

THE NORTHERN CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

Santiago de Compostela has, since the discovery of the remains of St James in the 9th century, been the dream destination for thousands of pilgrims from around the world.



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The magic of the Camino de Santiago lies in the fact that in an increasingly technological, dislocated and immediate world, the vast majority of visitors arrive on foot or by bike.

The Northern Camino de Santiago del Norte has for centuries been one of the **main routes followed by pilgrims coming from Europe.** In the Middle Ages, the various routes passing through the heart of Green Spain became **one of the safest paths leading to the**

sepulchre of the apostle, and to what at the time was the end of the known world: Finisterre. The reason? They were a long way from the Islamic frontier land (near which the French Camino ran), where battles were being waged between Muslims and Christians.



The Northern Camino de Santiago is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, **comprising four main routes:**

1



Coastal Camino

This runs almost the whole length of the Cantabrian coast as far as the Galician town of Ribadeo, before then heading inland towards Santiago de Compostela.

2

Original Camino

The oldest route on the Jacobean pilgrimage, between Oviedo and Santiago, via Lugo. From Melide onwards it joins up with the French Camino.



3



Basque-Rioja Camino

Branch connecting Irun and the French border with the Camino Francés via either Santo Domingo de la Calzada or Burgos.

4

Liébana Camino

Branch beginning in San Vicente de la Barquera and running as far as the Monastery of Santo Toribio de Liébana, which houses the largest known fragment of the True Cross. Whenever 16 April, the feast day of Santo Toribio, falls on a Sunday, a Lebaniego Jubilee Year is celebrated.



→ **The almost 900-kilometre distance between the French border and Santiago de Compostela** covered by the northern routes of pilgrimage stands out for its **omnipresent greenness**. The green of the meadows, of the native woodland, the local market gardens and crops, or the moss covering the stones.

→ Another distinctive feature lies in the **steep slopes and rocky outcrops** dotting a route which runs parallel to the sea, and must climb over minor mountain ranges and across estuaries, ford beaches and pass through tiny fishing villages. **No two places are the same.**

→ The Northern Camino de Santiago can be followed **either along the main path, or otherwise in the case of cyclists, on byways with little traffic**. There is an extensive network of (public and private) hostels, as well as plentiful accommodation of all categories.

→ **The Northern Camino is ideal to follow in any month of the year.** Winters in Green Spain are not severe, but are wet. In summer, the temperatures are milder and more moderate than in the rest of Spain, and the paths often tend to be sheltered by trees and woodland.

THE GRAND ROUTE

The Grand Route of Green Spain is a **complete travel experience to discover in depth the Spirit of the North**: a route divided into 16 stages linking the two northern ends of Spain, **from Hondarribia** alongside the French border and the Pyrenees, **to the mouth of the River Miño** separating Galicia from Portugal.

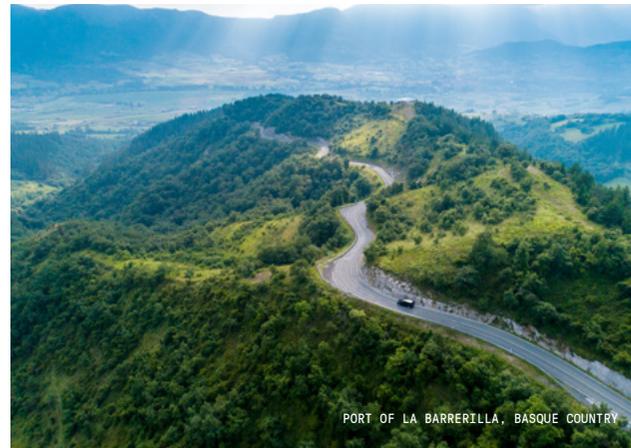


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The Grand Route takes you through the star attractions of Green Spain.



CASTRO URDIALES, CANTABRIA



PORT OF LA BARRERILLA, BASQUE COUNTRY



CHURCH OF SANTA MARÍA DEL NARANCO, WITH VIEWS OVER OVIEDO



ALDEA DE PIORNEDO, OS ANCARES, GALICIA

—————> **The River Bidasoa is separated from the River Miño by more than 2,500 kilometres of delightful byways** offering the chance to indulge in **slow driving**, discovering the villages and landscapes along the way.

—————> The route **passes through four of Spain's autonomous regions** (Basque Country, Cantabria, Asturias and Galicia), **nine provinces** (Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, Álava, Cantabria, Asturias, Lugo, A Coruña, Pontevedra and Ourense), switching between the coastal and inland sides of Green Spain.

