



 XUNTA
DE GALICIA.

 Xacobeo 21-22

A Coruña



Old Town
a walk of
history and life

A Coruña



A CORUÑA LIES ON A PENINSULA BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN AND THE RÍAS ALTAS THAT MAKE UP THE ÁRTABRO GULF, WHICH IS WHY IT WAS CALLED, IN ROMAN TIMES, MAGNUS PORTUS ARTABRORUM, THE GREAT PORT OF THE ARTABRI.

IT IS ALSO KNOWN TODAY AS THE GLASS CITY DUE TO ITS IMPRESSIVE BUILDINGS WITH GLASS-ENCLOSED BALCONIES, OR AS THE HERCULEAN CITY BECAUSE OF THE LEGENDS LINKED TO THE OLDEST WORKING LIGHTHOUSE IN THE WORLD, THE TOWER OF HERCULES, WHICH WAS DECLARED A WORLD HERITAGE SITE BY UNESCO.

Essentials

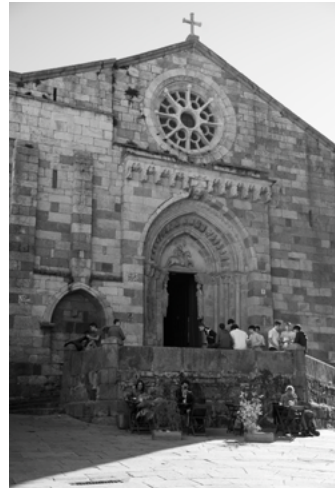
A Praza de María Pita



B Avenida de la Marina and Castillo de San Antón



C Iglesia de Santiago



D Jardín de San Carlos



E Praza de Santa Bárbara



F Colegiata de Santa María



The route



- 1 Praza de María Pita
- 2 Rúa de María Barbeito
- 3 Rúa de Santiago
- 4 Praza da Constitución
- 5 Rúa Príncipe
- 6 Rúa de Santo Domingo
- 7 Jardines de San Carlos
- 8 Rúa da Maestranza
- 9 Rúa Isabel Zandal
- 10 Praza de Santo Domingo
- 11 Praza de Santa Bárbara
- 12 Rúa Herrerías
- 13 Rúa Damas
- 14 Praza do Xeral Azcárraga
- 15 Rúa Ángeles



A Coruña

Old Town

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We begin our route in the **Praza de María Pita 1** (María Pita Square). Here we can admire the monument paying tribute to the local heroine the square is named after who defended the city against the troops of the English corsair Francis Drake at the end of the 16th century.

The square is presided over by the modernist CITY HALL, which was inaugurated in 1927 by King Alfonso XIII and Queen Victoria Eugenia. Its façade shows the four symbols of the Galician provinces with their respective blazons. Above them, two matrons hold

the coat of arms of A Coruña, with the Tower of Hercules, under which lie the remains of Geryon, the Greek anti-hero colossus who was defeated by Hercules. The tower is surrounded by scallop shells and crowned by the book of the Constitution. Inside you can visit the Museo de Relojes (Clock Museum) and some of its rooms.

Here we must pay homage to the man who became mayor of A Coruña a century ago, Manuel María Puga y Parga, known as "Picadillo", an illustrious chef who delighted the people of A Coruña with his recipes published in the local newspaper or in famous books such as *La cocina práctica* (Practi-



PREVIOUS PAGES Casa Rey, dock

FACING Praza de María Pita

RIGHT Meridian indicator on the ground of the square



cal cooking), *Vigilia reservada: minutas y recetas* (Reserved vigil: notes and recipes) or *36 maneras de guisar el bacalao* (36 Ways to cook cod). We can partly attribute to that love for cooking the fact that weighed around 270 kilos, according to the chronicles of the time. Foodies can pick up a copy of his recipes, which can be found in the city's bookstores.

The paving of the Praza de María Pita is crossed by a steel line, framed by two 19th



century pillars, which marks the meridian of A Coruña and the location of the city on the globe.

