

Castro Caldelas



**a walk of
history and life**

Castro Caldelas

CASTRO CALDELAS IS A SMALL TOWN IN THE PROVINCE OF OURENSE THAT HAS JUST 1,200 INHABITANTS, IS LOCATED AT 720 METERS ABOVE SEA LEVEL, AND STANDS ON A SITE THAT HAS BEEN STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT THROUGHOUT HISTORY. AN ANCIENT PRE-ROMAN CASTRO SETTLEMENT MAY HAVE EXISTED HERE, AS ITS NAME SUGGESTS. THE VÍA NOVA, A ROMAN ROAD THAT CONNECTED BRAGA AND ASTORGA, PASSES THROUGH THE DISTRICT. ITS IMPRESSIVE MEDIEVAL CASTLE DOMINATES THE WHOLE REGION AND IT IS THE GATEWAY TO THE RIBEIRA SACRA.



Essentials

A Casa Hidalga



B Castillo



C Torre de Homenaje and Patio de Armas



D Iglesia de Santa Isabel



E Santuario dos Remedios



F A Pena de Matacás



The route



- 1 Praza do Prado
- 2 Rúa Grande
- 3 El Castillo
- 4 Rúa do Mercado
- 5 Santuario dos Remedios





Castro Caldelas

We begin our tour in the **Praza do Prado 1** (Field Square), which is lined by traditional architecture built in granite and slate, typical materials in this area, including the beautiful glass-enclosed balconies that illuminate the buildings. There are several shops here where we can get our hands on the most typical local product, which is also made in other parts of Galicia, the *bica mantecada*, a sponge cake made with sugar, flour, eggs, and cow butter that is soft and very pleasant on the palate. It makes for a great treat to wash down with a coffee, tea, or liqueur.

To sample some, we can head to *Café Bar Rubio*, which also gives us the chance to try some wines and liqueurs from the Ribeira Sacra Designation of Origin.

Elsewhere on the Plaza do Prado you can find the *Cafe Bar Adega do Grilo*, which also has a shop selling souvenirs and food products, such as marrón glacé honey or artisan goat cheese from Touza Vella, produced by the local ComoCabras cooperative, which is made from pressed raw goat milk and has a natural chemical-free mouldy rind. The cafe also serves bica from Horno de Malena. Very close at hand is *Estanco-Bazar Casa Rafael* which stocks a wide variety of items such as

postcards, souvenirs, and, of course, tobacco products.

In the area around the square there are several places where you can sample and purchase this delicious sponge cake, such as *Casa Eladio* which serves *Bicas Lalo* cakes, made using the same recipe for over 40 years, and *Bicas O Forno* (behind the town hall). The latter sells not only traditional bica cakes but also the chestnut, dried fruit, and almond varieties.

We now climb **rúa Grande 2** and, at the beginning of the old Medieval area, we come across an 18TH CENTURY NOBLE HOUSE,



PREVIOUS PAGES Bicas, Castillo

FACING Rúa Grande

BELOW Praza do Prado





displaying coats of arms, which is listed as a monument of National Historical and Artistic Heritage and today houses the [Casa de Caldelas Hotel](#), which offers accommodation, a craft shop, souvenirs and food products, and even artwork from local artists such as Cándido Canerio and Maite Vázquez.

We now move onto another stately building where the [Farmacia González Movilla](#) pharmacy is located. The shop window takes us back in time with its odd instruments such



as the weighing scales, the microscope, and mortar from old apothecaries.

We carry on along rúa Grande until we come to the [Librería Nós](#) bookshop, whose name is a clear nod to the group of Galician intellectuals formed by Vicente Risco, Otero Pedrayo, López Cuevillas, and Castelao, in the first decades of the 20th century.

A little further up we reach [Pensión Rústica-Restaurante Caldelas Sacra](#), an important site in local cuisine, which offers us home-grown and seasonal products and a carefully curated selection of wines, including a

PREVIOUS PAGES Coats of arms and courtyard of the castle

ABOVE View of the castle

BELOW Noble house

prominent offering of Ribeira Sacra Denomination of Origin wines.

Our walk leads us to Castro Caldelas' main monument, [THE CASTLE 3](#). The fortress grants views over a wonderful landscape, as we can make out the Ourense mountains and mountain ranges from its towers, the Sil river canyon, the plateau and the Lugo mountains, and the Galicia-Bierzo mountains. It is really not hard to see why the location was so coveted by kings and feudal lords. There are still several towers, such as the torre del homenaje (keep tower) and the torre del reloj (clock tower), a double wall with watchtowers, and curious beehive-shaped sentry boxes.

Pedro Fernández de Castro built the castle in the 14th century and a century later when it belonged to the Count of Lemos, it was torn down in the Irmandiños revolts and rebuilt after the revolts were defeated. It started to look like a palace in the 16th century and in 1777, when the Houses of Alba and Lemos



were joined by the marriage of Jacobo Fitz-James and Maria Teresa da Silva y Álvarez de Toledo, it became the property of the Alba family, who still own it today. The House of Alba granted Castro Caldelas' Town Council the right of usufruct of the castle in 1992 in exchange for taking on the restoration and maintenance work. It currently houses the Tourist Information Centre and also serves as a venue for exhibitions, the Municipal Library, and the Ethnographic and Archaeological Museum.

