

# Costa da Morte

*On the edge of Europe*

ENGLISH VERSION

Xan X. Fernández Carrera

**Texts:**

Xan X. Fernández Carrera

**Photos:**

Xan X. Fernández Carrera, Ramón Caamaño and  
Arquivo Vidal

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Emilio Insua González

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# 01 INTRODUCTION

## > INTRODUCTION

**C**osta da Morte is the westernmost coastal region of Galicia, and the point where the Iberian Peninsula and the European continent also come to an end. A large territory that makes up one fifth of the province of Coruña, it includes the regions of Bergantiños, Terra de Soneira and Fisterra (previously Nemancos), and the municipalities of Mazaricos and Carnota. The name of the region is a relatively recent one and was given because of the many ships that sank in this part of the coast in the late 19th century.

The territory is defined more than anything by its extensive coastline, shaped by spectacular cliffs in the areas most exposed to the sea, “this proud, restless, powerful and tireless sea”, in the words of the local poet López Abente, alternating with long beaches and small estuaries or rías. A unique coast on which the tremendous power of nature has left an indelible mark, creating a heritage of extraordinary value.

From the coast, the influence of the sea penetrates further inland via the Anllóns, Porto, Castro and Xallas rivers.

The banks of these rivers are home to some of the best preserved native forestland in the region. Fertile valleys with their “sweet meadows”, in the words of the poet Eduardo Pondal.

This westernmost region of Eurasia has been populated since time immemorial, many traces of which remain from the Neolithic period to the present day.

The earliest remains belong to the megalithic period, characterised by barrows and dolmens that were used as burial sites. The Castro culture was the next to leave its mark, with its unique circular fortified settlements. Many of these hillforts can be found in the region.

Costa da Morte was no stranger to Romanisation. Brandomil, Moraime and Tines are settlements where the Roman presence is most evident. With the arrival of Christianity came the first religious inscriptions in Galicia—the stele of Victorinus, found in Tines, dates back to the late 4th century. No large religious communities were founded in this region, but there were some small monasteries. A notable heritage left by the clergy still remains.

Alongside the religious communities, noble families began to make their presence felt in the region. The Trabas family was the first to settle here, followed by the Mariños de Lobeira, Moscosos de Altamira, Bermúdez de Castro, Rioboos and Pardiñas.

Their presence is made visible in the form of magnificent buildings such as the castle of Vimianzo, the Torres do Allo, the Torres de Mens and the manor house of Vilardefrancos. The region is also full of local popular architecture: hórreos (granaries), cruceiros (calvaries) and windmills are just some of the most visible examples. It is also home to a wealth of intangible heritage, especially legends about the natural world, saints and historical remains.

The cuisine of Costa da Morte is rightly famous and one of its major attractions thanks to a wide and varied selection of coastal and inland products that provide an abundance of raw materials to make a wide range of delicious dishes. The sea offers the very best seafood while the land produces delicious meats and vegetables, which, combined with a local cuisine based on maintaining the original flavours of the ingredients, make for a truly delicious cuisine.

The Guide to Costa da Morte sets out to offer visitors the chance to discover and enjoy the rich heritage of this region. It contains a set of routes that take you on journeys where you can experience the best that this land has to offer.

The guide is divided into two sections: the first is about the context of the region, with details about the origin of the name of Costa da Morte, and geographical features such as the landscape, climate, flora and fauna, the people, its economic resources, without forgetting its history and wonderful cuisine.

The second, and longer, section offers visitors a series of routes throughout the region for travellers on foot or by car. If you plan to visit the area in a vehicle, we offer six routes across the 17 municipalities of Costa da Morte, in which you can visit all the locations with most natural, scenic, historical and cultural value. Most of the routes are circular, so travellers can start at any point. Each one has been designed for one day and tourists can decide for themselves to choose the stopping points that best suit their interests.

If you plan to go on foot, there is a selection of short and long routes, some of which immerse visitors even deeper into the region, especially spaces where nature and history come together to offer an even richer experience. We offer 13 shorter routes on foot in one day, and two longer ones: the Camiño dos Faros and the Way of Saint James of Fisterra and Muxía, which can be completed in a few days.

The Guide offers you all the information you need to get closer to Costa da Morte from a wide variety of perspectives and interests, so that you can discover and get a deeper insight into the geography and history of the region. It then offers a range of places and things you can choose from to see and experience the region according to how much time you have and what your interests are. A simple but very useful guide for any visitor who wants to come here and organise a trip that caters to their tastes.



## COSTA DA MORTE: A NAME WITH TRAGIC ORIGINS

### > COSTA DA MORTE: A NAME WITH TRAGIC ORIGINS

The place name now given to the westernmost coastal area of Galicia was first used in the late 19th century when this hazardous coastline witnessed major marine disasters near Cape Vilán.

The first was the English freighter ***Iris Hull***, in 1883, at the Baixo de Antón, near the Punta do Boi. Only one of the 38 crew members survived the wreck.

Seven years later, on 10 November 1890, the British cruiser ***H.M.S. Serpent***, sailing from Plymouth to Sierra Leone, also ran up against Punta do Boi, causing the greatest marine tragedy in the region—only 3 of the 176 crewmen on board lived to tell the tale. This accident had a tremendous impact on England, partly because of the number of victims and because the crew members were naval personnel. The British government harshly criticised the Spanish administration for the ineffective signalling of such a dangerous coastline: at that time the only working lighthouse in the area was the one at Vilán, an old low-grade lighthouse with very poor illumination that left a dark area of 21° produced by the summit of Vilán de Terra, including the greatly feared Punta do Boi.



*Mascarón de proa do Serpent*

Three years later, the British freighter **Trinacria** ran aground on 7 February 1893, nearby in Baixo de Lucín, to the west of the same area. Thirty of the thirty seven crew died.

These three tragedies happened in almost exactly the same place in just ten years, more than 200 people from the same country met their deaths. The events not only caused a major social and political furor in England, but also in Galicia and the rest of Spain.

Shortly after the fateful events of the late 19th c., this stretch of the coast started to be known by the macabre name of Costa da Morte (literally, "Death Coast"). No one knows if the new name was invented in England or in Galicia.

The first time it appeared in writing was on 14 January 1904, in a local newspaper published in A Coruña, El Noroeste. A section called "Maritime Accidents" with the title "Three shipwrecks" and the subheading "La Costa de la Muerte", describes the sinking of the English collier, **Kenmore**, which ran aground opposite the beach of Traba de Laxe; the Dutch dredger **Rosario**, which sank in the bay of Santa Mariña and the Spanish schooner **Francisco Rosa**, which ran aground in the entrance to the port of Corcubión.

The month after the article was published, the same newspaper reported on the sinking of another English vessel, this time a steamship called Yeoman, at the sinister Pedra do Porto, at the entrance to the bay of Camelle. 4 of the 86-crew perished.

The newspapers reporting the tragedy used the place name "Costa de la Muerte", which implies that the term was now in common use, especially when referring to the stretch of coast between Camelle and cabo Vilán. The newspapers that mentioned the name included some published in Madrid, such as El Heraldo de *Madrid*

or *El Imparcial*. That same year the term "Costa Brava o de la Muerte" was used in a project to reform the General Beacons Plan for the north-west coast of Spain.

In February 1904, Emilia Pardo Bazán, a writer from A Coruña, used the name in one of her articles published in the Catalan magazine *La Ilustración Artística*.

*"In my region, there is a wild and savage coast that local people call Costa de la Muerte".*

The poet Eduardo Pondal was the first to write the name in Galician. It appears in one of his poems, which has not been precisely dated, but may have been written in the first years of the 20th century. Pondal gives an intensely negative feel to the name, doubtlessly influenced by the tragic setting of a place where maritime disasters were the order of the day, especially amongst British vessels, the ones that most frequently passed along this coastline.

*The savage Briton, crossing the north, trembling with fear, exclaims from afar: "The coast of lamentations, the coast of death!"*

Eduardo Pondal.

Soon after, the new name appeared in English. The first mention is made by the traveller and writer Annette Meakin, who recorded in her diary the name *Coast of Death*, which she apparently heard from local sailors. It later appears in print on several occasions in her book *Galicia, the Switzerland of Spain*, published in 1909. Meakin said that the name was already used by sailors in England because of the many accidents involving English vessels in this part of the Galician coast.

Another traveller and writer to use and disseminate the name Costa da Morte was the English writer Aubrey Fitz Gerald Bell (1881- 1950), a journalist, writer and translator.

During his time as correspondent for the British newspaper *Morning Post* in Portugal, he travelled

## > COSTA DA MORTE: A NAME WITH TRAGIC ORIGINS

through Galicia and the rest of Spain, including Costa da Morte, which, according to him, extended from Vigo to Malpica.

"In the quiet roads to Fisterra, no mention is made of Costa da Morte, which is the name given to the Galician coast from Vigo to Malpica and the Sisargas Islands". (Aubrey F. G. Bell, 1922).

The Andalusian writer, José Mas, also helped to disseminate the name with his novel *La Costa de la Muerte*, published in 1928. Much of the plot takes place in the port of Malpica, interspersed with scenes in other places such as Corme, Laxe, Camariñas, Muxía and Fisterra.

Unlike the other writers, Mas makes use of one of his characters, Adrián, to dispel some of the negative myths and legends surrounding Costa da Morte. Adrián also denies the accusation that local inhabitants deliberately caused the wrecks or

cared little about the tragedies at sea. He puts the accidents down to natural weather conditions such as the frequent winter storms and fierce gales that lash this area of the coast, and to the lack of decent signalling systems such as lighthouses, and simple human error.



Cover of the novel *Costa de la Muerte*  
by José Más (1928)

Mas set out to counteract the gloomy, macabre connotations transmitted by the place name and proposed another, Costa da Vida (literally, "Life Coast"), a much more positive term that was supported by many other writers such as Eugenio Carré Aldao, Francisco Ramón y Ballesteros and José Baña Heim.

However, the name to finally triumph was Costa da Morte, especially when it appeared in many publications of the late 20th century, when the region was becoming an increasingly popular tourist destination thanks to the many and varied natural, historical, cultural and gastronomic attractions it has to offer.

The negative image previously associated with the name suddenly became one of its major selling points, offering a very different image of Costa da Morte as somewhere mysterious and unique, a place of legend, which, when combined with its other attractions, has made this European "end of the world" one of the most visited areas in Galicia.



**C**osta da Morte is the westernmost region of the Iberian Peninsula and is therefore where the European continent comes to an end. Inside the region are historical districts such as **Bergantiños, Terra de Soneira and Fisterra** (previously called Nemancos). The names that defined these ancient regions were to a great extent eclipsed by the tremendous impact in recent years of the new place name.

The easternmost limits of this large coastal region extend through the highlands that make up the plateaus of Ordes, to the north, and the Xallas, to the south. They are flattened Tertiary plains situated on the right hand side of the river Tambre. These higher areas gradually descend like steps towards the sea.

The higher areas in the north eastern part of the region border Terra de Ordes, and represent the dividing line between the basins of the rivers Tambre and Anllóns. They also separate the region, which forms part of the extensive plateau that extends through the centre of Galicia, from Bergantiños, more to the west.

#### > Region of Bergantiños

This region is the largest of the three that form Costa da Morte and is made up of the municipalities of **Laracha, Carballo, Coristanco, Malpica de Bergantiños, Cabana de Bergantiños and Laxe**.

The morphology of the area is similar to three large steps. The first step are the highlands belonging to the municipalities of Laracha, Carballo and Coristanco, which the local people themselves call A Alta (the highland), situated between 300 and 400 m

in altitude. Some of the highest points reach more than 500 m, such as Coto de Predouzo (518 m), A Pedra Cerdeira (564 m) and Monte Castelo (564 m).

The second step is the basin of the **river Anllóns**, an artery that crosses the region from east to west and springs from the meridional slope of the Coto de Pedrouzo. After circling round the mountain, it descends sharply to the plateau of Bergantiños, where it flows more gently. After passing through the town of Carballo, it receives its main tributary, the river Rosende, on the left-hand bank, fed by waters from the highlands on the borders of the Ordes plateau.

When it reaches Verdes, the river takes on new life due to tectonic movements that affected the area,

forming rapids and cascades that enable it to adapt to its new level. The river then comes into contact with harder rocks, such as the gneiss that spring up from the riverbed, more resistant to erosion, and its course is divided into several streams, which creates the beautiful natural space of Refuxio de Verdes.

After passing through the parish of Corcoesto, the river flows calmly once again until its mouth at the town of Ponteceso. Before it reaches the town, it forms a large meander in the parish of Anllóns, which gave the river its name. After passing under the bridge of Ponteceso, next to the house of the poet Eduardo Pondal, it enters **the cove of A Insua**, a wide estuary and a space of great natural interest

that continues up to A Barra, where its waters mingle with the Atlantic Ocean in the ría (the local name of estuaries) of Corme and Laxe after a journey of over 70 km.



*Mouth of the Anllóns river*

Pondal refers to this final stretch of the river's passage through the region in one of his poems:

*I was born in wild solitude, I was born from the wild hills,  
where the Anllóns, with noble majesty, wanders towards its  
ultimate fate.*

The centre of the region of Bergantiños is occupied by the lowlands of the valley of the Anllóns and its two tributaries. Here the soil is a reddish colour, "red lands turned by the plough", as Pondal says, formed on basic rocks, giving rise to fertile terrain and the name of the "granary of Galicia" because of the abundant production of cereals in ancient times. The area now produces excellent potatoes, beans, vegetables and fodder crops.

The third and final step consists of the land that descends down to the sea, forming an extensive coastline mostly of granite rocks, in which high stony areas alternate with sandier zones that are open to the sea.

Between the coast and the valley of the Anllóns there is a small range of mountains that reaches the coast and rises up to form a string of high cliffs, where waves crash against the rocks. The highest of these hills is **Monte Neme** (386 m), which looks like a watchtower over this part of the coast and the territory further inland. This strategic location, combined with the wealth of its mines

and its history, have made it a place of myth, tales and legends.

The coast of Bergantiños starts at the **peninsula of Caión**, where the small fishing port of the same name stands next to the beautiful beach of Salseiras. The coast then continues, where rocky cliffs dominate until the large **sandbanks of Razo** and Baldaio, where a coastal lagoon was formed. The entire area is a natural space of great interest.

The section that extends from Razo to the **peninsula of Malpica** consists almost entirely of cliffs, with a few headlands and some islets. There are a few beaches to be found here, such as those at Torradas and Riás. The small peninsula of Malpica, on which the fishing town of the same name stands, culminates at the peak of A Atalaia, with the fishing port to the east and the beach Maior to the west. The reduced space available to the townspeople has obliged them to build their houses one on top of the other around the small bay of the port; some of them appear to be hanging from the very cliffs, which gives this fishing town a lot of charm and personality.

The coast continues along the **cape of Santo Adrian**, a rocky peninsula with a chapel dedicated to the saint where a very popular pilgrimage is held every June.

Opposite this headland you can see the **Sisargas Islands**, the only sizeable archipelago to be found in Costa da Morte.

From here on the coast becomes more abrupt, with areas of steep cliffs that border the peninsulas of A Nariga and O Roncudo, where some narrow coves with sandy beds can be found, such as A Seiruga, Barizo, Niñóns and A Barda. The outlet of the **ría of Corme and Laxe** opens up between O Roncudo, to the north, and A Insua, to the south.

This area is more protected from the wind and the sea than the open coast, and the two largest towns in the



*The natural area of Razo and Baldaio from Monte Neme*

area can be found here. The port of Corme lies to the north while Laxe is in the south. Further inland in less rugged country are the villages in the parishes of Cospindo, Cesullas and Canduas, the largest of which is Ponteceso, at the mouth of the river Anllóns.

After the peninsula of A Insua, the last section of the coast of Bergantiños consists of two large areas open to the sea, with rough waters and constant waves: the first is the **beach of Soesto**, between Punta Carreiroa and Catasol, well known as an ideal locations for surfing and the **beach of Traba**, a wild sandbank bordered by dunes that contribute to the formation of a small coastal lagoon at the bottom of the low valley that surrounds it.

#### > Terra de Soneira

Roncudo, where some narrow coves with sandy beds can be found, such as A Seiruga, Barizo, Niñóns and A Barda.

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*Cabo de Santo Adrián and Sisargas islands from Seiruga beach*

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#### > Terra de Soneira

**Terra de Soneira** occupies the central part of Costa da Morte. It is a region that extends from east to west from the peak of Meda to Cabo Vilán and is made up of the municipalities of **Zas, Vimianzo and Camariñas**, the first two of which are located inland while Camariñas is on the coast.

The region is also flatter and lower than the plateau of Xallas. It can be divided into three areas: the valley of the river Porto, the land further south from which water flows to the Xallas and Castroi rivers, and the coastal area.



*Pico de Meda from the parish of Carreira (Zas)*

The **valley of the river Porto** occupies the largest part of the region and its highest point is **Pico de Meda** (567 m), with its conical profile shaped like the haystacks or medas typical of the region, from which it gets its name. It is a truly exceptional vantage point over the lands that surround it; sometimes even the sea is visible.

The source of the river Porto, the main artery of the region, running from east to west, is located on the eastern side of this mountain. On its way through this high part of the region, it passes between the plateaus of Xallas and Soneira in a steep gradient to form the **waterfalls of O Rabiñoso**, creating an attractive natural and ethnographic setting in which the cascading waters were used to power the wheels of several mills.

The river winds its way lazily down the rugged slopes of this valley. The network that forms the tributaries of the river is highly asymmetrical, as almost all of them join it from the left-hand side from the south to the north, since their sources are in the highlands that border the region of Xallas. The Zas and Vilar rivers are the largest of these tributaries.

There are two areas of interest in this middle section of the river: the attractive landscape of the **area of Pedra**



*Rabiñoso waterfall, in the upper reaches of the Porto river*

**Vixía**, on the Zas river, with its well conserved riverside woodland and a leisure area next to the river, and **A Carballeira da Devesa**, next to the town of Baio, one of the most valuable native woodlands to be found along the course of the river.

Just a short distance from Baio, and further downstream, is the ethnographic site of the mills and **fulleries of Mosquetín**, with seven watermills and three fuller's mills. There are records of the site dating back to the 18th century and the complex itself is unique in Galicia.

The Porto river slowly winds its way through the parishes of Salto and Calo, apart from the area in Foxo, where the banks narrow and the waters flow more rapidly. The river's potential is used here for hydroelectric power.

It is joined in the second parish by the Cambeda river on the left-hand side, which crosses the **valley of Vimianzo**, a tectonic trench between the mountains of San Bartolomeu and Faro, the two high blocks of the fault. **The town of Vimianzo**, founded at the foot of a Medieval castle, is the largest urban centre in the valley.

The final stretch of the Porto river becomes more uneven due to the morphological changes of the area that force a narrower course in which the waters now accelerate towards the **town of Ponte do Porto**.

Further downstream from the bridge of Ponte do Porto, the river broadens its course and forms an **estuary** that extends a further 5 km to where it meets the sea at the *ría* of Camariñas, after a journey of over 47 km. In this section, the water of the *Carnés* river joins the Porto in Cereixo and passes alongside the **Romanesque church of Santiago de Cereixo** under the only **tide mill** to still be conserved in Costa da Morte.

The second area of Terra de Soneira is made up of the southern part occupied by the municipalities of Zas and Vimianzo, whose waters run into the river Xallas, as is the case with the parishes of Muíño, Brandomil and Brandoñas in Zas and Baíñas in Vimianzo. The territory occupied by these parishes forms part of the region of Xallas, with which they share physical and geological similarities.

The area in the basin of the river Castro, like the parishes of Castrelo and Berdoias in Vimianzo, are separated from the others by a chain of mountains whose highest point is **Alto da Cruz** (536 m), a magnificent viewing point to see a sizeable part of Soneira, Xallas and Nemancos.

The third section is the **coastline** of the region, including practically all the municipality of Camariñas. It commences in Sabadelle, the only outlet to the sea in the municipality of Vimianzo. It then opens up at the small **cove of Camelle**, with a beach to the rear, where this fishing village can be found. A short and rocky section then leads to the **beach of Arou**, where the sea can be rough, although the beach itself is a good bathing spot.

From here on a very rocky and rough section of the coast commences, where an abundance of reefs makes this area very dangerous for navigation. Outcrops alternate with small coves like the teeth of a saw up to Punta do Capelo, the





*Mouth of the Porto river*

easternmost limit of the small **cove of Santa Mariña**. The **cove of Trece** is located between between Cabo Veo and Punta do Boi.

The bay itself is a large sandbank with a highly developed system of dunes, which gave rise to the spectacular **Monte Branco**.

At Punta do Boi visitors can see the English Cemetery, where bodies from the wreck of the English ship *Serpent* are buried. This section is the most rugged and hazardous of the entire coastline and is where the greatest marine disasters took place.

From Punta do Boi onwards, the coast continues to be abrupt and rugged until the entrance to the ría of Camariñas. This section is notable for the promontory of Cape Vilán, with its spectacular lighthouse, which dates back to 1896 and was the first in Spain to use electricity.

The entrance to the ría of Camariñas opens up between A Virxe da Barca and A Virxe do Monte, in much the same way as the similarly shaped ría of Corme and Laxe.



*Beach of Arou*

There are also fishing villages on each side of the ría. **Camariñas** is on the northern side while **Muxía** lies to the south along with two coves, A Basa and Area Maior. The ría continues eastwards via the estuary of the river Porto to the town of **Ponte do Porto**.

### > Region of Fisterra

The area to the south of Costa da Morte is the **region of Fisterra**, what was once called Nemancos, made up of the municipalities of **Dumbría, Muxía, Cee, Corcubión**

and **Fisterra**. The southern part of this region also includes the municipalities of Mazaricos and Carnota.

Part of this area geographically belongs to the region of Xallas, as does the eastern part of the municipality of Dumbría and the entire municipality of Mazaricos, where the last section of the **river Xallas** passes through.

The river begins on the western bank of Monte Castelo and the river Mira, form the lagoon of Braña Rubia or Alcaían, joins it at Castriz. The river then runs calmly through the rugged plains, forming continuous meanders. It passes close to the **town of Santa Comba**, the capital



*Chapel of the Virge do Monte at the top of Mount Farelo*

and the commercial and service centre of the region. An old bridge crosses the river at **Brandomil**: it may be a replacement of another Roman bridge, as there was and **Fisterra**. The southern part of this region also includes the municipalities of Mazaricos and Carnota.

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From the bridge of **Ponte Oliveira**, where the St James Way to Fisterra and Muxía passes over, the surroundings are more rugged and the river



*Xallas River in Brandomil*

becomes narrower. It rugged and the river becomes narrower. It becomes still again at the dam of Castrelo and then at the dam of Santa Uxía, before racing down a steep and very narrow slope for the last few metres between Monte Pindo and Alto da Pena. The river bed is made up of a granite that is highly resistant to erosion, while **coastal subsidence** led to the formation of a spectacular cascade at the river mouth, which is one of the great attractions of the area.

Another part of the region of Fisterra extends westward to the region of Xallas, along the basin of the river Castro, whose source and part of the river can be found in the highlands of the parish of Castrelo in Vimianzo, where it is called Rego Lavandeira. In Vilaseco it crosses the AC-552 road and from the parish of Berdoias it acts as a boundary between the municipalities of Dumbría and Muxía. It forms a waterfall in Castro (Coucieiro, Muxía), called Caldeiras do Castro, a very attractive natural site. It then continues through the plain area of Salgueiros, Coucieiro and Caberta, where it now acts as the dividing line between Cee and Muxía. The tectonics in the final stretch of the river force it to take a sudden turn to the west and finally flow into the small ría of Lires, though the natural course of the river would be to end at the ría of Corcubión.

The third area of Fisterra consists of the coastal zone from the parish of Leis (Muxía), inside the area of the ría



*Panoramic view of the coast of Muxía and Camariñas from Lourido (Muxía)*

of Camariñas, to the mouth of the river Xallas, in Ézaro (Dumbría).

This extensive coastal region alternates between low sandy areas and other high rocky zones. The former stretch along the interior of the rías of Camariñas and Corcubión and bays where long beaches can be found, such as **Praia de Lourido, Nemiña, Rostro and Mar de Fóra**. The stretches of cliffs extend along the peninsulas that form the points or capes that penetrate the ocean, such as **Punta do Cachelmo**, where the famous cave of Burserana can be seen, **Punta da Buitra, cape Touriñán**, the westernmost point of **peninsular Spain, cape of A Nave** and the emblematic **cape Fisterra**, one of the most famous and widely visited locations of the Spanish coast.

#### > Municipalities of Mazaricos and Carnota

The municipalities of Mazaricos and Carnota joined the region of Costa da Morte because of their proximity to the region of Fisterra, although the first belongs to the region of Xallas, together with Santa Comba, and the second forms part of Muros. Although Mazaricos stands close to the coast, the area is isolated from the sea by the mountainous barrier formed by Monte Pindo.



*Mount Aro from San Cosme de Antes*

The land in the municipality forms part of the plateau of Xallas. The wildest areas are situated to the north and east and the highest parts are in the centre, surrounding Monte Aro. To the west, in the area of Montes da Ruña (641 m), are the highest points of the municipality and the slopes of Monte Pindo.

The valleys of Mazaricos, Beba and Arcos are located between the hills, crossed by rivers with the same names that are tributaries of the river Xallas, which flows along the western part of the municipality where its waters are halted at several dams, the largest of which is A Fervenza, built in 1965.

The area to the east of the municipality is irrigated by the river Maroñas, also a tributary of the Xallas and the river Santa Baia, which flows into the ría of Noia.

The Atlantic climate of this municipality, which favours the production of pasture and fodder crops, brought about a thriving economic activity in livestock, especially for milk production.

The municipal capital is **A Picota**, a centre for services provided to the twelve parishes that make up the area.





*Mount Pindo from Ézaro*

The **municipality of Carnota** consists of a long stretch of coast that extends from the mouth of the river Xallas in the north to the beach of Lariño in the south. The dividing line with the inland areas starts with the legendary **Monte Pindo**, which stands at over 600 m high and continues to the south through a mountainous zone that borders the plateau of Xallas in the south west and abruptly drops to the coastal heights. There are zones where this range of hills comes close to the sea like the Pindo or the parishes of Lira and Lariño, where the coast is rocky. However, when the coastal plateau becomes wider, in the parishes of San Mamede and Carnota, it gives rise to good farming land, especially for corn, which explains the two long hórreos (Galician granaries) of Carnota and Lira. Extensive sandy areas were formed when they came into contact with the sea, such as the **beach of Carnota**.

#### > Climate

The climatic conditions of Costa da Morte

are very similar to those in the rest of the Galician coast, with an Atlantic climate. However, its location further to the west blends the characteristics common to the neighbouring northern and southern areas, which are more protected from the oceanic winds and winter storms.

Within the coastal area itself there are some variations between the coast and the interior, and between the north and the south. The large area within the region called Costa da Morte is included within the climatic classifications called **humid oceanic** and **hyper-humid oceanic**, which are characterised by mild temperatures with few variations and abundant rainfall. The rainfall in the hyper-humid areas, which include regions further south, is even more frequent.

The average monthly temperatures during winter do not fall below 6°C and in summer rarely go above 20°C. The coldest months of the year are January and February, with average temperatures between 7°C and 10°C, which steadily drop the further away you are from the coast.

The areas close to the sea rarely experience frost, but it does appear in areas further away from the ocean and in zones of high altitude. In these areas prolonged frosts take place from November to March or April, as is the case in the plateau of Xallas and areas of high altitude in Bergantiños and Soneira.

Summers are pleasant because the average temperature stays at about 20°C inland and does not drop below 18°C in coastal areas. August is the warmest month of the year. The oceanic influence, which enters the territory via the valleys of the catchment network, ensures that temperature variations are low and hardly ever more than 10°C between the lowest and highest averages. Temperature variations do tend to increase inland. There is also a slight temperature increase from north to south, especially from Fisterra southwards.

Rainfall is abundant, although snow is very infrequent in the area. The amount of rainfall throughout the region does not

go below 1,000 mm a year. Half of the weather stations in the area record precipitations of over 1,500 mm, while in some parts of the region it reaches 2,000 mm.

These precipitations generally increase from the ocean to the interior, given that the humid fronts from the sea release part of their moisture when they reach the first high areas. Some areas in the region of Xallas see precipitations of over 1,800 mm, as do some parts of the interior of Vimianzo. However, rain is less abundant in the northern area of Costa da Morte. The rainiest period is from November to March, although a lot of rain can also fall in the spring. All the precipitations fall moderately or gently throughout the year.

The most unstable and changeable weather takes place in spring and autumn, caused by the displacement of the Azores High to the north in spring and in the opposite direction in autumn. The displacement of the high allows frontal systems to enter from the west or south west, which leads to increased rainfall, intensifying in the last months of autumn and winter, when the anticyclone is at its southernmost position.

The weather is more stable in the summer as the Azores High is then at its northernmost point and impedes the entry of depressions, causing warm, dry weather, although the high temperatures of Costa da Morte are accompanied by the cool Nordés (north-easters) winds, which blow between the Sisargas Islands and Fisterra and counteract the heat. Wet, cloudy days are not uncommon in the region during summer, especially when the anticyclone moves away towards the west and allows atmospheric disturbances to enter from the north Atlantic, causing rain and drops in temperature, especially on the coast.

Recent years have seen a change in the weather conditions of this region, with lower rainfall concentrated into fewer days but with greater intensity. Summer has also extended to the point where it ends in early October and winters are now shorter, dryer and less harsh as a result of climate change.



*Riparian forest in the middle course of the Porto river*

### > Flora and fauna

The region's location next to the Atlantic Ocean and in the intermediate part of Galicia places Costa da Morte in the Eurosiberian floral region, which extends through the centre and north of Europe and determines the type of vegetation. At the same time, the region is also influenced by other factors local to this western region, such as the Atlantic climate and the mostly acidic soil.

**Oak forests** are the local most common woodland to be found throughout the region, although intense human activity over many years have led to these natural woodlands practically disappearing in some areas. Now their presence is limited to river banks where, along with other tree species such as alder, ash, willow, birch, hazel, laurel and hawthorn, form what is called a **riverside woodland**.

The spaces once occupied by oak forests were initially replaced by gorse and heather. Species for forest repopulation such as pines and eucalyptus were then planted and now cover most of the surface



area of the local hills and mountains, and in some cases have invaded farmland. However, a trip through Costa da Morte is not just countryside dominated by trees, it contains other very different landscapes, both on the coast and further inland.

The extensive coastal region has a wide range of fascinating natural spaces with specific flora and fauna that come together to create a unique landscape.

There are vast sandy areas with dunes, wetlands and even the occasional coastal lagoon, where there is a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna, as is the case with **Razo and Baldaio** in the municipality of Carballo, a fascinating natural space with different ecosystems: beach, dunes, wetlands and a lagoon. One very notable feature of the area is the wealth of bird life, especially water birds. One of the best known and most endangered species is the Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), which nests on top of the dunes.

The next natural area with extensive sands and a coastal lagoon is the **beach of Traba de Laxe**, an area that also blends in with the surroundings hills, the famous **crag of Pasarela and Traba**, which were declared a Natural Landscape in 2009 for their considerable geological and scenic value.

Two different ecosystems exist in this natural coastal setting: the beach, and the dunes and coastal lagoon. Each one has its own particular fauna. The plant species in the area include the *Centaurea corcubionensis*, which is endemic to this coast.

The last large sandy area is the **beach of Carnota**, with dunes and wetlands. This 7 km stretch of sand is the longest in Galicia.

The beach itself is of fine white sand produced by erosion of the local granite and seashells. The variety of flora and fauna throughout the area also makes it a site of great natural interest.

These extensive areas of sand alternate with long sections of **cliffs**, especially in the contours of the peninsulas and promontories that form the capes and headlands, where winds blow fiercely and waves break with force against the rocks.

There is little in the way of woodland in the coastal areas because of the tough environmental conditions. What is commonly found in these areas is low vegetation, such as gorse and heather, as can be seen on the coast between Razo and Malpica, at the cape of Santo Adrián and the Sisargas Islands, the peninsula of Roncudo, the coast from Camelle to cape Vilán, the peninsulas that form the headlands of Buítra and cape Touriñán, cape of A Nave and cape Fisterra.

The third and last group of coastal spaces of natural interest are the estuaries of the largest local rivers: the rivers Anllóns, Porto, Castro and Xallas and the rías that they flow into are more protected than the rest of the coast and have a wide variety of flora and fauna.

The **estuary of the river Anllóns**, also called the cove of Insua, is the last stretch of the river, extending from the bridge at Ponteceso to A Barra. The estuary is a large natural space enclosed by a sandbank



*Dune warbler (Charadrius alexandrinus) (Habitat Group)*

where a dune was formed that covered the southern slope of Monte Branco because of the winds. The areas of mud and the wetlands that surround it contain a rich variety of flora and fauna typical of these types of ecosystems. An outstanding feature is the large number of aquatic birds that use the area as their permanent or temporary habitat. They have been catalogued by the renowned ornithologist José Luis Rabuñal Patiño in his many visits to this area.

The **estuary of the river Porto** commences at the bridge of Ponte do Porto, where the river broadens. The river flows more slowly after Baixa de Dor and forms small islets that some local aquatic birds use for nesting.

In the final stretch, sand begins to form on the margins of the river to create the beaches of Ariño near Xaviña and Area rest of the coast and have a wide variety of flora and fauna.



*Last stretch of the Anllóns river bed*

The **estuary of the river Anllóns**, also called the cove of Insua, is the last stretch of the river, extending from the bridge at Ponteceso to A Barra. The estuary is a large natural space enclosed by a sandbank where a dune was formed that covered the southern slope of Monte Branco because of the winds. The areas of mud and the wetlands that surround it contain a rich variety of flora and fauna typical of these types of ecosystems. An outstanding feature is the large number of aquatic birds that use the area as their permanent or temporary habitat. They have been catalogued by the renowned ornithologist José Luis Rabuñal Patiño in his many visits to this area.

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In the final stretch, sand begins to form on the margins of the river to create the beaches of Ariño near Xaviña and Area Grande near Leis.

The advantage of this estuary is that, from Cereixo up to its end point at the ría of Camariñas, its banks are covered with vegetation and no man-made structures are present, and so human intervention is scarce, making it a very safe and peaceful location for the local fauna.

The mouth of the **river Castro** forms a very small estuary that was modified by the Tres Mares fish farm, built here in 1969 to breed trout. This space, through the mouth of the river Lires, forms an area where a large number of aquatic birds mingle and breed, an ideal place for bird watchers.

The **river Xallas**, the mouth of which forms a large waterfall, has a small estuary at the foot of Monte Pindo where the waters flow into the ría of Corcubión. The right-hand side of the estuary and the fauna that inhabits the area have been greatly affected by human intervention in the form of a hydroelectric power plant and the houses of Ézaro that were built along the banks. The greatest natural attraction of the area is the unique granite enclave that surrounds the impressive waterfall of the river Xallas.

All these natural spaces have been under official protection for some years, and so should be treated with care and respect to ensure that they are not affected in any way.

The coastal areas of this region are included in the Natura 2000 network via the Special Conservation Zone (ZEC) of Costa da Morte, which includes the coast that extends from Sabón (Arteixo) to Fisterra, in a surface area of 11,809 hectares, and the ZEC of Carnota – Monte Pindo, which includes the last part of the river Xallas, Monte Pindo, the beach and wetlands of Carnota and the Lobeiras Islands, with a surface area of 4,628 hectares.

The wealth of bird life in some of these coastal areas has caused them to be protected as a Zone of Special Protection for Birds (ZEPA) of Costa da Morte, with a surface area of 7,962 hectares.

The sites of natural interest further inland in Costa da Morte include areas such as the ZEC of the river Anllóns, as part of the Natura 2000 network, which covers most of the main course of the river and its tributary, the Rosende, over a surface area of 162 hectares, as well as the Protected Landscape of the crags of Pasarela and Traba, with a surface area of 212 hectares in the municipalities of Vimianzo and Laxe.

### > Population

The Costa da Morte is one of the most underpopulated coastal regions in Galicia. The cliff-lined coast, beaten by winds and waves, with few protected areas, has not encouraged human settlement, while a long-standing lack of roads and other means of communication has not helped establish or occupy cities.

The region is characterised by a widely dispersed population living in small villages, as is the case in the rest of rural Galicia, and some towns in more protected areas of the coast or inland along the AC-552 road.

There are significant differences in terms of population between the number of the inhabitants on the coast, which is more heavily populated, and the interior, with much lower population levels. The parishes on the coast, apart from one or two places with many cliffs, are more heavily populated.

The total population of Costa da Morte is 111,958 (2022), occupying a surface area of 1,711 km<sup>2</sup> and grouped into 17 municipalities in the regions of Bergantiños, Terra de Soneira and Fisterra, along with the municipalities of Mazaricos (Terra de Xallas) and Carnota (region of Muros).

This population represents solely 10% of the inhabitants of the province of A Coruña, while the surface area of



*Scattered habitat in the interior of the Costa da Morte*

Costa da Morte is 21% of the total territory of the province.

A closer look at the distribution of the population as a whole show that the average density is 66 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, much lower than the provincial average (141 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>) and average for Galicia (90 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>).

The distribution of the population shows many contrasts between one area and another. There are municipalities with a population density of less than 25 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, such as Dumbria and Mazaricos, while others have over 100 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, such as Corcubión, Carballo, Cee and Fisterra. The largest concentration is found on the coast of the small rías, where the main towns are located. The population around **the ría of Corcubión** is gathered in the town of **Fisterra** and around the beach of A around the beach of A Langosteira, and in the towns of **Corcubión** and **Cee**, a continuous urban nucleus.

The highest density in the **ría of Camariñas** is on the north coast, in the town of **Camariñas** and the road that links the town with **Ponte do Porto**. On the southern side of the ría is the town of **Muxía** and the AC-440 road from the town to Quintáns.



*The ría of Corcubión is one of the largest population centres in Costa da Morte.*

Most of the population of the **ría of Corme and Laxe** live in these two towns and along the AC-429 road, which passes around the south part of the ría from Ponteceso to Laxe. The coastal towns of Malpica and Caión are located further to the north.

As regards the interior, population densities depend to a great extent on the **AC-552** between **A Coruña and Fisterra**, especially in the northern section. All the towns are located alongside this road, which was established in the second half of the 19th c. The highest level of population is on the section from **A Laracha** to Coristanco, especially in the town of **Carballo**. Further south, the largest towns are **Baio and Vimianzo**.

Carballo (19,267 inhabitants) is by far the largest town, followed by Cee (3,890 inhabitants), A Laracha (3,465 inhabitants), Fisterra (2,720 inhabitants), Camariñas (2,427 inhabitants), Malpica (1,854 inhabitants) and Laxe (1,710 inhabitants), according to data from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE) for 2022.

Analysis of how the absolute population has evolved from the final years of the last century to the present day shows that there was a marked drop in almost the



entire Costa da Morte. This loss of population is due basically to a pronounced negative population growth in which deaths are much more common than births, along with migration to the two nearby cities of A Coruña and Santiago and to other regions in Spain or countries in Western Europe.

The drop in population brought about in the 1960s by constant emigration to European countries, especially Switzerland, was then accentuated by low birth rates and large numbers of young people leaving the region in search of better job prospects. This further accelerated a process of population ageing that is now difficult to counteract.

Administrations have therefore attempted to take measures to resolve the problem of depopulation with proposals to develop the territory and create employment, making use of the many resources available on land and at sea in the region, and contributing towards maintaining the population and halting the constant loss of residents due to emigration.

### > Economic resources

Costa da Morte has good prospects for balanced economic development, partly because it is a natural setting ideal for all kinds of activities and because of the potential of the resources available on land and at sea.

The fact that it is an economically underdeveloped region with low levels of job creation is due more than anything to a series of causes that led to the region's resources being under-exploited.

Its location at the westernmost point of the Iberian Peninsula (and the European continent) meant that the territory suffered from almost constant isolation and a lack of roads and other means of communication, which had a lot to do with a lack of initiatives to bring progress to the area. There is no other territory in Galicia with a surface area like Costa da Morte, almost 2,000 km<sup>2</sup>, that is not crossed by at least one railway

line. There were plans to build one from A Coruña to Corcubión in what was called "the three Cs" (for the three towns that were to be inked: A Coruña, Carballo and Corcubión) or the "train of wealth", because of the prosperity that it would bring to the region. Despite various attempts by municipalities and well-known local political figures and businessmen in the early 20th c., it was never made a reality. If the line had been built, the conditions for development in the region would have been very different.

