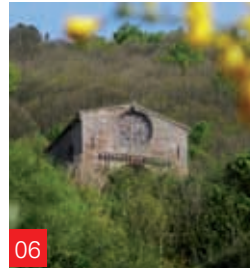


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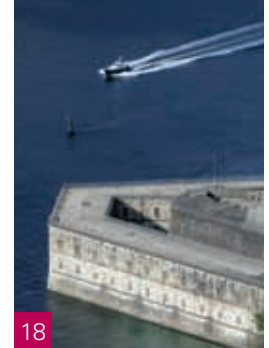
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Declared World Heritage by UNESCO, it is one of the best kept examples of roman military fortification.

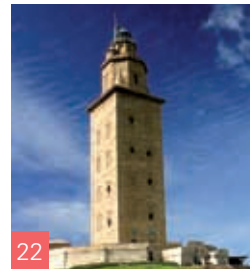


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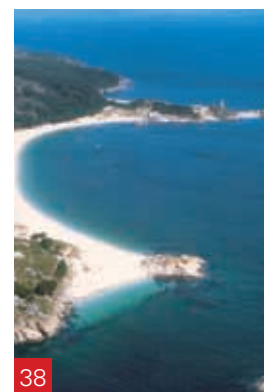


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TOP TEN: TEN UNIQUE PLACES IN GALICIA

Galicia is water, earth, wind... Galicia is sentiment, passion, joy, “morriña” (Galician homesickness)... Galicia is art, history, legend... It is everything that makes one dream, feel moved, marvel... All of this is Galicia, a land which we will discover little by little, step by step... That is why, we present a selection of ten extraordinary places in this land which will definitely not leave one unmoved and which, undoubtedly, embody the true essence of Galicia: we shall encounter natural marvels like the Cíes Islands or the Vixía Herbeira cliffs; World Heritage monuments like the walls of Lugo, the Tower of Hércules or the Way of St. James and its Old Quarter; places which are unique due to their architectural and landscape beauty like the Ribeira Sacra (Sacred Riverbank) or Ferrol from the Enlightenment; and other places which are no less special due to their historical or mythological value like Cape Fisterra or the Santa Tegra “Castro” (Celtic Settlement).

10 Unique places in Galicia



Motorway / Dual carriageway	
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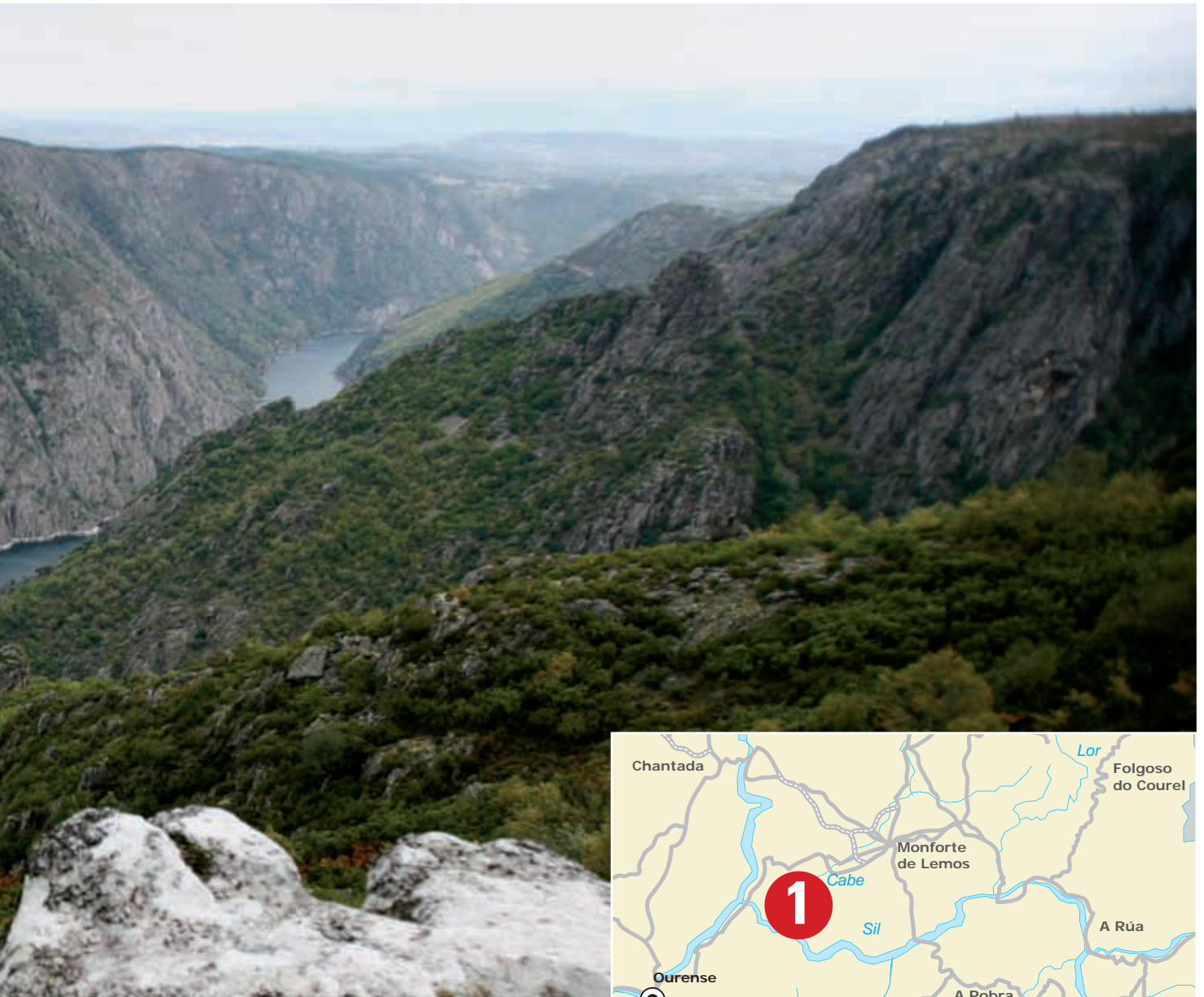
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Ribeira Sacra



Our first stop on our “10 unique places in Galicia” route is the Ribeira Sacra, where we will come across the largest collection of religious Romanesque buildings in Europe.

Can you keep my secret?