It is worth climbing to the top of the Homenaje and Reloj towers to take in the scenery. The latter has preserved the mechanical system of the 19th century clock that still tells the time in the town, an oven, and an old chimney. In the parade ground we can

ABOVE Baking *bicas*

BELOW Enjoying the landscape from the Torre del Homenaje

NEXT PAGES Torre del Reloj





see a water tank, access the battlements, and reach the wooden balcony and the different rooms of the castle.

We now continue our walk through the town and follow **rúa do Mercado** 4 to the IGLESIA DE SANTA ISABEL (church of Saint Elizabeth), which dates from the 16th century and has Mannerist features. On one side we can see the coat of arms of the Counts of Lemos,

the lords of the town at that time, and the picturesque cemetery that surrounds it, as this was a parish church. Standing in front of the façade you can make out the Sil Canyon and the steepness of the terraces of the vineyards. Given just how difficult it is to harvest grapes in these places, it is no surprise that wine production in the Ribeira Sacra Designation of Origin is called heroic viticulture.

Very close by and still on rúa do Mercado, in the oldest part of the Medieval town, is the Casa Rural Cima da Vila guesthouse, which



preserves all the charm of the region's traditional architecture.

From there we head back along **rúa do Sol** to the Plaza do Prado where we started our tour. On our way we can take in narrow cobbled streets, staircases carved from rock, some houses bearing coats of arms belonging to important families, and beautiful glass-enclosed balconies, which are typical of Castro Caldelas.

Once back in the square, we cross the OU-536 road and head towards the SANTUARIO DOS REMEDIOS 5 (Shrine of Remedies). The current church was built in 1814 on top of an earlier church, which was badly damaged in the Peninsular War. Residents of the region donated rams, cows, sheep, honey, grain, cheese, wine, and other products to help with the building of the church. Inside we can view the braces that help to support part of the structure, an ingenious solution attributed to the local blacksmith Gervasio



Mosquera, who, by means of a long key and the strength of a pair of oxen, tightened the nuts that we see on the outside. The church has one of the few elliptical domes in Galicia. A large fachón (straw torch) leaves the atrium in a procession on the eve of the feast of Saint Sebastian, on 19 January. This burning torch measuring about 30 metres, raised on pitchforks by the men of the town, follows the image of the saint as it makes its way around the town. This Christian celebration of the Festa dos Fachós has clear ancestral remnants of fire worship.



FACING, ABOVE Iglesia de Santa Isabel
FACING, BELOW View of the cemetery
ABOVE Rustic pension - Caldelas Sacra restaurant
BELOW Santuario dos Remedios



ABOVE Visiting wineries
FACING A Pena do Matacás viewpoints
NEXT PAGE A Pena do Matacás viewpoints

Visit to a winery

In the area surrounding Castro Caldelas we can visit several wineries from the Ribeira Sacra Designation of Origin and enjoy the views of the heroic viticulture in the vineyards. Along the road that connects Castro Caldelas with Lugo, the LU-903, we can see the signs for wineries offering visits and tastings, such as the Ponte da Boga winery. This is a building that dates back more than a hundred years where you can taste the wines and take a guided tour of its facilities and vineyards.

A Pena do Xastre and Pena de Matacás viewpoints and sailing on the River Sil

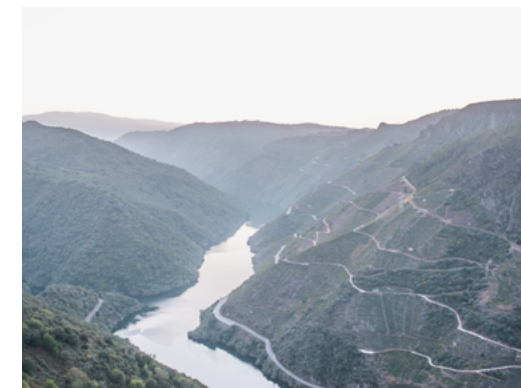
Along the OU-536 to Ourense we turn off towards Mazaira to reach the Pena do Xastre viewpoint where we can take in spectacular views of the A Cubela meander in the River Sil.

To get to the Pena de Matacás viewpoint we follow the LU-903 road towards Monforte de Lemos. After 7 kilometres, at O Pombar, we turn off towards the viewpoint where we are treated to spectacular views over the River Sil and the canyon. At the Doade and Abeleda docks we can board a catamaran and go for a boat trip on the Santo Estevo reservoir in the heart of the Ribeira Sacra, which is one of the region's main attractions. To get to the

docks we head back along the LU-903 and drive down to the river.

Ponte das Táboas recreation area, mill route, and Castro Caldelas magic forests hiking trail

The PR-G 213 Castro Caldelas Magic Forests hiking trail starts from the Praza do Prado with two routes to choose from. The first, at a length of 5.3 km, takes us to the Ponte de Táboas Recreation area and passes by the mills on the River Edo. The second, longer route (14.9 km) leads down to Souto de Poboeiros and reaches the Monasterio de San Paio de Abeleda (Saint Pelagius of Abeleda monastery). Both routes are circular and offer fantastic scenery and architectural heritage to discover, including rivers, waterfalls, forests of chestnut and oak trees, meadows, vineyards, monasteries, chapels, and parish churches.





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