

# galicia

lighthouses and wild beaches



XUNTA DE GALICIA

# Contents

## **T** 08 | The cathedrals of the sea

A trip in order to witness how the powerful Cantabrian sea sculpted amazing strangely-shaped cliffs.



## **T** 14 | Strolling along the northern part of the north

Beaches, cliffs and a rough coastline mingle and give way to breathtaking sceneries.



## **T** 20 | Sugar beaches

Fine, white sandy beaches which mix with charming coves and lighthouses on abrupt cliffs.

## **T** 26 | Lighthouses and beaches at the end of the world

The winding, challenging relief of the Death Coast presents one of the most enchanting landscapes in Galicia.



## **T** 32 | The beaches from “Mar Adentro” (The film “The Sea Inside”)

Amazing, long beaches surrounded by intense coastal nature.



## **T** 38 | The Arousa estuary beaches

A trip across an estuary full of legends about “moors”, pirates and mermaids in a magical surrounding which invites one to dream.



## **T** 44 | The Costa da Vela magical triangle

Waters which caress sandy white beaches with incredible legends.



## **T** 50 | The Gods’ paradise

The Cies Isles: a union of white sandy beaches and turquoise waters, the perfect place to feel freedom.

**EDITED BY:** Turgalicia. Estrada Santiago Noia km 3, 15896 Santiago  
Tel.: 902 200 432 | Fax: 981 537 588 | cir.turgalicia@xunta.es  
**COORDINATOR:** www.valoraconsultores.com  
**DESIGN AND LAYOUT:** Versal Comunicación S.L.  
**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Turgalicia Archive

**PRINTED:**

**LEGAL DEPOSIT:**



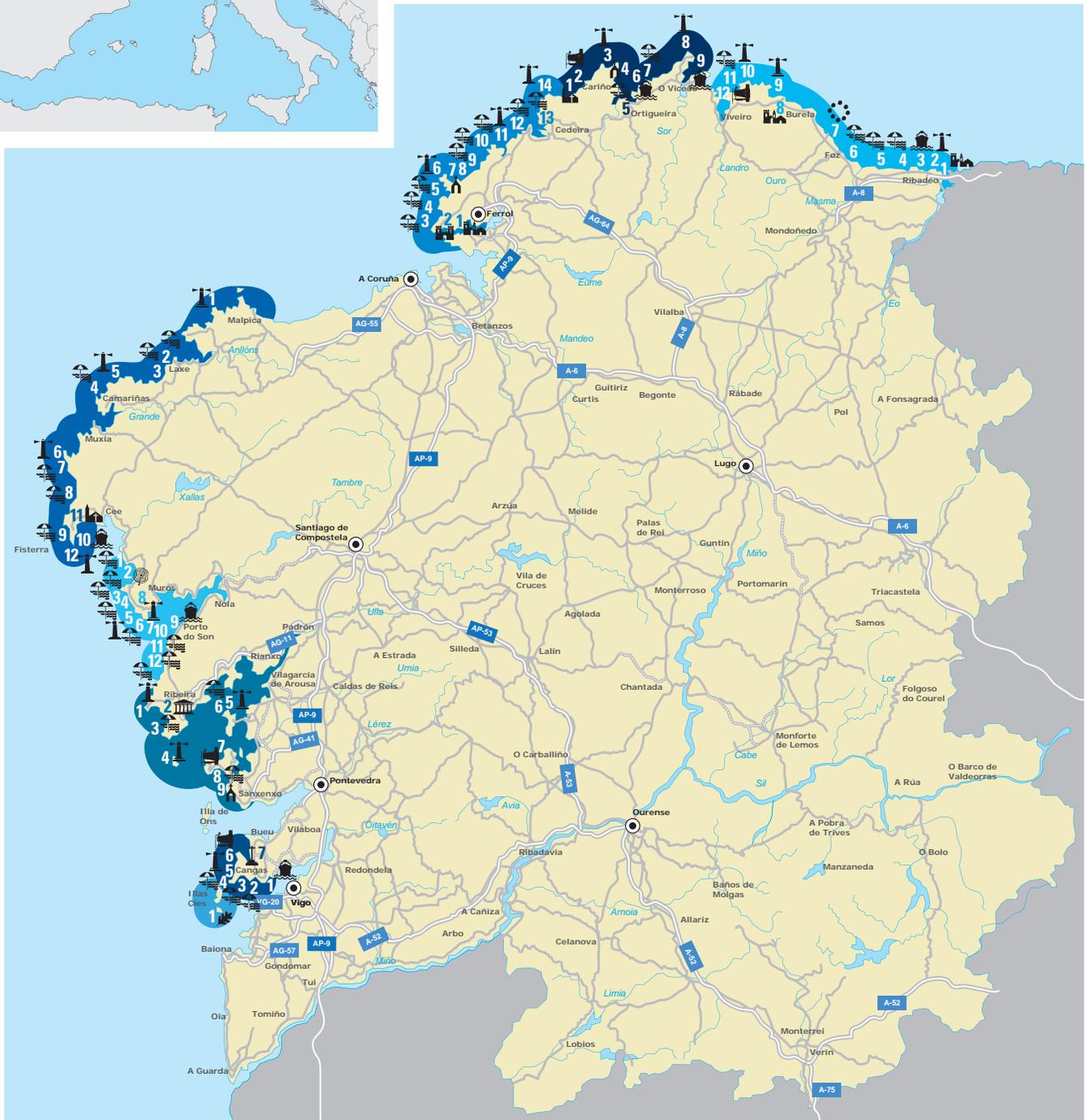


# WILD GALICIA

If there is an endless sound in Galicia, it is surely the never-ending beat of the sea against the rocks, so rough a sea, once the home of mermaids, that even the bravest of sailors found it at some time or other hard to master. Tide after tide, the Galician coastline gives way to wild beaches, open-sea estuaries and long stretches of sand which are perfect for walks where the salty sea breeze caresses one's face as the damp sand presses against one's feet. Obviously, our coast is guarded by many a lighthouse, lookouts on amazing spots, who, day after day, help boats reach dry land safely.

To cover our coastline can turn into a unique experience if, apart from admiring its beauty, one takes the time to live it differently: plunge into our sea, feel the ocean breeze while surfing, sail in our waters and visit amazing places like our isles, which hide all sorts of treasures, discover one by one our lighthouses all of which are first hand witnesses of the routes ships take along our coast... In a nutshell, leave your footprint on our wildest beaches and allow, at the same time, Galicia to do the same to you.

# Lighthouses and wild beaches



Motorway / Dual carriageway	
High capacity road	
Others	



# Proposed experiences

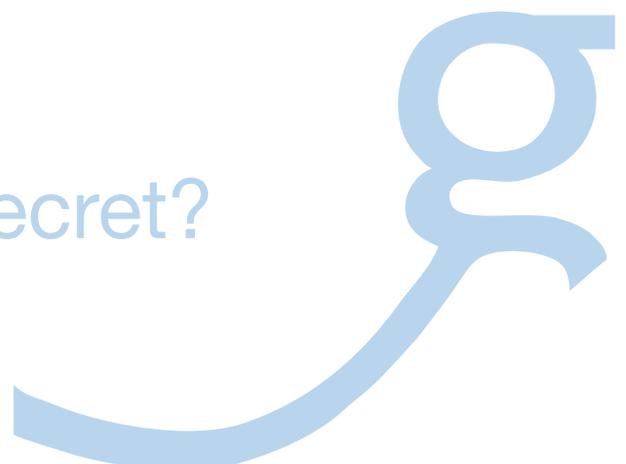
The cathedrals of the sea			
1	The town of Ribadeo		Historic ensemble
2	Pancha isle lighthouse		Lighthouse
3	Rinlo dock		Dock
4	Os Castros-Illas beach		Beach
5	As Catedrais beach		Beach
6	Peizás beach		Beach
7	Fazouro Celtic settlement		Castro culture
8	Sargadelos iron, steel and pottery complex		Historic ensemble
9	Cape San Cibrao lighthouse		Lighthouse
10	Punta Roncadoira lighthouse		Lighthouse
11	Esteiro beach		Beach
12	Mount Faro viewpoint		Viewpoint

Walking along the northern part of the north			
1	Santo André de Teixido sanctuary		Sanctuary
2	Vixía Herbeira viewpoint		Viewpoint
3	Cape Ortegal lighthouse		Lighthouse
4	San Xiao de Trebo chapel		Chapel
5	Morouzos beach		Beach
6	Espasante dock		Dock
7	Céltigos beach		Beach
8	Estaca de Bares lighthouse		Lighthouse
9	Bares dock		Dock

Sugar beaches			
1	A Graña neighbourhood		Historic ensemble
2	San Felipe castle		Castle
3	Lumbó beach		Beach
4	Doniños beach		Beach
5	Covas beach		Beach
6	Cape Prior lighthouse		Lighthouse
7	Santa Comba hermitage		Hermitage
8	Sartaña beach		Beach
9	Ponzos beach		Beach
10	Casal beach		Beach
11	A Frouxeira lighthouse		Lighthouse
12	Pantín beach		Beach
13	Vilarrube beach		Beach
14	Punta Candieira lighthouse		Lighthouse

Lighthouses and beaches at the end of the world			
1	Punta Nariga lighthouse		Lighthouse
2	Soesto beach		Beach
3	Traba beach		Beach
4	Cape Vilán lighthouse		Lighthouse
5	Area de Trece beach		Beach
6	Cape Touriñán lighthouse		Lighthouse
7	Nemiña beach		Beach
8	O Rostro beach		Beach
9	Mar de Fóra beach		Beach
10	Fisterra dock		Dock
11	Santa María das Areas church		Church
12	Cape Fisterra lighthouse		Lighthouse

Can you keep my secret?



### The beaches from "The Sea Inside"

1	Caldebarcos beach		Beach
2	Carnota beach		Beach
3	Lariño beach		Beach
4	Lariño lighthouse		Lighthouse
5	Ancoradoiro beach		Beach
6	Area Maior beach and Louro lagoon		Beach
7	Mount Louro lighthouse		Lighthouse
8	Laxe das Rodas petroglyph		Petroglyph
9	Porto do Son dock		Dock
10	Baroña beach and Celtic settlement		Beach
11	Río Seira-Boca do río beach		Beach
12	As Furnas beach		Beach

### Beaches on the Arousa estuary

1	Corrubedo lighthouse		Lighthouse
2	Casa da Costa (CIELGA)		Museum
3	O Vilar and Ladeira beaches		Beach
4	Sálvora lighthouse		Lighthouse
5	Punta Cabalo lighthouse		Lighthouse
6	Area de Secada beach		Beach
7	Mount Siradella		Viewpoint
8	A Lanzada beach		Beach
9	Nosa Señora da Lanzada chapel		Chapel

### The Costa da Vela magical triangle

1	Cangas dock		Dock
2	Nerga beach		Beach
3	Barra beach		Beach
4	Melide beach		Beach
5	Cape Home lighthouse		Lighthouse
6	Facho de Donón viewpoint		Viewpoint
7	Hío stone cross		Stone cross

### The Gods' paradise

1	The Cíes isles		Protected nature reserve
---	----------------	---	--------------------------



# The cathedrals of the sea

Can you keep my secret?

As Catedrais (Cathedral) beach



A Mariña lucense (Coastal Lugo) is a never-ending source of marvels of nature which live side by side to a spectacular historical heritage. This stretch of the Galician coast, bathed by the waters of the Bay of Biscay, hides within the fanciful shapes of its cliffs magical legends about mermaids and sailors.



- 1 The town of Ribadeo
- 2 Pancha isle lighthouse
- 3 Rinlo dock
- 4 Os Castros-Illas beach
- 5 As Catedrais (Cathedral) beach
- 6 Peizás beach
- 7 Fazouro Celtic settlement
- 8 Sargadelos iron, steel and pottery complex
- 9 Cape San Cibrao lighthouse
- 10 Punta Roncadoira lighthouse
- 11 Esteiro beach
- 12 Mount Faro viewpoint

Day 1

## From the town of Ribadeo to the Fazouro Celtic settlement

We shall start our trip in the town of Ribadeo which is situated on the mouth of the river Eo, which acts as a natural frontier with Asturias, and is smack in the heart of the Mariña Lucense region. The town's splendid past can be accounted for by taking a stroll through its charming historical quarter full of beautiful "indiana" (style brought by Spaniard who had been in Latin America) buildings. When we get to the dock, we can go for a short walk by a rugged cliff. While on route, we can stop to take in the Cantabrian breeze at the Santa Cruz viewpoint at over 200 m above sea level. From here we can also discover the Pancha isle and two picturesque blue and white lighthouses. The smallest one is square-shaped and it dates back to the end of the nineteenth century while the other, more modern one, was built in 1987.