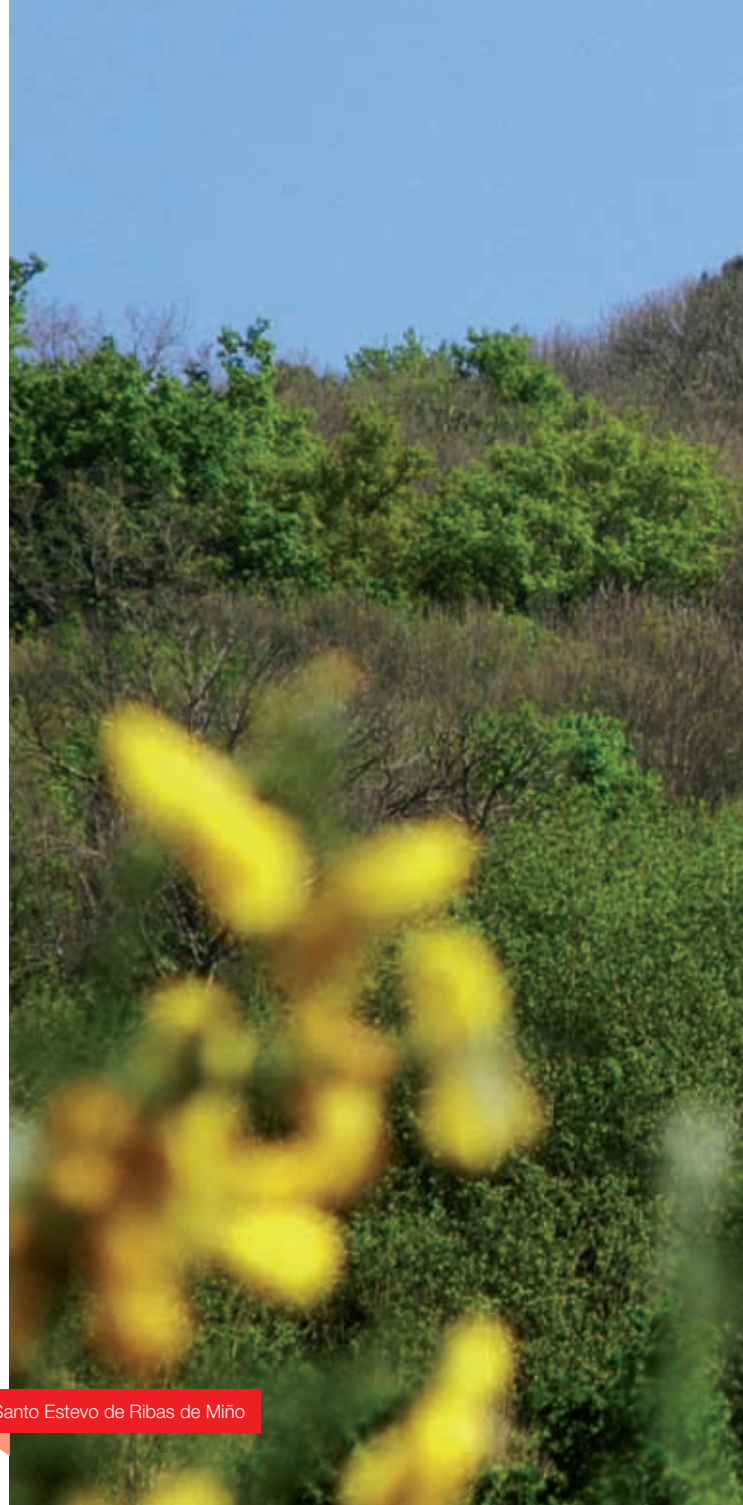


The banks of the river Miño

1 Ribeira Sacra

The Ribeira Sacra is a land which is characterised by the river Miño and the river Sil which shape the beautiful landscape as they cross the mountains. If we add the faith and spirituality which still surrounds the many monasteries scattered throughout these lands, we stand before a part of Galicia which is a win-win bet for our senses.

We can venture into this magical atmosphere so as to get to know such a special place like Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil, an old convent which has been totally renovated and integrated into the National Paradores (State – Owned Hotels) net. Another must is the San Pedro de Rocas monastery which was excavated from the very rock. When we enter the temple, we feel like we are



Santo Estevo de Ribas de Miño

in a primitive cave. Surrounding the church, we will find anthropomorphic tombstones which have a kind of magical varnish caused by the mixture of stone, water and lichen. These are but two examples of the plentiful heritage we can contemplate in the Ribeira Sacra. There are many more waiting to be discovered on the banks of the Miño and the Sil like the San Paio de Diomondi and San Miguel de Eiré churches, or the Santa Cristina de Ribas de Sil and Montederramo monasteries. Yet not everything is architectural heritage in the Ribeira



Sacra, its landscape, made up of indigenous forests, is an ideal place for nature lovers to take different routes. We should not forget to stop at nature's great work of art, the river Mao canyon and its incredible falls. And if what we really like is to contemplate landscapes, we should head up to Parada de Sil where the most rugged and steepest canyons in the area await. The best-known look-out point is the so-called "balcóns de Madrid" (The Madrid Balconies) from where we may contemplate the canyons in their entire splendour as we hang in mid air and as long as we are not afraid of heights. To speak about the Ribeira Sacra also means to speak about wine, which we will understand as soon as we set foot in the area: the landscape is

full of "socalcos", vineyards on plots on the sides of the mountains. As we are in the area, we should not miss the opportunity to try some of the product of one of the five Denomination of Origin wine-growing areas in Galicia, to which the district gives its name.

We hope you will say farewell to the Ribeira Sacra in a peaceful state of mind after visiting its magical mountains where nature at its wildest and faith live together in harmony. Whether guided by the banks of the Miño river or sailing through the Sil river canyons, we will discover hidden places which cannot be reached by land where true medieval treasures await among the "socalcos" which make this land a place not far from paradise.

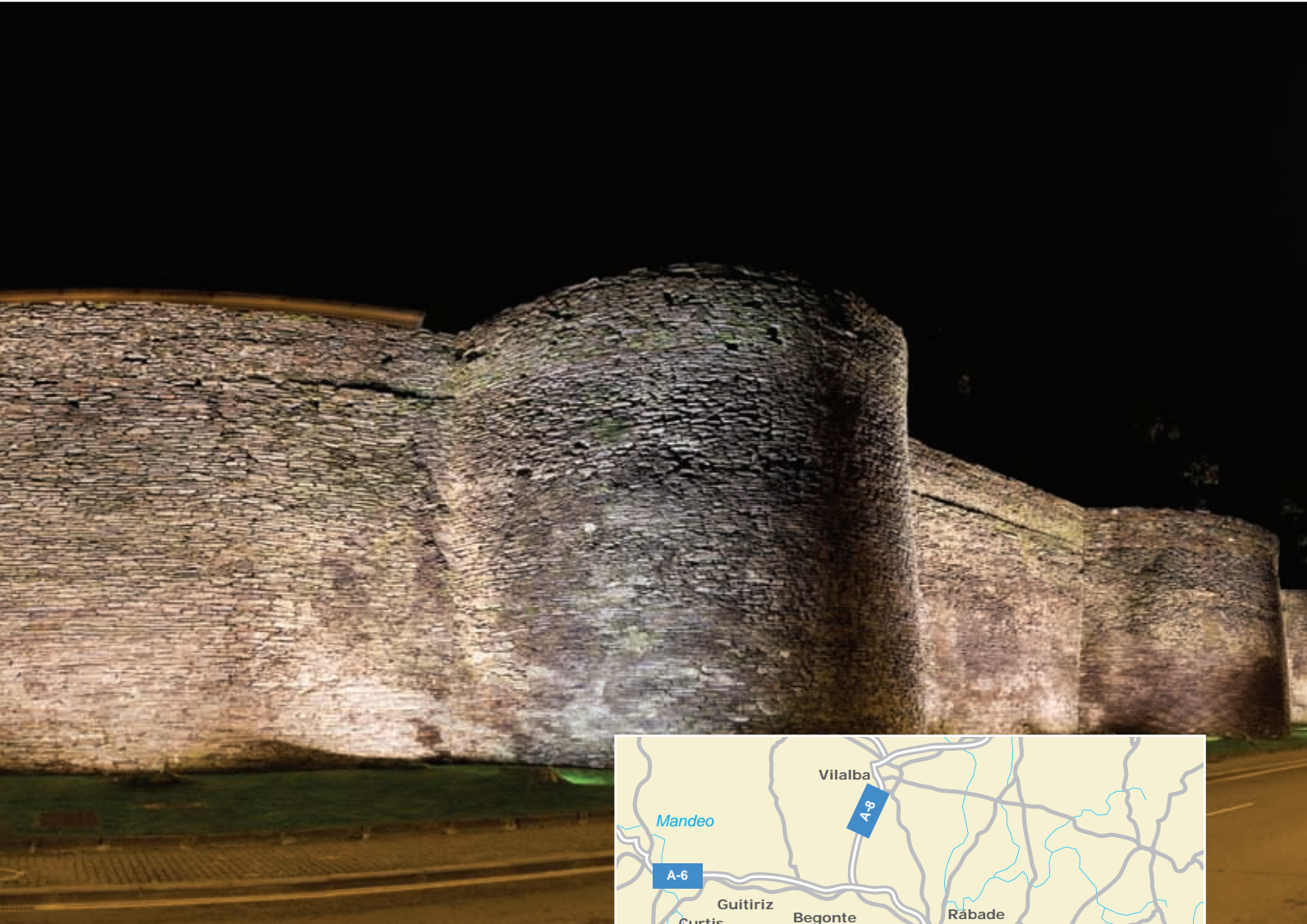


The walls of Lugo



Our unique trip brings us to the city of Lugo, whose wall is the best surviving example of all the Roman military fortifications. It was declared World Heritage by UNESCO in the year 2000, and it is an exceptional example of the type of construction which illustrates a significant period in our history.

