



 XUNTA
DE GALICIA

 Xacobeo 21-22

Combarro



**a walk of
history and life**



Combarro

COMBARRO IS A SMALL, PICTURESQUE TOWN LOCATED IN THE PONTEVEDRA ESTUARY. IT WAS DECLARED A HISTORIC SITE IN 1972 FOR THE GREAT WEALTH OF TRADITIONAL COASTAL ARCHITECTURE, WHICH INCLUDES A HUGE CONCENTRATION OF WELL CONSERVED HÓRREO GRANARIES AND CALVARIES. THE BUILDINGS ARE NESTLED IN NARROW COBBLED STREETS ON THE SEAFRONT, OVERLOOKING THE NEARBY ISLAND OF TAMBO AND THE TOWN OF MARÍN, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ESTUARY.

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES COMBARRO WAS DEPENDENT ON THE NEARBY MONASTERY OF SAN XOÁN DE POIO, WHICH CHARGED THE INHABITANTS TITHES IN EXCHANGE FOR LAND AND PROTECTION. IN THE 19TH CENTURY, AFTER CONFISCATION IN 1836, IT WAS MERGED INTO THE MUNICIPALITY OF POIO. IN THE PAST, THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES WERE FISHING AND THE GATHERING OF SHELLFISH, WHICH TOOK PLACE ALONGSIDE FARMING. THE RESIDENTS WERE ORGANISED INTO TWO GUILDS: THE LAND GUILD AND THE SEA GUILD. NOWADAYS, TOURISM IS ONE OF THE MAIN PILLARS OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

Essentials

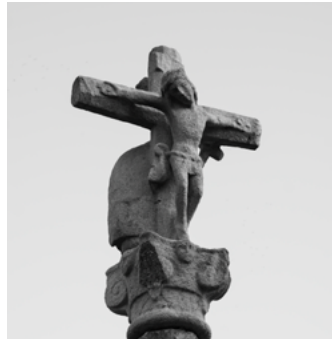
A Cruceiro de la praza de San Roque



B Igrexa de San Roque



C Calvary of the Iglesia de San Roque



D Cruceiro da Rúa



E Seafaring houses (rúa do Mar)



F Panoramic view of granaries from O Padrón and O Peirao



The route



- 1 Peirado da Chousa
- 2 Praza de San Roque
- 3 Rúa de San Roque
- 4 A Rúa
- 5 Praza da Fonte
- 6 A Rúa Cega
- 7 A Rualeira
- 8 O Padrón
- 9 O Peirao
- 10 A Rúa do Mar
- 11 Praza da Chousa





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Our route begins at the **Peirao da Chou-sa** ¹ (Orchard wharf) which, as its name suggests, was a small area used for crops at the edge of the beach. In the square itself we

can see several examples of *hórreo* granaries of different types and materials: stone, wood, and combinations of both materials. All of them have the characteristic bases, which insulate the chambers from the humidity of the ground, and *tornarratos* staddle stones, which are circular stones that prevent rodents from getting into the *hórreo*, where grains, mostly corn, were stored and dried alongside sardines and anchovies.

There is a traditional communal washing place in this square, which is still in use, where it is common to see some women washing clothes in the old way and then han-



PREVIOUS PAGES Seafaring houses, *hórreos*

FACING Graneries on the sea

RIGHT Marina



ging the clothes in the upper area to dry; the upper structure is similar to a *hórreo*.

The port offers an idyllic picture, with small fishing boats and traditional fishing methods. Numerous businesses make this a lively area, especially restaurants, pubs, and bars, although there are also some souvenir

shops, bakeries such as *Campañó*, general stores, and clothing and accessories shops.

Nearby is the *Marina Combarro*, the first Spanish marina to win the Jack Nichol Marine Design Excellence Award in 2012, which holds the highest 5 Gold Anchors award, certified by the British Yacht Association. The facilities also include a small shopping and leisure centre with underground parking. It is the perfect place to sip on an aperitif, coffee, or drink whilst enjoying the sea views at *Café-Bar A Tres Nudos*, buy sailing clothes at *Ronáutica*, and to explore the estuaries and get into water-based activities, there is nowhere better than *The Lost Tourist*, where



ABOVE Tinta Negra, old fishermen's net warehouse
BELOW Grooves produced by cars loaded with algae

they run sailing, surfing, and paddle surfing classes, and hire boats and jet skis.

