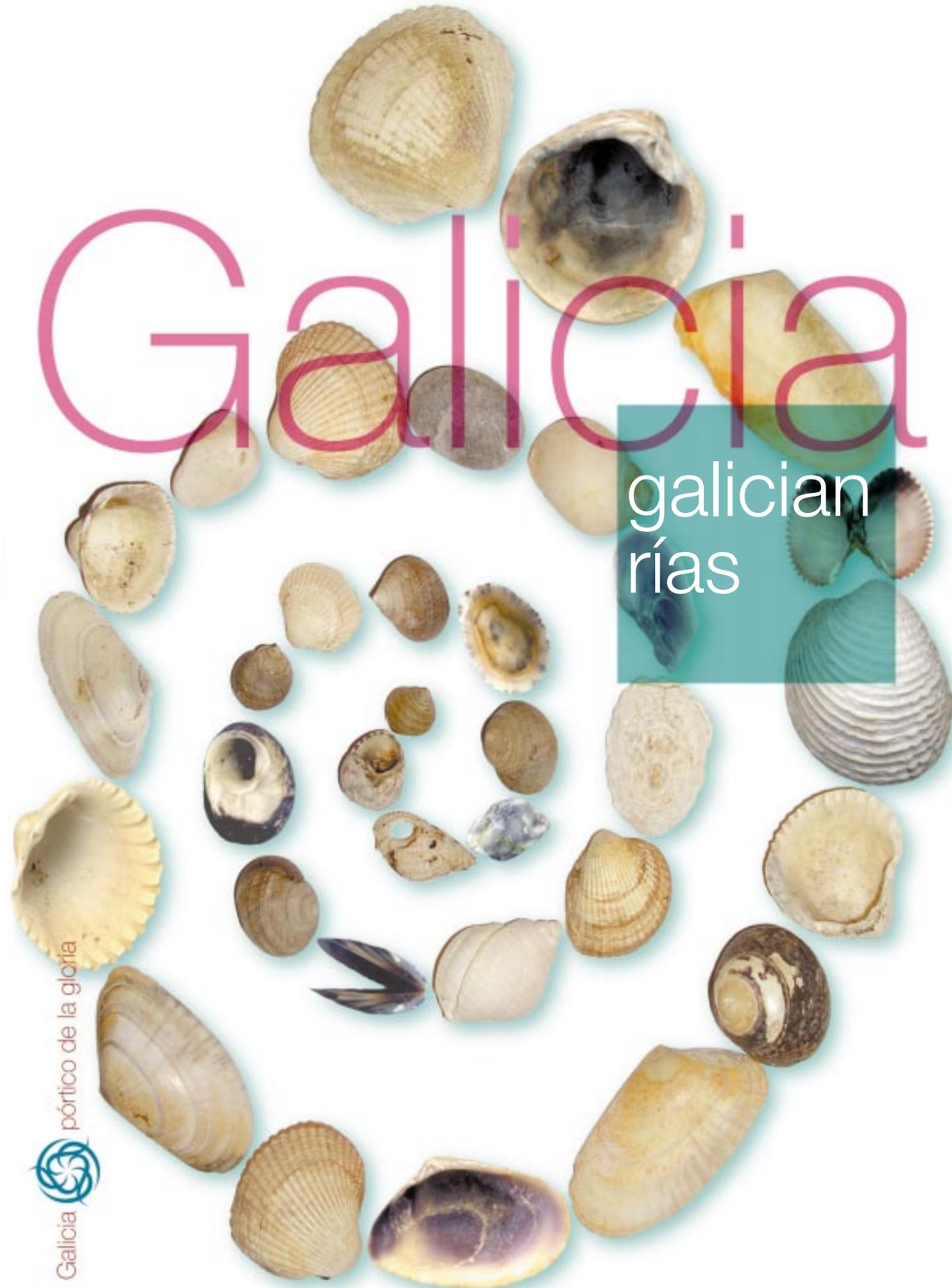
“You say: Galicia is very small. And I say: there is a World of Galicia. Every piece of a land is in itself as the entire World. You may journey from North to South, from East to West, in little time; you may do so over and over again, and yet you shall not travel it whole. And every time you go, you shall come across new things (...) The surface may be small; in depth, entity, Galicia is as great as you wish ... ” VICENTE RISCO



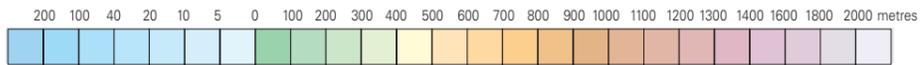
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Galicia

galician
rías



Galicia  pórtico de la gloria



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THE GALICIAN RÍAS (ESTUARIES)

The most singular trait of the coast of Galicia is the presence of the estuaries. These arms of sea that enter the continent, creating a broken-up coastline. In their genesis, they were enhanced by an intense network of landslip breaks that made it easy for the sea to come in and marked their design, which is the case of the Rías Baixas; others are the lower part of former flooded river valleys, as is the case of Ortigueira, Ribadeo, Foz and Ferrol; and a third type, such as the Ría de Arousa, are former tectonic pits. They all contain a wide range of scenery that is the fruit both of the factors of the environment and particularly the secular work of men and women throughout history.

The diversity of the crags that give the Galician countryside its numerous tones take on special traits in the estuaries. Both the granite and the slate or schistose rocks offer a different tone on the coast, especially at dusk, when the sun hides over the horizon creating a flurry of colours, tones, atmospheres... The reddish colours of dusk create a magic scenario by blending with the orange tones of certain kinds of granites or the silver of the slate.

But the rock is not the only character on the coast; so too is the climate that materialises in any season in days of diaphanous, brilliant light that highlights the shapes, showing them to visitors, or, particularly during the autumn and winter, on days covered with a cloud layer which, by spreading the light, creates mysterious atmospheres, full of theatricality and a beauty that can only impact on the visitor. The estuaries are therefore worth a visit at any time of year.

However, the scenes of the estuaries are not only explained in natural key, they must also be explained in human key by analysing the changing work of centuries of history; of working the land; of making use of the sea's resources; of building villages, towns and cities on the coast; of tracing paths and ports; lanes and fields of crops. A work of centuries of struggle and dependence on resources, and at the same time, of domesticating nature, which has brought in a wide mosaic of chromatic prints.

This symbiosis between man and his medium has undoubtedly created something unrepeatable: a society that for thousands of years has built itself a different world, a mythical-magical world present in legends and traditions, in the religious and pagan feasts; a world structured by a discourse and a language of its own that has survived to the present day alongside a privileged nature.

Because the Galicians have managed to take the most exquisite products out of their two stores, land and sea: some eighty varieties of fish, a dozen varieties of crustaceans and more than double this number of shell molluscs, fifteen varieties of meat without counting game, a dozen and a half varieties of greens and vegetables, a dozen varieties of wine, fruit, etc.

Within this unique Galicia, plural in its habits, spaces and customs, the estuaries possibly offer the most enjoyable adventure for travellers. Along the 1,400 km of coastline there are kilometres of sandbanks -772 beaches- or spectacular cliff sections that become the entrance door to the most profound Galicia. The Galician estuaries are sea paths always coming together into paths on land, sometimes wide in the shape of motorways, dual carriageways or highroads, and sometimes simple footpaths leading attentive, curious visitors to the humble peasant and seaside houses or the sumptuous country manors; to the small chapels or monumental monasteries; to the popular festivals and dances; in short, to the mysterious Galicia.

Furthermore, it can not be forgotten that in Galicia, neither land nor sea have ever been frontiers. Since the 9th century, the 'Camino de Santiago' (Path of St. James), the Francigenous Path of the Chronicles, has taught us what Hospitality is, and we have lived in this school of warmth and generosity for over a thousand years. Today, this feeling is now rationalised and turned into infrastructures, industries and services, but in most cases, it maintains the aroma of the old hospitality.

The Galicians, institutionally or privately, have made a great effort thinking of the visitors to be able to offer a wide range of hotels, spas and houses for rural tourism, sports ports, golf course and spaces for congresses.

All of this so that those who visit us might enjoy a privileged land, a true PÓRTICO DE LA GLORIA (Porch of Glory).





Corrubedo Nature Park (A Coruña)

Axeitos dolmen, Ribeira (A Coruña)

Bridge, Pontevedra

Cruceiro do Hío, Cangas (Pontevedra)

Sea museum, Vigo (Pontevedra)

Cies Islands, Illas Atlánticas Nature Park (Pontevedra)

Illa de San Simón; Ponte de Rande (Pontevedra)

The so-called Rías Baixas come together between Baiona and Fisterra. These are the largest estuaries and those that spread uniformly from south-west to north-east, and are the Vigo, Pontevedra, Arousa and Muros-Noia.

On its rough littoral, the coastal area of cliffs, rocks and sharp falls combine with broad areas of sand accessible from land, following the road network, or from the sea from one of the numerous ports.

From the viewpoint of the climate, temperatures are mild a large part of the year and there is considerable rainfall in autumn and winter, which causes the development of large forest masses blooming greenness and that travellers see at first sight.

The lands on the banks therefore break down into extensive tree-covered areas that intertwine with fields of crops where fruit trees, vegetables and vineyards surround villages, towns and cities, generating a cheerful varied countryside.