—————> On a single day you could **wake up alongside a wave-battered cliff**, take a dip on a urban beach (perhaps San Sebastian, Santander, Gijón or A Coruña), have **lunch at a mountain village restaurant**, and by mid-afternoon be enjoying a **wine tasting** (paired with a regional cheese) in a district of vineyards.

—————> The Grand Route of Green Spain **passes through the main natural, urban and coastal landmarks and landscapes of the north of the country**, taking in all the outstanding heritage and cuisine that the route has to offer.

—————> You can **follow the directions on your mobile phone** thanks to the convenient Wikiloc tracks which provide precise details of the route, **or try the old-school approach with a roadmap**, assisted by The Grand Route PDF guide to be found **here**, with a mile-by-mile description of the towns, beaches, mountains, countryside, museums and designations of origin that travellers will meet along the way.

What makes the Grand Route of Green Spain so special?

→ It runs in parallel, **crosses over and is constantly connected with the Northern Camino de Santiago.**

→ **It offers a journey through the cuisine of one of the 'tastiest' regions anywhere in Spain,** discovering not only bars and restaurants, but also local producers, winemakers and the countryside that makes all this possible.

→ **It is closely linked to the N-634, Green Spain's very own 'Route 66',** a classic, legendary highway which starts in San Sebastian and ends up in Santiago de Compostela.

→ **It showcases a wide variety of ecosystems of the coast** (beaches, dunes, marshland, cliffs, estuaries...) **and inland,** from meadows to native woodland, along with former glaciers and dry plains.

→ **It passes through villages and cities of all types and sizes,** allowing for an immersive experience of the peoples of the North.



WINE AND GASTRONOMY

Green Spain, from the Pyrenees to the Portuguese border, covers **one of the most famously culinary parts of Spain**, drawing on produce from both the sea and the inland countryside and mountains.

The gastronomy of Green Spain is the legacy of fisherfolk and farmers who have for years been trawling the seas and working the land.



The land and its associated ingredients are the great common denominator for cookery in Green Spain: **seas providing the finest fish and inland areas kept damp and fertile by the rainfall, which has for centuries provided green pasture for dairy herds and livestock.** Unlike the land of the central plateau, Green Spain stands out for its market garden produce.

All these regions share the same culinary roots, which they have nonetheless developed individually with their own clear personality. Roots which could be summed up as follows:

→ **Homage to the finest local, native produce sourced nearby,** always fresh, whether a cut of beef, a monkfish, a homegrown tomato or a grenache grape.

→ **Dishes prepared with few spices,** bringing the natural flavour of the very best ingredients to the fore.

→ **Passion for char-grilling and barbecuing** to prepare top-quality meat and fish.

→ **Cookery firmly shaped by tradition** which nonetheless stands out for its **more avant-garde ventures and signature cuisine.** Green Spain is home to more than 50 Michelin-starred restaurants in total.

→ The traditional markets of the towns and villages place **great importance on small-scale local producers.**



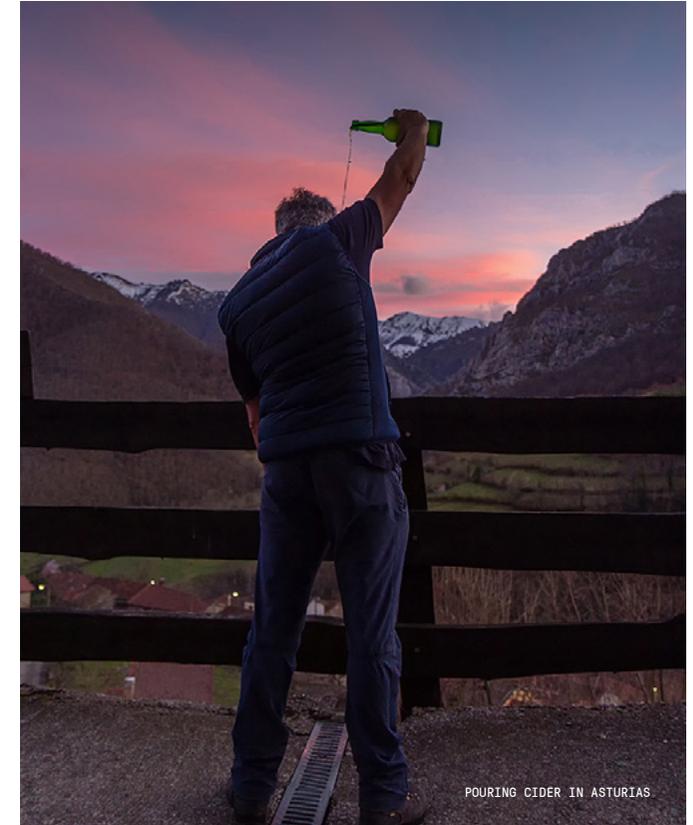
SEA

Pride of place for both white (**hake, cod, seabream and turbot**) and oily fish (such as **sardines and anchovies**), baked in the oven or grilled over coals. **Bonito** casseroles can be found in the summer months throughout Green Spain. Galicia has a particular fondness for **seafood, shellfish and octopus**, all with a nationwide reputation.