Due to the shape of the Cantabrian coast, we find ourselves in an area which is ideal for hiking lovers. We will need a comfortable pair of shoes to enjoy

### USEFUL INFORMATION:

**Starting point:** Ribadeo.

**Finishing point:** Viveiro.

**Days:** 2

**Approximate distance:** 90 km

**Other interesting details:**

- › Sargadelos factory. Contact number: 982557841 ([www.sargadelos.com](http://www.sargadelos.com))

the best way to see this coast as we follow the different routes on foot.

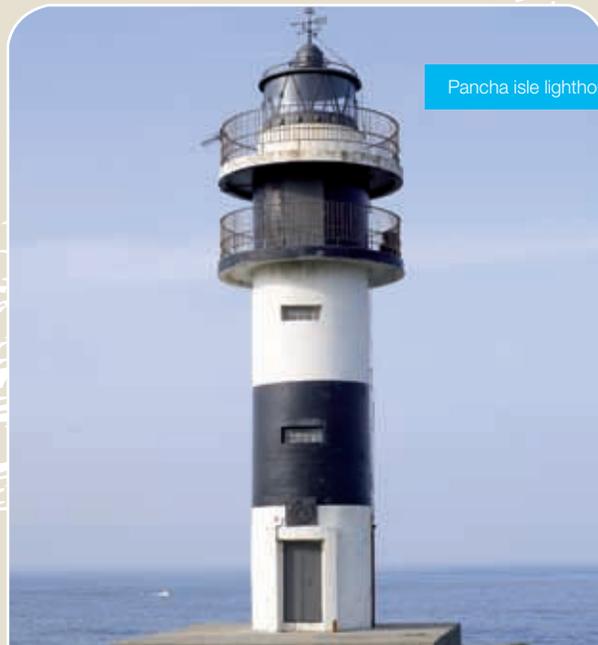
If we carry on westwards, we will come to the fishing village of Rinlo, which is very well known for its gastronomy. Although its number one dish is lobster and rice, some octopus, "empanada" (Galician pie) or what-you-may tapas included in the menus, come in a close second.

After lunch, we can go for a stroll to Os Castros beach and reach the sea by crossing the unique access which is a natural tunnel. This beach invites us to lie on its completely smooth rocks, where caressed by the rhythmical sound of the waves, we will be able to sunbathe or take a short nap.



## An almost spiritual experience

With renewed energy, we shall head to one of the most beautiful beaches in the entire north, Augas Santas beach which is known worldwide as As Catedrais beach (Cathedrals beach). Its name comes from the unique rock formations in the shape of great arches, some of which have broken due to the force of the ocean. Yet, apart from its beauty, this beach hides many a cave where the sea searches for a bigger and bigger opening, for which we must be very careful during our walk. When the tide is high, we can contemplate As Catedrais beach from the cliff as long as we keep a safe distance from the edge. And if we are lucky enough to be in the area when the tide is low, we can walk down the steps onto the fine sand and confront these imposing stone arches face to face. If we would like to know about the weather and the tides here before coming, we can check on Meteogalicia's website.



Pancha isle lighthouse



Pancha isle lighthouse



*Going up to Roncadoira lighthouse is the toughest part of the route, the seagulls seem to find it hard to keep their balance, the waves strike the cliffs with intensity.*

## Sunset by the sea

If there is still sunlight left, we can continue a little further along the coast, where we will come to some more urban beaches which, however, maintain their natural charm. A good time to make a stop is when we get to Peizás beach, which is more secluded than others in this area. As the day reaches its end, there is no better way to bid it farewell than to sit and watch the sun set at Castro do Fazouro, a spot right at the foot of the cliff. The wind blows strongly here and this invites us to seek refuge within gaps in the walls in order to feel their warmth after an entire day in the sun.

Day 2

## From the Sargadelos factory to the town of Viveiro

The second day of this itinerary takes us along the coast to the Sargadelos factory, which is half way between the fishing town of Burela and Cervo. This handmade china establishment is situated in a well-kept rural area and we will recognise it at once as it is in a 1970's round building. The process of making

this porcelain, which originated in the early years of the nineteenth century thanks to an enlightened initiative, is very interesting. We shall try to be there during visiting hours so we can take a look at the production plant and then at the exhibition in the store. In the display cabinets we will be able to admire the first Sargadelos porcelains and a wide selection of traditional Spanish and foreign pieces. The more current items are also true porcelain jewels with which to surprise a loved one with a typical gift from Galicia. The other Sargadelos factory is located in O Castro, in the town council of Sada in the province of A Coruña.

Also very interesting is one of the legends from this area which tells the story of “Os Farallóns”, two small islets opposite Cape San Cibrao, in Cervo. It is said that a mermaid called “A Maruxaina” lives there and that when there is bad weather she comes out to call the fishermen. Some say to help them if they are in danger, yet others sustain that her intention is to trick them so they become shipwrecked.

Referring to this legend, an old tradition was recovered a few years ago. Some of the neighbours make a mermaid with long blonde hair using a





spindle. On the second Saturday in August as night falls, she is taken from “Os Farallóns” to San Cibrao beach. There she undergoes a trial which ends in a not-guilty verdict. When it is over, she returns to the islets where she remains hidden for the rest of the year.

### Northeastern winds

Continuing our route, we will get to Xove at which point we will head north towards the imposing punta Roncadoira lighthouse. The clearly marked access through picturesque villages and green fields changes progressively as we go up the road,



and becomes wilder and wilder due to the huge eucalyptus trees twisted by the wind, the huge rocks which shed their shade upon us and above all, the low temperatures. We must remember to come prepared for the north-easterly winds in this area. At the edge of the cliff, we will be able to hear the sea's rage as it hits the rocks with all its might. This is the toughest part of the route. The seagulls seem to find it hard to keep their balance, the waves strike with intensity...but the impeccable Roncadoira lighthouse makes us fall in love with the place. This slim, well-kept, easy-to-get-to, brilliant white lighthouse allows us to contemplate the Cantabrian (Bay of Biscay) coast with its little isles inhabited only by seagulls and other ocean birds. With this feeling of wild peace we will descend from Roncadoira towards Viveiro in order to stop at Esteiro beach, still in the town council of Xove. We will have a calmer view and an ideal area for a picnic or a stroll at any time of the year. A wooden walkway will lead us to the beach in the more protected entrance of the Viveiro estuary.

### To delight the palate

In the same direction, we will go up to mount Faro. It is worthwhile just for the views and as we are here, we can take a walk up to the lighthouse hidden by the eucalyptus forest. If we hurry, we are still in time to visit the town of Viveiro and enjoy a pleasant meal. Some fresh hake from the Celeiro fish market is a perfect ending to this trip along coastal Lugo.

Punta (Point) Roncadoira lighthouse



*Os Castros beach invites us to lie on its completely smooth rocks, where caressed by the rhythmical sound of the waves, we will be able to sunbathe or take a short nap.*

Os Castros beach



# Walking along the northern part of the north

Can you keep my secret?



As we are in Cedeira, we ought not to miss the opportunity to visit Santo André (St Andrew) of Teixido Sanctuary and follow the saying: “whoever does not go while alive, will go after they die”. So do not forget to leave a pebble on a “milladoiro” (small piles of stones) on the way as proof of the visit. And if one is in search of love, find some “falling-in-love” grass, one never knows...



- 1 Santo André de Teixido sanctuary
- 2 Vixía Herbeira viewpoint
- 3 Cape Ortegal lighthouse
- 4 San Xiao de Trebo chapel
- 5 Morouzos beach
- 6 Espasante dock
- 7 Céltigos beach
- 8 Estaca de Bares lighthouse
- 9 Bares dock

## Day 1 From Santo André de Teixido to the Loiba cliffs

Let us head now towards Cariño and go up the Capelada range to the Garita (Sentry Box) da Herbeira. From this viewpoint, one can see how the cliffs plunge down almost completely vertically to a sea full of rocks. They are one of the highest in Europe. Once we get to the Herbeira viewpoint, the highest spot on the way, take a deep breath and feel the immensity of the earth, the strength of the wind and the peace this place offers.

### A spectacle in Ortegal

We shall carry on to Cape Ortegal, where one of the most photographed lighthouses in the area stands. Its importance contrasts with the simplicity of its red and white cylinder tower. There are several reasons for its fame, yet what most stands out here are the “Aguillóns”, huge rocks which emerge fiercely near the cape and against which the waves beat with anger, especially during a storm, offering an amazing spectacle full of energy. To the right is

## USEFUL INFORMATION:

**Starting point:** Cedeira.

**Finishing point:** Mañón.

**Days:** 2

**Approximate distance:** 60 km

the Orteguera estuary with its stretches full of cliffs and beaches.

The beauty of this place, where the wind will play tricks with the visitor, deserves another moment of inspiration staring at the ocean before heading on to the little San Xiao (St, Julian) of Trebo chapel. From the surroundings of the temple, a path connects the trekking route to the fishing town of Cariño. If it is around lunchtime, it would be a good idea to savour a ray fish stew, or scrambled eggs with sea urchins and algae. On working days, one can stop at one of the traditional canning factories and take a sample of the sea back home in the shape of a can filled with a fish variety.

Our trip continues on to Orteguera, where the river Mera forms a beautiful mouth which can already be contemplated as we head back from Cape

Esteiro and Estaca de Bares beaches



Ortegal. Starting off at the port, we can take a 4 km walk Morouzos beach. Its waters are calm and peaceful for bathing, behind it a pine tree grove and an area of marshland and rush; and to the right is the small Ladrado cove. In the middle of July, the pine tree wood becomes a camping site for the audience at the Ortigueira Festival, an unavoidable summer event which has been one of the world's folk references since 1978.

### A Celtic settlement by the sea

The restaurants by the beach where one can savour some delicious seafood have made our next stop, Espasante, well-known to all. In the evenings, some of the taverns offer a cosy atmosphere with traditional music, where the customers enjoy singing popular songs. But let us wait a while before indulging in the fun. At this moment, the nearby cliffs will offer us a pleasant surprise, as at the end of the dock, punta dos Prados, a coastal Celtic fortress appears. Close by is the practically virgin Céltigos beach, from where one will have a beautiful view of Cape Ortegal and its "Aguillóns". We will also pass by the beaches of San Antonio; Eirón, where one of the largest caves in the area is located: and Bimbieiro, the only pebble beach

Cape Ortegal lighthouse



Cape Ortegall lighthouse



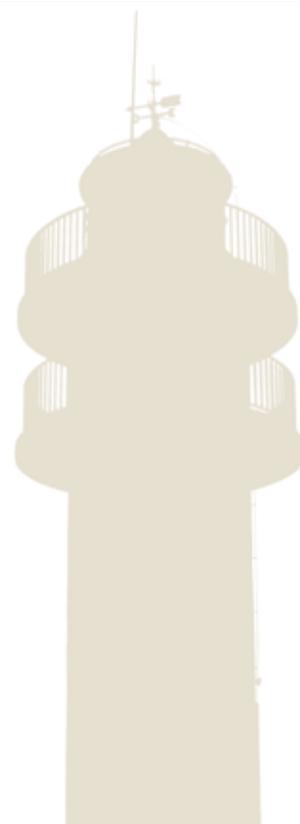


on this stretch of coast. Along this high cliff area, a walk in the footsteps of the “percebeiros” (barnacle fishermen) will allow us to understand the perils these skilful fishermen undergo on a daily basis. If there is a spring tide, one can go down to the beach to see all the sea life, and if it is a working day, one will surely come across barnacle, octopus, algae or urchin fishermen and women carrying out their daily routine, without a doubt, a beautiful snapshot which is real proof of the riches of these waters.