Costa da Morte was also marginalised in the plans for road construction in the 19th and 20th centuries, given that no national motorway crosses the region. The most important road was the regional AC- 552 from A Coruña to Fisterra, which was built with painful slowness in the second half of the 19th c. Improvements to this road were carried out in the last decades of the 20th c., with similar delays.

The first motorway to cross the region was the AG-55 from A Coruña to Carballo, built in the 1990s and financed almost entirely with public funds. However, road maintenance was then financed by a toll system, which has only further held back regional development. The extension of this motorway from Carballo to Baio was opened in 2016 under an undercover toll system, but it needs to be further extended to Cee, which should now be completed.

Road connections with the city of Santiago are even worse, especially with the centre and north of Costa da Morte, from Baio or Carballo.

These two urban centres should be connected to Santiago with better roads, which would connect with the AG-56 Santiago-Noia motorway.

Road network limitations such as these, combined with governmental neglect that has lasted for many years, goes a long way towards explaining the low economic development of the region, which has forced local residents to adopt the long-standing tradition of





*There are a large number of livestock farms in the interior of Costa da Morte.*

emigration, a problem endemic to the region and one that continues right up to the present day.

The economy of Costa da Morte has historically been based on the primary sector, agriculture, livestock and fishing. The exploitation of these resources based on traditional skills continued until very recently, leading to an unplanned and much delayed evolution to a modern economy.

This modernisation of the local economy in the farming and livestock sector focused mainly on intensive dairy farming for milk production, which did little to create any new jobs.

This meant that a large part of the farmland was given over to fodder crops to feed the new livestock. However, there was no commitment to develop modern farming to produce wheat, legumes, potatoes, vegetables and fruit

that would adapt well to the climate and soil type and that could be profitable in a modern market, especially in the most fertile lands. It would therefore be necessary to combine the plots of farmland under cooperatives to make them profitable and specialised in producing and marketing some of these products. The region also has good conditions for producing ecological products, for which there is a growing demand by consumers who are ever more aware of the need for a healthier diet.

Workers who left traditional farming because it was unprofitable or because they chose not to form part of the livestock farms went on to work in construction or emigrated to Western Europe.

Fishing has been the main economic activity in coastal towns such as Caión, Malpica, Corme, Laxe, Camelle, Camariñas, Muxía and Fisterra. Inshore purse-seine fishing is the most common practice in the region to capture sardine and xurelo (Atlantic horse mackerel), most commonly at the ports of Malpica and Camariñas; longlining for hake, red sea bream, gilt-head bream and pomfret in ports like Muxía and Fisterra; and other systems with baskets to catch octopus and velvet crab, or small-scale fishing vessels with driftnets (trammel nets, gill nets, etc.) to catch a wide variety of fish and shellfish in all the ports.

This fleet was gradually renewed from the 1960s when the market price of fish began to increase and catches were abundant. Some ports also saw the introduction of coastal trawlers that caught a range of fish and shellfish.

A drop in catches started in the 1990s due to overfishing in certain fishing grounds and because of the limitations imposed by increasingly restrictive regulations for the sector. The industry also faced a serious problem with the lack of generational replacement in fishing families, which caused many companies to dispose of their vessels due to the lack of new crew members and rely on subsidies from the EEC, with the intention of reducing the coastal fishing fleet, which led to ports



*Fishing vessels at the port of Malpica de Bergantiños*

having fewer and fewer vessels. This situation caused a drop in fishing activity in most ports in the region and an ever increasing focus on the tourist sector, despite the fact that this new activity and fishing complement each other perfectly, since the latter provides one of the raw materials for the varied and delicious cuisine of this part of the Galician coast.

Costa da Morte is a region with a low level of industrialisation. One of the first local industrial initiatives was the alloy factory at Cee, which is still active under the name of XEAL (Xallas Electricidad y Aleaciones). The next initiatives to appear were the Cerdeimar canning factory in Camariñas, the Calvo canning factory in Carballo and the UNENSA fiber board factory in Coristanco.

Industrial estates were then established in Cee, Vimianzo, Baio, Ponteceso, Carballo and A Laracha, where most local companies now have their business premises; many of the companies operate in the construction, automotive, hospitality and food sectors.



*Calvo canning factory on the outskirts of Carballo*

There is a lack of industrial firms that could transform the wealth of raw materials available in the region, such as companies that extract products from the farming and livestock sectors, and which could set the foundations of a solid food industry. The same process could take place with the wood taken from local mountain areas, much of which is marketed without being transformed, when the logical thing to do would be to set up a wood industry focused on furniture making and construction.

The excellent conditions in Costa da Morte for producing electricity from wind farms on mountains that combine favourable conditions for installation would ideally be another factor in encouraging local industry. However, most of the energy produced is exported to other territories.

Tourism represents another major potential sector for Costa da Morte. The unique natural, historical and gastronomic heritage makes this region one of the most attractive in Galicia.

The incomparable coastal landscapes with impressive cliffs, wild pebbled and sandy beaches, and small rías and little urban development is just one of its major



*The Porto river as it passes through the oak forest of Devesa de Baio*

attractions. The beautiful landscapes of the interior should not be forgotten either: the banks of the Anllóns, Porto, Castro and Xallas rivers, and other places such as the crags of Pasarela and Traba and Monte Pindo.

The historical, cultural and gastronomic heritage is another great attraction for its quality and abundance. An unmissable part of the region's history are the dolmens, hillforts, churches and chapels, manor houses, lighthouses and hórreos, a unique and valuable architectural heritage. The rich local cultural heritage can be discovered in many unique forms, such as the legends, customs, language, literature, music, crafts and cuisine.

Another major tourist attraction of this region is the Way of St James from Santiago to Fisterra-Muxía, which receives a growing number of pilgrims from all over the world.



*Pilgrim on the Way of St James to Fisterra-Muxía*

Few other territories have such a rich crafts heritage such as the lacework of Camariñas or the ceramics of Buño. Costa da Morte is both a coastal and inland region, which means that it has a wide variety of products from land and sea, the raw materials for the excellent local cuisine.

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## 04 HISTORICAL ROOTS

### > Megalithic architecture

Human occupation of Costa da Morte has a much longer history than the dates offered by the few stone tools discovered in places such as the lagoon of Alcaíán (Coristanco) and Baldaio (Carballo). The humid and acid soil here, as in the rest of Galicia, does not allow bones to be conserved for very long periods.

The first culture for which we have abundant archaeological remains is the **Megalithic**. The oldest dating available for this culture is the beginning of 4,000 BCE, and the chronology in this case has been attributed by researchers to the first dolmens, such as ancient Dombate.

The term megalith comes from the Greek megas (large) and lithos (stone). Megalithic remains consist of a stone structure locally known as an **anta** or **arca**. Another term used is **dolmen**, a Breton word that means “large stone table”. The earth tumulus, sometimes reinforced with a stone coating, that surrounds this stone structure is locally known as a mámoa, medoña or medorra.

The most common shape of mámoas is circular or elliptical and their diameter varies between 10 and 30 metres. Their height above ground level varies between one and three metres. Many of the mámoas that hide an anta in their interior are gradually eroded by the passage of time and human activity and so reveal part of the structure of the burial chamber, i.e., the dolmens that we see today. However, in most cases what is seen is the earthen mound or tumulus, with a depression at the top caused by attempts to extract stones from the chamber for other uses or to find a treasure that was thought to be buried there. Such treasures clearly did not exist but were commonly believed to be there, especially in the early 17th century, when king Philip III granted a permit to Vázquez de Orxas to open the tumuli and take any treasure found within. This belief led to many mámoas being damaged. This sort of activity continues today, although it is now illegal. The construction of field tracks



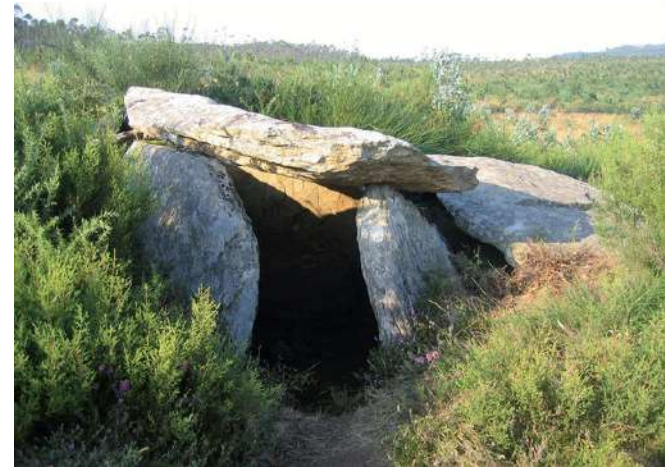


*Mámoa do Seixo (Turiñán, Muxía)*

and other routes, as well as farming and forestry work, has led to the disappearance of part of this valuable historical heritage. Even so, more than 600 Megalithic sites, including mámoas and dolmens, have been catalogued in Costa da Morte.

Several stages or phases can be distinguished in the long history of the Megalithic culture, according to the type of monuments. According to the archaeologist Antón Rodríguez Casal, there are three phases:

An **initial period**, from 3500 BCE to 3000 BCE, when the simplest enclosed polygonal or circular antas with just one chamber were built. An example would be the one at **Dombate**. An **intermediate phase** followed, which corresponds to a period of expansion of this type of funeral architecture, in which larger monuments were built with an entrance corridor facing east. This phase lasted approximately from 3000 BCE to 2500 BCE. The most important antas in Costa da Morte were built during this period: **Dombate** (Borneiro, Cabana de Bergantiños), **Pedra da Arca** (Cerqueda, Malpica), **Pedra da Arca** or **Casa dos Mouros** (Baíñas, Vimianzo), **Pedra Cuberta** (Treos, Vimianzo), **Arca da Piosa** (Muíño, Zas), **Pedra**



*Dolmen da Arca da Piosa (Muíño, Zas)*

**Vixía** (Lamas, Zas), **Mina da Parxubeira** (Eirón, Mazaricos), **Pedra Moura** (Aldemunde, Carballo) and **Pedra Embarrada** (Ferreira, Coristanco).

The **final phase** lasted from 2500 BCE to 2000 BCE, and is characterised by the construction of square or rectangular antas with one single covering. Examples of this type of anta would be the ones at **Casota de Freán** (Berdoias, Vimianzo) or **Fornela dos Mouros** (Nande, Laxe), which would be the last monuments of this type of collective burial. They were then replaced by smaller structures called **cists**, for individual burials, such as the one discovered in Taraio (Cerqueda, Malpica), now in the Archaeological and Historical Museum at the Castle of Santo Antón in A Coruña.

Alongside the dolmens and mámoas, there are other structures dating back to the megalithic period such as **pedras fitas** or **menhirs** and **stone circles** or **cromlechs**. In the municipality of A Laracha, the **menhir** of **Marco da Anta** is still preserved and can be seen in the parish of Erboedo. It is some 2.05 metres high and the base measures about 74 cm in circumference. The archaeologist Luis Monteagudo publicised details of this



menhir in 1950. There is another pedra fita or menhir on Monte Nariga, on the outskirts of the municipalities of Malpica and Ponteceso, called **O Fuso da Moura**, which measures 2.5 m in height and about 40 cm on each face in the middle.

As regards stone circles in this region, there are some references. The most famous one is A **Eira das Meigas** on Monte Neme, but the original has not been preserved. There is a replica near the location of the original circle.

The Megalithic culture appeared at a time when a series of changes were taking place in the social groups that lived in the region, which coincided with the **Neolithic period**, such as farming and livestock keeping, the invention of new tools made of polished stone and the use of ceramics. Innovations such as these were to lead to the first forms of sedentary life. These economic and social changes brought about a change in religious sentiments, which can be seen in a growing concern about life after death, which would explain the reasons behind the construction of all these funerary monuments throughout Costa da Morte and the rest of Galicia.

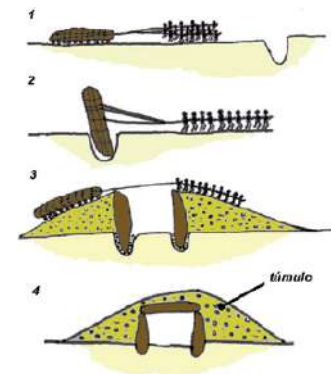


*Pedra Fita or the menhir of Marco da Anta (Erboedo, A Laracha).*

There is very little information about life in the communities that lived in this region more than 4,000 years ago and that left us their Megalithic architecture. There are no remains of their settlements, which were very probably built of perishable materials and because of their semi-nomadic

lifestyle, which depended on pastoralism and itinerant farming. The existence of many mámoas throughout the region, plus the ones that were destroyed and no longer exist, lead one to the conclusion that there was a fairly sizeable population dispersed around the territory, grouped into family clans that occupied specific areas, in which the tumuli acted as elements of group cohesion and domination of the space that they lived in.

The fact that these funerary monuments were used for collective burials indicates that there was no clear stratification in the social structure. However, some kind of ruling class would have been necessary to direct hierarchically organised groups for structures of this size. This would also explain the differences between the remains that have been found. Transporting the massive slabs that formed the chamber from their place or origin and building the structures themselves would have required large groups of people.



*Images of the possible construction of one dolmen (Wikipedia)*

These huge pieces of stone would have been transported by groups of people or animals using ropes to drag them or wooden rollers. Once the slabs had been transported, holes would have been dug to place the columns or upright slabs of the chamber and corridor, covering them with small stones; then earth would be placed on top to create the tumulus and inside to fill the chamber.

The tumulus would have been used as a **ramp** to drag the **ceiling** of the structure. Finally, the earth would be removed from inside the structure to make space in the chamber for the burials.

Few objects have been found inside or outside the antas. The lack of finds may be due to constant looting, the few excavations that have been carried out, and also to the poor state of conservation of many of the monuments. The objects that have been found include: small flaked stone tools such as knives and arrow heads, and others made of polished stone such as axes or adze heads. Adornments or cult objects, indicative of wealth or social distinction, such as necklace beads and *idoliños* (small idols). Pot remains are very common, ranging from simple open convex shapes to pieces with vertical walls, closed forms and straight lines. The pottery is grooved, incised, indented or beaker shaped.

Some **slabs** inside the dolmens have carvings. Their meaning is difficult to establish, as in the case of the figure called the The Ting in Dombate or the dolmen Pedra Embarrada, in Coristanco. **Remnants of red, white and black paint** have been found in others such as Pedra Cuberta, Casa dos Mouros and Dombate.

An outstanding example of the large antas or dolmens in Costa da Morte is Dombate, also known as the "cathedral of Galician antas", excavated by the archaeologist Jose María Bello between 1987 in 1989. The finds included paintings on the slabs in the chamber and corridor distributed in horizontal lines, the discover of another previous monument within the mass of the tumulus, called "**old Dombate**" and the group of twenty **idoliños** found at the entrance to the corridor.

After the whole site was left under a plastic sheet or in the open air for over twenty years, it was finally covered in 2011 with a structure of wood and glass to protect the paintings. An interpretation and visitor reception centre was also built nearby. The monument receives about 30,000 visits a year.

Megalithic architecture is one of the major tourist assets of Costa da Morte, and so it should be cared for and appreciated. With this aim in mind, the regional government approved a project to create the **Magalithic Park of Costa da Morte** in 2003, but no further measures have been taken since then. In recent years the provincial council of A Coruña, which owns the dolmen of Dombate, has shown interest in instilling new life into the initiative with the collaboration of municipalities that have monuments of the period. An agreement between all the local administrations to move the project forward as soon as possible would do a great deal to preserve this example of the regional heritage.

### > Castro Culture

This cultural manifestation extended throughout the north western part of the Iberian Peninsula. Its most common characteristic is the fortified settlement, or castro, from the Latin "castrum" (fortress). These settlements set out to protect a territory where its inhabitants had interests in farming, livestock or mining. Most hillforts were built on hills or high places to facilitate defence, but there are others located on open spaces, surrounded by farmland, and in coastal areas, which would have been built to make use of marine resources and to trade with other settlements.

These prehistoric settlements were circular or elliptical in shape, with a surrounding defensive system made up of one, two or three defensive lines alternating with ditches. In many case the inhabitants made use of natural features such sloping terrain and coastal cliffs for defence.

There are many hillforts distributed throughout Costa da Morte. Some can be found on the topmost point of mountains to aid in their defence, such as Monte Aro (Mazaricos), Castro de Xansón (Moraime, Muxía), Monte Croado (Carnés, Vimianzo), Castro de Lume de Suso (Castro, Coristanco) and Coto do Castro (Artes, Carballo). Others can be found on slopes or flatter ground, such as Mintiráns (Caberta, Muxía), As Barreiras (Vimianzo),



*Archaeological excavation at the top of Castro de Montes Claros (A Laracha)*

Nemeño (Ponteceso) and Cances (Carballo). The vast majority were built on hilltops, such as Mallou (Carnota), A Rega (Camariñas), A Croa do Castro (Cerqueda, Malpica), Oca (Coristanco) and Montes Claros (Vilaño, A Laracha). Finally, mention should be made of coastal castros, which made use of cliffs as a natural defence, such as the castro at Punta Galeana (Vilanova, Malpica), Merexo (Ozón, Muxía) or the islet of O Castelo o Herboso (Touriñán, Muxía).

The only castro to be completely excavated in A Costa da Morte is the one at A **Cidá** (Borneiro, Cabana de Bergantiños), where several excavations were completed throughout the 20th century; the last, directed by Ana Romero Masiá, took place in the 1980s. What is now visible there is 36 circular and rectangular constructions with rounded corners, which occupied three quarters of the space at the top of the settlement. All of them were used for domestic purposes, although not all of them were dwelling places. Besides the space at the top in the eastern part of the castro, where the main entrance of the enclosure was located, there is an area called the "Barrio Extramuros", where some structures were found, including an oven that was used to forge metals.

Some castros have recently been excavated, such as **Mallou, As Barreiras, A Croa do Castro and Montes Claros**. Remains of structures and large amounts of pottery were found in some of them.

The period of the Castro culture commenced at the end of the Bronze Age and developed during the Iron Age, to the early days of Romanisation, throughout a period that lasted from the 7th c. BCE to the 1st c. CE.

The first inhabitants of each castro ("castelum", according to Roman writers) were made up of a community bound by blood ties. Several settlements formed a superior unit called a *populus* (people), which occupied a territory within a defined border. According to Roman chroniclers, the tribe or *populus* that lived in Costa da Morte were the **nerii** in the regions of Fisterra and Soneira and the **brigantinos** in Bergantiños.

The economy of the castros was based on farming, with different types of cereals (wheat, millet and barley) and some vegetables. The domesticated livestock of the Castro culture included cows, horses, sheep, pigs and poultry, but they also hunted as game was abundant in this period. The coastal settlements also included fish and shellfish in their diet. The bones and shells found in the coastal castros show that this was the case.

Castro peoples were also excellent metal workers. They worked with copper, tin, lead, gold, silver and iron. Bronze objects (fibulae, rings, needles and balls) made of bronze and iron were found in the castro of A Cidá (Borneiro, Cabana de Bergantiños).

The quality of the precious metalwork made by the Castro culture impresses visitors even today for the variety of techniques used in the gold objects that have been found and conserved: torques, diadems, bracelets and necklaces. **Torques**, such as the one found at Orbellido (Baíñas, Vimianzo) were objects of prestige associated with warriors.

They were also master ceramicists, who commenced shaping clay objects by hand and then with a wheel, making pieces in a wide variety of shapes and decorated with many different plant motifs, which they used to store and transport goods, for domestic use and for rituals or leisure. A large quantity of highly fragmented pottery has been found at the castro of A Cidá. Similar sites where many potsherds have been found in Costa da Morte include Montes Claros, As Barreiras and Mallou.



*Torques from Doorbell (Bañas, Vimianzo), 1st c. CE (Wikipedia).*

Local Roman inscriptions indicate that the religious pantheon of the Castro culture was many and varied. Latin writers mention over 200 names of gods, although in some cases the same god could have different names depending on the region.

There were many divinities linked to nature and the astral world. The Castro culture was a warlike society and so a large number of gods were dedicated to war, such as Coso, who appears in many of the inscriptions.

On the other hand, there were also gods and goddesses of fertility who watched over plants, animals and people, and who were prayed to to protect the harvests, livestock and the family. Others were also responsible for protecting the home.

Areas inside the most central and highest points of especially large castros have been identified as places where religious rites may have been practised. The most common rituals were sacrifices and animal

offerings to the gods.

Some details of the social life and customs of the Castro culture have been passed down through Roman historians, who considered them to be barbarians because their customs were different, such as drinking water instead of wine and eating bread made from acorns. They were also said to eat while sitting on long benches and that the men grew their hair long like the women.

Written records suggest that women played an important role in farming and in the care and breeding of livestock, while men's roles were more closely linked to warfare and politics.

### > Romanisation

The Romans' first contact with the westernmost region of the Iberian Peninsula took place in 139 BCE, during the first expedition led by **Quintus Servilius Caepio**, the time when the first reference is made to callaicoi. Two years later, an expedition led by the consul **Decimus Junius Brutus** set out with the intention of conquering the ancient Lusitania. His army was the first to cross the river Letheo (Lima), the so-called river of forgetfulness. These incursions did not lead to the subjection of the tribes settled in the western part of the region. Contemporary writers say that Brutus and his army were terrified when they reached the coast and saw huge waves and a spectacular sunset. After the expedition, Brutus was given the honorary nickname of "Callaicus".

A naval expedition led by **Julius Caesar** arrived at the port of Brigantium (A Coruña) in 60 BCE. His plan was to conquer the rebellious tribes and seize their wealth. He returned to Rome without having achieved his goal. In 26 BCE, **Augustus** arrived in the region at the head of several legions to put an end to the rebellious tribes and subject them to the laws and authority of Rome. Once the territory was pacified, the Aras Sestianas (altars) were built in honour of Augustus in 16 BCE; their exact location is unknown.



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The territory was later organised once again, and the indigenous peoples were obliged to abandon their hillforts and settle in the flatter areas. From then on, the territory of Gallaecia was divided into three jurisdictional regions: Bracara, Astúrica and Lucus, where all political and military power was centralised. The area of Costa da Morte was included in the latter.

To control the territory and exploit the mines, the primary goal of the Romans in the north west of the Peninsula, three roads were built to link the capitals of the three administrative regions: via XVIII, via XIX and via XX. The third was also called “per loca marítima”, as it passed close to the sea. It believed to have crosses part of Costa da Morte, but no agreement has been reached by historians about its route.

There is growing evidence to confirm that the mansio or



*Section of the Camiño Real in Brandomil with remains of Roman paving.*

or official stopping point of Glandimiro coincides with the present-day municipality of **Brandomil** (Zas). Many Roman remains have been found in this region: three votive altars, a funerary pediment, a funerary panel, remains of columns and a lot of Roman pottery.

The excavations promoted by the Fundación Brandomil, sponsored by the municipality of Zas and directed by the archaeologist Lino Gorgoso, have made some important new discoveries, such as the remains of a Roman road and a structure that may be a mansio, which may be linked to the ancient road. From here it would cross the region of Xallas, enter Bergantiños via the lagoon of Alcaíán and cross the river Rosende, where the Lubián bridge is now located. Carballo may have been home to another mansio where ancient baths and traces of thermal springs were found. It then headed off towards Vilaño (A Laracha), where a milestone was found, then Arteixo, before finally reaching the city of Brigantium.

Besides the Roman settlement at Brandomil, most likely established because of the gold mine of Pozo Limideiro, Roman remains have been found in many other parts of this coastal region. Excavations conducted at **Duio** (Fisterra) in the 1940s by a local doctor, Francisco Esmorís Recamán, brought to light prehistoric tools and Roman roof tiles. Local legends also link the area to the presence of the Romans.

Traces of what may have been a Roman villa were found in **Moraime** in 1972, to the south of the modern parish church of San Xulián. The finds include the remains of a hypocaust, fibulae, beads, coins and many fragments of pottery, linked to the late Roman period.

A similar discovery was made in Tines (Vimianzo), where the archaeologist Manuel Chamoso Lamas discovered a Roman-Suebian necropolis in 1951, with stone and tile-built sarcophagi, and traces of a Roman mansio. The **funerary stele of Victorinus** was found in the same place, and is now on display in the Archaeological and Historical Museum at the Castle of Santo Antón in A Coruña.



*Funerary stele of Victorinus, Tines, Vimianzo (Wikipedia).*

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It is the oldest written evidence of the presence of Christianity in Galicia.

Possible remains of Roman villas were also found in **Agra da Cruz** (Gándara, Zas), **Cores** (Ponteceso), where two Roman altars and other finds from the same period can be seen in the parish church.



*Tomb from a Visigothic necropolis found in Moraime.*

Remains of a Roman necropolis was also discovered near the church of **Cances** (Carballo), where several tombs made with tiles were found. Roman pottery has been found in many other places.

Romanarmy, the international research group, and researchers from the University of Santiago de Compostela, discovered a group of provisional Roman encampments that have contributed to increasing knowledge about the conquest of Gallaecia. Five of these encampments were found in the province of A Coruña, one of which was discovered next to the **castro of Santa Baia** (Soandres, A Laracha).

### > Middle Ages

There is little information in Costa da Morte about this long period in history that covers about one thousand years (5th-15th c. CE) due to a lack of existing documentation and archaeological excavations.

Remains from the Suebian and Visigothic periods were found in some places where Roman remains were also found, such as **Moraime** (Muxía), **Tines** (Vimianzo), **Cores** (Ponteceso) and **Cances** (Carballo), but they were hardly studied and little information the sites was obtained. If more research work were carried out, the number of Germanic sites in the area would greatly increase.

Many historians state that Costa da Morte was scarcely populated in the Early Middle Ages because of its peripheral position and its distance from important population centres of political and ecclesiastical power. This belief goes against the fact that the territory was heavily populated in previous periods, such as the Megalithic and Castro cultures, if the large number of archaeological finds from these periods is anything to go by. The lack of historical documentation that might provide more details about this early period of the Middle Ages makes it impossible to know whether human occupation at that time was greater than it is currently believed.

According to the **Parrochiale Suevum** (572), the lands that made up Costa da Morte were included in the large districts and parishes of Bregantinos, Coporos and Célticos, since no mention is made of the historical regions of **Bergantiños, Soneira and Nemancos**.

In the **document of Tructinus** (868) only two churches are mentioned in the entire region: **San Saturnino de Vimianzo, in Soneira, and Santa Eulalia de Dumbría**, in Nemancos, both of which belonged in this period to the diocese of Iria Flavia. Besides the ecclesiastical divisions, the Asturian-Galician-Leonese monarchy shared out the territory in **comitatus** (counties), where a count exercised military, judicial, fiscal and governmental powers in the king's name. In the 11th century, the region was divided into five counties: Carnota, Célticos, Nemancos, Soneira and Bergantiños, which corresponded to the parishes of Entines, Célticos, Nemancos, Soneira, Seaia and Bergantiños, later transformed into archpriestships after the reforms of 1177 made by the archbishop of Santiago, Pedro III. The first five formed the arch-deanery of Trastámara, which was based in the town of Cee.

There is no information about the existence of any noble families in Costa da Morte until the end of the 11th c., when the first details appear about the Traba family, which may have received their name from the parish of Santiago de Traba (Laxe), where they may have had fortified settlements on the heights of the Torre da Moa.

The most visible figure of this group of nobles was **Pedro Froilaz**, also known as the Count of Traba, who was educated in the court of king Alfonso VI where he gained the trust of Raymond of Burgundy, son-in-law of the king and father of Alfonso Reimúndez, the future king Alfonso VII, who as an infant under the protection of Pedro (he spent part of his childhood in the monastery of Moraime). Pedro also defended Alfonso's rights to the throne and, with the support of the archbishop of Santiago Diego Xelmírez, the prince was crowned king of Galicia in 1111 with the title Alfonso VII. After the death of his mother Urraca (1126), he also became king of Leon and then Castile.



*King Alfonso VII spent part of his childhood in the monastery of Moraime.*



The links between the Traba family and Costa da Morte also led to closer relationships between the region and the monarchy and the church in Santiago. In acknowledgement of the hospitality shown by the monks of Moaraime, Alfonso VII granted extensive hunting lands to the monastery in 1119. In the same century, Count Pedro also donated several churches he owned in Nemancos to the archbishopric of Santiago. The leading role of the Traba family in Costa da Morte in the 10th and 11th centuries CE can be seen in their participation in the founding of several small monasteries in the region, such as **San Xulián de Moraime** (Muxía), **Santiago de Mens** (Malpica), **San Mamede de Seavia** (Coristanco) and **San Xoán de Borneiro** (Cabana de Bergantiños). There were others in Nemancos, Soneira and Bergantiños: **San Martiño de Ozón** (Muxía), **San Antolín de Baíñas** (Vimianzo), **Santa María de Cabo Tosto** (Xaviña, Camariñas), **San Vicente da Graña** (Ponteceso), **San Martiño de Canduas** (Cabana de Bergantiños), **Santo Tomé de Nemeño** (Ponteceso) and **San Pedro de Soandres** (A Laracha). Almost all of them were founded by the family, although their origins are unknown. Some of them were very old, dating back to the 9th and 10th centuries, although many were established in the 11th c., and reached their moments of maximum splendour in the 12th c.

The most important **monasteries** in the region were San Xulián de **Moraime**, in Terra de Nemancos, and San Pedro de Soandres, on the eastern edge of the region of Bergantiños. The monastery of Moraime may have been founded in the 11th c. (the earliest document referring to the monastery dates back to 1095). Some researchers believe that it may have been founded by the Trabas, since several members of the family were the first benefactors of the monastery, and it also received royal privileges and donations. One particularly notable gift was given by Alfonso VII for the rebuilding of the monastery buildings destroyed by Muslim pirates, in acknowledgement of the time he had spent as a child under the care of the monks and local people.



*Historical complex of Moraime.*

Constant harassment by the local nobility in the 12th c., who took over parts of the monastery lands and revenues, led to its gradual downfall. In 1499 it went on to form part of the monastery of San Benito de Valladolid, and then changed hands to become part of the community of San Martiño Pinario in Santiago de Compostela in 1633, until the ecclesiastical confiscations of Mendizábal (1835). The properties belonging to the monastery of Moraime extended throughout the region of Nemancos, along with other properties in Xallas, Soneira and Bergantiños. It also obtained revenues from the patronage of twenty parishes distributed throughout Costa da Morte.

Remains of this important monastery include the magnificent **church of San Xulián**, the best example of Romanesque architecture in the entire region and the rectory, converted into a pilgrims' hostel. Both buildings bear the coat of arms of San Martiño Pinario.

The **monastery of San Pedro de Soandres** also played an important role in the northern areas of Costa da Morte, and its influence extended to the municipalities of A Laracha, Cerceda and Carballo. The date of its founding is also unknown. The oldest documents that mention the monastery are from the mid-10th century, but there may



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The **monastery of San Pedro de Soandres** also played an important role in the northern areas of Costa da Morte, and its influence extended to the municipalities of A Laracha, Cerceda and Carballo. The date of its founding is also unknown. The oldest documents that mention the monastery are from the mid-10th century, but there may have been a previous religious congregation, even in the Roman period, de Valladolid, and then changed hands to become part of the community of San Martiño Pinario in Santiago de Compostela in 1633, until the ecclesiastical confiscations of Mendizábal (1835). The properties belonging to the monastery of Moraime extended throughout the region of Nemancos, along with other properties in Xallas, Soneira and Bergantiños. It also obtained revenues from the patronage of twenty parishes distributed throughout Costa da Morte.

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*Church of San Pedro de Soares, with its Gothic head.*

Roman period, since an altar dedicated to Jupiter was found there. From the 14th century onwards, it was constantly harassed by the local nobility and their supporters, who plotted to take ownership of its lands and revenues; one particularly rapacious family was the Mariñas, owners of the towers of Cillobre (A Laracha). In 1499, it was turned into a priory and was handed over to San Martiño Pinario.

The most interesting architectural feature of Soandres is the Gothic church sanctuary, while the rest of the church is built in the Baroque style. The rectory is attached to the southern side of the church and was built in the 18th c., but it conserves the shape of the old monastery with the cloister.

In the Middle Ages, attacks by Norman and Muslim pirates were a constant threat for religious communities and local populations near the coast, who were forced to seek refuge further inland in some periods of the year. Piracy would explain the low population of the coast in the middle centuries of the Middle Ages and the construction of the first parish churches away from the coast to avoid pillaging. Examples of these are San Andrés da Canle (Corcubión), San Paio de Refoxos (Cee), San Xurxo de Buría (Camariñas), San Pedro do Porto (Camariñas), Santo Adrián de Corme Aldea (Ponteceso) and Santa María de Caión (A Laracha). Several fortresses

were built to watch out for and protect local people from pirates, such as San Xurxo, on the west slope of Monte Pindo, and the tower at Canedo in San Mamede de Carnota.

After the end of the Almoravid empire in the 13th century and the increased control by Christian kingdoms of the coasts on the south of the peninsula, there was a reduction in piracy, which opened the way to trade between Italian merchantmen and Flanders. This change brought about an increase in trade on the Galician coast, as some vessels stopped off to replenish at some of the natural harbours in the region and also took the opportunity to sell their goods. This commercial activity, combined with an increase in fishing, attracted the population towards the coast, which led to the establishment of the coastal towns of Fisterra, Corcubión, Cee, Muxía, Camariñas, Laxe, Corme and Malpica.

The new towns attracted the interest of the clergy in Santiago and the lay nobility, who both planned to take economic control of the new coastal settlements. The archbishop of Santiago took possession of the ports of Fisterra, Muxía and Malpica, while the Moscoso de Altamira went on to take control of Corcubión, Camariñas and Laxe. The town of Cee was owned by the archdeacon of Trastámara, where he had his residence.

The Traba family, who had been a force to be reckoned with in Costa da Morte and other parts of Galicia in the 11th and 12th centuries, began to lose much of their power in the following years, and other lineages began to take their place, many of which were linked to Pedro Froilaz, whose two marriages had created a line of powerful descendants. This branch of the Trabas became the root of the new Galician nobility: **the Mariños, Moscosos, Mantaos, Andrades and Mariñas**. The first two families had close ties to Costa da Morte. The Mariños were the first to take possession of a sizeable part of the region, starting with the donation made by king Sancho IV to Martín Eáns Mariño of the parishes of Santa María de Fisterra and San



*The port of Corcubión was attacked by the troops of archbishop Rodrigo de Luna in 1457.*

Vicenzo de Duio in the late 13th century. When they married into the branches of the Soga and Lobeira families, their influence extended to many other parts of Galicia. The family would fall into disgrace at the end of the 13th century due to problems between family members and also because of debts with the crown, to the point where Rui Soga de Lobeira, one of its most notable figures, was imprisoned and later beheaded in the town of Noia (1393).

The power and influence of the Mariños in the area of Santiago and Costa da Morte passed to the **Moscoso de Altamira**, another powerful family in the region. They gradually took power by occupying ecclesiastical and lay posts, first in Santiago and then in Costa da Morte. Their dominion led to a confrontation with the archbishop of Santiago, as they both had economic interests in the same geographical area. The conflicts between both parties were frequent in the 15th century. An example is an assault by a squadron of the supporters of archbishop Rodrigo de Luna on the port of Corcubión, which was owned by the Moscosos at the time.



*Torres de Mens, one of the castles destroyed by the Irmandiños.*

Much of the wealth of the new lay nobility came from abuses of power taken against the properties of the monasteries through the usurpation of revenues or land. Despite the repeated complaints sent by the abbots or priors to the kings to put a halt to these abusive practices, little was done and most complaints were ignored. The dynasty of the Trastámaras favoured this type of conflict, which permitted the nobility to act with complete freedom. The Moscosos took a lot of advantage of these abuses of power, as was the case with the monastery of Moraime, while other nobles such as the Mariñas also took the same approach with the monks of the monastery of Soandres. The growing power of this rapacious nobility was such that it began to take possession of property owned by the archbishop, and even crown property was not exempt. The Moscosos went so far as to collect taxes by force, including the alcabala (royal sales tax) in the towns of Cee, Muxía and Fisterra, which were owned by the Church.

The violent and abusive attitude of the nobility created a confrontation with the Church and with the monarchy, and even with the nobles' own vassals, and became the main cause behind the **Irmandiño revolts**, which rebelled against the hostile nobles in the king's name. This social revolt of 1467 was also supported by some minor nobles and extended throughout Galicia. It had a particularly strong effect on Costa da Morte, where several castles at Vimianzo, Mens, A Penela and Ferreira were destroyed. However, the rebellion only lasted two years; the nobles who had fled returned and organised a counter attack with the king's support to recover their lands and castles.

The rise to power of the Catholic Monarchs also led to greater control over the nobility and some of them were obliged to appear at court, thus keeping them away from their lands. The autonomy of the monasteries also disappeared under the new monarchs. The smallest passed into the hands of the large parishes who were in turn controlled by the monastery of San Benito in Valladolid.

### > Modern Age

This period ranges from the end of the 15th c. to the late 19th c., approximately three centuries. It is also referred to as the **Ancien Regime**. This period commenced with greater centralisation of royal power after the arrival of the Catholic Monarchs, who created new institutions to limit the power of the nobility. Part of the aristocracy was transferred to the court at the service of the new monarchs.

The main feature of the territorial division of the period was the seigniorial rights acquired over a geographical area from donations or inheritance, giving rise to jurisdictions and hunting reserves, over which an ecclesiastical or lay lord would exercise their authority and be entitled to collect a series of taxes from the local inhabitants. Each jurisdiction was divided into parishes.





*Torres de Nogueira, manor house of the Bermúdez de Castro family.*

During this period, Costa da Morte belonged to the large provinces of Santiago, apart from the lands more to the north in the region of Bergantiños, which were included in the province of A Coruña. Much of the coastal region was owned by the **Moscosos** or the **counts of Altamira**, who exercised their domain over the large jurisdictions of Corcubión, Vimianzo and Mens, which were made up of a total of seventy two parishes and an approximate surface area of 675 km<sup>2</sup>, almost half of the geographical area of the region. The rest was shared between abbots or priors of monasteries, bishops and archbishops, the king and other nobles such as the **Bermúdez de Castro** from Torres de Nogueira (Seavia, Coristanco) and the town of Caión, or the **counts of Maceda**, who shared their possessions in several parishes with the count of Altamira. The archbishop of Santiago owned the towns of Fisterra, Muxía and Malpica, while the monastery of San Martiño Pinario had authority over the jurisdictions of Ozón (Muxía), Baíñas (Vimianzo) and Rus (Carballo).

The population of Costa da Morte grew overall in the 16th and 17th centuries. The greatest growth took place in the coastal area due to the increase in fishing and associated trade. However, there were periods when it dropped, such as during the epidemic of 1571, when towns like Muxía, with 140 inhabitants, were left with just 40 (Benlloch del Río, 2010: 39). This upward trend in the population was consolidated in the mid-17th century, as a result of the introduction of **maize** from America, which began to be cultivated in the coastal areas because of its most appropriate weather conditions.

According to the census of 1533 on the populations of reserves and jurisdictions of the Crown of Castile, the towns in the south of Costa da Morte had the following number of residents: Muxía 57 (228 inhabitants), Cee 59 (236 inhabitants), Corcubión 46 (184 inhabitants) and Fisterra 39 (156 inhabitants). The data are not very reliable, but they do a rough idea of the population of these towns.

In the early 17th century, according to information given by cardinal Jerónimo del Hoyo in his biography (Memorias, 1607), Cee and Corcubión saw a significant increase in population, while the upward trend in other towns was much smaller.

The main economic activities in all these towns were **fishing** and **maritime trade**. The most frequently caught species were **sardines, hake and conger**. All the fish caught for sale had to be salted, smoked or air cured to be conserved. After being caught in nets, sardines were conserved in salt or smoked.