Can you keep my secret?



From its Roman origin and its agitated medieval period to the innovative and revolutionary 19th century, it constitutes a unique monument which demonstrates the different phases of evolution of a city like Lugo, which, in itself, has been an important combination of historical and artistic monuments since its beginning as *Lucus Augusti*.

In Lugo, everything revolves around the wall; it is the heart of the city. If we decide to go up and cover the wall from the top along its wide, two thousand year old, 2,3 km long walk, we will surely be taken back to the past but, without a doubt, people taking a stroll, chatting or practicing sport will make us realize that the wall is more alive than ever, as it seems like just another one of this charming city's streets.

Surrounding the wall, Lugo has more important heritage which we should visit while we are here, like the old neighbourhood or the cathedral. Undoubtedly, a walk through the charming old quarter will lead us to an establishment where we can regain our strength: we must try "polbo á feira" (boiled octopus with olive oil, sea salt and paprika served on a round wooden dish), "lacón con grelos" (boiled salted ham with turnip tops) or "filloas con mel" (Galician pancakes with honey). There is a reason why the saying "and to eat, Lugo!" exists.

However, Lugo is much more. If we happen to be here during the summer solstice or at the beginning of October, we can mingle among the crowds that come to "Arde Lucus", a celebration which evokes the city's Roman past, and the San Froilán Patron Saint festivities, respectively.

Last but not least, we should not forget that one of the most important rivers in Galicia, the river Miño, crosses Lugo. Along its banks we can go for a walk through the large well-kept area under the indigenous trees.

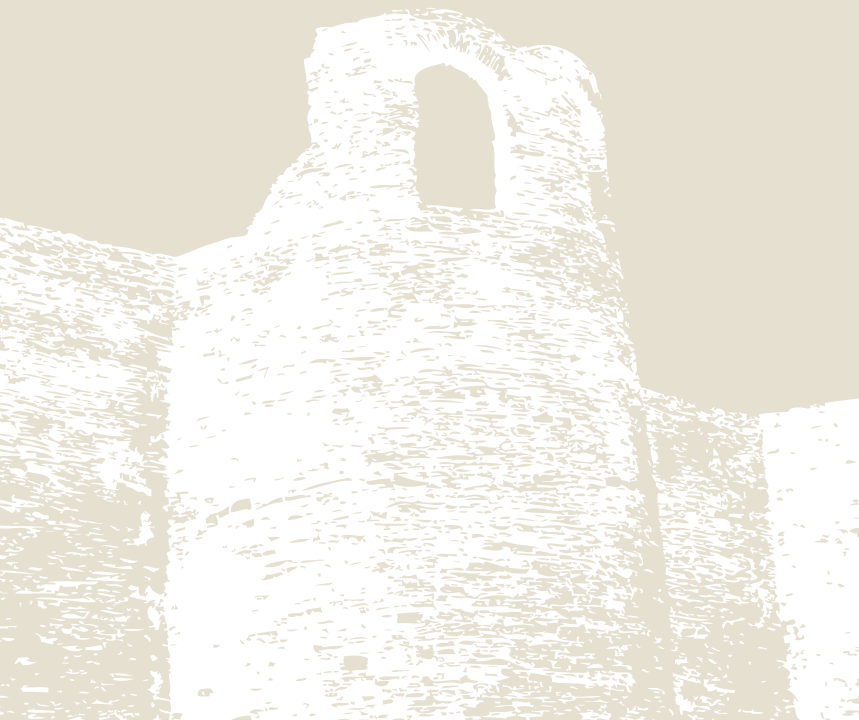
And thus, accompanied by the coolness on the banks of the Miño, we will bid farewell to this beautiful city which already caught the eye of the Romans.

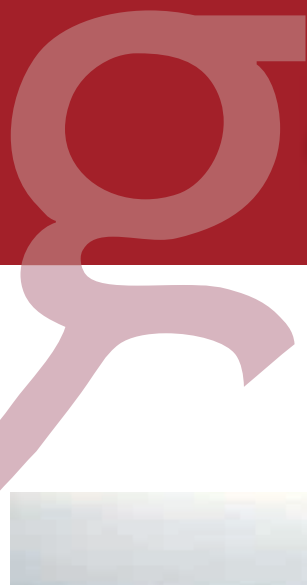


The walls of Lugo and cathedral



San Pedro de Toledo gate





A Capelada mountain range



We shall continue our pilgrimage through the “10 unique places in Galicia” heading north to the Capelada mountain range where we will find some of the highest cliffs in Europe.

Can you keep my secret?





3

A Capelada mountain range

The highest peak is Vixía Herbeira, which is over 620 m above sea level. From here, we will be able to contemplate the greatness and magnitude of the cliffs, the highest after the Norwegian fiords, as we must add to their height an 80% gradient. The scenery is amazing: a marvellous panoramic view of the powerful Atlantic Ocean and the rugged coastline near Santo André is, undoubtedly, one of the best in the entire European coastline.

And, as we have mentioned Santo André, we should not forget to take the chance to visit the sanctuary which is on the way to the top of A Capelada. It is one of the most venerated in Galicia where, as the saying goes, “whoever does not go while alive, will go after death”. If we wish to fulfill the tradition, we should place a stone on one of the “milladoiros” (piles of stones) on the side of the road in order to prove that we have been here. And, if what we wish is to find love, look for some “love grass”, you never know...

Once we are in the Capelada mountain range, we can continue the route and visit cape Ortegal and its lighthouse, where we will be amazed by the force of the sea beating against the “Aguillóns”, spiky rocks which emerge from the ocean against which the



waves release all their might. The experience will be complete if we happen to be there during a storm, as we will be able to witness the wildness of the sea in all its splendour, a feeling of power hard to forget. Standing here, one should take a deep breath and feel the immensity of the Earth, the strength of the wind and the peace which this place transmits. If we go down to Cariño and we are feeling a little weak, we should not forget that we can savour a delicious ray fish stew or scrambled sea urchins and seaweed, both of which are typical local dishes that will fill our mouth with the taste of the ocean. Without a doubt, the end of this trip will be marked by the blowing of the wind, the sea salt on our skin and a head of knotted hair, but above all, by the feeling of having been in a place of almost unreachable, or let us say, unforgettable landscapes.