Day 2

## Estaca de Bares lighthouse and its dock

On the second day of our trip, we will head towards O Barqueiro, but before we enter the town, we will take the turning which leads to Bares in order to visit the cape and the lighthouse. The 43° 47' 9.26" N, 07° 41' 2.23" W coordinates are the ones which are always included when referring to Estaca de Bares point, the northernmost cape on the Iberian Peninsula and where the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of Biscay meet. If we happen to have some binoculars, we will be able to witness the flight of migrating birds from the Atlantic, the Mediterranean or the Arctic.



*The beauty of the cliffs at Picón-Loiba has been chosen many a time as the set for several movies.*

## Where the ocean becomes a sea

We can go up to the old Semáforo (Traffic Lights) of Bares, which has long forgotten its previous military use and is now quaint little hotel. From here we can contemplate a very special and symbolic sunset. Near the lighthouse, on the cliffs, we will come across a line of windmills, some of which have been renovated, for yet another beautiful snapshot.

We can end the day by going down to the Bares dock where we will have the chance to taste some fresh fish or some rice and lobster at a terrace by the beach. Surrounded by vegetable gardens and normally empty, it is immersed in a magical aura.

Two days full of beaches, cliffs and lighthouses situated on emblematic spots with the north-easterly wind as a faithful companion, which will clear the sky ahead.



Loiba beach

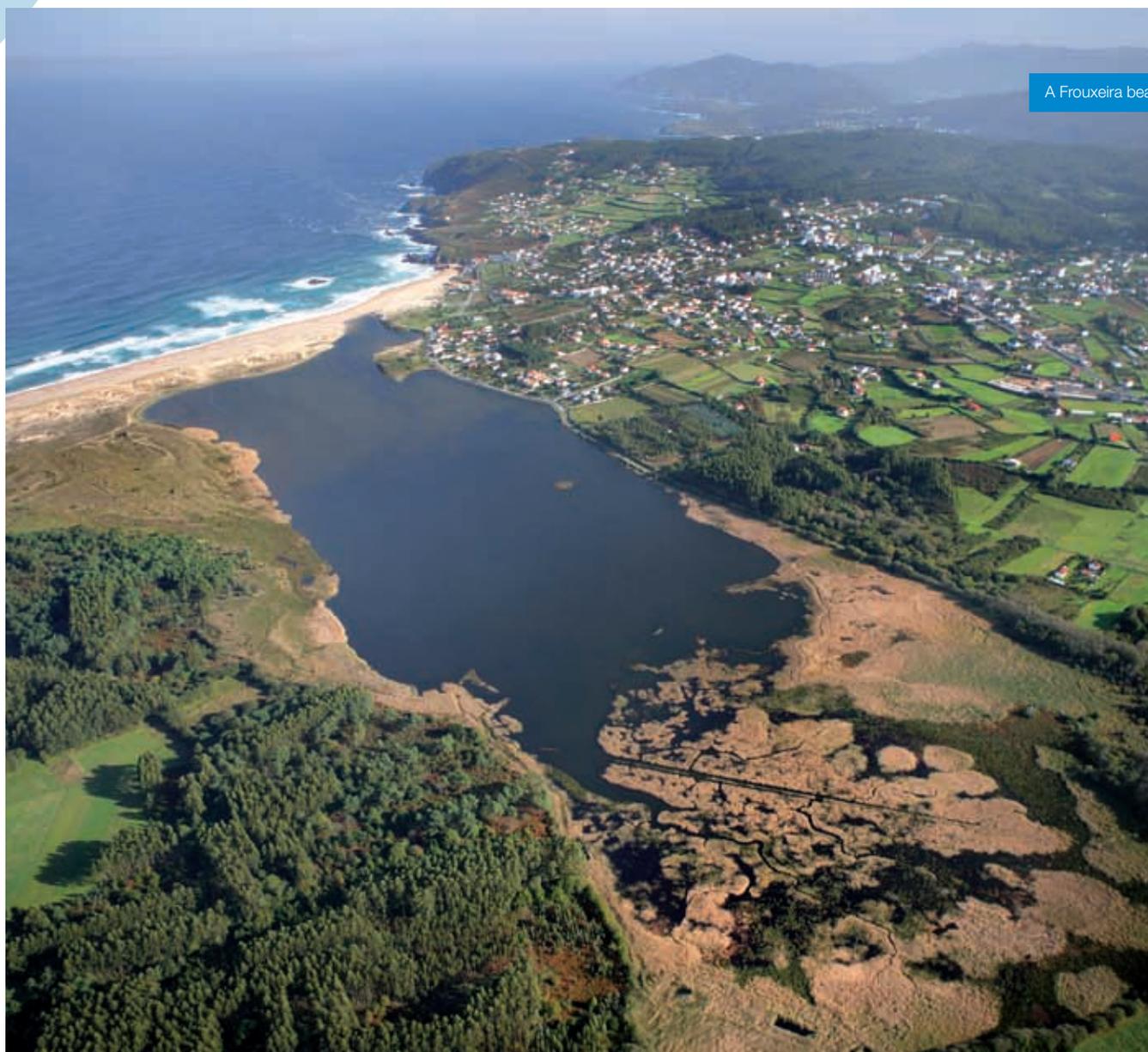
*Estaca de Bares is the northernmost point on the Iberian Peninsula and where the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of Biscay meet.*



The town of Cariño

# Sugar beaches

Can you keep my secret?



A Frouxeira beach

From the Ferrol estuary to the one in Cedeira, many are the kilometre long, fine, white, sandy beaches which intermingle with enchanting coves and lighthouses on steep cliffs. This is an ideal area for pleasant walks and for practising water sports like surfing or windsurfing.



- 1 A Graña neighbourhood
- 2 San Felipe castle
- 3 Lumbó beach
- 4 Doniños beach
- 5 Covas beach
- 6 Cape Prior lighthouse
- 7 Santa Comba hermitage
- 8 Sartaña beach
- 9 Ponzos beach
- 10 Casal beach
- 11 A Frouxeira lighthouse
- 12 Pantín beach
- 13 Vilarrube beach
- 14 Punta Candieira lighthouse

## Day 1 From Ferrol to Casal beach in Narón

We head out from Ferrol. Our route begins in the fishing neighbourhood known as “A Graña”, with its typical narrow houses and cobbled roads which will lead us to San Felipe (St Philip) Castle which has the town at its feet. This fortress is an excellent example of the true academic designs of its time, the Enlightenment. As we contemplate from here the marvellous views of the estuary and the Palma Castle, situated in the municipality of Mugardos, we cannot but help recalling the historical and cultural relevance of these defensive fortresses on the Ferrol estuary and that too of the Military Arsenal, which together made the entrance impregnable from the sea, above all for the English incursions.

### A legendary beach

Let us continue towards Cariño in order to reach Doniños, the first wild beach on our route, by the lagoon of the same name. The latter, apart from being home to the ancient city of Valverde sunken here due to divine punishment according

## USEFUL INFORMATION:

**Starting point:** Ferrol.

**Finishing point:** Cedeira.

**Days:** 2

**Approximate distance:** 100 km

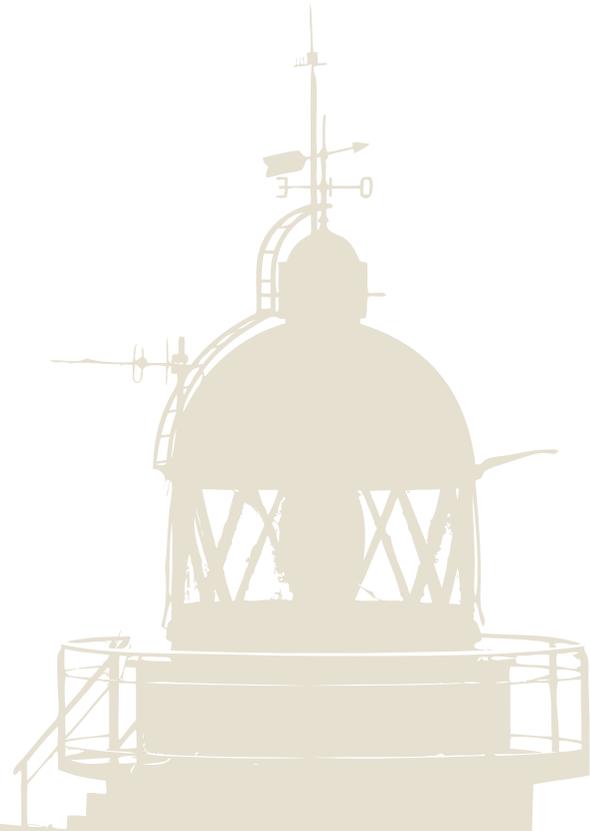
to legend, also appears in the history books under the Brión Battle, as it was here where the English disembarked and had to retreat as they were defeated by the neighbours of San Felipe and A Graña. This confrontation is commemorated on August 25<sup>th</sup> with a re-enactment which has given way to more and more frequent dramatized visits of St Phillip Castle.

On the sand, we will find the remains of a coastal battery and, from the left-hand side, we can access the little Lumbó beach. If we happen to be here when the tide is low and at the close of the day, we will be lucky enough to admire an amazing sunset amidst natural stone sculptures. On the other end of the beach, we can access the wooden walkway and continue our stroll. If we have a bike, we will be



able to continue almost all the way to Covas along the bike lane.

Our next stop is at San Xurxo (St George) beach on the south end of Cape Prior. It has a shell shape, extremely white sand and it is windy due to North East winds and, it is one of the neighbours' favourite during the summer. Maybe because as it is 2 km long, it is ideal for long walks in the dunes or by the sea, in order to feel the waves caress one's feet when the tide is low. From Herbosa Point, where we get to following a nearby path, we will have a perfect panoramic view of the complete arch formed by the San Xurxo, Esmelle and O Vilar beaches referred to as the Covas beaches by the neighbours. A perfect snapshot of turquoise waters among tall pine trees.



*When it rains and it is sunny at the same time,  
The devil lurks in Ferrol  
— Carrying a load of spoons  
And calling out to the women.*



## Emerald waters

At Cape prior, we will also encounter the lighthouse bearing the same name and which has been working since 1853. There used to be a military detachment here and its remains look peculiar from a distance nowadays. Behind the lighthouse, there are some steps which allow us to climb down 171 m to see the beach from the North and also the St Comba Isle with its Romanesque hermitage. We can also visit As Fontes cove where the sea leaves behind emerald green water pools: a perfect place to lay in the sun and soak one's feet.

We will now pass by the Sartaña and Medote beaches in order to get to the wildest, Ponzos. On the very right there is a nudist area and, when the tide is low, one can climb over the rocks to get to the lonely Casal beach, which is a part of the neighbouring municipality of Narón. An experience not to be missed on any of these wild beaches is to walk barefoot in the sand and while the wind messes up one's hair.

*“Marraxo” (a type of shark), monk fish, tuna and barnacles are the local gastronomic favourites in this area.*



Santa Comba beach

## From Frouxeira lighthouse to point Candieira

Our first stop on this second day will be heading towards Valdoviño in order to offer the first panoramic view of the day from the Frouxeira lighthouse. Admire the immensity of the beach named the same as the lighthouse and leave footprints on the almost 3 km long stretch of sand until the rough sea or the strong winds sweep them away. Wander about the tunnels under the lighthouse too. When they come to an end, one will be able to see the force of the ocean and understand the risk the “percebeiros” (barnacle fishermen) take as they keep a tradition alive. Surely, a prayer is said for them at the Virxe do Porto (Virgin of the Port) pilgrimage at the start of July, as for the rest of the fisherman from this area. The chapel is located very near to here, about 3 km away, on a little isle we can get to by following some narrow steps. Even though it is tiny, its structure is simple and its walls are white, it stands out in an imposing fashion in this natural landscape.

### The surfers' beach

As we leave behind the wildest part of the Frouxeira beach, we can enter the protected area where the lagoon bearing the same name is situated. As it is naturally opened towards the sea, it is a privileged area for birdwatchers, especially during the winter. Species such as the mallard, the plover or the European coot are common.