TOWNS	NEIGHBORS	POPULATION (aprox.)
Fisterra	60	240
Corcubión	120	480
Cee	120	480
Muxía	60	240
Camariñas	50	200
Laxe	40	160
Malpica	62	248

*Source: Memorias of the Cardinal del Hoyo*





*Conger drying racks in Muxía, conserved to the present day.*

Salt was a scarce commodity that came from Portugal or Brittany and was under a state monopoly by crown officials at the storehouses. Establishments of this type are mentioned in the towns of Fisterra, Corcubión, Cee and Muxía in the 15th century. Smoking was carried out in enclosed buildings called fumeiros, in which different plants were burned, especially bay leaves.

Conger and hake were air cured, although hake could also be salted. Conger was fished with gorentes, an old type of longline, and dried on coastal wooden structures where the fish hang after being gutted, cut and washed in seawater. The dry northeast wind typical of this coastline is ideal for this process. Hake was also dried on wooden racks next to houses (caniços), as described in the history of the town of Cee (Castiñeira Castro, V. M., 1999: 253).

Cured or salted hake was exported to different parts of the Iberian Peninsula.



*Several ports in Costa da Morte had vessels that hunted for whales (Arquivo da pesca, Caión).*

There are records from the 16th and 17th centuries of traders from Rías Baixas coming to ports in Costa da Morte to buy hake and conger and then sell it in the Basque Country, Portugal or the Mediterranean. From there it was transported to areas in La Rioja, Castile and Aragon. Boats from these ports - called barcos de cubierta - also transported this type of fish to other parts of the peninsular coast. Camariñas was one of the most active ports in this regard. Boats loaded with sardines headed off from Camariñas for the Basque Country and returned with iron.

**Whaling** was also practised in this period from ports on Costa da Morte, especially in the northern regions. This activity was mentioned in the Middle Ages, but the most detailed reference comes from Juan de Molina in the mid-16th c., when he described the ports of Malpica and Caión. Whales were hunted in winter for their oil. The practice died out in the late 17th century due to competition from other countries.

Major changes to the Galician fishery sector took place in the mid-18th century due to the enactment of the General Ordinance of 1748, which in theory freed sailors from the jurisdictional impositions of the church and nobility, although some taxes were still claimed. Likewise established was greater maritime safety, freedom to fish and the option of using new technologies in both fishing and in conserving and selling fish. But the new laws included a series of obligations and duties that would gravely affect their work and permit the arrival of the Catalans at the Galician coast, first occasionally and then as a constant presence.

These Catalan promoters enjoyed the privilege of not having to do military service in the Navy, since members of the Catalan fishermen's guilds were not obliged to enlist, but Galician sailors were obliged to do so between the ages of 16 and 60 years of age, in the event of any conflict.

The **Catalans** arrived at the Galician coasts with the intention of fishing the abundant banks of sardines that existed at the time; they would then be salted and sold on the Mediterranean market. Their presence brought about many changes in the sector, as they ended up dominating the fishing industry and using more advanced and aggressive techniques such as the seine net and pressing to conserve the fish. They increased trade on the Mediterranean route, taking salted sardines and bringing wine, liquors and salt.

These new entrepreneurs soon formed part of the social elite in the coastal towns and occupied important posts in local administration and politics. There are details of the arrival of the Catalans in the ría of Corcubión in 1755. The ports where their presence was most noted were Fisterra, Cee, Corcubión, Camariñas and Laxe. Catalan surnames such as Xampén, Pou, Agramunt and Carbonell were common in the ría of Corcubión, while Domènech, Mas, Haz and Borrell were more frequently seen in the rías of Camariñas and Corme and Laxe.



*Castle of Cardeal, with Monte Pindo in the background.*

During this period, the coastal towns of this region and in many other parts of the Galician coast were frequent victims of attacks by **pirates** from European Atlantic countries and North Africa. Fisterra, Corcubión, Cee, Muxía, Camariñas and Laxe were most frequently attacked and pillaged, since they had few resources to defend themselves against the raids, often possessing small defensive redoubts with just one or two cannons. The first batteries in the rías of Corcubión and Camariñas were not built until the mid-17th century.

The forts of **San Carlos** (Fisterra), El **Cardenal** (Corcubión) and El **Príncipe** (Cee) were built in the ría of Corcubión and can still be seen today. The fort of El **Soberano** was built in the ría of Camariñas, of which just a few foundations remain.

While inhabitants of the coastal areas of Costa da Morte lived mainly from fishing, people further inland made their living from **farming** and **livestock**. Most of the farmland was leased under statutory contracts granted by an ecclesiastical institution, a noble or hidalgo, who imposed an annual rent that was almost always paid in kind: wheat, barley or corn.



*Hórreo in San Martiño de Ozón.*

Priories such as **Moraime, Ozón and Baíñas** owned large stretches of leased land from which they gathered large amounts of cereals. The rents that Moraime received every year in the second half of the 17th century were 3,500 ferrados (a local measurement of weight ranging from 12 to 20 kilos) of wheat, more than 1,000 ferrados of maize and about 600 of barley. These rents made it one of the communities that paid most revenue to its corresponding monastery, San Martiño Pinario in Santiago. The revenue jointly provided every year by the priories of Ozón and Baíñas to San Martiño was approximately 2,700 ferrados of wheat, 1,200 of barley and about 800 of maize (Castiñeira Castro, 2000: 2019).

After paying the tithes and other taxes, farmers were left with hardly enough resources to live on. Practically all the wheat that was harvested went to pay tithes and other taxes; they attempted to keep a reserve of maize to bake broa (a kind of local corn bread) and feed the domestic animals. Farms were small and crops were rotated on a three-yearly basis. Wheat or barley were planted in the first year, while maize was planted in the two following ones.

The potato—another plant from America—was introduced as a crop in the 18th century, and began to extend from the interior to the coastal farms. Potatoes began to replace chestnuts and helped to improve the diet of the poorest classes.

An example of the intensive farming of corn in Costa da Morte are the large number of **hórreos** or granaries that were built to store and preserve maize. Some of the longest ones can still be seen in Lira, Carnota, Ozón, Cereixo and Cambeda. With the exception of the hórreo at Cereixo, the others belonged to the Church and were used to store the harvests from the rents and taxes that farmers were obliged to pay to the clergy.

Fishing was the predominant occupation in the coastal towns, but there were others: traders, craftsmen, cobblers, tailors, lawyers and apothecaries also plied their trade there, as the towns also served as small commercial and service centres for the surrounding population. The main occupation in the rural parishes was that of farmer, although other trades such as the tavern keeper, carpenter, blacksmith, cobbler, seamstress and

weaver were also present. Some tradesmen worked part time, alternating between their craft and work on the farm. A special case in this regard is **Buño**, where most of the population specialised in pottery. Records of this activity date back to the 16th century, when craftsmen of the parish made pipes for the first water network in the city of A Coruña.

Pottery made in **Buño** was exported by sea from Ponteceso and Corme to other parts of Galicia and even to Asturias and Portugal. Mule drivers distributed the pottery by land and sold it at fairs and inland towns.





*Pottery workshop in Buño.*

**Flax** was also an important crop in Costa da Morte, especially in the regions of Soneira and Bergantiños. It was used to produce fabrics on the rural looms for domestic use or for export. The arrival of flax from other regions and the textile industry led to the disappearance of handcrafted fabrics.

The craft that reached its apogee in the region was **lace work**, especially in the coastal areas. There are no details as to how it was introduced into Galicia, but there are records from the 15th century of its presence in the region. The craft had spread to the entire coast of Galicia and some inland regions by the mid-18th century. With the passage of time, the lace work industry shrank to some small areas surrounding the ría of Camariñas. It was of some importance to the family economy, since it represented a necessary complement in the homes of fishermen and farmers. Before reaching its maximum splendour in the late 19th and early 20th c., when lace makers took advantage of the great demand for lace in Latin America, it was sold in Galicia and inland Spain, carried by farm workers travelling to work in the harvests in Castile.



*Bobbin lace makers at the Camariñas lace-making exhibition in 2023.*

### > Late Modern Period

This period started with a historic event: the invasion of Spain by Napoleonic troops and the **subsequent Peninsular War**, which had a major impact on Costa da Morte, especially in the towns of Cee and Corcubión, which were sacked and burnt down by French troops in April 1809.

Two months previously a detachment of French troops had occupied Corcubión with the aim of taking booty to maintain the invading army. Soon after, a defence committee was organised in the town to halt a second offensive, after the town

authorities refused to accept the imposition. The alarm was raised and a popular army was recruited under the command of **Pedro Lapido**, from Morquintán (Muxía), and **Juan Domingo Pizpieiro**, from O Ézaro (Dumbría), supported by the frigate Endymion, moored in the ría of Corcubión, which supplied arms and ammunition.

Lapido gathered his troops in Ponte Olveira, Baíñas and Vilastose. After finding out that the French had left Santiago and set off towards Corcubión, the defence



committee decided to confront them at A Ponte Oliveira, which was the only bridge over the river Xallas. When the French troops reached the bridge, they encountered a reduced garrison that offered little resistance, as most of the popular army was in Paizás (Cambada, Vimianzo) and, when they finally reached the bridge, the French had crossed the river and were heading off to the towns of Cee and Corcubión. Once they arrived, they unleashed a storm of violence on the population. They set fire to the two parish churches and many houses, committing theft, rape and other crimes as they went. This happened on 13 April 1809, but just a few days later they returned and destroyed what little was left. There is little objective information about the French troops' conduct in Camariñas, but local stories talk of pillaging and many deaths.

After the Peninsular War and the return to the absolutist rule of Ferdinand VII, life soon returned to the same conditions as there had been during the Ancien Regime. The same divisions of hunting reserves and jurisdictions and the appalling conditions of farmers, the most common social class in the region, continued much as before. The desperation of some farmers in the region led some of them to organise groups of bandits, called *bandoleros* or *gavillas* and assault the homes of priests, landowners or others with money or goods. The *gavilla* from Vimianzo was one such gangs in the western part of the region.

Carlism had very little impact on the region, as there were no large monasteries or cities with a powerful clergy. There are records of two Carlist attacks on Carballo. The first took place on 14 January 1838, in which the town was looted and money was stolen, while the second on 7 May of the same year was more violent, with 13 dead and the kidnapping of a liberal judge, José Vázquez de Parga, who was later found dead on a mountain in Arzúa.



*Ponte Oliveira, the bridge crossed by the French troops that attacked the towns of Cee and Corcubión.*

There were new divisions of state territory into provinces, judicial districts and municipalities in the 1830s. The reform was carried out by a minister of the regent María Cristina, Javier de Burgos, although some attempts had been made to make such changes under the Cortes of Cádiz and during the Trienio Liberal (three years of liberal national administration).

The same decade also saw the Ecclesiastical Confiscations of Mendizábal, which enabled the

State to sell religious properties and goods. The objective was to enable peasant farmers to buy and own land, but plots were auctioned off in large lots and so they were purchased by people who already had considerable funds (nobles and the bourgeoisie).

In Costa da Morte, the property of the monastery of Moraime was auctioned off in 1841 and bought by one J. Méndez, but it then changed hands and

became the property of Francisco Leiro, a wealthy man from the same parish. A closer look at the evolution of the population in the Late Modern Period shows a moderate increase from the early 19th c. to the late 20th, but then it came to a standstill and then dropped markedly in the first decades of the 21st c., due to a sharp drop in the birthrate.

The moderate growth that took place throughout the 19th century and a good part of the 20th was caused by emigration. There was a growth in the number of emigrants from 1880 onwards and the process continued until 1930. Many emigrants went to countries in Latin America, mainly Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. The process was halted by the restrictions imposed by these countries because of the Spanish Civil War and the isolation imposed by the Franco regime during the postwar period.

The emigrants established associations in the countries where they settled, such as the Sociedad Agraria y Cultural de los Hijos del Partido de Corcubión, created in Argentina in 1922, which would later be called Asociación Benéfica y Cultural del Partido de Corcubión. The association went on to publish a magazine called **Alborada** and was highly active in sociocultural and charitable activities related to the places of origin of its members. One of the association's initiatives was to establish schools to raise the low educational levels that existed in Costa da Morte. The aim was to establish a school in each municipality of the Judicial District of Corcubión, but the outbreak of the Civil War halted the project and only four were built: **Nemiña** (Muxía), **Pasarela** (Vimianzo), **Suarriba** (Fisterra) and **Estorde** (Cee).

Some emigrants acquired fortunes and acted as benefactors in their places of origin, as is the case of **Fernando Blanco** de Lema, who was born in Cee and later emigrated to Cuba. He donated money for the construction of an important primary and secondary school in his home town. **José Carrera Fábregas** (born in Corcubión) and **Anselmo Villar Amigo** (from Malpica) likewise provided the resources necessary to establish schools in the towns where they were born.

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Emigration began again towards the end of the 1950s, first to Venezuela and then to countries in Western Europe: Switzerland, Germany, England, France and Holland. There was also interior emigration to regions such as Madrid, Catalonia, the Basque Country and the Canary Islands. Recent years have seen a growing exodus of young people, many of whom are graduates, who, in a climate of economic stagnation in Galicia, seek job opportunities abroad.

Most of the people living and working in Costa da Morte in the 19th and 20th centuries worked in agriculture. Many farmers had no way of owning the land they worked on until the abolition of the regional sharecropping system in 1926. But even when they were able to own them, other factors came into play, such as the small sizes of the farms and the lack of mechanisation, which held back rural development.

The most widely cultivated products continued to be corn, potatoes, wheat, barley, flax, legumes and some fruit and vegetables. Subsistence farming was the norm and not the exception, and low output was the main reason for rural emigration.

Fishing and maritime trade continued to be the main sources of employment in the coastal towns. Sardines, conger, hake and pollack continued to be the most widely caught species.

There were seasons when catches of sardines dropped drastically and created serious crises for fishermen and for the salting factories, who found themselves without work. A crisis of this nature is mentioned in the Dictionary of Pascual Madoz, in the 1840s, when describing the ría of Camariñas. Sardine salting factories were established in the 19th the 20th centuries all along the coast at Quilmas, Brens, Corcubión, Fisterra, without work. A crisis of this nature is



*Statue of Fernando Blanco in front of the school that he founded.*

mentioned in the Dictionary of Pascual Madoz, in the 1840s, when describing the ría of Camariñas. Sardine salting factories were established in the 19th the 20th centuries all along the coast at Quilmas, Brens, Corcubión, Fisterra, Merexo, Camariñas, Camelle, Laxe, Corme and Malpica. Only one of them has remained up to the present day: the Cerdeiras family canning business in Camariñas. Calvo is another large canning factory in Carballo, but it was established by an external company in the 1940s.

Hake and pollack were salted for export, but demand dropped with the influx of large quantities of cheap cod onto the market, which displaced the other two species of salt fish and led to them being sold fresh.

Conger continued to be air dried as it had been for centuries. Air drying racks were used in a number of ports: Muxía, Camelle, Malpica and Caión. The only ones that still exist today are the racks in Muxía, which are unique in Europe and may disappear if they are not protected.

The lack of industrialisation in Costa da Morte was another deficiency in the region, despite the many raw materials produced by agriculture and livestock keeping, fishing and forestry. The carbide factory built in Cee in the early 20th century was one of the first in the region. The same period saw the construction of the first pine wood



*Sawmills were a common sight in the Costa da Morte in the 19th century (Arquivo Vidal).*

sawmills, which were established because of the large amounts of raw materials and demand for the product by mines and the construction industry. However, a wood processing industry was not established. Many sawmills were built on the shores of rías or near the coast to facilitate exports by sea. In the 1960s, the UNEMSA factory was built in Erbecedo (Coristanco), where different types of wood fibreboard are made.

Costa da Morte has had a poorly developed road network in the region since ancient times. The roads were in a dreadful state in the 19th century. Bridges such as the one at Baio over the river O Porto or the one at Ponteceso over the river Anllóns had almost been in ruins for many years. The most important track was the one from A Coruña to Corcubión and Fisterra, which was converted into a road in the second half of the 19th c. The branch roads that connected this road with the towns of Malpica, Camariñas and Muxía were built shortly after. If the railway line from A Coruña to Corcubión proposed in the

early 20th century had been built, economic development of the region would have been very different.

Road links in the region have improved greatly, especially with the city of A Coruña after the construction of the motorway connecting the city with Carballo and the opening of the section of motorway in Costa da Morte between Carballo and Baio, which should now be extended to Cee. Links with Santiago and the south of Galicia are not as good and require roads in better conditions.

Trade in the region was always underdeveloped and almost all commerce was carried out by sea, given that roads were few and in poor conditions. Small commercial ports were located within the rías. Fisterra, Corcubión and Cee, in the ría of Corcubión; Muxía, Camariñas and Ponte do Porto, in the ría of Camariñas; and Laxe, Corme and Ponteceso, in the ría of Corme and Laxe. These ports distributed imports to the interior (wine, oil, iron, lime, salt, etc.) and also exported goods, especially farm produce: wheat, corn, barley, potatoes, legumes, onions, cured or salt fish (sardines, conger and hake), pine wood, lace, and pottery from Buño.

Trade on land was conducted at the fairs held throughout the territory. The largest of these were held at Cee, A Picota, Baíñas, Quintáns, Ponte do Porto, Baio, A Agualada, Anllóns, Leiloio, Verdillo and Paiosaco. The most important fairs were those at **Baio**, in Terra de Soneira, which was held on the third Sunday of every month in the fields of A Piroga (Bamiro, Vimianzo), from 1741 or possibly earlier, and the fair of **Verdillo**, in the region of Bergantiños, which was held in the parish of Artes on the fourth Sunday. The fair was then transferred to Carballo in 1941 after several years of protests by the residents and priests of the parishes of Verdillo, Artes and Sofán. Livestock and farm produce were not the only things to be bought and sold at the fairs; a brisk business was also done in cloth, footwear, tools, pottery and many other products.



*Fair at Trabe, Ponteceso (Arquivo Vidal).*

The most important event to take place in the last century was the **Spanish Civil War**, which brought severe consequences for Costa da Morte, especially towns where there was an active trade union movement, as is the case with Cee, where there was a carbide factory or the sawmills at A Ponte de Oporto.

The Franco regime savagely repressed Republican and trade union ideals during the war and the postwar period. A lot of information about this period has been brought to light thanks to the research work of the local writer, Luis Lamela García, in his book *Crónica de una represión en la "Costa da Morte"* (1995), which contains details of military trials, purges, paseos (night-time assassinations) and punishments meted out to many local people during this terrible period. About 110 people went into exile, over 100 were killed and many were imprisoned or fled and hid amongst the crags of Monte Pindo.

After the dictator Franco died, a new period of democracy commenced with the approval of the Constitution of 1978 and the first elections held in the following year. With these new developments, Costa da Morte began to see improvements in the primary sector and more employment in the building and service sectors, but this was not enough to halt emigration to other more





*The 1970s and 1980s were good times for the fishing industry in the ports of Costa da Morte (fish auction hall of Muxía).*

developed parts of Spain or to other European countries.

There was a bonanza in coastal fishing during the 1970s and 1980s, but shortly after the fishing grounds showed signs of depletion and the EEC began to impose limitations on catches, which led to a crisis in the sector.

The only modernisation to be seen in the countryside was in livestock farming, and processing industries for the raw materials in the region were not developed, and so not enough jobs were created to employ working population.

At this moment in time the tourist sector is the most dynamic one and is creating the most employment, although much of the work is seasonal. Costa da Morte has more than enough resources to attract quality tourism, for which it has to make a commitment.

Its rich natural heritage that extends throughout the coast and the interior, combined with a splendid historical and cultural heritage, without forgetting its varied and delicious cuisine, make Costa da Norte a region with tremendous potential for tourism in Galicia, as long as its cultural and historical assets are cared for and appreciated.

### > Legends

The wealth of legends created by the people of a region are invaluable in helping to discover their history, since this imaginary cultural heritage shows the response of its inhabitants to the deeper questions facing the people that form part of a community. Questions that set out to explain their origins, their role in the world and what might exist in the afterlife.

The answers to questions such as these are different in each culture and gave rise to a set of myths, legends, beliefs and rituals that give an identity and personality to a group of people.

Geographical locations, features of the physical surroundings or contacts with other cultures have led certain territories to create a richer and stronger world of the imagination that lasts throughout time. This is the case with Costa da Morte, a region on the edge of Europe, where the earth ends and an immense ocean begins.

The region's location on the edge of the continent was the main cause of the wealth of legends in this part of Galicia. This unique characteristic has been combined with specific places in the region: stones, lagoons, mountains, caves, trees and historical ruins, sacred places linked to ancient divinities that later became Christian saints, and that are now the main sanctuaries in the area.



*Pilgrims at Pedra Abalar and Pedra dos Cadrís at Muxía.*

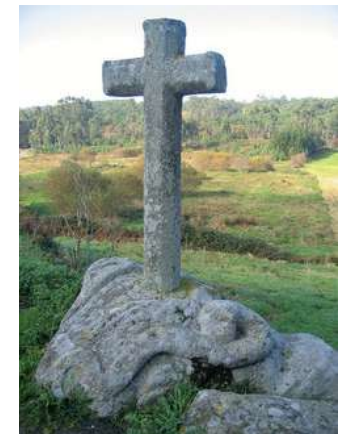
The very name of **Costa da Morte** also plays a part in a collective imagination that attempts to explain its origin. Some are of the opinion that it may be related to the death of the sun that sinks into the waters of the Atlantic every night, although the majority believe that it comes from the many shipwrecks that took place on this dangerous coastline.

Even the maritime tragedies are not free of an aura of legends that talk about the wrecks being caused by evildoers who wanted to steal the ships' cargoes, heartless criminals who went to the coast on stormy nights leading cattle with lamps tied to their horns to simulate ships sailing closer to the coast, inciting other vessels to come closer and so run aground on the rocks. This macabre legend is regarded as untrue by most academics, although some people continue to believe that they are true.

Granite is the predominant stone in Costa da Morte, especially on the coast. Granite can take unusual shapes when it is eroded by the wind or water: some can look human, others may resemble animals. These shapes awoke the curiosity of the local inhabitants, who gave them a transcendental value and converted them into objects of worship where rituals were practised to cure diseases or obtain some other type of benefit.

There are several places in Costa da Morte where rituals relating to stones were and still are practised. The most famous is the one at **Punta de A Barca de Muxía** where, according to the local teacher Antón Castro, there was a sizeable prehistoric cult sanctuary dedicated to the stones, which were later Christianised with the sanctuary of A Virxe da Barca. What may have begun as a site where fertility rites were practised later became the most important Christian sanctuary in the region. The monks of the monastery of Moraime were the driving force behind these changes, assimilating ancient pagan cults and inventing the legend of the arrival of the Virgin Mary on a stone boat, thus integrating the most important stones of the sacred space such as **Pedra de Abalar and Pedra dos Cadrís**.

Other stones in the region were attributed with properties that could make people fertile, such as Cama do Santo, located in the now nonexistent chapel of San Guillermo de Fisterra, which, according to the local priest Martin Sarmiento, was visited by infertile couples who wished to have children. He also mentioned the existence of similar practices in some stones on Monte Pindo. There are stones whose size or location have led to legends being associated with them, such as the enormous cloven stone called the Sala do Perello, near the sanctuary of A Barca. The stone is some distance away from the town of Muxía and is large enough for couples to hide in, with the resulting idea that it invites people to sin, for which reason children are told to keep away from it.



*Pedra da Serpe de Gondomil, in Corme.*

**Pedra da Serpe** de Gondomil, in Corme, has a carving of a winged serpent similar to a dragon, which gave rise to the legend of Santo

Adrián, patron saint of the parish, according to which the valley was infested with snakes that attacked the resident, but when the saint arrived he stamped hard on the ground and all the snakes were buried under the stone.

The story surrounding **Pedra do Frade**, on the track from Vilaseco to Muxía, is that a friar standing next to the stone on his way to the monastery of Moraime was devoured by wolves, who left only his sandals and some of his clothing. A cross was placed on top as a symbol of the incident.

One very common type of legend in Costa da Morte are those related to lagoons, rivers and the sea. There are many legends about flooded cities in this part of Galicia. Some of them are conserved in the memory of the people who live near such spaces, such as the legend of the **lagoon of Alcaián** in Seavia (Coristanco), which has now become a bog called the Braña Rubia because of the reddish colour of the soil. The story goes that Jesus Christ and Saint Peter came to the city that existed there disguised as beggars to seek lodging. The people of the city refused to accept them in their homes and even set the dogs on them. So Jesus Christ said:

*Farewell, Alcaián, you set dogs on me You shall sink and never come back.*

The city then sank below the waters of the lagoon. That is why some days one can hear the sound of church bells, cocks crowing and the barking of dogs coming from the lagoon. The legend of the **lagoon of Traba** in Laxe says that there was a city there called Valverde. Saint James, the patron saint of the parish, arrived there one day and asked for lodging. No one wanted to help, apart from one old lady who offered him hospitality. The next day the saint asked her to accompany him to the high ground of A Moa. When they arrived there, they looked back and saw the city disappear under the waters of the lagoon.



*Lagoon of Traba in Laxe.*

A similar legend is that of the **city of Duio** in Fisterra, where there once was a lagoon at the bottom of the valley. There are several versions of the tale, one of which says the Jesus Christ arrived there and stopped next to the calvary of O Rapadoiro and said: "may God convert you, because we cannot", and the city disappeared.

The mythical city of Duio is also present in the legend of the transfer of the remains of Saint James the Apostle to Galicia, as it was the place where the king or Roman governor lived. Queen Lupa sent the disciples bearing the remains of the Apostle to the city to ask for a place to bury him. This tale is mentioned in the Codex Calixtinus.

Similar legends include the city of Valverde at the beach of A Ermita, in Corme, the city of Galilea in the lagoon of Baldaio and the city of the lagoon of As Xarfas in Louro.

Springs, wells and rivers are also places where fantastic beings may also appear. A hen with her chicks appears at night at the spring of San Paio (Coristanco); carvings appear on a rock next to the spring at San Xoán de O Esto (Cabana de Bergantiños) on Midsummer's Eve; a golden





*Monte Neme from the lagoon of Baldaio.*

harrow can be found in the well of A Forca (Riobó, Cabana de Bergantiños) and a fantastic being emerges from the well of A Xerpa, at the mouth of the river Anllóns. Half-woman and half-snake, she seduces and attracts all those who look at her.

There are also many legends about mountains, such as **Monte Neme**, whose name means "sacred forest", which most likely comes from a stone circle or cromlech at the peak, commonly known as Eira das Meigas, where, according to tradition, the witches of the area would come together on Midsummer's Night to issue judgements against human beings. The space was later Christianised with the chapel of Santa Cristina.

In Penedos de Pasarela and Traba, a beautiful natural theme park, visitors can see **Torre da Moa**, a huge stone resembling a giant millstone that stands over the valley and beach of Traba. The legend says that under the stone is the Capela dos Mouros, built by mythical beings who hid their treasure there. Another part of the legend says that there was a tunnel that connected this place to the lagoon of Traba.



*Monte Pindo is the most legendary and mythical mountain in Costa da Morte.*

**Monte Facho in Fisterra**, which ends at the famous headland or promontory of Nerio, is another place that is full of stories and legends. Several places on the mountain are linked to tales, such as **Pedras Santas**, where the Virgin Mary was said to rest or where the previously mentioned **chapel of San Guillerme** was located. Some scholars identify this saint with William X, Duke of Aquitaine, immortalised in the character of Don Gaiferos, while others believe that it may have been a hermit who lived there. San Guillerme is also related to the legend of the barrel of wine, told by the Polish traveller Erich Lassota in the 16th c.

The famous **legend of Orcavella** is also linked to Monte Facho in Fisterra, according to the story told in the 16th century by the knight Julián Íñiguez from Navarre, who was on pilgrimage in the region and heard the tale of an old woman who lived for 176 years as was an expert in the arts of magic, who robbed and ate all the children who fell into her hands. Tired of life, she retired to this mountain and dug a tomb between some crags, helped by a shepherd who was also bewitched and taken captive. She then covered the tomb with a huge slab

and died after three days in his arms. The shepherd's friends heard him cry for help and tried to rescue him, but they could not because the tomb was ringed with snakes.

Another legendary place in Costa da Morte is **Monte Pindo**, also called the Celtic Olympus. Its close proximity to the sea and jagged granite peaks make it an ideal place for myths and legends. The intensive fragmentation of its rocks created a terrain full of crests, caves and gorges that make it difficult to walk around it. Martin Sarmiento, a priest and writer, was struck by the many stories relating to Monte Pindo, such as the belief that grass there grew much faster at night, it was full of medicinal plants and that infertile couples went there to procreate and have children. There are stories about two castles, one on the peak of Penafiel, destroyed by the Irmandiños, and another on the Pedrullo that dates back to the 10th century. The latter was said to be one of the palaces of queen Lupa. Another legend says that queen Lupa was buried with a treasure on the summit of A Moa. There is a natural tunnel in the mountain called **A Casa de Xoana**. A legend says that on Midsummer's Night the local witches meet to prepare the spells for the coming year and then go to Chan das Lamas, a flat area on the mountain, before heading off home.

There are also legends about caves and tunnels. The most famous of these is the **legend of A Buserana**, at the northern end of Monte Cachelmo in Muxía, near the tourist hotel of Costa da Morte. The roaring of the sea can be heard inside the cave on stormy days, which is very probably the reason behind the story told by the sailors of Muxía. However, it was the local poet Gonzalo López Abente who created a literary version of this legend in his novel *Buserana*, published in 1925. The novel links the cave to the castro of Xansón, on a nearby hill. A castle stands there, the property of the father of Florinda, the heroine, who is in love with the troubadour Buserán.



*Furna da Buserana.*

Legends about tunnels are very common in areas where there are the ruins of castros or medieval castles. One of the most popular tales is about a tunnel between the towers and the church of Santiago de Mens (Malpica). The story says that a count who lived there kidnapped a young girl and kept her prisoner there. The local people decided to attack the fortress and free her. When the count saw that he was surrounded he tried to escape through the tunnel, but the locals set fire to both ends and the noble died inside. Local residents say that, since then, the wheat planted above the tunnel grows less and ripens earlier.

Trees that are especially old or close to a sanctuary are often granted curative or supernatural powers. The **old oak of Santo Antón in Vilardefrancos** (Artes, Carballo), regarded as the oldest one in the region, is said to have been born inside the chapel dedicated to the saint. It is attributed matchmaking powers. If a young girl goes to the tree, walks around it three times and manages to insert a stone inside one of its holes, she will be married before the year ends.

The ancient oak next to the **chapel of San Fins** in Cambeda (Vimianzo) is attributed with properties to cure diseases such as hernias and stomach pains. Children with hernias undergo a ritual in which they pass nine times through a split branch. If the branch is made whole, the child will be cured. Another tradition is to walk nine times around the tree to cure any kind of pain.

Legends are often invented about ancient remains such as dolmens and castros to explain their origin or purpose. The **legends about mouras and mouros** (supernatural beings) are often related to ancient ruins.

Some scholars defend the theory that the legends of mouras who built the megaliths can be traced back to before the Romans and for this reason are similar to the ones in other Atlantic regions, such as Brittany and Ireland.

Dolmens may have been places of worship for fertility rites or to cure illness, and so the Catholic church imposed negative connotations with the characters that appear in such legends, converting mouras into repugnant witches to stop people from going to these places. These ancient beings, with the power to transport huge blocks of stone, may in fact represent ancient female divinities such as fertility goddesses.

Mouras may appear as beautiful young women with blond hair. They can be seen in places associated with water (springs, rivers and wells), breastfeeding a baby, washing clothes or combing their hair, but her supernatural powers enable them to disappear or turn into a snake. One has to know how to break the spell to turn her back into a woman.

The mouros are more closely associated with castros, and in some cases were the inhabitants and builders of such places. Their way of life is somehow similar to human beings, but they possess supernatural powers, such as making themselves invisible and building structures in just one night. They live underground, where they keep large treasures.



*Pedra da Arca in Malpica is one of the dolmens associated with the legend of a moura.*

There are many legends about **virgins and saints** in Costa da Morte, some of which are hagiographies set out to explain why a sanctuary was built in a particular place or describe the appearance of the divinity that the place is dedicated to. Many sanctuaries in the region are linked to legends about the patron saint arriving from the sea, as is the case of the Holy Christ of Fisterra, the Virgin of Xunqueira, San Marcos of Corcubión, the Virgin of A Barca, the Virgin of O Monte in Camariñas and the Holy Spirit of Camelle. Other legends describe how local people try to take an image that has appeared to the parish church, but the image goes back to its original location, to show that this is the place where it wants the chapel to be built.

A legend related to the Way of St James of Fisterra and Muxía is that of the **vákner**, an unknown wild animal mentioned by the Armenian pilgrim Mártir, bishop of Adzenján, who encountered the creature when crossing a wild and lonely part of the country, near O Marco do Couto (Os Buxantes, Dumbria), on the route to Fisterra in 1492. He arrived at Santiago de Compostela after a pilgrimage through several European countries from 1489 to 1496.





*Sculpture of the vákner by Cándido Pazos.*

The pilgrim's vague description makes it difficult to identify what kind of beast it was that he encountered in such a lonely place, although different interpretations have been offered about this enigmatic creature, ranging from the realistic to the fantastic.

The part of the original text that mentions the animal was written in Armenian. It was translated into French in the early 19th c. by Antoine Jean Saint Martin and then into Spanish by Emilia Gayangos de Riaño. It reads as follows:

"I suffered many travails and fatigues on this journey, in which I encountered many wild and very dangerous beasts. And I encountered the vákner, a wild animal, large and very dangerous.

*-How could you save yourself -they said to me-, when groups of twenty people could not pass?*

*I then went to the country of Holani where*

*the inhabitants eat fish and I did not understand their language. They treated me with the greatest consideration, taking me from home to home, and admiring of the fact that I could escape from the vákner".*

The French translator believed that the animal would have been a bull or bear, but Gayangos, who translated the text into Spanish, identified it as a lobo cervical (a lynx that inhabited the Cantabrian Coast until the 19th c.). Scholars like José Luis Pensado, Aurora Lestón and Fernando Alonso Romero do not reject the idea that it was an imaginary or mythical animal. One theory is that it may have been a beast created by the Catholic church to persecute the pagan cults that were deeply rooted in the area. Another is that it was a dragon, while Alonso Romero believes that it was a mythical figure from popular folklore with Indo-European origins because of its similarity to the Basque besajaun, which lives in forests, and the Asturian busgosu, a powerful beast with fur and horns, which in Galicia may be related to the nubeiro, an evil being that causes thunder and lightning. Another theory that should not be discarded is that it was a wolf or werewolf, another Indo-European figure.

The biologist Martiño Nercellas offers a new vision of this mysterious animal based on the interpretations of previous authors and zoological factors related to events that took place over the course of centuries in Europe.

He regards the idea of the creature being a lynx or bear as an unlikely one, since they no longer inhabited the region in that period. He also doubts that it was a wild



*Vákner Festival held on 28 May 2022 (Adiante Galicia).*

bull, given that there are no traces of their presence in these mountains. He also rejects the idea of it being a wolf in a normal state, because such an animal would be incapable of terrifying a group of 20 people; however, he does accept the possibility of it being a wolf infected with a virus that could change its behaviour, one that in the advanced stages can make an animal act with extreme violence, a diabolical wolf like the Beast of Gévaudan, which did so much harm in the south of France. He quotes cases of sick animals in other European countries, Galicia and even in Costa da Morte. Could a rabid animal have been the beast that bishop Mártir saw on his pilgrimage to Fisterra? Nercellas asks this question.

More than 500 years after the tale was told, the town hall of Dumbría decided to increase awareness of this unknown creature and so boost the image and popularity of the Way of St James of Fisterra and Muxía and make it a symbol of the town and a tourist resource.

To make these aims a reality and promote a figure that had already become a legend, the town government has programmed a series of events in recent years, such as the International Meeting on the Vákner Territory in October 2019, entitled "The Vákner, a medieval monster

on the Way of St James of Fisterra and Muxía", with the participation of researchers on this or other related subjects; the installation of a bronze sculpture of almost 5 metres in height of the mythical creature, created by the artist Cándido Pazos, near the calvary of O Marco do Couto; and the Vákner Festival itself. The latter two events were held on 28 May 2022 along with the 3rd Vákner Territory Literary Competition, open to school students and adults.





## 04 CUISINE

Cuisine is now one of the major tourist attractions for any region, along with its natural and historical heritage. Caring for this resource is an essential factor when planning a tourist destination.

Cookery programmes are becoming more and more common on the TV and radio, while articles in newspapers and magazines are sparking travellers' interest in the subject.

The value of a cuisine in a region like the Costa da Morte depends on several factors. The essential ones include the raw materials that are available, meaning the products and ingredients necessary to prepare local dishes, the gastronomic culture forged over time by the region's inhabitants and the academic training of the staff who work in restaurants that offer locally made dishes.

Cuisine or the art of cooking, in the widest sense of the word, is an integral part of the interests of any modern society that enjoys a certain level of well-being. The demand for well made dishes used to be a phenomenon limited to privileged sectors of society: nobles, hidalgos and the bourgeoisie, since the lower classes, who lived mostly in the country, concerned themselves more with growing enough food to eat and keep hunger at bay.

If one bears in mind that most of the population of the Costa da Morte lived and still lives in small villages, with the exception of those who live in the coastal towns, it is easy to understand why regional cuisine was very underdeveloped, as was the case in the rest of rural Galicia. Pork was the basis of the inland diet, complemented with other products that the farmer obtained with his work, such as milk, eggs, some vegetables, greens and fruit. The diet in coastal areas revolved more around products from the sea: sardines, horse mackerel, octopus and other species, but pork was also consumed.

Strangely enough, the shellfish and many types of fish that now form a part of the delicious cuisine of the Costa da Morte were hardly appreciated by poorer families.





*"Percebeiros" (barnacle pickers) face yet another day's hazardous work in rough seas*

Barnacles, which are now regarded as the king of seafood, were not popular with coastal families and were only eaten if there was nothing else available, as with other types of shellfish that are now greatly appreciated in today's cuisine. Even now, some elderly locals from the coast say that a plate of barnacles and potatoes is poor people's food.

Shellfish and many types of fish began to acquire more cachet in the nineteen sixties and seventies, when families' purchasing power increased and the demand for such products steadily grew, especially at certain time of the year, such as Christmas, Holy Week and in the summer.

The cuisine of the Costa da Morte took on more importance at the end of the 20th and the early 21st centuries, when tourism became one of the main resources of the region. The spending power of the visitors increased demand for services in the hospitality sector and for regional dishes such as fish and shellfish.

The opening of new restaurants has contributed to an evolution in traditional cooking and an increased demand for more qualified staff who can prepare more creative

and varied dishes, and create a more modern cuisine, without losing essential traditions and using the excellent local raw materials as a basis.

Few regions in Galicia can offer such a wide range of natural products of such high quality as does the Costa da Morte. All types of fish and shellfish are caught along its coast, while further inland excellent greens and vegetables are produced, along with some truly exceptional meats, which, taken together, provide the best in raw material for the delicious dishes of the region. The fact that the region produces the very best from both sea and land means that local cuisine offers a very representative sample of Galician cuisine, since here there are almost all the ingredients that can be found in other parts of the community.

The most popular dishes at local restaurants are without a shadow of a doubt ones made with products from the sea. The extraordinary quality and relatively affordable price of such dishes tempts many visitors to ask for seafood menus.

The region offers all types of shellfish, with the exception of oysters and scallops, which come from the Rias Baixas, . The most popular of these for many diners is **barnacles**, a type of shellfish that is very abundant on the local coastline and of truly exceptional quality.

The prices charged for barnacles on the market at certain times of the year is easy to understand when you consider just how dangerous it is to extract them from the rocks. They are very easy to prepare, just a brief spell in boiling salt water or seawater and they are ready to eat. A festival of appreciation of this very popular shellfish is held very July in the town of Corme.

But if the barnacle is regarded as the king of shellfish on this coast, velvet crab, spider crab, edible crab, spiny lobster, clawed lobster and king prawns were very abundant on this coast, although now their numbers have been reduced. The traditional way to prepare this type of shellfish requires no special recipe, they were

simply boiled for a while in water with salt. Some shellfish, like the spiny **lobster** and the **edible crab**, are prepared with a vinaigrette. Modern cuisine now has other ways of preparing shellfish. Spiny lobster and clawed lobster can be prepared grilled, while clawed lobster can be made with rice, which is one of the most popular dishes for this type of shellfish.