INLAND

Northern Spain is famed for a livestock farming tradition which inspires particular devotion to its **beef**, grilled over local firewood. All four regions are famous for their rich cheesemaking tradition, with dozens of such varied specialities as **Idiazabal, Arzúa-Ulloa, Afuega'l pitu and Bejes-Tresviso**.



WINES AND CIDER

The lands of Green Spain likewise boast a proud winemaking tradition, offering both red and white wines from Protected Designations of Origin such as **Rioja Alavesa, Costa de Cantabria, Cangas and Ribeira Sacra**. The north has also for centuries been a major producer of cider (in Asturias and the Basque Country), and spirits.

SLOW SLEEP

Sleeping in Green Spain is all about 'Slow Sleep', spending the night in **delightful accommodation in incredible settings.**



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In Green Spain, 'sleeping' means choosing from accommodation that blends in not only with the landscape, but with its history. Spending the night in unique natural settings, cosmopolitan cities, villages where time has stood still and watchtowers buffeted by the wind blowing in off the sea. Turning out the light, to **awake hours later in a Basque farmhouse, mountain cottage, grand colonial villa or a manor house with centuries of history behind it.**

'Slow Sleep' accommodation is the perfect option for those seeking a **genuine and unique experience, whether in a rural or an urban setting**, with painstaking care given to every detail.

There are as many types of accommodation as there are idiosyncrasies to the four territories that make up Green Spain:

- Historic spa resorts
- Urban mansions
- Country manor houses
- Accommodation in the traditional buildings of the rural community, such as the Basque caseríos, Galician pazos, Asturian casonas, casas de indianos, cabañas pasiegas in Cantabria...
- Boutique hotels in urban settings

→ **Gastronomy is another of the cornerstones on which the 'Slow Sleep' experience is based** Which is why these establishments not only serve local recipes, but also use traditional homegrown or locally sourced ingredients. Which means a breakfast of jam made from local fruit, a lunch of fish bought at the market that very morning, or a dinner of meat raised by local livestock farmers.

→ **'Slow Sleep' is all about unwinding, relaxing, discovering the place's history, chatting with the townsfolk, experiencing the same sensations as the local population,** discovering their culinary secrets, and in short, feeling part of your surroundings, and a privileged way of life.

→ **The North has for more than 150 years been a welcoming destination for holidays and retreats,** from the days when Green Spain was the perfect place for Madrid's aristocracy to leave behind the heat of the capital and enjoy a cool summer, pure mountain air and therapeutic bathing in the sea. **Experience that speaks volumes.**



ECOTOURISM & NATURE

Green Spain lies in the **northern strip of Spain**, perfectly framed by an ocean (the Atlantic), a sea (the Cantabrian) and two major mountain ranges: the Cantabrian Range and the Pyrenees. This location, its mountainous terrain and diverse climate **help to create the beautiful green landscapes which characterise the region.**



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Green Spain runs the entire length of the Cantabrian Sea, occupying a strip of land some 100 kilometres wide.

Which means there is room for **sites of natural beauty on the shoreline itself, as well as mountains climbing to more than 2,500 metres.**

In all, it covers more than 2,500 km of coastline, serving up a vast spectrum of diverse landscapes. **There is a Green (and natural) Spain for each type of traveller:** the coast, with its beaches, coves, marshes, dunes and the highest cliffs in Europe; the inland mountains, rocky summits, glaciated lakes, gullies, fertile valleys, fast-flowing rivers and leafy woodlands. And then there is the Green Spain of wheat fields and expanses of vineyard.

The climate of Northern Spain is another of its hallmarks, and a remarkable exception for Southern Europe: **the winters are damp and cool (but not cold), while in summer, temperatures are warm and mild.**





→ Green Spain embraces two **National Parks** (Picos de Europa and Atlantic Islands of Galicia), more than twenty **Nature Parks** (most notably Urkiola, Saja-Besaya, Somiedo and Fragas do Eume) and 15 **UNESCO Biosphere Reserves** such as Urdaibai, Río Eo, Oscos and Terras de Burón; or Terras do Miño. And then there are also more than **150 smaller protected sites** to enjoy biodiversity to its fullest.