Heading north, on the very edge of the cliffs, the Paraño Viewpoint will offer us a panoramic view of the other end of the Frouxeira beach and then we shall head down a road which leads directly to the Rodo or Pantín beach. The latter name is also the popular name for the surfing championship held here since 1988 and where the top surfers from all over the world come.

Our next stop is at the Vilarrube beach: a charming beach with calm waters, ideal for long strolls and also offers the palate tasty razor clams or barnacles at the nearby taverns. If one has the chance and the weather is nice, one

Punta (Point) Candieira lighthouse



should dive into the iodine rich waters which will improve one's tan.

### The lighthouse with a thousand bends

When we get to Cedeira, there are still a few hours of daylight left, so crossing the historical quarter; we will come to the white Santo Antón (St Anthony) hermitage. This natural viewpoint offers a magnificent panoramic view of the mouth of the estuary as we head up to the Lighthouse at Candieira point. Here, at the top of Mount Purrido, one can head down the ten well-known bow-shaped bends on the road towards the lighthouse which has been working since 1954 or one may decide to admire the wild landscape from the mountain side as a goat or a wild horse passes by.

For our last meal on this trip across the "Rías Altas" one should not forget to include in the menu, "marraxo" (a type of shark) stew, monk fish Cedeira style, tuna in a sauce or "pastelón", a type of pie made with pastry instead of bread dough and filled with delicacies such as tuna, cod with raisins, conger eel... Barnacles are also a common dish which will evoke the unmistakable flavour and aroma only our rough sea can provide.

Pantín beach



# Lighthouses and beaches at the end of the world

Can you keep my secret?



If one were able to fly and lift one's body just a few metres above Cape Fisterra, one would be able to contemplate the twisting and threatening shape of the Costa da Morte (Death Coast) which proudly moves in and out of the fierce Atlantic. Its historical lighthouses warn sailors of the dangers ahead and the energy of the waves takes the fine white sandy beaches captive unveiling one of the most bewitching landscapes in Galicia.



- 1 Punta Nariga lighthouse
- 2 Soesto beach
- 3 Traba beach
- 4 Cape Vilán lighthouse
- 5 Area de trece beach
- 6 Cape Tourián lighthouse
- 7 Nemiña beach
- 8 O Rostro beach
- 9 Mar de Fóra beach
- 10 Fisterra dock
- 11 Santa María das Areas church
- 12 Cape Fisterra lighthouse

## Day 1 From punta Nariga lighthouse to mount Facho

It is said that the name of the Death Coast, among other theories, refers to the great number of catastrophes which have occurred in these waters in past times, and so too in recent ones, due to its dangerous cliffs which plunge into the sea and the frequent storms.

### The lighthouse which was a ship

On strategic spots, signals, which have survived until our days, were raised in ancient times and after being restored have become icons of a territory branded by the harshness of its ocean. Some have even been built recently, like the modern punta Nariga Lighthouse, in Malpica de Bergantiños, the first stop on this route. Built in 1995 and designed by the Galician architect César Portela, it rises regally on the cape with the same name. It was made with pink Porriño granite and when one looks carefully, one will be able to make out a great ship made up of three parts which rises 50 m above sea level. This structure blends in with

## USEFUL INFORMATION:

**Starting point:** Malpica de Bergantiños.

**Finishing point:** Fisterra.

**Days:** 2

**Approximate distance:** 150 km

**Other interesting details:**

- › Cape Vilán lighthouse museum (Interpretation centre for shipwrecks, lighthouses and maritime signs) Open every day in the morning and in the afternoon. Contact numbers: 687521167/ 678621062

the animal-shaped rocks sculpted by the wind and the sea and together with the Sisarga Isles to the north and Cape Roncudo to the south completes an extremely unusual view. The barnacles which breed on this cape are said to be the best in Galicia, so one would be inclined to try some.

Our trip continues toward Camariñas, but first, we shall make a couple of stops in Laxe. Far away from the busy beach in the town centre are the two

*Penedos of Pasarela.  
When I see you, rocks  
I die of love for her.*

Eduardo Pondal

virgin beaches of Soesto and Traba which, even though they are cove-shaped, may greet strong winds and waves. In both cases, the car has to be parked nearby and then one should cross the dunes on foot over the wooden walkways until one gets to the fine white sand. Soesto is around 860 m long from one end to the other, while Traba is over 2,5 km long. This is a nice distance to cover while contemplating the ocean birds among the reeds in the dunes: seagulls, kingfishers or wagtails among other live in this huge ornithological observatory. And if we look up, in the distance, we will be able to see some of the curious stones sculpted by the wind and time on the Penedos (rocks) of Traba and Pasarela, declared a Protected Landscape by the Xunta de Galicia.

### **Vilán and the English cemetery**

Actually, this eastern part of the Pena Forcada Range goes from Traba de Laxe to Cape Vilán, our next stop in the Camariñas territory.

At this stone place, which also feels intimidating due to the gale force winds, there stands another of the best-known lighthouses on the Death Coast, not only because of its structure but also due to its location and now also because it is home to the Museum of Shipwrecks. While visiting the exhibition, one can find out about the lighthouses and their secrets and come to know why the beauty of this place contrasts with its tremendous danger.





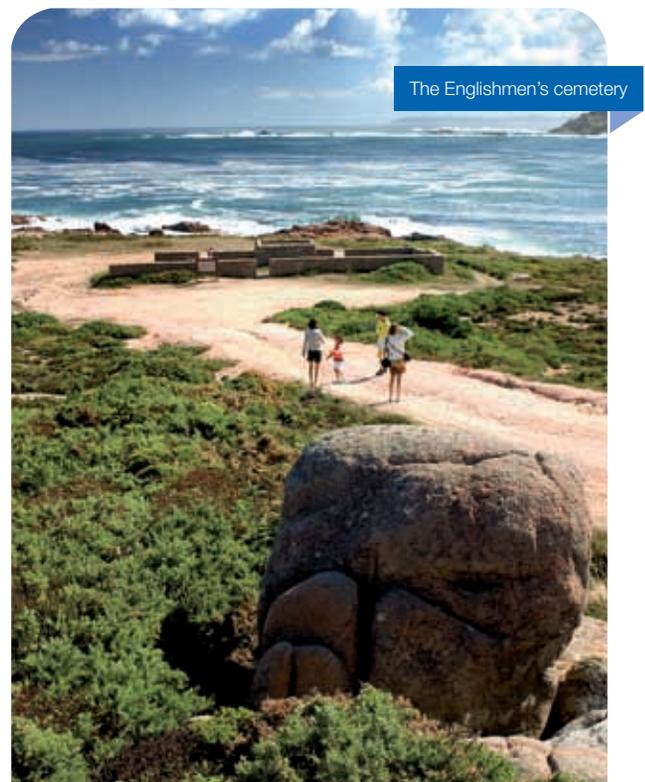
On this strip of coast one can count up to 150 shipwrecks, the most famous of which was that of the English military vessel, the HMS *Serpent*, on November 10<sup>th</sup> 1890. Except for three survivors who barely managed to reach the shore the other 172 members of the crew are buried in the well-known “Cemiterio dos ingleses” (The Englishmen’s cemetery). One can go up to the ancient lighthouse, behind the current one, from 1896. From here one will be able to contemplate in its entire splendour the octagonal tower on Cape Vilán. There one has the Cyclops of the Death Coast, which stands 105 m high over the sea guiding all the vessels that sail on these waters. This was the first electrically powered lighthouse on the Spanish coasts. Another curiosity is the tunnel which connects the lighthouse keepers’ quarters to the lighthouse along one side of the cliff.

### The most remote beach

From the road which leads to the lighthouse, there is a track which heads to the Trece wild beach. Leave the car behind and venture in on foot or by bike to be able to take in the magnificent panoramic view: the majestic silhouette of Vilán, the beaches, the never-ending rush of the waves...Back on route, we will come across the Foxo do Lobo (the wolf’s trap). This is a hunting system, which probably dates back to prehistoric times and which consists of convergent stone walls which were used to trap wolves, wild boar or deer.

Here one will encounter a great biological diversity too. In fact, this is the only place in Galicia, as well as the Cies Isles, where the last endangered “camariña” bushes, which give this area its name, can be found. Note the leaning pine trees, due to the force of the wind, which can be seen here. The landscape surrounding us makes us think about nature’s extraordinary power. Further ahead, and following the same track, we get to the Englishmen’s cemetery. At the end of the track, we will come to the Trece cove, guarded by a moving dune which seems to want to climb to the top of mount Branco.

*O Rostro and Mar de Fóra are two beaches whose beauty is almost cruel due to the rivalry among the water, the wind and the earth.*





Nemíña beach

We shall now head south in order to arrive during the late afternoon at the westernmost spot on the Spanish mainland: Cape Touriñán. This is a small peninsula which challenges the sea for over 1 km. As we contemplate the Atlantic scenery of the Death Coast in all its splendour with the small lighthouse in the background, the force of the wind will push us down the path which leads to one of the spots on the over 1 km long Nemíña wild beach to see how the sky blushes at this time of the day. Sunset could also be a good moment to go up to mount Facho and contemplate the beauty of the peninsula of Muxía. Or maybe, at this magical time of day, we might want to join the surfers who encounter paradise on this beach.

## Day 2 **From O Rostro beach to cape Fisterra**

We will need the second day of this itinerary to get to Fisterra, known as Land's End in ancient times. Before entering the village and following one of the pilgrims from all over the world who meet the end of the Santiago Way here, take a moment to visit two beaches whose beauty is almost cruel due to the rivalry among the water, the wind and the earth. O Rostro and Mar de Fóra beaches are open to the Atlantic and always surrounded by an apparent solitude. Even though they are not a normal part of summer swims, they are well worth visiting. O Rostro is over 2 km and a quarter long. Those who love nature and trekking flock here. Legend says that under its white sand hides the mythical city of Dugium, founded by the Nerians and which was swallowed by a great wave. Mar de Fóra, which is closer to the town centre is located between two inseparable companions, cape Fisterra on one side and cape Da Nave on the other.

### **The lighthouse at the end of the world**

Our stay at Fisterra turns into an excellent excuse to taste some of the delicacies the sea has to offer. During the summer there are many

Cape Touriñán



gastronomic festivities dedicated to them. However, any of these delicacies such as "longueiróns" (a type of razor clam) clams, barnacles, grilled sea bass, Galician style octopus can be savoured at any of the many restaurants in town.

After dessert, take some time to walk around town accompanied by the aroma of the sea and the cosmopolitan bustle of the visitors, especially near and around the hostel and the bars and cafés by the dock. Go into the 1757 San Carlos (St. Charles) Castle which is now a Fishing Museum. If it is Sunday we can walk into Santa María das Areas (Saint Mary of the Sands) Sanctuary to see if the almost human image of the Christ of the Golden Beard needs his nails and hair trimmed as tradition says both grow, but do not forget to keep an eye out at the sky...

Just before the sun sets, one must have arrived at The Fisterra lighthouse on time to be seated on one of the surrounding rocks and wish the sun goodnight on this his ancient altar, the Phoenicians' Ara Solis. The building which is next to the lighthouse is the Siren building better known as "the Fisterra Cow" due to the sound which comes from it on foggy days and which can be heard at a distance of 46 km. The third building is the Semaphore, a little further away from the first two. It used to be used by the marines but now it is a hotel which was renovated by the architect César Portela.

The shadow of the mythical lighthouse, the sound of the Siren, the view of the never-ending sea, a little boat in the distance, the dangerous Centolo isle or the Mount Pindo stone mass on the other side of the Corcubión estuary will be our best companions to bring an end to this trip through a rough, yet calm sea, of death, yet of life too.