Shellfish such as cockles, clams and razor-shells are also very common in the rias of Corcubión, Camariñas and Laxe.

**Cockles**, are best eaten raw, as Alvaro Cunqueiro once said, to really appreciate the natural flavour of the sea. But they are also very tasty when steamed, cooked with rice or baked in a pie. Clams, like in many other parts of Galicia, are prepared in a wine and parsley sauce, but they are also delicious steamed, grilled, cooked with octopus, with beans or with fine noodles.

**Longueiróns** and **navajas** (two types of razor-shells) are another very popular type of shellfish. They are almost identical. The navaja has a slightly shorter and more curved shell than the longueirón. They are often served grilled with a few drops of olive oil, but they can also be prepared in pies. The Festa do Longueirón is held every August in the town of Fisterra.

**Octopus** is one of the most appreciated species on the coast. The most traditional way to prepare it is á feira, when it is boiled and served on wooden plates with salt, olive oil and smoked paprika. Recent years have seen the introduction of many other ways of preparing octopus: grilled, in pies, with clams, etc. A delicious way to prepare it is with its own ink with rice, although it can also be fried or cooked with onions.

There is such a wide variety of fish that it is difficult to list all the species that are caught and prepared here: flounder, sole, grouper, hake, sea bream, horse mackerel, sea bass, conger eel, wrasse, sardines, mackerel and yellowtail are some of the best known species. The "**caldeirada**", (fish stew) is a dish invented by sailors, and



*Preparing pulpo á feira (feast day octopus)*

is one common way of preparing fish in this region. **Grouper, ray, hake, conger, red scorpionfish, wrasse, brown wrasse and horse mackerel** are the species most commonly used for this dish. Besides using good quality fish, another secret is to salt it a few hours before cooking, and make a good garlic sauce. Excellent caldeiradas can be found at any of the region's fishing ports. Flat fish, **flounder or sole**, is best served grilled or barbecued.

Other fish, like hake sea bass, sheephead and other species can be grilled or barbecued and served boneless with boiled potatoes and a drizzle of olive oil. One of the tastiest dishes to be found on the coast in summer are roast sardines. Visitors taking a walk through one of the local fishing villages will be sure notice the delicious aroma of roasting **sardines**. Some bars and restaurants in the port area offer this dish with some good bread and potatoes cooked in their skin: a real delight for the tastebuds. Many of the region's traditional fiestas would not be complete without a big sardiñada (sardine roast).

Small sardines, or **xoubas** are fried, put in a caldeirada or in an "empanada" or pie. Empanadas in this region are



*Dish of fish caldeirada*

are made with cornflour pastry and are one of the most typical dishes to be found in the traditional local cuisine. Roast or grilled **mackerel and horse mackerel** are also delicious. Both may be humble but they are very tasty and nutritious. Smoked or fried mackerel are also well worth a try.

Other products of the sea have recently been making a big impact on regional kitchens, such as **seaweed and sea urchins**. Prepared as a pate or sauce, they give dishes a characteristic marine flavour.

Seaweed is abundant on the coast of the Costa da Morte. After being gathered and dried, it is sold to prepare a range of dishes. The culinary influences of countries like Japan, China and Korea and changes in eating habits have led to seaweed being included in the local cuisines, thanks to its low calorie content and high levels of fibre and minerals. There are many ways of preparing it according to the type of seaweed. It can be used to accompany or garnish different kinds of dishes: salads, sautéed vegetables, with rice, in soups and broths, etc.



*Celebration of the Faguía de Carnés (Vimianzo)*

While the dishes prepared with ingredients from the sea are the best examples of what the regional cuisine has to offer, the local **meat, vegetables and greens** are of the best quality and very abundant. Any restaurant will offer diners the chance to try exquisite meat-based dishes.

Thanks to the influence of local people who emigrated to South America, many restaurants offer meat grilled on a charcoal barbecue. A very popular dish is charcoal barbecued pork or veal tenderloin, and lamb or veal chops. The traditional dish of roast veal can still be seen on many menus, but demand for it has dropped in recent years. Other delicious meat dishes include free range chicken and lamb.

Stewed tripes are one of the most traditional dishes in regional fiestas and fairs. The **Faguía** is celebrated on the first day of the fiestas of San Cristovo de Carnés, and consists of a meal that was first held in the early 16th century after the foundation of the brotherhood of penitents of the parish and which now consists of handing out dishes of stewed tripes to all the attendants.



In winter, especially with the approach of the Carnival, restaurants offer the typical dishes **cocido gallego** (boiled pork, potatoes, chickpeas and greens) and **lacón con grelos** (pork hock and turnip greens); solid fare to beat the winter chill. There are eating houses and restaurants that specialise and offer group menus for these types of foods.

Restaurants in recent years have been adapting their dishes to the changes in eating habits that are taking place in modern society, characterised more than anything by a greater consumption of greens and vegetables.

The land in the regions of Bergantiños and Soneira have very good conditions for growing products such as these and offer a lot of potential for ecological farming, which is seeing a growing demand amongst consumers. The coastal valleys of the region have a tradition of producing good quality vegetables: these include Baldaio (Carballo), Barizo (Malpica), Traba (Laxe) and Merexo (Muxía), where a great deal of garlic and onions were grown and exported to other parts of Galicia and elsewhere. Other valleys of the interior also have good land for cultivating market garden crops that could supply nearby restaurants with local produce.

We have seen that restaurant menus include a growing number of cold and warm salads of all kinds, and greens such as turnip greens and collard greens to accompany many of their dishes.

The **potatoes** grown in the region are also of exceptional quality; both the indigenous variety of Carballo and other species that have adapted without problems to local conditions. Coristanco potatoes are rightly famous, and the Festa da Patata, a major celebration of the potato is held there.

The **beans** of Bergantiños and the Terra de Soneira are very good quality and are sold at the fairs of Carballo, Baio and Ponteceso. The town hall of Ponteceso organises



*The Fiesta de la Patata de Coristanco has a long tradition amongst other celebrations*

the **Feira das Fabas** (bean fair) in late October, and has been doing so since 1990.

Some market gardens also produce **fruit**, such as strawberries, cherries, apples, pears, figs and walnuts, which are used to prepare a range of dishes, especially desserts. Cherry trees are delicate and easily affected by atmospheric pollution, and production has dropped a lot in recent years, but the valley of O Anllóns once produced many cherries. The fairs held in season at Carballo and Paiosaco were when the fruit produced was sold. The **Feira das Cereixas** is held on the first Sunday of July in Paiosaco; a festival that commemorates the times when this fruit was abundant in the area.

Restaurants offer a wide range of **desserts** for customers to try and enjoy. Some are offered at certain times of the year, such as filloas (pancakes) and orejas (palmiers), which are an integral part of the Carnivals and combine very well with the traditional dishes of cocido and lacón con grelos. Others were a typical part of traditional fiestas, such as cheese with quince, rice pudding, brioche,

sponge cake, chocolate roulade and many different types of tarts. However, many of the desserts seen on menus are made by the restaurants themselves. The wine lists also offer a wide range of wines, both local and from other wine-making areas, from which customers can select a wine to match the meal and their preferences.

06

## ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE



**D**iscovering a region as big as Costa da Morte, with more than 1500 km<sup>2</sup> and 300 km of coastline, full of natural spaces and a rich historical, ethnographic and cultural heritage, requires a lot of driving and walking if you want to see all the places of interest that the area has to offer.

The aim of this guide is to provide you with a set of routes that give you the chance to see and experience the most important places in the region for the first time, to give you an idea of the landscape, history and people who live in the westernmost point of the Iberian Peninsula end Europe. Then, if you like what you see, you can get to know the area better and see the things that most interest you.

We know that every traveller has their preferences, and it's very difficult to satisfy everyone with a guide designed for a broad cross section of visitors. But the idea here is to offer some attractive locations that you can choose from according to your tastes and interests.

That's why the routes in this guide are suggestions and are as open-ended as possible so you can plan your own trip the way you want. We've organised circular routes as much as possible so you can join one no matter where you are, although there are one or two where that's not possible and you'll have to leave and return on the same route.

We've divided Costa da Morte into five big routes for travelling by car. They start at coastal towns because they're the ones with the largest number of visitors, giving them the highest priority because they tend to be the places of most interest to tourists, although other locations further inland that are notable for their heritage are also on the routes. Each route is designed for one day's travelling. There are also some short-distance and long-distance walking routes.

## ROUTE 1

### FISTERRA-MUXÍA

This first route starts in Fisterra, the best known and most visited place in Costa da Morte, and one that no visitor to the region should miss. There are several places to see here: the town of Fisterra itself, the parish church of Santa María das Areas, the cape and lighthouse, and Monte Facho.

#### > Town of Fisterra

##### History

The good conditions offered by this part of the coast where Fisterra stands today have always made it an ideal location for settlement since prehistoric times, although there is no data to confirm this. The town was established in the Middle Ages as a centre for trade and fishing.

From the late 13th to the end of the 14th century, the town formed part of the estate of the Mariños, a family of nobles who owned a lot of land in this

region. A member of the family, Vasco Pérez Mariño, was made bishop of Ourense, which explains why Fisterra belonged to the chapter of the city. An exchange was later made by the archbishop of Santiago and the chapter of Ourense and for several centuries Fisterra was owned by the archbishopric.



## ROUTE 1 FISTERRA-MUXÍA



## > ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE



*Fisterra in the 1930s (R. Caamaño)*

In the mid-16th century, besides the parish church of Santa María das Areas, Fisterra was also home to three shrines: San Guillerme, on the slopes of the hill with the same name; Santa Catalina, on the street with the same name and San Roque, at the entrance to the town, near the calvary of A Cruz de Baixar. There was also a pilgrims' hospital opposite the parish church, founded by a parish priest, Alonso García, in 1469.

Fisterra had been attacked by foreign pirates since the Middle Ages, first by Normans and Muslims, and then by the English and French. French pirates attacked the town in 1552 and looted the shrine of San Guillerme. Cardinal Del Hoyo states in his memoirs of the 17th century that they stole the saint's remains and a reliquary with one of the saint's arms that was kept in the parish church. He also mentions that the population of the town at the time consisted of sixty persons who all earned a living from fishing, were very poor and whose homes had been burned down on several occasions.

Fisterra was invaded by French troops in 1809, who looted the town and set fire to the castle of San Carlos. Seeing that it was impossible to resist the invaders, many of the residents took to the sea in boats and protected themselves in the ría.

By the early 20th century, Fisterra had become a large town with over two thousand inhabitants who worked in fishing and used the beaches of A Ribeira and Calafigueira to moor their boats. The town had salting factories, a thriving business community, leisure associations and a fishermen's cooperative.

The oldest houses were situated around the beach of A Ribeira as a natural harbour. The town itself was made up of two districts: the oldest, called Cabo da Xesta, had a main road that started in the Praciña Ara Solis, passed through the Praza de la Constitución and then continued along the Rúa Real. The other more modern district was called Cabo da Vila and the high street was called Rúa Santa Catalina, which went to the town hall and the outskirts. The districts were separated by the Regato Mixirica, a stream that is now channelled and covered by a street, Rúa Federico Ávila, which is the main road that leads to the port.

In the 1920s, Carré Aldao, a local writer, described Fisterra as a town with regular streets and well built houses, quite unlike the picture drawn by the English travel writer, Aubrey F. G. Bell, who said that the houses looked miserable and that the streets were unkempt and full of rubbish.

Present-day Fisterra is a very different town from the one it was one hundred years ago. Although it still conserves a sizeable part of the old structure, most of the houses are newly built or restored. The greatest changes have been made to the port area, where fishing and tourism is mostly concentrated. The most striking building is the new fish auction hall, designed by the architect Juan Creus, where the catches of the fishing fleet are sold off every day.

#### Route on foot around the town

The route starts at the harbour esplanade and takes you on a tour to discover the town. A walk around the harbour allows you to see all the port facilities, the ships that fill



*Present-day Fisterra is very different from the town of one hundred years ago*

the port's waters with colour and the many bars and restaurants and their terraces. The fish auction hall can be found in the broad open space of the **harbour**, where much of the fishing activity takes place. A huge anchor painted black can be seen in the same area. A closer look shows that the **anchor** is a reference to the sinking of Casón, a vessel sailing under the Panamanian flag that ran aground on this coast in 1987 and caused panic amongst local residents because of the dangerous cargo on board.

The **beach of A Ribeira** is behind the port: a small bay that used to be a mooring space and is now an urban beach. The oldest houses in the town surrounded this small and sheltered bay, but now little remains of them. One of the few to remain is notable for having an entrance with a pointed arch as a reminder of medieval Fisterra. On some cliffs at the south end of the bay is the **Castle of San Carlos**, one of the four fortresses commissioned by the Bourbons to defend this coast in the mid-18th c. and designed by the French engineer, Carlos Lemauro. The irregular shape of the perimeter wall

is caused by the rocks on which it stands.

The embrasures face in three directions: cape Fisterra, the centre of the ría and the town itself. There is a building inside with space for a small garrison. The castle was razed during the French invasion. It was later purchased by a local businessman in the late 19th century, Plácido Castro Rivas, who donated the building to the town hall of Fisterra to build a school, but the project never came to fruition due to a lack of funds. Plans were also made in the postwar period to convert it into a museum, which likewise never saw the light of day. The building changed hands on several occasions and was put to different uses until the Fishermen's Guild gathered enough funds to create the **Fishing Museum** in 2006, which opened its doors two years later. Since then, it has received more than 100,000 visitors who have had the chance to listen to the interesting explanations of the museum guide and well-known local poet Francisco Manuel López Martínez, who signs his work with the pseudonym Alexandre Nerium. Any visitor to Fisterra should pay a visit to this small but fascinating museum.

From the Castle of San Carlos you now head off to the **Praza de Ara Solis** to see the **chapel of Buen Suceso**, founded by the parish priest Mateo Pérez Porrúa in 1743, and built in the Baroque style, as the façade clearly shows. The altarpiece of the main chapel, likewise built in the same style, is presided over by the Virgin of Succour. The calvary and font nearby complement the structure.

The plaza also has an old house with a coat of arms and sundial that date back to the early 17th century and symbolise the presence of nobility in the town. Now head off down the main street to the **Praza da Constitución**, the centre of the old town, where some houses of local businessmen can still be seen, with balconies or galleries, unlike the humbler fishermen's houses. Continue along Rúa Real, the town's high street, until you reach the street that goes down to the port. On the left hand corner you can see the **pilgrims' hostel**, built in 2001 to provide accommodation to the many pilgrims who come to Fisterra. If you head straight down along Rúa Santa



*Beach of A Ribeira and Castle of San Carlos to the left*

Catalina, you'll come to the town hall building and the road leading out of the town.

The high road crosses the town from east to west and has different names along the way. It used to be the old road that went to the parish church and the lighthouse. Fisterra grew around this street and became the centre for commercial, cultural and leisure activity. It was crossed at right angles by small streets or lanes that went down to the shore, where all the fishing activity took place. The town's appearance changed after the construction of the new port area and the opening of the new road to the lighthouse.

#### **Parish church of Santa María das Areas**

This church is located at the exit from Fisterra to the lighthouse. The reason for placing it outside the town centre and further away from the coast was to protect it from attacks by pirates, which were frequent events on this coast.





*Parish church of Santa María das Areas*

The building consists of a hall church, made up of a rectangular main chapel, with a cross-ribbed vault and a nave of the same shape, covered with a timber and tiled roof, divided into four sections by pointed arches, supported by columns embedded into the walls and reinforced on the outside by buttresses. The pointed triumphal arch rests on three half-columns on each side.

The main façade is plain, with two buttresses at each end, and Romanesque archivolts that frame the door and act as a decorative feature. Four semicircular arches on columns can be seen opposite, which were built to bear the weight of the portico, which no longer exists. The 16th century bell-tower stands at the southern end, attached to the nave.

Several structures were added to both sides of the primitive Romanesque building, which have disfigured its original shape. The **Santo Cristo chapel**, which is the largest one, was added to the northern part, and consists of two rectangular and quadrangular elements. It dates back to the late 17th or early 18th century and was built in the Baroque style. The altarpiece, built in the same style, was added in 1721 and was designed and carved by Miguel de Romy, an artist from Santiago. However, the image of Christ is Gothic and was donated by Vasco Pérez Mariño, who was born in Fisterra and a bishop of

Ourense. He donated a similar image to the cathedral of Ourense.

The very human way in which the body, clothing and hair are represented, along with the figure's expression of pain and suffering, give the image a powerful realism that sets out to move the congregation and lead them to repentance.

There are many legends surrounding the Christ. These range from stories in which the figure's nails and hair grow,

to a legend that says that it was made by Nicodemus, the Jew who helped Christ down from the cross.

Another legend tells the story of how it arrived at Fisterra by sea. According to the tale, the figure was

inside a box thrown into the sea from an English

ship that was threatened by a storm, which did not allow the vessel to leave. After the image was hurled overboard, the storm died down and the ship could sail away. The box was then taken by some local sailors to the church.

To the west of the Santo Cristo chapel is the old chapel of the Rosario, now the chapel of Carme, founded by María Blanca in 1534 and built in the Plateresque style.



*Altarpiece of the Santo Cristo chapel*

The north wall also contains a beautiful doorway with a **mixtilinear arch**, which has a coat of arms on each side. The influence of the architect Enrique Egás, who designed the Hospital dos Reis Católicos in Santiago, can be seen here.

The south wall includes the sacristy and the chapel of San Miguel and Las Angustias, from the late 15th c.

The church interior has other works of artistic merit besides the image of Christ: the 16th c. image of Santa María das Areas (Saint Mary of the Sands), the patron saint of the parish, and another 17th c. image of St James the Pilgrim, which highlights the strong tradition of the Way of St James in Fisterra.

The Resurrection of Christ, is re-enacted on Easter Sunday in the field to the south of the church and is attended by thousands of pilgrims. The event is held in front of a grotto at the foot of the hill. In the early morning a group of participants dressed as Roman soldiers guard the cave where the body of Christ is interred. A tremendous sound terrifies the soldiers and they flee, then the door to the cave opens and an angel comes out. The three Marys, in mourning and afflicted, come closer to the tomb and talk to the angel, who tries to convince them that Jesus has risen. Mary Magdalene tells the Virgin Mary, who celebrates the news. Flags are then raised, doves are released, fireworks are set off and music is played in celebration of the event. A group of young girls dressed in white sing the Victimae paschali laudes. The event ends with a traditional dance called the Danza das Areas.

### Cape and lighthouse of Fisterra

After seeing the church, now's the time to set off to the cape and lighthouse of Fisterra. We'd recommend walking the three kilometres to the cape. The route has some fantastic views of the ría of Corcubión, Monte Pindo, which rises over the bay like a granite giant, the long beach of Carnota, and farther south the elongated peninsula of Barbanza that ends at the headland of Corrubedo.



*Cape Fisterra*

The peninsula that forms **cape Fisterra**, which penetrates for more than three kilometres into the sea, has two very different faces. The northern side is open to the Mar de Fóra, a local name for the ocean where waves violently crash against the sheer cliffs and the beach that bears the same name, while the south has a kinder side, with calm seas that wash against the beach of A Langosteira.

This point at the western extreme of the Iberian Peninsula and Europe, where the ancient world came to an end and an endless ocean began, awakened the curiosity of many who came to see the wild and stormy seas in a land full of legends of monstrous beasts and an ocean whose currents made any sea voyage a dangerous one.

Classical authors mentioned the region when writing about the western Peninsula and said that it was inhabited by a tribe called the Nerii. Cape Fisterra may be the promontory of the Nerii or the Celts that is mentioned in ancient sources. Some scholars believe that the Aras Sestianas, three altars dedicated to the emperor Augustus, were built here.

In the Middle Ages, Fisterra was linked to the Way of St James. The legend of the transfer of the remains of St James to Galicia, which is mentioned in the Codex Calixtinus, also refers to the legendary city of Duio, which was located behind the beach of Langosteira. Christian tradition also draws connections between St James and Fisterra, stating that he preached in these distant and pagan lands. The saint, made desperate by local resistance to his sermons, had the pagan city disappear under the waters, and then, exhausted, he withdrew to pray on the rocks of Muxía. The shrine of San Guillerme, situated on the eastern side of Monte Facho, is also linked to the cult of the Way of St James, since pilgrims would arrive here in ancient times to redeem the sins they had committed.

Several buildings were built at the end of the cape in the 19th c., one of which is a 143-metre-high lighthouse. The structure consists of a rectangular two-storey building with a third floor in the central part, painted white with the frames and corners built with masonry. The building against the beach of A Langosteira.

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When the **lighthouse** keepers stopped living in the building, some parts of it were converted for cultural and tourist activities. Exhibitions and cultural events were held inside, along with a tourist information office. However, the building has been closed for some years, despite it being in one of the most popular tourist destinations in Galicia.

A little further to the south is the rectangular **foghorn building**, which started operating in 1889. Two foghorns sticking out of the building emit a loud blare when there is a thick mist. Local people call it the Fisterra Cow, because the sound is similar to a moo.





*Lighthouse of Fisterra*

Further north on a higher promontory stands the Semáforo, which was the old marine signalling station. It was designed by the engineer Joaquín López Vázquez and commenced operations in 1883. It was rehabilitated by the architect César Portela as a restaurant.

### Monte Facho

Take the right-hand trail before the lighthouse to walk up to the top of this mountain (241m). The name comes from the bonfires or beacons that were used on coastal hilltops to warn the local population of invasion from the sea. When visiting Fisterra in the second half of the 18th c., the Italian cleric and traveller Domenico Laffi mentioned a tower on this mountain where a fire was lit to guide ships, but he also commented on the damage caused by vessels that raided the port.

As you go up the hill you'll see a viewing point, built after the rubbish tip that was below was sealed off. After a steep trek uphill, you reach the top; nearby there's an enclosure protecting the antennae of the radiotelegraphy station. According to Benjamín Trillo, the enclosure contains the tomb of Orcavella, whose name means "old tomb" or "dolmen", as mentioned in the section on legends.

## > ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE

After the enclosure, you come to a **slight elevation** that drops down to the sea on the western side, and there you'll see the Pedras Santas, or **sacred stones**, which were already mentioned in the 16th c. by several travellers who went to Fisterra.

When you go down Monte Facho you'll see an earthen track to the left that goes round the eastern slope and takes you to the remains of the **chapel of San Guillermo**. To get there, you need to take a diversion along a track to the right that goes to the chapel. From this high point you can enjoy some amazing views of the town, the beach of A Langosteira and the entire bay of Fisterra. The remains of the walls of the chapel and a sepulchre can be seen next to a large rock, which may have something to do with the "stone bed" mentioned by Martin Sarmiento in 1745, where infertile couples were said to lie down and encounter the solution to their ills.

There is no information about the founding of the shrine; however, there are some records that indicate that it was an important place of pilgrimage, and it is mentioned by Flemish courts when they imposed the sentence of pilgrimage to a distant place. According to cardinal Del Hoyo, Breton pirates who attacked Fisterra stole the saint's relics from the shrine along with one of the saint's arms decorated with silver that was kept in the parish church.

San Guillermo (Saint William) became a legendary figure with different stories about who he was and what he did. The real San Guillermo was very probably a hermit who retired to live in this place.

### From Fisterra to Muxía

After visiting the town and peninsula of Fisterra, which takes about one day, now's the time to head off to Muxía.

Leave Fisterra on the straight road called A Anchoa, San Guillermo (Saint William) became a legendary figure with different stories about who he was and what he did. The real San Guillermo was very probably a hermit who retired to live in this place.



*Remains of the chapel of San Guillerme*

and take the road to the left towards Ermedesuxo, Denle, **Castromiñán** and the beach of O Rostro. This road crosses the **valley of Duio**, where the legendary city of the same name is supposed to be. The place name lasts in the parishes of San Martiño and San Vicenzo. After Denle, the road passes close to the hamlet of Castromiñán, whose name comes from the hillfort on the coast, where the defensive walls can be clearly seen. A little more to the north is the headland of O Castelo, where a cargo ship, the **Casón**, sailing under a Panamanian flag, ran aground on 5 December 1987. 23 of the 31 crew were killed in the accident. There was tremendous alarm and panic amongst the local population because of the highly toxic cargo that the ship carried. The road heads closer to the sea and runs parallel to the **beach of O Rostro**, a long stretch of wild sandy beaches of about two kilometres, with open sea and rough waves, which produces a constant and all-encompassing roar that's well worth listening to. There is a local saying that goes: "Sea of O Rostro, if you wed, you'd soften".

Further on the way, you'll pass through the hamlets of Padrís and A Canosa and then reach **Lires**, which is a parish in the municipality of Cee. The village extends along the side of the road that goes to the small ría and the beach. Nearby is the mouth of the **river Castro**, the



*Hikers crossing the beach of O Rostro*

source of which is in the highlands of the parish of Castrelo in Vimianzo. It acts as a border between the municipalities of Vimianzo, Cee and Muxía. The name of the river comes from O Castro de Coucieiro, which it passes through to give shape to the beautiful natural area of As Caldeiras do Castro. The river mouth forms a **small estuary or ría**, a natural site of great interest thanks to the many birds that inhabit this tranquil area. Part of this space is occupied by a large fish farm for trout that was established in 1969, as part of the Tres Mares group. It produces about 3,500 tons of fish a year.

The estuary extends via the stream of Lires and the tide waters come up to the hamlet itself. After passing through the hamlet and crossing the stream, you come to the small ría, which can come as something of a shock when you discover the peaceful atmosphere there, occasionally interrupted by the sound of birds singing or fish jumping in the calm waters.

At the end of the road you'll marvel at the fantastic view over the long beach of **Nemiña**. To get there, you need to take the road to cape Touriñán and turn left. This long sandy beach is ideal for a day by the sea protected from the north east wind. It has become a firm favourite for surfers in recent years.

The coastal **Way of St James from Fisterra to Muxía** passes through Lires and is mentioned by ancient travellers and pilgrims, who crossed the river Castro via a crossing that no longer exists because of the waters from the weir that supplies the fish farm. A foot bridge was built here in 2011 to allow travellers to cross the river at this point. The **Vaosilveiro** manor house, a property owned by the Oreiro family, is on the other side. The place name inspired the local writer Gonzalo López Abente to write one of his novels.

Lires was a pioneer in efforts to promote rural tourism. It was the first village to open this kind of establishment in Costa da Morte. The residents previously lived from farming, but now they work mainly in tourism.

Leave Lires along the road to Pereiriña and about three kilometres further on turn left towards cape Touriñán. Cross the river Castro at A Ponte Nova and pass through **Frixe**. The village parish church of Santa Locaia has some Romanesque remains. 2.5 km further on, you'll come to a turn to the left that takes you to the beach of Nemiña, which is worth a visit if you fancy going there. Or you can carry on down the road to cape Touriñán.

### Cape Touriñán

This headland is the westernmost point of Galicia and therefore of Spain (Coordinates: 43° 03' 20" lat. N and 9° 17' 54" long. O).

The last ray of sunlight on continental Europe shines on this place twice a year. The first is from 21 March to 23 April; the second, from 13 August to 22 September, according to the local physicist Jorge Mira Pérez. Touriñán takes up its duties from cape Roca in Portugal and passes them on to cape Vardetangen in Norway.

This promontory is basically a peninsula of about two kilometres in length that ends at Punta Buxeirados, and is about 900 m at its widest point. There is an isthmus of 300 m between Porto da Insua and the bay of O Saco de Touriñán. This headland is a windswept tongue of rugged land where trees cannot grow, covered with gorse and



*Foot bridge of Vaosilveiro on the Way of St James from Fisterra to Muxía*

heather.

The coastline of Touriñán is rugged and rocky, with hazardous sandbanks that make navigation near the headland a difficult process. The most dangerous one is **Laxe de Touriñán**, about three quarters of a mile to the west of the cape. It's a place where many vessels have run aground. This folk song is about the difficulties of navigating the cape:

*Santo Cristo of Fisterra,  
saint with the beard of gold,  
help me to overcome  
Laxe de Touriñana.*

To the west is the islet of O Herboso or **istlet of Castelo**, which you can walk to at low tide. The remains of a castro or hillfort can be found there, from which the island gets its name.



The **lighthouse** is located at the western point of the promontory. This old square building is made of ashlar masonry with white rendering, with the stonework left visible at the openings and corners. It was inaugurated on 15 December 1898.

The plans for the design were drawn up by the engineer Adolfo Pequeño, one of the participants in the project for the new Vilán lighthouse, and date back to 1884. The building is quadrangular and measures 14 m on each side, with a hipped roof and a small tower that rises just slightly above the roof top, surrounded by a balcony with iron railings and a lantern with flat panes and vertical uprights. The octagonal tower in the centre of the building was surrounded by the living quarters for the two lighthouse keepers and their families and rooms for services. The first lighthouse emitted a white beam up to a distance of 10 miles produced by a Mares paraffin lamp and an optical system taken from the old lighthouse at cape Vilán. The optical system was restored in 1918 to produce flashes in groups of 2 and 1 every 15 seconds. A new vaporised oil burner lamp was also installed, with a light intensity of up to 20 miles (37 km).

A new and much uglier lighthouse was built in 1981 to replace the old one. A 3 m diameter, 14 m high cylindrical concrete tower, surrounded by two circular balconies with metal railings and a dome for the lantern room. The lantern is a 1,500 watt electric lamp that projects a beam for up to 24 miles.

When you leave cape Touriñán, you'll come to the crossroads of O Seixo after about 4 km, turn to the left towards Viseo and when you reach the village, turn left again to take the road that goes to Cuño, Lourido and Muxía. The road runs parallel to the coast and is rather narrow with quite a few curves, but it gives you a chance to see some amazing views of the coastline.

When you get to **Lourido**, the road broadens thanks to the new section that was built for the **Parador Costa da Morte**, which is near the village.



*Old and new buildings of the Touriñán lighthouse*

The idea for building this parador (or hotel that forms part of the national chain of paradores) was born from the catastrophe of the Prestige, which caused a huge oil spill all along the Galician coastline in 2002, especially in Costa da Morte.

The aim of this project was to boost the local economy through tourism, but it took 18 months to build and complete. The newly built hotel finally opened its doors on 25 June 2020, and was soon a roaring success thanks to the tremendous demand over the summer. Since then it has steadily established itself as a part of the regional tourist.

The project designer was the architect Alfonso Penela, who devised a building built like a stairway to enable it to adapt to the slope and reduce the environmental impact. Another environmental plus is the vegetation that acts as a roof over the pavilions for the rooms, which offer fantastic views of the beach of Lourido.



*Parador Costa da Morte, in Lourido (Muxía)*

The whole complex occupies 128,000 m2 with 63 rooms, an auditorium, restaurant, cafeteria, spa, swimming pool and other shared areas. A hotel with a cutting edge design where glass and wood dominate the setting.

The history, culture and nature of the region were some of the inspirations behind the furnishings and décor, using simple, timeless designs that combine both past and present. The interior decoration includes an exhibition of the art, photography and crafts of **Muxía** and Costa da Morte. Local influences can also be seen in the library's selection of books.

From Lourido you now head off to Muxía, an unmissable stop on this first route.

## > Town of Muxía

### History

This small town of a little over one thousand inhabitants is situated on the sandy spit between Monte Corpiño to the north and Monte O Enfesto to the south, in the narrow peninsula that ends at Punta A Barca.

The origins of the town go back to the nearby monastery of San Xulián de Moraime. The name of the town (Muxía means "land of monks") is in fact a reference to the monastery, which played an important role in evangelising

## > ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE



*Muxía in the early 20th century*

the surrounding area.

The first historical reference to the town was in the 12th century, when it is mentioned as part of the parish of Santa María. In 1346, king Alfonso IX granted the town the statutory rights of A Coruña, which gave the residents certain privileges, with the proviso that they should respect the rights that the monastery of Moraime possessed over the town.

Cardinal J. del Hoyo comments in his memoirs that fishing was the only economic activity in Muxía and the town's jurisdictional space was so small that the locals depended on the parish of Moraime for basic necessities like firewood, water and farm produce.

According to Del Hoyo, the emperor Charles V took Muxía away from the monks of Maraime and gave them another port, and then granted it to the archbishop of Santiago.

According to the Catastro de Ensenada (a regional census), the town had 94 residents (about 350 inhabitants) in the mid-18th century, most of whom worked in the sardine and conger fishing trade. Lace working was an important local craft, partly because of the number of women who worked in the trade and because of the many families who sold it.

The town's economy in the 19th century was still closely linked to fishing and maritime trade. Lace working and conger drying were also important sources of income. In the mid-19th century, Muxía was a centre of business and services for the municipal parishes. The town also had taverns, ironmongers, lace shops, a doctor, a pharmacist and a lawyer.

The population had increased to almost one thousand by the early 20th century, and the houses, built of local granite and ceramic tiles, showed a remarkable harmony.

The use of engine-driven boats in the late 1920s was a major boost for the fishing sector. The vast majority of the families in the town lived from the fishing industry, but there were others who made a living in business and other occupations. They formed a small enlightened bourgeoisie that met at the local casino. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War led to deep social divisions and an economic crisis that continued to the end of the 1950s.

Commercial fishing started to undergo an economic revival in the 1960s and the discovery of the O Canto fishing grounds at the end of the decade led to a major increase in the incomes of many families working in the industry. A lot of the money made from the sector was spent on construction that was carried out without any appropriate planning and led to a major change in the town's image. The construction of the seawall, jetty, promenade and sports marina has also totally changed the old port.

The crisis in the fishing sector that commenced in the 1990s up to the present day meant that many jobs were lost. Tourists attracted by the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region and the promotion of the Way of St James, are creating jobs, albeit seasonal ones, but the fishing industry needs to be revived, given that it is an excellent complement to tourism.



*Muxía today with Monte Corpiño in the background*

### Route on foot around the Muxía peninsula

Muxía is located on a peninsula, which means you can walk all around the edge of the town next to the sea and enjoy the wonderful views over the ría, Cabo Vilán and the Punta de A Buítra.

We recommend starting this route at the **viewing point of A Cruz**, whose name comes from the calvary that marks the border between the parishes of Muxía and Moraime. It is also gives its name to the beach at the entrance to the town.

If you look eastwards, you'll see the beaches of A Cruz and O Espiñeirido. The first one is ideal for people coming in from the road to Berdoias, while the second welcomes pilgrims ending the route from Hospital de Logoso to Muxía. If you look to the north west you'll have a good view of the port and the frontage of the town that overlooks the ría.

The next stage is to walk along the promenade to the monument of the local poet **Gonzalo López Abente** (1878-1963), who was related to Eduardo Pondal. This monument was designed and made by Andrés Barbazán, an artist from Negreira. The sculpture was commissioned in 1971 to celebrate the fact that the Galician Literature Day was dedicated to the writer.



Continue along the promenade until you reach the jetty of **Don Manolo**, a small quay built by the local businessman Manuel Lastres to moor his maritime transport vessels. You'll see an old cannon from the defensive bulwark in A Gurita that is now used as a bollard.

Pass in front of the modern Town Hall, and continue along Rúa da Marina until you reach the Rambleta. The building on the corner where the bar "A Marina" is now used to be a house where the poet Rosalía de Castro stayed when she came to the Romaría da Barca in 1853, accompanied by Eduarda Pondal, sister of the famous poet of Ponteceso.



*Gonzalo López Abente, a writer from Muxía  
(R. Caamaño)*

Now you go up towards the Rúa Real until you reach the **Praza da Constitución**, which is the centre of the old town where the market and fiestas are held. The old Town Hall used to be located here, in the new building that still has some stone columns on the ground floor.

There is a group of restored houses near the plaza that show what the traditional homes of the town were like. Opposite is the recently restored house that was home to the writer **Gonzalo López Abente**. Keep straight ahead till you reach the next plaza.



*Parish church of Santa María de Muxía*

You'll see a coat of arms on the gable of a stone house that shows the same symbols as the ones on the house of Pazos de Senande, which suggests that this noble family had a house in Muxía. There is another house in the same plaza with a very worn coat of arms that belonged to the noble family of Dios y Castro. The building where the Casa del Mar now stands used to be the old salt store. The monopoly to sell salt was granted to Muxía in the 15th c. A few metres further on you'll see another group of restored houses, one of which is the municipal library and the other, the tourist information office.

If you go towards the sanctuary of A Barca, walk as far as the cemetery and then head up to the parish **church of Santa María**, built in the Marine Gothic style with Romanesque touches. It consists of just one nave with a wooded roof and a rectangular apse with a pointed domed ceiling. The chapel of Rosario (Our Lady of the Rosary), with a cross ribbed vault, can be seen in the north wall. The bell tower rises over some rocks at the foot of the church. Go back to the promenade next to the sea. Look right and you'll see a structure made of wooden trunks. These are the **racks** used to dry conger in the



*Sanctuary of A Virxe da Barca de Muxía*

open air. There were several conger-drying businesses in this area, which sold the dried fish to the Spanish interior. Carry on walking along the promenade and you'll come to some magnificent views of the northern coast of the ría of Camariñas, the chapel of A Virxe do Monte and the Vilán lighthouse.

Now you're at the **chapel of A Virxe da Barca**, which was built in 1719 with funds from the count of Frigiliana and his descendants, the counts of Maceda. The building itself is Baroque, robust and sober. The interior used to house a valuable Baroque altarpiece by a sculptor from Santiago, Miguel de Romay, which was destroyed in a fire on 25 December 2013.

The famous pilgrimage held to honour the Virgin takes place on the second weekend of September, except when the date on the Sunday is the 8th, in which case it is transferred to the third weekend.

Head down the atrium stairs and you'll see the legendary stones of **Abalar and Os Cadrís**, which were Christianised and then went on to form part of the legend of the vessel that transported the Virgin to this place. Rocking A Pedra de Abalar (literally, "the rocking stone") and passing nine

times under the stone of Os Cadrís (literally, "the hip region") is a popular ritual amongst pilgrims and visitors.

Return from A Barca along the **track of A Pel**, and at the top you'll see a huge granite stone: the **sculpture of A Ferida**, which commemorates the tragedy of the Prestige. From here you can take the track that goes up to **Monte Corpiño**, the best viewing point of Muxía.

Go back and take the track of A Pel, where you'll get some beautiful views of the ocean and the headlands of O Cachelmo and A Buítra. A curious thing to see on this part of the route are the **stone walls** surrounding the small market gardens, which are not dissimilar to the walls of houses in ancient hillforts. These walls were built to demarcate the properties and protect the crops from the sea winds and the salt they bring with them. Just before the first houses, there is a track that goes down to **Fonte da Pel**, a spring where pilgrims washed themselves before continuing on to the sanctuary. Now head back to the track and go down the Rúa Atalaia toward the Coído. The house of the local photographer **Ramón Caamaño Betín** (1908-2007)

is at no. 12 Rúa Matadero. He was famous for immortalising the landscapes and people of Costa da Morte. The ground floor of the house contains a small musum with some of his photos and personal effects.



*Ramón Caamaño, photographer from Muxía*

Go back now to the Rúa Atalaia, cross the Rúa A Pedriña and you'll come to the conger drying racks in this area. Walk from here alongside the coast and you'll arrive at the **Praza de O Coído**, regarded as the ground zero during the Prestige disaster, which mobilised thousands of volunteers to collaborate in recovering the coastline. A monument was placed here in 2007 to acknowledge their selfless work. To end the route, we recommend a visit to the **Permanent Exhibition** at the Voluntariado building, made up of a large collection of photographs that graphically illustrate the appalling ecological disaster that took place in November 2002.

### From Muxía to Fisterra

Take the road to Berdoias to leave Muxía, and three kilometres further on you'll come to the **church of Moraime**, which formed part of the monastery that was once here. Moraime is the most important historical centre of Costa da Morte and one that had a tremendous influence on the region.

### Historical-artistic site of Moraime

The history of Moraime goes back to the pre-Christian period.

Excavations directed by Manuel Chamoso Lamas in 1972 in the area to the south of the present church brought to light from different historical periods. The oldest finds were Roman, while some of Visigothic origin were also found.

There are no records of the founding of the old **Benedictine monastery**, but its origins may go back to the 11th century. The first documents about the monastery date back to 1095.

Moraime was raided by Norman and Muslim pirates. The church was destroyed by Almoravid raiders, according to a document by king Alfonso VII, who spent a part of his childhood in the monastery under the protection of Pedro Froilaz, a member of the Trabas family of landowners.