The richness and variety of the natural medium is complemented by the wide range of products of the sea or land, fish, shellfish and wines that delight any gastronome and can be tried both in the large cities such as Vigo or Pontevedra, and in the numerous sea towns.

In Rías Baixas art lovers will find many places to stop: fortresses, Romanic, gothic and baroque churches. Manors and magnificent museums like those in Pontevedra, Vigo or Bueu may be visited depending on the time available.

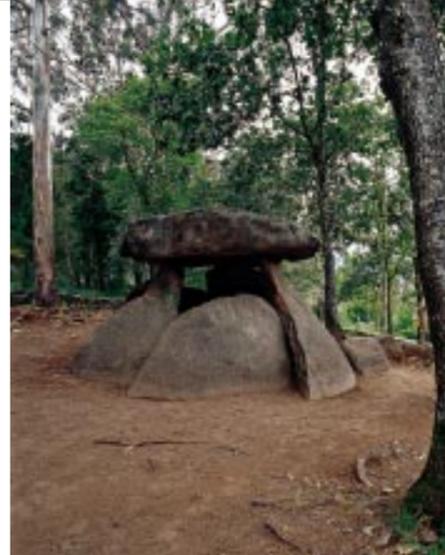
Furthermore, the festivals and processions throughout the year, particularly in the summer, will allow visitors to go further into the traditions and beliefs of Galicia.



Portonovo, Sanxenxo (Pontevedra)

Granary, Combarro, Poio (Pontevedra)

Louro, Muros (A Coruña)





Aerial view from the open sea (Cíes Islands)

The Ría de Vigo extends from south-west to north-east like a marine lance stretching out as we go inland. However, it is clearly different from the other estuaries in the south of Galicia. While those in Muros, Arousa or Pontevedra become narrow in their depths, the Vigo estuary does so in Rande and opens up again to form the cove of San Simón with the island of the same name connected to the land at low tide by a sandy strip.

At the mouth of the Ría de Vigo, like three stone ships moored in the ocean, there are the Cíes Isles, which together with the Ons Isles, the Isle of Sálvora and the Isle of Cortegada, form the National Park of the Atlantic Islands.



Boeiro, O Agoeiro-Cíes and the south of San Martiño Island



Baiona (Pontevedra)

The Cíes have different shapes between west and east. To the west they have a rough, inaccessible coast with impressive cliffs with numerous gulleys and caves –*furnas*– housing a large amount of fauna. On the other hand, inside the estuary, the relief is gentler, the slopes are not as steep and this has caused the creation of beautiful beaches mixing sand with shell remains. It is precisely in this protected sector where we can see interesting signs of the Atlantic flora, and especially the ‘camariña’.

The Cíes, which can be got at from Vigo by a limited number of people, are not only outstanding due to their natural interest, but also, to a certain extent, they protect the estuary from the rough Atlantic storms, allowing many mussel beds to populate the waters.

Thanks to its privileged location, the Ría de Vigo not only holds the city that gives it its name, one of the best ports in Europe, but also other places with a long history; we must not forget that the estuary has been a commercial axis since prehistoric times.

Ría de Vigo



Faro Island from Punta Principe (Cíes Islands)



Illas Cíes, Vigo (Pontevedra)



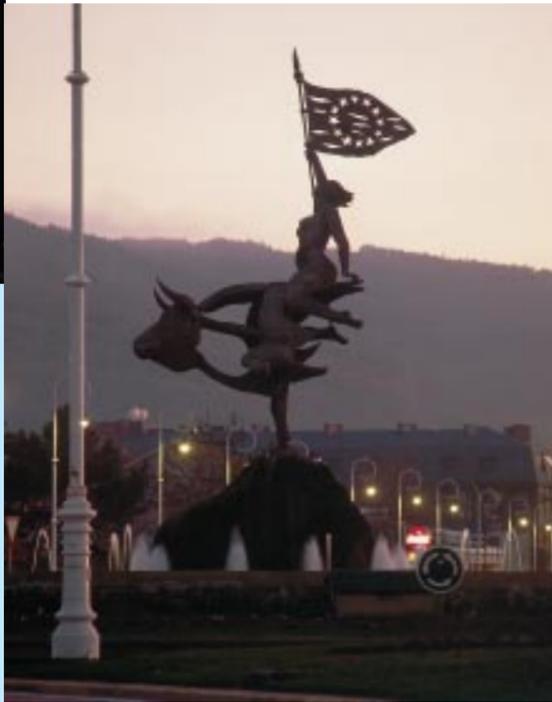
Templo Votivo del Mar, Nigrán (Pontevedra)



América beach, Nigrán (Pontevedra)

It was said by the traveller G. Borrow that Vigo was the happy combination of a bay “*without match in the world*”. The development of the late nineteenth century brought the creation of a large maritime industrial infrastructure -steel works, preserve factories, fishing port, etc.- which turned it into the most populated estuary in Galicia. It has splendid parks, museums (contemporary, of the sea, zoological) and beaches. It preserves the small, marine old quarter of O Berbés, currently being renovated, and the Castrelos park, which is undoubtedly the most beautiful urban park in Galicia. The area also houses the Quiñones de León Manor-Museum, which is now the municipal museum.

On the southern bank of the Ría de Vigo is the cove of Baiona, which receives the river Miñor. At either end are the ports of Panxón and Baiona, joined by the A Ramallosa and Praia América sandbanks. Baiona, today a prime tourist resort, for centuries concentrated the trade until Vigo developed spectacularly. It was a very important business centre in the Middle Ages and is still one of the best known and most used shelters for ships travelling around the coast of Galicia.



Europa Square, Vigo (Pontevedra)

Ría de Vigo



Barra beach, Cangas (Pontevedra)



Ría de Vigo



Ponte Sampaio, Pontevedra

In March 1493 the caravel La Pinta dropped sail in the town under the orders of Pinzón and piloted by Sarmiento of Pontevedra. In the town there are beautiful churches, and particularly the collegiate.

On the northern side of the estuary is Cangas, a town with great business that still has the typical streets and old customs like Moaña, another beautiful marine print.

To the north-west, the estuary narrows in Rande where it is crossed by the motorway joining Vigo with the north of Galicia with a spectacular suspension bridge like a great tray, which blends harmoniously with those that cover the marine surface of its surroundings. On passing Rande, we come to Redondela, a town marked by the railway and its iron bridges.

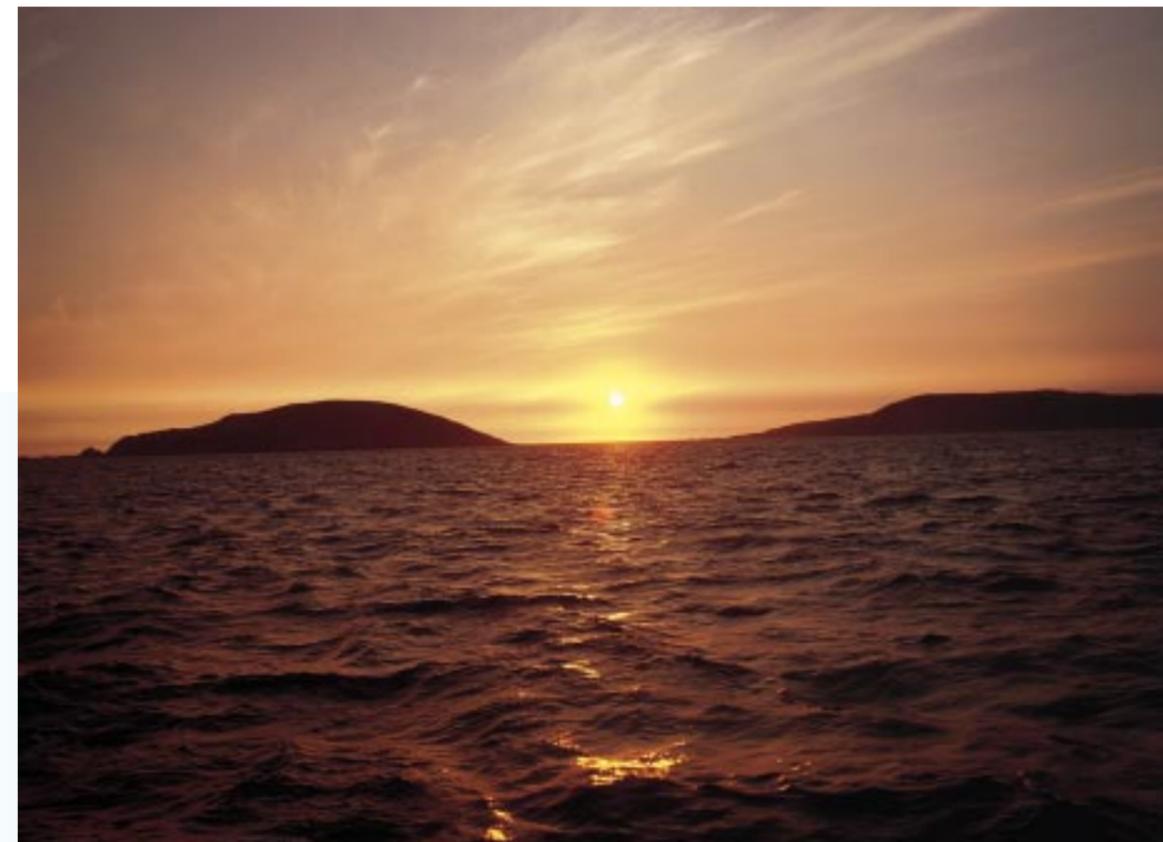
And at the bottom of the estuary sit Ponte Sampaio, a name of liberating resonances (due to the battle that finish with French domain in 1809) and Arcade, once one of the most important oyster beds in Europe.