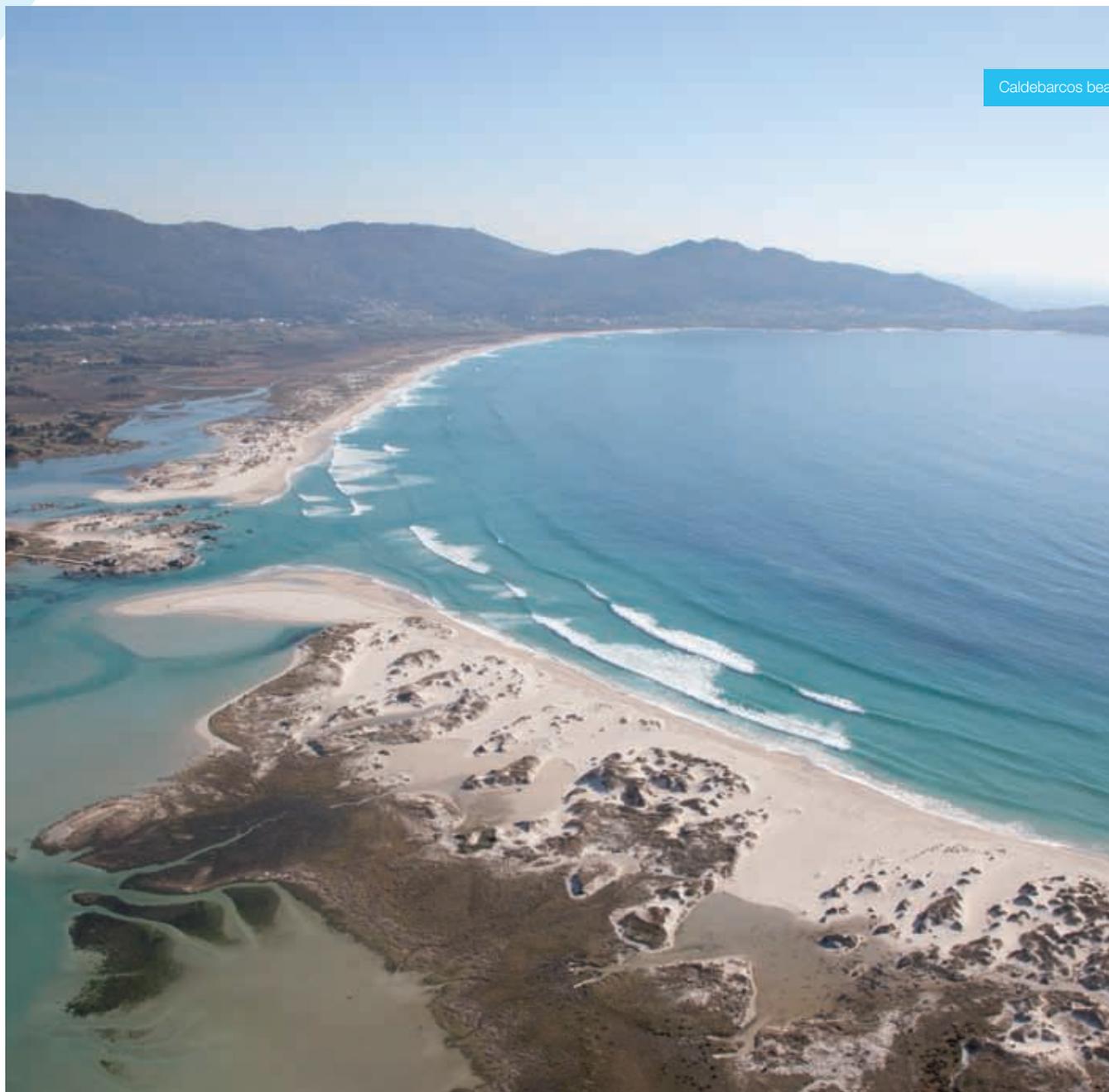
Cape Fisterra



# The beaches from “The Sea Inside”

Can you keep my secret?

Caldebarcos beach



What can be considered as the last stretch of the Costa da Morte (Death Coast) followed by the Muros and Noia estuary, will offer our five senses amazing long beaches surrounded by intense nature.



- 1 Caldebarcos beach
- 2 Carnota beach
- 3 Lariño beach
- 4 Lariño lighthouse
- 5 Ancoradoiro beach
- 6 Area Maior beach and Louro lagoon
- 7 Mount Louro lighthouse
- 8 Laxe das Rodas petroglyph
- 9 Porto do Son dock
- 10 Baroña beach and Celtic settlement
- 11 Río Sieira-Boca do río beach
- 12 As Furnas beach

## Day 1 From Caldebarcos beach to Laxe das Rodas petroglyph

No matter which route one has taken to get to Carnota, what is certain is that one will never forget the first time one contemplates its beaches. If the starting point was Cee, the 627 m high Mount Pindo will be our companion the entire way; and if we were to choose the Negreira road, we will have an incredible panoramic bird's eye view of the entire coast.

### Carnota: the neverending beach

Caldebarcos beach is the one situated further north of the town council of Carnota. It is just under 1,5 km long and, the same as the rest of the beaches we are going to visit; its sand is so white that it could be mistaken for the one in warmer areas of our planet. Apart from its surroundings, the recently restored fishermen's cabins, which are tied to the fishing activity in this area, stand out as does the Berbecheira natural area where the female shellfish gatherers collect cockles standing up. Windy and

## USEFUL INFORMATION:

**Starting point:** Carnota.

**Finishing point:** Porto do Son.

**Days:** 2

**pproximate distance:** 65 km

with frequent coastal breezes, Caldebarcos is great for water sports like surfing or windsurfing, as well as for yachts and other crafts to anchor. A walk around this area could be a good way to realise that in the Caldebarcos seabed we can find several of the vessels from the Invincible Armada on their way to conquer England in 1596. If it happens to be lunchtime, savouring some clams and octopus at one of the local restaurants can become a unique experience too.

We shall carry on along this stretch of coast towards Carnota Beach, which was classified as one of the hundred best beaches in the world by the German magazine *Traum Strände*. One can see it is immense from the road. Its almost 7 km makes it the longest beach in Galicia. When the tide is low, its width can be over 1.000 m in some parts. In the marshland



and dune area, a great variety of migrating birds and endemic vegetation find their home. In fact, this is one of the rare places in Galicia where the Kentish plover nests. The vast arrow of sand at the Valdebois river estuary, better known as Boca do Río (River Mouth), has become one of the most attractive natural areas in Galicia due to both its landscape and its ecological value; in other words, the Caldebarcos marshes and Carnota Beach.

If we are lucky, we might see one of these birds as we cross the wooden walkway which seems to float on top of this wetland until it reaches the beach. At this cove between Caldebarcos Point and Sargas Point, the turquoise waters, the fine white sand, the intense sun, the first hours of the morning and a totally calm sea will create in us a magical, evocative feeling. One really should take a walk by the shore and enjoy the atmosphere of this paradise while one's footprints are repeatedly erased by the waves. In the background, on the other side of the Corcubión estuary, mythical Cape

*Its almost 7 km make Carnota the longest beach in Galicia.*



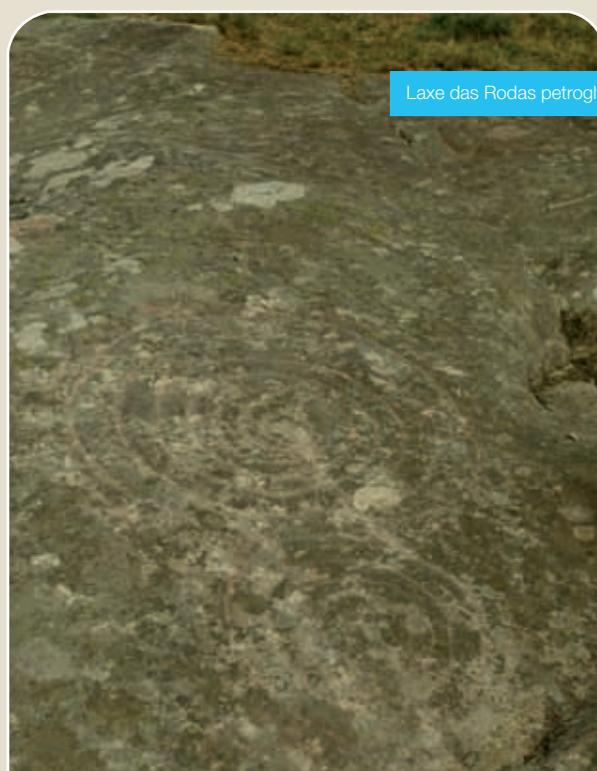


Fisterra contemplates us from afar. Say goodbye with one last look and maybe a bottle with a message will wash up onto the sand before our departure...

### Coves, dunes, reeds and lagoons

Still in Carnota territory, but very close to Muros, we will come to Lariño beach. It is divided into to completely different parts. On one side, a 2 km stretch of sand and on the other, little coves upon the rocks. On the so-called Ínsua point, a geographical mark which helps us fix the entrance in the Fisterra arch and the Corcubión estuary, we will find the Lariño lighthouse, which dates back to the 20's and is next to the remains of an old windmill. Near here, the destroyer "Ariete", which belonged to the Spanish Armada, sank in 1966. The town council of Carnota was awarded the title of "Very Humanitarian" for helping to rescue the ship's crew.

Ancoradoiro is the first of the many beaches in the municipality of Muros and it is separated from our last stop by only a pine tree grove. We shall



Laxe das Rodas petroglyph



again see how the northerly winds aid surfers and windsurfers; and also those who wish to walk down the Area Maior and Lagoa de Louro beaches along a narrow track among dunes and reeds. When one is here, one has the feeling that Mount Louro acts as a stone guard. Next to it, the dunes become a natural barrier between the fresh water Xarfas lagoon and the lonely sand on Area Maior. According to legend, a village disappeared into the marshland and mount Louro was also a temple for worshipers of the sun the same as cape Fisterra used to be.

### An estuary beauty

Heading towards the town of Muros, we shall come across a sign which will take us to the Louro lighthouse. From here, we will have a great view of the Muros and Noia estuary, the Barbanza mountain range and even Corrubedo. As it is quite near, we can visit the Laxe das Rodas petroglyph. We will be able to contemplate prehistoric granite rock carvings which several experts relate to the worshiping of the sun, while others believe they are a work calendar, an offering table to ask for good harvests or relate them to death or fertility.

Louro is a small summer holiday village with a long touristic tradition. At its taverns and restaurants we will have our pick of the gastronomic delicacies from the estuary or the sea and we will be able to allow the flavours to explode in our mouths to complete this first day's trip.

## Day 2 From Porto do Son to Río Sieira beach

We should leave our visit to the town of Porto do Son for the second day of our itinerary. We can take some time to have a cup of coffee by the dock or to go for a stroll: the aroma of the sea, the boats which return after a hard days work, and others which set off, or fishermen repairing their tackle are a good example of how important the sea is for this attractive fishing village. Let us continue our trip toward Castro de Baroña beach. The high level of iodine in its waters helps us to get a healthy long lasting tan. Castro



Baroña beach is protected from the wind by two rocky hillocks which are about 50 m. high. Here we will find one of the best known Celtic settlements in Galicia: Baroña. This prehistoric settlement has almost twenty constructions and a splendid wall which would defend its inhabitants. Chronologically we could situate it between the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. and the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.C.

### A beach fit for a movie

Our itinerary heads on to the beach of As Furnas, but it is worthwhile to make a stop on the way and visit the medieval bridge on the river Siera, near

the waterfall which bears the same name. The construction has a stone slightly Gothic arch and it leads to a former Royal Way by the shade of a riverside wood. The stream ends up at the Siera beach. It has an unspoilt look about it, its waves are not too rough and its white sand connects to the sand on As Furnas beach by a wooden walkway. Some might recall this beach in Alejandro Amenábar's well-known film, *Mar Adentro (The Sea Inside)*. Río Siera-As Furnas are the last beaches we will visit while in the town council of Porto do Son. Holidaymakers love to cover this 1 km stretch of sand and rocks as if it were a promenade.