On the ground floor of the buildings lining the square, supported by harmonious stone arches, there are numerous bars and restaurants with glass terraces. It is the perfect place to soak up the grandeur of the architecture and the city's welcoming atmosphere. The cuisine is rich in variety, from eateries offering traditional cooking to newer restaurants serving up a fusion of Asian and Galician. Especially worth mentioning is *Cambalache*, which opened its doors almost forty years ago and is known as one of the first pizza restaurants in Galicia. Today it has thirteen restaurants all over the auton-

ABOVE Panoramic view of La Marina
BELOW Detail of the Casa Rey

mous community offering a menu based on handmade pizza, fresh pasta, local ingredients, and Galician *mozzarella*.

We leave the Praza de María Pita along **rúa María Barbeito** 2 and come to a panoramic view of the Avenida de la Marina, in which the famous glass-enclosed balconies that have given A Coruña the title of the GLASS CITY stand out. Built in the 19th century to imitate the aftercastle of galleons, the balconies, made in wood and glass, formed a thermal chamber that offered protection against the rain and the cold whilst allowing those inside to look outside in shelter. Some have more than 25 metres of continuous balcony, they are the back of the buildings whose façades face Riego de Agua street and the Praza de María Pita. Between the glass balconies is the so-called "diente de oro" (gold tooth), the name the people of A Coruña have given to the only building without glass galleries that stands



out among the white "teeth" of the other buildings.

The Marina dock is opposite. This old inshore fishing wharf is now mostly used by pleasure boat. The complex is framed by the REAL CLUB NÁUTICO DE A CORUÑA and the glass-fronted PALACIO DE EXPOSICIONES Y CONGRESOS (PALEXCO). This building was designed by the architects César Portela and Ricardo Bofill and in 2006 it was ranked as one of the top three conference centres in the world.

From this vantage point we can see two of the real jewels of modernism in A Coruña, the CASA REY (King's House), built by Julio Galán in 1911, on the corner with the Praza de María Pita, and the CASA MOLINA (Mill

ABOVE Iglesia de Santiago
BELOW Palacio de Exposiciones y Congresos



House) built by Rafael González Villar in 1915, with Italian inspirations based on hanging garlands. At street level we find the [Heladería Puerta Real](#), a firm from A Coruña specialising in artisan ice cream made from fresh Galician milk and 100% organic produce, with no colourants, preservatives, or artificial flavourings.

Our tour continues along **rúa de Santiago** [3](#) where we find [Berbiriana libros e grolos](#), a fusion of bar and bookshop that serves

its clients a collection of teas, craft beers, coffees, wines, and natural juices that can be enjoyed whilst leafing through books or browsing its extensive catalogue of comics, stories, and tales.

From the atrium of the Iglesia de Santiago (church of Santiago), you can see the house where the writer Emilia Pardo Bazán lived, which is now a [MUSEUM AND HEADQUARTERS OF THE ROYAL GALICIAN ACADEMY](#), whose first president was Manuel Murguía, the great Galician intellectual and husband of Rosalía de Castro. The visitor's entrance is on the neighbouring rúa Tabernas. In A Coruña, many businesses are called Marinada, in

FACING Atrium of the Iglesia de Santiago
BELOW Casa Museo Emilia Pardo Bazán





memory of the name that Emilia Pardo Bazán gave the city in her literary work.

Right here, at no. 8 rúa do Parrote, [La Flore-ría](#) was opened in 2007 as a beautiful space for "agricultural crafts" where you can admire their floral decorations that are tailored to each season. Choosing, buying, and giving flowers in this place is a wonderful feeling.

The 12th century romanesque [IGLESIA DE SANTIAGO](#) (church of Santiago) is the second oldest monument in the city, although it has been extensively renovated. This is where pilgrims following the English Way to Compostela start out, so it is no surprise to see references to the Camino de Santiago in the surrounding area in plaques, towers, and landmarks. Inside, there are several images of Santiago, depicted as a knight or pilgrim.