The Ría de Pontevedra opens between the Cabicastro point to the west of Canelas beach to the north, and the Centoleira point to the south. Its most eastern line is more difficult to mark, due to the mouth of the river Lérez, but we can situate it in the city of Pontevedra, where the river joins the sea, some 14 km from the mouth of the estuary whose shape is that of a perfect wedge of sea water incrusting in the continent south-west to north-east.

Relatively close to the coast, at the entrance to the Ría de Pontevedra, are the Ons isles, inhabited in antiquity. With gentler shapes than the Cíes, the Ons also have contrasting coastlines, less abrupt on the interior and with cliffs to the west, where we once more encounter *furnas* like the spectacular Cova do Inferno. Like in Cíes, the fauna finds a privileged place on the Ons. However, on the Ons there has historically been a larger human presence and the islands were inhabited until the nineteen fifties. Today, the large part of the population only lives on the island in summer.

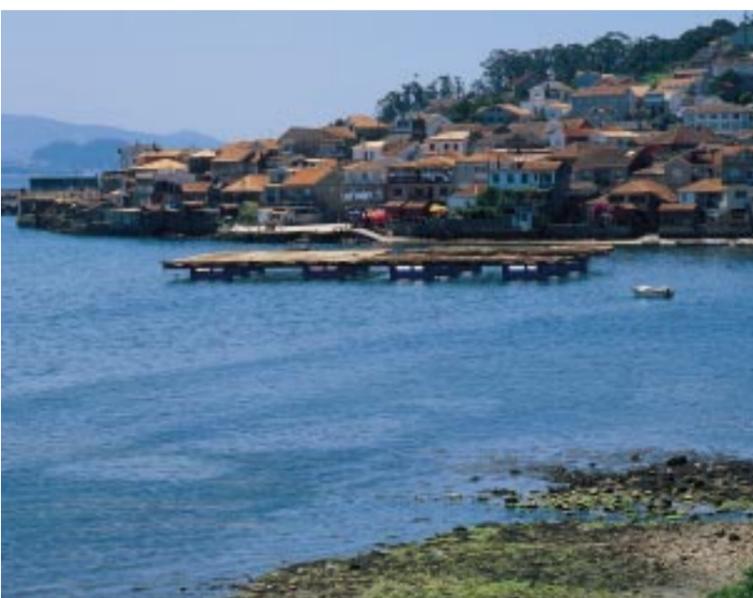


Portonovo, Sanxenxo (Pontevedra)



Strait between the Islands of Ons and Onza

Ría de Pontevedra



Combarro, Poio (Pontevedra)

In the Ría de Pontevedra and on its banks, art and history combine to please travellers. The banks house beautiful cities like Pontevedra; monasteries such as the Poio or, a little further away, Armenteira; towns such as the Marín, combining their military destiny with fishing, or Bueu, clearly a centre of fishing and shell fishing; tourist and residential centres like Sanxenxo, Portonovo and San Vicente de O Grove; picturesque villages like Aldán, lodged at the bottom of its small cove, an annexe to that of Pontevedra, Raxó, Combarro and Mogor.



Lighthouse and western coast of the Island Ons

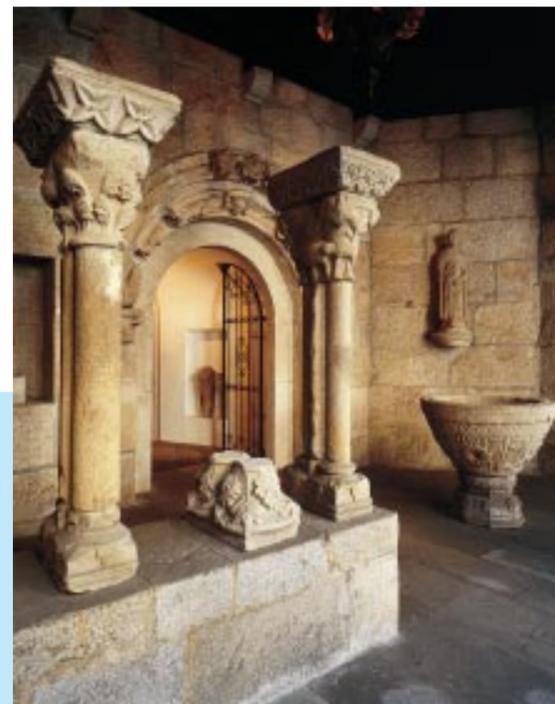


Praza da Leña, Pontevedra

Pontevedra, the provincial capital, is a balanced city without urban giants, which combines the charm of the past in its broad old quarter, joyfully respected by modern development. Inside appear beautiful churches such as the ruins of Santo Domingo, San Francisco, Santa María la Mayor, A Peregrina and a Provincial Museum that possibly receives more visits than any other in Galicia due to the wealth of its funds. Pontevedra was the home of great sailors (Sarmiento, Nodales, etc.) who discovered lands for Spain.

Very nearby is Marín, a modern town with hardly any vestiges of the past. At the top of the hill behind it is a viewpoint that allows us to contemplate the Vigo and Pontevedra estuaries.

The estuary has a wealth of sandbanks, and especially Sanxenxo, due to its importance with tourists, the population of which multiplies in the summer. However, the new constructions have swept away the remains of the former population. Everything is modern.



Ruins of Sto. Domingo, Pontevedra



A Peregrina (Pontevedra)



Aerial view, A Lanzada (Pontevedra)

Quite the opposite occurred at A Lanzada beach, a sandbank of more than 4 km belonging to the O Grove and Sanxenxo councils, where the regeneration of the dune system has enabled the survival of one of the most widely visited beaches in Galicia. Associated with it are beautiful legends like those of the baths of “*nove olas*” for finding a partner or assuring descendents, and on the shores lies the Hermitage of Santa María da Lanzada and the Torre da Lanzada, the possible remains of an ancient lighthouse.

Further to the west is O Grove, a town that has turned sea gastronomy into a cult that can be “practised” in the different bars, inns and restaurants that offer the most exquisite shellfish and fish.

And as an annexe we have the Illa da Toxa, a splendid area with magnificent hotel facilities, built at the beginning of the century. In the evenings on A Toxa said Alvaro Cunqueiro that there is “*a strange, consoled silence, only disturbed by the wind of the pines and the sea singing in the neighbouring Lanzada*”.

Ría de Pontevedra



Sanxenxo (Pontevedra)



A Lanzada hermitage



O Grove (Pontevedra)



Aerial view, Vilanova de Arousa (Pontevedra)

The Ría de Arousa is the most extensive estuary of the Rías Baixas. Its mouth opens between the Covasa point in the north and San Vicente point in the south. More rectangular than its neighbours due to its sunken block origin, it offers a contrast of shapes. To the north it clearly borders on Serra do Barbanza and to the south it seems surrounded by the gentle flatlands of O Salnés.

It contains numerous islands and isles of extraordinary beauty, and particularly the Illa de Sálvora at the entrance, the Illa de Arousa in its centre and the isle of Cortegada in its depths, in the contact with the mouth of the river Ulla, in the lands of Carril. This last island was donated in the early 20th century as a residence for king Alfonso XIII.

Ría de Arousa



Rianxo (A Coruña)



Illa de Sálvora

The winding profile of Arousa gives rise to a large number of coves and peninsulas that favour the settlement of numerous marine towns such as Aguiño, Ribeira, A Pobra do Caramiñal, Boiro and Rianxo, on the northern side and Carril, Vilagarcía, Vilaxoán, Vilanova, Cambados and O Grove to the south. At the connection with the river Ulla, Catoira and in the centre of the estuary, the town of the Illa de Arousa.



Pazo Torre Xunqueira, A Pobra do Caramiñal (A Coruña)

This is an area that combines natural beauty with economic development, though not always in harmony with art and tradition. Of the first we have the example of the islands, its numerous beaches, the mountain ranges in its surroundings, like the O Barbanza, or the lower sections of the rivers that give on to the estuary, such as the As Pedras, the Ulla and the Umia, not to mention the marvellous Corrubedo lagoon-dune complex, now a Nature Park on the peninsula that separates the Arousa and Muros-Noia estuaries.

The width of the Ría de Arousa meant that it was once a place open to invasions, as shown by the Western Towers in Catoira, raised to defend the river Ulla from the attacks of the Normans and Arabs, but also a place open to trade.



Torres de Oeste, Catoira (Pontevedra)

From the economic viewpoint, it must be stressed that the wealth of Arousa does not come down simply to the shellfish sector, fishing, agriculture or the preserve industry. Of great importance too is the wine sector, where we have the Albariño, undoubtedly one of the best whites in the world.

First Carril and later Vilagarcía de Arousa were places that knew extraordinary economic growth, as they acted as ports for Santiago, and their lands, Vilanova de Arousa and Cambados, on the southern side, along with Rianxo, Boiro, A Pobra do Caramiñal and Ribeira to the north, developed more recently.

Vilagarcía de Arousa is an important commercial and fishing port with extraordinary economic activity that relieved the immediate Carril from the promoting role it had held until the 19th century at the centre of the region of O Salnés, famous for its Rías Baixas Appellation Controlée wines.