A stone's throw away in an old fishing net shop is *Tinta Negra Bar-Tapas & Cocktails*, which still has the original wooden decking and, as well as serving food, cocktails, and tapas, puts on live music every Saturday night.

Continuing our tour, we now move into the old town. In the secluded **Praza de San Roque** (Saint Roch Square), which, like the rest of the town, is hewn from rock, we can still see the *rodeiras*, furrows left by carts loaded possibly with the algae used as fertilizer on farmland.

Among the small seaside houses, the eighteenth-century building that houses the Library stands out, with its stone balcony



facing west to capture the last rays of the sun, which gives it a certain noble air.

Two calvaries, which depict the Passion of Christ, decorate this space; one is formed by a simple cross and the other with the image of the Crucifixion on the front and the image of the Virgen del Socorro (Our Lady of Succour) on the back, which, with her threatening club, protects the population from evil, represented by the demon at her feet.

In front of some calvaries there is a *pousadoiro*, which is a stone table on which coffins were placed. It was customary for residents to carry the coffin on their shoulders and then lay it on the *pousadoiros* in front of the

ABOVE Calvary at Praza San Roque
BELOW Calvary



calvaries whilst they prayed for the soul of the deceased.

One of the most prestigious restaurants in the area is on this square. [Alvariñas](#), opens during the tourist season or on request and has made a name for itself due to the quality of the food it serves and its decoration.

ABOVE This *cruceiro* was drawn by Castelao in his book *As Cruces de Pedra na Galiza*

BELOW Iglesia de San Roque

Portraits of illustrious sailors such as Columbus, Blas de Lezo, Álvaro de Bazán, and Churruca hang on its walls. We shouldn't forget that directly opposite Combarro is the Escuela Naval Militar de Marín (Naval Military School of Marín), where King Juan Carlos I and King Felipe VI studied and, interestingly, both were regulars at this place.

In the surrounding area we can spot some souvenir and craft shops that show their range of products on the façades of their buildings to advertise to tourists.

Rúa de San Roque  (Saint Roch street) leads us to the [IGLESIA PARROQUIAL DE SAN](#)



ROQUE (parish church of Saint Roch), which dates from the 18th century and was built on top of an old chapel. The founding of this parish, in 1868, saw Combarro become independent from the monastery of Poio. Inside the church, as is to be expected in a fishing village, the patron saint of sailors, the Virgen del Carmen (Virgin of Carmel), is venerated. The figure goes on a maritime procession on 16 July, the day of her festivities, when sailors decorate their boats with flowers and flags to earn the honour of carrying the image of the Virgin.

On the wall of the atrium that surrounds the church there is a cross that was drawn by Castelao in his work *As cruces de pedra na Galiza* (The stone crosses of Galicia). The image of San Roque, patron saint of the town, dressed as a pilgrim, is carved on the staff. He points with his right hand to his blistered leg and is accompanied by his faithful dog Melampo, who brought him a piece of bread in his mouth every day while



he was in isolation with leprosy. The piece culminates with Christ, nailed on the front of the cross, accompanied by Mary and Saint John, and on the back is the image of the Virgin of Renda with the Baby Jesus in her arms.

Legend has it that on the nearby island of Tambo there was a chapel where the Virgin Mary was worshipped, but at the end of the 16th century it was plundered by the privateer Francis Drake, who threw the image into the sea. However, the sculpture was rescued in the nets of the sailors who moved it to the nearby chapel of Renda.

All along **rúa de San Roque** we can see the **TYPICAL SEASIDE HOUSES**, with small porches

ABOVE Seafaring house

BELOW Combarro souvenirs



CALVARY DA RÚA, with depicts Jesus on the cross and on the back, there is once again the image of the Virgen del Socorro (Our Lady of Succour); the depictions of San Francisco, carved in the capital and in the staff, complete the piece.

The altar-tables are lavishly decorated with floral tablecloths during the Feast of Corpus Christi, as are the carpets that cover the main streets of Combarro which the procession passes along.

There are some tapas bars, tourist accommodation, and restaurants on A Rúa, in traditional buildings such as *Tapería Pedramar*, which has a terrace overlooking the estuary.