FACING Viewpoint of Jardín de San Carlos

ABOVE La Leonesa

BELOW Fundación Luis Seoane



ROUTE MAP



The stone pulpit houses decorative motifs linked to the pilgrimage, such as scallop shells, the Cross of St. James, and pumpkins. Before leaving the temple, two carvings that reflect the human motherhood of the Virgin Mary are worth taking a look at: the invocation of the Virgen de la Leche (Nursing Madonna), in which she appears seated, nursing the Baby Jesus, and the Virgen de la O (Virgin of the O), in which she is pregnant, caressing her belly, which some devotees visit to ensure a good birth or in the hope of becoming pregnant.

In front of the north door, [Wombat decor](#) has a selection of polychrome furniture, original paintings, decorations, natural soap, and organic teas. The inspiration behind the range of pieces is taken from Australian style, which we can use to turn our home into a beautiful, colourful paradise.



From the apse of the church we head on to the **Praza da Constitución** 4 (Constitution Square) where the PALACIO DE CAPITANÍA is located. This neoclassical building from the late 18th century was partly financed with the collection of one maravedí coin for each *azumbre* (roughly 2 litres) of wine produced in Galicia. This small and beautiful building can be visited. THE PASILLO DE LOS ESPEJOS (Hallway of Mirrors) and the SALÓN DEL TRONO (Throne Hall) are its most notable areas.

Just a stone's throw away, the noble building of the old French consulate is located on the shortest street in Europe, La Reja Dorada (The Golden Grille), which only measures the width of the building, so it does not usually appear in any street map.

FACING Pazo de Cornide
ABOVE Praza de Santo Domingo
BELOW Praza de Santa Bárbara

On the corner with **rúa Príncipe** 5 (Príncipe street) we come to El Bajo de Amalia, a bar that has been here for more than 50 years, where, on sunny days, you can take in one of the liveliest terraces in the old town as you sip on an aperitif. This bar is on the ground floor of the house where Francisca Herrera Garrido was born, who was the first woman to be elected a member of the Real Academia de Galicia (Royal Galician Academy) in 1945. Next door, at no. 3 Príncipe street, another plaque marks the site where the great poet Rosalía de Castro lived. It is worth remembering that, since 1963, 17 May has been the Day of Galician Literature, a date chosen in honour of the centenary of the publication of one of her most important works: *Cantares Galegos*.

A little further up, at no. 2 **rúa Santo Domingo** 6 is the Jamonería La Leonesa, another shop with tradition and history as it opened its doors in 1967, where legs of ham are hung from the ceiling in the traditional



style, which never ceases to amaze foreign visitors.

Following along **rúa Tinajas** and after passing through the Arquivo do Reino de Galicia building, we reach the **Jardines de San Carlos** 7 (Saint Charles Gardens). Here stands the MONUMENT TO SIR JOHN MOORE, which makes us remember the Battle of Elviña, in the Wars of Independence in 1809. The viewpoints offer one of the best views of the port of A Coruña. Among the historic buildings we can see is the Renaissance Castillo de San Antón (Castle of San Antón), which is today the site of the Archaeological Museum. As an anecdote, we should mention the castle was built in the 16th century with stones from the Torre de Hércules (Tower of Hercules), which at that time was abandoned. We recommend a visit for anyone who wants to discover the history of the castle, the city, and Galicia.

We now continue along **rúa da Maestranza** 8 to the viewpoint in the gardens of the same name, where we come to the unexpected sight of the more than a kilometre long MUELLE BARRÍE DE LA MAZA BREAKWATER (Barrié de la Maza Breakwater), which houses the double glass cube of the TORRE DE CONTROL MARÍTIMO (Maritime Control Tower). We can also see the curious sail-shaped roof of the CENTRO OCEANOGRÁFICO (Oceanographic Centre) the side of the Rectorate of the University and, nearby, the IGLESIA DE LA VENERABLE ORDEN



TERCERA, (church of the Venerable Third Order) and the MUSEO MILITAR (Military Museum). Nearby is the FUNDACIÓN LUIS SEOANE (Luis Seoane Foundation), a museum that houses the work of one of the best avant-garde artists of the 20th century and is well worth a visit.