O Salnés is also known for Cambados: A stately town where we can see heraldic houses and the extraordinary Fefiñáns square flanked by the Figueroa manor and the church of San Benito from the 16th century. This is a place that must be visited on foot to enjoy it, and it is also the capital of Albariño.

To the north of the estuary, A Pobra do Caramiñal is a stately town with heraldic houses and castles like the Torres da Xunqueira. The shadow of Valle-Inclán, its bard, floats over the town.

On the same shore we find Santa Uxía de Ribeira, a town of extraordinary economic development based on the fishing sector. Inside, it holds some remains of the former marine town and Corrubedo is very nearby.

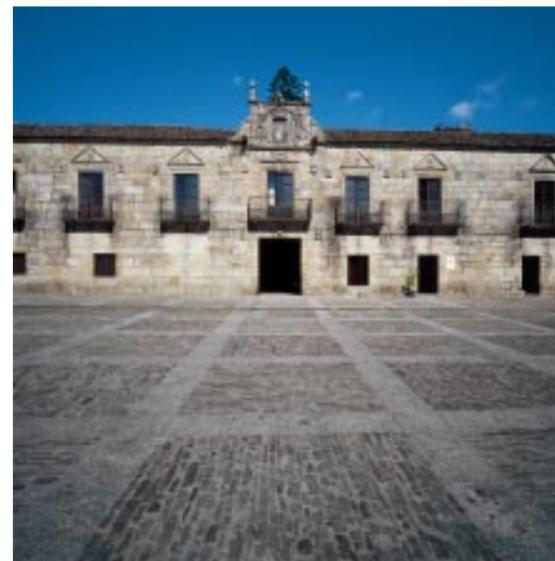


Cabío, A Pobra do Caramiñal (A Coruña)



Corrubedo Nature Park, Ribeira (A Coruña)

Ría de Arousa



Pazo Fefiñáns, Cambados (Pontevedra)



Corrubedo Nature Park, Ribeira (A Coruña)

In the Corrubedo Nature Park it is possible to see the combination of different elements. Lining the sea, the long beach with certain granite peaks. If we walk inland, we first of all come to a dune system fixed by the vegetation with a predominance of pine forms; then a wide corridor between the dunes and then the moving dune which, one kilometre long and some twenty metres high, moves rhythmically to the winds from the south-west and north-east. This set of winds means that its movement is limited to a very specific area without large movements.

Having passed the moving dune, on one side there is a large wind blanket and to the north-east the marshlands of Lagoa de Carregal which, together with the Vixán a little further south, are areas of great interest for their fauna and particularly for their bird life.



Ría de Muros e Noia (A Coruña)

Like the rest of the Rías Baixas, the Ría de Muros e Noia spreads south-west to north-east in the form of an open breach amidst granite rocks. On analysing the whole of the area, we clearly see a sharp contrast in the northern sector, rougher, with numerous inlets and outlets, and the southern sector, straighter and more open with gentler forms.

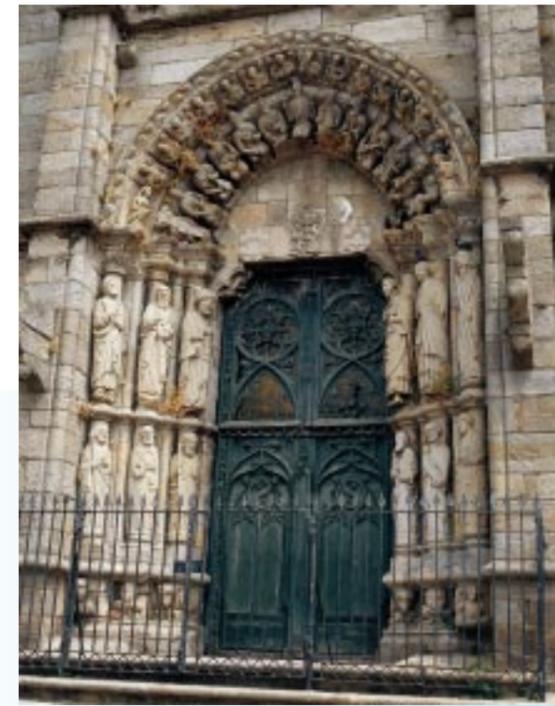
The granite rocks condition the large part of the countryside. This can be seen perfectly in the Baroña sector on the southern shores of the estuary, and the mount Louro to the northern side.

In Baroña, very close to Porto do Son, the stone walls of the fortress that has been there for centuries blend with the slabs opened by time. On mount Louro, close to Muros, an extensive range of geometric shapes stand out on the sides as if some sculptor had ordered them rationally for walkers to contemplate. At their feet, associated with a large sandbank covered with dunes, visitors can admire one of the most beautiful coastal lagoons of Galicia.

Ría de Muros e Noia



Lagoa de Louro, Muros (A Coruña)



San Martiño church door, Noia (A Coruña)

On the northern shores of the estuary there is Muros; in the depths, Noia. These are two stately towns built of the granite, or a similar granite, used by the waves and winds to work the forms of Baroña and Louro and the cliff sections that give on to the sea.

Muros has been open to the sea since medieval times. It preserves the typical style in its squares and streets; a magnificent parish church, the former collegiate of Santa María. Anyone recently arrived will find narrow, winding *rías* coming together in small squares with welcoming arcades. While strolling, it is possible to feel the warmth of past history written by anonymous persons, artists, writers and pilots.



Baroña fortress, Porto do Son (A Coruña)



Aerial view, Noia (A Coruña)

Noia is at the depths of the estuary. The medieval roots are also seen in the structure of the town: narrow streets, arcades, mansions. Its history began when Fernando II decreed that the town had to be transferred from la Barquiña to its present site.

Legend says, however, that Noah founded the town and this is materialised in its shield. Inside we have the 15th century church of San Martiño, and the convent of San Francisco, alongside the modern Alameda.

The shores of the estuary also house other centres of interest. On the southern shores is Porto do Son, a beautiful town that conserves a large part of the seafaring knowledge of its peoples and Portosín with its large sports port.

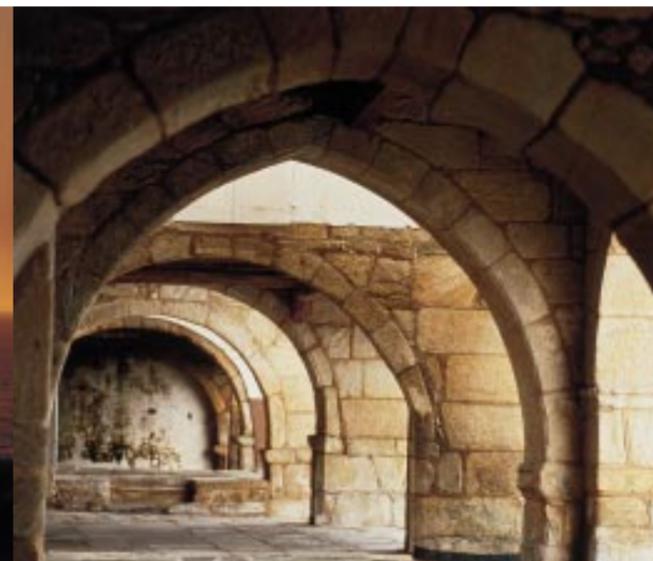
Ría de Muros e Noia



Louro, Muros (A Coruña)



Muros (A Coruña)



Muros (A Coruña)



Portosín, Porto do Son (A Coruña)



Playa de Caión beach (A Coruña)



Illas Sisargas (A Coruña)



Punta Nariga, Malpica (A Coruña)



Beyond the Ría de Muros, and particularly to the north of Fisterra, is a section of rough, varied coastline. Amidst straight sections joining large sandbanks such as Carnota, Razo, O Rosto and Baldaio, there rise sharp cliffs, such as Cabo Vilán and Roncudo or small estuaries like Corcubiión, Camariñas and Corme e Laxe. On the coastal front, very close to land there are islands like the Sisargas.

Rías da Costa da Morte

The name of Costa da Morte comes from the tragic fact that hundreds of ships have run aground on its stony depths and have been buried by the waters, which has made a stream of legends on shipwrecks last in collective memory. Its beaches still offer solitude, with a rough, heavy sea as witness. The small ranges that rise on the coast shelter villages of extraordinary beauty which, seen from afar, seem like tiny spots of colour painted on the hillside.

Travellers coming to the Costa da Morte either by land or by sea will find a countryside marked by contrasts. Small estuaries and tiny coves and broad sandbanks overlooked by impressive stone scenery including the hills of Monte Pindo and the Montes de Traba; visitors will walk through corn fields surrounding them with their blanket of green giving way to granaries, some very beautiful like those of Carnota, Lira and Moraime.

Nature lovers can admire lagoons protected by large dune complexes, such as the Xuño, Traba and Baldaio, where the fauna and flora make them privileged places.

But the Costa da Morte is also a synonym of intense religiousness monopolised by the Virgen del Carmen in each and every one of the sea ports, the Santo Cristo de Fisterra and the Virxe da Barca, in Muxía. Folklore impregnated with souls in grief constantly wandering in search of eternal rest.