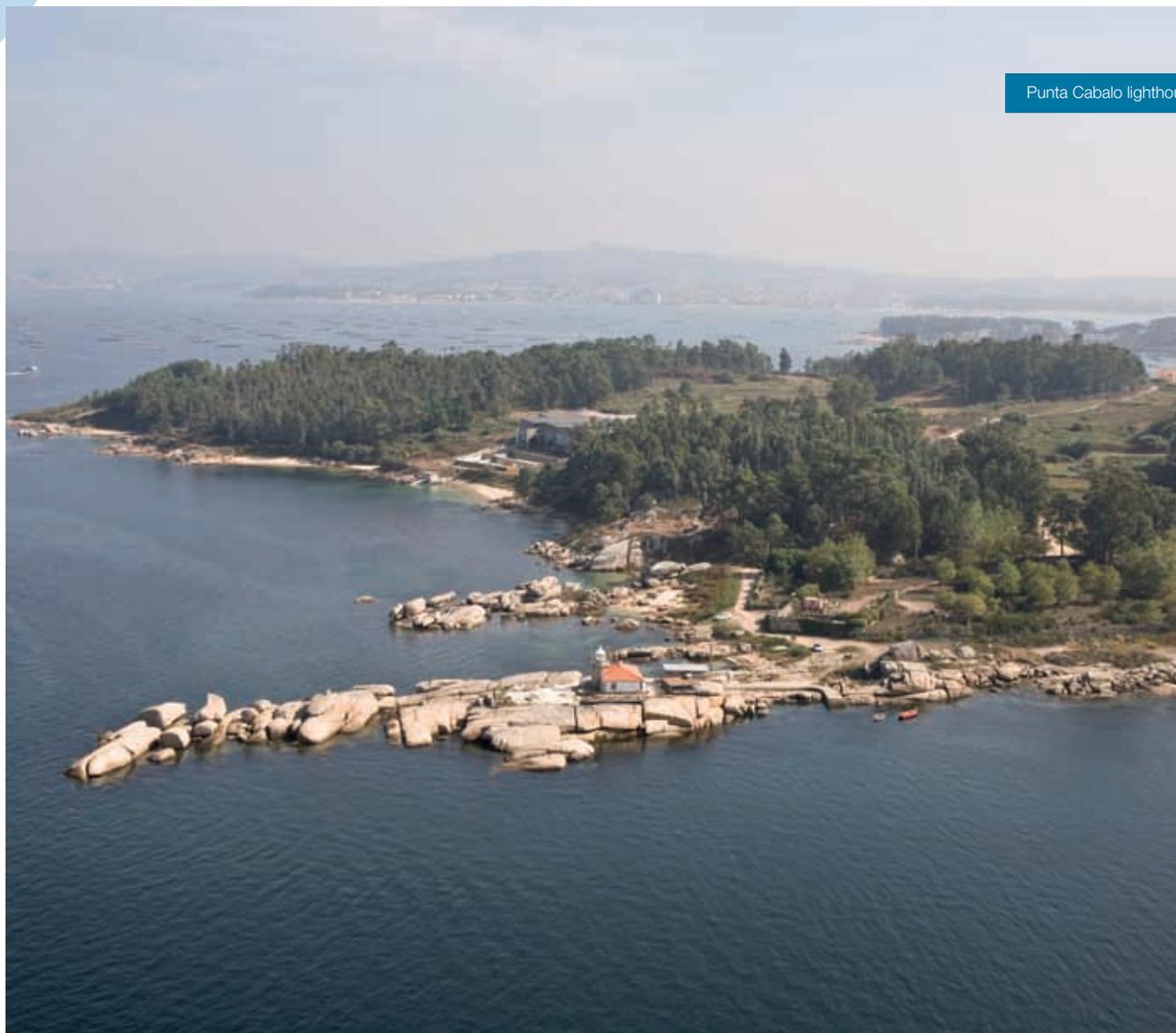
*Some might recall As Furnas beach in Alejandro Amenábar's well-known film, Mar Adentro (The Sea Inside).*



# Beaches on the Arousa estuary

Can you keep my secret?

Punta Cabalo lighthouse



According to legend, when God finished creating the world, he rested by placing his hands on Galicia and thus creating the Galician “rías” (estuaries). On this itinerary along the Arousa estuary, we will have the opportunity to discover an estuary full of legends about the Moors, pirates and mermaids which are interwoven with the magical surroundings which invite the visitor to dream.



- 1 Corrubedo lighthouse
- 2 Casa da Costa (CIELGA)
- 3 O Vilar and Ladeira beaches
- 4 Sálvora lighthouse
- 5 Punta Cabalo lighthouse
- 6 Area de Secada beach
- 7 Mount Siradella
- 8 A Lanzada beach
- 9 Nosa Señora da Lanzada chapel

## Day 1 From Corrubedo Natural park to the isle of Sálvora

We shall set off on this first day of our trip at one of the key places on the coastline of the Arousa estuary: at the Town Council of Ribeira, one of Galicia's natural treasures, Corrubedo Natural Park, awaits. Before feeling its amazing dunes, we will stop at the Corrubedo lighthouse which has been working since 1854. Its façade appears as semi-circular while facing the sea and rectangular while facing land in order to withstand the terrible storms which strike this area. From here one can appreciate the power and intensity of the Atlantic, with nothing except for the lighthouse itself, between one and the New World.

### Before the great dune

The initial purpose of the lighthouse was to warn about the dangerous rocks on the seabed in this part of the coast; however, its warning did not always work. Through the years it has unfortunately witnessed quite a few shipwrecks. The wreck of the Santa Isabel ocean liner opposite the isle of Sálvora,

## USEFUL INFORMATION:

**Starting point:** Ribeira.

**Finishing point:** Sanxenxo.

**Days:** 2

**Approximate distance:** 123 km

**Other interesting information:**

- › Casa da Costa (CIELGA) interpretation centre.  
Contact number: 981878532 ([www.riveira.es](http://www.riveira.es) and [www.arousa-norte.es](http://www.arousa-norte.es)).
- › Mount Siradella nature interpretation facility.  
Contact number: 986 680 284 / 986 805 469 ([www.turismogrove.es](http://www.turismogrove.es)).

probably due to confusion between Corrubedo lighthouse and the one at Sálvora, was the reason for its white light being changed for a red one and thus being known as the "communist lighthouse". We will now set off towards our next destination as we leave behind the lighthouse. We shall change the tarmac for wood and sand as we venture into Corrubedo Natural Park. There, hidden in the wild surroundings, we will find "Casa da Costa" (House



of the Coast) Interpretation Centre (CIELGA). This is a learning centre with exhibitions on this unique ecosystem. The true gem in the Park is the Corrubedo dune complex and the Carregal and Vixán lagoons, which cover an area of 1000 ha. in the parishes of Corrubedo, Artes and Carreira. One can ask the biologists about any doubts and then put what one has learnt into practice by exploring the sands of Vilar and A Ladeira beach, which both belong to the Natural Park. Also visit Carregal lagoon which slowly came to be as a ridge of sand and a body of water connected. The wind has caused the formation of several ridges of dunes many of which are quite stable due to the vegetation that grows in them, but there is also a travelling dune, the largest in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula.

Legend says that at the bottom of Carregal lagoon lays the city of Valverde where the Moors expelled by Charlemagne lived.

### The isle of the mermaid

If we follow the thread of this legend, we will head to Aguiño dock where a boat will take us to the mysterious Sálvora isle. According to the story, Roldán was truly injured, yet managed to



*Oh Sálvora, oh Saint Vincent  
Oh Sálvora, farewell Mourente  
Oh Sálvora, eyes of the estuary  
For pretty girls, come to Vilagarcía.*

*Galician folk song*



Corrubedo dune

escape from the battle at Roncesvalles and sought refuge on this Arousa isle. One day, while he was strolling along the beach, he came across a girl of great beauty emerging from the water and he fell hopelessly in love with her... She happened to be a mermaid! His love for Mariña (whom he named himself) was such that they had a child and thus beginning the Mariño family name. Due to this mythical story, the visitor will be greeted by a stone mermaid that signals the cobbled way to the Sálvora lighthouse, the guardian of the Arousa estuary, alongside the San Vicente lighthouse in O Grove.

## Day 2 **From punta Cabalo lighthouse to Nosa Señora da Lanzada chapel**

Let us go from one isle to another. On this second day, we shall leave behind the land of the Barbanza and head towards the isle which named this famous estuary: the isle of Arousa. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was an important canning centre; in fact, it was here that the first canning factories in the modern era were set up. The isle's main activity was, and still is, the sea in all of its aspects. Why not dare to



Ría de Arousa



discover the water sports the isle has to offer as well the gastronomic gems cooked in a local style?

### **A calm sea**

We shall begin our visit at punta Cabalo lighthouse, built in 1852 . At first it was attended by two lighthouse keepers, but after several renovations, it became a restaurant. This lighthouse which emerges among the rocks is a perfect spot to enjoy the sunset after a full day's activity in nature. Seated on one of the rocks in front of the tower and caressed by the subtle sea breeze, one will be able to make out the grandeur of the Arousa estuary: from the Areoso and Rúa isles to the mouth of the river Ulla. On this stretch, hundreds of wooden mussel beds rocked by the sea produce the world's largest amount of mussels.

The entire isle is peaceful, but a very special place is Area de Secada, a white sand natural beach which is surrounded by a virgin forest. The only sound to be heard is the relaxing movement of the waves or the chirp of a bird in search of food. The waters on this beach are calm and perfect for practising relaxing water sports. One can rent a kayak and row among the mussel beds and the curious dolphins. An unforgivable mistake would be to leave the isle without tasting a large dish of octopus prepared in the local style.

When we get back onto the "continent", we shall visit O Grove, situated at the entrance of the Arousa estuary. If it were not for the sandy Lanzada tumulus, it would still be an isle. If one is in the area in October, one should not miss the opportunity to visit the world famous seafood festival held in O Grove every year; one can savour the seafood at any other time too, though.

### **Paradise for birds**

If we would like to have the best views of the estuary, we need to go to the top of mount Siradella. It seems a little effort to climb the 167 m when one contemplates the spectacular view of the Lanzada isthmus, and the Umia and O Grove complex with the Atlantic in the background. Once we are here, we might as well visit Nature



A Lanzanda isthmus from mount Siradella

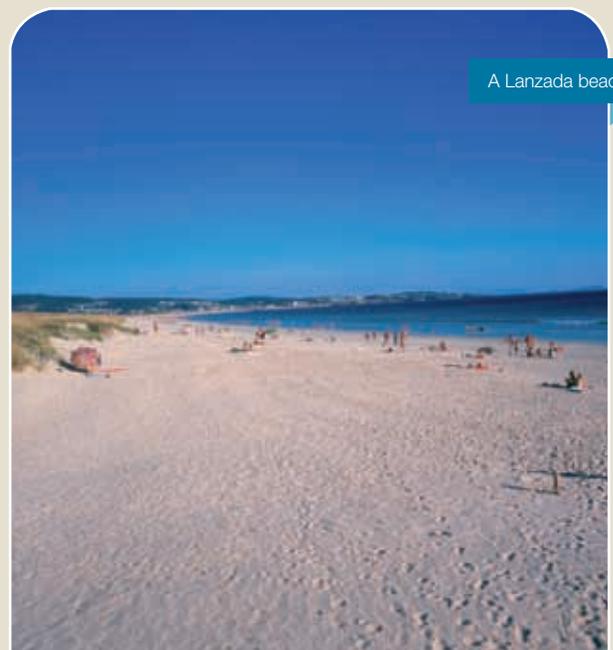
Interpretation Centre which will teach us how important it is to preserve the delicate ecosystem in this area.

### Nine magic waves

As a perfect ending, there is nothing better than a stroll along the wild coast of one of the best-known and most visited beaches in the “Rías baixas” (Lower Estuaries), A Lanzada beach. As it is wide open to the Atlantic, it is perfect for sports like surfing or windsurfing. We can see that its fame is well deserved just by contemplating the fine white sand and the quality of its waters. Its fame is also due to the legends that say its sanctuary has magical powers. According to tradition, if one allows nine waves to strike one’s body by taking a midnight bath in these waters on the day of the procession or on St John’s (June 24<sup>th</sup>), infertility will come to an end. Another version of the legend adds that the women who want to complete the ritual are to lie on the Virgin’s bed in the chapel of Nosa Señora da Lanzada. The sanctuary is a late twelfth-century Romanesque church from where one has one of the best views of the beach.