A short distance away we come to La Dormilona, a specialist shop for paddle enthusiasts, where we can get not only the necessary equipment but also advice on the right gear suited to each player's ability.

We head back to the old town along **rúa Isabel Zandal** 9 (Isabel Zandal street) who, according to the WHO, was the first nurse in history to embark on an international mission when she took part in the Balmis expedition, which in 1803 set sail from the port of A Coruña carrying the smallpox vaccine to Spanish overseas territories (the Americas and the Philippines). Isabel Zandal took



charge of the 22 children from the hospice in A Coruña who were given the vaccine, as this was the only way to preserve it on such a long journey.

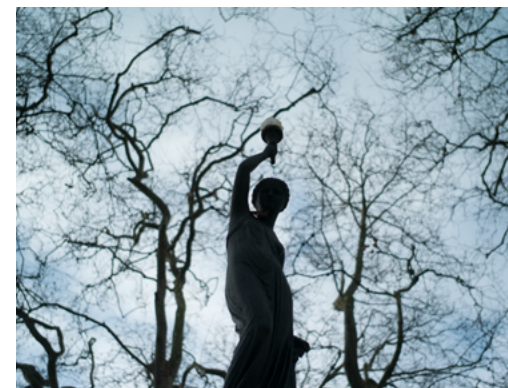
We come on to **rúa San Francisco** at no. 2 where the ceramist Alejandro Roig receives us in his [Arobe Cerámica](#) workshop, the site where he makes, exhibits, and sells his work. He has his own catalogue of more than 200 pieces of utilitarian ceramics and nature-inspired pieces based on traditional Galician plant motifs. We may also catch him in the creative process or giving classes.

From here we move onto the **Praza de Santo Domingo** ¹⁰ (Saint Dominic Square), which is presided over by the [BAROQUE CHURCH](#) of the same name, where the patron

FACING Colegiata de Santa María del Campo

ABOVE Coat of arms of palace of Marquis of Camarasa

BELOW Fuente del Deseo in Praza do General Azcárraga



saint of the city, the Virgen del Rosario (Our Lady of the Rosary) is worshipped. As a curious fact we can point out that the façade and the tower have different orientations which gives them a distinctive character.

Our next stop is the **Praza de Santa Bárbara** ¹¹ (Saint Barbara Square) one of the most reserved and romantic spots in the city. The barred windows show us the [CONVENTO DE SANTA CLARA](#) (cloistered convent of the Poor Clares), founded on the site of the ancient chapel of St. Barbara, thanks to a papal bull issued by Alexander VI in 1494. The entrance is decorated with what some consider is part of a medieval tombstone. It features representations of Christ on the cross and God the Father, flanked by the sun and the moon, and accompanied by St. James the Apostle, St. Francis, St. Dominic, and the archangel St. Michael carrying the scale for the weighing of souls, which is a clear reference to the Last Judgement. In the porter's lodge



we can pick up some pastries and cocadas, home-made sweets that the nuns have been making for centuries, which allows us to make a small contribution to the upkeep and conservation of the convent.

If we leave the square by **rúa de Herre-rías** ¹², we pass in front of the [CASA-MUSEO DE MARÍA](#) (House-Museum of María Pita), where the heroine of A Coruña lived. A look around inside will reveal curious aspects of her eventful life, as well as the period leading up to and after the English siege.