Malpica (A Coruña)



Baldaio lagoon and sandbank, Carballo (A Coruña)

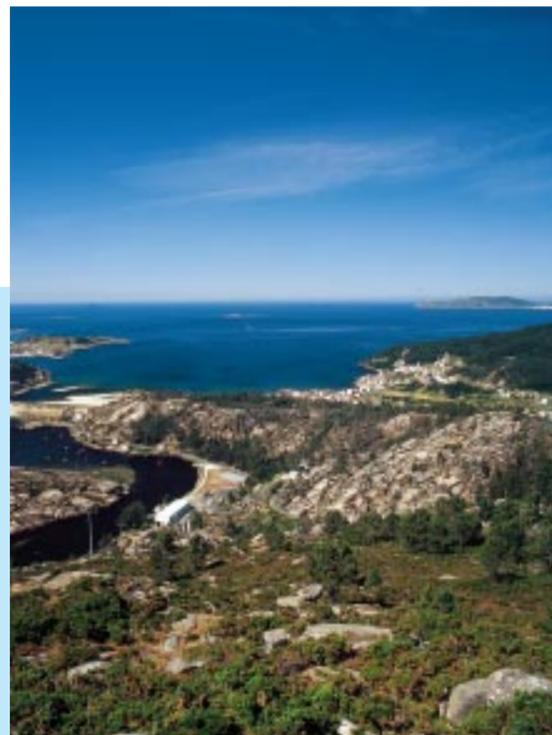
The Ría de Corcubiión draws an arc that stretches to the south. It has an open form and is really a wide cove protected by the stone annexe of the Fisterra cape that spreads southwards, and enclosed a marine area.

Granite rocks condition the countryside once more. The crag appears clearly and changingly at the same time. Monte Pindo is dominated by shapes moulded in the granite (specifically granodiorite) rock. Several kilometres scale rocky peaks simulating pointed castles, long slabs, rounded domes, figures of fantastic beings, stony ground... From the summit too, in A Moa more than 600 metres high, we have an incredibly beautiful view with the village of O Pindo at its feet and cape Fisterra in the background.

Amidst this exceptional countryside are the falling waters of the river Xallas. The Fervenza, in Ézaro, is undoubtedly one of the most spectacular parts of the Galician coast. The construction of dams upstream of its mouth means that it can be seen on certain days of the year, but despite this, it is possible to admire a corner of great beauty.

To the west, at cape Fisterra the granite is different and the shapes too. The presence of the sea and the lighthouse whose lights and sound guide the ships to prevent more tragedies, has created a world of myths and magic that join their charm in San Guillermo. This all means that like the former legionaries of Rome, the travellers that go there, wait for the magic time when the “green flash” appears.

And to the south, the rock destroyed by time and taken away by the waters is accumulated on the Carnota sandbank, the largest in Galicia with a length of eight kilometres between the Caldebarcos and Nosa Señora dos Remedios points. Beach and dunes enclose marshlands such as the Boca do Río, where the granite forms stand out of the water.



O Pindo, Carnota (A Coruña)



Carnota and Monte Pindo (A Coruña)

Ría de Corcubiión



Aerial view of Corcubiión and Cee (A Coruña)

Fisterra lighthouse (A Coruña)



Corcubiión (A Coruña)

Carnota Granary (A Coruña)



O Pindo and Fisterra bear witness to the rich ethnography of the region. The *Ara Solis*, a place for sun worshipping, where, according to legend, the roman legions came each evening to see the sun or *Dugium* die, with its legend of sea horizons and cities flooded by the waters serve as an example.

On the other hand, the permanence of fertility rites in stones of Fisterra (the end of the land and the beginning of the *mare tenebrosum* for centuries of culture) are traits that talk of the survival of traditions in these places.

But stone is transformed at the hand of man, giving rise to the small villages scattered along the coast and the towns of Fisterra, Corcubiión and Cee. The first of the two sea towns and the third industrial, they contain beautiful buildings highlighted by glass galleries and buildings flanked by arcades.



Ría de Camariñas (A Coruña)

Camariñas is a different example of an estuary: small, tight, hardly marked on the land. Its most western limits are constituted by two stone outcrops: the Punta da Barca to the south and the Cabo Vilán, flanking the entrance on the northern side. Inland, the estuary loses its marine traits and in Ponte do Porto tamely joins the waters of the river Grande.

The main towns of the estuary are the fishing ports of Camariñas and Muxía and the remains of the former port of Ponte do Porto. The towns reveal a whole range of houses, some marine and others noble, mixing the strong iron balconies with glass galleries standing out from walls painted in a thousand colours (just like the ships moored in harbour), lining narrow, twisted streets.

The sea impregnates everything and until relatively recently it was possible to contemplate the remains of ancient traditions like curing fish in the sun. On the other hand, the embroidering tradition has appeared once more and travellers who arrive in time in such places may contemplate the *palilleiras*



Cabo Vilán, Camariñas (A Coruña)

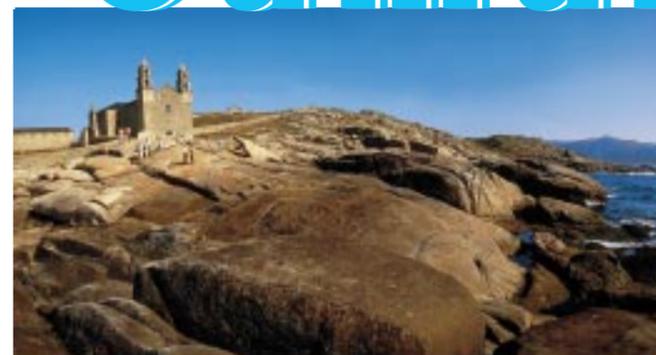
Ría de Camariñas



Camariñas (A Coruña)



Porto de Muxía (A Coruña)



Muxía (A Coruña)



Vilán Lighthouse, Camariñas (A Coruña)

moving the balls with true mastery and see how, as if by magic, true filigrees made with yarn grow.

Religious folklore is monopolised by the devotion to the *Virxe da Barca*. In her sanctuary in Muxía, in a place marked by the crag and facing the rough seas (calm some days, furious others), every year she gathers thousands of processions who kneel before the virgin and at the same time following the tradition of passing below the *Pedra dos Cadrís* or trying to move the now broken *Pedra de Abalar*.

And if at Punta da Barca holiness overrides, in cape Vilán, the northern part of the estuary, this is nature's role; the enormous cliff and rocks entering the ocean against the force of the waves and the wind. From the lighthouse, it is possible to see another great range of marine scenes marked by the blue of the sky, the pink of the crag and the yellow-white of the sandbanks. A true wilderness paradise.



Ría de Corme e Laxe (A Coruña)

Travelling north, we come to the Ría de Corme e Laxe, which like a prehistoric monster with a great head and narrow, twisted tail, goes inland along the lower course of the river Anllóns.

When walking along its shores, we can admire another sector marked by the verticality of a coastline with cliffs, rocks, worked on granite with its capricious forms that seem to have been sculpted by the patient hand of some mysterious being. Cylinders entering the *penedos*, cavities like church pyres, nests worked by a thousand wasps... take shape to give the countryside a look of mystery in this section of the Costa da Morte. The surroundings of Roncudo, for instance, are a good place to see this and, at the same time, to admire a country scene astride a cliff marked by its verticality.

Ría de Corme e Laxe



Porto de Corme, (A Coruña)



Pedrido bridge, Paderne (A Coruña)



Laxe (A Coruña)



Traba, Laxe (A Coruña)

The towns of Corme and Laxe, two important fishing ports, are located on either side of the estuary. In the first of the two, with a predominance of fishing activities, is the closed structure of its centre and its steep, narrow streets with new buildings and old fishermen's houses (once more on the Galician coast) painted in lively colours. In the more commercial Laxe, we find its 14th century church with its beautiful design and the Rúa Real, with remains of its noble past.

In the depths of the estuary, at the mouth of the river Anllóns, beyond the Monte Blanco, another place where wind and water created spectacular sandy scenery, is Ponteceso, the place where the poet Pondal was born, a man who masterfully sang not only of these lands, but also composed the beautiful words of the Galician Hymn.

Laxe church (A Coruña)





Mandeo river, Betanzos (A Coruña)

The A Coruña, Betanzos, Ares and Ferrol estuaries are in the north-west of Galicia. The whole of the sector is known as Golfo Ártabro, a name that comes from the inhabitants who lived in the area before the arrival of the Romans (the 'ártabro' people) and the port that dominated this series of estuaries, the *Artabrorum Portus*.

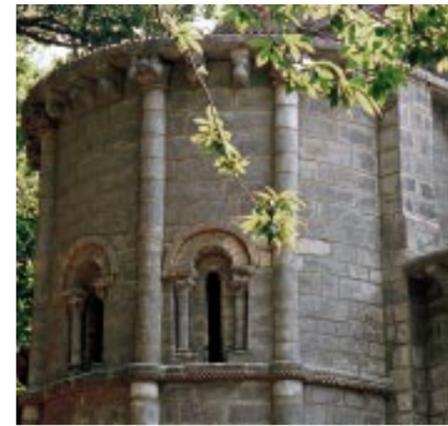
The estuaries of the Golfo Ártabro in a certain way sketch out a sea leaf that is incrustated in the land: the Ferrol estuary stretches slightly to the north-west, like that of Ares, whereas the Betanzos and A Coruña estuaries stretch southwards.