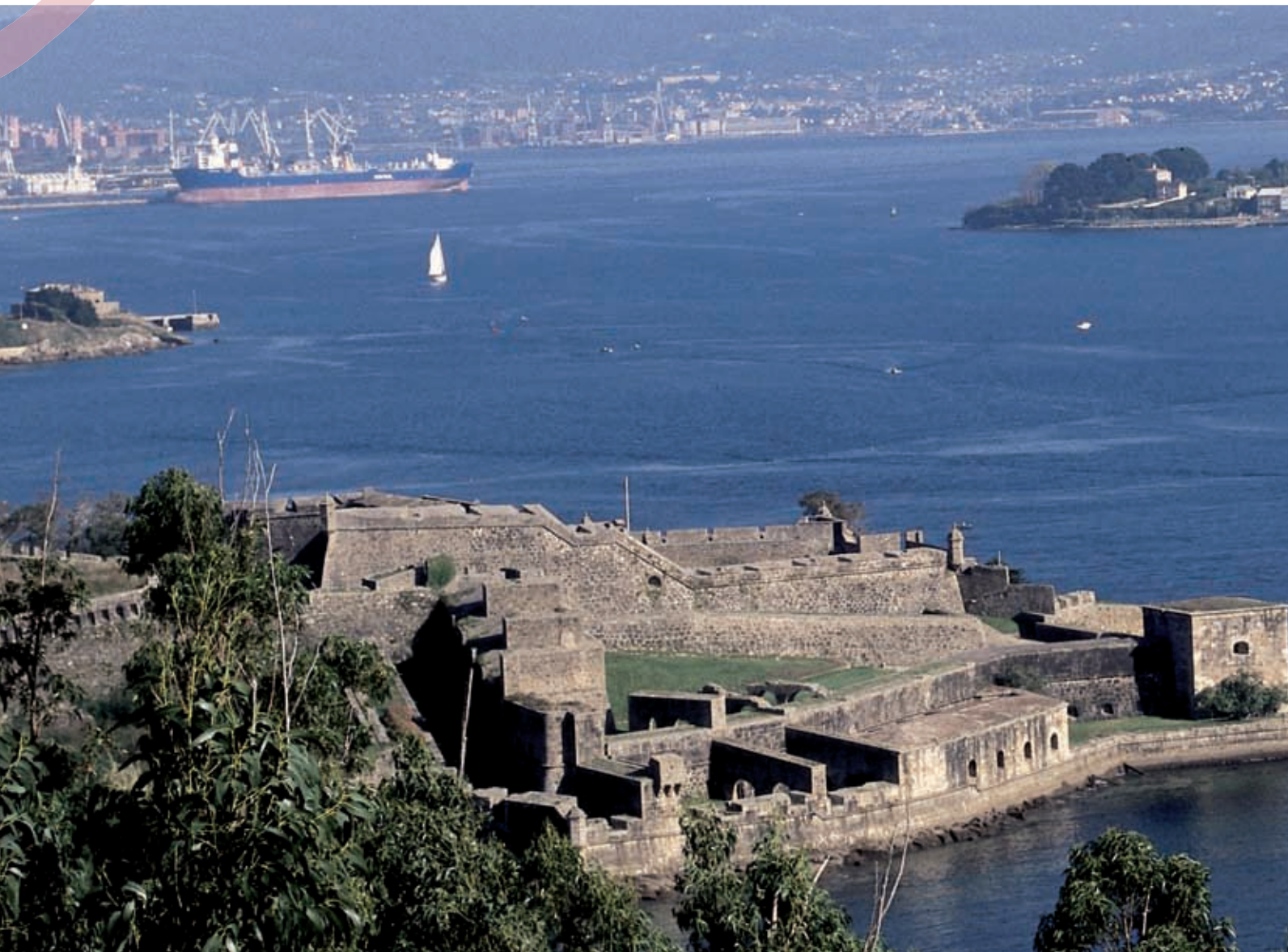
Sanctuary of Santo André de Teixido



Santo André de Teixido and Punta Valteira

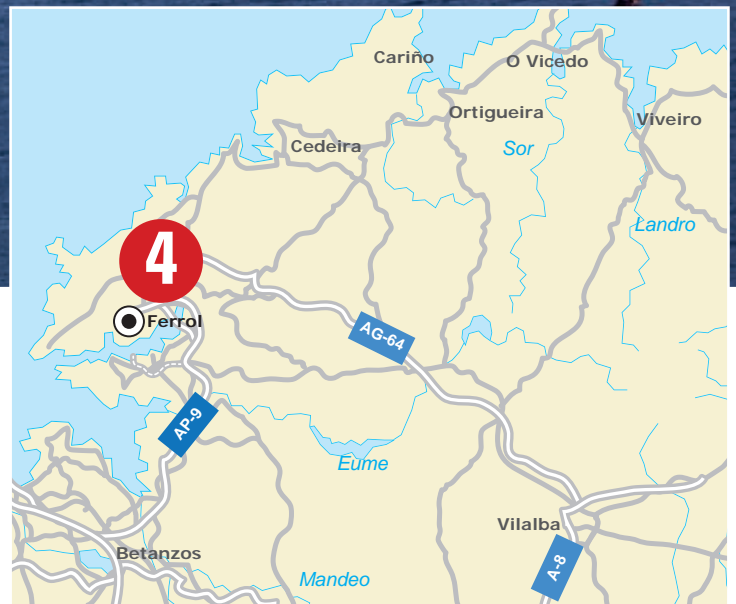
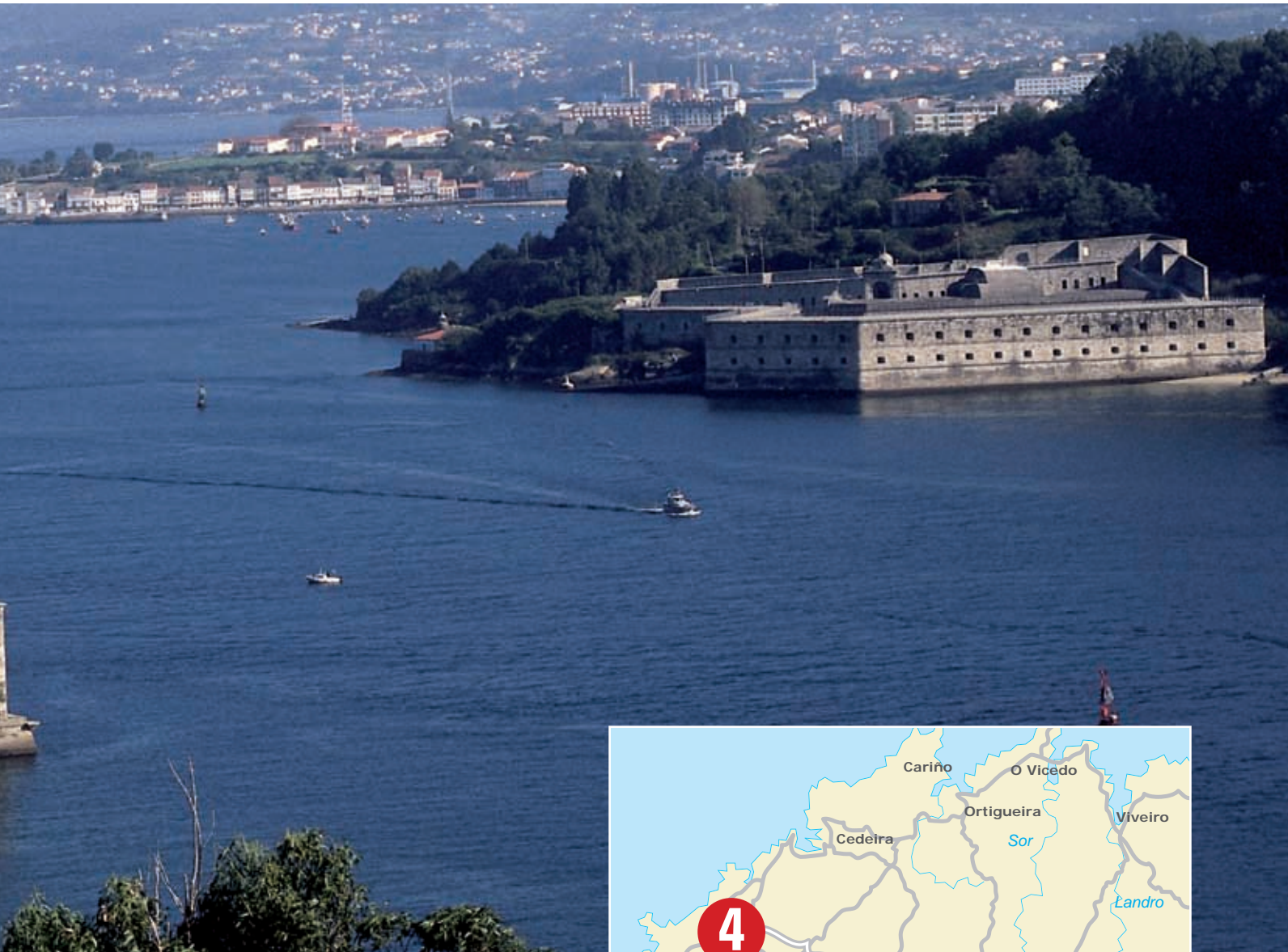


Ferrol from the enlightenment period



Our trip along the north of Galicia brings us to the city of Ferrol in order to visit its Arsenal, the only military port from the Enlightenment period which remains intact in Europe and the largest naval base from that time...

Can you keep my secret?



A Magdalena neighbourhood

4

Ferrol from the enlightenment period

Even though Ferrol was a town with a strong fishing tradition in the beginning, throughout the sixteenth century, its port began to harbour vessels belonging to the Royal Armada. Later, King Felipe V, King Fernando VI and King Carlos III encouraged the construction of this great piece of work, thus, making the city the main military base in north-western Spain and the largest European naval base during the time. On the inside, which we can visit after applying, we will find the Arms Hall, which currently serves as barracks. We may also visit the Naval Museum and the Campana Dike, one of the largest in the world. We ought not to forget Exponav, an important exhibition on naval construction, either.