In the document, the king acknowledged the ruinous state of the church and declared his intention to restore it and offer whatever was necessary to maintain the monastic community. Shortly after the church and monastery were built.

Moraime began to decline in the 13th century, when the Trabas lost power and minor landowners and barons began to take possession of the monastery's properties and revenues.

It was merged with San Benito in Valladolid in the late 15th c. and was then taken under the wing of San Martiño Pinario in Santiago in the 17th c. No monks remained in the early 17th c. and the building was in ruins, according to cardinal Del Hoyo.

The church and the 18th c. **rector's house** situated nearby were declared a Historical-Artistic Site in 1972.

The **church** you can see today is all that remains of the old monastery. The building is Romanesque and built on a basilica-based floor plan, with three naves and three apses.

If you look at the **exterior** of the church, you can see a marked difference in height between the main façade and the sanctuary. For this reason you have to go down two flights of stairs to enter.

The three apses stand out from the church sanctuary. The central one is highest and rectangular in shape while the two side ones are semicircular. The corbels of all the apses are decorated with geometric and plant motifs.

Buttresses joined by semicircular arches stand out from the north wall, and show influences from the religious architecture of Santiago de Compostela. The sacristy, which was built later, is attached to this wall.

The south wall stands out for the buttresses of different sizes and heights and the **beautiful Romanesque door**



"discovered" in 1975. It consists of three archivolt with semicircular arches. The two interior ones are supported on cluster columns, while the exterior one rests on the wall itself. Deeply etched geometric and plant motifs decorate the columns and



*South door of the Church of Moraime*

plinths. The capitals, on the other hand, are decorated with human and animal figures. The poor state of conservation makes the figures difficult to identify.

The tympanum shows the **Last Supper**, with Jesus Christ in the centre blessing seven apostles. **An Agnus Dei** appears on the inside of the **tympanum**.

The façade, protected by a portico of later construction, is made up of three semicircular archivolt that rest on cluster columns. The entire façade is profusely decorated. Two individuals are represented on each column, in the manner of a statue-pillar, another clear reference to the style of Santiago de Compostela. The capitals are decorated with plant motifs.

The tympanum shows seven figures framed within semicircular arcades. The central figure holds a crosier in his left hand, and gives a blessing with the right. It may represent San Xulián (Sain Julián) and his disciples or San Bieito (Saint Benedict) and members of his order.

The tympanum is framed within three semicircular archivolt. Each one is decorated with rough, rustically worked figures.

The high bell tower on the south side dates back to the 19th century, although the Baroque design makes it look older.

The triumphal arch and the other arches in the side apses are semicircular and double. The three naves are divided into five sections by cuadrangular pillars with cluster half columns on each side.

The half columns support the side arches and transverse arches that rise up to a greater height. The capitals are profusely decorated with plant motifs.



*Wrath, one of the seven deadly sins, shown in the Gothic paintings of Moraime*

The north wall has some excellent 15th c. **Gothic paintings**, showing scenes of the seven deadly sins and death, which were discovered in the nineteen seventies and restored in 2018.

**Caldeiras do Castro** A few metres from the church of Moraime, take a right turn onto the road to Cee and Corcubión, which passes through Morpeguite and Vilarmide. If you turn left here towards Coucieiro and Trasufre, you'll have the chance to visit the Caldeiras do



*Cascade in As Caldeiras do Castro*

Castro, a space of great natural and geological interest next to the river Castro, formed by the channelling of the river when it crosses an area of granite in which the water descends and forms rapids and cascades. Over time the river has formed large basins or pools, locally referred to as caldeiras. The 17th c. chapel of Santo Outelo and a calvary of the same period can be seen in the leisure area just before the river.

At the exit of **Caldeiras do Castro** turn right towards Trasufre, where you can see the **sanctuary of A Virxe do Espiño** or da Santiña, where a fiesta is held every 21 September. This road leads out to the regional 552 motorway that takes you to Cee and Corcubión.

If you decide not to go to the Caldeiras do Castro, continue on the CP-2303 road, which crosses the river Castro at Ponte Constante and links with the AC-552 in A Pereiriña.

When you reach the roundabout at Lobelos, instead of heading towards Fisterra, keep straight ahead to see the historical town of **Corcubión**, the final stop on this route.

## > Town of Corcubión

### History

The origins of this town and parish are related to the small settlement that was established close to the old church of Santo Andrés da Canle, which was further from the coast. When the number of raids from the sea began to decline in the 13th century, the population settled on the coast and established what is now Corcubión and built the new church of San Marcos, the patron saint of Venice. The change of patron saints from the previous one to San Marcos (Saint Mark) is an indication of the importance of the commercial exchanges that existed between the town and the Most Serene Republic.

The town was owned firstly by the Traba family and then by the Moscosos, the Condes de Altamira. They administrated a huge estate from a large house in the town. The Conde was responsible for appointing the judge and the aldermen of the area.

In the first half of the 18th c., Corcubión was home to about 200 inhabitants, most of whom made a living from fishing for sardines and conger. The second half of the century saw the arrival of the Catalans, who started to build sardine salting factories, a process that continued into the following century.

The town was attacked in the early 19th century by French soldiers, who looted and burned the town. However, Corcubión had become one of the most active and prosperous towns in Costa da Morte by the early 20th century. It had electric lighting, a telegraph service, a police station, banks, a salting industry, leisure associations, etc. Its status as the head of the court circuit meant that the judicial and administrative authorities also resided here.

The early twentieth century saw a great deal of emigration to South America, especially Argentina. *The Sociedad Agraria de los Hijos del Partido de Corcubión*, which was later called the *Asociación Benéfico Cultural del Partido de Corcubión*, was founded in Buenos Aires in 1922, and its



*Old port of Corcubión (R. Caamaño)*

many activities included the publication of a magazine called *Alborada*.

In the years of the Second Spanish Republic, both Corcubión and Cee were centres of intense trade union and political activity that was utterly wiped out after the rebellion of 1936.

Corcubión is now a small historical town of 1,400 inhabitants who work mostly in the service and tourist sectors. It has a very important historical heritage. The town centre was declared a Historical-Artistic Site in 1984.

#### Route on foot around the town

A good starting point for a walk around Corcubión is the **Praza de Castelao**, where you can see some stone built houses with galleries, such as the one owned by the Miñones family, which was very important both politically and economically before the Civil War. The most important member was José Miñones, a deputy in the parliament of the Second Republic and a victim of the repression under Franco. Close to this house is the house of the Dios y Pose family, with the **chapel of O Pilar** close by, which was converted into a municipal auditorium.

Set off from the Praza de Castelao and head up the Rúa San Marcos. As you start up the hill, you'll see what was the

manor **house of the Altamiras**, an old fortress that was built in the 15th c. and rehabilitated in the 17th and 18th centuries.

It was the residence of the Counts when they came to the town and also acted as a gaol and courtroom.

The street then takes you to the parish **church of San Marcos**, which still has some Romanesque features in the sanctuary, although most of the church is Gothic in style. The chapels

of O Socorro and the Virxe do Carme were added in the early 18th c. The façade was built in the late 19th c. in the neo-Gothic style, and was designed by the architect Domingo Rodríguez Sesmero. The previous façade had been damaged by lightning on several occasions, the last of which took place in 1884 and killed 3 people and injured 60.

The carving of **San Marcos da Cadeira**, patron saint of the parish, can be seen inside, which consists of a Gothic image carved in the style of the Venetian school in the second half of the 15th c. It may have been donated by the Conde de Altamira.

Go up the Rúa das Mercedes. There you'll see the **Casa da Teixeira**, with its large coat of arms, one of several large noble houses or pazos that can still be seen in the town. Carry on up the street to the end and stop at the **Praza do Campo do Rollo**, named after a pillar or column where criminals sentenced to death were executed. From here head down the Rúa Mártires, which



*Façade of the Church of San Marcos de Corcubión*





*Rúa Antonio Porrúa*

passes through the Praza do Médico Ramón Carrera and takes you to the market square and the **Casa do Concello**, or town hall, which is located in the building commissioned by the philanthropist José Carreras Fábregas, who made a considerable fortune in Argentina. He set out to create an arts and crafts school in his home town. The building was designed by an architect and composer from A Coruña, Eduardo Rodríguez Losada, in 1924. Now head down the Rúa Clotilde Salomoni, and you're back in the Praza de Castelao. Go left and continue along the Rúa Antonio Porrúa, the town's high street and the one used to enter the town. Here you can see some interesting buildings of the late 19th and early 20th c., with galleries and balconies. Go up the Rúa Peligros to the **chapel of Santo Antón**, a small shrine built in late 17th c. There are some excellent views from here of the ría and the town. Now you have two options: you can carry on down the Rúa Salvador Allende to the end and then return along the promenade, or go down the Rúa Peligros and when you come to the Rúa Rafael Juan go down a lane that crosses the street at a right angle and also takes you to the promenade. Carry

on along the promenade. You'll pass the viewing point of Ramón Pais, and from there a short walk brings you to the port, where this urban tour comes to an end.

Take the AC-552 from Corcubión and you'll be back again in Fisterra; the starting point of this first route.

## ROUTE 2 MUXÍA-LAXE



## > ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE

### ROUTE 2 MUXÍA-LAXE

Almost all of this second route is in **Terra de Soneira**, a region in the centre of Costa da Morte that includes the municipalities of Camariñas, Vimianzo and Zas. The region is a flat plain between the highlands of the plateau of O Xallas and the coastal area that borders the municipality of Camariñas. It includes the river O Porto, which starts at Pico de Meda and crosses the region from east to west before finally flowing into the ría of Camariñas.

#### From Muxía to Camariñas

The route starts in the town of Muxía: from here, take the AC-440 motorway to Berdoias. When you come to **Os Muíños**, turn left and continue along the coastal road. Go through the hamlet of **Merexo**, on the right, and the **beach of O Lago**, which together with the stream that flows into it and the surrounding pine groves make for a welcoming natural space in the ría. Then pass through **Leis**, a parish with a magnificent Romanesque church.

When you come to the crossing with the DP-1603, turn left towards **Cereixo**. This parish is in the municipality of Vimianzo, and is not only one of the most picturesque places in the area but also has a rich historical heritage with a parish church, towers and a tide mill.

The **church of Santiago de Cereixo** is just one example of the beautiful Romanesque churches to be found in rural Galicia. The nave and apse are both rectangular. You enter via a semicircular triumphal arch that rests on half columns with capitals decorated with plant motifs.

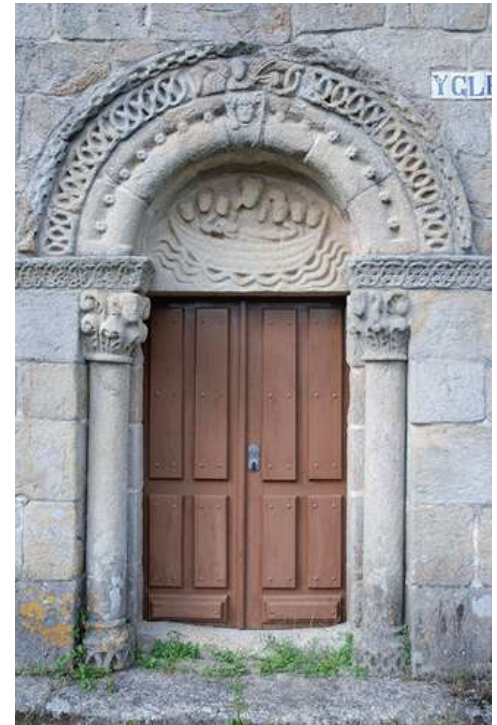


*Beach of Lago de Muxía.*

The exterior of the **south door** is a pure example of Romanesque art. The tympanum shows the transfer of the body of St James in a boat, accompanied by seven of these disciples. The image is valuable for being one of the very few representations of the Translatio, the voyage of the body of St James.

Higher up from the church are the **towers of Cereixo**, a manor house that looks like a medieval castle. The house was commissioned by the minor noble family of Calo y Carantoña, who later married into more powerful families such as the Castro Vilamarín and the Lanzós Novoa, who were counts of Maceda. The latter were major beneficiaries of the sanctuary of A Barca de Muxía. After many years of neglect, the building was restored and converted into a private residential property.

If you walk along the river bank, you'll come to the **mill dof Arcea or As Torres**, the only tide mill still left in Costa da Morte and one of the few left in Galicia. The origins of the mill go back to 1647 when the lord of Cereixo, Juan Taboada Ribadeneira, granted rights to the brothers Andrés and Pedro Espasante to build a mill here in exchange for a yearly rent. After being rehabilitated and leased to different tenants, it was converted into a private residence.



*South door of the church of Santiago de Cereixo.*

After Cereixo, set off towards the town of **Ponte do Porto**, whose name comes from the old bridge that crossed the river and from the port that was established here. The town is divided into two by the river. The parish church, which is now on the left bank on the site of the old chapel of San Roque, was previously in the hamlet of A Grixá.





*Town of Ponte do Porto.*

The town was established as a small trading centre because of the monthly fair held in the field of San Roque. It was an important centre of the lace work trade many years ago.

The district of Curros, which has a small ethnographic museum, is the starting point of the **Os Muíños** route (trail of the mills), which takes you along the last stretch of the river Porto.

This is a beautiful trail. On this part of the river, you can see the amazing landscape and the riverbank woodland, full of willow, ash, oak and bay trees. Along the way you'll see several mills, which gives an idea of the importance of this type of building in the past.

When you reach the district of As Barrosas, you'll come to a foot bridge over the river and return to the starting point of the trail, but if you want to continue with the tour, there's another trail less than a kilometre further on that allows you to see some more of the area.

After Ponte do Porto, head towards the seafaring town of Camariñas about 9 km away, the town that gave the local craft of lace work its name.



*The town of Camariñas in 1929 (R. Caamaño).*

## > Town of Camariñas

### History

Camariñas, whose name comes from the local name for crowberry (*Corema album*), a shrub that grows on the dunes near the town, was established later than the ancient hamlets in the parish of San Xurxo de Buria. The monks of the small monastery of Tosto, in Santa Mariña, helped to Christianise the region, although the community belonged to the diocese of Mondoñedo in the 10th c.

The first inhabitants began to settle here in the 13th century, making use of the good conditions offered by the beach of O Curbeiro as a natural harbour for fishing and maritime trade, and thus the town of Camariñas was born.

In the 15th c., the port came under the control the Moscoso de Altamira family, who governed the region from the castle of Vimianzo.

In the 16th c., Juan Molina, a local writer, commented on the importance of the town. In the first half of the 18th c., the *Compendio del Estado de Altamira* (1724) (a description of the regional estate) stated that Camariñas had a

population of 140 residents (about 600 inhabitants), who worked in fishing. The port was well known and vessels from other countries that sailed along this coast would dock there. *The Catastro de Ensenada* (1753) (a local census) mentions two galleons that were used for fishing sardines, several pataches (boats) that transported salted sardines to the Basque Country and other small vessels that fished for conger.

Frequent attacks from pirates led to the construction of defensive fortifications, the most important being the castle of O Soberano, built in the mid 18th c., of which only the foundations remain.

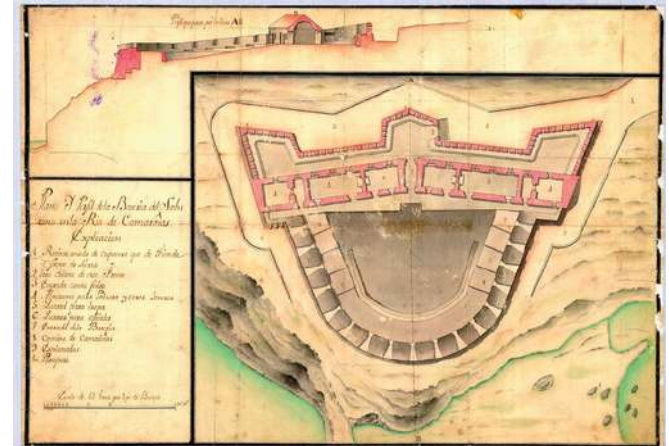
In the early 20th c., Camariñas was a bustling fishing town, with well built whitewashed houses that made it look like an Andalusian village, and narrow streets that opened out onto the port itself. Commerce was another important activity in the town. Cereals and timber were exported from the port, and manufactured goods and some food products were imported.

The appearance of the town started to change radically in the 1960s with the construction of new buildings that had little to do with the traditional houses and did not respect urban regulations.

Camariñas is now a town of about 2,500 inhabitants with a modern centre built on top of the previous one. It has also extended out into the surrounding countryside. The residents work in fishing, canning, lace work and the service sector.

Although the centre of the town has lost much of its previous charm, the beautiful coastline, lace work and the spectacular Vilán lighthouse have made Camariñas a very attractive option for tourists.

### Route on foot through the town of Camariñas



Plan of the castle of O Soberano.

An opportunity not to be missed when you come to Camariñas is the **lace work museum**, which has a lot of information about the history and current state of this craft. Then take a walk by the sea, where you'll see some of the buildings that used to be the old sea front: lace work shops, terraces of bars and restaurants with sea views, and closer to the port the views include fishing boats and leisure craft that fill the harbour with colour.

If you go to Punta do Boi or Punta do Castelo, you'll come upon the ruins of the **castle of O Soberano**. The castle consisted of a curved part facing the sea that was adapted to the contours of the coast, and another polygonal face that looked out over the land. The design is typical of the military architecture of the period, and is made up of triangular bastions on the corners and a bastion with four sides in the centre, joined by two straight walls, where the entrances are.

There was a set of buildings in a straight line that acted as a second defensive wall, used to guard gunpowder and munitions, along with quarters for the officers and troops. A central walkway gave access to the mountings for the artillery, where a curved battery for 17 guns was placed.



*Façade of the church of San Xurxo in Camariñas.*

Only the foundations remain of the fortress, which never saw a war: the stones were used in the 1940s to build the port.

In the town centre and some distance from the sea is the **parish church of San Xurxo**, built in the Baroque style and worth visiting for its architecture and because of the interesting altarpieces inside the church.

It was built between 1788 and 1797, thanks to a financial donation from a benefactor, Antonio Domingo Rodríguez Canosa, a local from A Casa do Rego da Horta, in O Cotro, who had emigrated to Mexico. The ground plan is shaped like a Latin cross, with just one nave, covered with a groin vault and gabled roof. The sacristy is at the back of the building.

The façade is built with well cut granite masonry and is more visually dynamic than the rest of the building, where there is hardly any decoration. The bell tower and door, with Baroque decoration, are two notable features.



*Dance of Os Arcos in Camariñas, held in the fiestas of the Virxe do Carme (Virgin of Carmel).*

The interior contains several very interesting altarpieces. The largest, completed in the Neoclassical style, may be a work by the well-known sculptor **José Ferreiro**, and is presided over by the Virxe do Monte (Virgin of the Mount) and San Xurxo (Saint George). Two other altarpieces on the left hand side of the church have also been attributed to Ferreiro: those of Jesus tied to the column and the Nazarene. The Baroque altarpiece of the Dolorosa (Our Lady of Sorrows) is on the right-hand side.

The narrow streets inside the town contain the mid-19th c. **chapel of the Virxe do Carme**, which has an interesting Baroque altarpiece dedicated to the Virgin of Carmel, patron saint of sailors. The fiestas in her honour are held every 16 July in the town. The streets also contain the **Casa dos Altos or dos Romero**, an urban pazo or manor house that belonged to this noble family. It has a large coat of arms on the façade with a symbology similar to that of the pazo of Loroxo (Cerqueda, Malpica), which belonged to the same family.



After visiting the town of Camariñas, head off to the cape Vilán and its lighthouse, about 5 km away. The road has beautiful views of the coast of Muxía.

### **Cape Vilán and lighthouse**

The granite promontory of cape Vilán extends northwards and ends at the isle of O Vilán de Fóra. The entire headland has a rugged coast with steep cliffs that descend almost vertically to the sea. The coastline is full of rocky sandbanks that are very dangerous for navigation. They have been the cause of many tragedies at sea and the main reason why a lighthouse was built here.

The first maritime beacon was placed here in 1854. This was the old lighthouse that was built on a slight elevation to the south of the present lighthouse. The building was poorly designed and did not meet the conditions for signalling that such a hazardous part of the coast required. It was small, emitted a weak light and was badly located. Only some parts of the tower remain today.

The bad location and poor technical conditions of the first lighthouse soon led to plans for the construction of a new one placed closer to the sea on the promontory.

The engineers Francisco Lizárraga and Adolfo Pequeño were commissioned to design a new lighthouse, which was put out to tender in 1886. The stone was taken from the quarry of Pena Maior, about five kilometres away. The complex nature of the project caused the building works to last for five years. It started to operate on 15 January 1896.

It was the first lighthouse in Spain to use electricity produced by two steam engines. The personnel consisted of six keepers, including the engine room operator and stoker, and later included another engine room operator and another keeper.

The octagonal tower is made of granite blocks and reaches a height of 25 metres from the ground, including the lantern, and 104 m above sea level.

The lack of available terrain surrounding the tower obliged the designers to build the living quarters and the engine room on the esplanade below.

The building to house the keepers initially had just one floor and another was added in 1909. Electric current by cable arrived in 1924 and so the steam engine room was demolished and the vacant lot was converted into the forecourt in front of the living quarters.

A Telefunken spark radio beacon was installed in 1922 to emit a signal in Morse code similar to the one emitted by the light. The lantern rotation mechanism was replaced in 1926, and the siren, new optics and lantern were installed in 1962.

Some of the parts that were removed are now on display in a small museum on the ground floor of the building that include the turbine of the old engine and the optical system with the electric arc lamp that was removed in 1962.



*Cape Vilán lighthouse.*

The surroundings of cape Vilán are also of great interest because of the colony of marine birds that nest here, like the black-legged kittiwake, the common murre and the double-crested cormorant.

#### **From the lighthouse of cape Vilán to Camelle**

There are two options to return from cape Vilán: head back to Camariñas and Ponte do Porto and from there set off to Camelle, or take the earthed track along the coast by the English cemetery, the cove of Trece, Santa Mariña, Arou and reach Camelle.

The second option will take longer and the route is more difficult because of the rough track to Santa Mariña, but the landscapes along the way are



*The English Cemetery*

spectacular and you have the chance to visit one of the most iconic locations on this coast: **the English Cemetery**, built after the sinking of the naval vessel **Serpent**, which ran aground here on 10 November 1890 and caused the death of 173 of its 176 crew.

After the cemetery, the track continues to **Santa Mariña**, a village with a small fishing port, and then goes on to **Arou**, a village close to a magnificent beach. The small fishing village of **Camelle** is close by.

#### **Fishing village of Camelle**

The origins of this town may have something to do with whaling. The chapel of the Espíritu Santo in

Camelle is mentioned in the 16th c. It belonged to the parish of San Pedro de O Porto, as Camelle did not become an independent parish until 1964.

The few houses that were here in the early 18th c. and the lands surrounding them were owned by the count of Altamira. The town began to prosper at the end of the century, after redeeming the statutory rights that obliged the residents to pay rents to the Altamiras. From then on, the residents could make free use of their lands. Another factor that contributed to the town's growth was the establishment of the Maritime Salvage Station of Barbeito y Cía, which extracted scrap from sunken ships and also carried out marine salvage activities. There were three fish salting factories and conger drying stations here in the 1920s.

The period of greatest development was in the 1960s and 1970s, when fish and shellfish acquired increasing value in the market. The port facilities were improved and traditional houses were replaced by others built with new materials, which meant a major change to the image of the town.

### **Man, the German of Camelle.**

Camelle is especially famous because of the life and work of Man, a tall, blond, blue-eyed German whose real name was Manfred Gnändinger, who happened to arrive here in 1962 at the age of 26.

After coexisting with the locals in a house loaned by the Baña Heim, a family of German descent on the mother's side, Man decided to withdraw to the coast, where he built a small hut where he was to remain for the rest of his life. He lived an isolated existence, but at the same time engaged in an intense artistic activity in painting and open-air sculptures, which he left around his hut and in the surroundings. His work matched his artistic philosophy, based on the circle as the origin of everything.



*Fishing town of Camelle in 1934 (Arquivo Vidal).*

He also changed his eating habits and became a vegetarian, with the idea that one day he would be able to live solely from solar energy, which would allow him to take a crystal sphere and drift in the sea.

The appalling catastrophe of the Prestige mortally wounded him. A man as sensitive to nature as he was would never have been able to overcome such a great ecological disaster. The black tide took over his world and his museum. It was a real torment to live every day with oil dumped by the sea on his home.

Man's soul grew sick and on 28 December 2002, which curiously enough is the Day of the Holy Innocents, local residents found that he had not taken the bag of food that was left at his door. He was later found dead inside his hut. Man was the first human victim of the Prestige. A wake was held and he was then buried like any other resident of the town, although everyone knew that he was very different.





*Camelle today.*

His life and work gathered renewed force and he remains amongst us as a symbol of spiritual force and commitment to the natural world, opposed to the materialism that dominates the world of today.

He was aware of the importance of his work for coming generations and was concerned for its future. He drew up a will and bequeathed it the State. It was then transferred to the municipality of Camariñas. In his honour, **the Man de Camelle Museum** was built in the port area, where some of his work is on display, and what remained of his home was rehabilitated in 2017, where his ashes were deposited the following year.

### From Camelle to Laxe

From Camelle, head back to Ponte do Porto and take the road to Vimianzo. After about 3 km, turn left once again onto the AC-433 towards Laxe. When you pass through the hamlet of Magro, look right and see the granite massif of **Os Penedos de Pasarela e Traba** (the crags of Pasarela and Traba), with its spectacular shapes; a natural space of great geological and scenic value that is one the few to be given the status of Protected Landscape.



*Man of Camelle*

A route was designed to walk along and see the rocks with explanatory signs next to the ones with the most attractive and unusual shapes.

When you come to A Costa, in the parish of Traba, you'll have the chance to see some wonderful views of the **valley of Traba**, with the lagoon and large beach in the background. If you have time, this area is well worth a visit to discover the **lagoon, dunes and beach** and see how they interact. The place is interesting for its flora and fauna, especially the birds that gather here. Like most lagoons, it also has its legends: one talks of the sunken city of Valverde, which disappeared under the water because its inhabitant paid no attention to the sermons of St James the Apostle.

The **parish church of Santiago de Traba** conserves part of its Romanesque structure, a notable feature being the north door. The Baroque façade was built in the first half of the 18th century, and made use of elements from the previous church.

On your way to Laxe, pass through Soesto and then you'll see the manor **house of Arrueiro**, established by Gonzalo



*Valley of Traba in Laxe with the lagoon and beach in the background.*

Pose El Viejo and later occupied by the Leis family. It now belongs to the Blanco Rajoy family. If you decided to take the road to the coast, you'll come to the large **beach of Soesto**, where nature takes precedence over any human intervention. The constant waves make this an ideal location for surfers. The parish of Soesto was the birthplace of the priest **Juan Antonio Posse** (1766-1854). He was one of the few defenders of liberal ideals and the Constitution of 1812. His memoirs show a deep love of Galicia and his native land.

Carry on towards **Laxe**, a fishing and tourist village at the foot of Monte Cornaceiras, which has a large beach on the south side of the ría of Corme and Laxe.

## > Town of Laxe

### History

The location of Laxe (1,700 inhabitants) has certain similarities to Muxía: both are on a peninsula in the south side of a ría and next to a beach that acts as a natural jetty, although Laxe is more protected from the southerly and easterly winds.

The little space available for farming meant that fishing was the main activity for the town's residents.

Malpica, Muxía and Fisterra were under the dominion of the archbishop of Santiago, while Laxe, Camariñas and Corcubión answered to the lay nobility, in this case the powerful Moscoso family, counts of Altamira and owners of the castles of Mens and Vimianzo. Laxe was under the jurisdiction of Vimianzo and historically functioned as the port of Soneira.

Casa del Arco, the oldest manor house in the town, belonged to the Moscosos, who also ordered the construction of the parish church of Santa María da Atalaia in the late 15th c., at the initiative of Urraca de Moscoso, executing one of the last wishes of her mother Juana de Castro y Lara.

Juan Molina mentioned the importance of Laxe as a fishing port in the mid-16th c., commenting on the large quantities of hake and conger caught there. The second half of the 18th century saw the arrival of the Catalans, attracted by the large schools of sardines in the ría. The Domènech family established a sardine salting factory in the port and went on to have a major social and political influence on the town.

In the 19th c., the decline of the Altamira family led to the Casa del Arco and the castle of Vimianzo falling into the hands of the Martelos. The Casa del Arco was later owned by the Domènech family. The first mayor of the constitutional municipality of Laxe was a member of the same family.



*Old maritime façade of Laxe (Arquivo Vidal).*

Like many other ports on the coast, Laxe was raided by pirates. English pirates attacked the town in 1748 and stole the most valuable articles from the parish church.

In the late 19th c., Laxe was a town with about one thousand inhabitants. The houses of the town extended from north to south, parallel to the coastline, including the parish church at the highest point with its bell tower. The plaza was located in the centre of the town, where much of its economic and social life took place. In the early 20th c. there were as many as five salting factories facing the beach that employed mostly women. The kaolin mine that started operations in the 1920s also played an important economic role in the town. Besides the fishing industry, the improvements made to the port in the postwar period turned the port into an important commercial harbour for

products such as kaolin and timber.

The famous people of Laxe include the photographer **José Vidal García** (1900- 1986), who left a visual testimony of the landscapes and people of Laxe and the surrounding area. Another figure was the geologist **Isidro Parga Pondal** (1900-1986), lecturer at the University of Santiago, who was removed from his post after the military rebellion of 1936. He founded the Geological Laboratory of Laxe, where students from several European countries came to study. The poet **Antón Zapata García** (1866-1953) emigrated as a young man to Buenos Aires, where he became involved in a wide range of cultural activities. His poetry was inspired by the landscape and sea of his native village.

### Route on foot around the town

The urban route that we propose for Laxe matches the circular 1.6 km tour proposed by the municipality. It's available on the municipal website and includes a street map, while our proposed route has a bit more information. Start the tour at the **promenade**, next to the panels with information about the municipal hiking trails. Head towards the parish church until you come to the **Praza de Ramón Juega**. This space is open to the sea and is the centre of the commercial and social life of the town. The most important building here is the **Casa do Arco**, named after the ogival arch that gives access to the Rúa Real. It may have been commissioned by Urraca de Moscoso and her husband Pedro Osorio in the 15th c. Although their main residence was in the city of Santiago, they would spend time in the castle of Vimianzo and in this house when they visited their properties in the area. The family owned it until 1870, when María Luísa Osorio de Moscoso sold the castle of Vimianzo and the Casa do Arco to Ramón Martelo Núñez, who was a member of the land-owning family of O Pombal from Boaña (Traba de Laxe) and also descended from the Moscosos on his mother's side.





*Isidro Parga Pondal, local geologist.*

His son, the poet Evaristo Martelo, sold the house to the Domènech, a family of Catalan traders and developers, who settled in Laxe. The next owner of the Casa do Arco was Ernesto Pons, who sold it to Calixto Añón Vazquez, who opened a hospitality business on the premises.

The building is a large one, with three floors, a hipped roof and little in the way of decoration. The most attractive façade is the one facing the plaza, but the main entrance is on the west side between two chimneys. The only notable feature of the façade is a balcony on the third floor that rests on four corbels.

There is an old coat of arms of Galicia underneath the arch and to the left, with the chalice and host and an inscription in Gothic script. There is another coat of arms with a wolf's head, a symbol of the Moscosos, and the six roundles of the Castros, a reference to the previous owners of the house.

The houses with balconies and galleried landings that close off the plaza to the west were built in the second half of the 19th c. by members of the local bourgeoisie. One of them belonged to the family of the geologist



*Praza de Ramón Xuega.*

Isidro Parga Pondal. Go up the lane next to the Casa do Arco and you'll come to the **Museum of the Sea**, situated in a building in the old quarter that used to be the barracks of the Civil Guard. The museum occupies four floors and focuses on the historical, anthropological and visual heritage of the town and municipality of Laxe.

Seafaring culture is an important part of the exhibitions, since it was the main activity in the town, although there are exhibits on mining and the lives and work of the town's most important figures, such as the geologist Isidro Parga Pondal. However, the most valuable part of the museum is the photographic archive **Arquivo Fotográfico Vidal**, which was declared an Asset of Cultural Interest. The archive consists of the work of the photographers Plácido Vidal Díaz and his son José María Vidal García in a collection of 67,000 photographs. The photographic archives of José María's son, José María Vidal Eiroa, was recently included, adding another 73,000 photos to the collection.

All the photos contain images of the landscapes, society, economy and leisure activities of the people of Bergantiños and Terra de Soneira in the 20th c.



*Laxe Sea Museum. Space dedicated to the distinguished geologist Isidro Parga Pondal*

From the Praza de Ramón Juega, pass under the arch and carry on up the Rúa Real to the **church of Santa María da Atalaia**, situated at a high point in the town, from where it dominates the port and the town centre. The church served a twofold function as a place of prayer and as a defensive strong point. A wall was built in the church atrium in the late 16th c. where several artillery pieces could be placed to defend the port.

The initial construction of the church was commissioned by Juana de Castro y Lara, on a site that may have been occupied by a church prior to the 13th c.; it was completed by her daughter Urraca de Moscoso in the late 15th and early 16th centuries.

The ground plan consists of just one rectangular nave divided into three sections by pointed arches that rest on polygonal half columns that correspond to the exterior buttresses. The roof is of wood and tiles. The chancel is also rectangular and is covered with a cross-ribbed vault that rests on cluster columns with cylindrical capitals.

The bell tower, which looks like a structure made for defence, was built next to the south wall after the church itself was built, in the 16th or 17th c., and is accessed by a stairway, with a stone railing that had carved images of the Virgin Mary and Child, a Franciscan friar and an angel; these figures were later reused.

The same wall has a door with an ogival arch and large voussoirs, above which is a stone image of the Virgin. There is another door into the church in the north wall, with images of the interior frieze above the lintel, although they have been compressed due to limitations of space.

There is a door with a pointed arch in the façade, with a rose window above that illuminates the nave. The sacristy was built in the 18th c. and abuts with the east wall of the chancel; it previously occupied the lower part of the bell tower.

Enter the church and go to the chancel. There you'll see that the capitals of the triumphal arch have the symbols of the Castros (roundles) and the Laras (cubes), linked to the mother of Urraca, who had been the driving force behind the construction of the church.

The apse wall contains a stained-glass rose window, in which there is the polychromatic stone image of the **Virxen da Atalaia** (Virgin of the Watchtower), the patron saint, from the same period as when the church was built. It is similar to the image of Santa Inés (Saint Agnes) shown on the north wall, which may have been donated by Inés de Moscoso, Urraca's sister.

Under the rose window there is a relief of the Resurrection, a sculptural work of considerable value. It is a stone frieze in the Gothic style of 4.5 x 1.07 m, which was discovered in 1955, when lightning destroyed the Baroque altarpiece that was previously there and concealed the frieze.



*Church of Santa María de Atalaia.*

It shows five scenes from the Resurrection of Christ. The order from left to right is as follows: The Resurrection of Christ, the descent of the risen Christ into Limbo, the appearance of Christ before the Virgin, the Holy Women in front of the empty sepulchre and the appearance of Christ before Mary Magdalene. The scenes do not follow the chronological order that appears in the New Testament. The tombs without inscriptions next to the chancel were installed after the church was built and may belong to the Pazos family, who were vassals of the Altamiras, given that the Moscosos and Castros were buried in the church of the monastery of Santo Domingo de Bonaval in Santiago.

A fresco with an image of Santo Domingo de Guzmán (Saint Dominic) was found on the north wall in the nineteen nineties. Only the lower part of the figure can be seen, as well as a dog with a torch and a smaller image of the saint praying. The painting may be from the same period as when the church was built and may also have been commissioned by Urraca de Moscoso.

The church in Laxe shares some similarities with other churches on the Costa da Morte, such as the church of Santa María de Muxía, the church of San Marcos de Corcubión and the church of Santa María das Areas in Fisterra. Some authors have listed them as churches built in the marine Gothic style.

Leave the church and turn left into the Rúa Hospital, the name of which comes from the old hospital that used to be here, and which was possibly founded by Urraca de Moscoso. Carry on down the Rúa do Campo, named after the farmland in the parish, where you can see some hórreos or granaries used to store the maize harvested from the nearby fields. Then turn left towards the Fonte de Arriba fountain and from there keep walking up to the **hermitage of Santa Rosa**, where there are some wonderful views over the ría and town.

The origins of the chapel and calvary may lie in a sailor from Laxe, called Couceiro, who sailed on the Spain-Peru route. On his final voyage in the late 17th century, he brought with him what were supposed to be some relics of the Peruvian saint, Saint Rose, and promised that, if he arrived home safely, he would build a calvary in a high place and put the relics at the foot of the cross. The calvary is known as the Cruz do Navegante or the Cruz da Rosa, and a fiesta is held there every 21 July. The chapel was built much more recently in 1936 for the fiesta of Saint Rose, of whom a Baroque image was kept in the parish church. The pilgrimage of the saint is held on 30 August.

Head down from the hermitage along the Rúa Santa Rosa and then turn right into the Rúa Dos Plazuelas, turn left towards the Praza do Cantón or Mercado and you're back at the promenade, the starting point of this urban route.

### **From Laxe to Muxía**

Leave Laxe on the AC-433 motorway, the same one as the one we used to enter the town. When you reach Castrelo, turn left onto the CP-4001, which goes through A Torre, Coens and Fornelos in the direction of Baio. When you





*Town of Laxe and chapel of Santa Rosa on Monte Cornaceiras.*

enter Baio, take the left turn to see Torres do Allo, a manor house whose entrance is on the AC-552, via an avenue lined with old oak trees that form a beautiful green dome.

### **Torres do Allo**

Besides the building's splendid architecture, it also has a lot of historical value for being the first Galician pazo, or manor house, since the first period of construction dates back to the late 15th or early 16th century. It belonged to the same family throughout its long and varied history. The Riobooos came from Torre da Penela (Silvarredonda, Cabana de Bergantiños), but their surname comes from the parish of San Martiño de Riobó.

It was initially believed that the entire building had been built at the same time, but the book *Torres do Allo. Arquitectura e historia del primer pazo gallego* (Sánchez García, J. La., 2001)<sup>2</sup> demonstrated that the north tower, or Torre Viexa was built between 1490 and 1512, and was commissioned by Alfonso Gómez de Rioboo Villardefrancos, about 175 years before the south tower or Torre Nueva.

The central part of the building was commissioned by Gómez de Rioboo y Seixas and his wife Jacinta de Luces Caamaño and was built between 1669 and 1685, in a period when the Baroque style was spreading throughout Galicia. However, the family chose to maintain the late Gothic and early Renaissance styles of the old tower.

The building is about 35 metres long and consists of two square towers with hipped roofs, joined by a rectangular building with a gabled roof.

The towers are almost symmetrical, there is a door on the ground floor with a semicircular arch and large corbels, typical of the architecture of the 16th c. Most of the decoration of the building is on the upper floor: a window with a double ogival arch, stone-tiled roof shaped like a ledge, and a larger window alongside with a balcony on the south tower and a coat of arms above. All the elements are surrounded by a mixtilinear arch. There is a window on the top floor of each tower.

The central part consists of two floors with a large chimney stack. There are two floors on the ground floor: the main door in the centre, and a side door on the left. There are six rectangular windows on the upper floor. A cornice runs around the entire building, except for an area in the centre where the gargoyles are.

The coats of arms contain the symbols of the families that lived here: Rioboo (tower covered in brambles), Caamaño (pine tree and lances), Seixas (five doves), Losada (two lizards under a slab) and Figueroa (five fig leaves). Famous residents of this house include: Antonio Rioboo y Seixas, author of the book *La barca más prodigiosa. Poema historial sagrado* (1728), about the Virxe da Barca (the Virgin of the Boat) in Muxía, and the naturalist from Ferrol, Víctor López Seoane, who married Francisca de Rioboo Álvarez, the first female heir of the house.

In the first half of the 20th c., the owners abandoned the house, which was then occupied by their agents. It was then left unoccupied in the second half of the century and deteriorated to the point where it almost became a ruin.