Together they constitute a socioeconomic unit based on the cities of A Coruña and Ferrol, and supported by towns of great tradition such as Sada, Betanzos, Pontedeume, Ares, Mugardos, Fene, Neda and Narón.

The wealth of the countryside that arises both from the presence of the sea and from the amount of rivers flowing into it after crossing deep gulleys like in a long history, turn them into privileged places for visitors.

The coast, generally low and rocky, is splashed with numerous pretty beaches. The many towns and villages that mark out their shores offer visitors the chance to enjoy a swim and visit the many historical centres and interesting monuments and to enjoy a varied range of typical dishes where the fish and shellfish have a primordial role along with sweet cakes.

The castles of San Antón and Santa Cruz in the A Coruña estuary, San Felipe and A Palma in the Ferrol; the Romanic churches of Cambre, Bergondo and Bremao; the manors of Meirás and Meirama; the monasteries of Caaveiro and Monfero or the monumental centres of Betanzos and Pontedeume are good examples of the artistic wealth of the estuaries in this sector.



San Miguel de Bremao, Pontedeume (A Coruña)



Mera beach, Oleiros (A Coruña)



A Coruña



Fishing port and Avda. de La Marina (A Coruña)



Galleries in Avda. de la Marina (A Coruña)



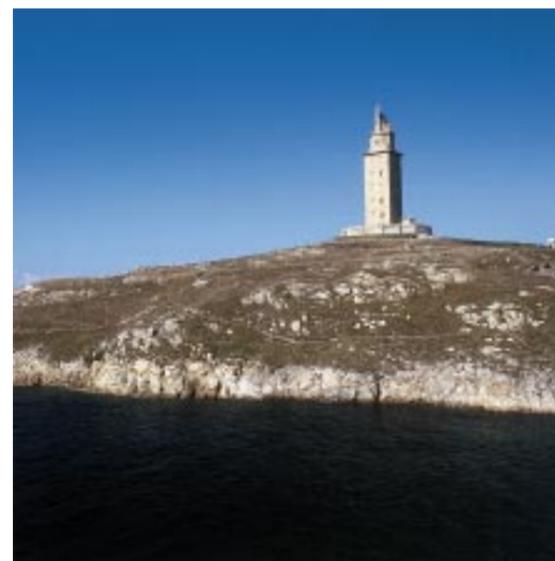
Fountain and beach in Orzán (A Coruña)

The Ría de A Coruña opens between the Punta do Seixo Branco in the east and Punta Herminia in the west and spreads southwards to the mouth of the river Mero. In the west it is flanked by the peninsula on which the city of A Coruña is settled, whereas on the east, the estuary runs around an undulating coast that stretches to the Seixo Branco.

The intense humanisation of the territory is shown by the deep transformation of the shores and the continuous populating activity with its centre of attraction in the Herculean city that spreads its economic tentacles far beyond the estuary itself, undoubtedly becoming the governing city of the north-west of Galicia.

Embracing the tower of Hercules, one of the most beautiful lighthouses in Spain and the oldest working lighthouse in the world, A Coruña opens on to the sea with a symphony of wood and glass that makes it the *Ciudad de Cristal*. Inside, beautiful prints worked in stone, churches, palaces, charming *rúas* that are the delight of any visitor.

Ría da Coruña



Tower of Hércules (A Coruña)



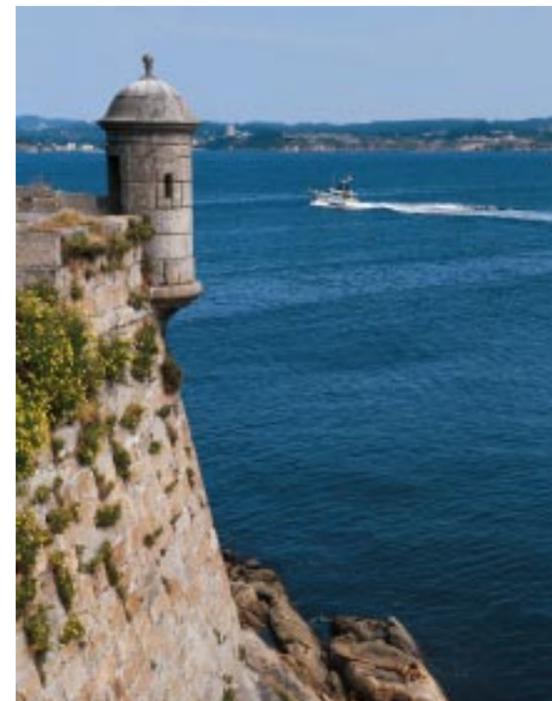
Celta park (A Coruña)



Palacio de la Ópera (A Coruña)



Archeological museum (A Coruña)



Castle of San Antón (A Coruña)



Sailing club and castle of San Antón (A Coruña)

Ría da Coruña

The whole of the city evokes the sea. Seen from the sky, it looks as if it is going to break off to become the island it was thousands of years ago. Since roman times it has lived off sea trade and just two hundred years ago, the sea still splashed the old houses of A Mariña and Los Cantones. Its commercial, fishing and sports port consolidate it in its marine vocation.

Its seafront has but brought the city to this ocean balcony that is its sea. Its tower of Hercules is the stone logo etched forever in the mind of all those who visit the city.

The estuary was formerly defended by the castles of Santa Cruz, raised in the 17th century and placed on the isle of its name, and by that of San Antón, built in the 16th century, and currently turned into the Archaeological Museum of A Coruña.

The port of A Coruña, which maintains its leadership in the fishing sector, especially on the high seas, which historically was its main source of income, is also important for its commercial activity.



Tram (A Coruña)



Finisterrae aquarium (A Coruña)



Aerial view, Perbes-Miño (A Coruña)



La Terraza, Sada (A Coruña)

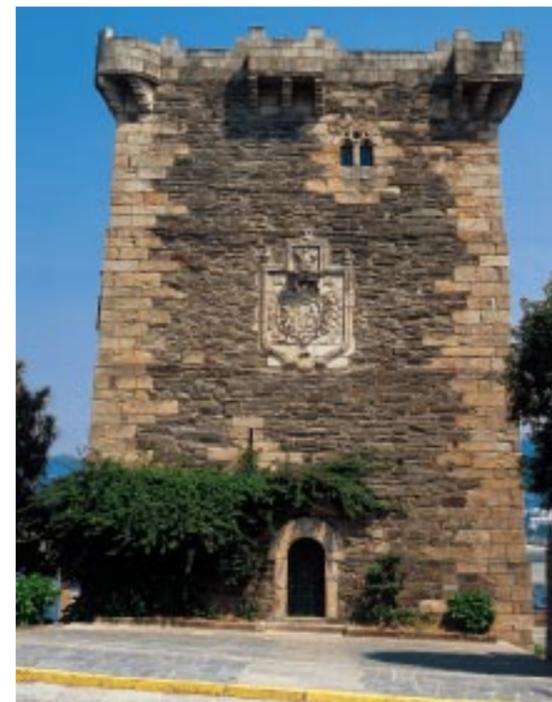
Rías de Ares e Betanzos

The Coitelada point in the north and the Torrella point in the south flank the entrance of a strip of sea that enters westbound and divides into two estuaries, one to the north-east and the other to the south, which like that of A Coruña, are very small: Ares and Betanzos.

Its location and its closed configuration were the reason for privileged climatic conditions characterised by mild temperatures and moderate rainfall that explain the importance that vegetable gardens and vineyards take on on the shores.



Castelo dos Andrade, Pontedeume (A Coruña)

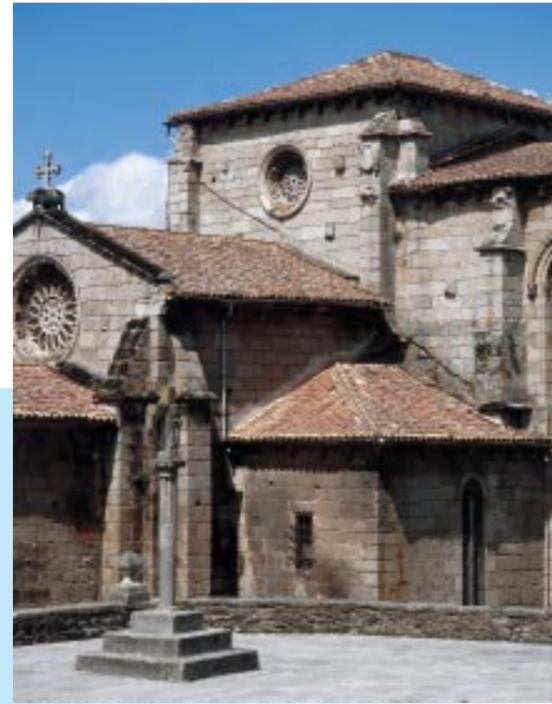


Andrade tower, Pontedeume (A Coruña)

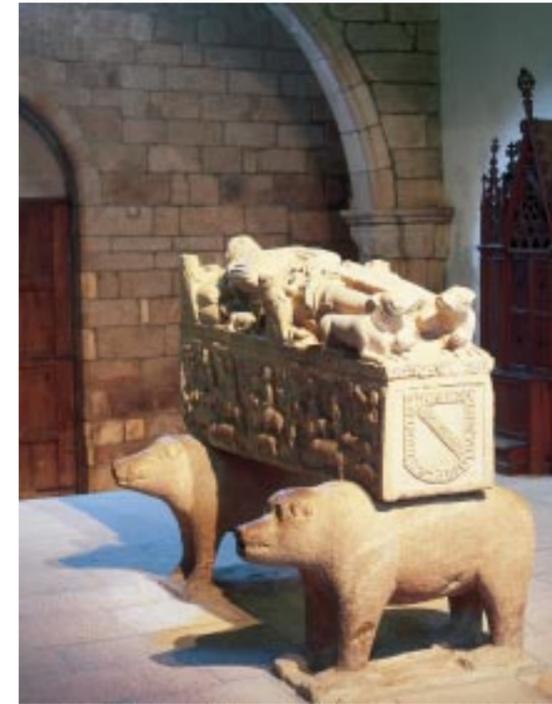
These lands, known as *As Mariñas*, perfectly combine tourist development and the best historical and artistic tradition materialised in the old quarters of Betanzos and Pontedeume, in the Terraza de Sada, in the Voto de Chanteiro, started in the 15th century and in the Romanic church of Bergondo, which bear witness to the growth of lands that experienced the imposition of the heraldry of the house of Andrade.