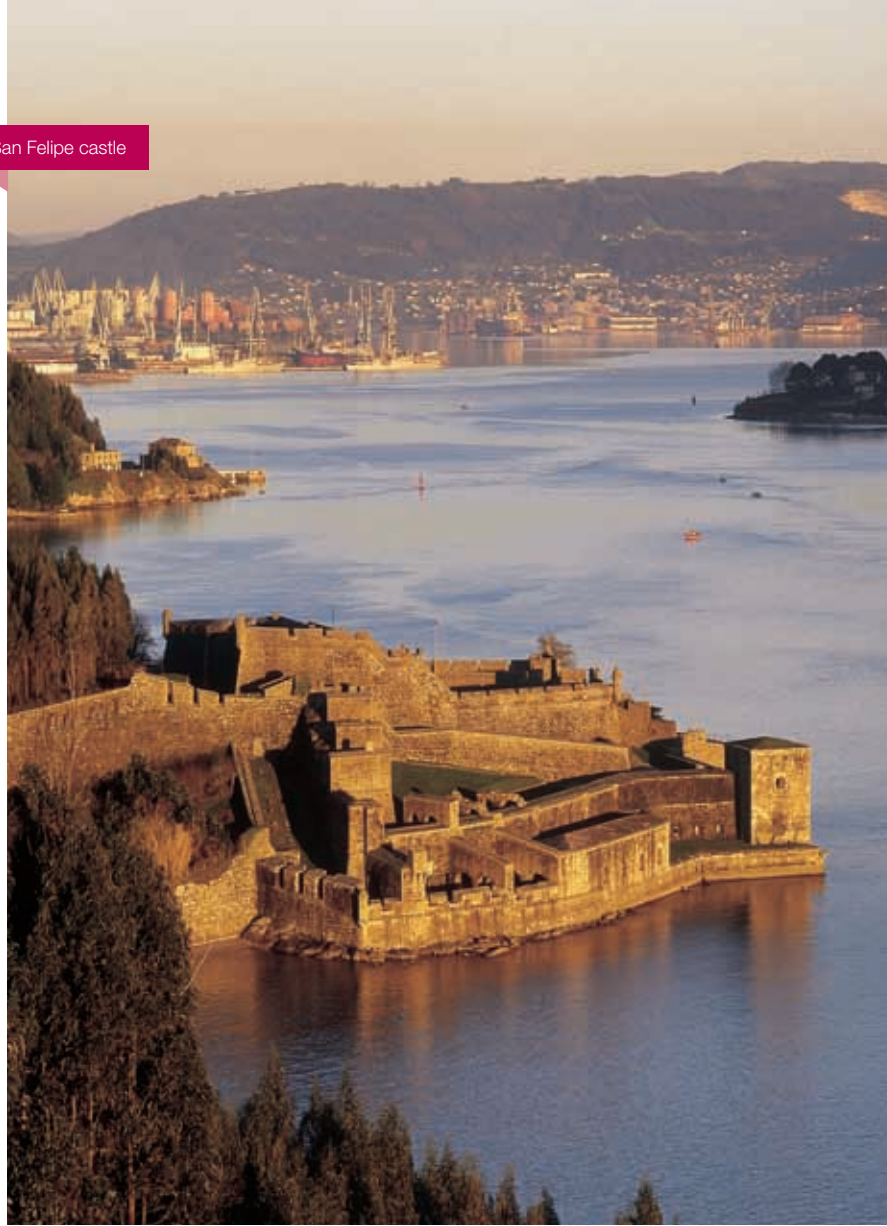
Another must in Ferrol is the Magdalena neighbourhood, which will draw us closer to the city's industrial and fishing history. Along our route through the neighbourhood, lit by galleries and with a perfect layout (in the shape of a pound of chocolate), we should not forget to stop at the balconies in the Herrera Gardens, from where we will



San Felipe castle

have a wonderful panoramic view of the Arsenal. The Jofre Theatre, San Xiao's church or the Ateneo are some other elements which will accompany us on our visit.

If we venture a little away from the city centre, we can end our route by visiting the fishing neighbourhood of A Graña, with its typical narrow houses and cobbled streets which will lead us to Castle of San Felipe. This fortress is a faithful example of the academic style of the period, the Enlightenment. As we contemplate from here the magnificent views of the estuary and the Castle of Palma, situated in the municipality of Mugardos, it will be hard to forget the historical and cultural importance of the two defensive fortresses on the estuary and the Military Arsenal, which turned this entry way into an impregnable stronghold, especially for the English incursions. If we happen to be here at sunset, this could be a perfect ending to our day: the sun going down on the still waters in the estuary with a view of Ferrol, this fishing and naval city which became our home during the day.



The Arsenal





The tower of Hércules



And so we continue our tour of the “10 unique places in Galicia” by skipping from one city to another. We arrive in A Coruña so as to admire The Tower of Hércules, the oldest Roman lighthouse in the world which is still working today and for which it was declared World Heritage by UNESCO.

Can you keep my secret?



The Farum Brigantium (lighthouse) was built by the Roman Empire towards the end of the 1st century or at the beginning of the following one. Situated at the entrance of the port of A Coruña, this colossal lighthouse was designed in order to better navigation along the dangerous Galician coastline, a strategic area along the route which connected the Mediterranean to north-western Europe.

According to legend, the Greek hero Hercules arrived in Spain in search of the giant Xerion, so as to free these lands from his abusive power. The battle they fought lasted three days and three nights. Hercules defeated the giant and cut off his head which he buried in the bottom of the sea. In this place, and as to commemorate his victory, a lighthouse was built, near to which the city of *Crunia*, the name of the first woman to live here and whom Hércules fell in love with, was founded. We should climb up the steep staircase and, once we reach the top, we will be able to enjoy an amazing panoramic view of the city of A Coruña and the Atlantic Ocean while the wind blows fiercely. But we should be careful not to make too much noise for we could wake the giant...

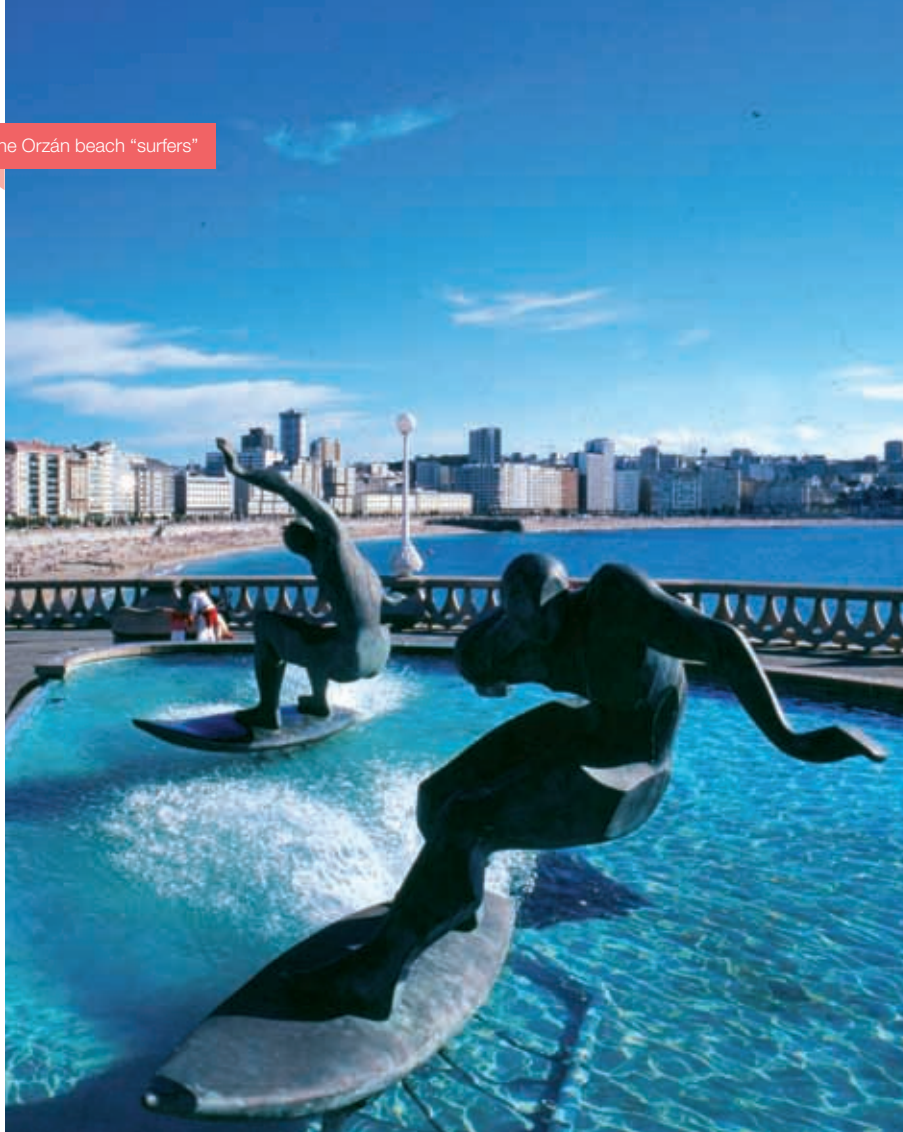
We must go for a walk on the promenade by the sea and visit the well-known Orzán and Riazor beaches where the force of the sea is a spectacle in itself. We should also visit the Mariña area and its galleries, which are the reason for A Coruña being known as “The crystal city”.