Just a short distance away is the [COLEGIATA DE SANTA MARÍA DEL CAMPO](#) (collegiate church of Saint Mary of the Fields, 12th to the 14th centuries), which welcomes us with a spike-shaped calvary with a seven-metre-high shaft carved in a single piece, which is believed to be the tallest in Galicia as it stands at over 8 metres high. The main façade of the church depicts, on the tympanum, the scene of the Epiphany, which was surely inspired by the work of Master Mateo. In its charming interior we can see the curious inclination of the pillars and a splendid work of silverware. The [MUSEO DE ARTE SACRO](#) (Museum of Sacred Art) annex is also worth a visit. Among the pieces on display there are the chest and

FACING Praza de María Pita from Porta de Aires

ABOVE On the route we find restaurants where you can enjoy the local gastronomy.



monstrance offered in the 17th century by Queen Maria Anna of Neuburg, the reliquary of San Clemente, and the monstrances of Ferrol and Sobrado, all wonderful pieces of goldsmithing.

Just in front is the 18th century [PAZO DE CORNIDE](#) (Cornide manor house), which is reminiscent of a French palace and bears the family coat of arms. If we skirt round the building on **rúa Porta de Aires**, on the corner with **rúa Amargura**, we come to [2 martelos](#), where they upcycle old items. They sell recycled furniture, decorations, household textiles, and accessories.

A little bit further on, at no. 2 **Campo da Estrada**, we reach another special business: [Bazzart](#). This is an art gallery where everyone is welcome, where you find everything from the works of established artists to pieces by new talents.



We retrace our steps to continue our tour along **rúa Damas** ¹³ (Dames street), named in honour of Lady Sancha and Lady Dulce, daughters of King Alfonso IX of León and Galicia, who in 1208 ordered the town of A Coruña to be repopulated and rebuilt with royal privileges and powers.

On our way down we find the 16th century PALACIO DEL MARQUÉS DE CAMARASA (Palace of the Marquis of Camarasa). It would later come into the possession of the marqués de Montaos, who had to surrender it to the Royal Treasury as payment for his outstanding debts. Undoubtedly, its most illustrious visitor was King Charles I, who stayed there before leaving the port of A Coruña to be crowned, in 1520, as emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire.

We now come to the **Praza do General Azcárraga** ¹⁴, (General Azcárraga Square) formerly the Plaza de la Harina (Flour Square), as it used to be the site of the grain market. It is one of the most special spots in the old town, which was constructed in the 19th century to recreate the models of gardens in English romanticism. In the centre, among ash, magnolia and banana trees, is the FUENTE DEL DESEO (Fountain of Desire), with four spouts from which the military, the prisons, and residents of the city were supplied with water, as the fountain had taps reserved for each group.

Heading down **rúa Ángeles** ¹⁵ and on the corner of Capitán Troncoso street we come to Tierra de Fuego, a bright and colourful place with an enormous collection of lamps, pottery, forged pieces, mirrors, costume jewellery, and jewellery showing marine influences.

If we go up **rúa Nuestra Señora del Rosario** to no. 11 we reach Bomoble, which sells designer personalised, and custom-made furniture they manufacture themselves. They use the space to exhibit paintings and sculptures by different artists in a small art gallery.

We have passed by numerous bars, restaurants, and cafés on our tour where you can stop off for an enjoyable rest. There are also antiques shops where you can find real gems and fabulous artwork, such as Elvira Mas, on Zapatería street, or Juan Olives Orrit, at no. 6 Donas street, which some say is the oldest house in A Coruña, dating back to 1217. These stand alongside traditional bakeries, florists, grocery stores, handicraft and souvenir stores, which make the old city an ideal place for a pleasant stroll and some leisure time.



Torre de Hércules

The most emblematic monument in the city is, unquestionably, the [TORRE DE HÉRCULES](#) (Tower of Hércules). It is the oldest working lighthouse in the world, with history spanning 2000 years, and was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2009. Built by the architect Cayo Servio Lupo in the first century CE, although its appearance on the outside has changed over time, the interior is for the most part unchanged. The Roman lighthouse had a ramp that surrounded its outer perimeter. Today it has neoclassical cladding, made in the 18th century by Eustaquio Giannini and stands 59 metres tall. In its surroundings an outdoor sculpture park was created with works by internationally renowned artists such as the [MENHIRES](#) by Manolo Paz, the [CARONTE](#) by Ramón Conde, the [CARACOLA](#) by Moncho Amigo, the [ROSA DE LOS VIENTOS](#) by Correa Corredoira. There are more than fifteen sculptures adorning this unique site, where the sea remains the main attraction and a walk around the location is a real treat for the senses.