On our walk we can spot some signs telling us that we are on the Spiritual Variant of the Portuguese Way, which connects the



ABOVE *Cruceiro da Rúa*
BELOW *Meiga*

under the wide wooden or iron balconies. The layout of Combarro is organised around this main street, parallel to the sea, with numerous alleys crossing it. The small size of the houses reveals the poverty of the area, with an economy based on agriculture and fishing.

Some souvenir shops offer us a seemingly endless variety of liqueurs and *crema de orujo* liqueurs, many of which are made by the shops themselves, from the most traditional, such as coffee liqueur, toasted grains, or herb liqueur, to the more exotic, such as mojito cream liqueur, rice pudding liqueur, or chocolate and cherries. We shouldn't forget that we are in one of the most important wine-growing areas in Galicia, one of the heartlands of the Rías Baixas Designation of Origin, and that in Combarro there is a great tradition of distilled liquors. After the harvest and production of the famous Albariño wine, the *orujos*, the grape pomace, is distilled to make these wonderful drinks.

At the intersection of the two main streets, **A Rúa 4** and A Rúa do Mar, we find the

traditional Portuguese Way of the Camino de Santiago with the Sea Route of Arousa and the River Ulla and reaches the tomb of the Apostle.

We now make our way to the **Praza da Fonte 5** (Fountain Square), where another calvary awaits. This one has a tender representation of a woman carrying a naked girl by the hand on the staff. For some it represents Saint Anne with her daughter, the Virgin Mary as a child. The cross is on the upper part. The front shows a skull and two shin-bones at the feet of Christ on the cross and on the back, there is the Virgen de las Angustias (Virgin of Anguish). The calvary dates from 1771, as shown in the inscription next to it.

From the square we now go to **A Rúa Cega 6**, where we can see that the houses are



facing away from the sea, which is maybe where the street gets its name from as "cega" means blind. The buildings have a wider door to allow cattle and carriages to pass, which clearly shows that the owners worked on the land.

A few steps away, on **A Rualeira 7**, is the *Rualeira Calvary*, which has a curious staff that resembles the trunk of a tree with rising branches and at the bottom shows the symbols of the Passion of Christ: the crown of thorns, the steps, the three nails in a heart,

ABOVE *Cruceiro in Praza da Fonte*
BELOW *Cruceiro da Rualeira*





and the hammer. Christ and the Virgen de Socorro complete the work on the front and back of the cross.

We continue our tour onto **O Padrón 8**, from where we can take in one of the most beautiful panoramic views of Combarro: the tiny houses with their stairways leading down directly to the estuary and a row of *hórreo* granaries at the edge of the sea. At low tide we may also see the tireless shellfish workers of the area, gathering delicious molluscs from the estuary.

Before moving on from this spot our eyes will be drawn to **MODERN PADRÓN CALVARY**, which was donated by the Rial-Díaz family in 1997, as detailed on the inscription, to replace the previous one which was felled by a storm. It includes images of the Virgen del Carmen, Virgen del Rosario (the Virgin of the Rosary), and the Crucifixion. It is interesting to note that on this occasion the Virgen del Rosario looks towards land, which is



unusual as in Combarro most of the calvaries have the Virgin Mary looking towards the sea and Jesus towards the land, because that is where the parish church is.

A few steps from here we have, overlooking the beach, the *A Rosa dos Ventos* bar, which is a wonderful place to enjoy this idyllic area of the Rías Baixas.

If the tide allows, we can walk out to **O Peirao 9**, formerly a site where fish were landed, vegetables were sold, and traditional celebrations were held. Today it is used by the terraces of the traditional, *Entre Pedras* and *O Peirao* restaurants, which serve up local cuisine with good views of the estuary.

PREVIOUS PAGES Carmen procession, O Peirao
FACING Panorama from O Padrón
ABOVE, BELOW Hórreos facing the sea



Some of Combarro's star dishes are the corn empanada pasty with cockles and roasted sardines.

From here, we can walk along **rúa do Mar** ¹⁰ to discover the most typical sight in Combarro, an endless number of **HÓRREOS** granaries hugging the seashore with numerous alleys leading down to the estuary, which were used by sailors and shellfish gatherers to bring small boats and rigging, such as *raño* hooks for harvesting molluscs and nets, in and out of the water. We can see that some of the *hórreos*, which in Combarro are called *palleiras* because the roofs used to be made of straw, have crosses at the end of their roofs whilst others have pinnacles. These are Christian and pagan symbols that help to protect the harvest stored inside.