*Torres do Allo after restoration.*

The Provincial Government of A Coruña was interested in restoring the building and purchased it in 1998; it was rehabilitated and opened to the public the following year.

Close by is the **church of San Pedro do Allo**, built in the Renaissance style and closely linked to the lords of the manor house.

The most interesting feature of the church is the Renaissance façade, similar to a stone altarpiece and divided into three panels. The church door is in the central panel, which is the widest. The side panels are framed by fluted columns on plinths. The figures of Adam and Eve are depicted on the lower area, while the archangel Gabriel and Mary are in the upper part.

The patron saint of the parish, St Peter, is in the centre above the door.



*Church of San Pedro do Allo.*

Close by is a calvary and the new parish cemetery, which were completed in the 21st c. and show great artistic sensitivity and respect for the surroundings.

At the exit of the Torres do Allo, take the AC-552 once again towards Baio. Go through the village and cross the bridge over the river O Porto. About one kilometre further on you'll come to a crossing on the right to the ethnographic site of O Mosquetín, carry on along this route and cross the river once again. Once you reach some houses next to the river, you'll see some traditional buildings.

#### **Ethnographic complex of the fulleries and watermills of O Mosquetín**

This complex of fullers mills and watermills can be found in long stone buildings with curved tile roofs. The one closest to the river contains four mills: one for wheat, two for corn and another for bran.



*Mechanism of a batán*

The building in the higher area has three mills (two for corn and one for wheat) and three fulling mills. The latter consist of a mechanism made of oak driven by water power. They were used to beat wet woollen fabric to tighten the weave and also wash and degrease it.

These mills have a long history: some of them were mentioned in the Catastro de Ensenada (a regional census) in the mid-18th c. and functioned right up to the 1960s. The buildings gradually fell into ruins after they were abandoned, until neighbourhood and cultural associations in the area campaigned to have them restored. Their protests were heard by the Provincial Government of A Coruña, who decided to buy the buildings and restore them in 1997.

If it hadn't been for the efforts of the local residents and the sensitivity and awareness shown by the provincial government, this unique piece of heritage would have been lost forever. Now it receives a growing number of visitors, who appreciate it for its great ethnographic value and also for the beauty of its natural surroundings.

Head back to the main road and head off towards Vimianzo to see the castle.

### Medieval castle of Vimianzo

This fortress was the seat of government for the sizeable jurisdictional region of Vimianzo, made up of 36 parishes and three towns: Vimianzo, Camariñas and Laxe. What is now the town of Vimianzo gradually grew around the castle. The town centre is at a crossroads that was later converted into the AC-552 motorway to Fisterra and the AC-432 to Camariñas and extends in the opposite direction to Serramo. The first lords of the castle were the Mariños de Lobeira, who fell into disgrace after accumulating debts with the king. In the early 15th c., ownership of the castle changed from the Mariños to the Moscoso family, who now controlled the region.

The old castle was destroyed during the revolt of the Irmandiños in 1467 and shortly after the archbishop of Santiago Alonso II de Fonseca ordered it to be rebuilt during a bitter struggle between him and the Moscosos for economic control of Santiago and Costa da Morte. The conflict reached the point where the prelate was kidnapped by Bernal Eáns de Moscoso and held captive in this castle and others in the region.

Shortly after being rebuilt, it was taken by force by Lopo Sánchez de Moscoso, 1st count of Altamira, and remained in the hands of the family until 1872, when it was bought by Ramón Martelo Núñez, a landowner of the house of O Pombal, in Boaña (Traba de Laxe), who had family ties to the Moscosos. It was then inherited by his son, Evaristo Martelo Paumán del Nero, poet, who adapted it as a seasonal residence. From then on, the castle was known as the Torres de Martelo.

Months before the Civil War, the municipal corporation of Vimianzo attempted to expropriate the castle for use by the local government and other municipal services. This had drastic consequences for the people who had encouraged the move after the military rebellion of 1936. The Provincial Government of A Coruña purchased the castle in 1973, and had it restored for use by the municipality of Vimianzo. There is a museum inside with panels that explain the history of the castle and Costa da





*Castle of Vimianzo*

Morte. There is also a live **show of local crafts**: lace work of Camariñas, pottery of Buño, basket weaving, straw hat making, glass, linen, etc. The **Fiesta of the Assault of the Castle** is held in the first month of July, which is a historical recreation of the revolt of the Irmandiños, which brings together thousands of people in the town.

The castle itself stands on a hill that dominates the central area of the valley of Vimianzo and is surrounded by a ditch. The layout is polygonal with four towers, one on each corner arranged according to the cardinal points. The gate to the castle courtyard is in the south wall and there you can see the two original coats of arms showing the wolf's head of the Moscosos and the roundles of the Castros, all the others are later additions. The keep is the only tower to have crenellations and battlements, the other three are covered with hipped roofs, although in the past their design would have been defensive in nature.



*Fiesta of the Assault of the Castle*

Some stairs close to the east wall in the interior courtyard take you up to the chemin de ronde or walkway from where you can see some splendid views of the valley and the town itself.

The architecture of the castle is clearly of the late Gothic style: examples include the pointed arch in the entrance gate, the windows in the keep and a loophole window ending in an ogee arch.

Vimianzo is the Galician municipality with the largest number of dolmens, some of which have been considerably damaged and others that have been perfectly conserved. The town of Vimianzo would be an ideal starting point for a route to discover them. The municipal website (<https://vimianzo.gal/turismo/>) offers information to guide visitors.



*Making straw hats in the castle of Vimianzo*

From Vimianzo continue on the AC-552 to Berdoias and from there head towards Muxía. Along the way take the opportunity to stop off at **San Martiño de Ozón** to see an interesting monument: the **church**, which still has two Romanesque apses with some interesting figures on the corbels; the **rector's house**, to the south of the church, where some remains of the old monastery can still be seen; and the huge **hórreo** that measures approximately 27 metres in length, making it one of the longest in Galicia.

From here you can return to Muxía, where you started this second tour of Costa da Morte.

## ROUTE 3 LAXE-MALPICA





## ROUTE 3

### LAXE-MALPICA

#### From Laxe to Corme

Leave Laxe and head off towards Ponteceso, when you reach the crossroads at As Agrelas, turn right towards Baio and once you reach the roundabout at Borneiro, turn right towards the **dolmen of Dombate**. This prehistoric monument is the most famous one in Galicia and is regarded as a cathedral of megalithic architecture in the region. It had already awakened the curiosity of the historian Manuel Murguía and the poet Eduardo Pondal in the 19th c. passed by the dolmen on his way from Nemiña and immortalised it in one of his poems.

*(...) I left Fontefría and set off towards Laxe on the road of  
San Simón de Nande, in the region Borneiro, full of small  
pines, and passed by the dolmen of Dombate (...)  
E. Pondal*

The tumulus is made of earth and has a stone enclosure. The structure consists of seven vertical slabs (orthostats), a ceiling and the entrance corridor, which was hardly visible until the most recent excavations of 1987-1989, directed by the archaeologist José Maria Bello Diéguez. They found that the corridor was made up of three sections of orthostats and the entrance was closed off with a vertical stone. The most surprising finds, however, were the etchings found on some **slabs** and traces of **paintings** in the chamber and corridor. A previous dolmen was also discovered underneath the shell that was later called "old Dombate". It was made up of one single chamber and only one of the stones of the chamber was found.

A line of twenty idoliños (small stone figures with rudimentary human forms) were found in front of the entrance to the corridor of "recent Dombate"; others had already been found in dolmens of this type.



*Dolmen of Dombate*

Different objects were found in the subsoil of the monument: arrow heads, flint blades, axe heads, beads, grindstones and different types of pre-bell beaker and bell beaker pottery.

After the paintings were discovered, the monument was provisionally protected with a plastic sheet until 2011, when the structure covering the entire complex was completed. A visitor reception centre was also built, including a replica of the dolmen, the etchings and paintings. Access to the original monument is now prohibited.

Take the same road to leave the dolmen of Dombate and when you reach the roundabout, go left towards Ponteceso. A short distance away on the right is the visitors car park for the castro of **A Cidá de Borneiro**, an Iron Age settlement to the north of O Chan de Borneiro, on a slope that descends to the stream of Os Muíños. The settlement is elliptical and measures 90 m in length by 55 m in width. It is regarded as a medium-sized castro.

The **high ground** of the castro is protected by a double wall and a ditch, except for the east side with just one wall due to the steep slope. The main entrance to the settlement is on this side.





*Close up of the paintings in the reproduction of the chamber of the dolmen*

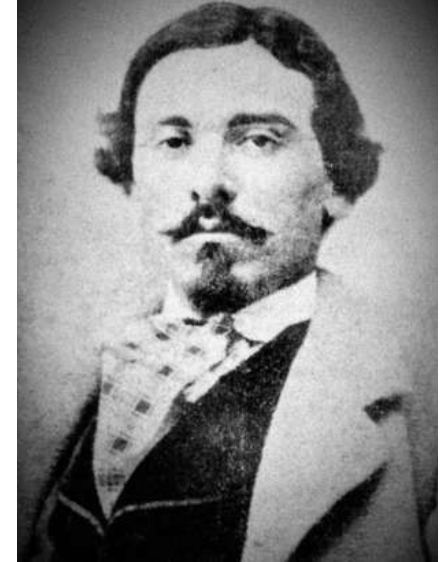
It was the first castro to be dated with C-14 techniques in Galicia. The data obtained showed that settlement began in 524 BCE and continued until the 1st c. CE.

The first references to the castro appear in studies by Salvador Parga Pondal and Pérez Bustamante in 1924. The first archaeological excavation of the site took place in the next decade under the direction of Sebastián González. Jorge Juan Eirora continued to study the site in the sixties, while the historian Ana Romero Masiá conducted the most extensive excavations in the 1980s. Almost three quarters of the settlement were excavated and brought to light 36 structures, most of which were dwellings, however other buildings were found that may have been used for the economic activities of the settlement.

The structures were mostly circular, but other rectangular buildings with curved corners were also found. One curious feature of the buildings is the lack of any entrances, which may be because they were placed at a higher point in the wall. The centre of each dwelling is a

fireplace marked out by embedded slabs to prevent the wooden post that bore the weight of the roof from being burned.

An area called the **Barrio Extramuros** (outer district) was discovered on the east side of the castro, which included a large elliptical structure, a spring with a drain and another structure with an oven or kiln. Theories about this building range from it being a sauna to an area for forging metal.



*The poet Eduardo Pondal*

Many **objects** were found during the excavations, especially in the most recent one. These include stone objects such as flat grindstones, sharpening stones, casting moulds, spindle whorls and polished axe heads. Many highly fragmented potsherds were also found, which indicates that the inhabitants abandoned the castro peacefully. The remains include mugs, pots and jars, painted red or yellow and decorated using different techniques and patterns. A lot of bronze and iron objects were also discovered: needles, rings, fibulae, knives, daggers, sickles, etc. Most of these objects are on display at the Historical and Archaeological Museum at the Castle of Santo Antón in A Coruña.

When you leave the castro, take the road that goes down to the crossing with As Agrelas and once you're there head towards Ponteceso. The road now borders the left side of the estuary of the river Anllóns and there you can see some beautiful views of Monte Branco and the natural space of the estuary, which is exceptional in ecological terms for the large number of birds that nest there along with the many migratory species that rest in the estuary. An ideal space for bird lovers.

Pass through A Carballa, where you'll see the Casa do Concello (town hall) of Cabana de Bergantiños, and Neaño, the largest village in the municipality. When you cross the bridge over the river Anllóns, you enter Ponteceso, the capital of the municipality of the same name. It is most famous for being the birthplace of the poet **Eduardo Pondal** (1835-1917), one of the great writers during the resurgence of Galician literature and author of the lyrics to the Galician national anthem. His childhood home can be seen next to the river, a large stone building with a gallery and large grounds with a fence. Pondal was always proud of having been born here. He said as much in his poetry:

*(...) I was not born in a city or town, I was born far from their enticing murmur; I was born next to a thick pine grove, I was born in little Ponteceso (...).*

Influenced by the historians of his time (Murguía and Vicetto), he invented a world of myth peopled with hypothetical Celtic heroes taken from place names in the area and the rest of Costa da Morte and created a glorious past to justify a regionalist Galicianist philosophy. **Ponteceso** came about from the union of small hamlets that existed at both ends, linked by the avenue named after the poet that crosses the old wetlands at the mouth of the river Anllóns.

On the east side is A Trabe, which grew thanks to the fair that was transferred from the nearby parish of Anllóns; on the west side is the small village of Ponteceso that grew around the bridge, which was a place of transit and



*Bridge over the river Anllóns and home of E. Pondal*

included a nearby jetty from which timber, farm produce and pottery from Buño was exported.

After crossing the bridge, turn left towards Corme. Pass through the hamlet of O Couto, well known for being home to the Monte Branco association and the Eduardo Pondal foundation, two cultural associations that are especially active during the Galician Literature Day.

After **O Couto** you'll come to a diversion to the left that takes you to the top of **Monte Branco** (182 m) and the beach of **Balarés**. From here you'll have some of the best views of the mouth of the river Anllóns and the ría of Corme and Laxe. Well worth a visit. The beach of Balarés is a very cosy spot thanks to its white sands, its location where it is protected from the winds and because of the large pine forest that surrounds it.

Continue on to **Corme**. Before you reach the town, you'll come to Corme Aldea. The word "aldea" means hamlet, and indicates that the old farming community around



*Town of Corme in 1957 (Arquivo Vidal).*

which the parish grew had its origins here.

### > Fishing town of Corme

The origins of **Corme** go back to the times when fishermen worked from the small bay that was formed to the north of the *ría*. The town itself took shape from the districts that joined together around the beach that acted as a natural wharf. Corme had yet to establish itself as a town in the early 20th c..

In the late 18th c., José Cornide commented on the suitability of the port for mooring vessels, and also comments on the presence of Catalans in the region who worked in the sardine salting industry. In the early 19th c., Lucas Labrada mentioned that the two most commonly captured species in Corme were sardines and conger eels.

Fishing and trade enabled the town to grow in size and population, making it the largest in the parish. However, the parish church was in Corme Aldea, where the local parish had first been established. Finally, the ecclesiastical authorities decided to convert the chapel of the Virxe dos Remedios into a parish church and establish the new parish of Corme Puerto.



*Modern Corme from the beach of A Ermida*

By the early 20th c., Corme had become an important commercial harbour. It had more than forty vessels dedicated to coastal shipping that travelled to ports throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Large quantities of timber were exported by sea from the local pine forests. There were six sardine salting factories and three conger drying facilities, along with the many small fishing vessels that operated in the area. Corme had become an active, seafaring and industrial town full of whitewashed houses with balconies and galleries. The vibrant town of the 1920s described by Carré Aldao has little to do with the Corme of the present day, where modern buildings have replaced the old houses and activity at the port has greatly diminished. The town now earns its living from fishing, barnacle picking and tourism. The charm of its sheltered port, its excellent beaches and beautiful coastline are incentives enough to attract large numbers of visitors. Tourists can still see the occasional traditional fishermen's house to remind them what Corme once looked like.

A famous native of the town is the seafarer **Francisco Mourelle de la Rúa** (1750-1820), who participated in the voyages of exploration and conquest conducted by Spain on the American Pacific coast from the Mexican base of San Blas. He participated in several expeditions in the





*Francisco Mourelle de la Rúa, seafarer  
born in Corme*

Pacific Ocean and discovered the island of Vava'u, which belongs to the Polynesian archipelago of Tonga. He wrote a detailed diary of his first expedition along the American coast.

The house that was the seafarer's family home in Corme has been conserved, with its coat of arms, but the building has fallen into a state of neglect and is now practically a ruin. The residents of Corme and local government should show more concern about the building and have it rehabilitated and converted into a museum to celebrate the sailor's life and work.

From Corme, head off to Punta do **Roncudo**, on the road that borders the coast. There are some wonderful views along the way of the ría and town of Laxe. Further away the coast of Camelle and Arou can be made out.

The road ends in a flat area next to the lighthouse. On your right, you can see the steep rugged cliffs that make up the north side of the peninsula. This stretch of coast is battered by waves and is home to the rightly famous and delicious barnacles of O Roncudo. Carré Aldao mentions that large barnacles of excellent quality grew here, reputed to be the most delicious on the entire Galician



*Punta do Roncudo and its lighthouse*

coastline. Barnacles were not very popular and used to be regarded as food for the poor. A meal of barnacles and potatoes boiled in their skins was certainly not one of the delicacies of the bourgeoisie of the time, however, it is now one of the most highly demanded dishes by visitors to the region. The high prices for this seafood can be justified by the effort and risks faced by the people who gather them from the rocks. Every percebeiro (barnacle picker) has to face hazardous, constantly shifting seas, which in some cases may win the battle between man and sea and drag the percebeiro into deep waters and a certain death. The crosses near the lighthouse are a reminder of the lives lost to this wild coast.

The **Festa do Percebe** (fiesta of the barnacle) has been celebrated in Corme in the first fortnight of July since 1992, and is wildly popular with barnacle lovers. Visitors are offered plates of barnacles with boiled potatoes at a very reasonable price, as part of an event to celebrate the noble barnacle!

**From Corme to Malpica**



*Apse of the church of Santiago de Mens*

From O Roncudo, head back to Corme and leave the town on the same road as the one you used to get there. Four kilometres further on, turn left onto the CP 68 01 road to Brantuas and Niñóns. After about a kilometre you'll see a track to the left that goes up to Monte **Faro in Brantuas** (229 m), where you'll see the chapel of the Virxe do Faro (Virgin of the Lighthouse), which holds a pilgrimage every 8 September. Nearby is a tower dedicated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus that is 39 m high. It was commissioned by an emigrant of the parish and inaugurated in 1959. If you climb up its 133 steps, you'll get some unbeatable views of the area.

After Niñóns, you'll come to the crossroads of A Campara and there turn left towards Cores and Mens. The church at Cores still conserves some parts of its original Romanesque fabric, while remains of the nearby Roman villa such as altars, sepulchres and roof tiles can also be seen.

The parish of Mens has two important medieval monuments: the **church of Santiago de Mens** and **Torres dos Altamira**.

The parish church of Santiago is a beautiful Romanesque building that formed part of a Benedictine monastery, of which records dating back to the 10th c. exist. What remains of the the complex is the church itself. The most interesting part of the church are the three apses with their carved corbels.

The towers were commissioned by Lope Sánchez de Moscoso, on the site of a previous fortress destroyed by the Irmandiño rebels. Its location on top of an ancient hillfort enabled it to control the surrounding plain. The last owners, the Abelenda family, later built a residence inside the castle. It was in ruins for many years until a member of the family bought the property and rehabilitated it throughout, and then converted it into a private residence.

From Mens it's worth going to **Punta Nariga**, a headland between cape Santo Adrián e the Sisargas islands and Punta do Roncudo. A category one lighthouse was built on this promontory in 1994, designed by an architect from Pontevedra, César Portela, who chose a solid design that would last and blend as much as possible into the surrounding stone landscape. The building is divided into three base parts: the base, the service building and the tower with the lantern room. The entire complex is built in granite with different finishes. The higher the tower, the greater the degree of elaboration of the stonework.



*Lighthouse of Punta Nariga*

The first part consists of a triangular platform made of large granite blocks taken from the surrounding area. One of the angles looks like the bow of a ship, where a figurehead has been attached. The second part is similar to a prism, likewise with a triangular base, used to house the services necessary for the lighthouse to function. The flat roof also functions as a viewing point. Finally, there is the cylindrical tower with the lantern room on top. This is one of the best lighthouses to be built in the second half of the twentieth century in the Iberian Peninsula, in a landscape of tremendous natural value.

Now continue on to Malpica. A kilometre after Beo there is a track on the left that goes to the cape of Santo Adrián, which ends at the chapel dedicated to the saint, where a very popular pilgrimage is held on the weekend following 16 June. Hundreds of pilgrims accompany the image in a procession from the parish church of Malpica to this chapel, and then hold liturgical celebrations in honour of the saint and the pilgrimage.

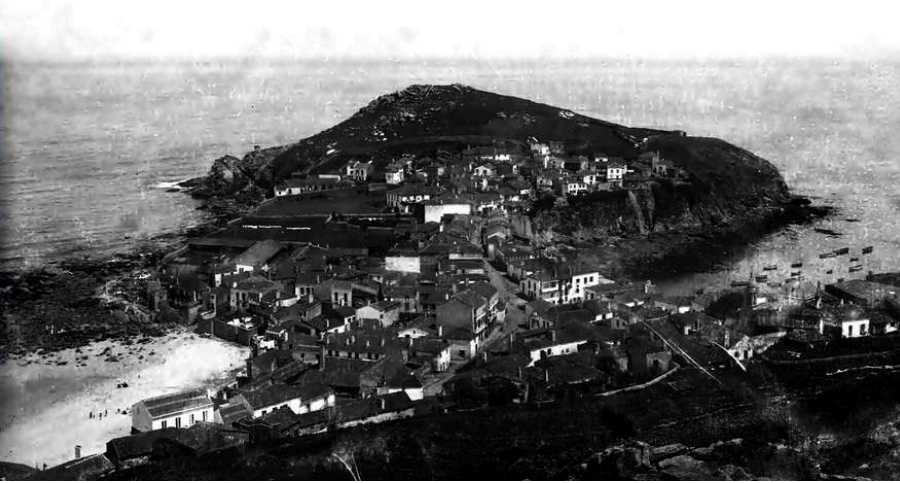


*Cape of Santo Adrián and the Sisargas Islands from Malpica*

The **cape of Santo Adrián** has come excellent views over the town of Malpica and the Sisargas Islands, which are an archipelago made up of three small islets: Sisarga Grande, Sisarga Chica and Malante.

The lighthouse is on the first of these, one of the first to be built on this coast, along with the ones at Vilán and Fisterra. It entered service in 1853. The building is on a rectangular ground plan with a central patio. The tower rises from the side facing the sea, with a shaft shaped like a truncated pyramid and an octagonal section. It was designed by the engineer Celedonio de Uribe.





*Town of Malpica in the early 20th century (Arquivo Vidal)*

Go back to the main road from the cape of Santo Adrián to Malpica to see the town.

## > Town of Malpica de Bergantiños

### History

The town of Malpica grew under the shadow of Monte A Atalaia as a small fishing and whaling port, just like Caión and Camelle. Basques and Asturians came to this stretch of coast in winter to hunt for whales that they used to make oil. Juan Molina mentions this type of fishing in the 16th c.: “Much can be taken from this creature, even when small, because up to twenty five litres of oil can be extracted, and may be used in much the same way as the fruit of the olive tree, except when cooking”.

Cardinal Del Hoyo offers more details about whaling in the early 17th century: “This town is the port where most whales are caught anywhere in Galicia. Every year seven or eight whales are caught, two of which are leased to the Basques, who are the ones who catch them; they pay seven thousand maravedís (an old Spanish coinage) to the archbishop in fixed rent every year”.

Whaling decreased in importance from the 18th c. onwards and was replaced by sardine and conger fishing. José Lucas Labrada comments that this port had a dangerous entrance and fishermen brought in catches of

about two million sardines, 250 hundredweight of conger eel and three thousand hundredweight of hake every year, along with one thousand six hundred kilos of onions that were exported.

Like Caión, Malpica was not an easy port to enter especially in rough seas. Such conditions made Malpica a port that was used solely for fishing. José Cornide mentions this in the 18th c.:

“Before coming to this headland [A Atalaia] one finds the port of Malpica, which stands on rock with only four fathoms of water; making it suitable for entry solely by fishing vessels, of which there are many”.

Local sailors always had to face the rough seas that beat against A Plancha and broke on the beach that was used for docking. That is why the boats had to be moved up a ramp in winter to the main street. The Andalusian writer José Mas, author of the novel *La Costa de la Muerte* (1928), which is set in the town, mentions this situation: “And the boats were there, all lined up in a seafaring street shaped like a ramp that slid gently down until it disappeared into the bay”. This event can also be seen in photographs of the period.

The locals' greatest ambition was to have some kind of protection for their fishing fleet. The first works on the port were the seawall and the ramp, financed by a local benefactor called **Anselmo Villar Amigo** (1850-1918), who had made his fortune in Argentina.

The first works to protect the port commenced during the 2nd Republic, and were interrupted by the Spanish Civil War. They would not recommence until the 1950s when the dyke was extended and the docks were built. The dyke was further extended and work to improve the port infrastructure took place in the seventies and eighties.

Malpica had about one thousand inhabitants in the 1920s and town had spread out to the south of the Monte da Atalaia and the isthmus that connects the small peninsula to the region. There was a mixed school, a police station, two leisure associations, several stores and a carriage service. Electricity did not arrive here until 1928.

Malpica back then was an attractive little town of narrow winding streets and small houses of one or two storeys, with stone walls and tiled roofs, some of which had balconies or galleries.

The 1960s brought about many changes, and the face of old Malpica was radically transformed by urban development that did away with the harmony of the past. Despite so many changes made with no respect for traditional architecture, the atmosphere of a fishing port, its unique setting and the bright painted fishing boats make it an attractive place for tourists.

### Route on foot around the town

Start at the **port**, which is the best place to park your vehicle. Activity at the port varies depending on when you arrive there. Take a walk along the quay and see what might be happening there; if you're lucky, there may be auctions at the fishing auction hall, and if so, then walk in and see the different types of fish on sale and enjoy the atmosphere inside and outside the hall. After walking along the quay, go up to the **Praza do Cruceiro** and once there go along the Rúa Tío Paz to the **viewing point**, where there are some wonderful views of the entire port. Just below you, it is the quay for the smaller vessels; and further away is the new district of O Camiño do Río that rises up to the chapel of As Neves or Santo Antón. You'll also be able to make out the port entrance where the larger vessels are moored and the rugged coast.

Head back to the Praza do Cruceiro and continue along the **Rúa Eduardo Vila Fano**, named after the engineer who designed the project for the first seawall at the port. Then carry on to the **Praza de Anselmo Villar**, which is the town centre. Here you can see the Fonte de Abaixo fountain, donated by Anselmo Villar, a local philanthropist, and



*Port of Malpica*

inaugurated in 1897. His bust was added in 1957. From here go down the Rúa Praia to the large **beach of Area Maior**, full of tourists in summer. Here you can walk along the promenade that borders the beach and see the fantastic views of the cape of Santo Adrián and the Sisargas Islands.

Go back to the Praza de Anselmo Villar once again and this time go to the **Casa do Pescador**, built in 1956 on the ramp that went down to the port. Inside there are several works of art by a painter from A Coruña, **Urbano Lugrís González** (1908? -1973), who was commissioned to decorate the building. The bar on the ground floor has a wind rose which is a copy of the one painted by Lugrís for one of his murals. The Fogar do Pensionista (1st floor) and the 2nd floor have several works by Lugrís: two triptychs with images of saints, the Wind Rose, "Balea", "Profundidade Mariña" and "as illas Sisargas desde Malpica".

From A Casa do Pescador head back to the port, but this time go along the south side. A little further on you'll see the sculpture of a whale's tail, a work by the artist Miguel Couto and inspired by "Balea" by Lugrís. Walk along the quay and return to where the route started.

### From Malpica to Buño



*Beach of Area Maior in Malpica*

When you leave Malpica, take the road to Carballo, and about three kilometres further on is Filgueira, where there is a right turn and a track to the **dolmen of Pedra da Arca**, about 700 m from the main road.

This dolmen, which is also known as Oratorio (Chapel), is one of the biggest in Galicia. Sadly the capstone was split by an auger in the 1950s, which caused the rest of the top to collapse, taking the vertical slabs with it.

The dolmen has a polygonal chamber, in which you can clearly see the tumulus and corridor oriented towards the east.

Head back to the main road and follow the directions to Carballo. Then stop at **Buño**, the potters' village of Costa da Morte, which is well worth a visit. The tradition of pottery here goes back to ancient times.



*Example of the pottery of Buño*

When ceramic items were no longer used, Buño, just like many other centres of pottery, passed through a serious crisis, but now several workshops continue to function. There are some shops in the village centre that sell local pottery and you can see one or two of the remaining communal kilns. The best conserved one is **Forno do Forte**, purchased by the Regional Government and converted into an **Ecomuseum**. Besides the kiln itself, which is still used in the days of the Mostra Oleira exhibition, held in the first fortnight of August, there are other structures to visit, such as the potters' homes, the storehouse and the hórreo. The origins of the complex go back to an old farmhouse that was leased out in the 20th c. to several families who worked in this craft. The visit gives you the chance to see a recreation of the way life of of these families in the 1950s.

At Buño take the road to Ponteceso and from there follow the directions to Laxe, which is where you started this route.



## ROUTE 4 MALPICA-CAIÓN



## > ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE

## ROUTE 4 MALPICA-CAIÓN

### From Malpica to Carballo

This fourth route takes in the northern part of the region of Bergantiños, where you'll visit the most emblematic locations of the municipalities of Coristanco, Carballo and A Laracha.

This route is a circular one and so you can start from any point you like. Our proposal is to start in Malpica because it's the town where the previous route ended.

Leave Malpica on the AC-418 motorway in the direction of Carballo. When you come to the Buño roundabout, turn towards this village to take the AC 421 from Buño to A Agualada. Go through Xornes and cross the river Anllóns in A Pontedona. When you come to Cereo Vello, turn left towards **Verdes**, to visit the **Refuxio de Verdes**, your first stop. Here the Anllóns, the main river in the region of Bergantiños, creates a natural space of extraordinary beauty.

What began as (and still is) a refuge for anglers became the best leisure area in the region. Its origins go back to the important fishing reserve in this section of the Anllóns, one of the best in the entire province of A Coruña.

In 1982, the National Institute for Nature Conservation (ICONA), purchased the mills that now function as refuges, and started to build the leisure area. The residents of Verdes actively collaborated in the project. A bridge was built to provide access to the island where the refuge is. The large mill with three millstones and two small mills were restored, the mill races were cleared and cleaned, and several wooden bridges and tables in the open air were installed. The leisure area has grown over time, with increased capacity for a growing number of visitors.

The Anllóns in Verdes has created a natural space that combines a unique area of study for anyone interested in geology, botany or ethnography, or for anyone who simply wants to spend their free time in a beautiful place.

### Refugio de Verdes

The **geology** of the area is **interesting** because of the rocks in this part of the river.

The stone in Verdes is gneiss, a hard metamorphic rock made up of bands of quartz, feldspar and mica. Gneiss is very resistant to erosion, so the river could not easily form a bed and was forced to spread the flow out into several streams. The erosive action of the river was encouraged by the local tectonics, which created an uneven flow and led to rapids and waterfalls. Natural pools formed in the river bed are common in this area, and some of them are quite large.

The interest of the **local botany** lies mainly in the beautiful riverside woodland that flourishes in the area. Eduardo Pondal mentions the oakwood of Verdes in his poetry, some of which is still preserved and called the chousa da Señora. The forest consists mainly of oak, alder, willow, ash, bay and hawthorn.

As regards the **fauna**, the fishing reserve of Verdes was one of the most famous in the province of A Coruña because of the quantity and quality of the trout that was caught here. The pollution caused serious damage to the



*Refugio de Verdes*

river fauna. The situation has improved in recent years, but a major effort will need to be made if the Anllóns is to recover the wildlife that used to be here.

The **ethnographic interest** of the area revolves around the mills that were built here. Most of them consist of one simple building made of the abundant local gneiss. The larger mills had a fireplace to keep the winter chills at bay and an attic to sleep at night.

Most of the mills are now in ruins, apart from the ones that have been restored as refuges and others that still conserve their walls and roof.

Refugio de Verdes is an ideal place to take a walk and enjoy the peace and quiet in a beautiful natural setting. It's also an excellent place for family and friends to get together and spend an unforgettable day.

Take the CP 1910 road from Verdes that passes through Xaviña and Oca, and links up with the AC 552 in Montecelo. Head towards Carballo, when you cross the viaduct for the exit of the AG 55 motorway, take the lane on the right that goes to the **Ponte Lubián** bridge, also known as Ponte Romana (the Roman Bridge), built on the





*Ponte Lubián*

river Lubián, which is the largest tributary of the Anllóns. The old royal road that went from A Coruña to the regions of Soneira and Fisterra crossed over this bridge. According to Carré Aldao, the Roman road called *per loca maritima* passed through here, but there is no evidence to support this assertion. In any case the ancient road would not have passed over this bridge, which dates from the late Middle Ages or even later. Salvador Parga Pondal visited the bridge in 1948 and said that it looked medieval, although the westernmost arch shows signs of Roman construction.

The fact that it is not a Roman monument does not mean that it lacks tremendous historical and artistic value that is well worth preserving. It is now the most valuable remnant of the old roadways in the region of Bergantiños. The structure itself is approximately 40 m long and 2.60 m wide. It has four asymmetric arches: the two on the right end side are larger than the other two at the other end. There is a cutwater between the largest arches and a circular buttress on the other side to reinforce the structure. The road over the bridge is made of stone slabs that extend some metres beyond and form a ridge that reaches its maximum height at the pillar supported by the two larger arches. Go back along the track and head off towards **Carballo**.

## > Town of Carballo

### History

Carballo is relatively new when compared to other towns in the region. Its origins go back to the rediscovery of the hot springs in 1716. They had in fact been previously used, as evidenced in the excavation work carried out by the architect Miguel Ferro Caaveiro in 1777, which brought to light remains of what were ancient baths, possibly of Roman origin.

The parish of San Xoán de Carballo was here before the town of Carballo was established. The parish was created in the Middle Ages on the left bank of the Anllóns, in Cernide, where the old parish church was located. The first records of Carballo date back to the mid-15th c., when it was under the control of the monastery of San Pedro in Soandres (A Laracha).

When the medicinal waters on the right bank of the river near the hamlet of A Lagoa were rediscovered, building work commenced on the first houses to offer accommodation to the bathers who came to enjoy the springs. And so, the town of Carballos was born.

When the spa was rebuilt in the mid-19th c., Carballo was already a town with two small districts: one that surrounded the baths, many of which were built to provide lodging for bathers, and another further south on the crossroads that went through the town, where the market and fair were held. The residents of this new district were mostly businessmen and civil servants working in the offices of the new judicial district of Carballo.

By the 1920s, Carballo was a modern town, with a well designed layout and a busy commercial, social and cultural life. The town extended along the two roads that crossed it from north to south (Coruña-Fisterra) and east to west (Santiago-Malpica). The 1920s saw the construction of the Praza do Mercado, in the area of the new Town Hall. At the same time the Desiderio Varela school and the new pavilions for the market and fair were





*Old Praza da Liberdade in Carballo (Arquivo Vidal)*

also built.

Political and trade union activities intensified during the 2nd Republic, which was stamped out after the military rebellion of 1936, when political and trade union leaders were hunted down and shot or imprisoned.

Carballo experienced wolfram fever in the late 1930s and 1940s. The mine at Monte Name was nearby and wolfram became a highly valuable mineral in World War II. Besides the workers employed by the mining company, many others trespassed on the mountain to try and find chunks of wolfram and sell them on the black market to make some much-needed money.

The Conservas Calvo factory opened in the 1940s. The factory, which was first located in the town centre and then transferred to A Revolta, gave a lot of work to local residents.



*Old Town Hall of Carballo (Arquivo Vidal)*

Another major event in the town's history was the inauguration of the trolleybus line from Carballo to A Coruña in 1950, which improved connections between the town and the city.

Urban speculation in the 1960s and 1970s did a great deal of damage to the historical centre of the town. Buildings of great architectural and historical value such as the parish church, the town hall and the spa at the Baños Vellos were lost forever.

The Carballo that you see today is the outcome of planning and construction carried out in the late 20th and early 21st centuries: new streets were opened, the roads in the town centre were pedestrianised, the banks of the river Anllóns were recovered and new public buildings were built, such as the Pazo da Cultura, the Forum and the new library.



*Park of Os Anllóns*

The recent transformation undergone by the town has created a new Carballo with an active economy, and a vibrant cultural and sporting life, a town that faces the future with optimism.

### **Route on foot around the town**

The route we propose for you to discover the town on foot starts at the **Museum of Bergantiños**, in the building that was the old prison and built in 1855. It was rehabilitated by the architect Manuel Gallego Jorreto. The building also contains the **tourist information office**.

The museum was opened in 2002 and has several exhibition spaces with displays on the history and culture of the region of Bergantiños and Carballo itself. Another exhibition space about Costa da Morte was opened in 2007. Twenty years after the museum opened its doors, rehabilitation work was completed in the entire exhibition area and a new space was inaugurated in December 2022 for an exhibition on the **archaeology of office machinery** (typewriters, calculators, printers, copying machines, telephones, computers, etc.). The municipal **library** is right next to the museum.

Leave the museum and turn left. You'll pass by the parish **church of San Xoán Bautista**. The church you see today is the third one to be built here. The first one, built in 1864, was designed by the architect Faustino Domínguez in the late classicist style. Problems caused by poor construction techniques and building materials soon started to appear and the church was closed in 1890. Another church in the Rúa San Xosé was used as a temporary substitute until 1924, when the new church building was opened. Designed in the neo-medieval style by the architect Manuel Hernández y Álvarez Reyero, this church also had problems due to poor planning, since the building was left without a roof for many years, which contributed to its deterioration.

The decision was made to build another church and demolish the previous one in 1974 although it could have been restored because the stone used to build was of good quality. The design for this third church was drawn up by the local architect José Manuel Rey Pichel. In place of a church, a parish complex was built entirely of concrete with several rooms and halls. The bells, some images and liturgical objects from the previous church were used. In the atrium you can see a calvary of 1811, which was transferred from Cernide, home of the old parish.

From the parish church head to the **Praza de Galicia**, previously called Praza da Liberdade, which is an intersection of several streets and the centre of old Carballo. The fair and market are held here. Three residences in the centre of the plaza were expropriated in the 1920s and replaced by a garden. A four spouted fountain was built on the east side in 1890 when the town was first provided with a water supply. The fountain can still be seen today. The calvary in the green space was placed there in 1982, in homage to Alfredo Brañas. It is a work by Manuel García Vázquez. A few 19th and early 20th c. stone built houses with balconies and galleries can still be seen in the plaza.



*Statue of Alfredo Brañas, in Carballo*

### *Praza de Galicia*

Head back from the Plaza de Galicia along the **Rúa Coruña**, which was opened in 1954 to connect the Rúa Martín Herrera to the Praza do Mercado. As you enter, in the right hand corner you'll see the childhood home of **Alfredo Brañas Menéndez**, a famous jurist and regional politician, who was born here on 11 January 1859. His home town has paid him several tributes: in 2005 a statue of of Brañas, sculpted by César Lombera was placed next to the house where he was born.

Walk along the Rúa Coruña, a street with shops, bars and restaurants, until you come to the **Praza do Mercado**, the broadest and most central public space in the town. The plaza was built during the urban rehabilitation of the nineteen twenties and was where the market and fair were to be held.

The only building in this plaza was the **old Town Hall**, designed by the architect Julio Galán and opened in 1913. The clock tower was added in 1943. The modernist style of the building was typical of the period. It was demolished when the new town hall was built in the opposite corner to the previous one. The new building was designed by the local architect José Manuel Rey Pichel and inaugurated in February 1974. The new town hall consists of a series of rectangular volumes whose

surfaces shrink from the ground upwards, with a strong emphasis on horizontal lines.

The **municipal market** can be seen to the east of the town hall, and replaces the old pavilions built in 1929. The market was designed by the architect Ramón Tenreiro Brochón and opened to the public in 1969.

A number of defects and limitations led the municipal government to carry out a complete restoration of the entire structure to adapt it to the present day. The new market was opened in 2010.

The same plaza is also home to the building of the **Escolas do Xardín** school, built in 1929 with funding from doctor Desiderio Varela Puga, whose only condition was the façade should include a plaque in memory of his wife Amalia Gómez Rodríguez. It consists of two lateral buildings with a stairway on each side and a central building that is set further back.

Each stairway gave access to the boys' or girls' section of the school. Many generations of local children studied here.





*Municipal market of Carballo*

Leave the plaza and continue westwards along the Rúa Desiderio Varela. The **Casino** can be seen in the Rúa Vázquez de Parga. This leisure association was founded in 1889, and was transferred in the 1920s to the building it occupies today in the Rúa Lugo. The association was later called the Sociedad Cultural y Recreativa Bergantiños. It was the main cultural and social centre of the town for many years, especially at certain times like Christmas, Carnival or Midsummer Night. The association's facilities were rehabilitated on several occasions. Perhaps the most notable changes were in the 1950s when Julio Sánchez was chairman, when the largest room was converted into a richly decorated salon that can still be seen. The association is now managed by a group of young directors and has a highly dynamic cultural and social agenda.