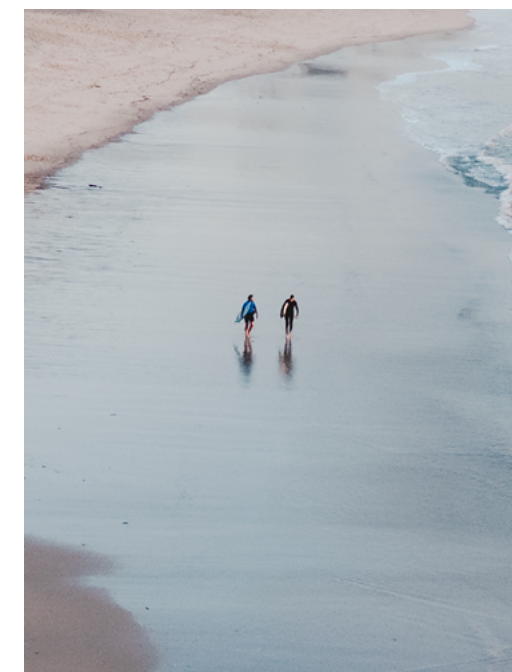
To reach the Torre de Hércules, we recommend a walk along the [PASEO MARÍTIMO](#) (Maritime Promenade), which is more than 13 km long and the longest in Europe. On the walk we can take in the detail of the lampposts with over 1,200 enamels from artist Julia Ares. Next to the promenade is the [CEMENTERIO DE SAN AMARO](#) (San Amaro Ce-

metery), which was added to the European Cemeteries Route in 2013. This cemetery, facing the sea, can be explored following four routes: Route of the creators, historians and scientists (taking in the graves of Pondal, Curros Enríquez and Wenceslao Fernández Flórez), Route of the politicians, soldiers, and dreams of A Coruña, Route of the secrets of San Amaro, and the Artistic Route.

Ya Beyond the Torre de Hércules, we find the [AQUARIUM FINISTERRAE](#), which the people of A Coruña call La Casa de los Peces (The House

FACING Torre de Hércules

BELOW Sunset at Orzán beach.





of Fish), which has a Maremagnum room where we can discover almost everything about the sea here. Further along is the [DOMUS](#), a work by Japanese architect Arata Isozaki and the world's first interactive museum on the workings of the human body. Next, we come to the [BEACHES OF RIAZOR AND ORZÁN](#), where every year the magical night of San Juan, a festival that was declared an International Tourist Attraction, is lit up by countless bonfires. At the end of the promenade lies the Palacio de los Deportes de Riazor (Sports Palace of Riazor), the work of Santiago Rey Pedreira, and the municipal football stadium, where [REAL CLUB DEPORTIVO DE LA CORUÑA](#) play. Following on with the walk we reach the [MUNCYT](#) (National Mu-

seum of Science and Technology), a strikingly interesting semi-transparent cube which won the Young National Architecture Award. A short while later we come to the tallest glass obelisk in the world, called [MILLENIUM...](#)

To round off our tour, there is nothing better than a climb up [MOUNT SAN PEDRO](#) (Saint Peter Mount) where the old military facilities were transformed into a place for leisure, which has the best views of the city, the estuary of A Coruña, the Gulf of Ártabro, and the Atlantic Ocean. If you feel like pairing these splendid views with haute cuisine, visit the [Árbore da Veira](#) restaurant, which was awarded a Michelin star in 2021.

ABOVE Domus museum

BELOW Learn playing at Aquarium Finisterrae



Other related guides





CORUÑA PESCADERIA DISTRICT



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