→ **Green Spain is more than a picture book setting: it is a territory to be travelled, walked and experienced.** The Spirit of the North stands out for its passion for physical activity in the open air. These landscapes thus provide the perfect setting for hiking, surfing, cycling (road, mountain or gravel), climbing, sailing, horseriding, potholing and plenty more besides. The more ecological side of Green Spain can be explored independently, or through one of the numerous firms specialising in active tourism or countryside birdwatching tours.

→ **In Green Spain you will find 34 greenways of differing lengths (some of them more than 40 kilometres long) to cycle or walk** with the natural world. The Greenways of Northern Spain make use of the specifically converted routes of former railways, to be enjoyed by pedestrians and cyclists.

SURFING

⊕ INFO

The coastline of Green Spain is bathed by the Cantabrian Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The four territories (Basque Country, Cantabria, Asturias and Galicia) have a combined coast measuring 2,500 kilometres.

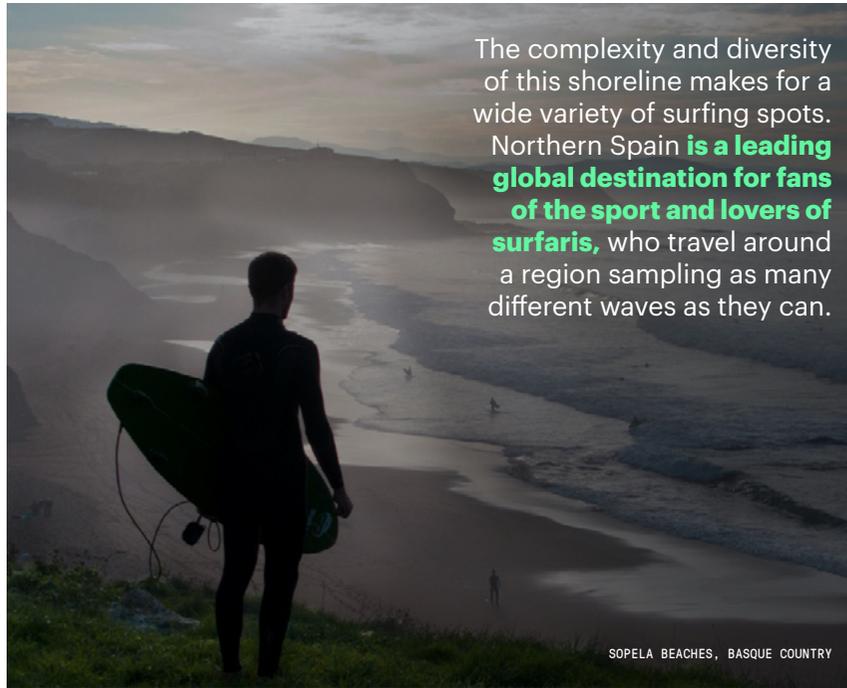


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SAN SEBASTIAN



LOS LOCOS BEACH, CANTABRIA



SOPELA BEACHES, BASQUE COUNTRY



The coasts of Green Spain cover everything **from endless sandy beaches and rocky coves, to cliffs and coastal mountain ranges;** along with estuaries, rias, islands and archipelagos of islets.

PEÑARRONDA BEACH, IN CASTROPOL AND TAPIA



SOESTO BEACH IN LAXE, A CORUÑA

1

Constant swells and decent waves throughout the year.

2

Perfect beaches for surfing beginners, with schools and the full range of amenities in such locations as San Lorenzo en Gijón (Asturias), Zarautz in the Basque Country, Somo in Ribamontán al Mar (Cantabria) and Razo in Galicia.

3

Spots with gigantic, powerful waves suitable only for the most experienced and boldest surfers, such as Izuztari in Gipuzkoa, La Vaca in Cantabria, El Faro in Asturias and Illa Pancha in Galicia.

4

Beaches where some of Spain's legendary surfers learned their trade, such as Aritz Aranburu, Gony Zubizarreta and Lucía Martiño.

5

Waves of World Class quality and global reputation, like Rodiles in Asturias and Mundaka in the Basque Country.

6

Wild beaches to be surfed, including Langre in Cantabria and La Salvaje in Sopela.

CITIES & HERITAGE

Green Spain also features an urban and cosmopolitan side, personified in more than a dozen medium-sized cities dotted along the route between the French and Portuguese borders.