Leave the Casino and head towards the **Rúa da Estrela**, named after the chapel dedicated to the Virxe da Estrela (Virgin of the Star) that used to be next to the spa. Walk towards the spa called **Baños Vellos**.



A Braña (now Rúa Vázquez de Parga).

The baths at Carballo were regarded as the most popular in Galicia in the second half of the 19th and early 20th c.

After a period of decay in the 1970s, the baths and their surroundings were sold as plots of land, and then the new spa was built in 1985. The hotel was opened in 1994.

The spa waters are bicarbonated, rich in sodium and sulphur and currently flow at a temperature of 42 °C. They are recommended for problems of the skin and the musculoskeletal, respiratory, digestive, nervous and circulatory systems.

### From Carballo to Caión

Take the AC 552 from Carballo towards A Coruña and about 3 km further on in A Rega, turn left onto the CP-1909 road to Caión. When you reach the high point of San Miguel de Vilela, look left and you'll see some wonderful views of the natural space of Razo and Baldaio. When you come to the km 8, turn left onto the CP-1913 to **Pedra do Sal** and our next destination.



*Hotel spa in Carballo*



*Marsh and lagoon of Baldaio*

### > Natural space of Razo-Baldaio

The origin of this ecological site lies in the fault of Baldaio which runs in a NW-SE direction through Lendo and A Laracha and reaches Meirama. The fractures caused by the tectonic movements associated with the fault established the elevation of some blocks and caused others to sink. The former correspond to the high areas of the ridges that define the entire depression, while the latter opened the way to the coast, where the sea would enter later.

The material brought by the streams that flowed into the bay gradually filled the bottom of the depression with sediment; then the action of the marine currents created a sand bar that closed off the outlet for the river water and created the lagoon. It gradually evolved and slowly became a mixture of grassland and wetland, while the hydrological area shrank. This natural space therefore contains different type of habitats: **beach, dunes, reed beds, wetlands and lagoon.**

The **beach** is over five kilometres long and is made up of a large sandbank formed by the prolongation of the sand bar from Razo to A Pedra do Sal. The shapes of the beach changes constantly due to tidal action and the state of the sea. You can see micro-cliffs, ripplemarks and beds of stones produced by wind action.

The **dunes** are the sand barrier that separates the wetlands from the marine lagoon. They vary from five to seven metres high, and spread out over three kilometres from east to west. Three types of dune can be distinguished: primary, which are closest to the beach and mobile because they are less colonised by vegetation; secondary, which are more fixed and further from the sea; and tertiary, which are totally immobile and fixed by vegetation. This cordon of dunes is cut by cross-sectional corridors that are penetrated by the sea during especially fierce storms.

The **reedbed** is to the west of the lagoon and occupies about 100 hectares. It is triangular in shape and demarcated by the dunes, the lagoon and nearby farmland. It was originally part of the lagoon, but was gradually filled until it became a plain covered with vegetation. The lower areas are flooded by fresh water in autumn and winter.

The **wetland** extends mainly to the south of the lagoon. It is made up of masses of silt and sandbanks with ruts that tidal waters run through and where local streams flow into the sea. There are areas that are temporarily flooded. Plants that can withstand high levels of salinity such as glasswort and common sea lavender grow in the area closest to the lagoon.

The **lagoon** occupies the easternmost part of the depression. It is elliptical and the main axis runs from east to west. The mass of water in the lagoon depends on the state of the tides and the rivers that flow into it. It has been affected by human intervention, especially by the trail built in 1975 that divided it into two sections: the larger of the two is in the north while the smaller one lies to the south. Subaquatic plants such as the sea lettuce can be found in the lagoon.

The entire area is rich in chemical nutrients, which makes for an abundance of microbes. This in turn has encouraged a large number of fauna to live here according to the type of ecosystem they prefer. The lagoon is inhabited by molluscs (cockles, clams and longueirón); crustaceans (crabs and prawns) and fish (bass and mullet). Birds inhabit the entire area. It is a stopping off point for migratory birds in autumn and winter. Waders and waterfowl are the most common types of bird here.

The wetland has long been used by the local population for catching shellfish, until a concession was granted during Franco's dictatorship to a company to install a fish and shellfish farm, although it later turned out to be a cover for extracting and selling sand. This sparked off a major conflict with local residents, who were prohibited from



*Town of Caión in the first half of the 20th c. (Arquivo Vidal)*

gathering shellfish. After a long struggle of over forty years, the residents regained their rights.

Human intervention drastically affected this natural space, and it is now vital to take whatever protective measures are necessary to prevent further degradation of the area.

Leave A Pedra do Sal and turn left on the road that passes through **Imende** and finally takes you to Caión.

At the km 12 point on this road, the left hand side has a wonderful viewing point over the town and the peninsula. It's well worth stopping a while to take a look.

## > Town of Caión

### History

The origins of this town are linked to the whaling activity of the Basques and Asturians who hunted them on this coast. Juan Molina mentioned this type of fishing in the mid-16th c., stating that it took place in the winter and was very profitable, thanks to the large amounts of oil that were extracted.

Cardinal Del Hoyo also mentioned whaling when he referred to the port. Besides the oil, the bones were also





*View of modern Caión*

used. Stools were made from the vertebra, and the ribs were used as slats for roofing.

The Bermúdez de Castro family, lords of Montaos, were the proprietors of the town of Caión. One of the members of the family, Francisco Bermúdez de Castro, was the founder of the monastery of the Augustinians, who were responsible for the parish, which was dedicated to Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro (Our Mother of Perpetual Succour). They were later transferred in 1772, to the city of A Coruña to occupy the Jesuit convent, after they had been evicted.

Sardines and congers were the species most commonly caught at this port in the early 19th c., according to José Lucas Labrada.

In the early 20th c., Caión was the largest town in the municipality of A Laracha, with nearly five hundred inhabitants. It had salting factories, a children's school and a police station.



*Pazo of the counts of Graxal*

Just like Muxía and Malpica, Caión is on a narrow peninsula pounded by the waves, which has had an influence on how the town has developed and taken shape and on the economic activity of the townsfolk, who used the sea as their main resource.

Changes to the town in recent years have left little trace of the traditional fishermen's houses with balconies and galleries, painted white or in the bright colours often used for the fishing vessels. However, the town's unique location and the magnificent beach of As Salseiras, which stretches out to the west of the town, have made Caión an attractive seafaring town that is well worth a visit at any time of the year.

#### **Route on foot around the town**

We recommend starting the route at the **Praza de Eduardo Vila Fano**, commonly considered to the centre of this small town. The two most important historical buildings are here: the **pazo of the counts of Graxal and the parish church**.

The noble title of counts of Graxal was acquired by the Bermúdez de Castro family when the daughter of the founder of the convent, Beatriz Bermúdez de Castro, was married to Juan Álvarez de Vega, count of Grajal de Campos (in Leon).

The pazo, or manor house, is a long rectangular building that takes up the west side of the plaza. The main entrance is through a door with a semicircular arch and large corbels. The façade is plain and has few openings. The building was evidently extended on the south west side since the colour of the granite is pinker with hardly any openings. This was the site of the local gaol, since the courts of the ancient jurisdiction of Caión were held here. There are several highly eroded coats of arms on the façade. The main one is situated above the central window and shows the arms of the Bermúdez and Castro families.

**Santa María do Socorro** was the church of the old monastery of San Agustín, founded in the 16th c. by Francisco Bermúdez de Castro, lord of the town of Caión. It was later made the parish church, to replace the church of Santa María, which was situated where the chapel of the Virxe dos Milagres is now.

The building consists of a rectangular nave and apse, and has a gabled roof. The main entrance is in the north side wall that opens out onto the plaza, and includes a beautiful Renaissance portal with a semicircular arch, flanked by two columns that end in a triangular pediment.

The tympanum of the wooden door shows the Annunciation, the Immaculate Conception and a Virgin with Child. There are two bell belfries in the plain façade. One is in the north corner, formed by a stone tower that has four holes. The other takes the form of a bell gable with two holes on the apex of the roof.

The old monastery building is at the back of the church. Two coats of arms can be seen on the façade. The one on the left has a tower and the following inscription:



*Pilgrimage of the Milagres de Caión*

*Malo mori quam foedari (Better to die than to be base)*

The one on the right has the symbols of the Bermúdez and Castro families, relatives of the founder of the monastery.

Leave the plaza via the south west corner and on the left you'll see the **building of the fishermen's guild** built in 1940. The building contains the fishery archives and a permanent exhibition about the seafaring culture and history of the town.

Inside you can see documents, fishing tackle and panels explaining the development of fishing and the way of life of the inhabitants of the port from the days when whaling was practised here.

Continue on the route along the **promenade** that borders the entire coast of the Caión peninsula, which will take you to the port, situated in the cove of the old wharf. Here you can see the port facilities and vessels that are moored or on

the esplanade itself. Then head off the la plaza, where the route started. You also have the chance to take the coastal walkway that goes to the beach of As Salseiras and continues along the earth track alongside the coast.

When you come back to Caión you can visit the **sanctuary of Os Milagres**, which is about two kilometres away from the town on the road to Carballo. The old parish church of Santa María de Caión used to be here, before the Augustinian Fathers founded the monastery in the town in the mid-16th c. The monastery church absorbed the one for the parish, converting it into an attached chapel and holding mass only on the festival of Our Lady. The current Baroque chapel was built in 1833. The pilgrimage is held every 8 September, and people from the entire region of Bergantiños participate in the event. The tradition is to walk at night or at dawn to the chapel and hear the mass. The Sunday before the pilgrimage, the figure of the Virxe dos Milagres (Virgin of Miracles) is transferred in a procession to the chapel and returns to the parish church on the Sunday following the fiesta.

After Caión, head back to Malpica, which is where this fourth route started.

## ROUTE 5 CEE-MUROS





## ROUTE 5

### CEE-MUROS

For this route you'll be using the AC 552 motorway that connects Cee and Muros. The route is about 40 km long and borders the coast all the way, with some fantastic views of the coastline and the entire peninsula of cape Fisterra. There are a lot of places that are well worth a visit along the way. We've selected the ones that are the most interesting for their scenic and historical value.

We'll start the tour in the town of Cee.

#### > Town of Cee

##### History

The first records of the town date back to the 12th c., when archbishop Diego Xelmírez granted the archdeacon of Trastámara, Arias Muñiz, with the administration of an estate that included the parish of Santa María da Xunqueira in Cee.

The town may have been founded when the constant Viking and Muslim raids on the coast had diminished. The population previously lived further inland in the old villages of San Paio de Refoxos and San Pedro Mártir.

Fishing and trade were the driving forces behind the development of the port. The fish was either sold fresh in nearby villages up to Santiago, or air-dried, salted or smoked and sent to other parts of the coast in the Iberian peninsula.

Cee forms part of the Way of St James from Santiago to Fisterra. There was a hospital for pilgrims near the parish church, which already existed in the 15th c. and remained open until the early 18th c. Cee formed part of a small jurisdiction independent from Corcubión in the 17th and 18th, which was dominated by the local clergy and



*The town of Cee in the 1930s (R. Caamaño)*

nobility. The highest authority was the archdeacon of Trastámara, who had his residence here.

Records from the 18th c. mention the presence of Catalan promoters at the port who introduced many changes to fishing methods. Such changes led to confrontations between local fishermen's guilds. One of the first anti-Catalan riots in Galicia took place in Cee in 1757.

The town was devastated and the parish church burnt down during an invasion by French Napoleonic troops. The revitalised fish salting industry and increasing trade and commerce caused the town to grow in the 19th century.

A carbide factory was built in the town in the early 20th c., making the town the only industrial centre in the coastal region. Cee is now the most important economic and service centre in the south of Costa da Morte, especially after the opening of the Regional Hospital Virxe da Xunqueira.

#### Route on foot around the town



*Façade of the church of Santa María da Xunqueira*

This route around the town starts in front of the Town Hall in the **Rúa Domingo Antonio de Andrade**. There is a statue dedicated to this famous local figure at the west end of the avenue. Antonio de Andrade was an architect, sculptor and one of the main artists of the Galician Baroque. He was the master builder of the cathedral of Santiago and his works include its famous clock tower.

Opposite the town hall is the parish church of **Santa María da Xunqueira**, which was originally built in the Gothic style, although the only remaining part of the original fabric is the apse. It underwent several changes in the mid-17th c. and was later burnt down during the French invasion of 1809. The church was later restored in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The interior contains the image of the Virgin of A Xunqueira, donated in 1812 by Pedro Díaz de Porrua. Legends state that the Virgin appeared amongst reeds ("xuncos" in Galician) on the shoreline, hence her name. The most important fiestas of the town are held in her honour on 15 August.

Go along the Rúa Domingo Antonio de Andrade to the town centre in the Praza da Constitución. When you enter the plaza you'll see the building of what was the Girls'



*Museum of the Fundación Fernando Blanco*

School and is now the **museum of the Fundación Fernando Blanco**, which opened its doors to the public in 2001. The scientific instruments and teaching materials used in the school are on display, along with historical and educational documents and the foundation's pictorial and artistic collection.

The museum has two floors. The ground floor contains a history of the foundation and its work, along with its art collection and educational materials for music, drawing and agriculture. The first floor is dedicated the scientific and teaching materials used for physics, chemistry and natural history. This space is also used for temporary exhibitions.

The plaza also has some interesting houses built by the local bourgeoisie in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Music School, which was previously the Town Hall, can be seen in the south west part of the plaza.

Now head down the Rúa Rosalía de Castro and take the first left to the Praza da Fonte Penín, to see the **Pazo do Cotón**, a Baroque manor house, as the coat of arms, the landing of the outdoor stairway and the balustrades on the balconies clearly show.



*Building of the Fundación Fernando Blanco*

Two local notables commissioned the construction of the building: Fernando Pérez and Alberta González, in the late 16th c. The present building was built in the 18th c. The name Pazo do Cotón comes from one of the last owners: José María Cotón. It now belongs to the Creus Andrade family.

The splendid coat of arms shows a tree, which may represent the Pérez family, two towers, the chequer pattern of the Bermúdez and the roundles of the Castro family.

Continue along the Rúa de Arriba and turn right onto the Rúa Vázquez Queipo, until you come to the Avenida de Fernando Blanco, where you'll see the **building of the foundation**, which is now a secondary school. This splendid building was designed by an architect from Madrid named Aguilar and completed in 1886. Funding for construction was provided by the philanthropist Fernando Blanco de Lema (1796-1875). The garden that surrounds the building has several interesting exotic plants.

#### **From Cee to Pindo**



*Waterfall of O Ézaro*

At Cee you'll start the coastal route to Muros on a road with some excellent landscapes along the way.

The first stop is the village of O Ézaro to see the waterfall formed by the mouth of the river Xallas. To get there, take the road to the left before crossing the bridge.

#### **Waterfall of O Ézaro**

After crossing the highlands of the same name, the river Xallas heads from north-west to south-east and flows in to the bay of O Ézaro, where it forms a spectacular waterfall. It's not always possible to enjoy this wonderful natural spectacle in all its glory because most of the water passes through pipes to generate electricity. However, the hatches are sometimes opened in winter to release excess water from the dams, and then the show is absolutely fantastic. It's the only river in Europe that ends with such an extraordinary waterfall.

The erosive power of the river was such that the flow dropped from such a great height ended up excavating a 16 metre deep natural well in the rock.

The waterfall and the well, called the Coadoiro, was





*Village of O Pindo with the Alto da Moa in the background*

mentioned by father Sarmiento in 1745 when he crossed the river on the ferry of Os Cregos, which linked Santa Uxía and Santiago de Arcos. A Barca de Abaixo (the lower ferry) was located where the O Ézaro bridge is now, and was used to cross the river, as the bridge wasn't built until 1951. There was a serious accident here in 1902 when the ferry that took people across the river capsized and killed 23 persons on board.

If you walk up from the car park where the waterfall is, you'll be richly rewarded: there's a viewing point of the reservoir with some fantastic view of the entire mouth of the Xallas.

Now it's time to continue with the trip and head southwards. Cross O Ézaro bridge and pass through the village of O Pindo, a small but charming fishing port, situated at the northern edge of the municipality of Carnota. Until recently the village had no parish, and so the inhabitants belonged to the parish of San Mamede, which is about ten kilometres away.

There was a chapel dedicated to Saint Peter in **O Pindo** but it no longer exists, although the name remains in the beach to the west of the village. Another hermitage was founded by a private individual in the 18th c., which is now the parish church and is dedicated to San Clemente (Saint Clement).

The track to go up Monte Pindo starts in this village, right next to the church. The round trip for the mountain takes about five hours, so you'll need to come here another day if you want to carry on with today's route.

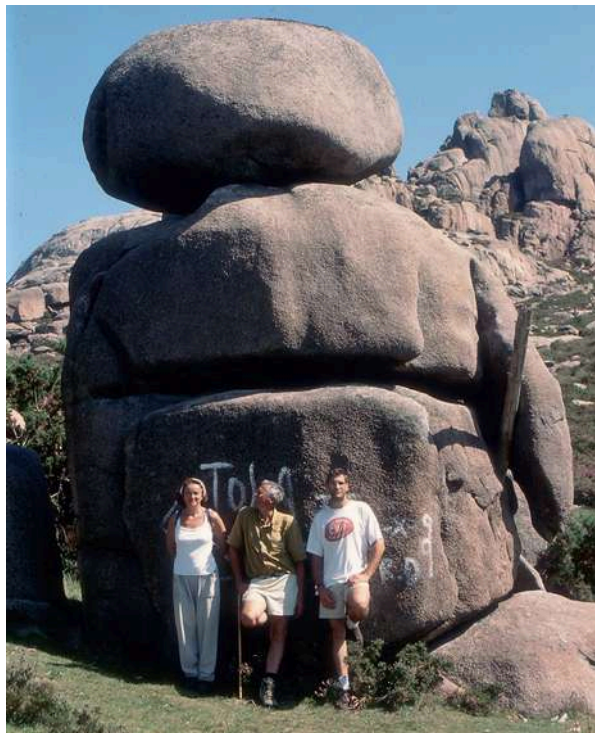
### **The route up Monte Pindo**

Monte Pindo is one of the most magical places of the many to be found in Galicia. This huge granite peak very close to the coast rises up to 627 m. Its close proximity to the sea, strange rock formations and sharply sloping and deep valleys have made it an intriguing place of many legends. It is also called the Celtic Olympus, because tradition says that the stones here were carved by this legendary people.

The legends about Monte Pindo must have been many and varied, since father Sarmiento was inspired enough to write the following in his journey to Galicia in 1745:

*"They say a thousand things about the mountain: that the grass grows abundantly from dusk to dawn, that there are an infinite number of medicinal herbs and many that are unknown, and that some physicians go there to find them; that the animals there are very fertile, and I heard that in times past sterile and infertile couples would go to Monte Pindo to have children, in much the same way as they used to say of the hermitage of San Guillerme in Fisterra".*

There are several tracks to go up the mountain, but the best known and most widely used one starts in the village of O Pindo. The whole route is marked out in yellow and white to indicate a short route.



*The Warrior of Monte Pindo*

The track starts from a narrow lane lined with walls, with dense vegetations that includes pines, bay trees and the occasional holly bush. The lane follows the course of a small stream where there are some abandoned mills. As you go up, the vegetation grows more sparse and the lane turns into a track; here is where you'll start to see the first rocks contorted into surreal shapes. After a kilometre and a half's walk, you'll see the **Alto do Pedrullo** (265 m) to your right. On the east side of this outcrop there are some piles of stones that were once the castle of San Xurxo. The route now starts to twist to the left through a relatively flat area. On the right hand side there is the hill of Onde se Adora, which may have been linked to an ancient pagan cult, then you come to **O Chan das Lamas**, a flat area where a road connected the village of O Pindo to the parish of San Mamede.



*A group of hikers at the top of A Moa*

A Moa offers some amazing views over the coastal area. You can see the reservoir of Santa Uxía, that parish of Arcos and the hills of A Ruña to the north; the valley and the long beach of Carnota to the south; and cape Fisterra is just visible to the west, along with the ría of Corcubión, the Lobeiras islands and the immensity of the sea. At the foot of the mountain lie the villages of O Pindo and O Ézaro, and the mouth of the river Xallas.

### **From Pindo to Muros**

The route then continues along the low part of the valley of a small stream and becomes progressively steeper. O Outeiro do Narís is to the right. Its name comes from the fact that one of its rocks looks like a nose. You then come to a flat open area at about 500 m; this is the **valley of San Lorenzo**. There was a small wolfram mine here in World War II. On the left-hand side of the track there is an impressive looking rock shaped like a giant, called O Guerreiro (The Warrior).

From here the trail continues to zig-zag upwards through a wooded area between crags. The last remaining challenge is the **summit of A Moa** via the south east to access the top from the north.



*Valley and beach of Carnota*

As the name indicates, the summit of O Pindo is shaped like a giant granite millstone or platform in which potholes ("pías") abound.

Before you arrive at O Viso, there is a diversion to the left that takes you to the hamlet of Cornido (1.7 km) and the workshop of the ceramicist **Nacho Porto**, a leading figure in the craft in Galicia.

The road passes through the narrow plain of the valley of Carnota. After passing through the hamlets of **O Viso and Pedrafigueira**, you arrive at **Carnota**, the capital of the municipality.

This coastal strip of alluvial land is excellent for farming. It was once part of the ancient Commiso (county) of Cornatum, donated by king Ordoño III in the mid-10th c. to the archbishop of Santiago, Sisnando II, and later owned by several feudal families: The Trabas, Trastámaras and the Condes de Lemos.

Carnota is worth stopping off at to see the huge hórreo, or corn granary, which, combined with the rector's house and church, make for an interesting architectural complex.

The hórreo was designed by the architect Gregorio Quintela, who wanted to give an artistic touch to a



*Hórreo of Carnota*

purely functional structure, and so engraved his name and the date of completion on the granary. It was built in two phases. The first part was built in 1768 and measured 17 metres, and the second part of the same length was added in 1783.

The architect gave a Baroque feel to the structure, which can be seen in the overhangs of the gables, the finials at the ends, and the cross. A touch of ostentation can also be seen in the louvres, the saddle stones and the feet that support the structure.

The **rector's house** and a dovecote can be seen next close to the **hórreo**. To the north is the **parish church of Santa Comba**, a Baroque building with a ground plan of a Latin cross and three naves. It was built in 1755. The interior contains an interesting Neoclassical main altarpiece, made by the sculptor José Ferreiro. The slender bell tower dates from the 19th c.



The parish of **Santa María de Lira** lies to the south of Carnota. The village has another large hórreo, with two feet less than the one in Carnota, but is longer overall. It stands on a stone platform and was built in the same period as the one in Carnota.

Once you pass through the parish of Santa María, there is a diversion to the right (point km 12), that takes you to the small **port of Lira**, which is also called Portocubelo, where you can see the fish auction hall, the boats and a small museum with some traditional fishing tackle on display.

### Lighthouse of Lariño

After passing through Lira, you enter the parish of Lariño, the last one in the municipality of Carnota. Watch out for point km 9, where there is a track on the right that takes you to the **Punta da Insua** where the **lighthouse** is. The building is rough-coated and painted white, and was designed by the engineer Salvador López Miño. Alongside is a 14 m high octagonal tower crowned by a dome with a wind vane dated 1920. Building work was completed in 1913, but it took several years for it to enter into service (1921). The reason for installing a lighthouse here was to warn of a long section of hazardous coast between cape Fisterra and cape Corrubedo. The lighthouse facilities were refurbished and converted into a hotel in summer 2021.

This area of A Insua witnessed the sinking of the **Ariete**, a vessel of the Spanish navy, which was driven against the sandbanks here on 25 February 1966. There were 190 crew members on board, who were saved thanks to the intervention of the people of Carnota. To thank the residents, many of them were decorated and the municipality of Carnota received a plaque with the inscription "Most humanitarian town".

Head back from the Punta da Insua to the main road and continue towards Muros. Before you reach the town, you'll see **Monte Louro** on your right, a granite peak that rises up to 241 m and stands out from the surrounding landscape for being so close to the sea. You then pass



*Lighthouse of Lariño*

close to the lagoon of **As Xarfas**, a coastal lagoon that was formed by the dunes of the beach Maior, which stopped the waters of the stream of Longarelo from flowing into the sea. The beach, dunes and lagoon combine to make a very interesting natural space.

Then you'll pass through the tourist village of **San Francisco** in the parish of Louro, whose name comes from a medieval monastery that was once here. Your next stop is the town of Muros.

### > Town of Muros

#### History

The oldest document to mention the town is a royal privilege issued by king Sancho IV, which granted dominion over a large territory from the mouth of the river Xallas to the mouth of the river Tambre.



*Lagoon of As Xarfas and Monte Louro*

Muros changed hands in the late 13th c. and was made part of the properties of the archbishop of Santiago. Like many other Galician ports, it was frequently attacked by pirates, and so in the 16th c. a wall was built around the town to divide it into two districts: A Cerca within the walls and A Xesta outside. The main entrance gate was located where the Town Hall is today. One of the streets is still called Porta da Vila (town gate).

The defences did not stop the port from being attacked by French pirates in 1544. French troops also razed the town in March 1809. The arrival of the Catalan promoters, who set up several salting factories in the town and on the outskirts, boosted the economic and commercial development of the port.

Muros is now one of the most interesting towns of the region in architectural terms. The town grew from the coast –the local centre of economic activity– to the interior. The geography of the area dictated the layout of the town, which extended from north east to south west.

#### **Route on foot around the town**

## **> ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE**



*O Curro da Praza in Muros*

Start the route at the **plaza of O Curro** da Praza, where you can see the **Town Hall**, a modern building built in 1958. The arches are an attempt to imitate the town's Gothic past. The plaza also has some fishermen's houses with colonnades of pointed or semicircular arches, with stone balconies resting on brackets with iron railings.

Leave the plaza and take the Rúa Camiño Novo to the **collegiate church of Santa María do Campo**, which is now the parish church of San Pedro. What had previously been a Romanesque church was transformed by order of the archbishop Lope de Mendoza into a splendid Gothic Basilica in the late 14th c. Remnants of its Romanesque past can be seen in the main entrance with archivolts, the rose window and the corbels. The bell tower was built in the Baroque style.

The building itself is made up of a broad nave divided into five sections and a gabled roof, with pointed arches that rest on cluster columns on each side and several Gothic side chapels that open out onto the nave. The chancel has a beautiful cross-ribbed vault with diagonal ribbing



*Praza da Pescadería Vella*

supported on corbels in the corners. Some old tombs can be seen inside the church.

Head back to the Praza do Concello and set off into the old town centre via the Rúa da Gracia, which takes you to the main street called the **Rúa Real**. To the right there are some lanes that go down to the marina: Venus, Ancha, Soedade, Anxo, Rosal, Saúde etc. Then you arrive at the attractive **Placita de Santa Rosa** or del Cristo, with an 18th c. calvary in the middle. From here go to the **Praza da Pescadería Vella**, where you can see some old houses with colonnades. One notable feature here is the fountain of A Salamántiga (the Salamander) built in 1929.

Go back to the main street, which here is called the Rúa da Xesta, in reference to the old fishermen's district of the same name. To the left you can see the food market, what used to be the Praza Maior, and further on in a narrow street to the left is the medieval **Arco de Don Diego**. The street name is a reference to Diego de Muros, which was the name used by three bishops of this town. The most famous one is Diego de Muros III, bishop of Mondoñedo and Oviedo and the promoter behind the construction of



*Port of Muros*

the Royal Hospital of Santiago (now the Hostal dos Reis Católicos). At the end of the **Rúa A Xesta** is the **chapel of Santa Isabel** or de los Remedios, which has an interesting 16th c. calvary in the courtyard.

You return from here to the starting point along the Avenida da Mariña or Castela, to see the port area and the old arcaded houses that are still preserved here.

It's worth paying a visit to the **old parish church of San Pedro**, at the high point of the town next to the cemetery. It is the oldest church in Muros. The only remaining parts of the church now are the chancel with an interesting collection of corbels. The chapel of Nosa Señora da Gracia, attached to the south side, used to be the **sacristy**.





*Sanctuary of A Virxe do Camiño*

The **sanctuary of A Virxe do Camiño** can be seen at the entrance to Muros on the road from Noia. Built in the Gothic style in the mid-16th c., it has a long nave in four sections and a chancel with a cross-ribbed vault.

There is beach opposite the church with a bridge that takes you to **Muíño do Cachón**: a tide mill built in the 19th c. that was recently restored and converted into a cultural and exhibition centre.

## ROUTE 6 MUNICIPALITY OF MAZARICOS



## ROUTE 6

### MUNICIPALITY OF MAZARICOS

#### From Colúns to Mina da Parxubeira

This route gives you the chance to discover some of the places of natural and historical interest in the municipality of Mazaricos. You'll be following the river Beba, which is a tributary of the Xallas, throughout the route. The Beba crosses the municipality from south east to north west over about 16 kilometres, forming a beautiful valley that gradually broadens out to a wide area of level ground in the centre of the municipality. The lower part of the valley is bounded to the west by the high hills of A Ruña and to the east by a low ridge that runs parallel to the road from O Pino do Val to A Picota. The parishes of Colúns, Beba and Coiro occupy the river basin.

The route starts in **Colúns**, which is very close to where the river Beba flows into the Xallas. To reach this point, take the road in Sanfoga, a hamlet that's about two kilometres from the capital of the municipality, A Picota.

You'll make your first contact with the river in San Salvador de Colúns. Here it's a good idea to stop and see the unusual **calvary** in the church courtyard, with a hexagonal base and shaft of three columns. The capital is decorated with angels' heads and volutes, and the embrace of Christ and Saint Francis is on one side of the cross and the Virgin Mary on the other.

Continue on the road that borders the right hand side of the river, in the direction of the source, and you'll soon come to the **leisure area of A Pontenova**. The area was built next to an **old bridge** with one pointed arch, and has barbecues, tables and a bathing area. It's a nice place to visit and take a walk next to the river, with the riverside vegetation and oaks, alders and willows.



*Leisure area of Pontenova, Mazaricos (J. Ramón Esperante).*

From A Pontenova, you now head off on the left hand bank of the river towards the parish of Beba, which gave the river its name. Here you'll see the **parish church of San Xulián**, which still has its Romanesque apse. There is a beautiful view of the valley from here.

Continue south and pass through the parish of **Santa María de Coiro**, which has a large church with three naves and a slender bell tower. The church contains the **chapel of the A Virxe do Monte**, where a famous pilgrimage called A Romaxe is held on the last Sunday of August. The event is attended by people from all over the municipality.

The chapel dates back to 1615, and was founded by Bartolomé Franco, a resident of A Manda (Coiro). A very popular monthly fair used to be held here.

Continue next to the river Beba and you'll come to the hamlet of Suevos. The place name refers to the Germanic tribe that settled in Galicia in the 5th c., and an interesting option for visitors is the **calvary of O Cirolán**, which stands alone next to the river. Leave your vehicle in the hamlet and walk for a while to see this beautifully

made monument. There is an inscription on the pedestal that says: "As a gesture of devotion from Ventura Pérez de Lema. 1861".

The group of images show the unnailing of Christ by Joseph of Arimathea, on the right, and Nicodemus, to the left, on two ladders on the reverse of the cross. Between the ladders is San Buenaventura with the book and quill.



*Calvary of Suevos, Mazaricos.*

The front shows a servant at the top of a ladder holding the body of Jesus, while Mary kneels at the foot of the scene.

This work is attributed to the sculptor Francisco María Rodeiro Permuy, born in Santiago.

Take the road from Suevos to Santa Comba, which passes through O Pino do Val. Five kilometres from the village, take a right turn to **San Fiz de Eirón**. Just a few metres after the turn there is a track on your right that goes to the dolmen of **Mina da Parxubeira**, located in the middle of an estate. The megalith is made up of a polygonal



*Dolmen of Mina da Parxubeira.*

chamber and a corridor that lacks several vertical slabs and the covering. Finds from the excavations carried out by the archaeologist Antón Rodríguez Casal over three seasons between 1977 and 1984 include strips of flint, pottery, etc., which are now on display at the Historical and Archaeological Museum in A Coruña.



## > ROUTES BY CAR

Costa da Morte is an ideal region for hiking. The varied and beautiful landscapes, combined with the rich and varied natural, historical and cultural heritage, make the region a very attractive option for hikers, who have a unique opportunity to enjoy everything that Costa da Morte has to offer.

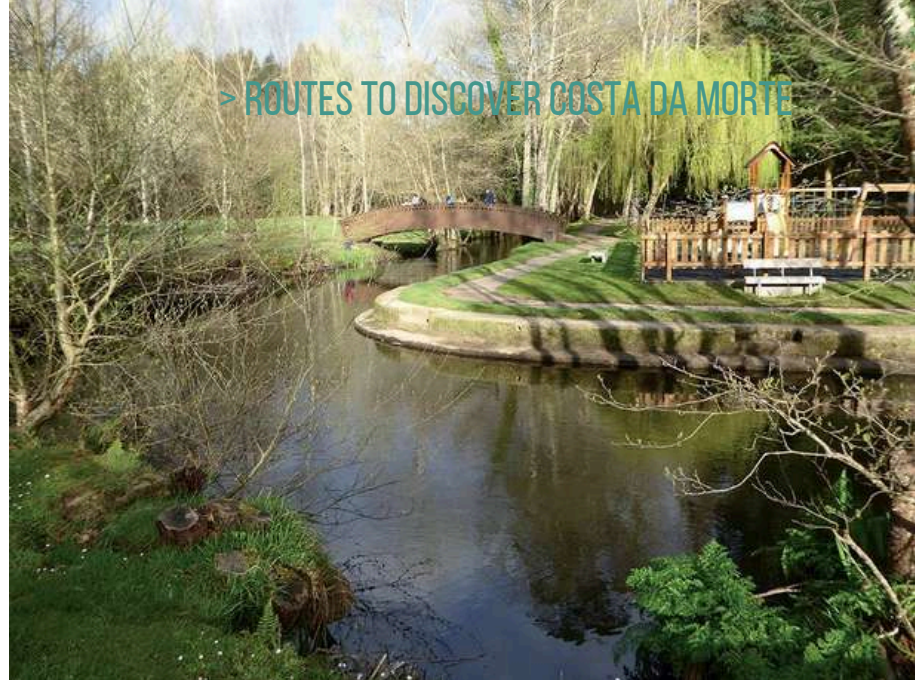
Local municipalities have designed a set of short hiking routes to the most attractive locations, although few of them have been standardised and some others need to be more effectively signposted and promoted.

There are routes that hug the coast so you can enjoy the most spectacular landscapes you could ever imagine, and discover the history of the shipwrecks, lighthouses and the coastal towns along the way. Others follow rivers and streams where you can see the flora and fauna, the waterfalls and watermills, fulling mills, bridges and hydroelectric plants. There are routes that take you to the top of mountains from where you can see incredible views and unique rock formations, such as Os Penedos de Pasarela e Traba or Monte Pindo. And don't forget the routes where you can discover the region's historical heritage and see dolmens, hillforts, churches, manor houses and calvaries.

Most of the routes are of low difficulty and are suitable for walkers of all ages at any time of the year.

We've selected some that we feel are the most interesting. You can find on the Internet at <https://www.visitacostadamorte.com/>, in the section "Caminos y Senderos de Costa da Morte", by the CMAT (Tourist Association of Costa da morte). We've taken most of the information about the short routes and published it here. The website has thirty two routes where you can discover the most interesting natural and historical sites in Costa da Morte.

## > ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE



*Leisure area of Gabenlle*

We've also included two longer routes of over 50 km, which you can do in several stages: the Camiño dos Faros (lighthouse trail) and the Way of St James of Fisterra and Muxía.

### > Route along the banks of the river Anllóns

Starting point: Leisure area of Gabenlle (A Laracha)

Route: Linear

Distance: 4.3 km (round trip)

Approximate duration: 1h and 15 min

Difficulty: Low

Route alongside part of the river Anllóns from the leisure area of Gabenlle to the bridge at O Formigueiro. You'll have the chance to see some restored watermills along the way: Tarrulo, Grande de Gabenlle, As Pezas and O Formigueiro. You'll also immerse your self in leafy riverside woodland full of alder, willow, oak, bay and ash trees.



*Waterfall of Entrecruces.*

The Gabenlle leisure area has all kinds of services and offers the ideal location for lunch in the open air in a natural setting.

#### > **PR-G 142: The waterfalls trail of Carballo**

Starting-arrival point: A Brea (Carballo)-waterfall of San Paio de Entrecruces  
 Route: Linear  
 Distance: 18.6 km  
 Approximate duration 5h  
 Difficulty: Low



*Refuxio de Verdes.*

This route starts in the hamlet of A Brea, passes through the parish of Ardaña, the Ramil waterfall, the church of Santa María de Rus, the church of San Xes de Entrecruces, the chapel of San Paio de Entrecruces and ends at the spectacular waterfall of San Paio. It's the perfect combination of nature, with the two waterfalls and in a beautiful setting, and historical heritage with the church of Santa María de Rus, one of the most interesting ones in the region, the church of Entrecruces and the chapel of San Paio with its beautiful cross-ribbed vault and Baroque altarpiece.

The route also includes some fascinating industrial archaeology. Before arriving at the waterfall of San Paio, you'll pass through what's left of the mini-power plant that supplied the first hydroelectric energy to the town of Carballo.

#### > **Refuxio de Verdes route**

Starting-arrival point: Refuxio de Verdes-old Pontedona  
 Route: Linear  
 Distance: 1.70 km  
 Approximate duration 1h (round trip)  
 Difficulty: Low





*Mills of Ribeira ou Ardeleiro*

This short route is a good way to discover one of the most beautiful places on the river Anllóns. Start the route at Refuxio de Verdes, a space where the river narrows and divides into several streams, forming rapids and small cascades, which combined with the nearby riverside woodland makes this place one of the loveliest in the region of Bergantiños.

Cross the river on one of the footbridges and continue along the left bank. You'll pass by some ruined watermills, and after a sharp bend in the river you'll come to old Pontedona, a structure dating back to the 19th c., with four millstones and the slabs that form the paving.

#### > **Route of the east coast of Malpica or Os Pinos do Mar**

Starting-arrival point: chapel of As Neves or Santo Antón-beach of As Torradas

Route: Linear

Distance: 11.7 km

Approximate duration 6 h (round trip)

Difficulty: Medium



*Beach of Balarés.*

This route for hikers and cyclists is an ideal way to discover a part of Malpica that few people know about. It starts at the chapel of As Neves or Santo Antón and borders the east coast of Malpica alongside an area with cliffs where headlands alternate with small bays and islets. When you reach the bay of Os Muíños you'll see five mills that may catch your attention, but the rocky folds of the coast are also well worth a closer look. The route then turns inland and passes through Loroxo, where the manor house of the Romero family is, then you come to O Ceán and head back to the coast and the beach of San Miro. After another rocky area with cliffs you arrive at the beach of Os Riás and As Torradas, where the route ends. Nearby is the hamlet of Santa Mariña in the municipality of Carballo.

#### > **PR-G 148: Camiño da Ribeira Route**

Starting-arrival point: Eduardo Pondal's house (Ponteceso)-Corme

Route: Linear

Distance: 11.1 km

Approximate duration 5 h (round trip)

Difficulty: Low





*Anllóns estuary.*

This route skirts the right hand side of the mouth of the river Anllóns, in the bay of A Insua and the northern part of the ría of Corme and Laxe.

It starts at the house of the poet Eduardo Pondal, runs alongside the bay of A Insua and comes to the beach of Balarés. From here it heads inland and passes through A Pedra da Serpe de Gondomil and then turns back to the coast at the beaches of A Ermida and O Osmo and ends at the port of Corme.

### > Archaeological route through Borneiro

Starting-arrival point: Car park of the castro A Cidá de Borneiro

Route: circular

Distance: 10 km

Approximate duration 4 h

Difficulty: Medium

Head up the forest trail from the car park near the hillfort to Monte Gontón and keep walking from there to the viewing point at the top of A Fernandiña, the best place to enjoy the view over the mouth of the river Anllóns and the ría of Corme and Laxe.