Take some time to cover this part of the city where we can stop for a coffee or savour some delicious homemade ice-cream. We can also walk up to the Méndez Núñez gardens and then walk up Rúa Real (Royal Street) which ends in the best-known square in the city, María Pita square. Here, we can admire a statue in honour of the most popular heroine in the city as we have a snack at one of the terraces.

Bid this beautiful “Atlantic balcony” farewell with the feeling of having been caressed not only by the aroma of the

sea and the salty breeze but also by the people, for it has been said for many years that no one is a foreigner in this city.

The Orzán beach "surfers"



Promenade and tower of Hércules



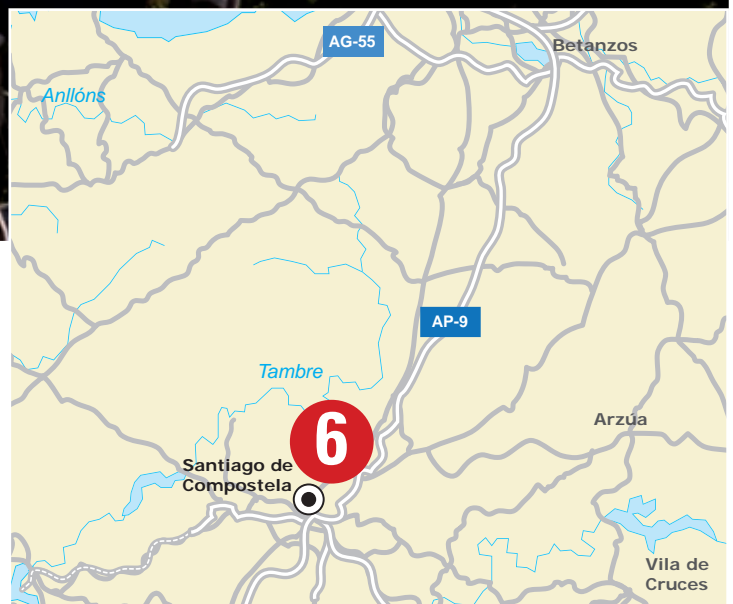


The Way of St. James



On our unique tour of Galicia, it is only natural that we focus on its emblematic Way. We are going to need our sports clothing, a backpack and a comfortable pair of shoes, as we cannot depart this Land without covering at least a small stretch of St. James' Way. A route which still keeps secrets waiting to be revealed.

Can you keep my secret?





6

The Way of St. James

The pilgrimage route to Santiago played an important role in allowing a cultural exchange between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe during the Middle Ages. Thus, St. James' Way was declared the First European Itinerary of Cultural Interest by the European Council in 1987. The well-known French Way was also declared World Heritage by UNESCO in 1993. In Spain, this is the route with the longest historical tradition and the one which is best known worldwide. It begins in Roncesvalles (Navarra) and it goes all the way to Santiago de Compostela for 750 km passing by isolated churches, bridges, cathedrals,

monasteries... with the eternal colour green always in the background.

If we want to get the "A Compostela"-the historical pilgrim credentials-, we should cover the last 100 km on foot or horseback or the last 200 km, if we decide to ride a bike. We should not forget that this pilgrim passport must be correctly stamped at least twice every day. Many pilgrims set off from the town of Sarria as it is 113 km away from Santiago, and thus they can be considered pilgrims.

From Sarria, we will venture into the heart of the true rural Galicia as we cross the provinces of Lugo and A Coruña. Along the route, we shall cross oak tree

woods, groves and meadows where we will be able to contemplate Galician cows grazing peacefully. This is, without a doubt, a good chance to see up close rural life and also to take in the fresh air which these green lands have to offer.

We should not miss the opportunity to savour some of the tasty cheeses which are certified as we cross the lands of A Ulloa, Melide and Arzúa. This is the perfect delicious stop on our route to regain our strength.

One last effort will bring us to the village of San Marcos, before getting to Monte do Gozo (Mount of Joy). From here, pilgrims can make out the city of Santiago de Compostela: The towers of the cathedral. This moment will awake many a feeling and it will be the best encouragement in order to continue in spite of the accumulated exhaustion. We will probably also meet other groups of pilgrims here too, which will add a certain emotion to this moment.

From this place, we will start our decent until we arrive at San Lázaro neighbourhood, and next the neighbourhood of San Pedro. The entrance to Santiago's old quarter is done by "A Porta do Camiño" (The Gate of the Way), one of the seven gates from the medieval wall which no longer exists. When we get to the imposing Obradoiro square, an emotional feeling will take a hold of us: the sound of the bagpipes in the background, the cathedral as a witness to this moment, the accumulated tiredness and the feeling of having accomplished a goal, a wish.