On our way along this street we find numerous shops selling souvenirs and handicrafts, such as *Artesanía O Fumil*, *Regalos Alberto*,

and *Maresola*, which is located in the birthplace of the ancestors of the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Adolfo M. Pérez Esquivel, as shown by a plaque placed on the façade at no. 4.

Besides the most common souvenirs, such as thimbles, plates, shells, and t-shirts, we can also purchase some good pieces of porcelain or ceramic craftwork from prestigious firms, such as *Barreiros*, *Regal*, *Buño*, and *Luarada*, and others produced in iron or granite, such as *Candán*, which offers scale reproductions of items of Galician heritage. The shopping options are rounded off by the artisan clogs from *Zoclos*, the fashion jewellery from *Kimu*, and *Cerámica da Ulla*, which sells pieces laden with Celtic symbolism. A dream for those who love souvenirs!

At no. 28 is *Abarrotes*, a delicatessen stocking numerous products with a Galician designation of origin. These include their

mirabelle plum pastries, chestnut muffins, and padrón pepper jams.

Standing alongside the souvenir shops, we also find some pubs that still retain the nautical character of the past, such as *O Bocoí*, others hewn from the rock, where the elegant presentation of their products is the house speciality, as is the case at *Leucoíña*, and some that are in the old salt or rigging warehouses, such as *O Peirado de Rial*, where, given its good location next to the sea, the catch could be unloaded straight from the boats through the window. The chef, Juan Manuel Rial, is nicknamed the King of Pizza, due to his career in Lausanne, where he cooked a giant 15 square metre pizza in 1985. Today, apart from home-made pizzas, they also offer local cuisine made from produce from the sea and the land.

We finish our tour through the old town by walking over the rocks on A Gurita, a staircase that gives us an easy route back to **Praza da Chousa** ¹¹ (Orchard Square) 1, where we set off from.

For three days in August, this square is filled with rock and roll fans at the *ARMADIÑA ROCK* festival, which has grown to be one of the

FACING Souvenir stores

ABOVE Back to Praza da Chousa



biggest rock festivals in the region. We just have to mention that it publishes its own comic book titled *O último festi*. What's more, there is a flea market here every Tuesday where we can get everything from cheese and sausages to textiles and accessories.

The unique architecture of Combarro has been the setting for countless photo reports and films, including *La Casa de la Troya*, *Botón de Ancla*, and *Dagon: The Sea Sect*, based on a novel by H.P. Lovecraft and shot in 2001, in which Paco Rabal played his final role.



Monasterio de San Xoán de Poio

A few kilometres from Combarro is one of the oldest monasteries in Galicia, the Monastery of Saint John of Poio, as tradition holds it was founded by San Fructuoso de Braga (Saint Fructuosus of Braga) back in the 7th century. Later it was taken over by the Benedictines and today it is home to Mercedarian monks.

You can visit the Renaissance church, the floor of which is numbered and divided into squares as this was how the ancient graves of the parishioners were marked; the chapel of Christ, where the Visigoth sarcophagus of Santa Trahamunda (Saint Trahamunda) lies, also known as the saint of nostalgia; the cloister of the Processions, decorated with camellias, which has a splendid stone fountain in the centre; the refectory; the grand staircase, which has no brackets and so seems to be suspended in the air; one of the largest *hórreos* in Galicia; and the cloister of the Calvary, where we can admire a great mosaic depicting the Camino de Santiago.

Catamaran trip along the Pontevedra estuary

From the port of Combarro, we can board a catamaran, which has regular departures with *Cruceros Pelegrín* between March and November, for a pleasant sailing trip in the estuary of Pontevedra. During the journey

you can take in the island of Tambo and its lighthouse, the port of Marín and the picturesque sight of Combarro from the sea. The catamaran, which allows visitors to peer underwater, approaches the *bateas* (farming tables) to show us the process of farming oysters, scallops and mussels, and the tour is topped with an on-board tasting of steamed mussels and young wine. And with a bit of luck, we may well spot dolphins!

Parque da Memoria (Remembrance Park)

In A Seca, a monument was built to pay tribute to all those who, at one time, had to leave their home, for political or economic reasons, as exiles and emigrants. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is the driving force behind this initiative, conducted in memory of his father, who left Combarro in search of a better future..



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