*Waterfall of the river Budián, a tributary of the Porto.*

Then walk to the hill of O Castro or Castelo de Borneiro, a named after the castro that was there, and then walk down to Borneiro, which has a parish church. Then set off to the sanctuary of O Briño and from there to the dolmen of Dombate. After visiting this spectacular megalithic monument, walk to the castro of A Cidá and you're back at the starting point.

### > PR-G 250 Water trail

Starting-arrival point: Bridge of O Sisto (Gándara, Zas)

Route: circular

Distance: 10 km

Approximate duration 3 h

Difficulty: Low

This route's unusual name comes from it following the upper section of the river O Porto and its tributary, the Budián. It's a beautiful trail with some really impressive

waterfalls.

Start from the bridge of O Sisto and walk to the waterfall of Budián, where there is a bench for you to enjoy the sights and sounds of a waterfall in full spate. Head back to the hamlet of Budián and go from there to Parga to see the second waterfall. Keep going to O Rabiñoso, an area of great natural beauty, with a waterfall, riverside woodland and several watermills. From here go back to the starting point.

### > Vieiro Fidalgo Route

Starting-arrival point: church of San Pedro de Berdoias (Vimianzo)

Route: circular

Distance: 9 km

Approximate duration 3 h

Difficulty: Low

This route is exceptional for its archaeological, historical and ethnographic heritage. Start at the church of San Pedro de Berdoais and from there take the trail to the hill where you can see the petroglyphs of O Pedrouzo. Then walk down to the dolmen of A Casota de Freán and then return to the hamlet of Berdoias, which is interesting for its traditional buildings (houses, threshing floors and corn granaries). Then cross the AC 552 road to Boallo, and continue along a track that crosses the river O Castro and the oak grove of Chavín.

Now head to O Outeiro do Recosto to see another group of petroglyphs, and from there head down to Boallo, where you can see the remains of the noble house of the Lemas, built by the son of Alonso de Lema II, Martiño de Castiñeira, and other interesting buildings. Return from here to the starting point.

### > PR-G 158 Costa da Morte Route



*Vieiro Fidalgo route in the parish of Berdoias.*

Starting-arrival point: ruins of the castle of O Soberano (Camariñas)

Route: circular

Distance: 22.5 km

Approximate duration 7 h

Difficulty: Medium

This route includes part of the coast of Camariñas and has some magnificent views of the coastline and the Vilán lighthouse. It's also a route with some historical interest because of the many shipwrecks that have taken place here.

Start from the ruins of the castle of O Soberano and head towards the beach of O Lago, then you go up to the chapel of A Virxe do Monte, from where you can get some amazing views of Muxía and the surrounding area. The track continues in the direction of the Vilán lighthouse. Cross the road that goes to the lighthouse and take the earth track to Reira. Pass by O Foxo do Lobo and keep walking to the English Cemetery, where some of the crew of the shipwrecked English vessel *Serpent* are buried. The trail then goes inland via A Portela de Reira, the viewing point of the hill of As Seixas and then reaches the hamlet of Mourín. Go from there to the town of Camariñas and you're back at the starting point.



*Waterfall in the Rio Negro dos Muíños (Muxía)*

#### > Muxía-Os Muíños Route

Starting-arrival point: Town of Muxía

Route: circular

Distance: 9.2 km

Approximate duration 3 h

Difficulty: low

This route is a perfect combination of natural and historical heritage. The focal point of the former has to be trail that skirts the river Negro, with a fascinating stretch of riverside woodland, while the main feature of the latter is Moraime, one of the most impressive examples of the architectural heritage of the region.

The route begins in the town of Muxía. Take the road to Berdoias and then turn right onto the trail that leads to the hamlet of Figueiras de Abaixo and Oruxo. After passing through As Casas Novas, you'll arrive at the church of Moraime. A stop here to see the magnificent Romanesque church and the rector's house really is a must. Then continue on the track of the Way of Saint James to Os Muíños, where you take the patch that borders the river Negro. A leafy riverside forest and watermills are the backdrop all the way the where the river flows into the beach of Area Maior. You can continue from here to the hamlet of Chorente via O Camiño dos Faros (lighthouse trail), or follow the tarmac path to the same place. Then go down on the Way of St James to Muxía, which skirts the beaches of O Espiñeirido and A Cruz along the way.

#### > San Guillermo-Fisterra Lighthouse Route

Starting-arrival point: Port of Fisterra

Route: circular

Distance: 7.5 km

Approximate duration 2 h 30 min

Difficulty: medium

This most emblematic part of this route is the cape and lighthouse of Fisterra, one of the most iconic sites in Costa da Morte, but it includes other interesting places such as the ruins of the chapel of San Guillermo, Monte Facho and the church of Santa María das Areas.

The route starts at the port of Fisterra and skirts the sea up to the beach of A Ribeira, where you arrive at the castle of San Carlos. From there it goes up through the streets that head up to the interesting church of Santa María das Areas, with traces of Romanesque and Gothic architecture and the image of the Santo Cristo (Holy Christ) inside the Baroque chapel. Continue along the road that goes to the lighthouse. 100 m further on take a right turn towards the mountain along a dirt track that goes up to the top of San Guillermo, where magnificent views and the ruins of the chapel of San Guillermo await





*View from Monte Facho in Fisterra.*

you. Head back to the main track and continue until you come to the tarmac path that goes up to the top of Monte Facho, where you can see all the peninsula of Fisterra, the ria of Corcubión and Monte Pindo. Then head down to the Fisterra lighthouse, the most remarkable place on the itinerary. Then take the roadside track and head back to the starting point.

### > Route of Os Penedos de Pasarela e Traba

Starting-arrival point: Pasarela (Vimianzo)

Route: circular

Distance: 8 km

Approximate duration 3 h

Difficulty: medium

Os Penedos de Pasarela e Traba (the crags of Pasarela and Traba) is one of the most astounding natural spaces in Costa da Morte, and was declared a Protected Landscape in 2009.

Start the route in the centre of Pasarela on a track that starts in O **Penedo** and walk towards the mountain.

## > ROUTES TO DISCOVER COSTA DA MORTE



*Penedos de Pasarela e Traba.*

After leaving the hamlet, take the trail to the left that goes to the **Explanada da Ferida**, where attempts were made to open a quarry and where A **Pedra do Barco** is, at the base of the peak of A Cachucha. Now take the track that took you here; on a curve to the right take the trail on the left that goes to the first group of rocks with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic shapes, situated to the north of the top of A Cachucha (208 m). We recommend following the information panels that guide you to each stone. Here you'll find the figures of O Cantor (the Singer), **O Camelo** (the Camel), **O Coello** (the Rabbit) and **O Paiaso** (the Clown). Further on to the north east you'll see A **Pedra Multiforme** (The Multishaped Rock), one of the most unusual rock formations. Depending on what angle you look from, you'll see a hand, an eagle, a spaceship and a royal throne. **Pedra do Fígado** (the Rock of the Liver) is also close by.

Leave this first area and return to the first track, and take the one on the left that goes to A Galla de Pena Forcada. Pass by A **Pedra Abaladoira**, a flat rock that weighs several tons but moves when two or three people stand on it. Then go up a steep slope and at the top you'll



*A Pedra Multiforme.*

see a vertical stone block that looks like the silhouette of a North African or a raised arm with a clenched fist. At the top of the slope, you'll see the imposing split block of **A Galla de Pena Forcada** (258 m), the highest summit on this massif, which marks the border between the municipalities of Vimianzo and Laxe. Now you're in the second area, where you'll be amazed by rock formations as extraordinary as **A Esfinxe** (the Sphinx) or **A Dama de Costa da Morte** (the Lady of Costa da Morte) and **A Zafra de Ferreiro** (the Smith's Anvil) or **A Osa** (the Bear), depending once again on where you look from.

As you walk down into the municipality of Laxe, you'll see two beautiful natural sculptures on your right: **A Tartaruga-Peixe** (the Turtle-Fish) and **O Xigante** (the Giant). The track joins up with a forest trail. If you turn left, you'll have the chance to see other unusual rocks such as O Bico (the Beak) or O Monólito (the Monolith), but your objective now is to take the trail to A Torre da Moa, and to do that you turn right, and then further ahead you take the trail on the left that goes to the third and final area on this route. The last part of the trail is more difficult than the previous one, but the effort is richly rewarded when you see the extraordinary views from the top of **A Torre da Moa** (244 m), the best vantage point for seeing the entire natural space of the beach and lagoon of Traba de Laxe. Another attraction here is the giant outcrops of rounded rock below at **A Cova dos**

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**Mouros** and the other rocks nearby such as **A Cachucha do Porco** (the Pig's Head) or **O Can Enfurruñado** (the Angry Dog).

When you return to the trail, turn left and then turn right when you get to the tarmac path. Walk a short distance until you come to the dirt track on the right. Follow it down and you'll be back in Pasarela, where you started.

### > Waterfall trail of Mazaricos

This route takes on a journey of discovery to see five waterfalls in the municipality of Mazaricos. The distances between some of them are quite long, so we'd recommend combining a car and your legs for this route. There is one group of three: **Vioxo-Chacín, Santa Locaia and Gosolfre**, to the east of the municipality, near O Pino do Val, all of which can be seen on foot. Then take a car to the **waterfall of Fírvado**, and finally there's the **waterfall of A Noveira**, in the parish of Arcos, which is the one that's furthest away. We'd also recommend not doing the whole route in one day.

Start the route by visiting the waterfall of Vioxo-Chacín, on the river O Casteliño. Then walk to the one at Santa Locaia, near the hermitage with the same name. Local people also call it O Pozo das Campás (the Bells Well), because of a legend about the place.

The third one, Gosolfre, is harder to get to on foot, and so it'll take a little more time to get there, but the route goes through a beautiful indigenous forest full of oak trees.

The fourth waterfall, Fírvado, is close to Suevos, where two streams meet. The charm of the place is in the combination of waterfalls and natural pools to be found here. One of the pools is called Pozo Negro (black pool), and there is a legend that a golden mattock is submerged here that emerges above the water on Midsummer's Eve. This legend also appears in other rivers where there are deep pools.





*Waterfall of Noveira.*

The fifth and final waterfall is A Noveira on the river Arcos, which is a tributary of the Xallas, near the reservoir of Santa Uxía. It is especially famous for the pools that were carved into the granite by water erosion. The natural pools make it a very popular place for swimmers in the summer.

#### > Camiño dos Faros (lighthouse trail)

This long route goes from Malpica to cape Fisterra, and follows the coastline between the two points. It

came about from the initiative of a small group of people who decided to go on a walking adventure at the end of 2012. They faced a lot of difficulties because most of the route didn't have any kind of track or path to

walk on. After doing some stages at the weekends, they finally reached cape Fisterra on 26 January 2013.

Before this daring initiative, a couple of proposals had previously been made with the same idea of a coastal route on foot through the same region, although a slightly less hazardous and ambitious one, where sections of the route through the steeper coastal areas were avoided. The first was called the **Itinerary on foot through Costa da Morte**, and can be found in a book entitled *Deporte e aventura na Costa da Morte* (Edicións Lea, 1998).

This route matched the first Camiño dos Faros in that the start and end and the whole route was divided into eight stages.



*Cover of the Ruta a pie book  
by Costa da Morte*



The second route was proposed in 2011, with the title **Route on foot through Costa da Morte**. The same title was used for a book published in the same year by Asociación Nería. This time the route went from Malpica to Muros and was divided into 10 stages. Besides the descriptions of the route and maps for each stage, the book also contains information about the most interesting natural spaces and historical sites to be found along the way.

The project by Asociación Nería was inaugurated with a ceremony at the town of Malpica and the completion of a stage in May 2012 between O Roncudo and the dolmen of Dombate. Sadly, the crisis that the association was going through at the time stopped the project from going forward. The book was distributed at promotional events for tourism and establishments in the sector, and amongst persons who were interested in the route.

However, the route proposed by the promoters of the Camiño dos Faros, which is closer to the sea, more difficult and with a higher level of risk, offered more excitement to people interested in the route, making it different from the previous ones, as Javier Mazorra, a journalist of the newspaper *El Mundo* (28/07/2015), commented in a report he wrote about the **Camiño dos Faros**:

“Several stages match the old Ruta a pé pola Costa da Morte but there is a difference: you walk almost all the 200 kilometres of the route on the same coast, almost always on paths or trails, without ever losing sight of the sea”.

The Camiño dos Faros between Malpica and cape Fisterra is about 200 km, runs alongside the coast and is marked with green arrows and points. It is divided into eight sections of different lengths depending on the difficulty of each one and the conditions in each area.

The shortest and easiest one is Laxe-Arou, at 18 km, while the longest is Camariñas-Muxía at 32.6 km. The difficulty of the stages increases as you progress along the route;

the last two are probably the most difficult ones of all.

The average duration of each stage is about 8 to 9 hours, at a speed of 3 km/h, to give you a chance to enjoy the scenery as you go.

The Camiño dos Faros association was created in 2013 to consolidate and maintain the route. Two walks along the route were organised the same year, one in the summer and the other in winter. Another two were organised in 2014 for spring and autumn, and one more walk was organised in spring 2015. A lot of people participated in all the events. The association actively campaigned on the social networks and media to promote the route and contacted government bodies to have it certified, which was impossible due to the number of bureaucratic obstacles it encountered along the way. Most of us are unaware of the difficulties that impeded this route from being certified as a long-distance trail, especially in view of all the success it has had, since it represents a tourist resource of great value and interest for Costa da Morte, besides being one that would help to develop the region.

It would be a shame to lose this resource when all the municipalities that the route passes through agree that the project should be fully established.

### > Stages of the Camiño dos Faros

#### Stage 1: Malpica-Niñóns, 21.3 km

This stage starts at the town of Malpica and continues to the chapel of Santo Adrián. It passes by the beaches of **Area Maior, Canido and Seaia** and rises upwards to the spring and **hermitage of Santo Adrián**, where a very popular pilgrimage is held every June. There are some fantastic views of Malpica and the **Sisargas Islands** from here. Sisarga Grande has a lighthouse (1853), one of the first to be built on this coast.



*Beach of Seiruga.*

After skirting the headland of Santo Adrián, head off to the **beaches of Beo and A Seiruga**. The second of the beaches has a river that you have to cross. It's easy to cross in summer but harder in winter because of the high water levels.

The route gets tougher after the **port of Barizo** because it rises up to the peninsula of A Nariga. The lighthouse of **Punta Nariga** is at the end of this peninsula. The building is a recent one and was designed by the architect César Portela. The route continues to skirt this area of the coast, which has a lot of cliffs and then after passing by the bay of **O Lago** you come to the **beach of Niñóns** and the end of this stage.

### **Stage 2: Niñóns- Ponteceso, 27.1 km**

This stage circles the peninsula of O Roncudo and consists of two sections with very different landscapes. The first one is a rugged rocky coastline that accompanies you to the headland of O Roncudo, while the second is a gentler coast with protected beaches that ends at the estuary of the river Anllóns.

Start the route at the beach of **Niñóns** and from there take a coastal track that goes to the small **port of Santa Mariña**. Then there is a stretch of cliff-lined



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*Beach and dunes of Barra.*

coast that takes you to the bay and **beach of A Barda**, where you head off once again on the track that skirts the northern part of this rugged peninsula. Pass through the **O Roncudo**, which is a small hamlet lodged in the midst of this harsh landscape. The track continues to skirt the peninsula up to the headland of O Roncudo, the most emblematic place on the entire coastline, where the lighthouse is located. Then head off to **Corme**, which is the most important town in the northern part of the ría and birthplace of the famous explorer **Francisco Mourelle de la Rúa** (1750-1820).

The route continues along the **beaches of O Osmo and A Ermida** and borders the northern part of the ría. It passes near the sheltered **beach of Balarés**, which is surrounded by a large green space. From here take the narrow trail that skirts the coast, until you arrive at the **beach and dunes of A Barra**. If you want to see some magnificent views of the area, head up to the top of **Monte Branco** and go down again to the banks of the estuary of the Anllóns. Then follow the trail that takes you to **Ponteceso** and the end of this stage.

### **Stage 3: Ponteceso-Laxe, 25.3 km**



*Beach of O Pendón (Cabana de Bergantiños).*

This third stage starts at the house of the poet Eduardo Pondal (1835-1917), and after crossing the bridge over the river Anllóns, it enters the municipality of Cabana de Bergantiños and continues along the left bank of the river estuary and the southern shore of the ría of Corme and Laxe. There is a diversion inland to see two very interesting archaeological sites: the castro of A Cidá de Borneiro and the dolmen of Dombate.

The first part of the route runs along the left bank of the bay of A Insua, firstly through a hilly area and then along the path that skirts the **beaches of A Orexeira and O Pendón** before arriving at the bay of **O Lodeiro**. It then follows the trail of the stream of **Os Muíños** and then rise up to the hillfort of **A Cidá de Borneiro**, an ancient Iron Age settlement.

From there it goes to the **dolmen of Dombate**, which is the most famous megalithic monument in Galicia. The route then rises to the top of **Monte Castelo**, an ideal vantage point to see the beautiful coastal landscape.

If you decide not to visit A Cidá and the dolmen of Dombate, the route is shortened by almost 10 km and is much easier to traverse. Go up from the bay of O Lodeiro to the church of Canduas and then carry on along the same track.



*Beach of Soesto.*

The route then descends to **Canduas** and takes you back to the coast, crossing the beaches of **Rebordelo and San Pedro** along the way. It continues along the cliffs that surround the **headland of O Cabalo** and then heads south close to the bay of the **mills at Frexufre**. It then crosses **O Cabo da Area** at the east end of the large beach, which you cross and then come to the **town of Laxe** and the end of this stage.

#### **Stage 4: Laxe-Arou, 18 km**

This is the shortest and easiest stage of the entire route. It starts at the **port of Laxe**, very close to the Gothic **parish church of Santa María da Atalaia**, well worth a visit.

Then follow the PR-G 70, a short route that borders the **A Insua peninsula** and takes you to the **lighthouse, the Furna da Espuma and the beach of Os Cristais**.

Continue on the trail that skirts this cliff-lined part of the coast, passing near the bay of **Baleeira** and the headland of **O Peñón** till you come to the beach of **Soesto**, a long stretch of sand with waves that are ideal for surfers.

Then go up to the high point of **Monte Castrallón** and walk round **Punta Catasol**. Continue alongside the **beach of O Arnado** to the next one at de **Traba**, another long beach with a coastal lagoon and a good spot for birdwatching.



After the beach, the route then enters an area of granite rocks in all kinds of shapes and sizes that are worth stopping to see. Then keep on going to the bay of Sabadelle and pass by the pebbled beaches of A Señora and **Sabadelle**. Shortly after you come to the entrance to the bay and the coastal town of **Camelle**. This small fishing port is well-known because of **Man**, a German who lived here for forty years and made a deep impact on the town. There is a museum with some of his art on display. Your next destination is the small town of **Arou**, which you arrive at by taking the track that skirts the coast and takes to a beautiful beach and the end of this stage.

#### Stage 5: Arou-Camariñas, 23.8 km

This stage is perhaps the most representative one on the Camiño dos Faros because it passes along a stretch of rocky, jagged coastline that is extremely hazardous for shipping. The many ships that have run aground and sank here are the reason why this region is called Costa da Morte (the Death Coast).

The route starts on the track that goes to the solitary **beach of As Lobeiras** and continues along a coastal path with dangerous cliffs, surrounded by headlands and small bays, that goes to the small **port of Santa Mariña**.

From here the trail goes up to O Penal do **Veio** and descends along the west slope where the impressive dune of Monte **Branco** was formed. The top offers fantastic views of the beach of O Trece and **Cabo Tosto**. Once you cross this long, wild beach, you come to the **English Cemetery**, which is one of the most important symbols of the coast. It is the final resting place of the bodies washed ashore from the wreck of the British vessel **Serpent**, which ran aground here on 10 November 1890 at Punta do Boi. The route then continues along the dirt track that runs parallel to the coast, with some magnificent views of **cape Vilán** and its **lighthouse** along the way.



*Beach of Trece with Monte Branco in the background.*

It passes near the **beaches of Reira, the high point of A Pedrosa and the bay of A Arliña** and joins the road to the Vilán lighthouse, another important symbol of Costa da Morte. It was the first lighthouse in Spain to be powered by electricity. It is regarded as one of the best buildings on the Iberian Peninsula for its location and for the construction of the tower.

After seeing the lighthouse, you now head along the coastal trails that takes you to the **chapel of A Virxe do Monte**, after passing the **headlands of O Corno and O Castelete**. The chapel looks out over the Atlantic from the top of Monte Farelo, an ideal place to view the coast of Muxía.

Head back to the coastal path that continues along the **beach of O Lago and the headland of Villueira and reaches the ruins of O Soberano**, which was a castle built in the mid-18th c. The houses of the town of Camariñas come up to this point. Continue down the street that goes down to the port, where this fifth stage comes to an end.

## Stage 6: Camariñas- Muxía, 32 km

This stage is the longest one of the routes. It skirts the ría of Camariñas and links the two fishing towns of Camariñas and Muxía at each end. It is something of a contrast to the previous stage with its wild seas and cliff-lined coast, here the setting changes to a gentle and sheltered coastline, full of vegetation and long sandy beaches.

Set out from Camariñas and at the end of the town you'll find the beach of **Area da Vila**. Further on there at the **bay of A Basa** there is an area for shellfish catching where cockles and clams are especially abundant. The track borders the bay and **Monte A Insua** and passes near the **beaches of Area Branca and O Ariño**, at which point you are now in the estuary of the river O Porto.

The route follows the road from **A Piosa** and crosses **Dor** and **O Allo** to the town of **Ponte do Porto**, the old commercial centre for the surrounding villages where a very popular fair is held. Cross the river O Porto on the bridge that gave the village its name and continue on the riverside path that takes you to **Cereixo** in the parish of Vimianzo. A welcoming place with some interesting sights, such as the tide mill, the Romanesque church of Santiago and the towers that once belonged to the counts of Maceda.

After a distance next to the road, the route then changes and enters a forested area that goes to the shore of the ría. After passing near the **Furna do Sapo** and the **beach of Area Grande, you come to the beach of A Barreira or Leis, separated from the beach of O Lago** by a rocky outcrop where a small lighthouse is situated. O Lago is one the most beautiful and popular beaches on the ría. Leave the beach, cross the bridge and walk for a distance beside the road, then take a track that goes to **Merexo**, a hamlet with a lot of traditionally built houses and hórreos.

Then continue along this section of the Way of St James to **Os Muíños**, then go down the riverside track that follows the river **Negro**, surrounded by a leafy indigenous forest



*Hikers on the beach of Area Maior dos Muíños.*

and several mills that takes to the **Area Maior**, another excellent beach on the shores of the ría.

Then walk up to the hamlet of **Chorente**. You have two options to get there: follow a trail that starts at the end of the beach, crosses the hill and ends at the hamlet; or take the tarmac road and then turn right onto the Way of St James that goes to **Moraime**, which was once a monastery and is now a centre of some historical and architectural importance, including a splendid Romanesque church. Then head off towards Chorente. Then walk down to the beach of **O Espiñeirido** and take the wooden walkway to **Muxía**. Walk through the town and continue in the direction of the **sanctuary of the Virxe da Barca** and the end of this stage.

## Stage 7: Muxía-Nemiña, 25.3 km

This stage is perhaps the hardest of the entire route, especially the section that goes from the beach of Lourido to the one in Moreira (9.3 km), which has some steep peaks and troughs.



*Hikers on the beach of Area Maior dos Muíños.*

The route starts at the **Praza do Coído** in Muxía, where you take the road to Lourido until it descends to the beach with the same name. Cross the sands and opposite you'll see the **parador Costa da Morte**, located on one side of the hill. The track skirts the coast up to the pebbled beach of the **river Escuro**, where the steep climb up **Monte Cachelmo** begins and where some magnificent views await you when you reach the top. Then head down to the small beach of **A Arnela** and go up another steep slope to the east of the **peninsula of A Buítra** up to the trail that goes to one end of it, which is the one you'll take. Now the trail skirts the headland along the west and offers some good views of cape Touriñán. Head down to the **cove of Cuño** and after you cross a small stream there, it's time to make the ascent of **Monte Pedrouzo** (272 m). Walk along the top and then head down towards the **beach of Moreira**.

The route gets gentler from here, as you walk along a track that takes you to **cape Touriñán**, which we first skirted on the right hand side when going to the lighthouse. This is the westernmost point of peninsular Spain. Now the route skirts the peninsula on the west side until the **cove of Touriñán**.



*Beach of Mar de Fóra and Cabo A Nave.*

Walk through the hamlet of **Campos**, where you turn right onto the track that goes to Nemiña and the diversion to **Talón**. Go down from here to **Nemiña**, a large sandy beach that's popular with surfers, and the end of this penultimate stage.

#### **Stage 8: Nemiña-Cabo Fisterra, 26.9/22.2 km**

This last stage of O Camiño dos Faros is also tough because of the steep slopes in some section, especially near cape A Nave and Monte Facho.

You can start this stage at Nemiña beach, where the previous stage ended, or at Lires. If you start at Nemiña, there's the problem of crossing the river **Castro**, which is only possible at low tide and in summer. If not, you have to take a detour of over three kilometres and cross it at the bridge of **Vaosilveiro**. If you start at Lires, you'll save yourself the detour and walk 22.2 km instead of 26.9 km.





*Beach of Mar de Fóra and Cabo A Nave.*

Walk from **Lires** to the beach with the same name and then continue along the coastal path. You'll pass near the **beaches of Area Pequena** and **Area Grande** and close to the cliffs of **Punta de A Lagoa** and **Punta Besugueira** before coming to the **O Rostro**, a long wild beach with big waves.

From here on it is uphill all the way along a cliff-lined area up to the top of **Monte Castelo**. The hillfort of **Castromiñán** is on one of the headlands here. A ship called the **Cason** ran aground near here in 1987 and provoked panic amongst the residents of the region.

After passing through the solitary beach of **A Arnela**, you start the hardest part of all, the ascent of Monte **Veladoiro**, which forms the **cape of A Nave**. A steep slope takes you down to the beach of **O Mar de Fóra**, the last one on this coastal route. Carry on along the track that takes you to the small hamlet of **A Insua**, and once there, take the track that skirts **Monte Facho** to the west and goes up to the summit. This final effort is well rewarded with some spectacular views from this fantastic vantage point. Now the only thing left is a comfortable walk down to the Fisterra lighthouse, the final point on this extraordinary adventure. After a long walk of eight days, the cape and lighthouse of **Fisterra**, both perched

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on the edge of the European continent, are a perfect end to this Camiño dos Faros.

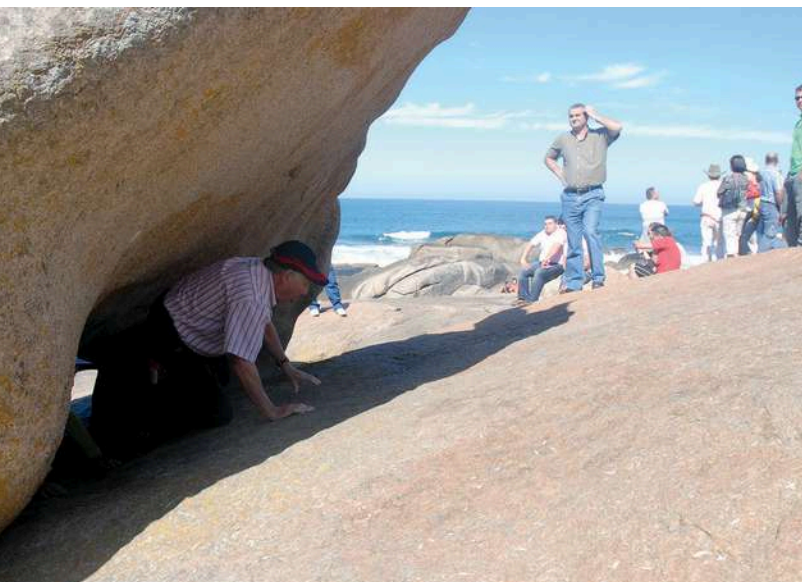
### > Way of Saint James of Fisterra and Muxía

The origins of the Way of St James from Santiago to Fisterra and Muxía are closely linked to the legends created to Christianise the westernmost regions of Galicia, where ancient beliefs in nature spirits and fertility were very deeply rooted.

The connection between **Fisterra** and the worship of St James starts with the legend of the "Translatio", the transfer of the mortal remains of St James the Apostle to Galicia, which was created in the Middle Ages and mentioned in the Codex Calixtinus. According to the legend, to be able to bury the remains of the saint in this area, the disciples of St James had to go to the city of Digium in the Duio valley (Fisterra) and ask for authorisation from the Roman governor.

The inclusion of Muxía in the traditions is related to the stones of As Cruces or Punta de Xaviña and with the Virgen de A Barca, who appeared here before St James. The Virgin arrived on a stone boat sailed by angels. This legend was almost certainly created by the monks of the monastery of Moraime, which was a centre for evangelism in the region. Were the monks the inventors of the traditions of St James in Fisterra and **Muxía**.

The fact that the Catholic church chose such important divinities as Christ, the Virgin Mary and St James the Apostle and placed them in Fisterra is indicative of the difficulties that must have existed in converting the local population to Christianity. The two most important religious centres in the region were dedicated to the first two figures: the Christ of Fisterra and the Virgin of A Barca. According to local legends both images arrived from the sea, which would be the logical route in a region that was so badly connected by land to the rest of the continent.



*Beach of Mar de Fóra and Cabo A Nave.*

After the legends and apparitions and the subsequent founding of these two important centres of faith, pilgrims began to arrive in the mid-12th c., testimonies of which can be seen in documents at the monastery of Moraime.

When the two centres had begun to acquire some degree of importance as centres of pilgrimage in the 15th., we see the first testimonies written by pilgrims and travellers. One of the first was the Frenchman **Nompar** II, lord of Caumont (1417), who arrived at Fisterra and mentioned the hermitage of San Guillerme. Some years later the German **Sebastián Ilsung** (1446) arrived at Muxía, where he appears in an image praying in front of the old chapel of A Barca. He then went on to Fisterra. More details about the region appear in documents by a Bohemian noble, **Jaroslav Lev of Rožmitál** (1466), a Polish knight called **Nikolaus con Popplau** (1484) and another Pole called **Erich Lassota** (1580), who mentioned these and many other places that he passed through when he went on the route from Muxía and Fisterra.

Erich Lassota von Steblovo was a mercenary in the army of king Philip II. He disembarked in Muxía, where he mentioned the existence of a large chapel in which the Virgin of A Barca was venerated with great devotion. He then went on foot to Fisterra and writes about the route between the two towns in great detail. He mentions the images of the Virgin and the Holy Christ as important elements in the religious life of Fisterra.



*Cover of the book by Domenico Laffi*

In 1673, **Domenico Laffi**, a clergyman from Bologna, went to Fisterra on the second of his four pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela. His experiences in the westernmost region of Spain evidently had a profound effect on him, as he comments on them in his book *Viaggio in Ponente a San Giacomo di Galitia, e Finis Terrae per Francia, y Spagna*. In the early 18th c., the Italian friars **Giavan Lorenzo Bonafede** and

**Giacomo Antonio Naia** left a record of their journey through Fisterra and Muxía. The new chapel of A Barca was being built when they visited the area, thanks to the financial donations of the counts of Maceda. At this period the number of local pilgrims who went to the chapels was large, but the number of pilgrims who went on the Way of St James was insignificant, to the extent that it effectively disappeared in the following centuries.

Pilgrims did not start to come this far west till the 1980s, when a growing number of people, especially foreigners, began to arrive here, attracted by the excitement of encountering the Atlantic finis terrae, the end of Europe, and seeing the immense ocean. Some were also attracted by religious sentiment towards the Holy Christ of Fisterra or the Virgin of A Barca.

**Associations of Friends of the Way** of St James had to a lot to do with the recovery of this route. One of the most active in this regard was the Galician association, especially when it was led by the chairman and local historian Antón Pombo, who was deeply involved in the project to recover the prolongation of the Way.

From 1993 onwards, the route began to be included in publications that promoted the Way of St James, and the first books and leaflets specifically about this route began to be published, with descriptions of the stages along the way, the places it passes through and the most important elements of the architectural and cultural heritage to be discovered there.

**Pilgrimages** organised by Asociación Nería in 1997, 1998 and 1999 attracted a large number of pilgrims from different parts of Spain and helped to promote this part of the Way of St James. Once the route was indicated and recognised by the public administrations, the next step was to build

the first **pilgrims' hostels**, which are an essential part of the infrastructure for consolidating the route and increasing the number of pilgrims. The first to be opened was the hostel of Fisterra in 2001, followed by Negreira, Olveiroa, Corcubión, Muxía and Dumbría along with many private hostels.

Since then, the number of pilgrims has steadily grown, despite the obstacles placed by the religious authorities in Santiago, who refused to recognise this part of the Way, alleging that it was not a religious route, when, as mentioned above, both Fisterra and Muxía were already included in the legend of the arrival of the body of St James in Galicia, which is the main reason behind the pilgrimage to Compostela. Another factor is the importance of the chapels of O Cristo de Fisterra and the Virxe da Barca to the Church.

This route is now one of the most popular amongst pilgrims who take the French Way to Compostela. About 30% of the pilgrims who arrive in Santiago state that they intend to continue onwards to Fisterra and Muxía.

### > Stages of the Way of Saint James of Fisterra and Muxía

This part of the Way of St James from Santiago to Fisterra and Muxía, which takes pilgrims to the edge of Europe and the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, has two points of arrival: Fisterra and Muxía. The route is divided into three stages, with another one that connects the two towns.

The first two: Santiago-Negreira and Negreira- Olveiroa are shared stages to reach either destination. The third one splits at the top of O Hospital de Logoso. The trail to the right takes you to Muxia after passing through Dumbría, while the one on the left passes through Cee and Corcubión and then ends at Fisterra. Then there is a fourth stage that connects the two points of arrival: Fisterra and Muxia, which is a trail that runs along the coast between the two towns.





*Public pilgrims' hostel of Fisterra.*

### **Stage one: Santiago- Negreira (21 km).**

This first stage starts at the Praza do **Obradoiro** in Santiago. Head westwards along the streets of As Hortas and Poza de Bar to leave the city. Pass through some small villages and hamlets in the region of A Maía up to O Alto do Vento, and then head down through Ventosa and Lombao until you come to **Augapesada**, where there is a small medieval bridge. Now the trail heads upwards along the coast of **O Mar de Ovellas**, where there are some beautiful views of A Maía. After leaving this region you enter A Barcala and pass through Santa María de Trasmonte, with the impressive Baroque tower of the parish church. Then head down through Reino and Burgueiros and come to **A Ponte Maceira**, where you cross medieval bridge over the river Tambre. The bridge and the well-conserved centre of the village are well worth visiting. Continue along the right bank of the river till you pass under an arch of the Ponte Nova (19th c.), go through the hamlets of Barca and Chancela, and after passing near the manor house of Chancela, you arrive at the town of **Negreira**, capital of A Barcala.



*Calvary of A Cruz de Baixar and the beach of Langosteira.*

### **Stage two: Negreira- Olveiroa (33 km).**

This is one of the longest stages of this route. Leave Negreira and after crossing the river Barcala, head up towards Zas and then take the old royal road that heads up the slope of the valley. The route passes through the hamlets of Camiño Real, Rapote, Piaxe, with the Baroque church of **San Mamede de A Pena**, and Portocamiño, and then goes down toward **Vilaserío**.

There is a small municipal hostel here. Carry on towards Cornado and once you leave the hamlet, you enter the flatlands of the region of O Xallas. Further ahead are the hamlets of Maroñas and **Santa Mariña**, the latter of which has a Romanesque church. After crossing the road between Santa Comba and Muros, the trail continues westward, passing through the small hamlets of Bon Xesús, Gueima and Vilar de Castro. After leaving Vilar de Castro, you start the ascent of **Monte Aro** (556 m), which towers over the entire plateau and offers a magnificent view over the reservoir of A Fervenza. Then pass through Abelairoas and San Cristovo de Corzón on your way down to the river Xallas. Cross the bridge of **A Ponte Olveira**, parts of which date



*Pilgrims passing through Olveiroa.*

back to the 16th c., and then you enter the municipality of Dumbría, before finally reaching **Olveiroa** and the end of this second stage.

### **Stage three: Olveiroa- Fisterra (34 km) or Olveiroa-Muxía (32 km).**

Shortly after leaving Olveiroa, the path follows a stream as it heads upwards on the slope of Monte Sino. It then passes through the hamlet of Logoso, before arriving at Hospital, whose name refers to a pilgrims' **hospital** that was once here. Further on you come to a roundabout on the main road, where the trail divides into two. If you take the route to the left, you arrive at Fisterra, if you go straight on, the trail takes you to Muxía.

The path to **Fisterra** passes near the calvary of O Couto, the chapel of Nuestra Señora de As Neves and San Pedro Mártir, and then goes down Monte de A Armada towards the ría of **Corcubión**. Pass through **Cee** and then enter the historical town of Corcubión. From there go up to the top of **San Roque**, where there is a hostel. Go through Amarela to the beach of Estorde, and then carry on through **Sardiñeiro** and the small bay of Talón. Then you come to the long **beach of A Langosteira**, which



*Calvary of A Cruz de Baixar and the beach of Langosteira.*

takes you to the calvary of A Cruz de Baixar, the entrance to the town of **Fisterra** and the end of this part of the route. Places to see in this town are cape Fisterra and the parish church of Santa María das Areas, which is home to the chapel of the **Santo Cristo**.

The way to **Muxía** goes along a hilly section and then heads down to the hamlet of As Carizas. Pass through the sports and leisure area of O Conco, where there is a pilgrims' hostel. Then head towards **Santa Eulalia de Dumbría**, the capital of the municipality, where you can see the 17th c. parish church. Carry on to the bridge of O Val de Liñares,

and after crossing the 552 regional road, keep going to **Trasufre**, which is famous for being the sanctuary of the Virxe do Espiño. Cross the river Castro, and a set of tracks through the fields take you to **Senande**. Pass through A Grixá, where you can see the church of San Cibrán de Vilastose. A track through a wooded hill takes you to **Quintáns**, and from there you head along the old dirt track that has now been converted into a path to **San Martiño de Ozón**, where there used to be a monastery, and where there is a site of great architectural interest made up of the church, the rector's house and a large hórreo. The path continues through Vilar de Sobremonite and Merexo



*Pilgrims at Punta da Barca.*

on its way to Os Muíños. Then it heads up to **Moraime**, which was and important historical centre.

Here there are Roman and Visigothic ruins and a beautiful Romanesque church and Baroque rector's house. From here head up to the top of **Chorente**, where you can visit the chapel of San Roque. After passing through the hamlet of Chorente, go down to the beaches of O Espiñeirido and A Cruz and enter the town of **Muxía**, which you pass through on your way to the **chapel of the Virxe da Barca** and the famous stones of **Abalar and Os Cadrís**, where this stage ends.

### **Stage four: Fisterra- Muxía (29 km).**

This fourth stage goes both ways, so you can start in Fisterra or Muxía.

If you start in Fisterra, leave the town and take the path to the parish of **San Martiño de Duio**: here you can see the valley where the mythical city of Dugium mentioned in the Codex Calixtinus is supposed to be.

Pass through **Hermedesuxo de Abaixo, San Salvador, Rial and Castrexe**, and head onto **Padrís**, with the long beach of O Rostro to your left.

Then continue through **Canosa to Lires**, which is a tourist village located in the middle of this stage. From here head down to the river Castro, which you cross via a stone footbridge built only a few years ago. Enter the municipality of Muxía via **Vaosilveiro** and continue through **Frixe**, which still has its Romanesque church.

Then pass through **Guisamonde** and **Morquintián**, and from there on the trail heads up towards **Vilela** and the top of As Aferroas, before heading down to **Xurarantes** and the beach of Lourido.

Follow the shore of the beach until you come to **Muxía**. When you enter the town, take the path in the Praza do Coído that goes to the area of A Pel and takes you to the **chapel of the Virxe da Barca** and the famous **stones of Abalar and Os Cadrís**, where this stage ends.