Area de Secada beach



A Lanzada beach

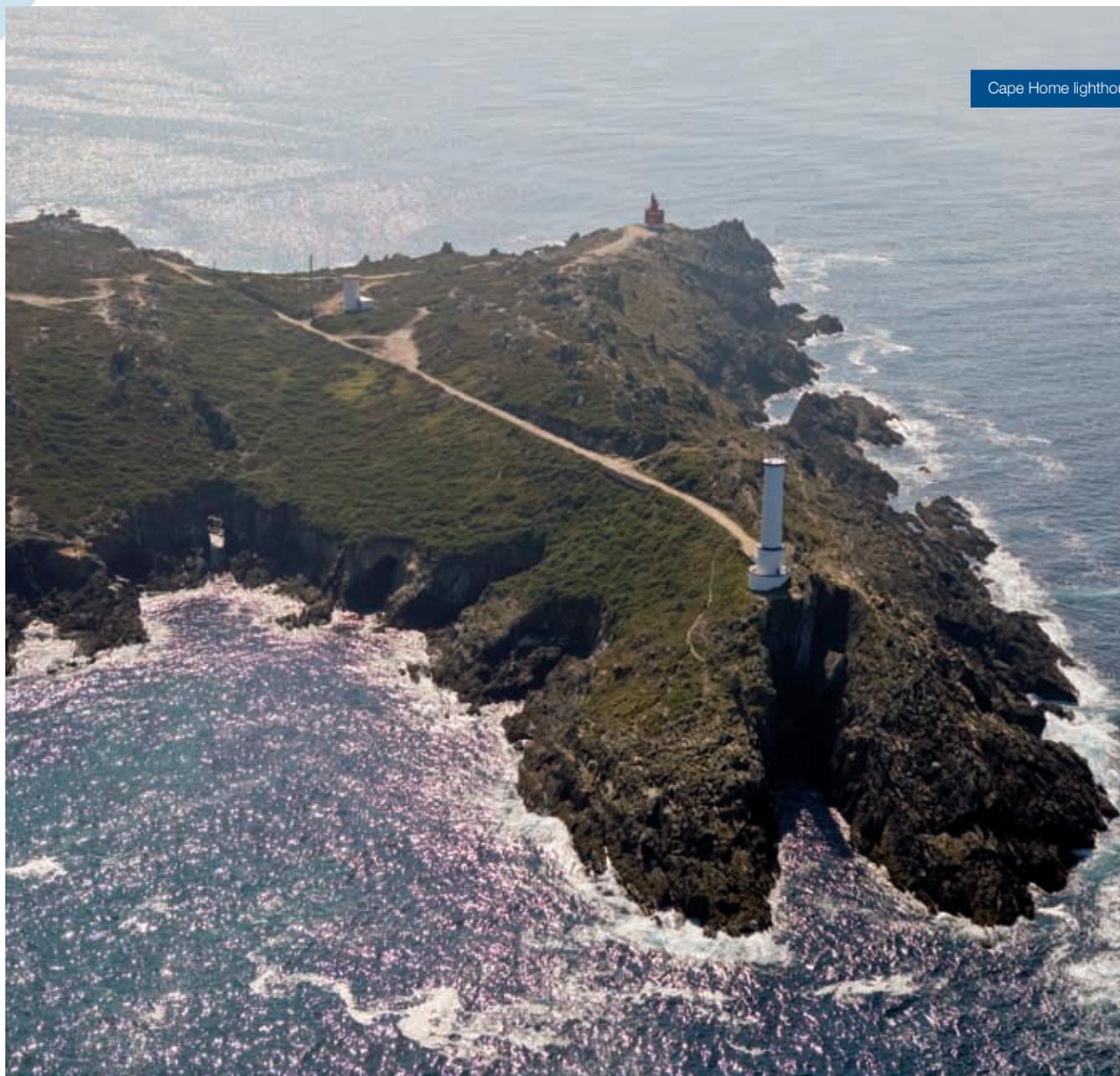
*Seek the nine waves  
Before the sun rises  
And with you, you will take  
The nine leaves of the olive.*

*Tradicional Romance*



# The Costa da Vela magical triangle

Can you keep my secret?



Cape Home lighthouse

Today's itinerary takes along one of the wildest coastlines on the Vigo estuary. The Vela Coast welcomes us to its waters, which soak white sandy beaches about which incredible legends of sea monsters are told.



- 1 Cangas dock
- 2 Nerga beach
- 3 Barra beach
- 4 Melide beach
- 5 Cape Home lighthouse
- 6 Facho de Donón viewpoint
- 7 Hío stone cross

## Day 1 From Cangas dock to the Hío stone cross

We shall begin our route on the westernmost part of the Morrazo peninsula, the exotic beaches opposite the Cías isles in the town council of Cangas. A walk about the centre of the town and a snack at one of its busy terraces would be the best way to begin this day full of wild beaches.

Nerga beach will be our first stop. It stands out especially due to its dune complex and its calm waters. Let yourself be taken away by the hypnotic sound of the waves, while calmly seated by a rock or one of the fishermen's colourful boats which rest on the sand.

### Deserted beaches

If we continue along the coast, we will come to Barra beach. To get there, we will have to cover some dirt tracks which will slowly lead us deeper and deeper into nature and make our stress disappear as our senses are aroused. After crossing a dirt path on foot and following the aroma of the sea,

## USEFUL INFORMATION:

**Starting point:** Cangas.

**Finishing point:** Cangas.

**Days:** 1

we will get to the best-known nudist beach in the Rias Baixas (Lower Estuaries), which is over 1 km long. After having walked among the trees, it is now time to sink our feet in the fine sand for a gentle massage. One can try to cover the footprints of other visitors or those of the seagulls for fun and feel the relaxation sink in almost immediately. Barra beach is windy but ideal for a swim as the waves are moderate.

We may complete this beach route at a more intimate beach but as beautiful as the previous ones. Melide beach awaits surrounded by a huge pine tree grove which offers shelter from the scorching sun. From here, the view of the Cías isles is splendid; they seem so close that they look as if they are not separated from the main land.



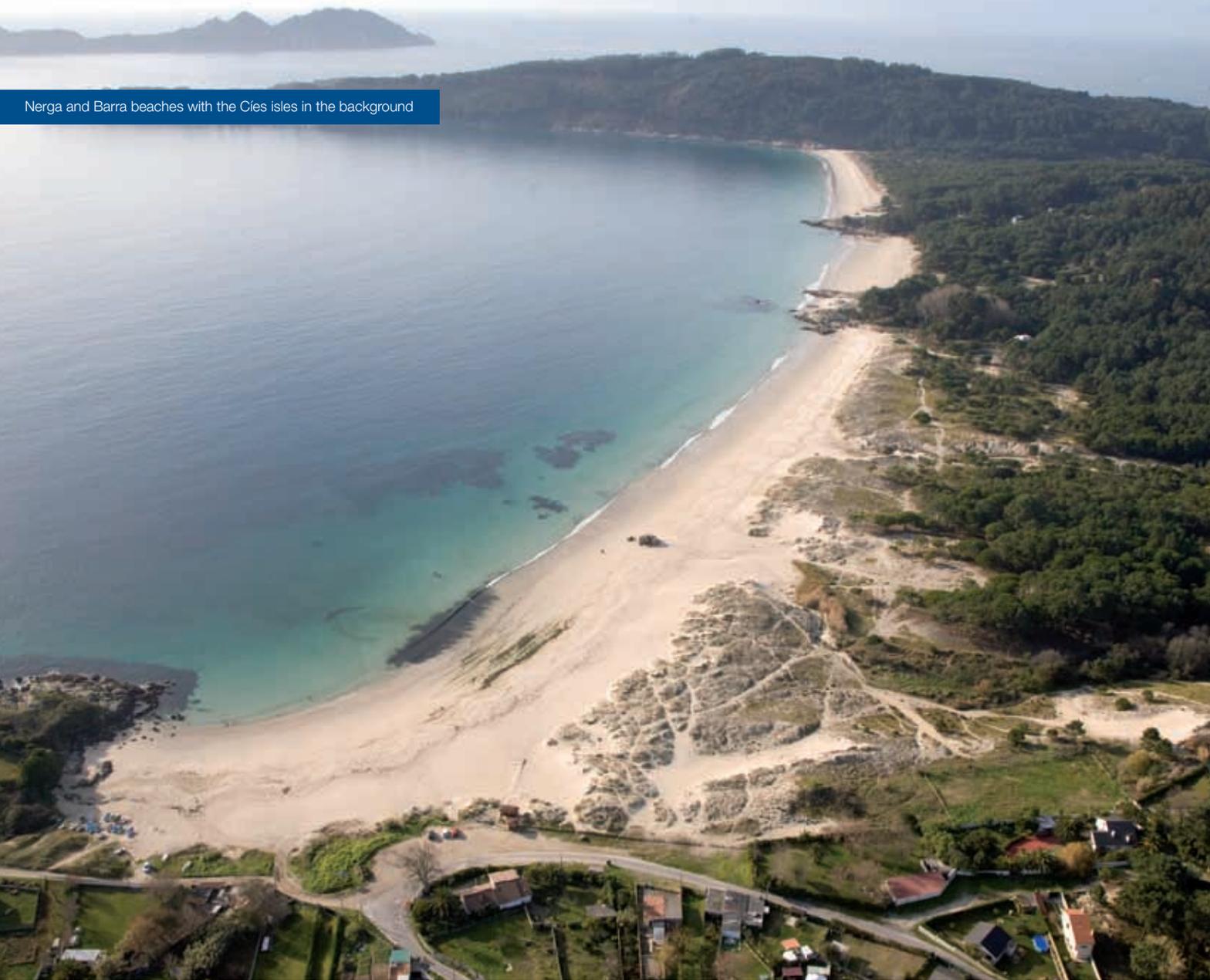
## The lighthouse that illuminates the Cíes

Another place which will allow us another spectacular view of the Cíes isles is the lighthouse on Cape Home, which is the closest spot to the Cíes isles. Surrounded by rugged cliffs, it belongs to the luminous formation which allows the entrance through the Vigo estuary. The dense fog which frequently covers the coast has been the cause of the lighthouse having a siren since 1888 to warn sailors of the dangers ahead and which has been named after the one at the mythical lighthouse on the Death Coast, “Vaca de Fisterra”.

As in many other places where tragedies have taken place, Cape Home has legends about the monsters which caused them. The most popular one is one which survived over five centuries being handed over from father to son and so on up until today. In those times, all the fishermen who survived the attacks from the sea at Cape Home said that the boats would sink in a strange way and that they were able to make out some kind of sharp teeth. On a dark day, the monster emerged from the sea and threatened to devour all of Hio’s inhabitants. It is said that the monster was larger than 143 elephants but a warrior named Oridón decided to challenge it. After many attempts he found out the way to defeat it thanks to his shield and the monster’s fear of daylight. The Cape Home monster fell into the sea in an agonising death leaving its spikes out of the water as it turned into stone. We can still see its spikes today in the shape of the pointed rocks by the cape. Come and see them but try not to wake the monster up...

*I can see Cangas, I can see Vigo  
I can also see Redondela,  
I can see Sampaio bridge,  
On my way to our land.*

*Galician folk song*



A stroll around the lighthouse is an invitation to intermingle with nature in its purest version. To sit on the cliffs and contemplate how the white foamy sea fights against the tough rocks on the coast in a rhythmical fashion is an unforgettable experience. We can also wander about the paths surrounding the other lighthouses and beaches in the area while the estuary breeze caresses our face. Tarmac is nowhere to be seen at Cape Home as the hand of man is practically imperceptible and vegetation and wildlife take the stand.

### Watching out for pirates

Carrying on along the abrupt Vela Coast, we will steer away from the sea for a moment to head up to the Facho of Donón, situated in the parish bearing the same name. We will get to it after a climb up a cobbled path which becomes steeper as we reach the top. The word “facho” refers to seventeenth-century small tower built out of the remains of Roman altar stones and which could



Cape Home lighthouse



have been used as a watchtower against the attacks of Turkish pirates. Its privileged location on the highest spot in the area guarantees the best views of the Cíes isles, the isle of Ons and also of the entrance of the Vigo and Pontevedra estuaries. On a clear day one may even be able to make out Baiona. According to tradition, they would light a fire here to act as a lighthouse for the fishermen from the area at the same time as it warned the neighbours of any danger that might be approaching from the sea.

Yet mount Facho of Donón is not only special because of its incredible views, but also because right at the top we find the remains of an old Celtic village and a Galician-Roman third-century sanctuary in honour of the god Berobreus.