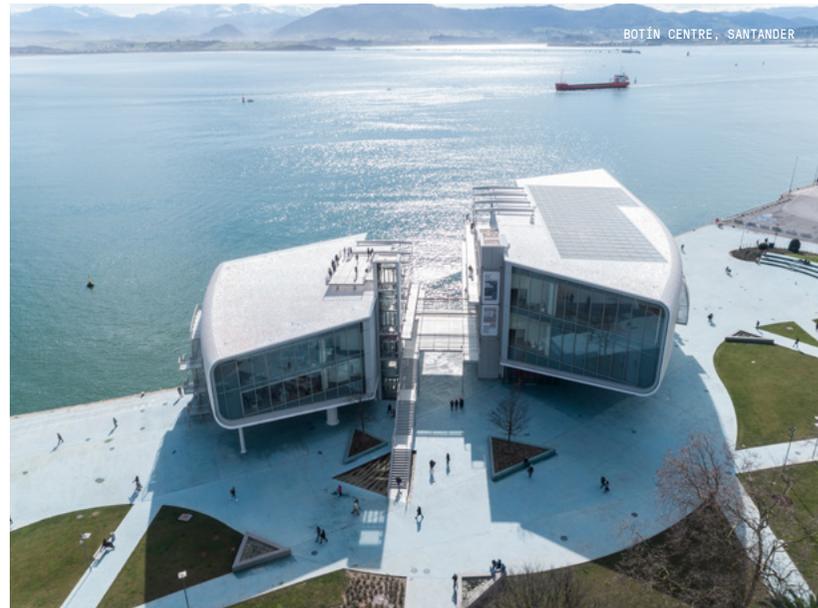


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They all boast a **privileged geographical location, surrounded by green countryside and protected by mountains and uplands.** Most stand on a broad river or ria, overlook the sea, and boast long, convenient urban beaches. These cities in the main had a **distinctly industrial past**, and now in the 21st century have been reborn as **urban service hubs with an active commercial sector, a thrilling cultural agenda and booming tourist industry.** All while retaining their distinctive personality **and not giving up one bit of their identity.**

They offer a continuum of **bountiful historical heritage covering almost the entire history of the nation,** from prehistory and the Roman era down to the present day. All of which can be visited not only in museums, but also open-air archaeological sites and cultural landscapes that remain practically unchanged centuries later. This glorious past coexists with the latest cutting-edge architecture and urban design.

Quality of life is another of the hallmarks of the cities of Green Spain. Built to a human scale, fully respectful of the natural environment in which they stand, and **with growing pedestrianised areas, they are perfect to stroll around.**



SPA CITIES

San Sebastian, famous for its bay and its haute cuisine in miniature: 'pintxos'. **Santander**, a gem of lordly architecture and the summer refuge of the royal household. **Ourense**, revered for its thermal waters and lively cultural agenda.

CITIES WITH AN INDUSTRIAL PAST

Bilbao, the city reborn with the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum. **Gijón**, the Roman town with a lively cultural and nightlife scene. **Avilés**, home to one of the few Oscar Niemeyer buildings in Europe.

CITIES WITH THE BEST QUALITY OF LIFE

Vitoria-Gasteiz, known for its parks, gardens and idyllic residential areas. **Pontevedra**, with one of the largest pedestrianised city centres in Europe. **Oviedo**, its majestic air and attractive mediaeval heritage.

HERITAGE CITIES

Santiago de Compostela, a dream destination for more than ten centuries. **Lugo**, surrounded by the largest fortified Roman enclosure in Europe.

TRUE SEAFARING CITIES

Ferrol, the ultimate shipbuilding city. **A Coruña**, home to the only Roman lighthouse in the world still in operation. **Vigo**, one of the most vibrant and exciting cities in Green Spain.

UNIQUE CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

The abrupt geography of the North, scattered with narrow valleys and high mountains which isolated communities at a time when nothing but dirt tracks existed, led to the development of a **distinct cultural identity**.

This identity has been handed down intact to the present day, through fiestas, celebrations, cuisine, and even the regions' own languages: Galician, Bable in Asturias, and Basque.

A journey to Green Spain is not just a geographical odyssey, but also a **journey through time and ancestral cultures:** legendary peoples with customs and festivities lost in the mists of time; territories with their own mythology of gods and demons; a unique folklore expressed through their own instruments, tunes and dances.

Green Spain is a mythical (and mystical) land, home to the stone-lifters of the Basque Country, the coastal rowers of Cantabria, the wild horse-tamers of Galicia and the nomadic cowherds of Asturias.