Betanzos and Pontedeume are centres of enormous artistic interest, with historical centres worthy of visit made up of narrow streets and certain sections with arcades, overlooked by beautiful buildings in granite in the form of churches and medieval fortresses such as Santa María do Azogue and San Francisco from the 14th century in the first of the towns, and the Torreón dos Andrades, built between 1370 and 1380, in the second.

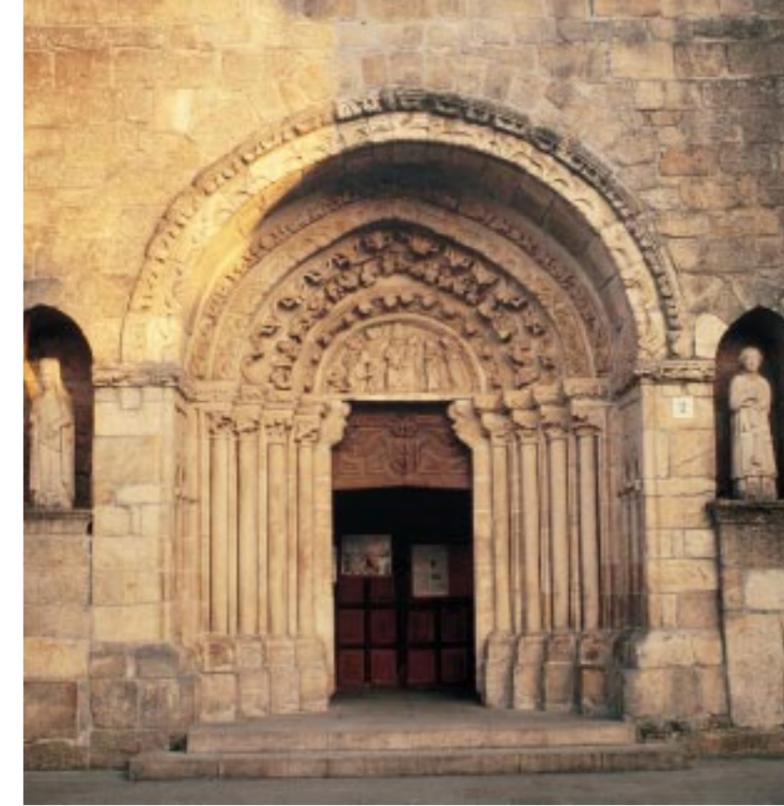
Redes offers the unique silhouette of a fishing village hanging over the sea, Ares is a tourist town as is Sada and is also the leisure capital of the region, and has the Torres de Meirás in its surrounding area, a palace inhabited by Doña Emilia Pardo Bazán and later by general Franco, whereas Miño has become a place for many visitors each year in search of its beach.



San Francisco church, Betanzos (A Coruña)



San Francisco church. Tomb of Fernán Pérez de Andrade, Betanzos (A Coruña)



Santa María do Azogue, Betanzos (A Coruña)

Rías de Ares e Betanzos





Aerial view, Ferrol estuary (A Coruña)



Mouth to Ferrol estuary (A Coruña)



Mugardos (A Coruña)

Ría de Ferrol

Elongated from west to east, the Ría de Ferrol draws out the profile of a swordfish breaking into the continent. At its narrow mouth it is followed by a narrow canyon that opens up to the mouth of the river Grande de Xubia, where it becomes narrow once more.

Cape Prioriño and the Punta do Segaña are the most western limits. When sailors pass the Vispón and Redonda points, the estuary opens its horizons and takes on an undulating form with the coves of O Baño, Mugardos and O Seixo on its southern shores and A Malata, Caranza and As Aceas on the northern.

The privileged layout of the estuary determined its choice as the centre for the Spanish fleet in the 17th century, which conditioned its economic life. It was necessary to build the castles of San Carlos, San Cristóbal, San Felipe and A Palma for its defence. Of these, only the last two remain in a good state.



Ferrol (A Coruña)



Ferrol (A Coruña)

On the northern shores is Ferrol on a flat relief that gently rises towards the north in the districts of Canido and Serantes. The Magdalena district, the result of the urban rationality of the 18th century, adapts to the natural geometry of the lines that cross it. A maritime and industrial city, its best buildings are in direct relation with the Navy.

The steel works and the supply services for the Navy and the barracks caused the attraction of Ferrol over its region, which progressively lost its signs of identity. From the 18th century, the same city gained a geometric rationalisation that appeared in the form of the Magdalena district, cornering the old private, marine Ferrol.

Just a few kilometres from Ferrol is the splendid beach of Doniños aimed at the open sea. Associated with this, the Doniños lagoon has been created, a beautiful natural site.

Around the estuary, despite its intense transformation, it is still possible to find beautiful marine prints. This is the case of the towns of Mugarodos, grasping the rounded form of its cove, A Graña, Fene, Neda and Narón which still conserve beautiful corners. The same happens with the villages with a navy past like O Seixo, San Felipe and Maniños.

Ría de Ferrol



Ponzos beach, Ferrol (A Coruña)



Doniños beach, Ferrol (A Coruña)



Coelleira Island, O Vicedo (Lugo)

To the north of the Ártabro Gulf is a series of small estuaries which, due to their latitudinal position, are considered “Altas” (high). The most western of these, Cedeira, Ortigueira, O Barqueiro and Viveiro, are wider and present sections of abrupt cliff coasts, although inland splendid sandbanks open up such as Vilarrube en Cedeira, Morouzos en Ortigueira and Covas en Viveiro. The eastern estuaries are smaller and the profile of the coast is gentler.

The inhabitants of these estuaries have been secularly isolated from Santiago, the historical centre of Galicia, and from the land routes of the interior of the peninsula. They therefore opened to the sea, their natural outlet, and were always fishing ports, particularly for whales and bonito, and fundamental centres for linen and hemp trading with the Baltic lands. This explains the appearance of customs in Viveiro in the 16th century and also in Ribadeo, and the existence of a pilots’ school in Ribadeo in the 19th century.

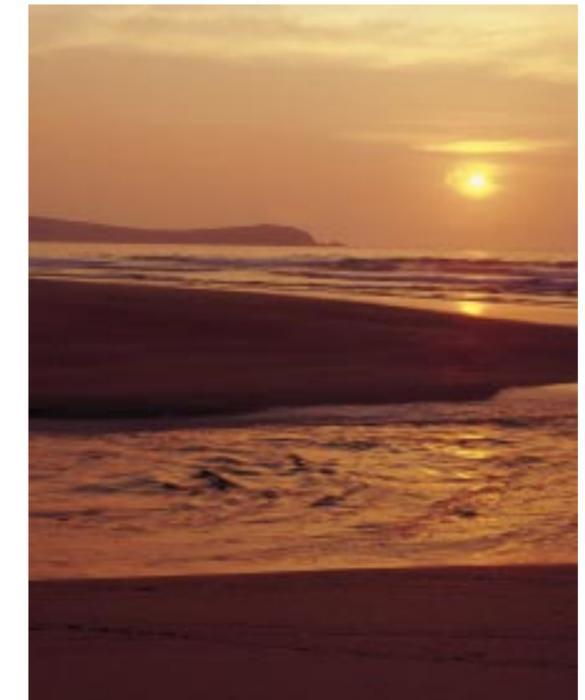
The remoteness of the university centres determined the creation of the centre for Grammar Studies in Viveiro in the 16th century, the so-called Escuela de la Natividad, and in Ribadeo in the 18th century. Towns all very jealous of their royal privileges, Cedeira, Ortigueira, Viveiro and Ribadeo, have their origins in the Middle Ages.



Ria de Cedeira



Esteiro, Mañón (A Coruña)



Valdoviño (A Coruña)



Ría de Cedeira, (A Coruña)

The Ría de Cedeira is in the shape of a double U, at the end of which the sandbanks of San Isidro have developed to the east, and Vilarrube to the south.

Between the Chirlateira point and the Vilarrube sandbank (a sandy double arrow where there are still beautiful dune accumulations), on the left bank, the cliffs that flank the peninsula formed by mount Burneira are a constant. Vertical in the majority, they are the chosen place for lovers of wind and waves.