Near Donón, our next and final stop is at the parish of Aldán. Here the Hío stone cross, one of Galicia's ethnographic heritage marvels, awaits. This nineteenth-century stone cross is almost completely carved out of one whole granite block. Adam and Eve before the original sin, The Virgin of Carme helping the souls in purgatory or the Virgin Mary stepping on the dragon-devil's head are just some of the biblical passages we can observe here.

### The pilgrim's dance

On August 16th, the day of the Patron, the Saint Roque dance, also known as the Pilgrims' dance, takes place in front of this cross. Twenty dancers take part, all of whom are men, who play the parts of the women too dressed in a similar fashion as the pilgrims.

Without a doubt, we depart from this magical land of the coast of the Rías Baixas (Lower Estuaries) submerged in nature and its beautiful and at times frightening stories, which are witnesses of a land accustomed to living side by side with the sea.

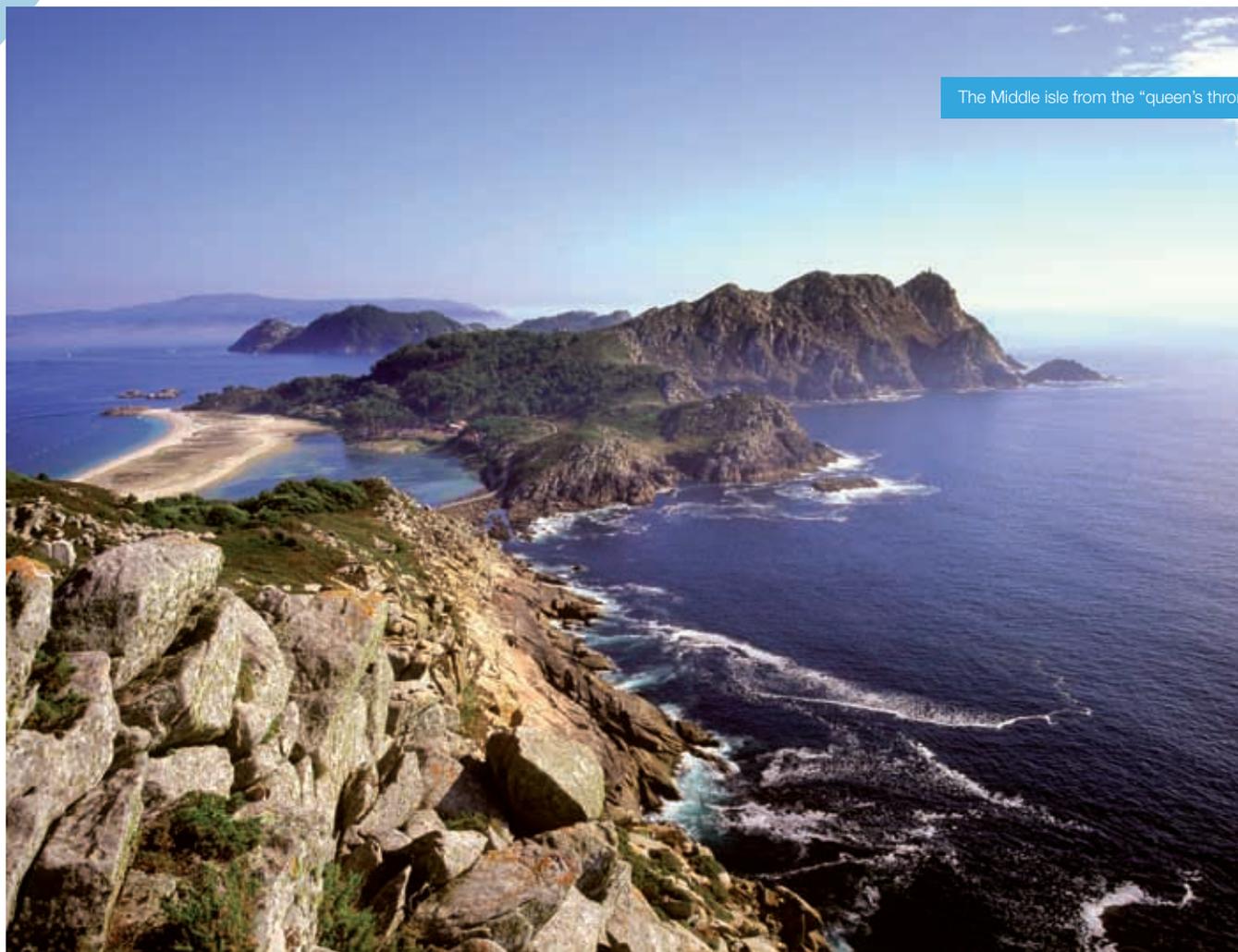
After this immersion in the culture and nature of the area, as a perfect ending to this day, we can satisfy our palate at one of the restaurants in Cangas where we will find a wide selection of the best and freshest seafood and fish as well as white wines.



# The Gods' paradise

## Can you keep my secret?

The Middle isle from the "queen's throne"



In 1997, the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, published a list of the top ten beaches in the world. Among them was Rodas beach, on the Cíes isles. A long time before this, the reputation of this piece of paradise in the entrance of the Vigo estuary was already known by neighbours and visitors, but ever since, it has become a reference for tourists from all over the world. Surrounded by indigenous woods, this 1,3 km long beach in the shape of a large shell, with fine white sand and turquoise waters is the perfect scenario for feeling freedom, the sea and nature.



## 1 The Cíes isles

### USEFUL INFORMATION:

**Starting point:** Vigo, Cangas or Baiona dock.

**Finishing point:** The Cíes isles.

**Days:** 1

**Other interesting details:**

- › The Atlantic Isles National Park office: Contact number: 886218090 ([www.iatlanticas.es](http://www.iatlanticas.es))

## Day 1

### From Rodas beach to Alto do Príncipe (Prince Heights)

Vigo, Cangas or Baiona are three docks from where, during the high season, ferries set out to the isles on a regular basis. It is certainly well worthwhile venturing out on this one hour voyage. During this time, the rocking movement of the boat will be our companion as the fresh breeze surrounds the vision from this privileged lookout in the middle of the Atlantic. During the trip, take some time contemplate the most important towns on this stretch of the Pontevedra coastline and Vigo's unmistakable outline. The Cíes isles are only 14 km away from the city.

#### The most beautiful beach in the world

The best picture of the three isles, the North one or Monteagudo, the Middle one or Do faro (Lighthouse) and the South one or San Martiño (St. Martin), will seem meaningless as one contemplates its natural beauty. The dock could be considered the base camp from where to begin to explore this piece of paradise. Ptolemy had already named this archipelago "The Isles of the Gods".

Even though they might seem relatively secluded in the entrance of the Vigo estuary, as if they were a great dam, once we arrive, we will find out that the Cíes isles played an important role in History. They were inhabited by Palaeolithic and Neolithic men. The Celtic fortress, "As Hortas", dates back to the Bronze Age and is situated on the side of Mount Faro, which was also occupied during Roman times. Some authors even sustain that Julius Cesar lay foot on this territory. There are no remains left from the Viking invasions, but during the sixth century, two convents were built here: San Martiño (St Martin) on the South isle and Santo Estevo (St Stephen) on the Middle isle. Upon the ruins of the latter, the current Interpretation Centre, next to which we can still see an anthropomorphic tomb, was built.

#### The isles under attack by pirates

The pirate attacks from the Turkish, the Tunisians and the English on the Vigo estuary also reached the Cíes isles, which were even plundered by the famous English pirate Francis Drake. These attacks brought with them plans for subsequent fortification, the construction of an artillery warehouse in 1810 at the old Santo Estevo monastery, barracks and the prison near Nosa Señora beach.

*The Cíes archipelago is formed by three isles, the North one or Monteagudo, the Middle one or Do faro (Lighthouse) and the South one or San Martiño (St. Martin)*

As years went by, the increase of the canning industry on the coast was also the cause for two salting factories to be built here, among other constructions, around the year 1840; however, production began to fall due to competition until it finally ceased. The small intermittent local population, most of which were from Cangas, also disappeared as the touristic interest increased.

We should not be tempted to just lay down on any of the beaches which, due to their natural features, could well be associated to tropical destinations, as could others in Galicia. The longest, Rodas, Nosa Señora, Figueiras nudist beach, Cantareira cove... Take some time to explore the North and Middle isles connected by a small dam, which gave way to a salt water lagoon, and by Rodas beach.

### **The best panoramic view**

Undoubtedly, the route towards Mount Faro is everyone's favourite due to the spectacular climb which is steep, twisting and rises to 175 m above sea level. At the top is Cíes lighthouse which dates back to 1852. From here we will have an excellent panoramic view of the archipelago which will have made the previous effort well worth our while. This hike will allow us to explore a great part of the Middle isle and its natural and cultural values: The Nature Interpretation Centre, Nosa Señora beach,

The Northern isle





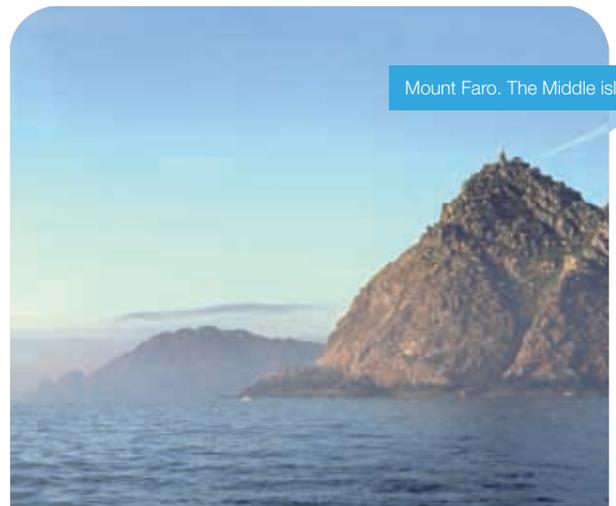
the Pedra da Campá (The Bell's stone) which has been perforated by the mixture of wind and salt, and the bird observatory. We will be able to see sea crows but above all yellow-legged seagulls. Here lives the largest colony of this species on the Iberian Peninsula and they are also the inhabitants that are largest in number on the isles. This route will also take us to the Porta Lighthouse, a sea signal which guards the strait bearing the same name, and from where we can perfectly contemplate the solitary isle of San Mariño which we can only reach by boat and where the Bicos Lighthouse is situated.

### The privileged “queen’s throne”

Towards the north, almost at the end of Monteagudo isle, we will discover the fourth lighthouse called O Peito (The chest/breast). Although it is situated on the highest spot on the archipelago, the Cíes Alto, 193 m above sea level, the route is easy. On the way, we will also be able to contemplate the remains of another settlement and another bird observatory apart from feeling closer to the mainland. The reason for this is that this spot is

*The pirate attacks from the Turkish, the Tunisians and the English on the Vigo estuary also reached the Cíes isles, which were even plundered by the famous English pirate Francis Drake.*

Mount Faro. The Middle Isle



Rodas beach







Panoramic view of the Cíes isles

just over 2,5 km away from A Vela coast and cape Home. To the north we will make out the isle of Ons guarding the Pontevedra estuary.

On our way back to our starting point, we can take a moment to go up to Alto do Príncipe, 111 m above sea level. We can lean on the funny looking rock called Cadeira da Raiña (The Queen's Throne). As if this rock were a natural balcony, look out into the Atlantic and observe the contrast between sides of the isles: to the west, almost vertical cliffs and soft dunes to the east.

As we walk along this part of the Cíes isles, Camariñas or A Pobra do Caramiñal will come to mind, as the "caramiña" bush grows in the Figueiras-

Muxeiro dunes too. This is an endangered bush with bluish black berries and is the reason for the names of aforementioned municipalities in the province of A Coruña. We might even be tempted to pick some "falling-in-love grass" also called sea coronation as if we were in Santo André (St Andrew) of Teixido and wished to perform one of the rituals associated to this magical sanctuary so that the mere contact with this plant will make us lucky in love.

As the day draws to a close, we will say farewell to this place full of life and peace as the Cíes sea intermingles with the already reddish sky and only the wake of our boat connects us to this heavenly paradise on Earth.



San Martiño beach. Southern isle



EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND  
"A way to build Europe"