Pilgrims at O Pino



Samos monastery



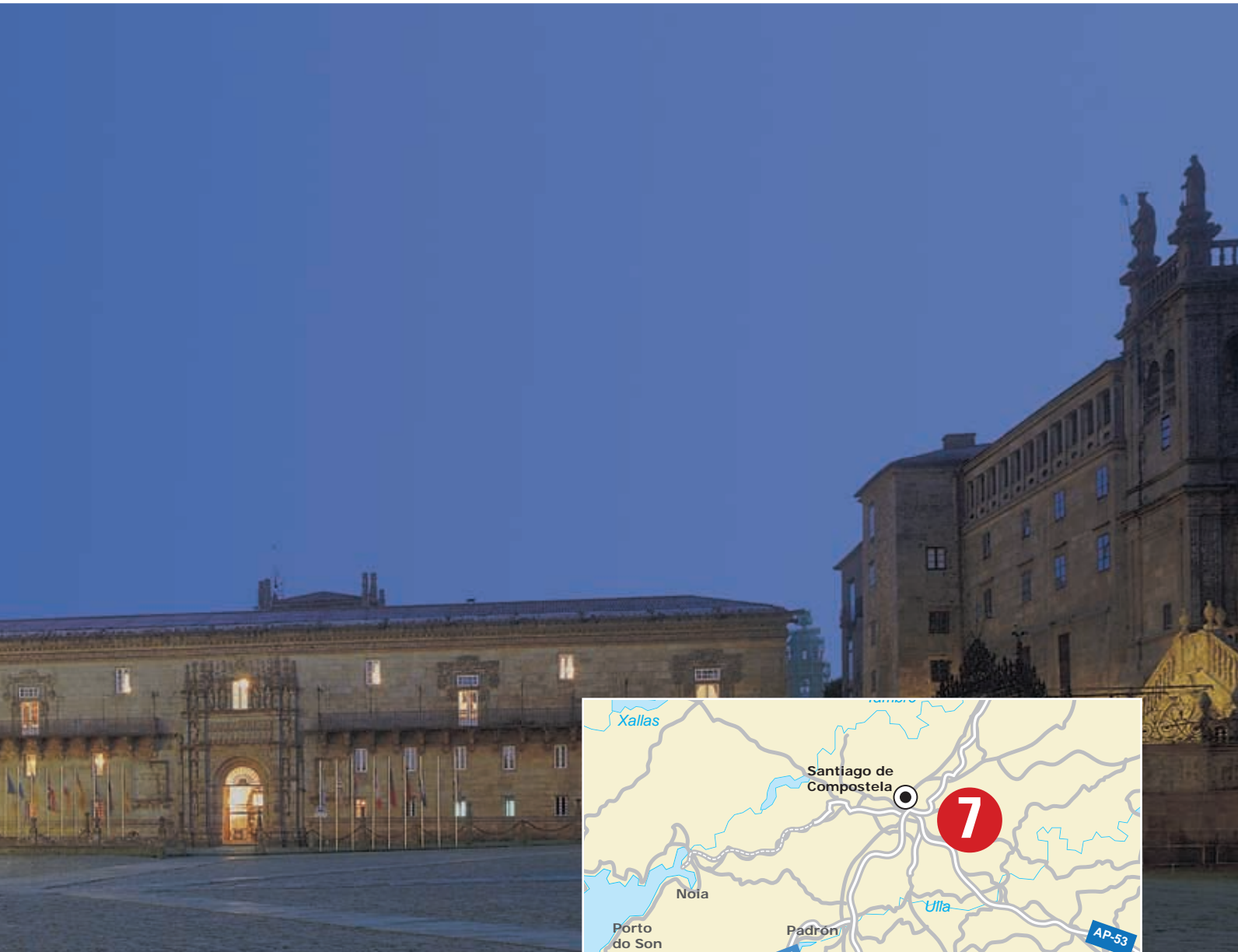


Santiago de Compostela



Our trip now brings us to the capital of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, World Heritage and a pilgrim destination for Christians since the 9th century.

Can you keep my secret?



7

Santiago de Compostela

The Cathedral from the Alameda

Thousands of pilgrims have carried the scallop shell and have walked all the way to the Galician sanctuary following all the St. James' ways, true routes of faith. Apart from this, we should add that both during the Romanesque period and the Baroque, the sanctuary of Santiago de Compostela held a strong influence over the development of architecture, not only in Galicia, but also throughout the north of the Iberian Peninsula.

Before going into the cathedral, it is recommendable to take a slow stroll through the different streets that make up the historical quarter, which was declared World Heritage by UNESCO in 1985 and is popularly known as "the almond". Rúa do Franco, with its typical restaurants, or Rúa do Vilar, with its arcades, are two good examples of its medieval heritage. Once there, we can enter Praza do Obradoiro and look around us: Pazo de Raxoi, where the town hall is located, the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, currently a Tourist National Parador, Colexio de San Xerome, where the vice-chancellor's office of the University of Santiago is located, together make up an extraordinary setting where we will inevitably feel tiny. The sound of the bagpipes in the background will enrich, if it is possible to do so, our experience as a piper is usually playing under the Pazo de Xelmírez arch, so we should listen carefully!

We shall enter the cathedral through the magnificent Pórtico da Gloria, by Mestre Mateo, where its image



Santiago's old city



(known as the “*saint of the head butts*”) and the friendly “smile of the prophet, Daniel” will welcome us. We should visit this temple with devotion, taking our time and being aware at all times of the magnitude of this piece of work. Contemplate each chapel and focus on the details of the main altar. We can go to mass too, and if we are lucky, we might get to see the “botafumeiro”, a huge censer which is a part of a unique ritual in this city. We will undoubtedly feel the withdrawal and emotion of the pilgrims, a feeling of having reached our goal, of having accomplished our dreams...

We should not forget to visit the different squares which surround the cathedral, like Praza da Inmaculada, Praza da Quintana and Praza de Praterías, which is crowned by the only Romanesque façade the cathedral has. The names of these squares come from medieval guilds,

something which still remains today, as we can come across several establishments where we can purchase silver or jet, a perfect souvenir.

After this magical route, we cannot leave Santiago without stopping at one of the many restaurants. The visitor is surprised by the refrigerated display cabinets in the windows which show as one walks by a selection of the best products from the Galician estuaries and lands: barnacles, octopus, crab, fish, beef and so on. All of this will be accompanied by a wide selection of the best wines. For dessert, Santiago cake, which is made with almonds, is a good option for those with a sweet tooth.

To end our trip around Santiago, there is nothing better than to head to the Alameda and its Ferradura walk from where we will have a wonderful panoramic view of the cathedral. Without a doubt, this is the best way to bid the capital of Galicia farewell.

g Cape Fisterra



Santiago de Compostela is the traditional end to the Santiago pilgrimage route, but to a certain extent, it is not the end of the Way. Thousands of people decide to continue their spiritual path to the western most point on the Iberian Peninsula in the region of Fisterra (called the End of the World by the Romans).

Can you keep my secret?





Fisterra lighthouse

8 Cape Fisterra

Fisterra was considered to be the end of the known world during Antiquity. In fact, its geographic location and the amazing sunsets, made Decimus Junius Brutus (the Roman general who led the conquest of Galicia) believe that this was, indeed, the place where the sun died.

Unquestionably, the surroundings have always been magical, as it is said that the Ara Solis, an altar, which according to legend, was where the Phoenicians worshipped the sun, used to be located. So, we recommend covering this part of the coastline, where, without a doubt, magic will lead the way.

When we get to the town of Fisterra, we ought to visit the dock where we will be able to contemplate the coming and going of vessels upon a still sea which will give us the impression that we are not in the fierce Costa da Morte (Death Coast). We can wander about the streets in this fishing town and stop at a tavern to listen to the fishermen's tales as we tuck in to a dish full of razor clams or any other tasty product from these waters.

Let us continue our trip and head to the lighthouse area, not without first stopping at the Santa María

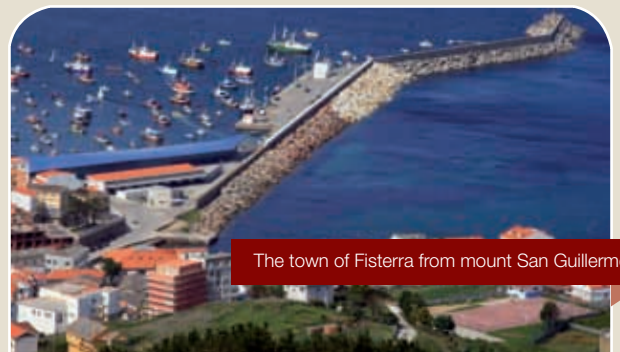
Cape Fisterra area

das Areas Romanesque sanctuary, which is home to the worshipped image of the Cristo da Barba Dourada (literally 'Christ with the Golden Beard'). Legend tells us that a ship got rid of it when it was having trouble at sea as it was approaching Fisterra dragged by the sea. We should take a look at the image to witness if what is said about it is really true: people assure that its hair and fingernails grow...



On the same road, we are likely to come across a pilgrim strolling along as he or she gazes into the Corcubi3n estuary with mount Pindo in the background.

Once we get to the lighthouse, the majestic views from the cliff over the Atlantic ocean, the sea beating strongly and the feeling that there is nothing which can come between this piece of land and the American continent, will stay with one forever, as it is not everyday that one has the opportunity to contemplate the sunset at the End of the World.