On the northern shore of the estuary, at the mouth of the river Condomiñas, is Cedeira, which lives off fishing, shellfish and tourism. The streets that climb the steep slopes lodge very good examples of the beautiful traditional architecture that dominated these lands, which takes form on balconies and galleries.

Ría de Cedeira



Vilarrube beach, Cedeira (A Coruña)



San Andrés de Teixido, Cedeira (A Coruña)

To the north of Cedeira, on the way to Montes Eixil or the Candieira and the Serra da Capelada, the littoral rises once more. Cliffs are a constant until we reach the Ortigueira estuary. Amidst this deeply rough scenery is San Andrés de Teixido, a place inseparable from Cedeira, a centre of religious and ethnographic interest of the region due to the survival of animist and pre-Christian cults.

The “*herba de namorar*”, the cult of stones and waters are present. The sanctuary of San Andrés de Teixido is visited by thousands of pilgrims, because, according to legend “*a San Andrés de Teixido, vai de morto quen non foi de vivo*”. The processioners placed stones on the path and gathered the grass called to bring about love.

The A Capelada range stands out not only because of its impressive cliffs (up to the 612 metres in Vixía Herbeira) but also thanks to its geological wealth. In this place we find mantle rocks, serpentinites and eclogites, very difficult to see on our planet. The area has therefore long called the attention of researchers throughout the world.



Pantín beach, Cedeira (A Coruña)



Aerial view, Loiba-Ortigueira (A Coruña)

Between the Estaca de Bares point in the north and cape Ortegá, the northernmost points of the Iberian Peninsula (the first “in a fine, sharp lance trace” and the second “Ortegá convex”, in the words of Otero Pedrayo) opens the broad estuary of Ortigueira and its annexe Ladrado. In front of it, the island of San Vicente.

This arm of sea, a broad fan that enters to the south, seems wedged between the Serra da Capelada in the west and the Serra da Faladoira in the east. To the south the estuary becomes a marsh as we reach the mouth of the Mera and Baleo rivers.

The mild temperatures throughout the year and the abundance of rainfall explain the exuberant vegetation and the wealth of apple trees which, in the Mera sector, becomes its distinguishing mark.

The towns of Ortigueira on the eastern shore and Cariño on the western channel the economic activity of the region. The first, the capital of the former medieval county, is more commercial and tourist; the second, an important port, lives from fishing and its industrial transformation. Alongside these is the port of Espasante, another place where fishing activities are a priority.

Ría de Ortigueira



Ortigueira (A Coruña)



Ría de Ortigueira (A Coruña)



Esteiro beach, Estaca de Bares (A Coruña)



Ría de Ortigueira, (A Coruña)

Ría do Barqueiro



Ría do Barqueiro



Ría do Barqueiro

Barqueiro



Bares, Mañón (A Coruña)

The Ría de O Barqueiro is well limited to the east and west. To the west it is flanked by the Bares peninsula, a narrow strip of land that stretches to the ocean, where its northernmost vortex is formed, the cape of Estaca de Bares. Here, at the foot of the old lighthouse, is the first wind park in Galicia. Very close by, the old water mills show the popular wisdom.

From mount Facho de Maeda, which rises to 331 metres, walkers have an exceptional viewpoint of the Cantabrian coastline that starts here. If we approach the place called Semáforo de Bares, a former coastal battery, we can see the mouth of the estuary. At its feet is Bares, a small, welcoming sea port with its cyclops *peirao* (quay) the origin of which is traditionally assigned to the Phoenicians and which, from the archaeological remains, would seem to be previous to the arrival of the Romans (1st century). In front of this, the eastern sector of the mouth of the estuary, the isle of Coelleira, called *cunicularia* in medieval times due to the abundance of rabbits, and which is currently another privileged place for contemplating the passing of migratory birds.

Inside the estuary, the ports of O Vicedo and O Barqueiro give the note of colour and human heat. At the bottom, where the waters of the river Sor mix with the sea, is the isle and place of Negradas, a good example of a country village.

The town of O Barqueiro is one of the most beautiful prints of the Cantabrian coastline. It is located in a gentle amphitheatre opened by the river Sor. The houses lean, climbing the steep hillsides, and the whole scene is of extraordinary beauty.



Viveiro (Lugo)

Between the Punta do Faro in the east and the Punta Fuciño do Porco in the west is the mouth of the Ría de Viveiro which, goes inland in a V shape, where it blends with the Landro river valley that runs amidst steep hillsides. The fact of being wedged between knolls makes it easier to climb several of them for their views. And so if we climb the Monte Faro or the Monte de San Roque, in this case to the foot of a beautiful hermitage, we can contemplate the full extent of the coastal scenery.

The estuary and its surroundings combine elements that are pleasing to any traveller. Not only can we admire the beautiful town of Viveiro, which focuses the administrative and commercial work of the region and holds many remains of its medieval past, but we can also visit the fishing port of Celeiro and the Area beach, where legend talks of the existence of a city *asolagada* (flooded) in punishment for refusing to receive St. James's preaching of the Gospels.

Ría de Viveiro

Of medieval origin, Viveiro was considered by Molina in the 16th century as “one of the gentile towns of this kingdom”. A commercial and fishing town for centuries, in the 19th century it was an important mining centre. It has been a city since 1891. The old quarter is still one of the most beautiful in Galicia.

Three doors are still preserved of the ancient wall in Viveiro: the *Mayor* or *Porta do Castelo* (16th century), declared a National Monument, the *do Valado* and the *da Vila*. Inside is the outstanding 12th century Romanic church of Santa María do Campo, and the gothic San Francisco from the 14th century. Furthermore, in the proximity is San Pedro de Viveiro, the former city cathedral (National Monument); the convent of Miraflores, and *O Naseiro*, where a typical procession is held at the end of August. In the surroundings is the Chavín forest with its spectacular eucalyptus.

On the western shore of the estuary, Covas has become a residential and tourist area, and its buildings contrast strongly with those of the old quarter.



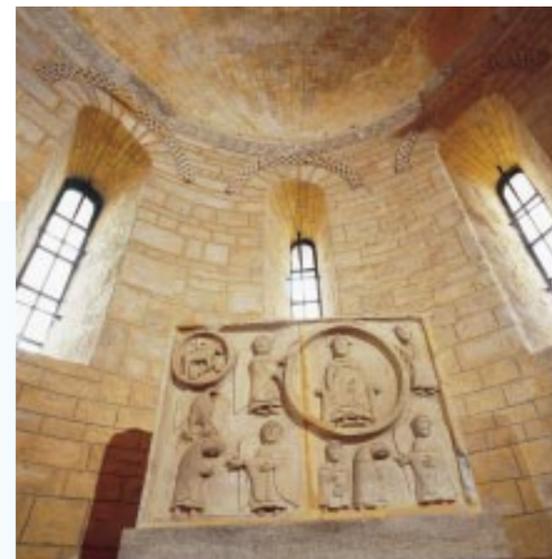
Carlos I gate, Viveiro (Lugo)



Church of San Francisco, Viveiro (Lugo)



Foz (Lugo)



Stone altarpiece San Martiño de Mondoñedo, Foz (Lugo)

The Ría de Foz is nothing more than a small brushstroke of sea drawn on the coastal plain. However, the large beaches that surround it make it an exceptional place. Foz, like many other towns in the north of the peninsula, finds its roots in the medieval centuries although, in recent years it has experienced strong economic growth. An inshore fishing port, it is one of the most significant capitals of A Mariña. A commercial and administrative centre, in the summer it becomes a prime tourist centre.

Nearby in San Martiño de Mondoñedo is the basilica, today the parish church, of great artistic interest. Founded in the 10th century, it was built through the 11th to the 14th centuries, and was the first cathedral of the Dumio bishopric.

Ría de Foz



San Martiño de Mondoñedo, Foz (Lugo)



San Martiño de Mondoñedo, Foz (Lugo)



Foz (Lugo)



Ría de Ribadeo

The Ría de Ribadeo, washed by the waters of the river Eo, is the easternmost of the estuaries of Galicia, which joins it to, more than separating it from, Asturias. It has a long shape stretching from north to south and enters Ribadeo on the western shore and Castropol on the eastern.

The towns of Figueras, Castropol and Vegadeo, on the Asturian shore, and Ribadeo on the Galician shore, centralise the life of the regions of the Eo. It is here that the commercial and fishing activities are concentrated.

Ribadeo is a compendium of history from medieval times to our days. A bishop's centre of the dioceses of Mondoñedo in the Middle Ages, in the 18th century, the powerful middle class left its urban print on the town. The palace of the first Marques of Sargadelos, a powerful industrialist, is today the town hall. The Sailing School was set up in the Casa do Patín in the 19th century. Today, the town is the most important commercial centre in the north. Among its magnificent beaches is the Playa de As Catedrais, thus named from the structure of the cliffs like gothic buttresses.

Ría de Ribadeo



Los Moreno tower, Ribadeo (Lugo)



As Catedrais beach, Ribadeo (Lugo)

Behind a first impression of uniformity, the place hides the most spectacular series of sea *furnas* (caves) in Galicia. Vertical cliffs join up with stone columns that serve as a lobby to a rosary of caves, sometimes connected by deep passages. A place well worth a visit and which serves as an exceptional porch or epilogue for any visitors who comes to Galicia or bids farewell.



As Catedrais beach, Ribadeo (Lugo)



Ría de Ribadeo (Lugo)