The town of Fisterra from mount San Guilleme



The Cíes Islands

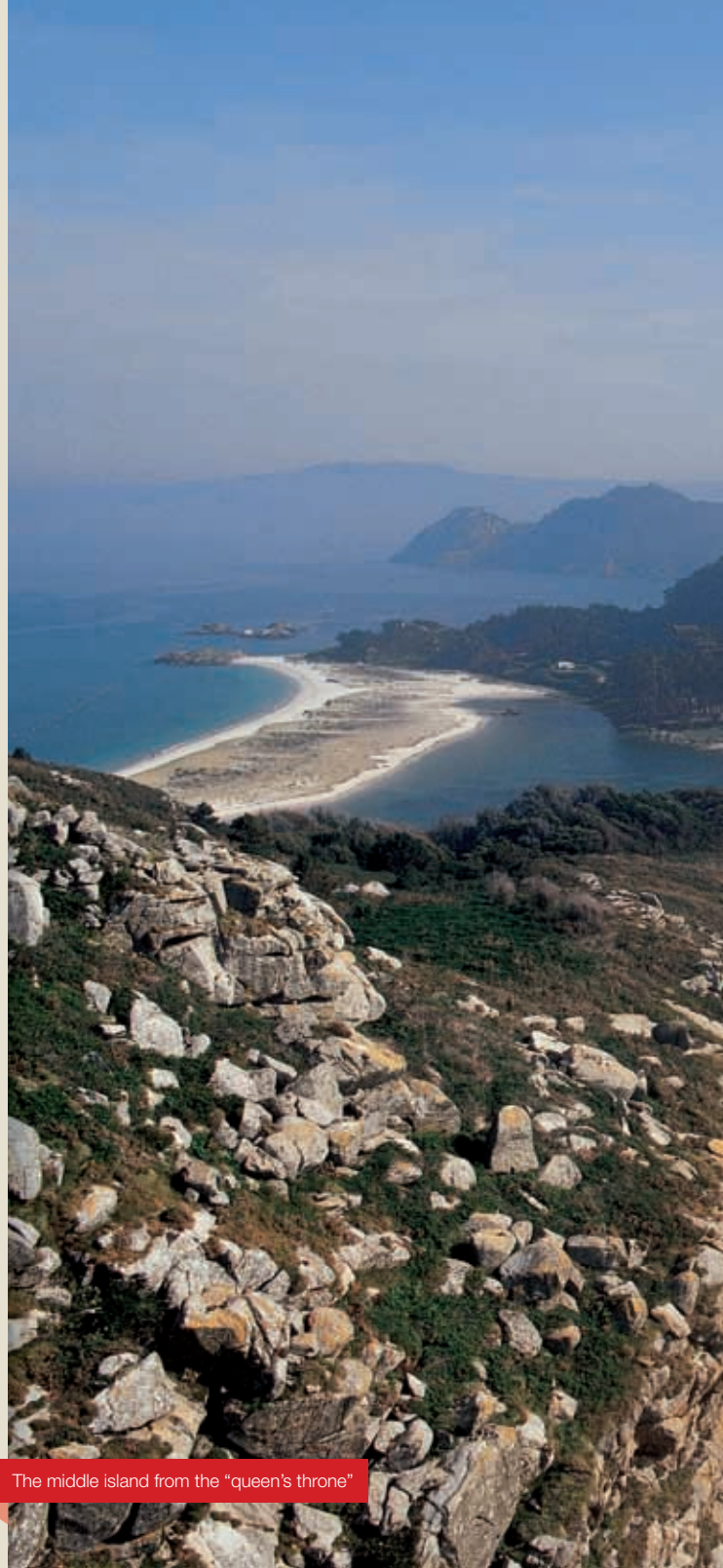


We now head south, to discover the Cíes Islands, one of the archipelagos that together with the islands of Ons, Sálvora and Cortegada make up the Galician Atlantic Islands Maritime-Terrestrial National Park.

Can you keep my secret?



Figueiras beach



The middle island from the "queen's throne"

9

The Cíes Islands

The variety of both wildlife and vegetation, as well as the spectacular landscapes make these isles one of Galicia's natural heritage gems.

To talk about the Cíes Islands is to talk about nature at its best. We can get to them, during the high

season, on board a regular ferry which departs from any of the following docks: Vigo, Cangas or Baiona. Like ancient, wild, untameable leviathans, the view of the isles at the end of the Vigo estuary will lead the way. Seagulls, sea crows, gannets and the always cheerful dolphins will be our companions during the entire trip. Many a little fishing boat will be scattered over the sea which goes to show how rich the Galician seafloor is.

Even the best photograph of the three islands, namely North, or Monteagudo Island; Middle, or Lighthouse Island; and South, or San Martiño



Island. Ptolomeus had already named them “the isles of gods”.

Once we are docked at the Northern isle, we can choose to relax on the beautiful Rodas beach or at another quieter one like Figueiras. The crystal clear waters are a delight for all those who decide to swim in them. Bream, sea bass, perch, all kinds of invertebrates and multi-coloured seaweed are to be found. This is what we will remember once we have dived into the Cíes marine paradise.

We strongly recommend visiting the Interpretation Centre where we will be thoroughly informed

about this paradise. The trails which lead to the lighthouses offer us beautiful walks which will be appreciated by trekking lovers. The path which leads to the top of Monte Faro is unrivalled. The views are well worthwhile the effort of the climb and if we wrap all this up with a sunset, then it will be a sight to remember forever.

At the end of the day, say goodbye to this spot filled with peace and life as the Cíes sea blends in with the already redish sky and only the wake of the boat unites us with this heavenly paradise upon Earth.



Santa Tegra



In order to come to the end of our tour of the “10 unique places in Galicia”, we arrive in the town council of A Guarda where the Santa Tegra Celtic settlement is located. From here, we will be able to contemplate a breath-taking panoramic view of the mouth of the river Miño, between Spain and Portugal.

Can you keep my secret?



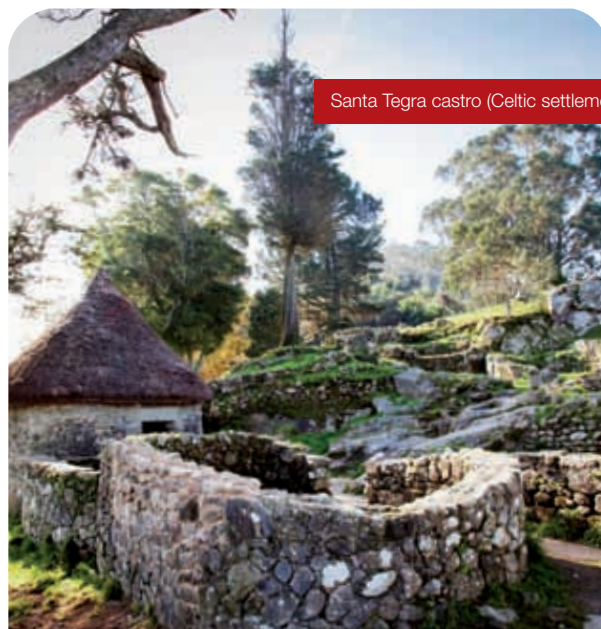


10

Santa Tegra

At the foot of the “castro” (ancient Celtic settlement), the river Miño empties into the Atlantic. The Portuguese and Galician coasts frame the view which can be observed from the top of mount Santa Tegra. The best thing to do is to take a good camera to capture it forever.

The scene has an even greater value if we travel back in time: the people who once lived in the Celtic fort already enjoyed these magnificent views from their homes back then. Obviously, the location of the fort was not owed to the beautiful landscape, but to strategic reasons and reasons which had to do with security, as from here, they were able to control the movement in the sea and in the mouth of the river Miño.





The settlement, situated at a height of 341 m, was home to about 5000 people during the time of its maximum glory back in the 1st century B.C. and it was one of the largest in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. It is made up mainly of oval-shaped home, but we may also see some rectangular-shaped ones with rounded edges due to Roman building technique influences. Even though it may seem a chaotic settlement, there is a logical order which around “family units”, which we could try to discover as we could the petroglyphs which are in and around the premises. Its inhabitants made pottery, jewels, fabrics and other utensils which we can observe in the A Guarda archaeological museum.

At this coastal town, stopping at the dock is a must. Here, we will be able to see the boats taking a break before another hard day’s work begins, always with the sound of the seagulls and the slight whirr of the boat engines in the background.

A grand finale would be to watch the sun set from one of the terraces while we savour some fresh lobster, whose gastronomic festivity is held in July. We shall bid these lands, which are caressed by the waters of the river Miño and the Atlantic Ocean, farewell, with the pleasant feeling of having been taken back in time and having been able to contemplate an amazing view from one of the most visited Celtic settlements in Galicia.



Mount Santa Tegra hermitage

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